

Memorandum Submitted to
The Government of Tamil Nadu on
The Development of Dalit and Tribals
June – 2026



Dalit Collective for Justice - DCJ
Tamil Nadu

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Development of Dalits and Tribals - 2026*

Date: June 2026

Compiled by:

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**Letter to the Hon'ble Chief Minister and
Hon'ble Minister for Social Justice**

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June 2026

To,

1. **The Hon'ble Chief Minister,**
Government of Tamil Nadu,
Secretariat, Chennai.

2. **The Hon'ble Minister for Social Justice,**
Government of Tamil Nadu,
Secretariat, Chennai.

Respected Hon'ble Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu,

Greetings and Best Wishes!!

We would like to extend our heartfelt greetings and congratulations once again to you on assuming office as the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, and to the Hon'ble Minister for Social Justice. We also wish to express our sincere appreciation and gratitude for renaming the Department of Adi Dravidar and Tribal Welfare as the Department of Social Justice, a more appropriate and meaningful term.

Despite the rights and welfare measures provided under various laws and legal safeguards in the country, the living conditions and rights of Dalit and Tribal communities have not been adequately restored, nor have their socio-economic needs been sufficiently addressed.

In this context, various organizations working for the rights, protection, and development of Dalits, Tribals, women, children, and other marginalized communities in Tamil Nadu have come together to discuss these social and its related issues. Based on these consultations, we have compiled the memorandum titled “Memorandum on the Development of Dalits and Tribals to the Tamil Nadu Government– 2026”, which we are submitting to you in person.

We respectfully request that the Hon'ble Government of Tamil Nadu to consider and fulfill these demands aimed at the social, economic, and developmental advancement of Dalit and Tribal communities.

The detailed demands are enclosed herewith. A summary of the demands is as follows:

1.Land and Housing

- Providing land entitlements/pattas and housing to all landless and homeless families in rural and urban areas across Tamil Nadu.
- Restoring Panchami lands and hand them over to their rightful beneficiaries.
- Identifying and distributing lands already acquired by the Government for the welfare of Dalit and Tribal communities to the intended beneficiaries.

- Providing land entitlements/pattas and housing to all landless and homeless families in rural and urban areas across Tamil Nadu.
- Restoring Panchami lands and hand them over to their rightful beneficiaries.
- Identifying and distributing lands already acquired by the Government for the welfare of Dalit and Tribal communities to the intended beneficiaries.
- Implementing special schemes to create hut-free villages.
- Ensuring basic rights and services, including food, clothing, healthcare, access to common burial and cremation grounds, and pathways leading to such facilities.
- Approaching and implement disaster management policies from the perspective and needs of Dalit and Tribal communities.

2. Preventing Atrocities and Ensuring Justice

- Ensuring the full and proper implementation of the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act and guarantee justice for affected Dalit and Tribal communities.
- Undertaking adequate preventive measures to stop caste-based atrocities before they occur.
- Appointing Special Public Prosecutors preferred by the victims through the judiciary.
- Taking strict action against officials who fail to discharge their duties under the law.
- Extending the protections of the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act to Dalit and Tribal Christians.
- Prohibiting caste-based organizations that contribute to the perpetuation and escalation of caste atrocities.
- Ensuring protection, livelihood support, and rehabilitation for persons entering into inter-caste, inter-religious, and inter-community marriages, and promote such marriages as a means of eliminating caste discrimination.
- Removing caste-based names from streets, residential colonies, and public places.
- Completely eradication of manual scavenging and ensure the welfare, rehabilitation, education, and development of workers engaged in such occupations and their families.
- Implement reservation in judicial appointments and ensure adequate representation of marginalized communities within the judiciary.
- Strengthen the functioning of the Human Rights Commission, empower it to visit atrocity-affected areas, and direct authorities to take appropriate action.
- Prevent custodial torture and deaths in police stations, ensure the independent functioning of statutory commissions, and provide adequate representation of marginalized communities in such commissions.

3. Rights of Dalit and Tribal Communities in Education and Employment

- Extending the Right to Education Act to cover education up to Higher Secondary Level (+2).
- Implementing reservation in admissions to Class XI (+1).
- Ensuring the immediate disbursement of higher education scholarships up to the maximum fee amount payable by students.
- Enforcing the University Grants Commission (UGC) regulations aimed at preventing caste-based discrimination in higher educational institutions.
- Introducing Constitutional Education in the curriculum and provide financial assistance to Tamil-medium and Mother-Tongue schools.
- To immediately fill all backlog vacancies reserved for Dalit and Tribal communities in government services.
- Implementing reservation in promotions for government employees belonging to Dalit and Tribal communities.
- Abolishing the outsourcing system in government employment.
- Implementing reservation in the private sector.
- Extending reservation benefits to Dalit Christians.
- Establishing a separate Welfare Board for members of social and civil society organizations.
- Promoting the social and economic advancement of transgender persons and ensure their meaningful participation in political processes and governance.

4. Economic Development:

- Effectively implement, monitor, and strengthen the Tamil Nadu Development Action Plan Act for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, 2024.
- Formulate new development schemes, simplify access procedures, and establish an Ambedkar Bank to support the economic advancement of marginalized communities.
- Establish a Resource Centre for the implementation, capacity building, training, monitoring, and evaluation of the Act.
- Reform and strengthen the functioning of the Tamil Nadu Adi Dravidar Housing and Development Corporation (THADCO).
- Develop and implement targeted development programs for Tribal communities, including the Narikuravar community.

- Under the provisions of the Act, formulating special schemes to provide essential infrastructure and services to Tribal villages and communities residing in hilly regions, including roads, electricity, drinking water, healthcare facilities, schools, colleges, protection from wild animals, and insurance coverage.
- Promote agriculture among Tribal communities living in hilly and remote plain areas by providing solar-powered facilities for agricultural lands where electricity is not available, through special schemes under the Act.

5. Democratic Participation – Local Governance and Political Representation:

- Conducting local body elections at the earliest.
- Recognizing and appoint persons with disabilities as nominated members in local government and providing them with appropriate training and support.
- Repealing Section 205 relating to the removal of Panchayat Presidents from office.
- Ensuring effective participation of citizens through Gram Sabha meetings.
- Providing reservation for deputy positions in local government institutions.
- Providing salaries and pension benefits to elected representatives of the local government.
- Register cases and take appropriate action under the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act against individuals who obstruct, intimidate, or discriminate against Dalit and Tribal elected representatives in local government.

6. Rights and Welfare of Dalit – Tribal Women and Children

- Prevent crimes against women and children and ensure their safety and protection. Take appropriate action against offenders under the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act wherever applicable.
- Implement the recommendations of the Justice Chandru Committee to eliminate discrimination in educational institutions and ensure a policy of Zero Discrimination.
- Ensure adequate provision of nutritious food, safe drinking water, healthcare, and other essential services for children.
- Establish childcare centres and residential care facilities in areas predominantly inhabited by Dalit and Tribal communities.
- Give special attention to preventing sexual offences against children and ensuring effective protection and rehabilitation measures.

7. Protection of the Rights of Tribals Communities

- Provide housing and land entitlements/pattas to all homeless Tribal communities, including the Narikuravar community and other groups recently included in the Scheduled Tribes list.
- Ensure the provision of basic infrastructure such as roads, drinking water, and electricity in Tribal habitations within a defined short-term timeframe.
- Facilitate the transfer of land ownership rights of small and marginal Tribal farmers from deceased ancestors to present legal beneficiaries through a Single Window system.
- Create greater educational opportunities and provide the necessary support for Tribal students to pursue education.
- Issue community certificates to Tribal children directly through schools, as is done for children from other communities.
- Eliminate bonded labour practices involving Tribal communities and other vulnerable groups and ensure their protection, rehabilitation, and socio-economic development.
- We respectfully and earnestly request the Tamil Nadu Government to give serious attention to, and ensure the implementation of, the social, economic, educational, local governance, and development-related demands presented under these seven major thematic areas.

Sincerely,

Dalit Collective for Justice-DCJ,
Tamil Nadu
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The background of the slide is a deep space photograph. It features a dense field of stars of various colors, including white, blue, and red. A prominent feature is a large, diffuse nebula or galaxy structure that stretches across the lower half of the image, showing a gradient from dark purple and blue at the top to bright orange and yellow at the bottom. The overall effect is a rich, multi-colored starfield.

1. Land and Housing

1. Provision of Land “Pattas” and Housing for All:

I. Housing and Patta:

- To this day, the majority of Dalit and Tribal people remain daily-wage labourers and agricultural workers. They do not own land or homes. A secure and dignified residence is not merely a house; it is the foundation for social liberation and the exercise of fundamental rights. It also provides social security. Land and housing are viewed not just as assets but as symbols of social status. Therefore, land ownership documents (pattas) and housing must be provided to all Dalit and Tribal people.
- Necessary amendments should be made to laws governing temple lands and Land Ceiling Acts. Surplus lands obtained through these measures, along with fallow lands and cultivable forest lands, should be redistributed to landless Dalit agricultural labourers.
- Most government-owned Natham and Poramboke (common) lands have been encroached upon by individuals with caste influence or political power. The government must immediately recover these encroached lands within a specific timeframe and distribute them to landless people for residential and agricultural purposes.
- Special camps must be organized to provide land titles (pattas) and housing without delay to Dalit families who have lived on government Poramboke land for several generations. In Tamil Nadu, a large number of Dalit and Tribal people still reside in huts. Every year, these dwellings are severely damaged by natural disasters such as cyclones, heavy rain, and floods, as well as by fire accidents during summer. Consequently, families face immense financial hardship, spending their hard-earned income annually to repair these structures. To create a "hut-free" state, special housing schemes must be launched to convert all huts into permanent concrete buildings.
- In urban areas such as Chennai, Coimbatore, Madurai and other cities, residents who have been living for generations are continuously being evicted and their houses demolished citing various reasons. Before evicting such urban residents, the Government must ensure proper rehabilitation by providing alternative housing or residential space of not less than 360 sq. ft. without affecting their livelihood.

- The Government should construct multi-storeyed housing units of at least 360 sq. ft. for houseless Dalit and Tribal communities living in municipalities, town panchayats, and other growing urban areas, and provide them at highly affordable prices.
- In Tindivanam, Gopalapuram area, the multi-storeyed housing units constructed nearly 60 years ago by the Tamil Nadu Housing Board for government employees have become uninhabitable and remain in a dilapidated condition for more than 10 years, posing a serious risk of collapse and accidents. Similarly, old and unsafe housing units constructed under various schemes across Tamil Nadu should be demolished and reconstructed with houses of at least 360 sq. ft., and allotted to houseless Dalit, Tribal, and other marginalized communities.

II. Recovery of Panchami Lands:

- Based on the recommendation of J.H.A. Tremenheere, the then Collector of Chengalpattu district, the erstwhile Madras Presidency Government issued Panchami lands to Dalit communities on 30 September 1892, with the condition that these lands should not be sold or transferred to members of other communities. It is stated that nearly 1.2 million acres of land were assigned under this scheme across the Madras Presidency.
- According to the Commissioner of Land Administration, Tamil Nadu, there were 126,013.6 acres of Panchami land in the State as of 2006. Land Administration Department records further reveal that Panchami lands were allotted to 62,745 individuals across Tamil Nadu, of which 19,923 beneficiaries were from Tiruvannamalai district alone.
- However, due to the absence of adequate legal protection and monitoring mechanisms, a large portion of Panchami lands are reported to have been encroached upon by non-Dalit communities.
- To recommend measures for the recovery of Panchami lands and their restoration to the rightful beneficiaries, the first State-level Retrieval Committee was constituted during the period 1991–1996. The Government of Tamil Nadu has also repeatedly assured that legal measures would be undertaken to retrieve Panchami lands across the State.
- Information obtained under the Right to Information Act indicates that nearly 18,400 acres of land in Cuddalore and Villupuram districts alone are classified as Panchami lands.
- **Therefore, the existing committee constituted to identify Panchami lands should be restructured and strengthened with a clear time-bound mandate to identify, retrieve, and restore Panchami lands to their rightful beneficiaries.**

III. Lands Acquired for Dalit and Tribal Communities Must Be Distributed to the Beneficiaries::

- The Tamil Nadu government has previously purchased and acquired private lands to provide housing and build homes for landless Dalit and Tribal people. However, in many areas, these lands have not been measured or handed over to the beneficiaries, even after 25 years.
- In 1997, during the tenure of Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi, land was acquired for 75 Dalit families in Reddipalayam village near Gingee, and pattas were issued. However, the land has still not been physically handed over to the beneficiaries.
- In Thazhanallur village near Pennadam, land was acquired for 52 Dalit families in 1989. To this day, the land has not been demarcated or handed over.
- Due to these delays, original landowners often move the courts, or real estate interests intervene to prevent Dalits and Tribes from occupying the land. The government must identify all such acquired lands and hand them over to the rightful people within a short-term target.
- **The Government should undertake a time-bound survey, preferably within one month, to identify lands that were acquired by previous governments across Tamil Nadu for the benefit of landless Dalit and Tribal communities. Such lands should be inventoried and verified, and, within a short and clearly defined timeframe, distributed to the intended beneficiaries. This will ensure that the original purpose for which the lands were acquired is effectively fulfilled and that landless Dalit and Tribal families are able to secure their rightful housing and livelihood opportunities.**

IV. Special Schemes for Creating Hut-Free Villages

Even today, a large number of Dalit and Tribal communities in districts such as Tiruvannamalai, Villupuram, Cuddalore, Nagapattinam, Ariyalur, and Perambalur continue to live in huts and temporary dwellings.

Every year, these huts are severely damaged due to cyclones, heavy rains, floods, and other natural disasters, while incidents such as fire accidents during summer further destroy their homes and belongings. As a result, families are forced to spend beyond their means every year on repairs and reconstruction, leading to recurring economic losses and insecurity.

Therefore, the Government of Tamil Nadu should formulate and implement special housing schemes aimed at creating hut-free villages across the State and ensure that all huts are replaced with permanent concrete houses.

1.2. Basic Right to Life

I. Food, Clothing, and Healthcare:

Due to the prevailing social, political, and economic conditions, the livelihoods of Dalit and Tribal communities, many of whom depend on daily wage labour, have further deteriorated. The lack of adequate employment opportunities has pushed a large section of rural Dalit and Tribal populations below the poverty line.

While ensuring their access to employment, economic security, food, clothing, healthcare, and other basic needs, it is also essential to create sustainable livelihood opportunities. With traditional occupations such as agriculture, which once provided regular employment, facing severe decline, the Government should formulate and implement economic and development programmes that can generate stable and viable sources of income suited to the present social and economic context.

II. Establishment of Common Burial, Cremation Grounds and Protection of the Right to Carry Dead Bodies Through Public Pathways:

In Indian and Tamil society, the final rites of a deceased person are treated with great reverence. Even those in poverty often borrow money to ensure a dignified farewell. This final journey is considered a mark of human dignity.

However, this dignity is often denied to Dalits in Tamil Nadu. From birth to death, they face discrimination, untouchability, and atrocities. Specifically, when Dalit communities attempt to carry a deceased person along a public road especially when there is no dedicated path to graveyard dominant caste groups often block the path, launch attacks, destroy property, or even commit murder to assert caste dominance.

In many places, Dalit communities do not have separate burial or cremation grounds. Even where such facilities exist, there are no proper pathways to carry dead bodies. In several cases, the available pathways cannot be used due to encroachments and other forms of obstruction.

Such incidents are frequently reported in the media. In 2024 at **Mothakkal village** and in 2021 at **Veeralur village** (Tiruvannamalai district), Dalit people were brutally attacked by dominant castes for using public roads for funerals. Their properties were vandalized, and these families are still struggling through court cases today.

Although the courts have, in several cases, directed the district administration and concerned authorities to ensure that Dalit communities are able to conduct funeral processions with dignity. However, these directions are often not implemented in practice.

- **Therefore, the Government should undertake a State-wide survey within a fixed time frame of three months and create proper burial/cremation ground pathways and access routes for Dalit and Tribal communities across Tamil Nadu.**
- **Common burial and cremation grounds, including gas-based or electric crematorium facilities, should be established and made accessible to all communities.**
- **Allowing Dalit dead bodies to be taken through public pathways and buried or cremated in common burial grounds is an important step towards equality and breaking caste-based discrimination prevailing in society. Hence, the Government must give priority to this issue and take immediate action.**

1.3. Disaster Preparedness and Safety Measures:

During disasters such as cyclones, floods, and storms, all communities in society are affected, but the Dalit and Tribal peoples are the ones who suffer the most.

The government, private institutions, and individuals provide relief assistance. However, the media has reported on multiple occasions that these relief efforts do not reach the Dalit and Tribal peoples in adequate measure.

- **Special attention should be given to the welfare, protection, and rehabilitation of all communities affected in coastal regions, including fishing communities, Dalits, Tribals, and other vulnerable groups. Disaster preparedness, relief, recovery, and development measures should be implemented in an equitable and inclusive manner, ensuring that no community is left behind.**
- **The Government should ensure that relief and rehabilitation assistance provided by government agencies, private institutions, non-governmental organizations, and individual donors reaches Dalit and Tribal communities without discrimination, exclusion, or obstruction. Effective monitoring mechanisms should be established to guarantee equitable distribution of assistance and to prevent any form of bias in the delivery of relief measures.**

Special Attention in Relief Services: During disaster periods, government-provided relief services must give special priority to the residential areas of Dalit and Tribal peoples and pay special attention through the right of pre-emption. Adequate training must be provided to officials to develop this perspective. Action under the Prevention of Atrocities Act must be taken against those who obstruct relief services meant for Dalit and Tribal peoples.

- **Temporary shelters must be established for Dalit and Tribal communities during disasters and emergencies.**
- **Permanent disaster protection shelters should be constructed in Dalit and Tribal habitations located in coastal and disaster-prone areas.**
- **Special attention must be given to the protection, safety, and relief support for Dalit and Tribal children during disasters.**
- **Strict action must be taken under the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act against persons who obstruct or discriminate in the distribution of relief materials and assistance to disaster-affected Dalit and Tribal communities.**

Disaster Management Act: Changes must be made in the national disaster management policy in a way that addresses violence and neglect against Dalit and Tribal peoples during disaster periods.

Without limiting itself to the central and local damage assessment teams, the government must formulate new guidelines so that Dalit and Tribal peoples and their residential areas are also assessed.



2. Preventing Atrocities and Ensuring Justice

2.1. Ensuring Law Enforcement and Access to Justice

In order to prevent untouchability and atrocities against Dalit and Tribal communities, the Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1955, the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989, and the Amendment Act, 2015 were enacted. The Rules framed in 1995 under the Act were further amended in 2016 to strengthen its implementation. In addition, since November 2021, the Government of Tamil Nadu has been providing enhanced compensation to victims of atrocities under the provisions of the Act.

According to 2022 data, on average, more than 11 Dalit women and girls across India are subjected to sexual violence every day. Further, atrocities against Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes increased by 78% between 2014 and 2022.

At the national level, a total of 70,749 cases of atrocities against Dalit and Tribal communities were recorded in 2023. In comparison, 67,646 cases were recorded in 2022 and 59,702 cases in 2021, indicating a steady rise in crimes each year.

In 2023 alone, 2,835 Dalit women and 744 Tribal women were subjected to rape and other forms of sexual violence and atrocities. Among minors below the age of 18, 1,379 Dalit girls and 445 Tribal girls were victims of sexual assault and rape.

The states of Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, and Tamil Nadu have reported particularly high numbers of sexual violence cases against Dalit girls.

In Tamil Nadu, a total of 11,117 cases relating to atrocities against Dalit and Tribal communities were registered across 32 districts between 2015 and 2025. Specifically, 1,416 cases were registered in 2021, 1,828 cases in 2022, 1,969 cases in 2023, and 1,777 cases in 2024. Available data further reveal that atrocity-related crimes increased by 7.5% in 2024 compared to the previous year.

I. Full Implementation of the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act

Dalit and Tribal communities continue to face untouchability, discrimination, and caste-based atrocities at all levels of society. Despite the existence of legal safeguards, atrocities continue to increase every year due to the inadequate and ineffective implementation of the law. Therefore, the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act must be implemented properly and, in its entirety, to effectively prevent atrocities against Dalit and Tribal communities.

- In order to fulfil the objective of the Act in ensuring speedy justice, exclusive Special Courts should be established in every district under Section 14 of the Act to exclusively try cases related to atrocities against SC/ST communities. Although such Special Courts have been constituted in 21 districts, judges have not been appointed in more than half of these courts. As a result, thousands of cases remain pending without trial, causing severe hardship and prolonged injustice to the victims. Therefore, judges must be immediately appointed in all Special Courts.
- Further, Deputy Superintendents of Police (DSPs), who serve as the Investigating Officers in these cases, are frequently transferred for various reasons, and in some instances with deliberate intent. Such transfers adversely affect investigations and often benefit the perpetrators, enabling them to evade legal accountability. Therefore, dedicated Special Investigation Officers at the rank of DSP should be exclusively appointed to investigate atrocity cases.
- Moreover, as mandated under Section 4(e) of the Act, investigations must be completed within 60 days and charge sheets should be filed before the court within the stipulated time. The Special Courts must conduct day-to-day hearings and deliver judgments within 60 days in accordance with Section 14(3) of the Act.
- In particular, the case relating to the mixing of human excreta in the drinking water tank used by Dalit residents in Vengaiyaval village, Pudukkottai district, must be reopened for fresh and impartial investigation, and the real perpetrators must be identified and punished.

II. Regular Meetings of State and District Vigilance Committees

The Vigilance and Monitoring Committees constituted under the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act should regularly review the cases registered under the Act and ensure effective implementation of all legal and administrative measures. This includes timely registration of cases, invocation of appropriate legal provisions, completion of investigations by competent officers within the prescribed time frame, provision of adequate relief and protection to victims, and appointment of Special Public Prosecutors.

The District Vigilance and Monitoring Committees headed by the District Collectors, as well as the State Vigilance and Monitoring Committee headed by the Chief Minister, should convene periodically and function effectively in accordance with the provisions of the Act. These committees must undertake regular reviews and publicly release reports on the status of implementation, investigation, prosecution, relief, and rehabilitation measures relating to atrocity cases.

III. Precautionary Measures in the Identified Atrocity-Prone Areas & Establishment of a Special Force for the Prevention of Caste Atrocities:

The primary objective of the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act is not only to punish offences after they occur, but also to ensure preventive and protective measures are taken in advance to stop atrocities from taking place. However, in practice, adequate preventive actions are often not undertaken.

- According to the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of India, as of 26 July 2024, the Government of Tamil Nadu has identified 345 villages across 37 districts as atrocity-prone villages. In such areas, the State Government and district administrations must take effective precautionary measures to prevent caste-based violence. Further, special development and emergency intervention schemes should be formulated and implemented for these identified areas.
- Many caste atrocity incidents occur despite prior complaints or oral information being given to the police, largely due to the failure of authorities to take timely and appropriate action. The preventive measures to be undertaken are clearly specified under Rule 3 of Section 17 of the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Rules.
- District Collectors and Superintendents of Police should personally inspect atrocity-prone areas and take necessary preventive steps. Firearms possessed by dominant caste groups in sensitive areas should be confiscated where required. Dalit and Tribal persons facing serious threats may be granted arms licences for self-protection in accordance with the law, and armed police protection should be provided wherever necessary. Special police units should also be constituted in identified vulnerable regions.
- Further, Vigilance and Monitoring Committees should function effectively at the State, District, and Division levels by conducting periodic review meetings. Awareness centres and training workshops should be organised regularly to educate the public and officials about the provisions of the Act and the rights of Dalit and Tribal communities. Non-governmental organisations engaged in awareness-building activities should be encouraged through financial and institutional support. The performance of Public Prosecutors and Investigating Officers handling atrocity cases must also be periodically reviewed.
- **At present, Tamil Nadu has constituted special units such as the “Singa Penne Force” for the prevention of crimes against women. Similarly, a dedicated “Caste Atrocity Prevention Force” should be established to prevent atrocities against Dalit and Tribal communities and to ensure rapid response and protection in vulnerable areas.**

Further, in cases where atrocities have already occurred and victims have suffered severe social, economic, or physical harm, appropriate rehabilitation, relief, and restoration measures must be implemented under the provisions of the Tamil Nadu Development Action Plan for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Act, 2024.

IV. Appointment of persons affiliated with political parties as Government Advocates Must Be Avoided:

At present, atrocity cases under the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act are being handled by Government Advocates appointed in the district courts. However, due to their involvement in various other cases, government responsibilities, and political activities, many of them are unable to devote adequate attention during the trial of atrocity cases. Victims are often not provided with proper legal guidance or necessary support to secure justice, resulting in many accused persons being acquitted with ease. Further, there exists a situation where the accused or their representatives are able to easily approach such advocates for compromise and undue influence, thereby undermining the fairness and integrity of the judicial process.

- **Therefore, the appointment of persons affiliated with political parties as Government Advocates in atrocity cases should be discontinued. The posts of Special Public Prosecutors for Exclusive Special Courts should instead be treated as independent professional positions and filled through a transparent recruitment process conducted by the judiciary or the Tamil Nadu Public Service Commission through proper examinations and interviews. District-level Special Public Prosecutors should be appointed solely on the basis of legal competence, independence, and commitment to justice.**

IV. Judicial Appointment of Special Public Prosecutors

Victims often face hardship due to administrative negligence by District Collectors in appointing the victims' preferred Special Public Prosecutors. Therefore, the law should be amended to empower the Special Court Judge to directly appoint the Special Public Prosecutor requested by the victim.

V. Strict Action Against Officials Derelict in Duty

Strict action must be taken against officials who fail to discharge their duties in implementing the law or who misuse their authority. Negligence, delay, bias, or deliberate inaction on the part of officials weakens the effective enforcement of the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act and denies justice to victims.

In particular, appropriate legal action must be initiated under Section 4 of the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act against police officers, revenue officials, and all other concerned authorities who fail to take mandatory action under the Act, including timely registration of cases, proper investigation, protection of victims and witnesses, and implementation of relief and rehabilitation measures.

2.2. Social Protection and Equality

I. Extension of the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act to Dalit and Tribal Christians:

Dalit Christians continue to face exclusion, untouchability, caste-based discrimination, and atrocities in social, political, and economic spheres. These atrocities are committed against them solely on the basis of caste identity. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar (Vol. 5, p. 470) observed that “the Depressed Classes among Christians are subjected to caste-based untouchability and discrimination. They are treated with untouchability both by non-Dalit Christians and by dominant caste groups.”

Therefore, in order to ensure minimum legal protection and justice for Dalit Christians affected by caste atrocities, the State Government should recommend to the Union Government that the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act be extended to cover Dalit and Tribal Christians and take necessary steps in this regard.

II. Prohibiting on Caste Associations:

The rapid spread and intensification of caste dominance and hate speech have led to an increase in caste atrocities, caste-based murders, sexual violence, and honour killings. Caste associations and their activities often encourage and perpetuate such violence.

Under Section 10 of the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, persons likely to commit atrocities may be externed from a particular area, district, or state. Further, under Section 17 and Rule 3, district authorities are empowered to take preventive measures, including restricting organizations that may incite caste violence.

Therefore, caste-based organizations, associations, and political formations promoting caste hatred and violence should be prohibited.

III. Protection and Support for Inter-Caste / Self-Respect Marriages (Amendment to the Self-Respect Marriage Law)

The Government shall create comprehensive legal protections to ensure the safety, dignity, livelihood, and rehabilitation of persons entering into inter-caste, inter-faith, and self-respect marriages.

In 2014, the Supreme Court recommended that Parliament enact a special law to prevent honour killings, provide relief to victims, and punish perpetrators involved in caste-based violence against couples. Further, in the Shakti Vahini judgment (2018), the Supreme Court issued 20 guidelines directing all State Governments to identify districts where inter-caste marriages take place and to proactively provide protection wherever threats exist.

According to the National Crime Records Bureau, 203 honour killings were reported across India between 2017 and 2021. Other reports indicate that around 190 persons were killed between 2013 and 2016 for marrying across caste lines.

Various constitutional and legal provisions prohibit discrimination on the basis of birth, caste, colour, gender, residence, economic status, or social background. In this context, the Self-Respect Marriage provisions introduced in Tamil Nadu recognize marriages solemnized without religious rituals, caste practices, or superstitious customs, based solely on the consent of the individuals concerned.

In 1967, under the leadership of former Chief Minister C.N. Annadurai, Tamil Nadu amended Section 7(a) of the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955, granting legal recognition to Self-Respect Marriages. Under this provision, two persons may marry in the presence of relatives, friends, or any witnesses of their choice, by exchanging garlands or declarations of consent without religious ceremonies. This progressive reform continues to facilitate thousands of inter-caste and inter-faith marriages in Tamil Nadu.

- **Just as legal recognition and protection have been provided for Self-Respect Marriages, the Government must enact a comprehensive legal framework to ensure the protection, dignity, livelihood, and rights of persons entering into inter-caste, inter-faith, and inter-community marriages.**

Section 103 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) defines the punishment for the offence of murder in India. It replaces Section 302 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC). Punishment for Murder (Section 103(1)) any person convicted of murder shall be punished with death or imprisonment for life and shall also be liable to pay a fine. Unlike the earlier provision, the imposition of a fine is mandatory under the new law.

Mob Lynching (Section 103(2)) where a group of five or more persons commits murder on the grounds of caste, community, race, sex, place of birth, language, or personal belief, every member of the group shall be punished with death, imprisonment for life, or imprisonment for a term not less than seven years, along with a fine. The new provision specifically recognizes caste- and religion-based mob lynching as a distinct offence. Such offences are cognizable and non-bailable.

However, while the law provides stringent punishments for caste- and religion-based mob violence, there remains an absence of comprehensive legal protection for couples who choose to marry across caste, religion, or community boundaries. There is also a need for stronger legal safeguards to ensure their safety, dignity, and fundamental rights.

Just as legal protection has been accorded to Self-Respect Marriages conducted without religious rituals and ceremonies, similar statutory protection is required for inter-caste, anti-caste, and inter-community marriages.

The draft legislation prepared by the National Law Commission to prohibit crimes committed against inter-caste couples is an important initiative. Several civil society organizations have also developed expanded versions of such draft laws by incorporating additional safeguards and protections.

- **The previous Government had constituted a one-person commission headed by retired Justice N. Basha to study and recommend measures to prevent crimes and killings committed against persons entering inter-caste and inter-faith marriages. Further, based on the guidelines issued by the Supreme Court, the National Law Commission prepared and submitted to the Union Government a draft bill titled “Unlawful Interference of Caste Panchayats etc. with Marriages in the Name of Honour: A Suggested Legislative Framework.” However, the bill lapsed without being enacted in Parliament.**

Therefore, the Government of Tamil Nadu should enact this proposed legislation as a separate State law with necessary improvements and additional safeguards to prevent honour crimes and protect inter-caste and inter-faith couples.

IV. Promotion of Exogamous (Inter-Caste) Marriages

The Government should actively promote inter-caste and exogamous marriages as a means to strengthen social equality and annihilate caste. Public awareness programmes must be conducted to educate society on the scientific, social, and medical concerns associated with rigid endogamous marriage practices that perpetuate caste divisions.

A progressive social perspective supporting inter-caste and especially inter-caste love marriages should be encouraged through educational institutions, media, public campaigns, and community engagement programmes. Such efforts would strengthen anti-caste values and contribute towards building an egalitarian society free from caste discrimination.

V. Removal of Caste-Based Names

With the objective of eliminating caste discrimination in Tamil Nadu, the previous Government had issued orders to remove caste-based names that have long existed in the names of streets, roads, and residential areas. However, in a case challenging the implementation of the Government Order, the Madurai Bench of the Madras High Court granted an interim stay and sought clarification from the Government.

The Government Order directed district administrations to remove names such as “Colony,” “Adi Dravidar Colony,” “Harijan Colony,” “Vannankulam,” and other caste-identifying names, and instead rename them after leaders, poets, flowers, or other socially inclusive names.

- **We request the Government of Tamil Nadu, which upholds the principles of social justice, to take necessary legal steps to ensure the removal of caste-based names from streets, roads, and residential areas across Tamil Nadu.**
- **As a further step, the Government should also take appropriate measures to remove caste-based names used in shops, public institutions, schools, colleges, and marriage halls.**

VI. Complete Eradication of Manual Scavenging

The “Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and Their Rehabilitation Act, 2013” must be fully and effectively implemented. Although the law prohibits the employment of persons for manual scavenging and hazardous cleaning of human waste, the practice continues in various forms under terms such as sanitary workers, hazardous cleaning workers, and sewer workers.

In a modern society, it is deeply inhuman and discriminatory that Dalit communities, positioned at the bottom of the caste hierarchy, continue to be forced into sanitation and waste-removal work based on caste. Between 2013 and 2022, 97 persons died in Tamil Nadu while engaged in sewer and septic tank cleaning work. Between 2021 and 2025 alone, 43 deaths have been reported. In many such incidents, FIRs are registered only after sustained public pressure, and compensation is provided mainly due to court interventions. However, proper investigations are rarely conducted, charge sheets are not filed, and justice is denied to the victims and their families.

Rules 4 and 5 of the “Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and Their Rehabilitation Act, 2013” mandate the provision of 58 categories of safety equipment and protective measures for sanitation workers by local bodies or contractors. Rules 6 and 7 further prescribe mandatory safety standards. In all deaths occurring during sewer and sanitation work, provisions of the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act must also be invoked wherever applicable, and strict action should be taken against contractors, agencies, and officials responsible. The responsibility of the Government does not end with registering cases and providing compensation; it must ensure prosecution, punishment of offenders, and effective preventive mechanisms to ensure that such deaths never recur.

Tamil Nadu currently records the highest number of sewer and septic tank deaths in India. Therefore, the Government must formulate and implement a comprehensive safety policy and detailed operational guidelines to prevent sewer deaths and hazardous sanitation work.

In recent years, several deaths and injuries have also occurred during underground drainage and sewer construction works across Tamil Nadu due to soil collapse, lack of barricades, absence of warning systems, poor lighting, and failure to follow construction safety standards. Innocent members of the public, including youth, students, women, and workers, have fallen into unsafe.

its, resulting in severe injuries, disability, and death. In some cases, bodies were recovered using heavy machinery under extremely inhuman conditions. Therefore, the Government must issue strict construction and public safety guidelines, ensure accountability, and provide justice and rehabilitation to affected persons.

Across the country, persons engaged in garbage collection, manual removal of human excreta, sewer and drainage cleaning, septic tank cleaning, and related sanitation work are collectively termed sanitation workers. However, deaths in hazardous cleaning work continue to rise. Between 2018 and 2022, 308 sanitation workers died in India while cleaning sewers and septic tanks. Tamil Nadu recorded the highest number of deaths at 52, followed by Uttar Pradesh (46), Haryana (40), Maharashtra (38), and Delhi (33).

Such degrading and caste-based occupations must be completely abolished, and Dalit communities must be fully liberated from forced sanitation labour. Alternative dignified employment opportunities, rehabilitation measures, education, skill development, and social security must be provided.

In January 2025, during proceedings in the Balram Singh case, the Supreme Court directed that manual cleaning of human waste must be completely stopped in six metropolitan cities including Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Kolkata, Bengaluru, and Hyderabad. Therefore, the Government must ensure the total eradication of manual scavenging through strict implementation of the 2013 Act and adoption of modern mechanized sanitation systems.

The Government must also formulate specific safety regulations and monitoring mechanisms for underground drainage and sewer infrastructure projects across Tamil Nadu to prevent future accidents, injuries, and deaths.

- The Act must be fully implemented to completely eradicate the practice of manual scavenging and the manual removal of human excreta.
- In recent years, underground drainage and sewerage projects have been implemented across Tamil Nadu. However, workers engaged in these works are frequently dying due to soil collapse and unsafe working conditions. Many members of the public have also lost their lives or suffered serious injuries due to the absence of adequate safety measures. Therefore, the Government must formulate and strictly implement proper safety guidelines and monitoring mechanisms to prevent such accidents, injuries, and deaths.
- All sanitation-related work, including the removal of human waste, cleaning of septic tanks and latrines, waste management, hazardous cleaning operations, and sewer maintenance, should be fully mechanized. The continued engagement of particular families and communities in such occupations on the basis of caste must be completely abolished. These services should be recognized as formal government employment, fully mechanized, and opened to persons from all communities rather than being confined to Dalit communities alone. Sanitation workers are frequently exposed to serious occupational hazards, including injuries, illnesses, long-term health complications, disabilities, and loss of life. However, adequate compensation and social protection are often unavailable. Therefore, all sanitation workers should be provided with comprehensive insurance coverage of up to ₹10 lakh, along with appropriate compensation, healthcare, and welfare benefits in cases of injury, disability, occupational illness, or death arising from the performance of their duties.

2.3. Representation in the Judiciary

Reservation in Appointments of Judges to the Supreme Court and High Courts

In 2021, out of 33 judges in the Supreme Court, 28 belonged to dominant caste communities, while only one judge each belonged to the OBC, Scheduled Caste, Muslim, and Christian communities. There was no representation from Scheduled Tribes.

Further, according to data released by the Ministry of Law and Justice, among the 715 judges appointed to various High Courts between 2018 and 2022, only 22 belonged to Scheduled Castes, 16 to Scheduled Tribes, 89 to OBC communities, and 37 to minority communities. This demonstrates the severe underrepresentation of historically marginalized communities in the higher judiciary, despite constituting a substantial proportion of the population. Such exclusion is contrary to the principles of diversity, equality, and social justice in the judicial system.

- **Therefore, reservation policies followed by the Government in appointments should also be implemented in the appointment of judges to the High Courts and the Supreme Court to ensure equitable social representation and strengthen the democratic character of the judiciary.**

2.4. Human Rights and Commissions

I. Strengthening the Tamil Nadu Adi Dravidar and Tribal Welfare Commission

- i. The Tamil Nadu Adi Dravidar and Tribal Welfare Commission was established by the previous Government based on a long-standing demand to prevent atrocities against Dalit and Tribal communities and to ensure justice and effective implementation of the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act.
- ii. The Commission should directly visit places where caste atrocities occur, conduct on-the-spot inspections of the actions taken by the police and district administration, and issue necessary directions for immediate and effective intervention.
- iii. The Commission must ensure prompt protection, relief, rehabilitation, and legal support for Dalit and Tribal victims of atrocities and guide the concerned authorities to take immediate action without delay.
- iv. Just as the functioning of officials responsible for implementing the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act is reviewed by District and State Vigilance and Monitoring Committees, the functioning of this Commission must also be periodically reviewed. In particular, the performance and accountability of the Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, Members, and the overall functioning of the Commission should be reviewed in the meetings of the State Vigilance and Monitoring Committee.

II. Intervention by the Tamil Nadu Adi Dravidar and Tribal Welfare Commission in Custodial Torture and Deaths

Between 2021 and 2026, a total of 36 custodial deaths were reported in Tamil Nadu. Recently, Dalit youths including Akash of Manamadurai, Punithan of Tambaram, and Selvakumar of Ariyalur died in police custody.

In all incidents of custodial torture, custodial violence, and custodial deaths, the Tamil Nadu Adi Dravidar and Tribal Welfare Commission must be mandated to immediately conduct spot inquiries, intervene suo motu, ensure registration of cases, and monitor independent investigations.


III. Representation of Dalits and Tribals in All Commissions

Tamil Nadu has several statutory bodies and commissions including the State Human Rights Commission, Tamil Nadu Adi Dravidar and Tribal Welfare Commission, State Women's Commission, Tamil Nadu Commission for Protection of Child Rights, and Tamil Nadu Information Commission.

- Appointments of politically affiliated persons to the positions of Chairperson and Members in these commissions should be omitted.
- Persons appointed as Chairpersons and Members should possess experience and expertise in law, human rights, social justice, and constitutional values. Adequate representation must be ensured for Dalit and Tribal communities, including women, based on principles of social justice.
- The practice of appointing retired judges alone as Chairpersons of the Tamil Nadu Adi Dravidar and Tribal Welfare Commission should be reconsidered. Instead, persons with proven experience in the implementation of the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, expertise in human rights, and a rights-based perspective should be appointed as Chairpersons.

IV. Establishing Human Rights as a Social Norm

- In 2010, amendments were introduced to the Societies Registration Act restricting organizations from using the term “Human Rights” in their names on the ground that the term was being misused. However, human rights represent universal democratic and constitutional values and are not proprietary terms.
- Such restrictions are contrary to the Constitution of India, the United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR, 1966), and the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Defenders (1998). Therefore, the 2010 amendment to the Societies Registration Act restricting the use of the term “Human Rights” should be withdrawn.



3. Rights of Dalit and Tribal Communities in Education and Employment

3.1. Educational Rights:

I. Extension of the Right to Education Act up to Class XII

The Right to Education (RTE) Act must be extended up to Class XII (+2). At present, the Act guarantees free and compulsory education only for children between 6 and 14 years of age, that is up to Class VIII. Extending the Act up to higher secondary education would be a significant and welcome reform in the Indian education system.

Such an extension would help reduce school dropouts, particularly among children from poor and marginalized families. Many students, especially girl children, discontinue their education after Class VIII due to financial difficulties and safety concerns. Ensuring free education up to Class XII would enable them to continue their schooling without interruption.

Further, completing only Class VIII or X is no longer sufficient for accessing higher education and employment opportunities. Free education up to Class XII would improve access to higher education, research, technical education, and skilled employment opportunities

This would also help reduce the dropout rate among girls in rural areas, promote gender equality, and enable students to continue their education under the 25% reservation policy in private schools. Extending the RTE Act up to Class XII is essential to achieve the goal of universal education for all children.

II. Reservation System Must Be Implemented from Class 11 Admissions:

There exists a Government Order stating that, during admission to Class 11 (+1), students should be allotted their preferred subject groups based on reservation, considering only their Class 10 examination results. This was established under Government Order No. 587 dated 23.03.1978, when the higher secondary (+2) system was introduced.

However, as reservation policies were not properly followed in schools, the Tamil Nadu Education Department issued another Government Order No. 42 dated 12.01.1994. According to this, reservation must be implemented separately in each subject group at the time of admission to the first year of higher secondary education (Class 11). Specifically, 18% for SC, 1% for ST, 20% for MBC, and 30% for BC, totaling 69%. This order applies to all types of higher secondary school administrations.

Despite this, it is not being properly implemented. In particular, Dalit students are often denied access to science and mathematics streams and are instead restricted to less-preferred groups such as vocational courses or history. As a result, opportunities for higher education among Dalit and Tribal students are severely limited. Therefore, reservation must be strictly implemented during Class 11 admissions.

III. Special Scholarships for Higher Education:

The Government of Tamil Nadu implements various scholarship schemes for Scheduled Caste (SC) and Scheduled Tribe (ST) students to pursue higher education, including the Post-Matric Scholarship Scheme, Higher Education Special Scholarship (HESS), and Overseas Education Assistance Schemes. These schemes provide support towards tuition fees, hostel expenses, and monthly stipends.

- **The financial assistance currently provided for pursuing postgraduate and doctoral (PhD) studies abroad, which is capped at Rs. 36 lakhs, should be enhanced to meet the actual and maximum educational expenses incurred by students, including tuition fees, living expenses, travel, insurance, and research-related costs.**
- **Further, the annual parental income ceiling prescribed for availing most scholarship schemes, which is currently fixed at Rs. 2.5 lakhs, should be revised to at least Rs. 8.5 lakhs to ensure that a larger number of economically and socially disadvantaged SC and ST students are able to access higher education opportunities without financial barriers.**

IV. UGC Regulations 2026 to Prevent Caste-Based Discrimination in Higher Educational Institutions

The stay imposed by the Supreme Court on the UGC Regulations 2026, which were introduced to prevent caste and economic discrimination, has caused great concern (Promotion of Equity in Higher Educational Institutions).

Following the suicides of Rohith Vemula, Payal Tadvi, and others due to caste discrimination and atrocities in higher educational institutions, the Supreme Court directed the formulation of strong regulations to prevent such discrimination. Accordingly, the University Grants Commission (UGC) issued new regulations by revising the earlier 2012 rules.

One of the key features of these regulations is the establishment of Equity Squads to monitor and prevent discrimination on campuses. Similarly, an “Equity Ambassador” is to be appointed in each department, hostel, and library to remain vigilant and report any violations immediately.

- **However, a case filed by organizations representing dominant-caste groups opposing the inclusion of such provisions led the court to impose a stay on the implementation of these regulations.**
- **Efforts must be undertaken to remove this stay, and the regulations should be implemented immediately across all educational institutions in the country.**

v. Constitutional Rights Education Should Be Introduced as a Separate Subject in Tamil Nadu Schools:

Under the Right to Education Act, compulsory education is guaranteed for all children between the ages of 6 and 14.

Education plays a crucial role in eliminating inequalities in society, promoting equality, and ensuring equal opportunities for all.

Furthermore, by creating awareness among children from a young age about democratic values and fundamental rights, they can be nurtured into responsible citizens.

For this purpose, Constitutional Rights Education (CRE) should be introduced as a subject for children. Through such learning, children will develop an understanding of society, legal rights, and a rights-based perspective.

This form of education can provide children with what they may otherwise lack in classroom learning. There is a need to cultivate the constitutional values and rights granted to all Indian citizens as a social culture through children. Therefore, Constitutional Rights Education (CRE) must be introduced as a subject in schools.

vi. Financial Support for Mother-Tongue Tamil Schools:

In Tamil Nadu, around 18 mother-tongue Tamil schools are functioning across various districts without any financial assistance from the government. The government should simplify the process for granting recognition to these schools. Further, these schools should be provided with all educational support extended to government school students, including textbooks and approximately 22 categories of educational benefits. Midday meals should also be provided. Since many of these schools are operating in rented buildings, the government should take the initiative to provide them with land and permanent infrastructure. Additionally, consolidated salaries should be provided to teachers and staff working in these schools. These mother-tongue Tamil schools should be treated as a special category, and the government must extend financial assistance to support their functioning.

3.2. Employment and Economic Rights

i. SC/ST Backlog Vacancies in Tamil Nadu Must Be Filled Immediately

Filling the long-pending backlog vacancies reserved for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes is an important and legitimate demand for ensuring social justice and protecting reservation rights.

Statistics indicate that more than 10,000 to 12,000 SC/ST backlog vacancies remain unfilled for several years in various Government departments such as education, police, revenue, municipal administration, and health. These include posts ranging from Office Assistant (Group D) to Deputy Collector (Group A).

Under Article 16(4) of the Constitution of India, it is the duty of the Government to fill backlog vacancies on a priority basis. Thousands of qualified and deserving Dalit and Tribal youth are waiting for employment opportunities, and filling these vacancies would provide them with economic security and social advancement. Therefore, the Government must take immediate steps to fill all SC/ST backlog vacancies without further delay.

II. Separate Legislation Must Be Enacted for Reservation in Promotion for SC/ST Employees in Tamil Nadu Government Services

Reservation in promotion for SC/ST employees has been a long-standing and important demand. The Central Government and the State of Karnataka have already implemented reservation in promotion for SC/ST employees.

However, in Tamil Nadu, reservation is currently provided only in direct recruitment, with 18% reservation for SCs (including 3% for Arunthathiyars) and 1% for STs. Reservation in promotions is not being implemented.

- **Article 16(4A) of the Constitution and various Supreme Court judgments permit State Governments to enact laws providing reservation in promotion for SC/ST employees. Tamil Nadu, which is regarded as the cradle of social justice, should also enact such legislation.**
- **Therefore, the Government of Tamil Nadu must bring a separate law to provide reservation in promotion for SC/ST employees in Government services.**

III. Abolition of Outsourcing in Government Employment and Withdrawal of G.O. Ms. No. 152 dated 20.10.2022 issued by the Municipal Administration and Water Supply Department

The practice of outsourcing and contractualization of work in Government departments must be abolished. At present, new permanent posts are not being created in many Government departments, and regular recruitment has drastically reduced, resulting in increasing privatization and outsourcing of public employment through private agencies and contractors. This trend undermines job security, labour rights, social justice, and reservation policies in public employment.

In particular, Government Order Ms. No. 152 dated 20.10.2022 issued by the Municipal Administration and Water Supply Department, which states that there is no sanctioned category called “Sanitation Worker,” should be withdrawn immediately. The denial of official recognition to sanitation workers further weakens labour protections and institutional accountability.

Protection and Welfare of Sanitation Workers:

The welfare, dignity, and labour rights of sanitation workers must be protected and strengthened. Tamil Nadu has 38 districts comprising 21 Corporations, 148 Municipalities, 489 Town Panchayats, and 12,524 Village Panchayats. In these local bodies, sanitation workers are engaged in essential public services such as waste collection, garbage segregation, removal of biodegradable and non-biodegradable waste, and maintenance of public sanitation systems.

Since 2023, sanitation workers across various Corporations, Municipalities, and Town Panchayats in Tamil Nadu have been continuously protesting for permanent employment, payment of pending wages, abolition of the contract labour system, and protection of labour rights. A majority of sanitation workers belong to Dalit communities and are employed as temporary and contractual workers without job security, permanent status, welfare benefits, social security, or fair labour protections. They continue to face exploitation under daily wage and outsourcing systems while living under constant fear of losing employment at any time.

Open defecation continues in public gathering spaces such as political meetings, conferences, markets, festivals, exhibitions, bus stands, and public events. Human waste from such open spaces is often removed manually by sanitation workers, perpetuating degrading and caste-based labour practices.

Due to prolonged exposure to unsafe working conditions, sanitation workers suffer from severe health complications including respiratory illnesses, skin diseases, infections, allergies, and other occupational health hazards. Therefore, the Government must implement special welfare schemes ensuring adequate safety equipment, periodic medical examinations, free healthcare services, medical insurance, preventive healthcare, vaccination programmes, and occupational disease treatment facilities for sanitation workers.

In 2007, the Tamil Nadu Sanitation Workers Welfare Board was established to promote the social, educational, and economic advancement of sanitation workers. However, the Welfare Board has not effectively functioned in accordance with its intended objectives. Therefore, the Welfare Board must be revitalized and made fully functional with clear timelines, accountability mechanisms, and focused welfare interventions for sanitation workers.

Further, the administration and implementation of welfare schemes for sanitation workers should be separated from TAHDCO and brought directly under the control of the Adi Dravidar Welfare Department to ensure focused attention, accountability, and effective implementation of welfare measures.

Sanitation workers, the majority of whom belong to Dalit communities, must be fully liberated from caste-based sanitation labour. All waste removal and sanitation work, including sewer and septic tank cleaning, must be completely mechanized to eliminate hazardous and degrading manual labour practices.

- **The Government Order issued by the Municipal Administration and Water Supply Department (G.O. Ms. No. 152 dated 20.10.2022), which states that there is no sanctioned post called “Sanitation Worker” in local bodies, must be withdrawn immediately. The ongoing privatization and outsourcing of sanitation work must be completely abolished. All existing contract and temporary sanitation workers must be regularized and provided permanent employment status, fair wages, social security benefits, and service conditions equivalent to Government employees.**

IV. Implementation of Reservation in the Private Sector

Recruitment in many Government departments has drastically reduced, and approximately 24 lakh vacancies in Central and State Government departments remain unfilled. As a result, the constitutional principle of reservation and social justice is facing a serious challenge.

At present, marginalized and backward communities are largely confined to lower-level posts such as office assistants, sanitation workers, and other menial positions. In order to ensure equitable access to higher positions and meaningful representation in employment, reservation policies must also be implemented in the private sector.

India has the largest population in the world; however, meaningful economic and social development cannot be achieved while excluding Dalit communities, who constitute a substantial section of the population. Economic policies such as demonetization and GST have adversely affected employment opportunities and deepened economic inequalities. Therefore, reservation in private sector employment is essential to ensure social justice, equal opportunity, and economic advancement for Dalits, Tribals, and other historically oppressed communities.

V. Reservation Rights for Dalit Christians

On 19 April 2023, the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly unanimously passed a resolution urging amendment of Paragraph 3 of the Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1950, which denies reservation benefits in education and employment to Dalits who convert to Christianity. The resolution emphasized that caste-based discrimination continues even after religious conversion, and therefore extending reservation benefits is necessary to uphold social justice.

The National Commission for Religious and Linguistic Minorities headed by former Chief Justice Ranganath Misra had also recommended extending reservation benefits to Dalits and Tribals who convert to Christianity, Islam, Jainism, or other religions. This recommendation has further been supported by the National Commission for Scheduled Castes.

The social and economic conditions of Dalit and Tribal persons do not automatically improve after conversion, and denying them constitutional protections and reservation benefits is unjust and discriminatory. Therefore, reservation rights must be extended to Dalit Christians and similarly placed converted communities.

The Government should once again strongly urge the Union Government to take appropriate constitutional and legislative measures to ensure reservation rights for Dalit Christians.

3.3. Establishment and Strengthening of Welfare Boards

1. Establishment of a Separate Welfare Board for Employees in NGOs and Social Organizations:

After the Second World War, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) have played a significant role in areas such as healthcare, medical services, education, promotion of literacy, sustainable agriculture, and the protection and promotion of the rights of Dalits, Tribals, women, and human rights in general.

NGOs have also been actively engaged in the welfare and development of children, persons with disabilities, and transgender persons. In this context, the contribution of NGOs has been substantial and noteworthy.

At present, NGOs and the social workers associated with them are facing severe challenges. In Tamil Nadu, there are more than 12,000 registered NGOs, employing over one lakh social workers. In addition, there are numerous unregistered organizations working in fields such as social welfare, human rights, child protection, gender justice, and environmental protection. Social workers serve as the backbone of social development and ensure that government welfare schemes reach the last mile.

Despite their crucial role in addressing social issues, these workers face challenges such as lack of social security, absence of permanent employment, and lack of institutional recognition. Most social workers in Tamil Nadu do not have formal employment contracts, health insurance, pension schemes, or financial support during emergencies. As a result, they face economic insecurity and lack of social protection.

Therefore, to ensure social security, a separate Welfare Board should be established for social workers employed in NGOs. They should also be provided with welfare schemes similar to those available under other welfare boards.

II. Establishment of a Separate Welfare Board for Private School Teachers and Staff:

Tamil Nadu is one of the leading states in the country in the field of education. The significant progress made in higher education and technical education is largely due to the contribution of private schools, along with their teachers and staff.

According to data for the year 2023–2024, Tamil Nadu has 37,642 government and government-aided schools, employing around 3 lakh teachers and educating approximately 70 lakh students. In addition, there are 12,481 private schools, with around 2.5 lakh teachers and about 60 lakh students.

In the present scenario, there is no significant difference between the number of students studying in government/government-aided schools and private schools. However, private school teachers do not receive similar welfare benefits. In particular, despite working for many years, they lack job security, financial benefits, and access to government welfare schemes.

Apart from 2.5 lakh teachers, there are also around 1 lakh non-teaching staff working in private schools. The livelihoods of lakhs of family members depend on these approximately 3.5 lakh employees.

Therefore, in order to protect the welfare and livelihood of teachers and non-teaching staff in private schools, a separate Welfare Board for Private School Teachers and Staff must be established.

III. Social and Economic Development and Political Participation of Transgender Persons:

According to the 2011 Census, there are 22,364 transgender persons in Tamil Nadu. However, estimates by other organizations suggest that the number may be around 50,000–60,000. Out of these, only about 8,000–9,000 transgender voters are registered.

- i. At least 1% reservation should be provided to transgender persons in education and government employment.
- ii. Due to the lack of proper documentation, special camps should be organized to provide Aadhaar cards, bank accounts, and voter registration.
- iii. Housing and land titles (patta) should be provided to those who are homeless.
- iv. Government subsidies and loan assistance should be increased to support small business ventures.
- v. For transgender students pursuing education, the government should bear the cost of higher education fees and hostel expenses.

- vi. Social security measures such as pensions, free healthcare services, insurance, and government support for gender reassignment procedures should be provided.
- vii. Property rights and family rights for transgender persons should be clearly established in law.
- viii. Representation or reservation should be ensured for transgender persons in local bodies and legislative assemblies.
- ix. The Transgender Welfare Board should be strengthened through comprehensive planning, including complete enumeration and research, to design effective programmes for the social and economic development and political participation of transgender persons.



**4. Legislations focusing on the
Economic Development of Dalit
and Adivasi communities.**

**Tamil Nadu Development Action Plan for
Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Act, 2024**

4.1. Effective Implementation, Monitoring, and Strengthening

Based on the recommendations of the committee report by Mr. L. Elayaperumal - Former Member of Parliament and leader of the Human Rights Party, which emphasized the need for special socio-economic development schemes to bring Dalit and Tribal communities on par with other social groups, the Government of Tamil Nadu enacted the "Tamil Nadu Development Action Plan for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Act, 2024" in February 2024 for the Special Component Plan for Scheduled Caste (SCP) and Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP).

The focus must now be on the full implementation of this Act, including effective planning, budget allocation, total fund utilization, and rigorous monitoring.

I. New Schemes:

Many current economic schemes were designed years ago based on past requirements. Outdated schemes that are no longer relevant must be abolished. In their place, new initiatives must be developed to suit the modern socio-economic landscape. Priority should be given to:

- Housing, residential buildings, and community halls.
- Basic infrastructure for residential areas.
- Agricultural land and livelihood projects.
- Entrepreneurship, education, and employment opportunities.
- Disaster protection and management.

II. Simplification of Access Procedures

The current process for applying for economic development loans is lengthy and difficult to navigate. These procedures must be digitized and simplified to align with today's modern technological environment, ensuring they are easily accessible to the beneficiaries.

III. Economic Development Projects

a. Establishment of "Ambedkar Bank":

A new bank named after Dr. Ambedkar should be established using the total five-year budget allocation for socio-economic development as its capital. Funds for various schemes should be disbursed directly to beneficiaries through this bank. This would bypass the stringent requirements of commercial banks, create a direct connection with the beneficiaries, and facilitate the intended economic progress.

b. Provision of Full Project Funding:

Currently, TAHDCO and the Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSME) department provide subsidized loans for entrepreneurship and livelihood projects. However, these agencies do not provide the credit directly; they refer applicants to banks.

- Banks often demand sureties or collateral, which most beneficiaries cannot provide.
- Furthermore, banks charge high interest rates, which contradicts the goal of economic upliftment. Consequently, 99% of borrowers struggle to achieve economic growth and spend their lives merely trying to repay the debt.
- Therefore, the practice of providing loans through commercial banks should be discontinued. Instead, credit should be extended directly through the proposed Ambedkar Bank or a dedicated financial institution.

4.2. Social Development Schemes:

I. Rehabilitation for Atrocity Victims and Sanitary Workers:

Special rehabilitation schemes and dedicated funds must be allocated for victims of atrocities, their families, and sanitary workers, as mandated by the relevant laws.

II. Revision of Income Ceiling:

The annual income eligibility limit for Dalit and Tribal beneficiaries to access development loans and entrepreneurship schemes should be increased to ₹2,000,000 (Twenty Lakhs).

III. Local Body Infrastructure Development:

New initiatives must be launched to improve basic amenities in Dalit and Tribal habitations under local bodies, develop "Model Villages," and promote the overall growth of these residential areas.

4.3. Resource Centre for Implementation, Training, and Research

A dedicated Resource centre is required to monitor the effective implementation of the Act, ensuring its benefits reach the people and its original objectives are met. This centre would:

- Plan, guide, and conduct research to ensure the socio-economic growth of Dalit and Tribal communities.
- Identify and bridge implementation gaps and resolve operational issues based on field experience.
- Provide continuous and appropriate training to officials responsible for implementing the Act, including District Collectors, Revenue officials, District Adi Dravidar Welfare Officers, and Special Tahsildars.

4.4. Restructuring of TAHDCO

The Tamil Nadu Adi Dravidar Housing and Development Corporation Limited (TAHDCO) was established in 1974 primarily to implement housing projects. Since 1980, it has expanded to offer subsidies and loans with bank assistance.

The name and objectives of “TAHDCO”, created 40 years ago, are no longer fully aligned with the current socio-economic environment. Its procedures have become difficult for modern users to access. Over the last 50 years, social and economic needs have changed drastically. Therefore, the institution should be renamed to better reflect "Socio-Economic Development." Its operational framework must be reviewed and modernized, and it should be reconstituted as a new, more efficient organization or commission suited to present-day requirements.

4.5. Development Programmes for Hill Tribal Communities

- Even today, many Tribal villages located in hilly regions lack adequate road connectivity. As a result, community members are often forced to walk long distances frequently more than five kilometres or carry patients and essential supplies on makeshift stretchers, even during medical emergencies and other life-threatening situations. This has led to avoidable loss of lives. Therefore, proper road infrastructure must be developed to improve accessibility and enhance the quality of life of Tribal communities.
- Although healthcare facilities have been constructed in some villages, they often lack adequate medical equipment, qualified doctors, and other essential infrastructure. Due to poor road connectivity, patients requiring advanced medical treatment face significant difficulties in being transported to urban centres such as Coimbatore and Pollachi, resulting in preventable deaths. Therefore, qualified medical personnel should be appointed and healthcare facilities in Tribal hill villages should be substantially strengthened.
- Many Tribal families continue to face threats and attacks from wild animals such as elephants and bears. These incidents not only endanger human lives but also cause severe damage to homes, crops, and property. Therefore, appropriate insurance and compensation schemes should be introduced to provide protection and support to individuals and families affected by wildlife-related incidents.
- Solar-powered irrigation and energy facilities should be provided to Tribal farmers living in hilly and remote plain areas where electricity supply is unavailable or inadequate, in order to promote sustainable agriculture and improve livelihoods.
- The above-mentioned basic infrastructure and welfare measures should be implemented through dedicated special schemes under the Tamil Nadu Development Action Plan Act for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, 2024, to ensure the comprehensive development and well-being of Hill Tribal communities.

4.4. Special Schemes for the Development of Tribal Narikuravar Communities

- i. After a long struggle, the Narikuravar and Kuruvikkarar communities were included in the Scheduled Tribe (ST) list in 2022. Special attention is now required to ensure their social, educational, and economic advancement through targeted welfare and development programmes.
- ii. Special camps must be conducted immediately to issue Scheduled Tribe (ST) community certificates to all eligible members of the Narikuravar and Kuruvikkarar communities so that they may effectively access reservation benefits in education and employment.
- iii. As many among these communities continue to live as nomadic and semi-nomadic tribal groups, the Government must implement comprehensive socio-economic development programmes to ensure social recognition, equal rights, livelihood opportunities, and sustainable rehabilitation. In particular, special schemes should be framed under the Tamil Nadu Development Action Plan for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Act.
- iv. The Government must also provide permanent housing, basic civic amenities, identity documentation, healthcare access, education facilities, and adequate social protection measures to ensure a life of dignity and security for these communities.



5. Democratic Participation - Local Government and Political Representation

**Dalit and Tribal Local Bodies Should Be Approached with a Social
Perspective**

5.1. Strengthening Local Self-Government Rights and Democratic Representation

After a long struggle, the Narikuravar and Kuruvikkarar communities were included in the Scheduled Tribe (ST) list in 2022. Special attention is now required to ensure their social, educational, and economic advancement through targeted welfare and development programmes.

I. Nominated Members for Persons with Disabilities:

The efforts taken by the Government of Tamil Nadu to appoint persons with disabilities as nominated members in each of the 13,178 local bodies including 12,525 Village Panchayats, 25 Municipal Corporations, 138 Municipalities, and 490 Town Panchayats are commendable. Through this position, they are empowered to participate in local body meetings, raise their voices on basic needs and developmental issues of their areas, and take part in governance. Appropriate training should be provided to these nominated members to enable them to effectively perform their roles.

II. Local Body Elections:

The term of office for rural local bodies in 28 districts ended in January 2025. Even after one year, elections have not yet been conducted. Necessary steps should be taken to conduct local body elections at the earliest.

III. Measures to Strengthen the Rights of Local Governments:

Just as there is a growing tendency of the Central Government to reduce the powers of the States, there is also a tendency for State Governments to reduce the powers of local governments. Similar to the constitutional lists that define the powers of the Union and State Governments, a separate list should be created for Panchayat Governments. A constitutional amendment should be introduced for this purpose. In Tamil Nadu, there exists a practice where government officials remove elected Panchayat representatives from office. Such practices, which are contrary to democratic principles, must be abolished.

IV. Action Must Be Taken Under the Prevention of Atrocities Act Against Those Who Act Against Local Body Representatives:

Reservation in Panchayat positions is implemented under the Panchayati Raj Act. While a Dalit person can become the President of the country, numerous incidents across various states in India show that it is often not possible for a Dalit to become a Panchayat leader in caste-dominated villages.

Even when a Dalit is elected as a Panchayat President, they are often prevented from using the Panchayat office, sitting on the official chair, hoisting the national flag, or handling Panchayat funds and cheques.

In effect, despite being democratically elected, they are denied recognition as leaders and are unable to function in their roles. Moreover, due to untouchability-based discrimination, atrocities, and social exclusion against Dalit Panchayat leaders and members, several have even been murdered.

Therefore, new mechanisms should be developed for district administrations to conduct consultative meetings exclusively with Dalit and Tribal Panchayat leaders once every three months or as needed. Adequate protection must be provided to enable them to function independently. Strict action must be taken under the Prevention of Atrocities Act against those who act against Dalit and Tribal local body representatives.

v. Ensuring Participation in Gram Sabha:

The efforts taken by the Government of Tamil Nadu to appoint persons with disabilities as nominated members in each of the 13,178 local bodies including 12,525 Village Panchayats, 25 Municipal Corporations, 138 Municipalities, and 490 Town Panchayats are commendable. Through this position, they are empowered to participate in local body meetings, raise their voices on basic needs and developmental issues of their areas, and take part in governance. Appropriate training should be provided to these nominated members to enable them to effectively perform their roles.

vi. Reservation for Deputy Positions:

A resolution has been passed seeking an amendment to the Tamil Nadu Panchayats Act, 1994, to provide reservation for Dalit and Tribal communities in all levels of Deputy Chairperson positions in local bodies, including Panchayats, Town Panchayats, and Municipalities.

vii. Salary and Pension for Panchayat Presidents:

Panchayat Presidents should be provided with a monthly salary of ₹25,000 to enable them to effectively perform their duties. Additionally, like Members of Legislative Assemblies and Members of Parliament who have completed a five-year term, Panchayat Presidents should also be granted a pension.

viii. Protection of Rights of the Local Government

Adequate protection must be ensured for Dalit and Tribal Panchayat Presidents and elected local body representatives who face threats, intimidation, violence, or caste-based obstruction while discharging their official duties. In cases where protection is sought, armed police security should be provided by the Government. Alternatively, in accordance with the provisions and safeguards available under the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, eligible representatives should be granted arms licenses for self-protection to ensure their safety, dignity, and independent functioning in local government.

5.2. Ensuring 50% Reservation for Women in Legislative Assemblies and Parliament

For more than two decades, there has been a longstanding demand for reservation for women in Parliament and State Legislative Assemblies in order to enhance women's political representation. In this regard, the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam (Constitution (106th Amendment) Act, 2023), providing 33% reservation for women in the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies, was enacted by Parliament in September 2023 as the 106th Constitutional Amendment.

However, the implementation of this reservation is linked to future delimitation and census processes and is expected to come into effect only in 2029 or later. In the meantime, there has been a growing demand from various sections of society that women's representation in legislative bodies should be increased from 33% to 50%, reflecting the principle of equal participation in democratic governance.

Therefore, with the objective of ensuring equal representation of women in democratic institutions, the Government of Tamil Nadu should support the demand for 50% reservation for women in Parliament and State Legislative Assemblies and actively engage in efforts to secure the necessary constitutional and legislative measures for its realization.

5.3. Safety, Protection, and Access to Justice

I. Action under the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act Against Those Obstructing Elected Representatives of the Local Government

Reservation in Panchayat institutions has been implemented under the Panchayati Raj system to ensure democratic representation for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. However, in many villages, Dalit Panchayat Presidents continue to face severe caste-based discrimination and obstruction. They are often prevented from using Panchayat offices, sitting in official chairs, hoisting the National Flag, handling Panchayat funds and cheques, or exercising their lawful administrative powers.

Despite being democratically elected by the people, Dalit Panchayat leaders are frequently denied recognition, dignity, and authority as elected representatives. Many Dalit Panchayat Presidents and members have also faced untouchability practices, social boycott, violence, and even murder due to caste hostility and opposition to their leadership.

Therefore, the Government must establish special mechanisms for regular consultation and grievance redressal meetings exclusively for Dalit and Tribal Panchayat Presidents and representatives, to be conducted once every three months or whenever necessary by the district administration. Adequate protection and institutional support must be provided to ensure that they can function independently and safely.

Strict action must be taken under the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act against persons who obstruct, threaten, discriminate against, or interfere with Dalit and Tribal local body representatives in the discharge of their official duties.

II. Mechanisms for Speedy Investigation and Trial of Cases

Cases involving murders, caste atrocities, violence, and harassment committed against Dalit and Tribal Panchayat Presidents, Vice-Presidents, and elected representatives must be investigated promptly and tried without delay through special mechanisms and fast-track judicial processes.

The Government must ensure timely justice, witness protection, and appropriate rehabilitation measures. Further, suitable Government employment should be provided to eligible family members of victims based on qualification and need.



**6. Rights and Welfare of Dalit -
Tribal Women & Children**

6.1. Prevention of Atrocities and Violence Against Women

Even though Dalit and Tribal women pursue education and get good jobs, they face various obstacles and barriers in society. In daily life, because of untouchability, access to education, health, public places, participation and other such things are denied.

Crimes against all women are increasing, but Dalit women are victimised in three ways: by gender, caste, and class (varna). This triple oppression experienced by Dalit women is called "Triple Discrimination."

As of 2022 data, across the country, on an average of more than 11 Dalit women and girls per day are victims of sexual violence. Moreover, 78% of crimes have increased from 2014 to 2022. Across the country in 2023, 2,835 Dalit women and 744 Tribal women were subjected to sexual violence and assault. Among girls below 18 years of age, 1,379 Dalit girls and 445 Tribal girls were subjected to sexual violence.

1. Violence against Dalit and Tribal women must be stopped. Appropriate action must be taken without delay against perpetrators.
2. Special measures must be taken to ensure the protection of elected Dalit and Tribal women representatives in local governance, and to ensure that no one stops them from performing their duties in administration.
3. The devadasi system must be abolished everywhere in the country; relief and rehabilitation must be provided to those affected, and livelihood and development programmes for them and their families must be created.
4. Article 23 of the Constitution: prohibits human trafficking and bonded labour. However, Dalit and Tribal women are largely subjected to forced labour and bondage. This must be completely stopped.
5. To advance the condition of the most marginalized women, and to achieve improvement, budgeting and plans with a focus on gender equality, particularly women's advancement and aspirations, must be prepared.
6. Actions must be taken to improve the legal literacy and access to justice for Dalit and Tribal women. The effective implementation of anti-violence laws must be monitored.
7. Special plans must be developed to ensure the participation of Dalit and Tribal women in police, judiciary, and legal professions.
8. Gender Budgeting Analysis Reports must be published annually.
9. The practice of forcing women into sexual commerce (Forcible Commercial Sex Work) must be completely abolished.

6.2. Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Children

Among Dalit communities, 83 out of every 1,000 children die before completing one year of age, whereas among non-Dalit communities the figure is 61 per 1,000. Similarly, 39 out of every 1,000 Dalit children die before the age of five, compared to 22 among non-Dalit children. Around 75% of Dalit children suffer from malnutrition, whereas the proportion among non-Dalit children is 49%. These disparities reflect deep-rooted social and economic inequalities and systemic discrimination faced by Dalit communities.

Discrimination against children must be strictly prevented. In educational institutions, children continue to face discrimination and violence on the basis of caste, religion, gender, colour, disability, and social background. In many schools and educational institutions, Dalit children are still compelled to perform degrading tasks such as serving teachers, cleaning toilets, and undertaking other menial labour. Such humiliating experiences during childhood leave lasting psychological trauma and social exclusion.

These discriminatory practices also contribute significantly to school dropouts among Dalit students, pushing many children into child labour and economic vulnerability. Therefore, the Government must take immediate steps to prevent caste-based discrimination in educational institutions and ensure that all children are able to study in a safe, equal, and dignified environment.

In particular, the recommendations of the Justice Chandru Committee on preventing caste discrimination in educational institutions must be implemented immediately and in full.

6.3. Creating a Discrimination-Free Environment in Educational Institutions

The recommendations of the Justice Chandru Committee must be implemented in full. In June 2024, the committee headed by retired High Court Judge Justice K. Chandru submitted a report to the Government of Tamil Nadu aimed at eliminating caste and social discrimination in schools and colleges.

The major recommendations of the Committee include:

- i. Prohibiting students from wearing caste-identifying symbols such as coloured wrist threads, caste marks on the forehead, rings, and similar identifiers.
- ii. Removing caste names from the names of schools and instead using only the name of the Government institution and locality.

- iii. Avoiding the inclusion of caste-related details in student attendance registers and institutional records.
- iv. Establishing a “Social Justice Students Force (SJSF)” in schools and colleges to monitor and prevent caste discrimination.
- v. Assessing teachers’ perspectives and commitment towards social justice during recruitment processes.
- vi. Avoiding the appointment of persons belonging to dominant caste groups in the locality as Heads of Institutions in schools where caste tensions and discrimination are prevalent.
- vii. Conducting continuous awareness programmes in schools and colleges to eradicate caste-based discrimination and promote equality and constitutional values.

The Government must take immediate steps to implement these recommendations in educational institutions across Tamil Nadu.

6.4. Prevention of All Forms of Discrimination and Violence Against Children in Educational Institutions (Zero Discrimination)

A national-level study on discrimination in educational institutions led to the preparation of the draft bill titled “PREVENTION OF ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AND VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN IN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS BILL, 2018,” which has been submitted to the Union Government along with sustained advocacy efforts since 2018.

The Tamil Nadu State Education Policy, 2021, emphasizes a “Zero Tolerance” approach towards all forms of violence against children and stresses equal importance for child protection and prevention of discrimination in educational spaces.

In addition, the recommendations of the Justice Chandru Committee also provide a framework for eliminating discrimination in schools and colleges.

Based on these principles and recommendations, the Government must implement a “Zero Discrimination” policy in all educational institutions to ensure child safety, equality, dignity, and access to education in a discrimination-free environment.

6.5. Ensuring Nutrition, Drinking Water, and Health Rights for Children Right to Life and Nutritious Food

- i. Dalit and Tribal children are severely affected by anaemia, malnutrition, and nutritional deficiencies. Therefore, the Public Distribution System (PDS) must provide nutritious food items specifically aimed at addressing nutritional deficiencies among Dalit and Tribal children and their families. The Government must also ensure the quality and nutritional standards of food supplied through Fair Price Shops.

- ii. The Government must ensure that the Midday Meal Scheme and Breakfast Scheme implemented in schools provide quality and nutritious food. The prescribed nutritional standards, including the proper weight and quality of eggs supplied to children, must be strictly monitored. Food security and nutritional rights of Dalit and Tribal children must be guaranteed.
- iii. The scheme providing nutritional supplements and iron-rich health supplements for adolescent girls aged 13–18 years must be reintroduced and effectively implemented. Further, pregnant women living in Tribal areas must be provided with nutritious food supplies and maternal healthcare support directly at their place of residence.

Drinking Water

In most schools, the provision of drinking water for students remains a significant challenge. Even where it is available, the supply is often insufficient to meet the needs of all students, resulting in persistent shortages. Due to inadequate access to safe drinking water, students are susceptible to various health issues, including dehydration. Therefore, appropriate measures must be taken to ensure that all schools are provided with an adequate and uninterrupted supply of safe drinking water. Ensuring the availability of sufficient drinking water will help safeguard the physical health of children.

Sanitation

Many schools lack adequate restroom facilities and water supply. With due consideration for the physical well-being and dignity of children, proper sanitation and water facilities must be established in all educational institutions, including schools and colleges, as well as in public spaces such as bus terminals. Furthermore, although sanitary napkins are distributed to students in many schools through Primary Health Centers, it is essential to ensure that these products are of high quality and within their valid expiry period. In addition, adequate facilities must be provided for the safe disposal and incineration of used sanitary napkins.

6.6. Establishment of Childcare Centers and Crèches

Childcare centers should be established at the workplaces of Dalit and tribal mothers to provide care for children aged three years and below. Furthermore, child welfare centers should be established for children above the age of three to ensure that those under the age of five receive early childhood education and adequate nutritional support. It is imperative to ensure that no child in the respective locality is left out or excluded from these services.

6.7. Protection Mechanisms to Prevent Sexual Offences Against Children

Nearly 30% of sexual violence cases committed against Dalit and Tribal women involve Dalit girl children as victims. The Government must therefore take immediate and special measures to prevent sexual violence against Dalit and Tribal children and establish stronger legal and institutional protection mechanisms.

Whenever children are subjected to sexual violence, cases are generally registered under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act. However, in cases involving Dalit and Tribal children, the relevant provisions of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act must also be mandatorily invoked along with the POCSO Act to ensure enhanced legal protection, accountability, and justice.

Further, in cases where children are rescued from bonded labour, trafficking, forced labour, or exploitative conditions, the provisions of the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act and other relevant child protection laws must also be invoked. The Government must ensure coordinated investigation, rehabilitation, psychological support, legal aid, and long-term protection for affected children.

6.8. Protection against Sexual Crimes and Harm

Dalit and tribal girl children are subjected to various forms of sexual abuse and harm. Appropriate legal action must be initiated against perpetrators without delay, and it must be ensured that investigations are conducted by trained, experienced, and empathetic police officers. Furthermore, mechanisms must be established to take appropriate action against police personnel who refuse to register such complaints as formal cases. The police must take prompt and effective action to locate Dalit and tribal girl children who go missing.

Furthermore, such complaints are often viewed through a caste-based lens. Regardless of the caste to which a missing child belongs, the police must take prompt and appropriate measures to locate the child. The government must take cognizance of the fact that, in certain instances, male children are also subjected to sexual abuse, and must implement appropriate measures to prevent such occurrences.

6.9. Protection Against Child Marriage

Children belonging to Dalit and tribal communities are often subjected to child marriage, which severely undermines their safety and education. To prevent child marriages, awareness must be raised and sustained efforts made to encourage these children to continue their education.



7. Protection of the Rights of the Tribal Communities

7.1. Situation of Tribal People, Challenges They Face, and Their Demands

The tribal peoples face problems such as displacement, poverty, loss of land, and lack of sanitation. Due to such pressures, more than 56% of tribal peoples have been displaced from their habitats, losing their livelihoods and pushed into poverty.

Rights to use forest resources have been taken away, along with traditional identity markers. They have lost their livelihood freedom. Joint family structures have been disrupted. Due to the loss of such identity markers, many are caught up in psychological problems. Health issues are rampant. People are being enslaved on their own land. Indigenous villages are being wiped out entirely.

1. Documents such as housing certificate, residence certificate, caste certificate, family card, and Aadhaar card must be provided immediately.
2. Basic needs for tribal residential areas such as roads, drinking water, electricity, and drainage must be provided.
3. Forest rights law, patta (land title), plantations, and herbal gardens must be encouraged; rights to minor forest produce/non-timber forest products must be guaranteed.
4. For educational improvement, residential schools and Anganwadi centres must be increased. Full scholarships must be provided to students.
5. Special attention must be paid to include tribal people in welfare boards, and special efforts must be taken.
6. An accurate census of all tribal community groups in Tamil Nadu must be conducted. All tribal peoples who were not included in the 2011 census must be enumerated. Therefore, a comprehensive and accurate census including all 37 communities with their sub-groups must be conducted.
7. Land Ownership Rights for Small and Marginal Tribal Farmers in Hill Areas: Many small and marginal Tribal farmers living in hilly regions have been cultivating lands that have traditionally belonged to their families. However, the ownership records of these lands are not registered in their names and continue to remain in the names of their fathers, grandfathers, or other ancestors from whom they have inherited the land. As a result, these farmers are unable to access various government welfare schemes, subsidies, incentives, and development programmes intended to promote agriculture and improve farmers' livelihoods. Despite repeatedly submitting petitions to the Government and concerned authorities requesting the transfer of land ownership and issuance of pattas in their own names, no effective action has been taken so far. Therefore, we request the Government to conduct special camps through a Single Window System to facilitate the transfer of land titles and pattas to the rightful cultivators. This would enable Tribal farmers to benefit from government agricultural support schemes, enhance agricultural production, improve their livelihoods, and contribute to the overall socio-economic development of their communities.

7.2. Education

- i. Education is a fundamental right. The educational rights of Dalit and Tribal students must be fully ensured. Schools must provide a child-friendly environment with compassionate engagement, inclusive practices, and quality teaching to ensure equal learning opportunities for all children.
- ii. The Government must ensure that Dalit and Tribal children continue their education at least up to the completion of Higher Secondary education (Class XII). Necessary support systems and targeted programmes must be designed and implemented to prevent school dropouts. Further, schools must ensure that no hidden or indirect fees are collected from students.
- iii. Rights-Based Education: It is essential to develop a rights-based perspective among children from an early age. Therefore, school curricula must include age-appropriate content relating to constitutional rights, life skills education, child rights, equality, dignity, and child protection mechanisms.
- iv. The Government must ensure the availability of nearby schools in Tribal habitations and remote areas. Where students are required to travel longer distances for higher classes, adequate and accessible public transportation facilities, including sufficient bus services, must be provided.
- v. Residential schools and hostels must be established based on need, ensuring access to quality education, nutritious food, safety, and proper care. The Government must ensure adequate protection, infrastructure, and quality maintenance in hostels established for Dalit and Tribal children.
- vi. All forms of entrance examinations that create barriers to equitable access to education should be abolished. Opportunities for higher education must be ensured for Dalit and Tribal students based on reservation policies and principles of social justice.
- vii.

Every Government and private institution, office, school, college, and workplace must formulate and implement a comprehensive Child Protection Policy to ensure the safety, dignity, and protection of children from all forms of violence, abuse, discrimination, and exploitation.

7.3. Issuance of Community Certificates to Tribal Students Through Schools

- i. In 1999, the Adi Dravidar and Tribal Welfare Department issued G.O. No. 31 directing that Scheduled Tribe community certificates must be issued within 15 days from the date of application. However, this Government Order has not been properly implemented by the concerned authorities. To avoid students and parents waiting for long periods at Taluk offices to obtain community, residence, and income certificates, the Government of Tamil Nadu introduced a system for issuing such certificates through schools. Accordingly, the Revenue Department issued various Government Orders in 1999, 2011, and most recently G.O. No. 184 in 2012. Under G.O. No. 184, students are presently provided with community, residence, and income certificates while studying in Class VI. However, Tribal students are often provided only residence and income certificates, while Scheduled Tribe community certificates are not issued to them through schools.
- ii. In many cases, officials deny community certificates to Tribal applicants citing “insufficient evidence.” To address this issue, in 2013, the then Secretary of the Adi Dravidar and Tribal Welfare Department, Kannagi Bhakiyanathan, issued instructions permitting authorities to obtain assistance from anthropologists and subject experts to verify claims and issue community certificates where documentary evidence is inadequate. Despite these Government Orders and administrative instructions, the procedures relating to issuance of Scheduled Tribe community certificates are not being properly implemented. Thousands of Tribal persons continue to wait for years at the district level for the issuance of community certificates. As a result, Tribal communities are unable to fully access Government welfare schemes, educational opportunities, and employment benefits.

Therefore, just as community certificates are issued to students of other communities through schools, Scheduled Tribe students must also be provided with community certificates through the school system. The Government must strictly ensure that Scheduled Tribe community certificates are issued within 15 days from the date of application as mandated under the Government Orders.

7.4. Abolition of Bonded Labour

According to Government of India statistics, a total of 3,15,302 persons were rescued from bonded labour between 1978 and January 2023. In Tamil Nadu alone, 940 persons were rescued from bonded labour during the five-year period up to February 2026, including more than 170 persons rescued in 2025 alone. Bonded labour practices continue to exist in sectors such as brick kilns, agriculture, domestic work, garment industries, fireworks and match factories, textile shops, and other informal labour sectors.

In many instances, authorities responsible for enforcement refuse to intervene by claiming that there is insufficient evidence or that bonded labour does not exist within their jurisdiction. As a result, social activists and non-governmental organizations are often compelled to identify victims and initiate rescue interventions.

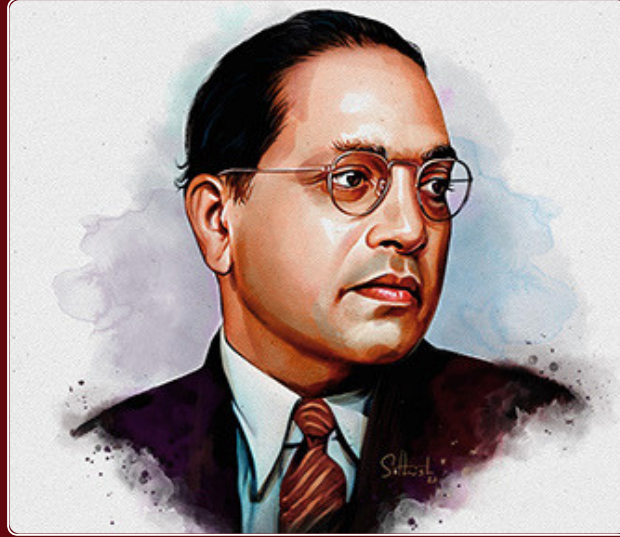
Even after rescue operations, officials frequently stop with merely issuing Release Certificates. Financial assistance is not provided on time, and rehabilitation packages are often delayed or denied. Consequently, many rescued persons are forced back into bonded labour due to poverty, unemployment, and lack of sustainable rehabilitation.

Further, cases registered under the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act rarely proceed towards meaningful legal action such as arrests, filing of charge sheets, prosecution, and conviction. In most cases, the process ends with rescue alone, without ensuring accountability or justice.

A majority of bonded labourers belong to Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Other Backward Classes, with more than 80% of affected persons coming from socially and economically oppressed communities. Poverty, caste discrimination, landlessness, and social exclusion continue to be major factors contributing to bonded labour.

The Government of Tamil Nadu has committed to making the State free from bonded labour by the year 2030. However, researchers and rights groups have pointed out that the prevailing delay, negligence, lack of accountability, and weak implementation of the law may prevent the realization of this objective.

Therefore, immediate relief, compensation, rehabilitation support, livelihood assistance, housing, education, and social protection measures must be provided without delay to persons rescued from bonded labour. In cases where bonded labour practices involve caste-based exploitation or atrocities against Dalits and Tribals, appropriate provisions of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act must also be invoked against perpetrators. The Government must ensure effective prosecution, timely justice, and long-term rehabilitation for all victims of bonded labour.



“How a constitution functions does not depend solely on the constitution itself. It also depends on ensuring that the key organs of the government — the legislature, the executive, and the judiciary — operate independently.”

Dr.B.R. Ambedkarkar

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