Later Vedic age: the shift east

Period and setting

The later Vedic phase is usually placed at about 1000 to 500 BCE. Vedic culture moved from the north-west into the upper Ganga basin, where larger settled communities and stronger territorial kingdoms developed.



Kuru, Panchala, Koshala and Videha

The Kurus occupied Delhi and the upper Ganga-Yamuna doab. The Panchalas held its middle portion. Hastinapur was an important Kuru capital.

By around 600 BCE, the cultural centre had moved farther east towards Koshala in eastern Uttar Pradesh and Videha in north Bihar.



Schematic cultural shift, not a political map

What changed?

Economy

Agriculture became the chief livelihood. Rice and wheat grew in importance, while barley continued.



Polity

Chiefs became stronger territorial kings. Hereditary succession grew, but the assemblies did not all disappear.



Society and religion

Social divisions hardened. Sacrifices grew more elaborate, while the Upanishads questioned excessive ritual and stressed knowledge.



Remember the pattern

These were gradual changes over centuries, not one event shared uniformly by every region.

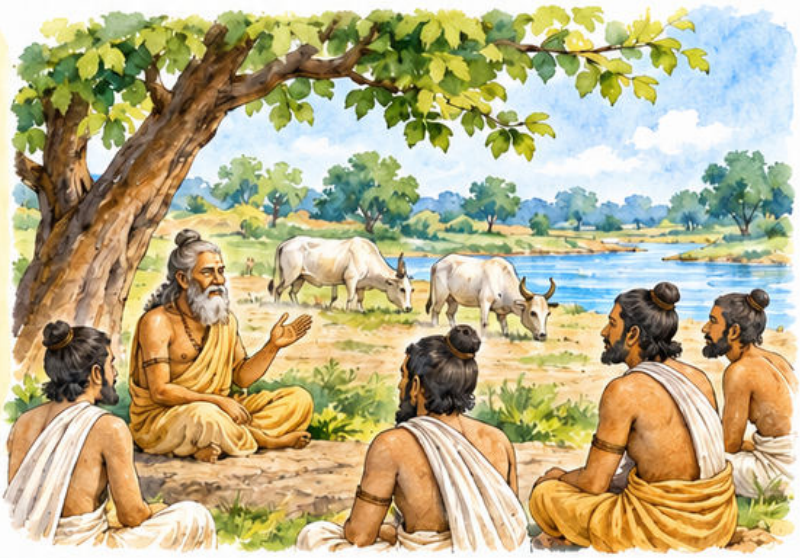


Sources: Day 29 Source Index | Topic 281

Texts and material traces

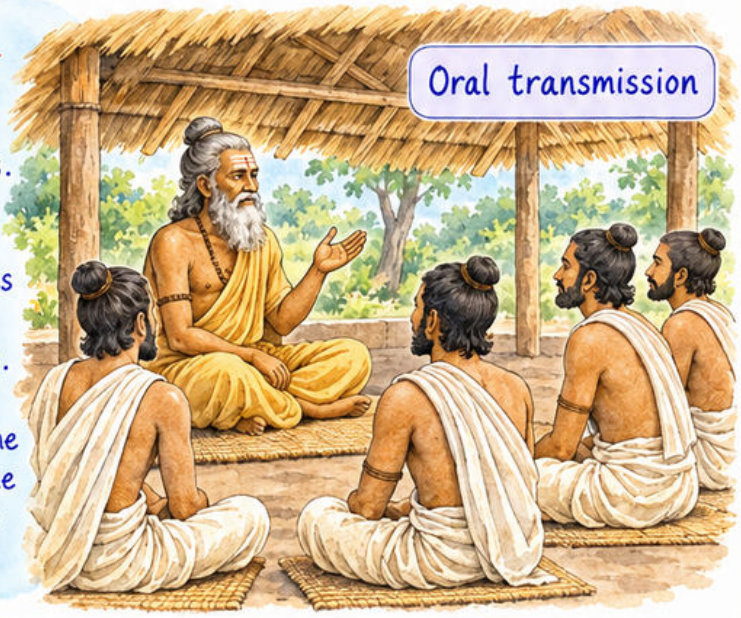
Two Vedic phases

The Rigvedic age is commonly dated about 1500-1000 BCE. Its setting was Sapta Sindhu, the land of seven rivers, with cattle-centred life, chiefs and assemblies. The later Vedic texts belong mainly to the upper Ganga basin and are commonly dated about 1000-500 BCE.



What the texts contain

The later corpus includes the Samhitas of the Sama, Yajur and Atharva Vedas and the Brahmanas. Alongside prayers appear rituals, magic and mythological stories. The Brahmanas are prose commentaries explaining Vedic sacrifice and the symbolic meaning of priests' actions. They are commonly placed around 800-600 BCE. Dates proposed for the Shatapatha Brahmana range from the eighth-sixth centuries BCE to about 700 BCE.



Painted Grey Ware

PGW bowls and plates are associated with many upper Gangetic settlements. Important excavated sites include Purana Qila, Hastinapura and Atranjikhera. The culture is conventionally dated about 1200-600/500 BCE and probably overlaps the middle and late Vedic period. Older surveys counted nearly 700 sites; a 2018 inventory listed 1,576.



- Purana Qila
- Hastinapura
- Atranjikhera

Sources: Day 29 Source Index | Topic 281

Kuru Panchala and the eastern lands

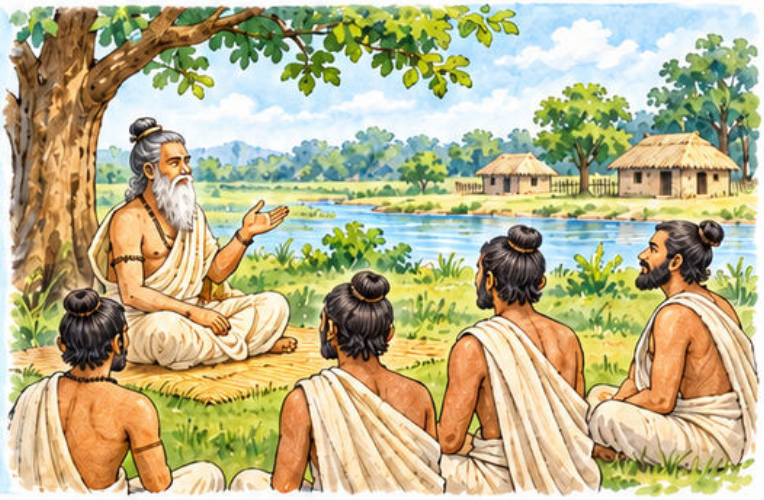
The Kuru-Panchala centre

The Bharatas and Purus combined in the formation of the Kuru people. The Kurus occupied Delhi and the upper Ganga-Yamuna doab; the Panchalas held its middle portion. Hastinapur is the standard textbook Kuru capital. Other traditions describe Asandivat as an early capital and name Indraprastha and Hastinapura as major later cities.



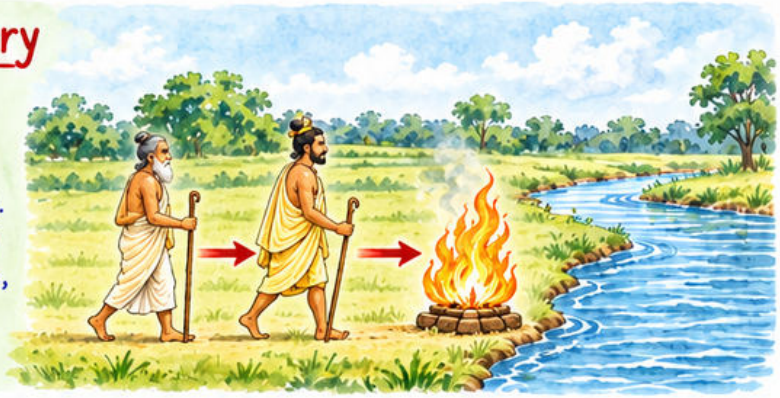
Koshala and Videha

Towards the end of the period, around 600 BCE, Vedic culture spread towards Koshala in eastern Uttar Pradesh and Videha in north Bihar. Koshala is associated with the story of Rama. Videha became an eastern political centre, and Janaka's court patronised Brahmin sages. Its early monarchy is placed in the Brahmana age, about 900-700 BCE.



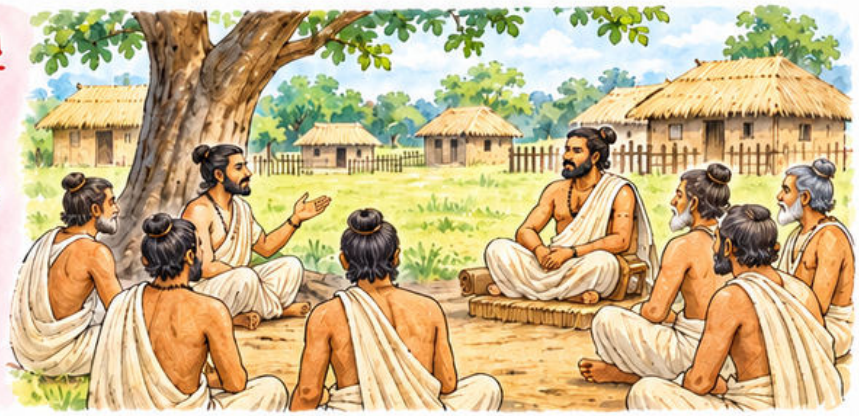
The Videgha Mathava story

In the Shatapatha Brahmana, Agni moves east, followed by Gotama Rahugana and Videgha Mathava, but does not burn across the Sadanira. The text calls that river the boundary of the Kosalas and Videhas. Therefore, the blanket claim that no Vedic text names Koshala is wrong.



Not one political form

Monarchies coexisted with emerging gana or sangha polities. The Kuru polity is described variously as an early state or a complex chiefdom.



Sources: Day 29 Source Index | Topic 281

Iron meets agriculture

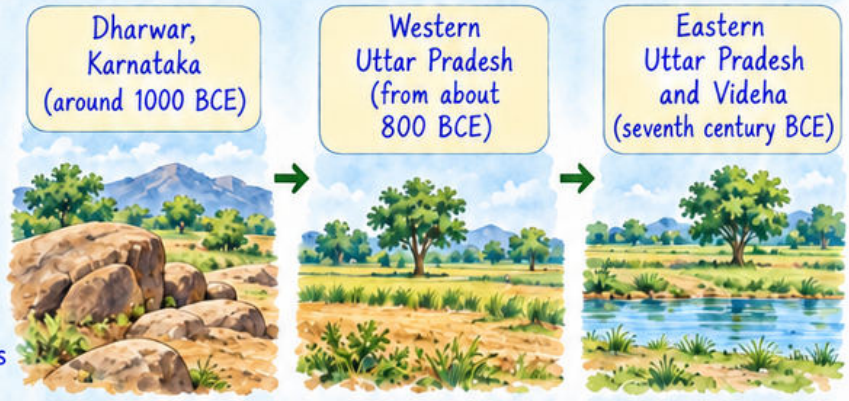
Recognising the metal

Later Vedic texts call iron shyama ayas or krishna ayas, meaning dark or black metal. Shyama ayas is first mentioned in the Atharvaveda. Rigvedic ayas is interpreted as copper or bronze, not automatically as iron.



A gradual spread

The standard chronology places iron in Dharwar, Karnataka, around 1000 BCE; common iron arrowheads and spearheads in western Uttar Pradesh from about 800 BCE; and early eastern Uttar Pradesh and Videha implements in the seventh century BCE. These dates describe different regions and objects, not one simultaneous transition.



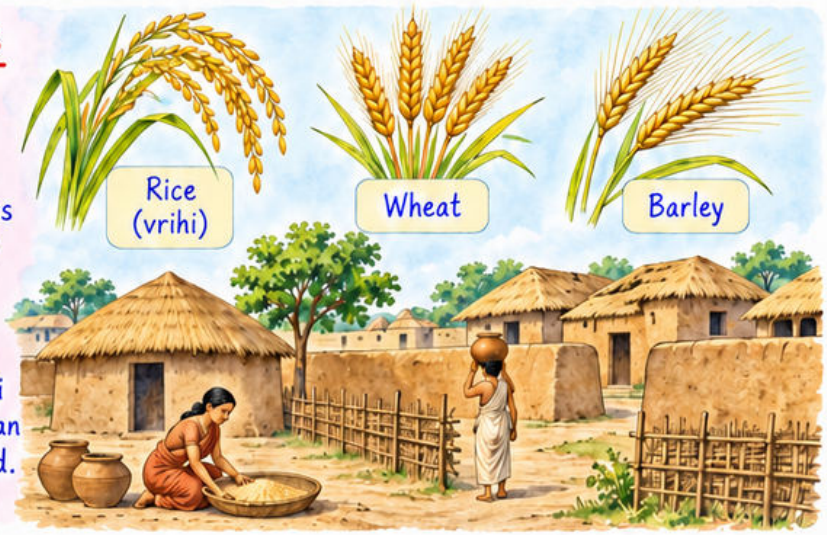
Tools and clearing

Iron helped forest clearance and cultivation. Few early iron agricultural tools have been excavated. Iron axes and ploughs aided forest clearance and expanding cultivation after about 1000 BCE. Their use was not uniformly abundant.



Crops and settlements

Agriculture became the chief livelihood. Rice, called vrihi, and wheat became chief crops, while barley continued. PGW communities also grew millet. Rice remains at Hastinapur date to the eighth century BCE. The Shatapatha Brahmana describes ploughing rituals. Hastinapur and Kaushambi developed into early or proto-urban settlements near the period's end.



Sources: Day 29 Source Index | Topic 281

From chief to territorial king

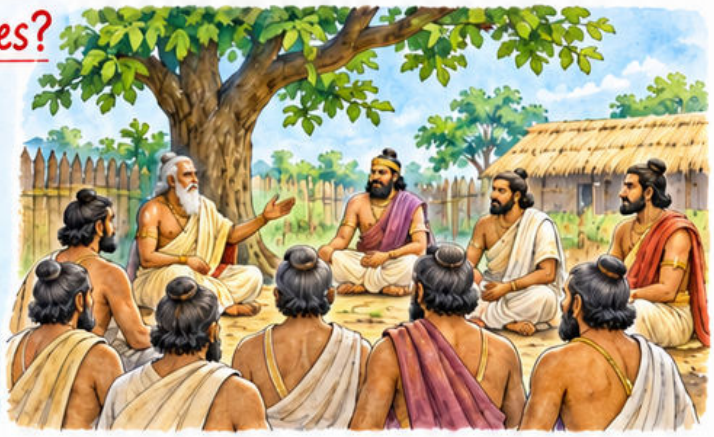
Kingship and territory

Royal power grew. Traces of election survived, but kingship became increasingly hereditary, generally passing to the eldest son. Primogeniture strengthened in ruling families. Rashtra indicated territory or polity, and the rajan became its protector and a custodian of social order.



What happened to the assemblies?

The vidatha disappeared. The sabha and samiti continued, but their influence declined and chiefs and wealthy nobles increasingly dominated them. Women were no longer permitted in the sabha in the standard account. Do not confuse declining influence with the disappearance of every assembly.



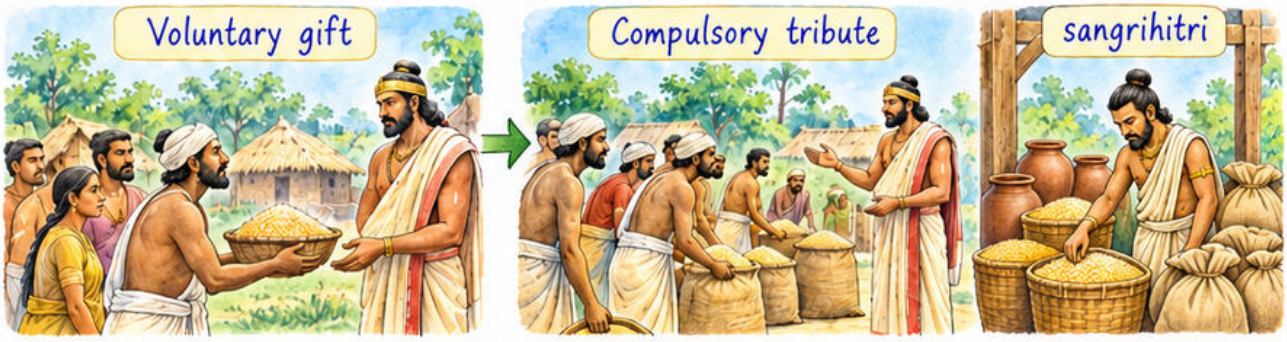
The king's helpers

The priest, military commander, chief queen and other high functionaries assisted the ruler. Growing royal authority did not yet amount to a fully developed modern state administration.



Bali and revenue

Bali had been a voluntary gift from the vis, the common people. It increasingly became a compulsory tribute. Tax and tribute collection became more common, with collected tribute probably kept by an officer called the sangrihitri. Yet there was no organised taxation system comparable to a later developed state.



Sources: Day 29 Source Index | Topic 281

Royal rituals and authority

Rajasuya

The royal consecration was understood to confer supreme authority and a divine charisma on the king. Ritual helped present growing political power as legitimate.



Vajapeya

A chariot race formed a central element. The royal chariot was made to win against the king's kinsmen. The ritual victory displayed the ruler's superiority.



Ashvamedha

A horse was released to wander, guarded by the king's men. If another ruler stopped it, conflict could follow. Uninterrupted movement symbolised the king's claim to control the territory through which it passed. It was an elaborate form of sacrifice, not an ordinary horse race.



The cost of sacrifice

Public shrauta rites required many priests and three fire-altars. The patron, or yajamana, paid the expenses. Sacrifices involved extensive animal killing and loss of cattle wealth. Priestly gifts included cows, gold, cloth and horses; priests sometimes claimed land as dakshiṇā.



Keep the three distinct

Rajasuya: consecration and royal authority.
Vajapeya: ritual chariot victory.
Ashvamedha: the wandering horse and territorial claim,
All reinforced kingship, but each had a different central act.

Sources: Day 29 Source Index | Topic 281

Society lineage and stages of life

The four varnas

Brahmanas, rajanyas or kshatriyas, vaishyas and shudras formed a more clearly bounded social order. Texts assigned status, duties and ritual privileges. Vaishyas appear as the principal tribute-payers. Shudras were expected to serve the other three and were denied upanayana, the sacred-thread initiation.



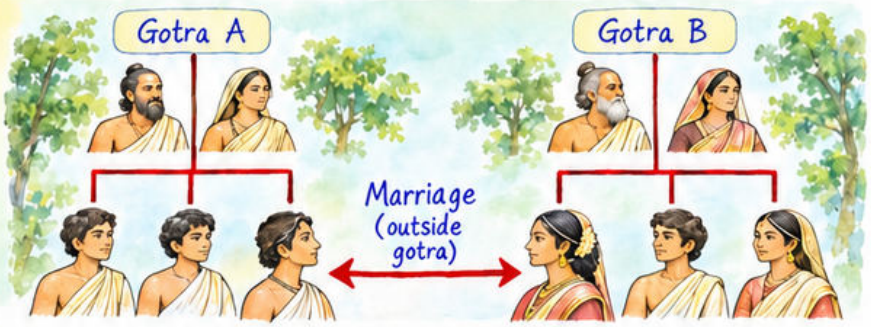
Status was not simple

Some artisans, including the rathakara or chariot-maker, enjoyed high standing. Kshatriyas resisted Brahmana ritual domination. A rigid four-label diagram alone cannot capture every social relationship.



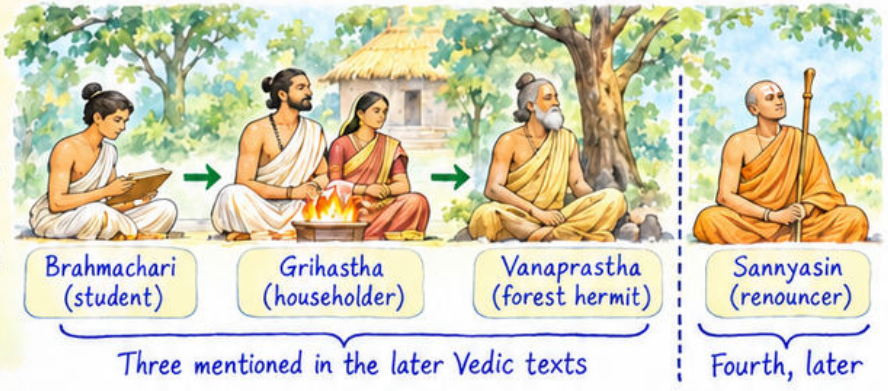
Gotra and family

Gotra originally meant a cattle pen and became a lineage marker. Gotra exogamy meant marriage outside one's own gotra, not within it. The father's authority increased; he could even disinherit his son.



The ashramas

The familiar four stages are brahmachari, student; grihastha, householder; vanaprastha, forest hermit; and sannyasin, renouncer. The four-stage system was not fully established in Vedic times. Only the first three are mentioned in the later Vedic texts in the standard account.



Women's position

Women's position generally became more subordinate, although some queens participated in coronation rituals. Experiences varied by social stratum; evidence for influential women does not erase the broader hierarchy.



Sources: Day 29 Source Index | Topic 281

Religion from ritual to reflection

A changing religious emphasis

Indra and Agni lost some of their former prominence. Prajapati, associated with creation, rose to the supreme position in the standard later Vedic account. Rudra became important as a god associated with animals. Vishnu developed as protector and preserver. Pushan, earlier a protector of cattle, came to be associated with the shudras.



Ritual becomes elaborate

Complex public rites, multiple priests and expensive gifts increased the burden on patrons and cattle wealth. The concern was not simply belief in new gods; it was also the expanding scale and authority of ritual.



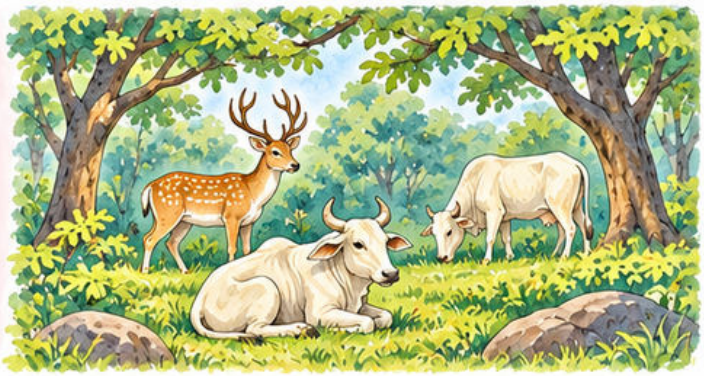
The Upanishadic response

Early Upanishads are commonly dated about 700-500 BCE; one standard account places their compilation around 600 BCE, especially in Panchala and Videha. They questioned excessive ritual and emphasised knowledge, right understanding and philosophical inquiry. They form the concluding portions of the Vedas.



Read the period carefully

Do not transfer every later description back into the Rigveda. The Rigveda does not depict Rudra as Pashupati. A later Vedic description of Rudra as a god of animals is not proof of that earlier identification.



Sources: Day 29 Source Index | Topic 281

Early and later Vedic phases compared

Region and livelihood

Early phase, about **1500–1000 BCE:** Sapta Sindhu; cattle-centred life.

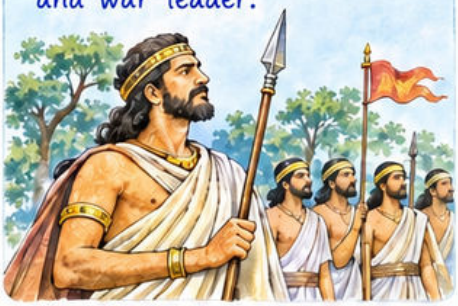


Later phase, about **1000–500 BCE:** Kuru-Panchala in the Ganga-Yamuna doab, then Koshala and Videha; agriculture increasingly central. Rice and wheat grew in importance, but barley did not disappear.

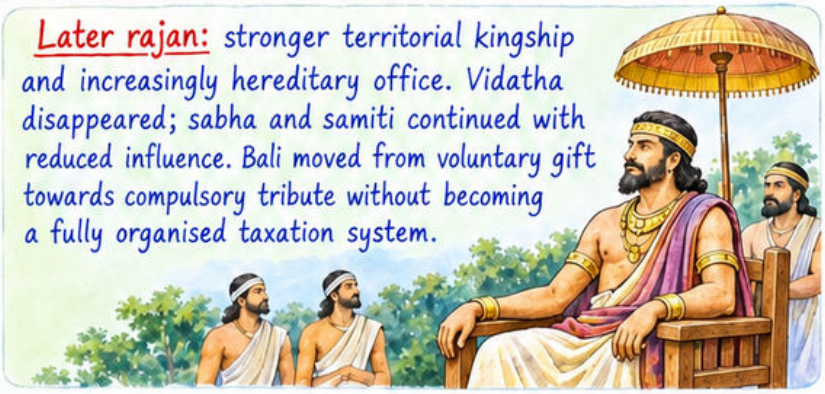


Power and institutions

Early rajan: chiefly a chief and war leader.



Later rajan: stronger territorial kingship and increasingly hereditary office. Vidatha disappeared; sabha and samiti continued with reduced influence. Bali moved from voluntary gift towards compulsory tribute without becoming a fully organised taxation system.



Metal and social order

Early ayas: copper or bronze.



Later shyama or krishna ayas: iron, spreading gradually across regions. The later texts defined the four varnas more firmly. Gotra exogamy required marriage outside the lineage.

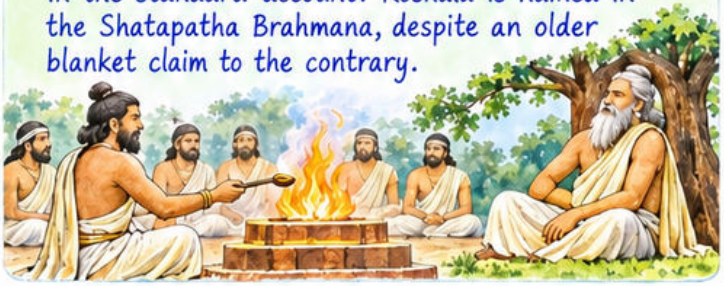


Religion and the final checks

Early prominence: Indra and Agni.



Later emphasis: Prajapati, rising Rudra and Vishnu, elaborate sacrifice and emerging Upanishadic reflection. Only the first three ashramas are mentioned in the later Vedic texts in the standard account. Koshala is named in the Shatapatha Brahmana, despite an older blanket claim to the contrary.



Sources: Day 29 Source Index | Topic 281

Three protections for every person

Article 20

Protection in respect of conviction for offences covers retrospective criminal punishment, double jeopardy and compelled self-incrimination. Its clauses use precise conditions; protection from every second proceeding is not what the text says.



Article 21

Protection of life and personal liberty begins: "No person shall be deprived of his life or personal liberty except according to procedure established by law." The fairness of that procedure became central to later constitutional interpretation.



Article 22

Protection against arrest and detention in certain cases distinguishes ordinary arrest from preventive detention. Each route has a different set of safeguards.



Person, not citizen

Articles 20, 21 and 22 protect persons and are not limited to Indian citizens. Foreigners are covered, subject to specific exceptions such as Article 22(3). Article 19 instead opens with "All citizens". Articles 12 and 13 apply to these rights as to the rest of Part III. The operative word is person, not citizen.

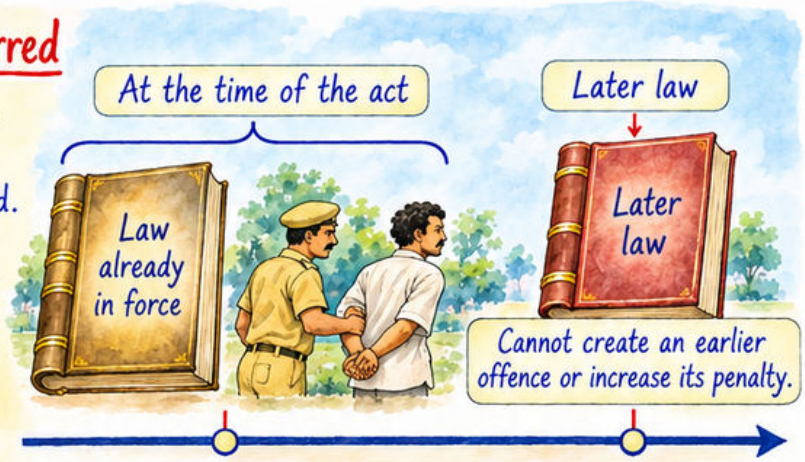


Sources: Day 29 Source Index | Topic 282

Article 20 stops retrospective punishment

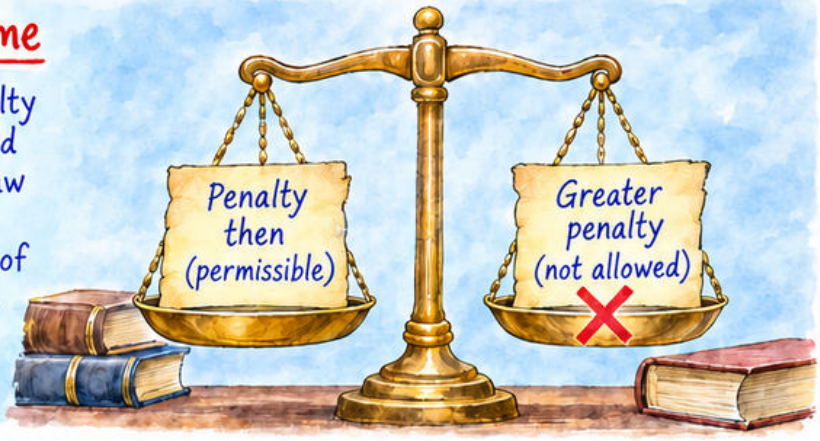
The law when the act occurred

Article 20(1) permits conviction only for violation of a law in force when the act was committed. A later criminal law cannot retrospectively turn that earlier act into an offence for the purpose of conviction.



The penalty at that time

A person cannot receive a penalty greater than the one that could have been imposed under the law in force when the offence was committed. Both the existence of the offence and the permissible penalty are tied to the time of the act.



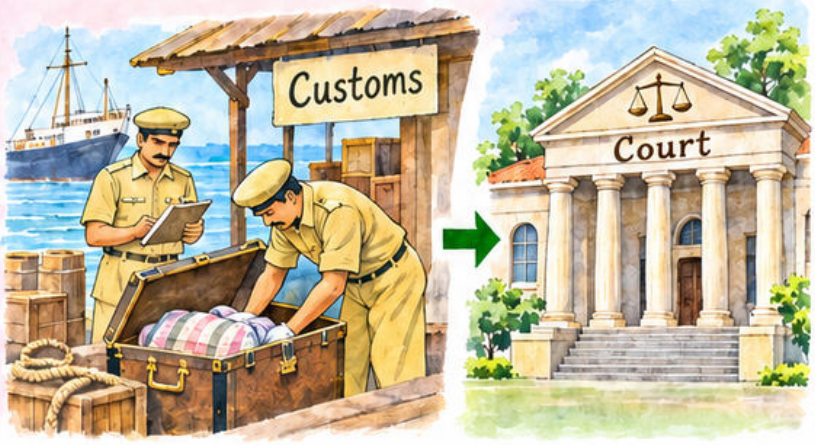
Double jeopardy

Article 20(2) says: "No person shall be prosecuted and punished for the same offence more than once." Both conditions, prosecution and punishment, matter. The same act and the same offence should not be treated as interchangeable wording.



Maqbool Hussain, 1953

Sea Customs authorities were not a court or judicial tribunal. Their confiscation therefore did not bar a later court prosecution. An earlier proceeding before a non-judicial authority does not automatically satisfy Article 20(2). Article 20(1), too, speaks specifically of conviction for an offence and a penalty.



Sources: Day 29 Source Index | Topic 282

Silence and freedom from compulsion

The constitutional words

Article 20(3) says: "No person accused of any offence shall be compelled to be a witness against himself." The protection concerns an accused person and compulsion; it does not depend on the trial already having begun.



Nandini Satpathy, 7 April 1978

Justice V.R. Krishna Iyer spoke for a three-judge Bench. The Court held that Article 20(3) reaches police investigation. Compulsion includes psychic and environmental pressure, not merely physical force.



Questions and legal help

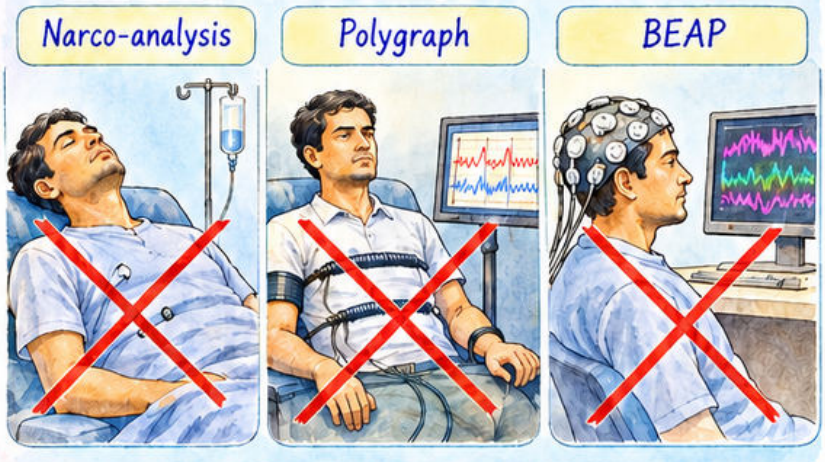
Section 161(2) of the CrPC allowed refusal to answer police questions that would incriminate the person. The Court called this a "parliamentary gloss" on the constitutional clause. If the accused wanted a lawyer present during questioning, that facility was not to be denied.



Selvi, 5 May 2010

Chief Justice K.G. Balakrishnan's judgment held compulsory narco-analysis, polygraph and Brain Electrical Activation Profile tests contrary to Article 20(3) and an unwarranted intrusion under Article 21. Even with consent, test results cannot by themselves be admitted as evidence. NHRC guidelines must be strictly followed. Consent and admissibility are different questions.

Compulsory tests prohibited



Sources: Day 29 Source Index | Topic 282

Gopalan reads liberty narrowly

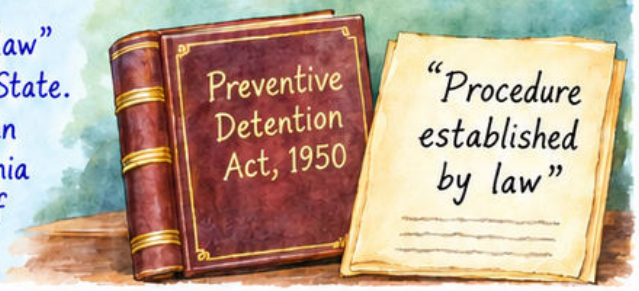
The case and the Bench

A.K. Gopalan v. State of Madras was decided on 19 May 1950 by six judges. Gopalan was detained under the Preventive Detention Act, 1950.



The majority approach

The majority read "procedure established by law" as procedure established by law made by the State. Justice Patanjali Sastri said law did not mean jus naturale, or natural law. Chief Justice Kania warned of difficulties in reading it as rules of natural justice.



Separate rights

The majority treated Articles 19 and 21 as dealing with different subjects. This doctrine of exclusivity later gave way to an interconnected reading of Fundamental Rights.



Different subjects

Doctrine of exclusivity

A safeguard still enforced

Section 14 of the Preventive Detention Act barred a detenu from disclosing detention grounds to a court. The Court held it void because it conflicted with Article 22(5). The judgment did not uphold every provision of the Act.



Fazl Ali's dissent

Justice Fazl Ali would have read notice, an opportunity to be heard, an impartial tribunal and an orderly course of procedure into the constitutional phrase. His emphasis anticipated the later focus on procedural fairness.

Majority

"Procedure established by law" as procedure established by law made by the State.

Articles 19 and 21 as dealing with different subjects.

Reading it as rules of natural justice would cause difficulties.

Dissent (Fazl Ali)

Read into the phrase: notice, an opportunity to be heard, an impartial tribunal and an orderly course of procedure.

Emphasis anticipated the later focus on procedural fairness.

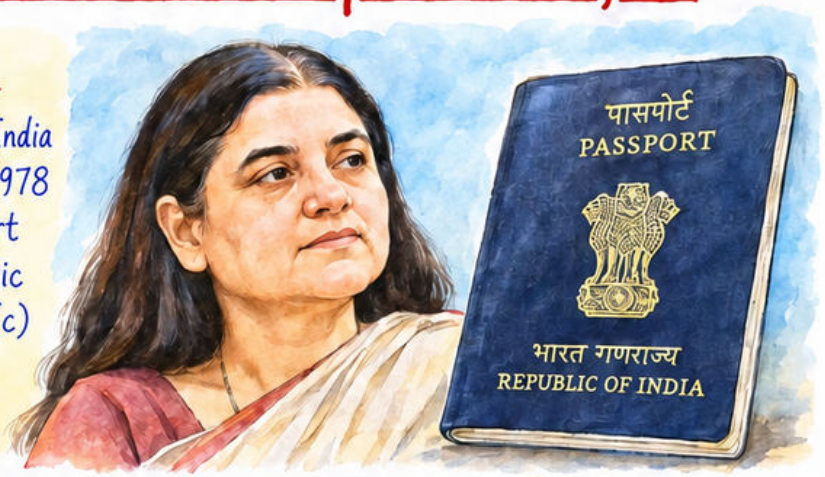


Sources: Day 29 Source Index | Topic 282

Maneka Gandhi makes procedure fair

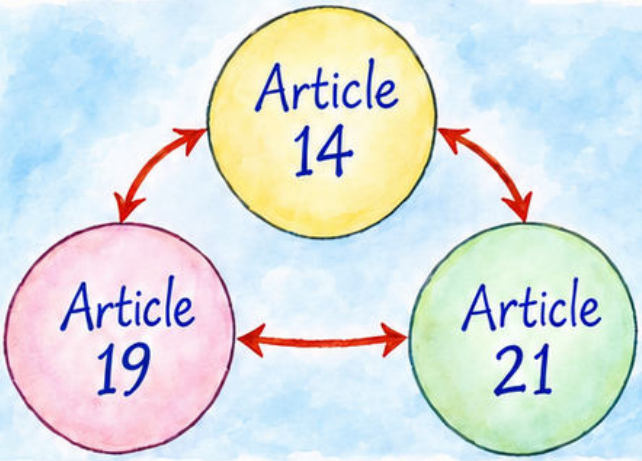
The passport dispute

Maneka Gandhi v. Union of India was decided on 25 January 1978 by seven judges. Her passport had been impounded "in public interest" under section 10(3)(c) of the Passports Act, 1967.



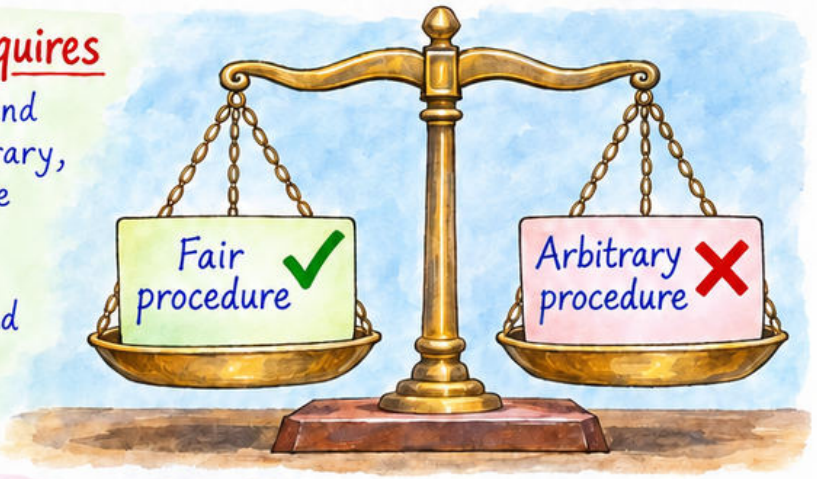
Rights work together

Justice Bhagwati held that Articles 19(1) and 21 are not mutually exclusive. The judgment noted that R.C. Cooper, the Bank Nationalisation case, had already overruled Gopalan's doctrine of exclusivity.



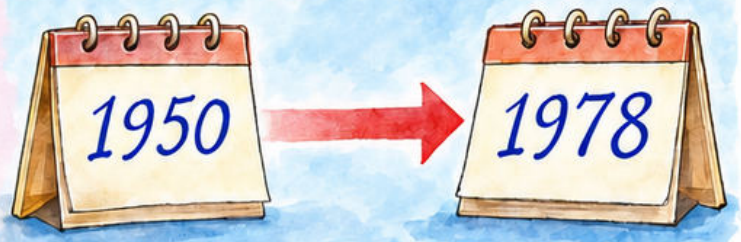
What fair procedure requires

Procedure must be "right and just and fair and not arbitrary, fanciful or oppressive". The existence of a law alone is therefore insufficient. Its procedure must be fair, and the law must also meet Articles 14 and 19.



The shift and its limits

Justice Kailasam dissented. The words "due process" are not in Article 21, but judicial review now examines procedural fairness, much as Justice Fazl Ali had urged in 1950. Remember both developments: Cooper rejected isolated compartments, and Maneka gave the fairness requirement its defining formulation.



Sources: Day 29 Source Index | Topic 282

Privacy and the reach of liberty

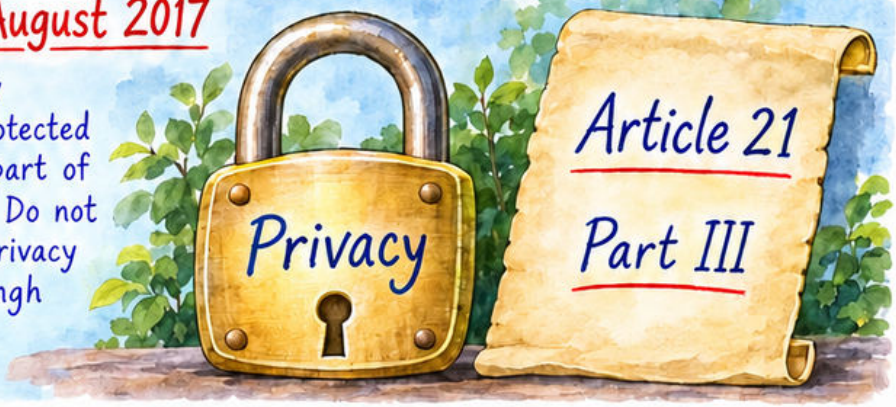
Kharak Singh, 18 December 1962

The Court struck down night-time police visits to a person's home under Regulation 236(b) of the U.P. Police Regulations as contrary to Article 21. Yet the majority said privacy was not a guaranteed constitutional right. Justices Subba Rao and Shah dissented.



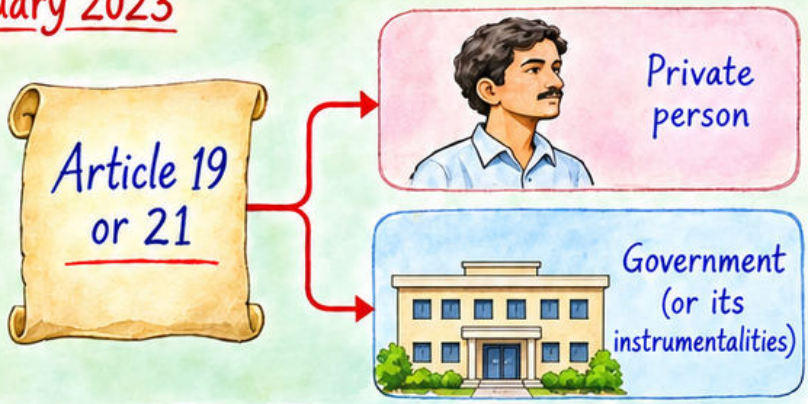
Puttaswamy, 24 August 2017

Nine judges unanimously recognised privacy as protected under Article 21 and as part of the freedoms in Part III. Do not attribute this complete privacy holding to the Kharak Singh majority.



Kaushal Kishor, 3 January 2023

The Court held that a right under Article 19 or 21 can be enforced even against persons other than the State or its instrumentalities. The reach of these rights is not expressed solely as protection against government.



Education is Article 21A

The 86th Amendment Act, 2002 inserted Article 21A, effective from 1 April 2010. It provides free and compulsory education for all children aged six to fourteen, in the manner the State determines by law. This textual insertion came by constitutional amendment, not by a judgment.



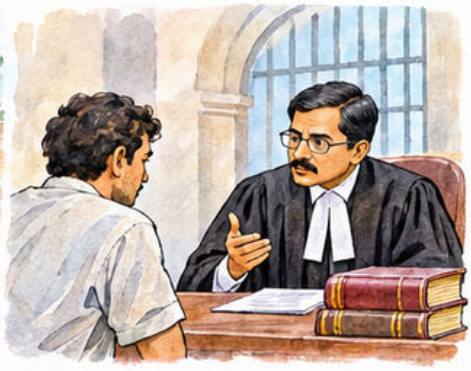
Sources: Day 29 Source Index | Topic 282

Ordinary arrest has immediate safeguards

Know the grounds

Article 22(1) requires an arrested person to be informed of the grounds of arrest "as soon as may be". The person must not be denied the right to consult and be defended by a legal practitioner of their choice.





Reach a magistrate

Article 22(2) requires production before the nearest magistrate within twenty-four hours of arrest. Time necessary for the journey from the place of arrest to the magistrate's court is excluded.





Time necessary for the journey from the place of arrest to the magistrate's court is excluded.

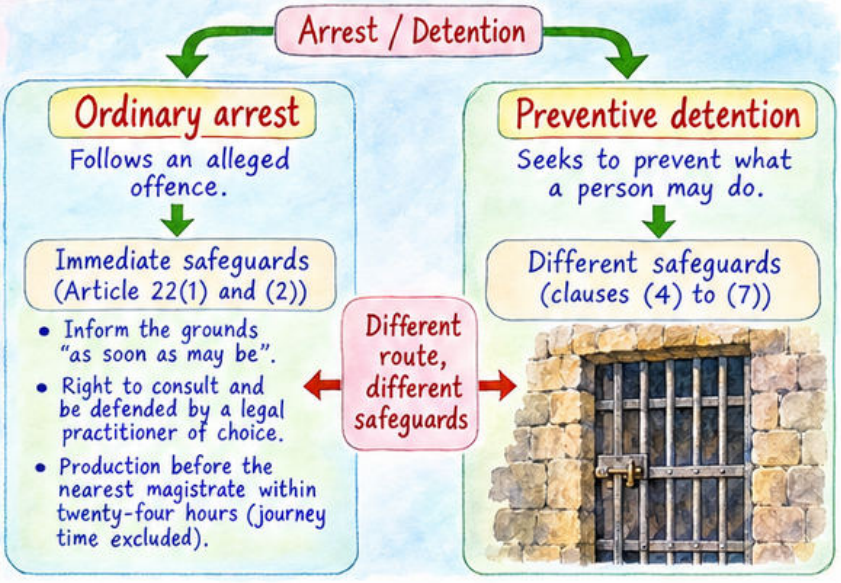
No unauthorised extension

Custody beyond that period requires a magistrate's authority. The twenty-four-hour rule is written into the Constitution, not merely into a criminal procedure statute.



Two exceptions

Article 22(3) excludes clauses (1) and (2) for a person who is, for the time being, an enemy alien, and for a person arrested or detained under a preventive-detention law. Ordinary arrest follows an alleged offence. Preventive detention seeks to prevent what a person may do; clauses (4) to (7) govern that separate route. Do not transfer the ordinary-arrest safeguards unchanged to preventive detention.



Sources: Day 29 Source Index | Topic 282

Preventive detention and the three months

The operative threshold

Under Article 22(4), a preventive-detention law cannot authorise detention beyond three months unless a qualifying Advisory Board reports sufficient cause before those months expire, or detention is under a Parliamentary law within clause (7).



The Advisory Board

Its members must be, have been, or be qualified for appointment as High Court judges. Article 22(5) requires communication of grounds as soon as may be and the earliest opportunity to make a representation. Clause (6) permits withholding facts whose disclosure the authority considers contrary to public interest.



Parliament's powers

Clause (7) allows Parliament to prescribe circumstances for detention beyond three months without an Advisory Board opinion, maximum detention periods, and the Board's procedure.



- Circumstances for detention beyond three months (without an Advisory Board opinion)
- Maximum detention periods
- Board's procedure

The uncommenced change

Section 3 of the Forty-fourth Amendment Act, 1978 would replace three months with two months and require a Board constituted on the appropriate High Court Chief Justice's recommendation. That change and omission of clause (7)(a) remain unnotified. The official English text dated 1 May 2024, still the latest listed on 1 November 2026, retains three months. An enacted amendment provision is not necessarily in force.

Forty-fourth Amendment Act, 1978

Three months → Two months

Board constituted on the appropriate High Court Chief Justice's recommendation.

Unnotified

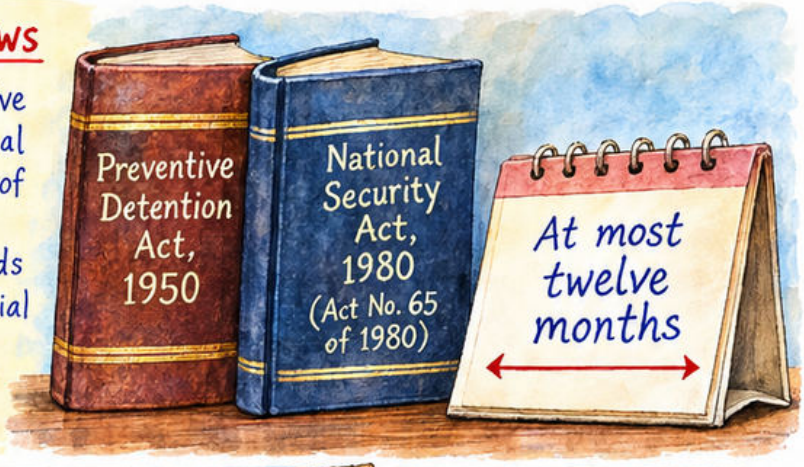
- That change and omission of clause (7)(a) remain unnotified.
- The official English text dated 1 May 2024, still the latest listed on 1 November 2026, retains three months.
- An enacted amendment provision is not necessarily in force.

Sources: Day 29 Source Index | Topic 282

Detention laws and arrest requirements

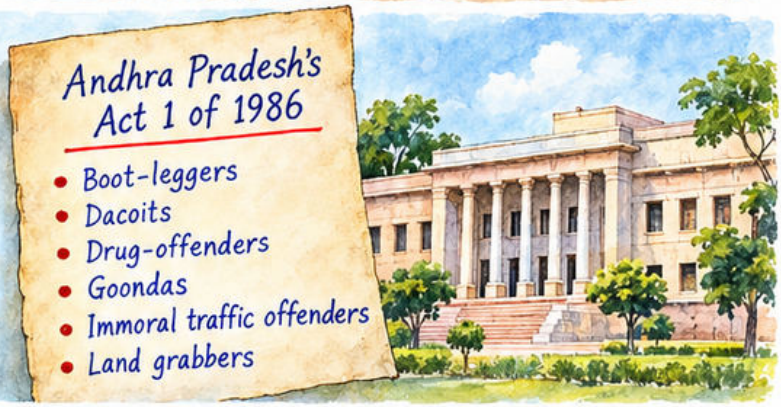
Examples of detention laws

Gopalan concerned the Preventive Detention Act, 1950. The National Security Act, 1980, Act No. 65 of 1980, permits Central or State Government detention on grounds including preventing action prejudicial to India's defence, for at most twelve months from detention.



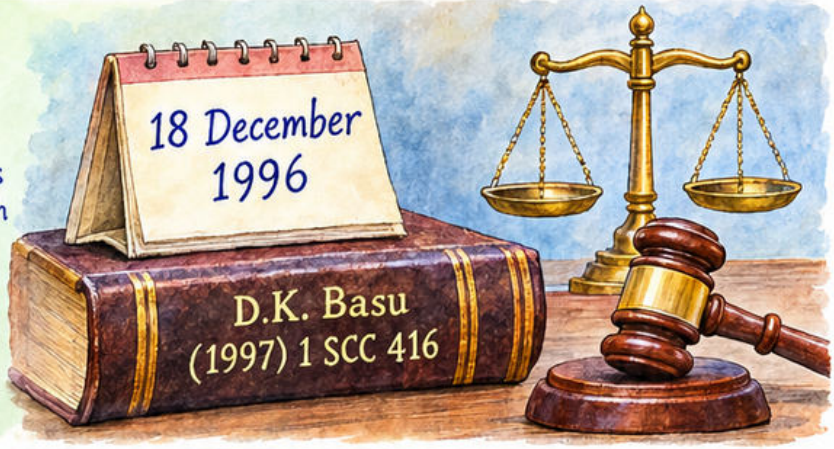
State legislation

Andhra Pradesh's Act 1 of 1986 addresses boot-leggers, dacoits, drug-offenders, goondas, immoral traffic offenders and land grabbers. Preventive-detention legislation is not confined to a single national statute.



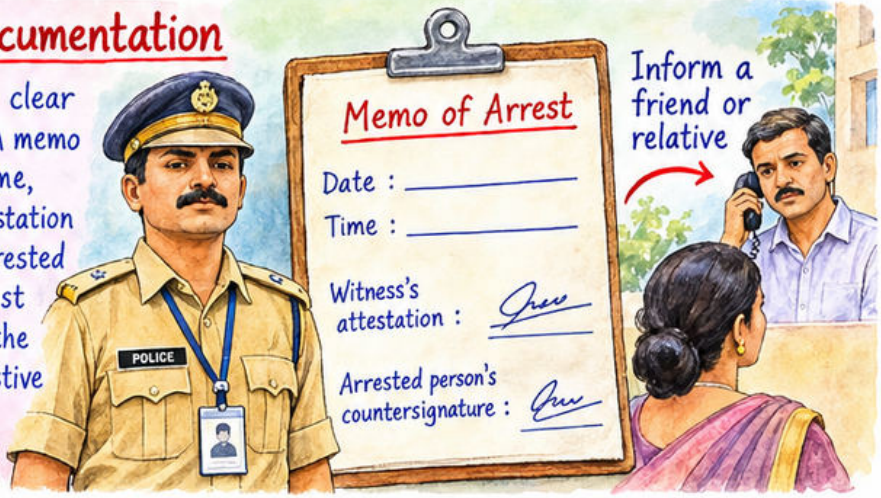
D.K. Basu's date

The judgment was delivered on 18 December 1996 by Justices Kuldip Singh and A.S. Anand. Its report is (1997) 1 SCC 416, which explains why books often give 1997. It prescribed eleven requirements for arrests and detentions until legal provisions were made.



Identification and documentation

Arresting officers must carry clear identification and name tags. A memo of arrest records date and time, has at least one witness's attestation and is countersigned by the arrested person. A friend or relative must be informed. These are among the eleven requirements, not an exhaustive list of them.



Sources: Day 29 Source Index | Topic 282

Custody needs checks and accountability

Medical and legal safeguards

D.K. Basu requires medical examination every 48 hours during detention. The arrested person may meet a lawyer during interrogation, though not throughout the interrogation. Keep this specific formulation distinct from an unrestricted promise of continuous lawyer presence.



Information and consequences

A police control room at district and State headquarters must be informed within 12 hours. Non-compliant officials face departmental action and punishment for contempt of court. The requirements make custody visible and subject to oversight.



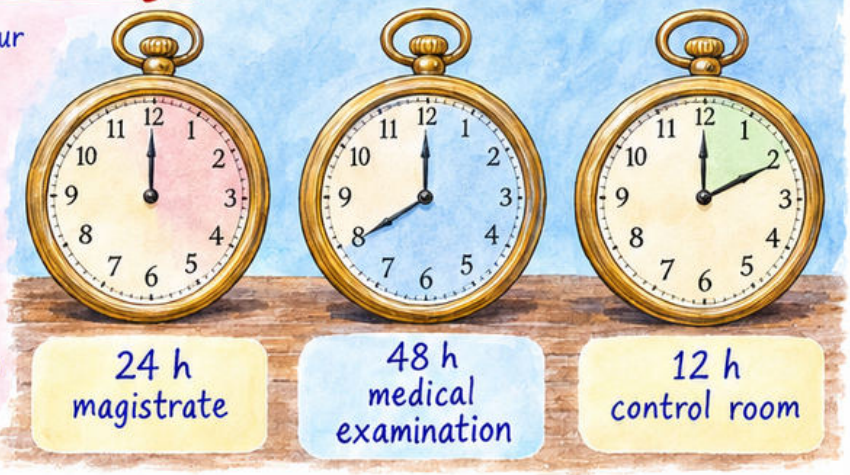
The procedure law changed

The Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023 came into force on 1 July 2024 and replaced the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973. Earlier judgments such as Nandini Satpathy naturally refer to the CrPC.



The Constitution did not change

Article 22(2)'s twenty-four-hour magistrate rule survives the replacement of the procedural statute. Read each time limit with its own purpose: 24 hours for production, excluding necessary travel; 48 hours for repeated medical examination under D.K. Basu; and 12 hours for the control-room information requirement.

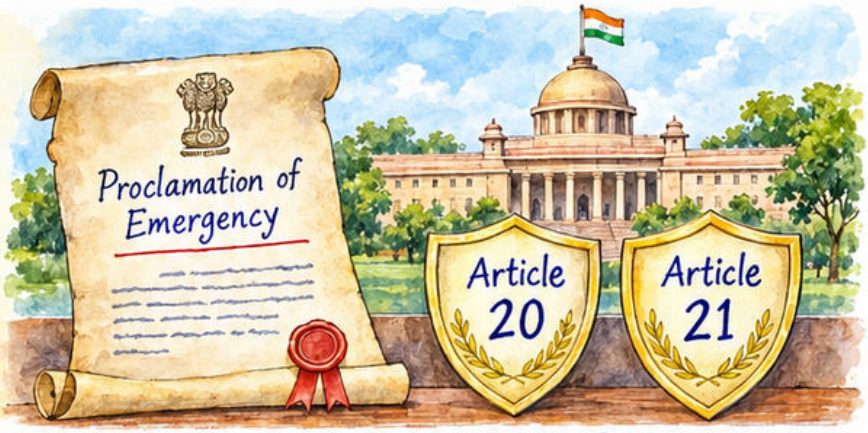


Sources: Day 29 Source Index | Topic 282

Emergency cannot switch off Articles 20 and 21

Article 359(1)

While a Proclamation of Emergency operates, the President may suspend the right to move any court to enforce the Part III rights specified in an order. The Constitution expressly excepts Articles 20 and 21.



Article 359(1A)

While such an order operates, the rights it names do not restrict State law-making or executive action, again with the express exception of Articles 20 and 21. Do not mistake Article 22 for one of these two protected exceptions.

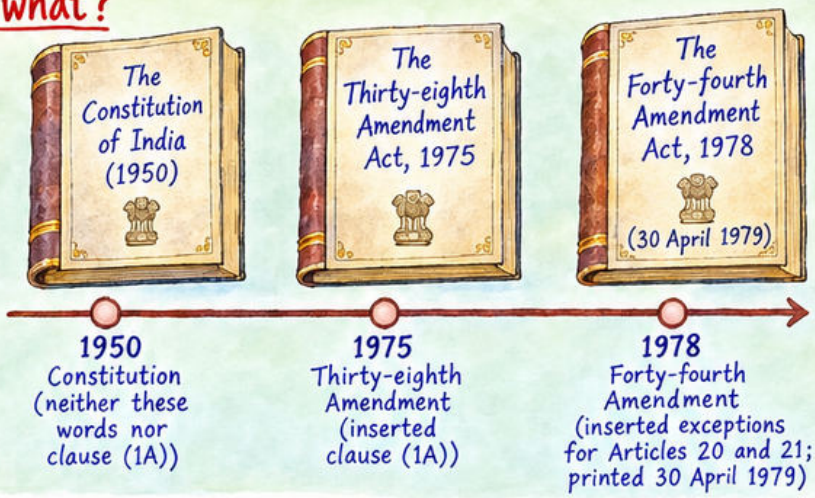


Which amendment did what?

Section 40 of the Forty-fourth Amendment Act, 1978 inserted the exceptions for Articles 20 and 21. The Act is printed with the date 30 April 1979.

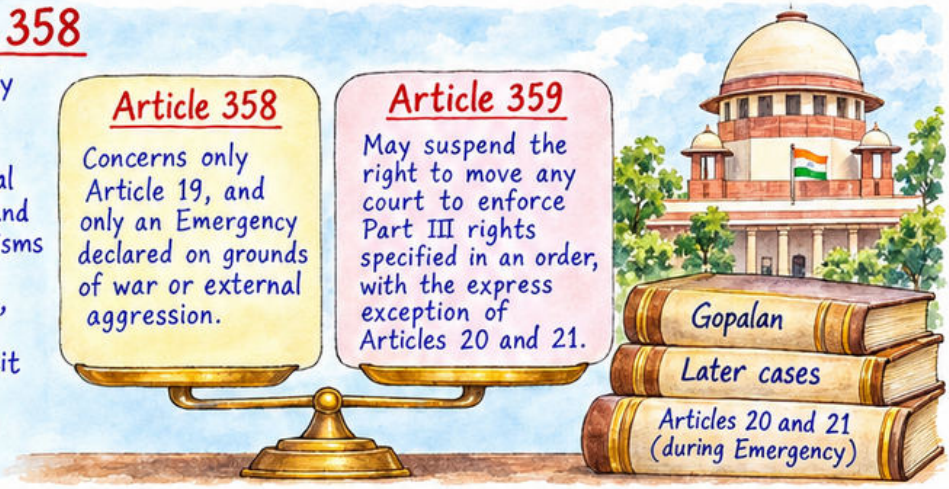
The original 1950 Constitution contained neither these words nor clause (1A).

The Thirty-eighth Amendment Act, 1975 had inserted clause (1A) earlier.



Contrast Article 358

Article 358 concerns only Article 19, and only an Emergency declared on grounds of war or external aggression. Articles 358 and 359 have different mechanisms and scope. Remember the sequence: narrow Gopalan, expanding liberty through later cases, then an explicit constitutional shield for Articles 20 and 21 during Emergency.



Sources: Day 29 Source Index | Topic 282

Equality is the starting point

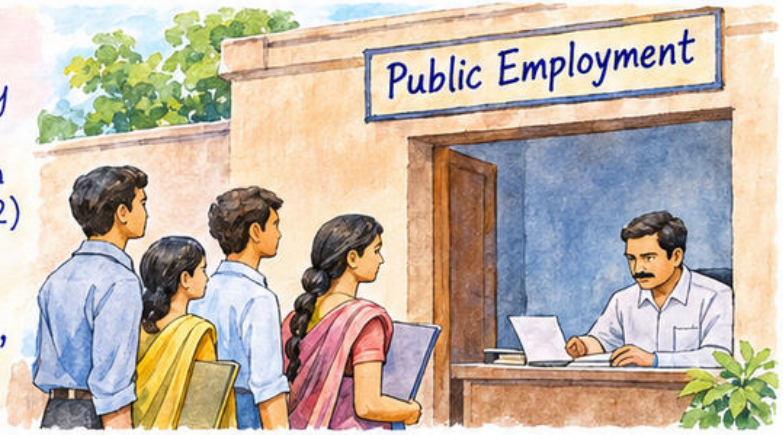
Equal protection

Article 14 promises equality before the law and equal protection of the laws to any person. Article 15(1) prohibits State discrimination against a citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them.



Public employment

Article 16(1) guarantees equality of opportunity for all citizens in employment or appointment to an office under the State. Article 16(2) bars ineligibility or discrimination on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, descent, place of birth, residence or any of them.



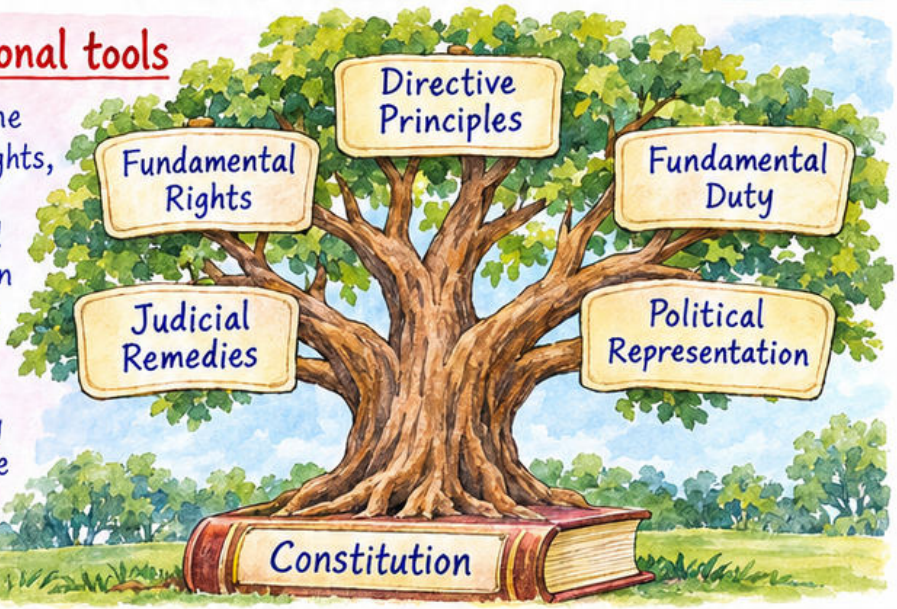
Special provisions

Article 15(3) says nothing in Article 15 prevents the State from making special provisions for women and children. It has been present since the Constitution commenced on 26 January 1950. It enables action; it does not command a particular measure.



Different constitutional tools

Women's safeguards combine enforceable Fundamental Rights, Directive Principles guiding State policy, a Fundamental Duty, political representation and judicial remedies. These categories should not be confused. A policy goal in Part IV is not automatically an independently enforceable Fundamental Right.



Sources: Day 29 Source Index | Topic 283

Work dignity and protection from exploitation

Trafficking and forced labour

Article 23(1) prohibits traffic in human beings, begar and similar forced labour. Contravention is an offence punishable by law. It binds private employers and traffickers too; in Peeple's Union for Democratic Rights, 1982, the Court described this protection as enforceable against the whole world.



Livelihood and pay

Article 39(a) directs the State towards adequate means of livelihood for men and women equally. Article 39(d) calls for equal pay for equal work for both men and women. These are Directive Principles.



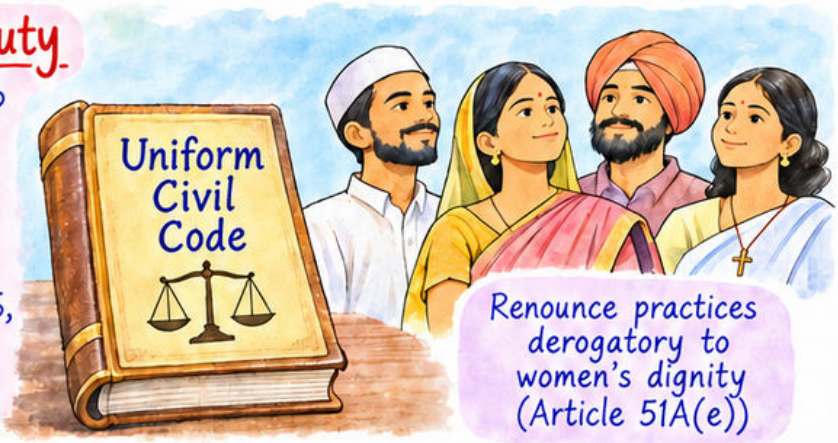
Health and maternity

Article 39(e) protects workers' health and strength and children's tender age from abuse, and seeks to prevent economic necessity forcing unsuitable work on citizens. Article 42 directs just and humane working conditions and maternity relief.



Civil code and civic duty

Article 44 directs the State to endeavour to secure a uniform civil code throughout India; it is not court-enforceable by itself. Article 51A(e), added with the Fundamental Duties by the 42nd Amendment in 1976, requires citizens to renounce practices derogatory to women's dignity.



Articles 39(a), 39(d), 39(e), 42, 44 → Directive Principle

Article 51A(e) → Fundamental Duty

Sources: Day 29 Source Index | Topic 283

Special treatment must still respect dignity

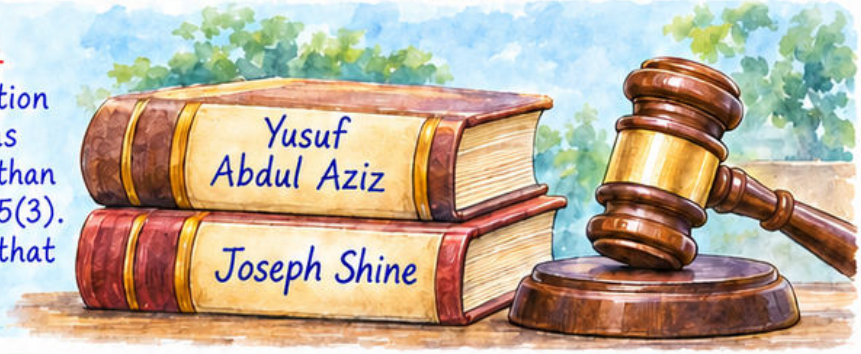
An enabling clause

Article 15(3) permits special provision for women and children despite Article 15's discrimination prohibition. Its wording, "Nothing in this article shall prevent", saves permissible affirmative measures; it does not make every rule described as protection constitutional.



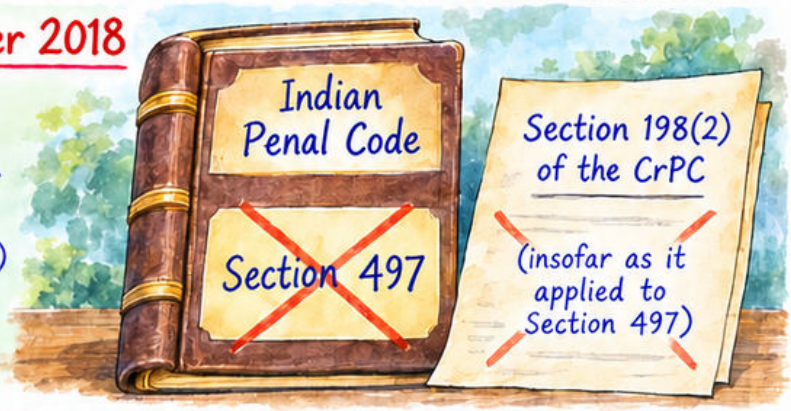
The earlier approach

In Yusuf Abdul Aziz, protection of women was understood as affirmative provision rather than discrimination under Article 15(3). Joseph Shine later recorded that earlier interpretation.



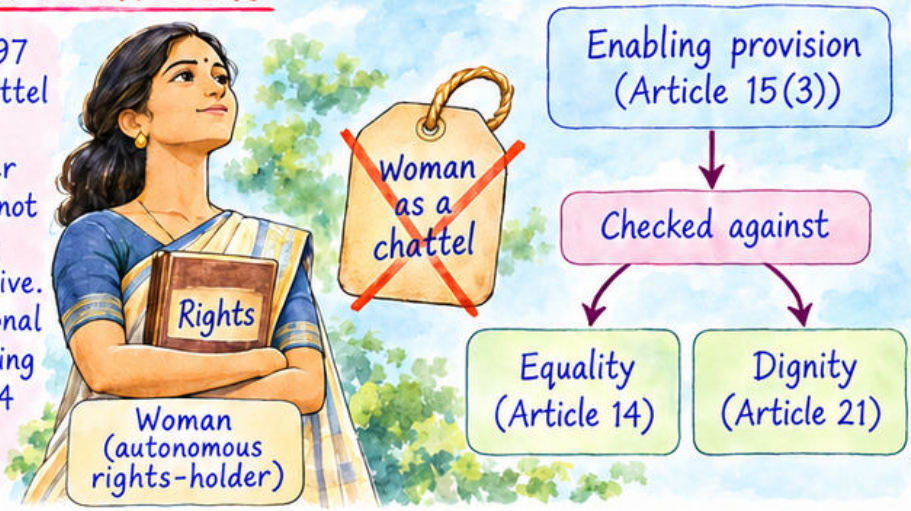
Joseph Shine, 27 September 2018

A five-judge Bench unanimously struck down Section 497 of the Indian Penal Code on adultery for violating Articles 14, 15 and 21. It also struck down Section 198(2) of the CrPC insofar as it applied to Section 497.



Why the label was insufficient

The Court said Section 497 treated a woman as a chattel and was absolutely and manifestly arbitrary under Article 14. A provision cannot escape scrutiny merely by being presented as protective. Equality, dignity and personal liberty still matter, including the tests under Articles 14 and 21.



Sources: Day 29 Source Index | Topic 283

Local bodies reserve at least one third

Panchayats: Article 243D

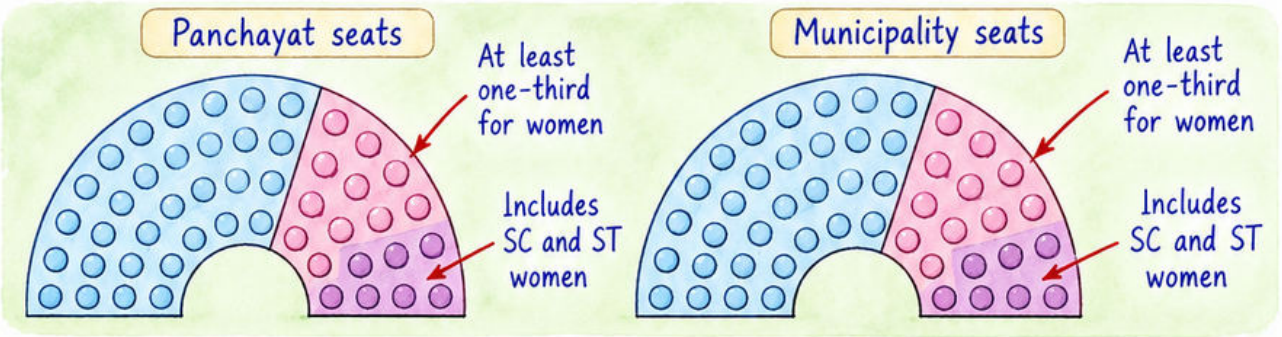
Clause (3) reserves not less than one-third of seats filled by direct election in every Panchayat for women. This total includes the seats reserved for Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe women.



Municipalities: Article 243T

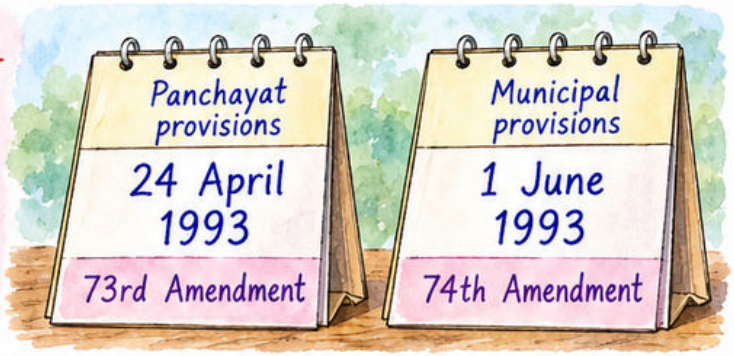
Clause (3) applies the same minimum to every Municipality's directly elected seats. The women's share is a floor, not a constitutional ceiling. In both kinds of body, the reserved seats may be allotted by rotation to different constituencies.





When these provisions began

The Panchayat provisions came into force on 24 April 1993 under the 73rd Amendment. The municipal provisions came into force on 1 June 1993 under the 74th Amendment. The local-body reservations took effect with the respective Parts.



Which reservation expires?

Clause (5) links SC and ST reservation to the period specified in Article 334. The general one-third reservation for women and offices reserved for women are outside that limit. Do not give every local-body women's reservation a fixed constitutional end date.



Sources: Day 29 Source Index | Topic 283

Chairperson rules are not identical

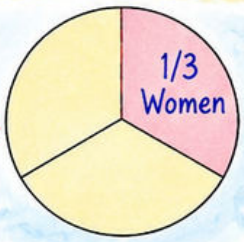
Panchayat chairpersons

Article 243D(4) reserves chairperson offices for SCs, STs and women in the manner State legislation provides. A proviso requires at least one-third of all chairperson offices at each Panchayat level to be reserved for women.



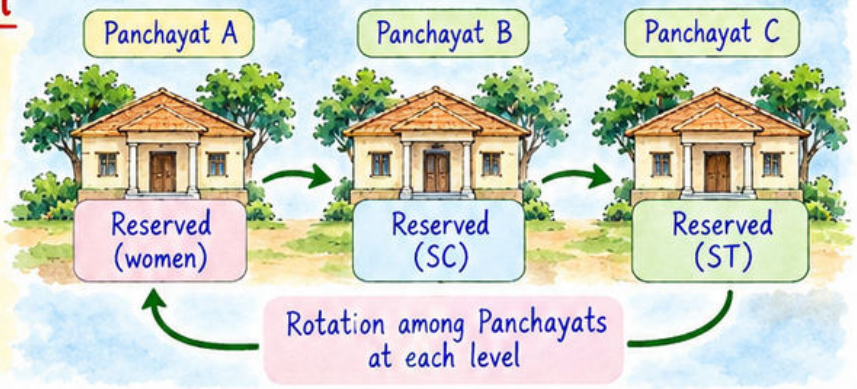


At least one-third of chairperson offices reserved for women →



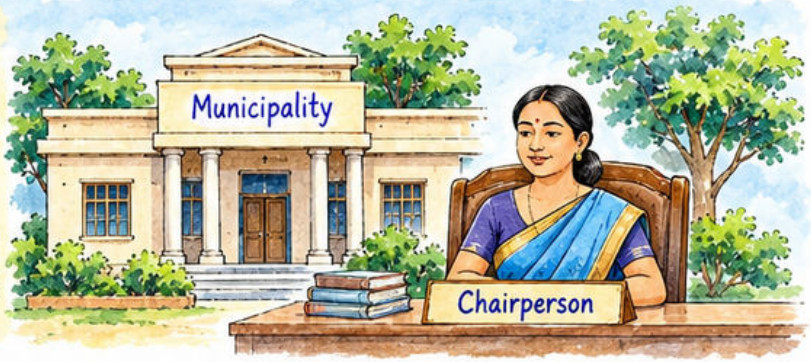
Rotation at each level

A further proviso rotates those reserved offices among Panchayats at each level. The rule concerns offices of chairpersons, separately from the proportion of directly elected seats.



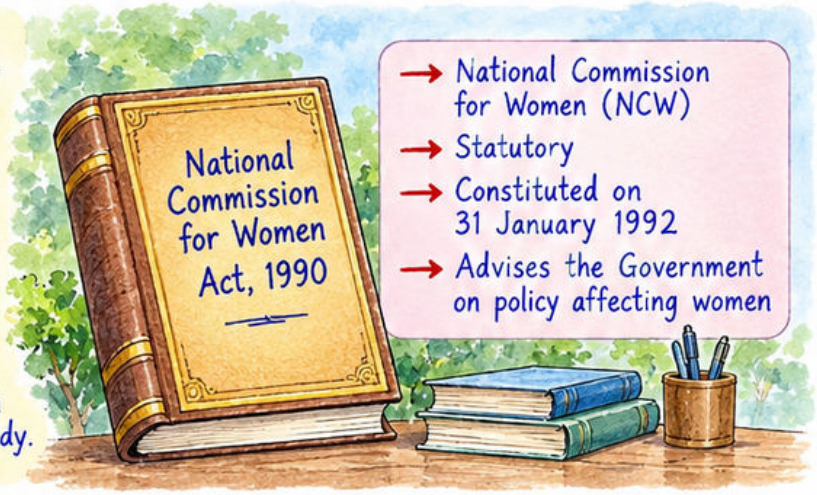
Municipal chairpersons

Article 243T(4) also leaves reservation for SCs, STs and women to State law. It has no corresponding proviso specifying a numerical women's share. Do not copy the Panchayat one-third chairperson requirement into the municipal clause.



Supporting institutions

The National Commission for Women is statutory, under the National Commission for Women Act, 1990. Constituted on 31 January 1992, it advises the Government on policy affecting women. State commissions also exist. The National Human Rights Commission is statutory too; neither institution should be labelled a constitutional body.

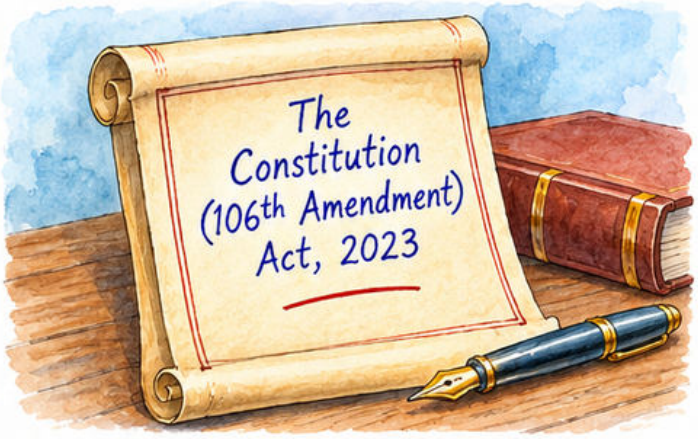


Sources: Day 29 Source Index | Topic 283

What the 106th Amendment reserves

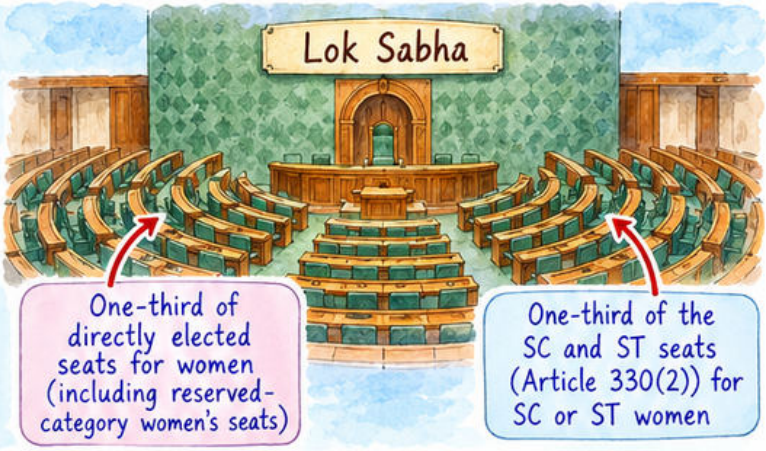
Act and commencement

The Constitution (106th Amendment) Act, 2023 received presidential assent on 28 September 2023. The Government called the Bill the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam. Section 1(2) required a commencement notification; the notification issued on 16 April 2026 appointed that date.



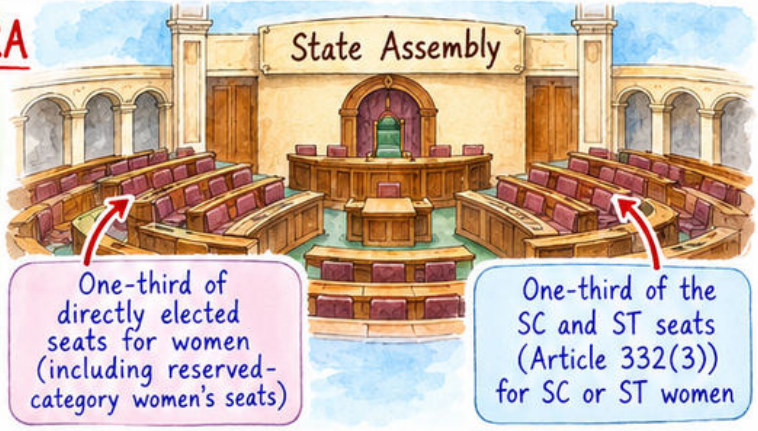
Lok Sabha: Article 330A

Women receive, as nearly as may be, one-third of directly elected seats, including the reserved-category women's seats. As nearly as may be, one-third of the SC and ST seats under Article 330(2) are reserved for SC or ST women.



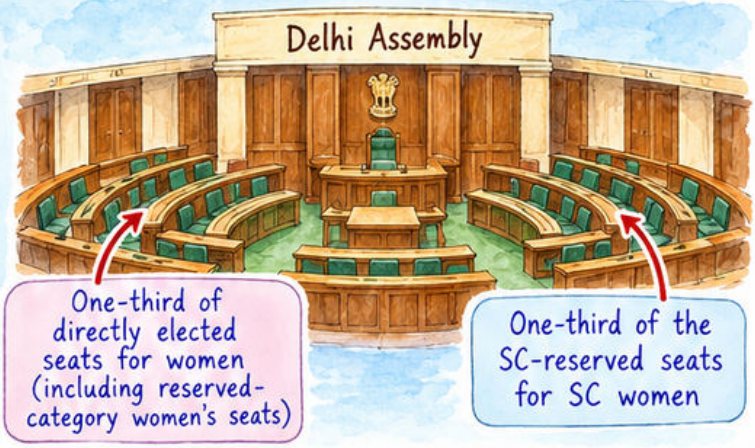
State Assemblies: Article 332A

The same pattern applies to every State Legislative Assembly, including one-third, as nearly as may be, of SC and ST seats under Article 332(3).



Delhi Assembly

Article 239AA(2)(ba), (bb) and (bc) reserve one-third of directly elected seats for women, including one-third of SC-reserved seats for SC women. Delhi has no ST clause. The Act covers these three categories of House, not the Rajya Sabha or State Legislative Councils.



Sources: Day 29 Source Index | Topic 283

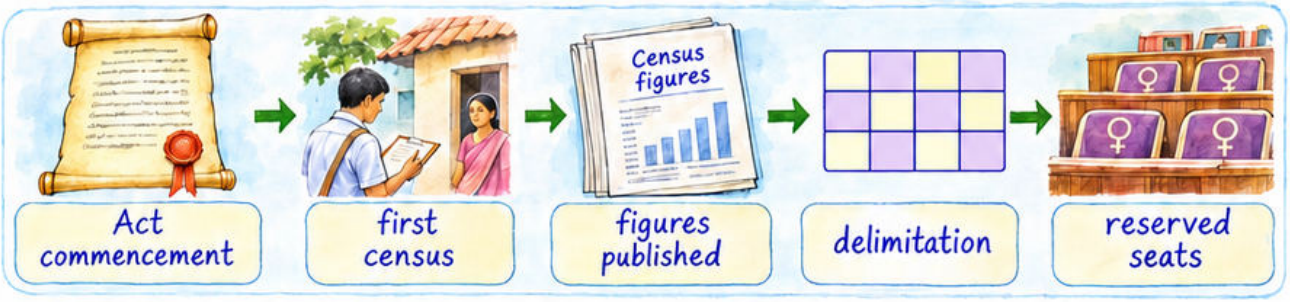
Reserved seats wait for census and delimitation

Article 334A(1): the sequence

The women's-seat provisions take effect after delimitation undertaken for this purpose, after publication of the relevant figures from the first census taken after the 106th Amendment's commencement.

Assent, commencement of the Act and operation of reserved seats are distinct events.





The fifteen-year wording

Clause (1) says the provisions cease after fifteen years "from such commencement".

The only commencement expressly named in the clause is that of the 106th Amendment Act.

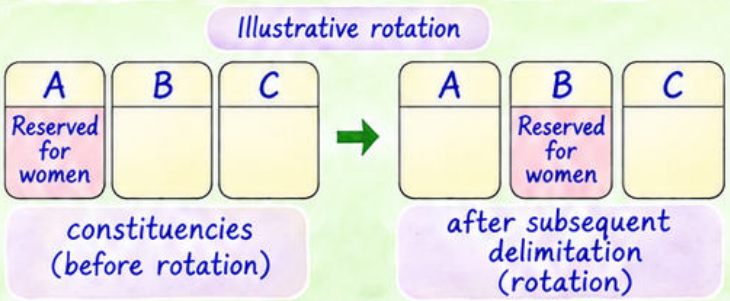
The text does not separately restate the starting point in other words; preserve its wording rather than substituting an assumed date.



Continuation and rotation

Clause (2) says the reserved seats continue until the date Parliament determines by law.

Clause (3) makes rotation effective after each subsequent delimitation, as Parliament determines by law.



Contrast with local bodies

The parliamentary and State-Assembly formulation is "as nearly as may be, one-third", whereas local bodies require "not less than one-third".

Local-body women's reservation has no equivalent fifteen-year period.

Passing an amendment in 2023 did not immediately create reserved Lok Sabha seats.



Sources: Day 29 Source Index | Topic 283

Representation and the April 2026 proposal

The proposal

The Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill, 2026 was introduced on 16 April 2026. It proposed dropping the requirement that delimitation for women's seats follow the first census taken after the 106th Amendment's commencement.



The vote

On 17 April 2026 the Bill received 298 votes to 230, short of the required two-thirds majority, and failed. Article 334A(1) therefore remained as enacted in 2023. The Act's notification and the failure of the separate Bill must not be confused.

Bill, 2026 (Vote)	
For	298
Against	230
Result	Failed

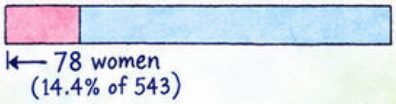
→ Article 334A(1) remained as enacted in 2023.

→ Act's notification (16 April 2026) ≠ Failure of the separate Bill

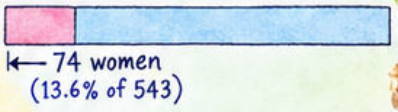
Women in the Lok Sabha

The 2024 election returned 74 women to the 543-seat Lok Sabha: 13.6 per cent. This was down from 78 women, or 14.4 per cent, in 2019. These are actual election results, not the future reserved-seat share.

2019: 78 / 14.4%



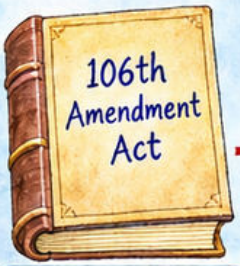
2024: 74 / 13.6%





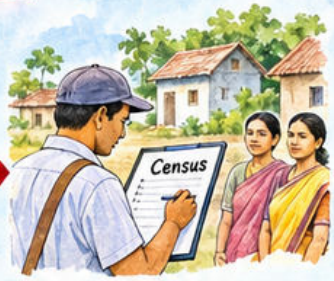
The implementation distinction

The 106th Amendment Act was brought into force on 16 April 2026, but reserved seats still await the census-linked delimitation. A commenced enabling constitutional framework can therefore coexist with representation below one-third. Read every current-affairs number with its year and institutional context.



Brought into force on 16 April 2026

→



Reserved seats await the census-linked delimitation.

→ A commenced enabling constitutional framework can therefore coexist with representation below one-third.

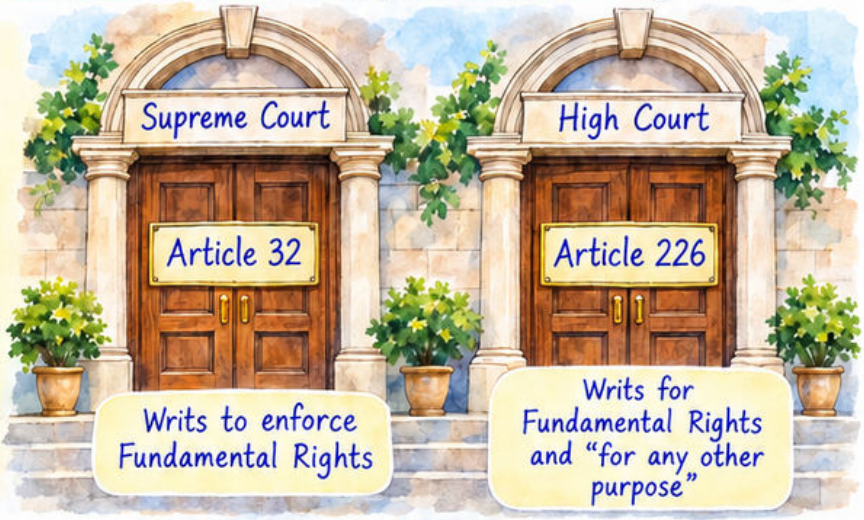
Sources: Day 29 Source Index | Topic 283

Courts provide remedies and reject arbitrary rules

Choose the remedy

Article 32 permits Supreme Court writs to enforce Fundamental Rights. Article 226 gives High Courts a wider writ power: for Fundamental Rights and "for any other purpose".

The two jurisdictions are not identical in scope.



Air India v. Nergesh Meerza

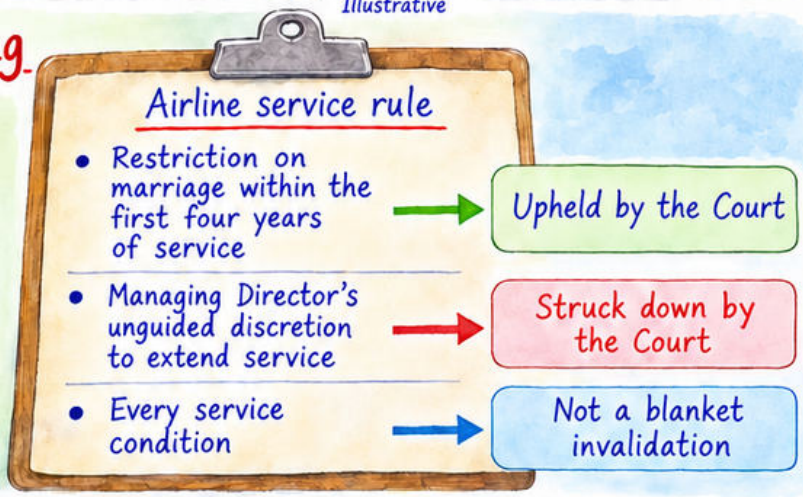
On 28 August 1981 a three-judge Bench held that ending an air hostess's service on her first pregnancy was unconstitutional, void and contrary to Article 14.



Illustrative

Read the whole holding

The Court upheld the restriction on marriage within the first four years of service. It struck down the Managing Director's unguided discretion to extend service. The decision was not a blanket invalidation of every service condition before it.



Protection is reviewable

Rules described as protective or administrative remain open to equality review. Nergesh Meerza and Joseph Shine show why the actual rule and judicial holding matter more than a general label. Article 15(3) permits affirmative provision, but cannot be used as a shortcut around constitutional scrutiny.



Sources: Day 29 Source Index | Topic 283

Vishaka fills a legislative gap

The case

Vishaka v. State of Rajasthan was decided on 13 August 1997 by three judges led by Chief Justice Verma. An Article 32 petition concerned sexual harassment at work.



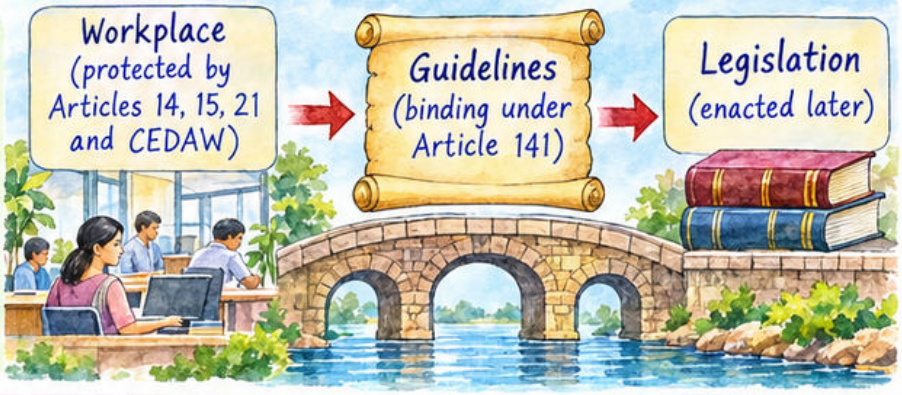
The constitutional foundation

The Court found violations of Articles 14, 15 and 21. It used the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, or CEDAW, to interpret the constitutional protections.



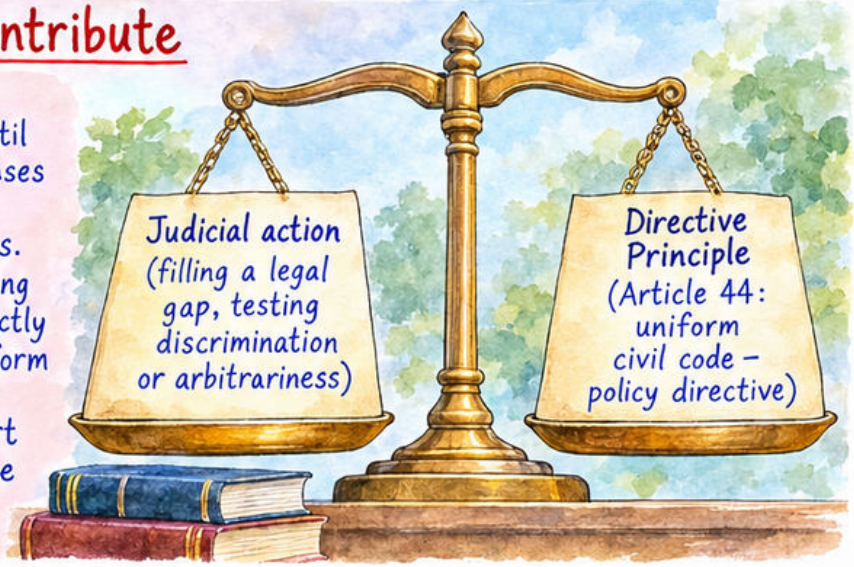
Binding guidelines

The workplace guidelines were binding and enforceable in law until suitable legislation was enacted. They operated as law declared by the Supreme Court under Article 141. Their force was not merely advisory.



How the courts contribute

Vishaka illustrates judicial action to fill a legal gap until legislation is made. Other cases test discriminatory rules or invalidate arbitrary practices. These roles differ from making every Directive Principle directly enforceable: Article 44's uniform civil code remains a policy directive, even though a court can test a particular practice against enforceable rights.

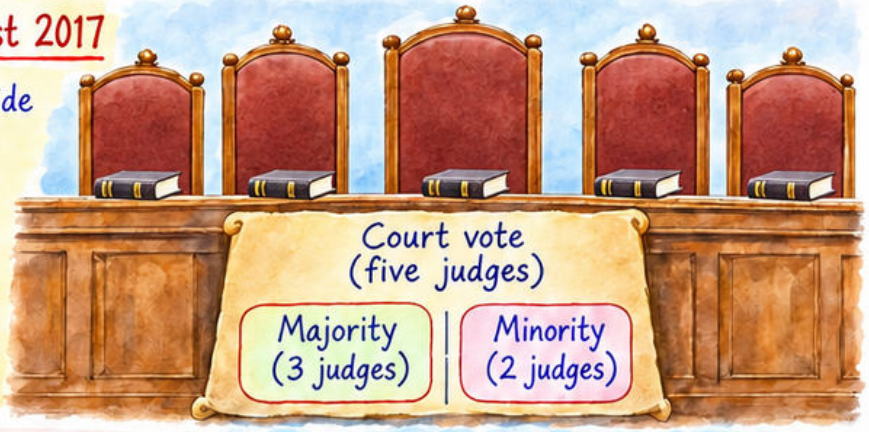


Sources: Day 29 Source Index | Topic 283

Personal laws and Army service

Shayara Bano, 22 August 2017

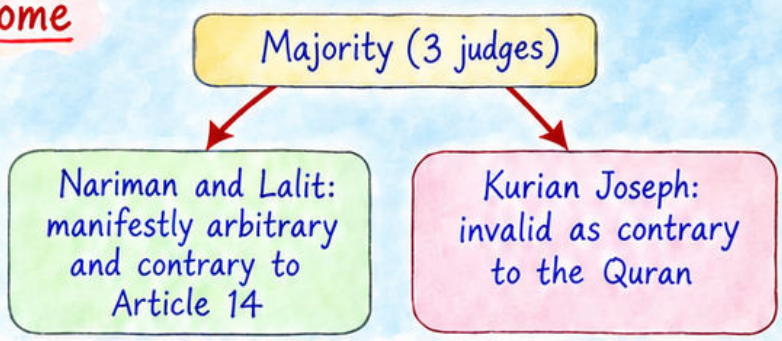
A five-judge Bench set aside instant triple talaq, talaq-e-biddat, by three votes to two. The three majority judges did not use one identical reason.



Two routes to the outcome

Justices Nariman and Lalit found it manifestly arbitrary and contrary to Article 14.

Justice Kurian Joseph found it invalid as contrary to the Quran.



A majority result does not mean every majority judge adopted the same constitutional reasoning.

Babita Puniya, 17 February 2020

Justices Chandrachud and Rastogi rejected an absolute bar on considering women Army officers for command appointments. All serving women Short Service Commission officers were to be considered for permanent commission, whatever their years of service; compliance was directed within three months.



Stereotypes are not a justification

The Court called the Union's submission disturbing and identified sex stereotypes based on socially assigned gender roles. The decision required consideration and rejected an absolute bar; it should not be restated as automatic appointment of every officer to every command.

These rulings connect equality to concrete institutional practices.

Sources: Day 29 Source Index | Topic 283

How rural employment became a legal guarantee

The Maharashtra beginning

A Government Resolution dated 28 March 1972 sanctioned Maharashtra's Employment Guarantee Scheme.

The Maharashtra Employment Guarantee Act, 1977 later gave it a statutory basis.

This State experience helped shape the national approach.



Food for work

The Ministry of Rural Development announced the National Food for Work Programme in October 2004 for 150 districts.

It was 100 per cent centrally sponsored, and the announcement also promised national employment-guarantee legislation.



The 2005 Act

The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005, Act No. 42 of 2005, is dated 5 September 2005.

Section 1(3) allowed different commencement dates for different areas.



Three phases and a new name

The Act began on 2 February 2006 in 200 districts. Another 130 entered from 1 April 2007 in Phase II, 2007–08.

Phase III covered the remaining 285 rural districts from 1 April 2008.

Amendment Act 46 of 2009 added "Mahatma Gandhi" with effect from 2 October 2009.

Enactment, phased implementation and renaming are separate dates.



Key steps

- 1972: Maharashtra scheme
- 1977: State Act
- 2004: Food for Work
- 2005: National Act
- 2006: Phase I
- 2007: Phase II
- 2008: Phase III
- 2009: Renamed

Sources: Day 29 Source Index | Topic 284

MGNREGA makes work demand driven

Household entitlement

Section 3(1) guaranteed not less than 100 days of work in a financial year to a rural household whose adult members volunteered for unskilled manual work. The entitlement belonged to the household, not separately to each adult.



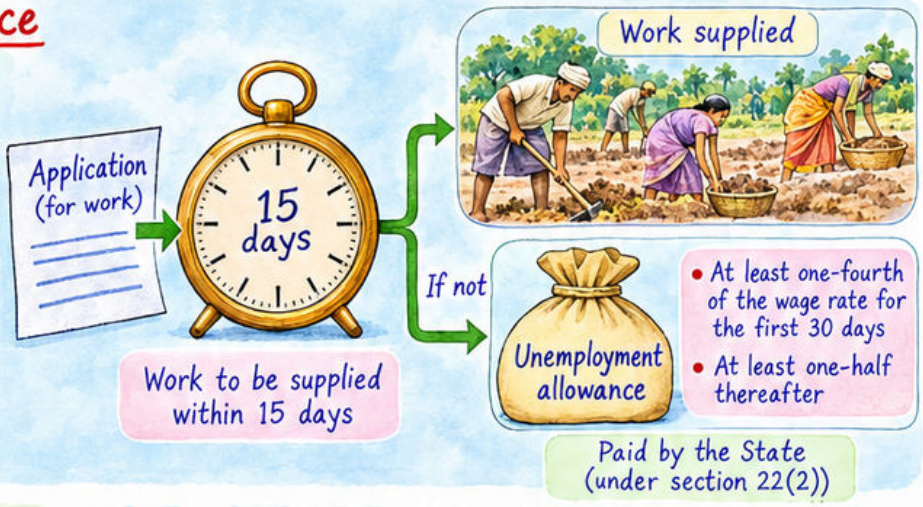
Registration and demand

Eligible adult household members registered for a job card, issued within 15 days of application. The programme was demand-driven: workers' applications generated the requirement to provide work.



Work or allowance

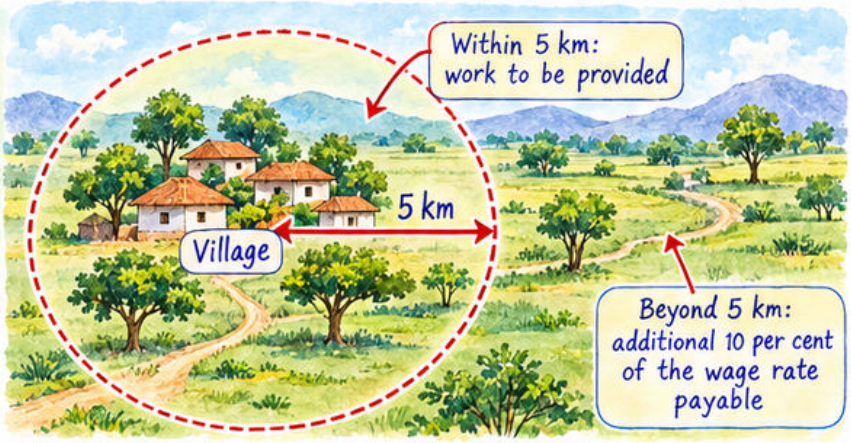
Work had to be supplied within 15 days of receiving an application. If not, section 7 provided unemployment allowance of at least one-fourth of the wage rate for the first 30 days of the financial year and at least one-half thereafter. Under section 22(2), the State paid this allowance.



Distance matters

Work was to be within a 5 km radius of the village. Beyond that distance, an additional 10 per cent of the wage rate was payable.

Do not confuse the job-card deadline, work deadline, allowance rates and travel supplement: each protects a different part of access to employment.

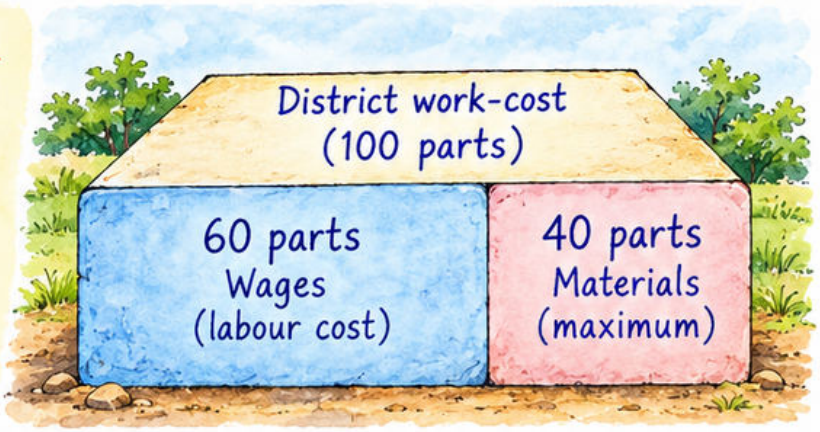


Sources: Day 29 Source Index | Topic 284

Who paid and who supervised MGNREGA?

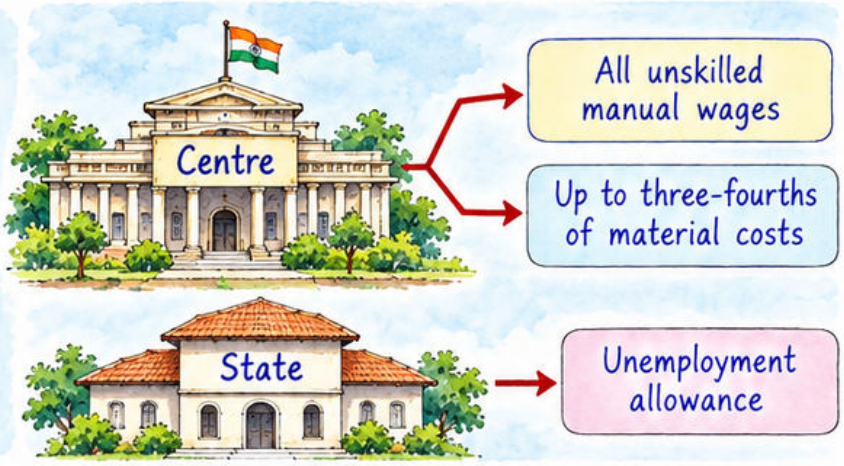
The wage-material rule

Material costs, including skilled and semi-skilled wages, could not exceed 40 per cent at district level. Schedule I, substituted in 2016, therefore produced the familiar 60:40 wage-material ratio. It was not a mandatory ratio for each individual work.



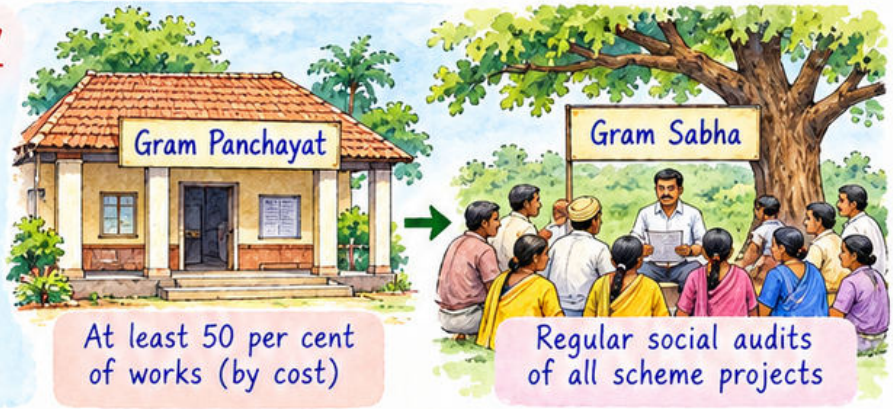
Centre and State

Section 22(1) made the Centre responsible for all unskilled manual wages and up to three-fourths of material costs. The State bore unemployment allowance. This arrangement differs from the new law's general Centre-State cost-sharing ratio.



Panchayat delivery

Section 16(5) required at least 50 per cent of works by cost to be implemented through Gram Panchayats. Section 17(2) made the Gram Sabha responsible for regular social audits of all scheme projects.



Women's access

Schedule II gave priority to women so that at least one-third of beneficiaries were women who had registered and requested work. The minimum is about beneficiaries, while later reported participation figures often measure women's share of person-days. Those are related but different measures.

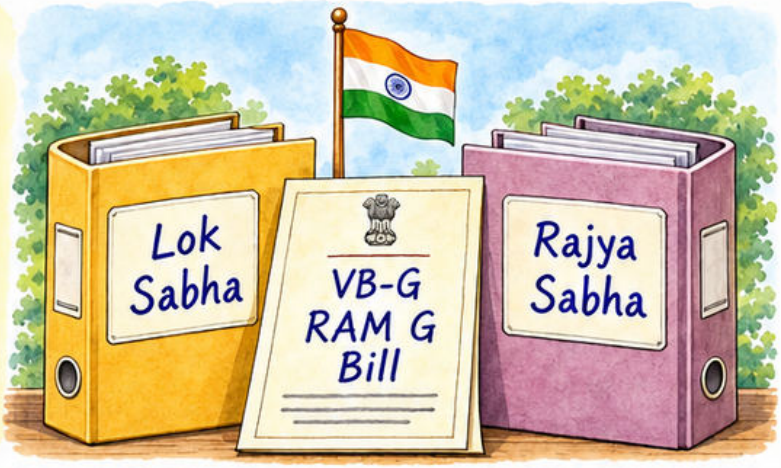


Sources: Day 29 Source Index | Topic 284

The new rural guarantee begins in July 2026

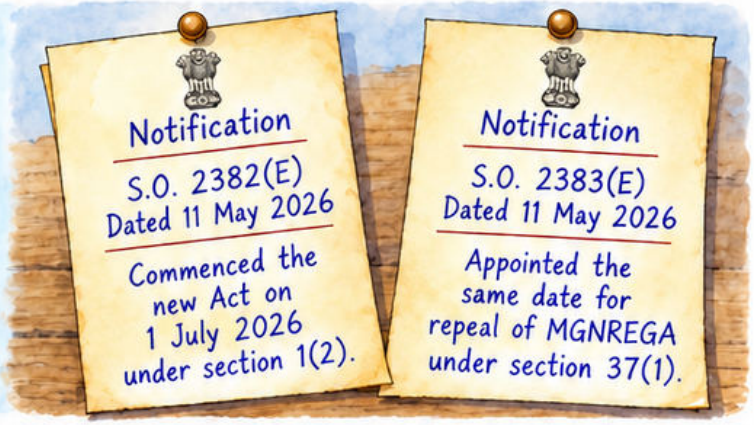
Passage and enactment

Parliament passed the Viksit Bharat-Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) Bill on 18 December 2025. The Rajya Sabha passed it by voice vote hours after the Lok Sabha. The VB-G RAM G Act is Act No. 36 of 2025, dated 20 December 2025.



Two notifications

Notification S.O. 2382(E), dated 11 May 2026, commenced the new Act on 1 July 2026 under section 1(2). S.O. 2383(E), also dated 11 May, appointed the same date for repeal of MGNREGA under section 37(1).



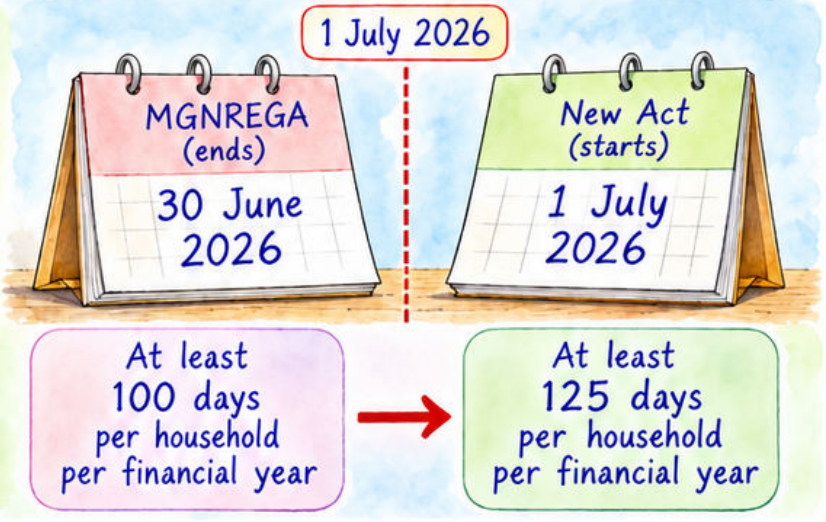
The date distinction

MGNREGA operated from 2 February 2006 through 30 June 2026, with its phased territorial rollout. The new law operates from 1 July 2026. Passage in December 2025 did not itself start the new guarantee.



The new floor

Section 5(1) guarantees not less than 125 days per household per financial year. Section 5(4) permits more within economic capacity. The increase is a floor, not a 125-day ceiling, and it remains a household entitlement.

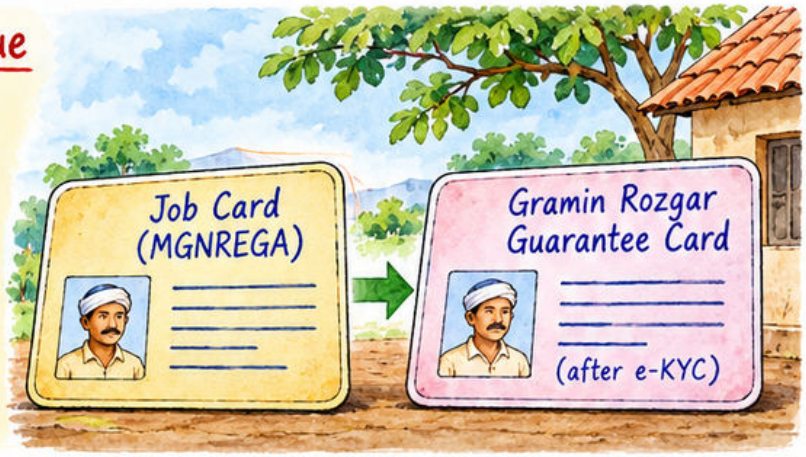


Sources: Day 29 Source Index | Topic 284

Transition planning and farm seasons

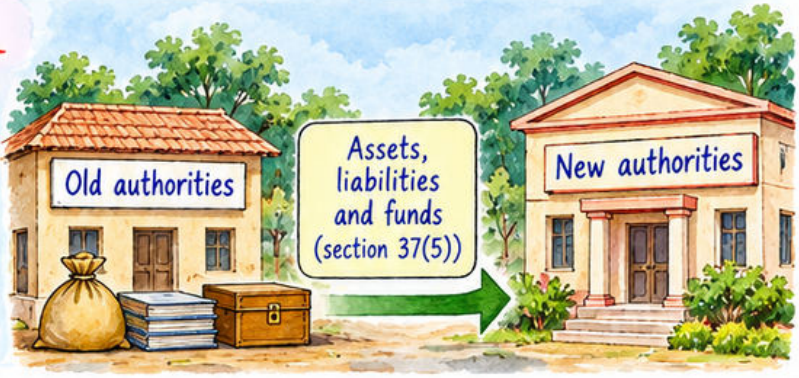
Work and records continue

Workers' job cards remain valid until Gramin Rozgar Guarantee Cards are issued if e-KYC is complete. Ongoing MGNREGA works may continue under the new Act. Section 37(2) treats old employment generated and wage liability accrued as under the new law.



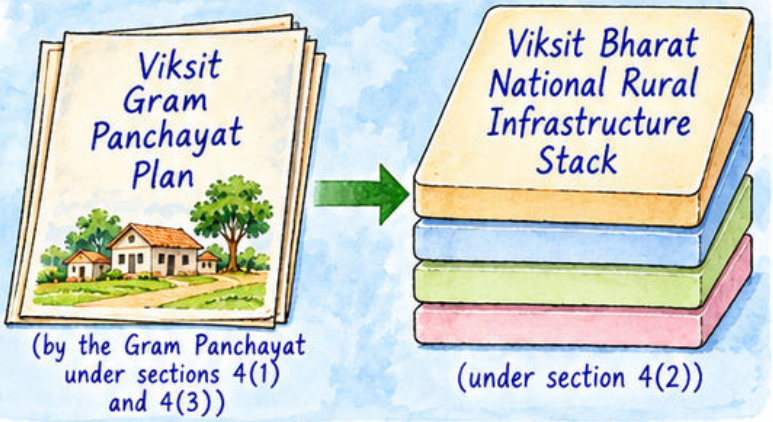
Institutional transition

Assets, liabilities and funds pass to the new authorities under section 37(5). Each State must make a scheme within six months of commencement under section 3(1). Tamil Nadu notified its scheme effective from 1 July 2026.



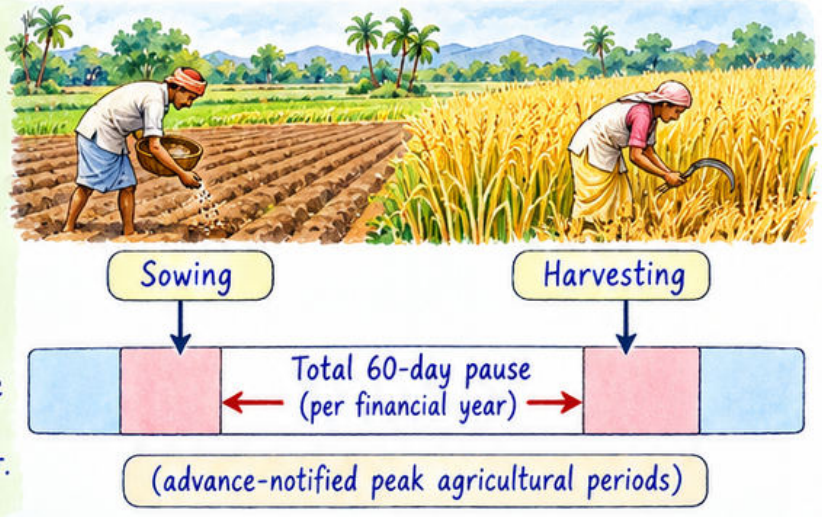
Plans from the village

Every work must arise from a Viksit Gram Panchayat Plan prepared by the Gram Panchayat under sections 4(1) and 4(3). These plans combine into the Viksit Bharat National Rural Infrastructure Stack under section 4(2).



The seasonal pause

Section 6 bars starting or carrying on works during advance-notified peak agricultural periods aggregating to sixty days per financial year, covering sowing and harvesting. States may set different periods for districts, blocks or Gram Panchayats. The annual guarantee and this seasonal scheduling constraint must be read together.

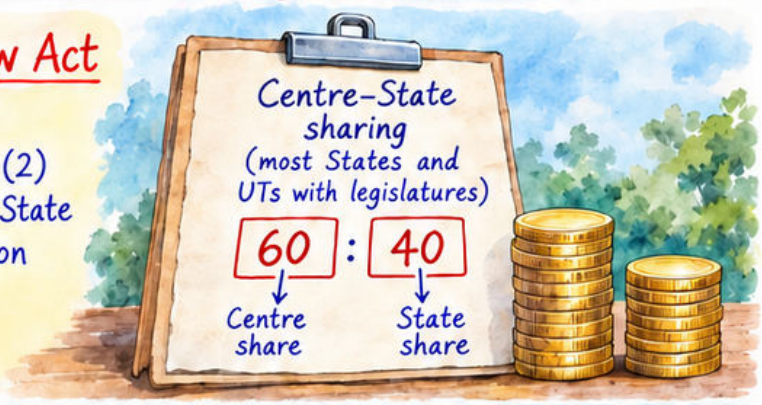


Sources: Day 29 Source Index | Topic 284

Two different meanings of 60:40

Cost sharing under the new Act

Section 22(1) makes the scheme Centrally Sponsored. Sections 22(2) and 22(3) provide 60:40 Centre-State sharing for most States and Union territories with legislatures.



Special categories

The ratio is 90:10 for North Eastern States, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir.



90 : 10
North Eastern States, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir

The Centre bears the whole cost in Union territories without a legislature. Do not treat all Union territories as a single funding category.

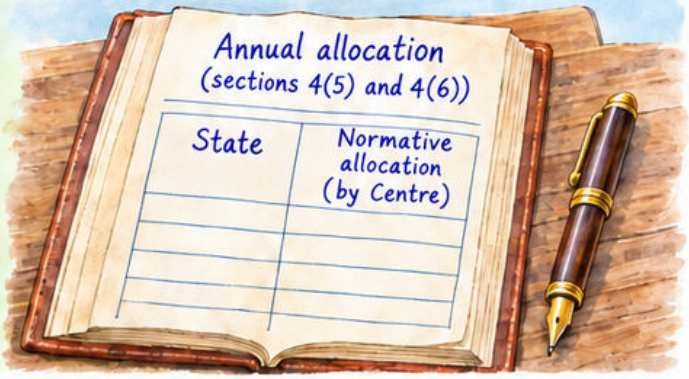


100 : 0
Union territories without a legislature

Annual allocation

Under sections 4(5) and 4(6), the Centre fixes State-wise normative allocations each year; States bear expenditure beyond their allocation.

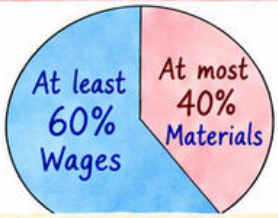
The parameters are left to Central rules. Draft rules were published for comments on 22 May 2026 as G.S.R. 396(E).



The other ratio remains

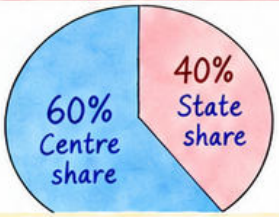
The district-level material-cost ceiling is still 40 per cent under Schedule I. That wage-material 60:40 describes spending composition, whereas Centre-State 60:40 describes who pays.

Wage-material 60:40
(spending composition)



Describes how the expenditure is split (wages and materials).

Centre-State 60:40
(funding)



Describes who pays (the Centre and the State).

MGNREGA instead had the Centre pay all unskilled wages and up to three-fourths of materials under its own funding structure.



Sources: Day 29 Source Index | Topic 284

Safeguards retained in the new Act

Work not supplied

Section 11 retains unemployment allowance after 15 days at the same minimum rates: one-fourth of the wage rate for the first 30 days, one-half thereafter. Section 22(8) makes the State responsible for this allowance and delay compensation.



Local implementation

At least 50 per cent of works by cost remain with Gram Panchayats under section 19(e). Regular Gram Sabha social audits continue under section 20(2). These are retained institutional safeguards, not newly invented replacements.



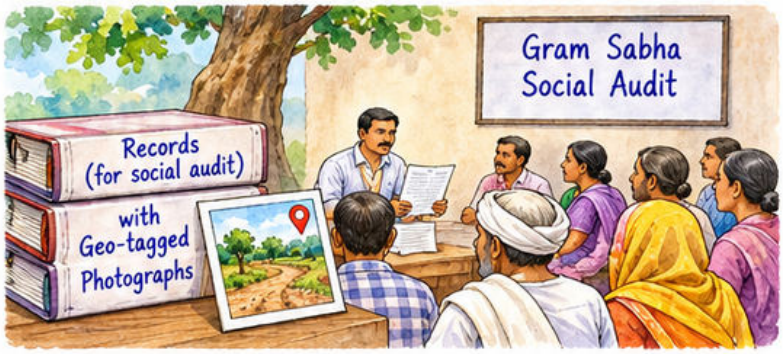
Women and distance

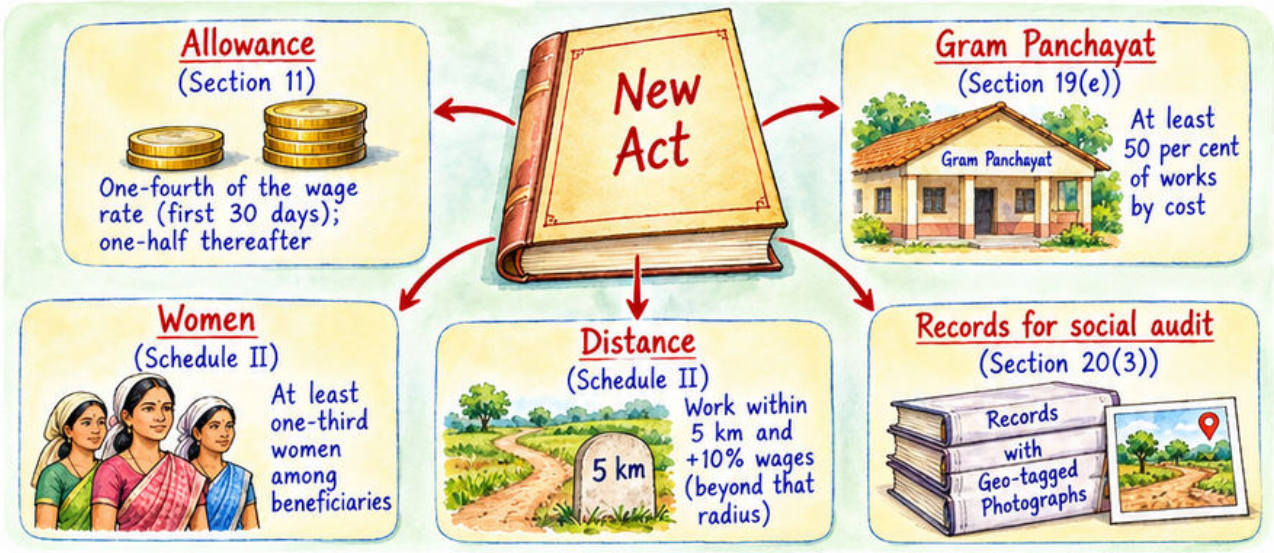
Schedule II preserves at least one-third women among beneficiaries, work within 5 km and extra wages of 10 per cent beyond that radius. The district-level material ceiling of 40 per cent is also retained.



Records for scrutiny

Under section 20(3), the Gram Panchayat must supply the Gram Sabha with all records for social audit, including geo-tagged photographs. A legal audit requirement and actual completion of audits are different matters. Retention of safeguards should be distinguished from changes in days guaranteed, funding and seasonal work scheduling.





Sources: Day 29 Source Index | Topic 284

What MGNREGA actually delivered

Work and participation

In 2024–25, MGNREGA generated 290.60 crore person-days. Women supplied 58.15 per cent of person-days, up from 48 per cent in 2013–14. Person-days count days worked, not unique workers.



290.60 crore
person-days
(in 2024–25)

58.15%
women's share of person-days
(up from 48% in 2013–14)

Workers and household days

Workers employed numbered 7.88 crore in 2024–25, compared with 11.17 crore in 2020–21. Average household work was 50 days in 2024–25 and 43 in 2025–26, the latter reported as the lowest in a decade in the Minister's 28 July 2026 Lok Sabha reply.



7.88 crore
workers
(in 2024–25)

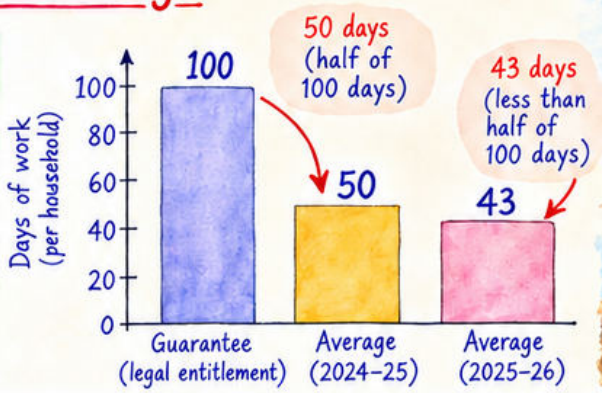
11.17 crore
workers
(in 2020–21)

50 days
average household work
(in 2024–25)

43 days
average household work
(in 2025–26)

Guarantee versus average

Fewer than 10 per cent of households that worked completed 100 days, according to PRS's 2026–27 analysis. The 43-day average was less than half the 100-day guarantee. A legal entitlement does not itself show actual access.





Andhra Pradesh

The State generated 241.07 crore person-days from 2014–15 to 2024–25, counted to 5 December 2024. Its notified unskilled wage was Rs 300 a day in 2024–25. Wage rates are notified State by State.



241.07 crore
person-days
(from 2014–15 to 2024–25, counted to 5 December 2024)

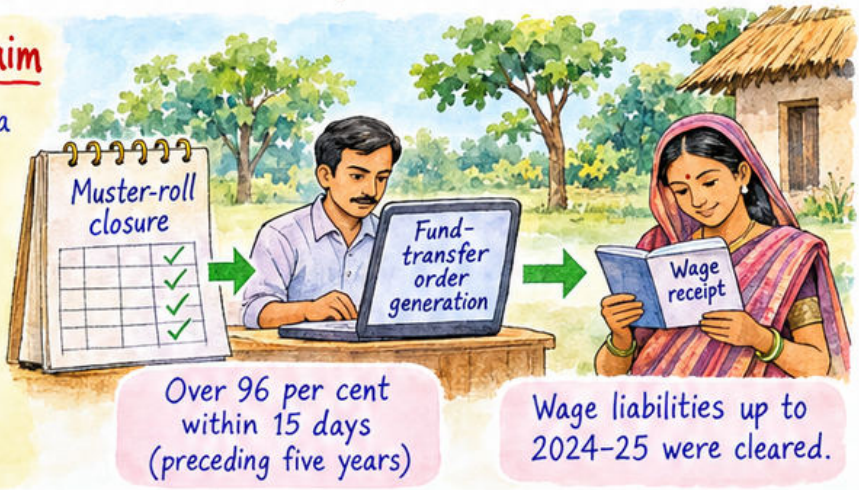
Rs 300 a day
notified unskilled wage
(in 2024–25)

Sources: Day 29 Source Index | Topic 284

Payment systems and unpaid entitlements

The Ministry's payment claim

In its 22 July 2025 Lok Sabha reply, the Ministry said over 96 per cent of fund-transfer orders had been generated within 15 days of muster-roll closure over the preceding five years, and wage liabilities up to 2024-25 were cleared.



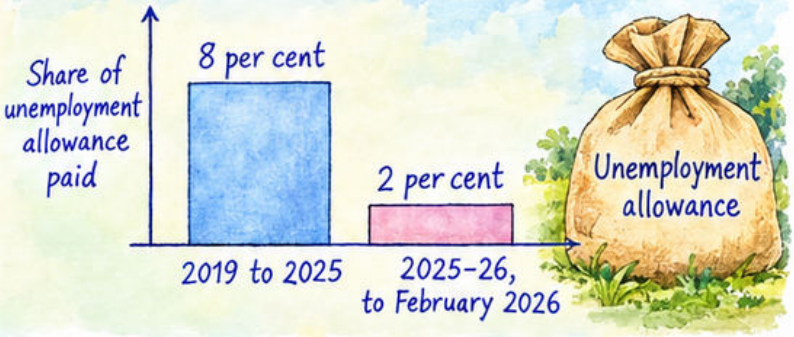
Wage adequacy and gaps

PRS found wages actually paid below notified rates in 20 of 31 States and Union territories in 2025-26, using data to December 2025. The Parliamentary Standing Committee's 37th Report, February 2024, called wages inadequate and sought a new base year instead of 2009-10.



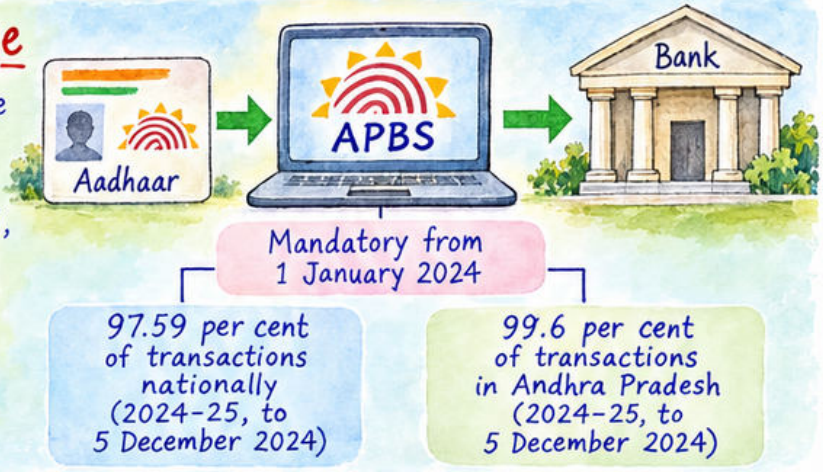
Allowance largely unpaid

About 8 per cent of unemployment allowance due from 2019 to 2025 was paid. In 2025-26, to February 2026, the share was 2 per cent. A payment-order processing statistic does not establish full delivery of every entitlement.



Aadhaar payment bridge

APBS became mandatory for wage payments on 1 January 2024 to avoid disruption when workers change bank accounts. In 2024-25, to 5 December 2024, it handled 97.59 per cent of transactions nationally and 99.6 per cent in Andhra Pradesh.

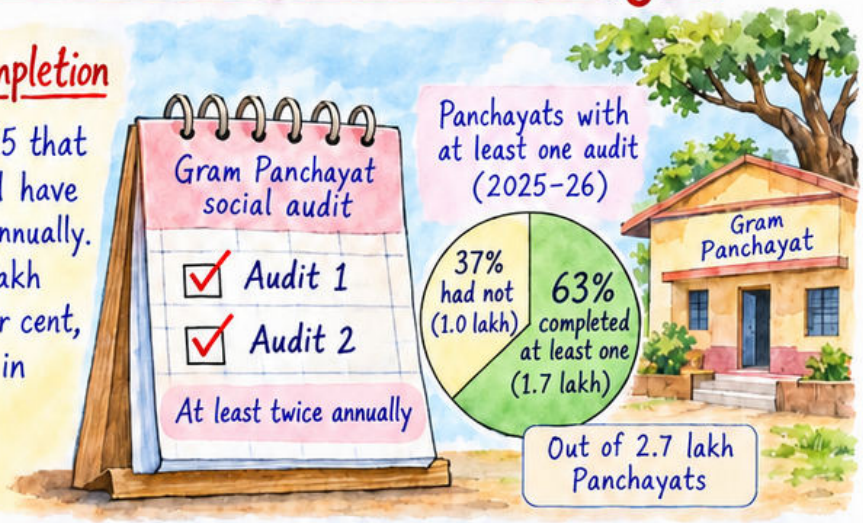


Sources: Day 29 Source Index | Topic 284

Social audit and the 2026-27 budget

Audit requirement and completion

PIB stated on 26 August 2025 that every Gram Panchayat should have a social audit at least twice annually. By December 2025, only 1.7 lakh of 2.7 lakh Panchayats, or 63 per cent, had completed even one audit in 2025-26, according to PRS.



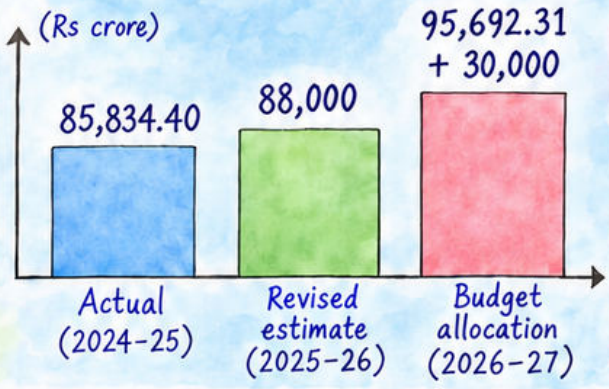
Budget allocations

Union Budget 2026-27, Demand No. 87, provided Rs 95,692.31 crore for the Viksit Bharat-GRAM G Scheme and Rs 30,000 crore for Mahatma Gandhi NREGA.



Earlier spending

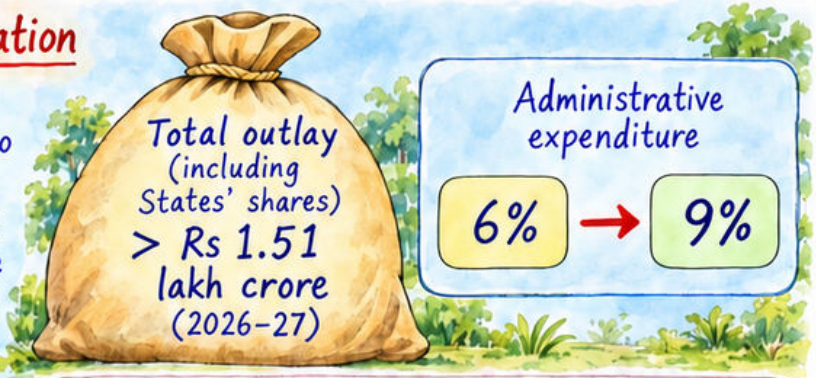
MGNREGA actual spending was Rs 85,834.40 crore in 2024-25; the revised estimate for 2025-26 was Rs 88,000 crore. Actuals, revised estimates and budget allocations describe different accounting stages.



Actuals, revised estimates and budget allocations describe different accounting stages.

State share and administration

Including States' shares, total 2026-27 outlay was expected to exceed Rs 1.51 lakh crore. Administrative expenditure rises from 6 to 9 per cent. The Centre had borne about 90 per cent of spending over the preceding five years; PRS expects States' spending to increase under 60:40 sharing.



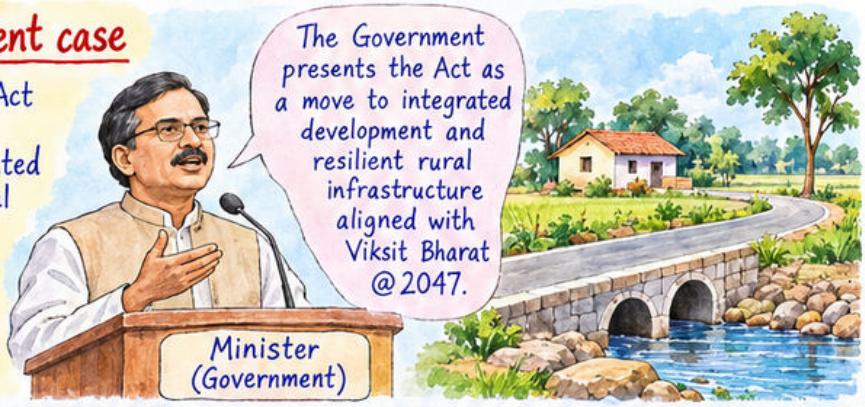
The Centre had borne about 90 per cent of spending over the preceding five years; PRS expects States' spending to increase under 60:40 sharing.

Sources: Day 29 Source Index | Topic 284

Why the new law is debated

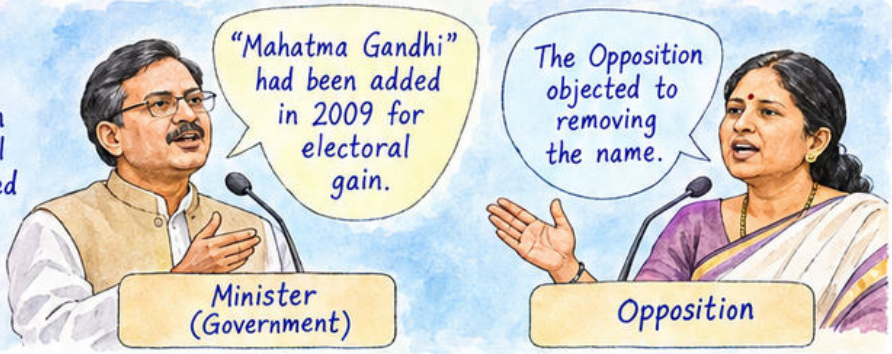
Government's development case

The Government presents the Act as a move from a standalone welfare intervention to integrated development and resilient rural infrastructure aligned with Viksit Bharat @2047. The Minister said it would correct shortcomings of the old scheme.



The name dispute

The Minister argued that "Mahatma Gandhi" had been added in 2009 for electoral gain. The Opposition objected to removing the name. These are attributed political positions, not neutral findings about motives.



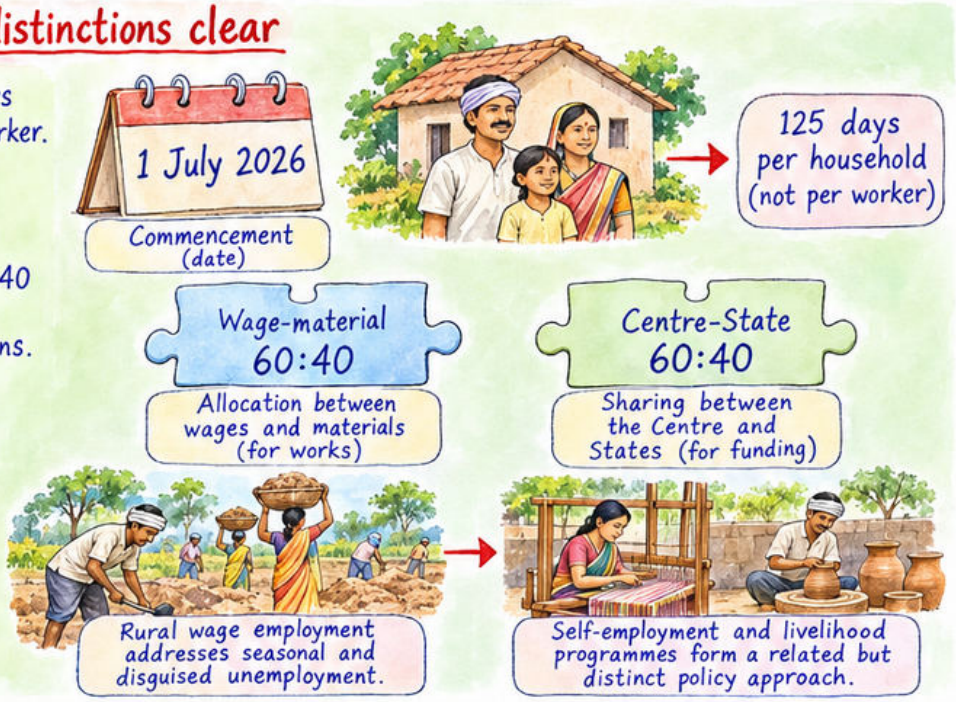
Funding and scrutiny

The Opposition, as reported on 19 December 2025, argued that the Bill would burden State finances and sought parliamentary-committee examination. The shift to shared funding and State-financed expenditure beyond normative allocations is central to that concern.



Keep the design distinctions clear

The new floor is 125 days per household, not per worker. Commencement was 1 July 2026, not the December 2025 passage date. Wage-material 60:40 and Centre-State 60:40 answer different questions. Rural wage employment addresses seasonal and disguised unemployment; self-employment and livelihood programmes form a related but distinct policy approach.



Sources: Day 29 Source Index | Topic 284