

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION

UPSC 2022 · 10 marks

How far is the National Commission for Backward Classes an empowered body? Assess its role in the context of rising demand for backwardness among dominant communities.

FLOW SNAPSHOT — how the answer moves

Intro routes

R1 empowerment real but partial → status without full force
R2 statutory origin (*Indra Sawhney*) → constitutional upgrade (338B) → frame the "how far"

Body flow

Indra Sawhney 1992 + NCBC Act 1993 → 102nd Amendment / Art 338B → parity with NCSC & NCST → functions (inclusion/exclusion in OBC list, advice) → civil court powers + reports to Parliament → limits: non-binding, no definition of backwardness, weak data/staff → dominant-community demand → evidentiary weakness exposed → sub-categorisation guards advanced groups

Counter-view

form vs effect: constitutional status & inquiry powers ↔ non-enforceable recommendations and dependence on government

Conclusion routes

R1 empowered in form, constrained in effect
R2 real test = defending evidence-based classification against political pressure

The NCBC's empowerment is real but partial. Born as a statutory body after *Indira Sawhney vs. Union of India* (1992) and NCBC Act, 1993, it gained genuine standing only through the 102nd Amendment (2018) which inserted Article 338 B and placed it broadly on par with the NCSC and NCST.

It now examines inclusion, exclusion, over-inclusion and under-inclusion in the Central OBC list, advises government and enjoys civil court powers to summon witnesses and take evidence on oath, with reports laid before parliament.

Yet its strength stops short of teeth. Its recommendations lack binding force, no clear definition of backwardness exists and data & staff support remain inadequate.

The commission can resist unjustified claims only through credible socio-economic data ; sub-categorisation further guards against advanced groups monopolising benefits.

Empowered in form yet constrained in effect, the NBC's real test lies in defending evidence-based classification against political pressure.