

2. Denotified Tribes- Polity

Centre 'not classifying' denotified tribes despite survey report. The Union Government has decided against reclassifying Denotified, Nomadic, and Semi-Nomadic Tribes (DNT/NT/SNT) into SC, ST, or OBC categories, despite an Anthropological Survey of India study recommending the inclusion of 179 such communities. This decision impacts millions of "Vimukt Jatis" who historically faced stigma under colonial laws and currently lack adequate access to constitutional benefits and social security.

Current Status- Government Stance & Recent Studies

Parliamentary Clarification- The Union Government has officially informed Parliament that there is no proposal currently under consideration to reclassify Denotified, Nomadic, and Semi-Nomadic Tribes (DNT/NT/SNT) into the Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), or Other Backward Classes (OBC) categories.

Background of the Reclassification Demand-

The Study- A massive three-year ethnographic study was conducted by the Anthropological Survey of India (AnSI) in collaboration with various Tribal Research Institutes.

Commissioning Body- The study was commissioned by a NITI Aayog committee.

Timeline- The classification effort began following the establishment of the Development Welfare Board (DWBDNC) in 2019.

Key Findings- The study identified 268 denotified, nomadic, and semi-nomadic communities.

Recommendations- It recommended the inclusion of 179 communities into the SC, ST, and OBC lists across 26 states and Union Territories.

Definition of Ethnographic Survey- It is a systematic, field-based study of a community's social, cultural, and economic life. It documents traditions, customs, livelihood patterns, social structures, and identity markers to understand the community's status.

Conceptual Breakdown

These groups are collectively known as "Vimukt Jatis" and represent some of India's most marginalized populations. The table below differentiates the three specific categories.

Category	Definition & Nature of Movement	Historical Context / Examples
Denotified Tribes (DNTs)	Communities that were legally labeled as "born criminals" under colonial laws but were later "de-notified" (delisted) after Independence.	History- Labelled under the Criminal Tribes Act of 1871. They faced surveillance and stigma. The Act was repealed in 1952.
Nomadic Tribes (NTs)	Groups that traditionally move from place to place without a permanent home, sustaining themselves through mobile occupations.	Occupations- Salt trading, fortune-telling, performing arts, pastoral activities.Examples- Gujjars, Gadia Lohars.
Semi-Nomadic Tribes (SNTs)	Communities that are mobile for part of the year but return to a fixed settlement during specific periods (often the rainy season).	Pattern- They migrate for the rest of the year in search of livelihood.Examples- Dhangars, Lambadas.

Socio-Economic Profile & Challenges

Common Characteristics

Lack of Land Ownership- Historically, these communities possess little to no private land or home ownership.

Identity Crisis- They face a severe absence of identity documents (Aadhar, Voter ID, etc.).

Deprivation- Low access to essential services like education, healthcare, and welfare schemes.

Exclusion- Many are excluded from existing SC/ST/OBC classifications, leaving them without targeted constitutional benefits.

Population Data- According to the 2001 Census, approximately 10.74 crore people belong to DNT, NT, and SNT communities in India.

Historical Commissions & Recognition

Over the decades, various committees have highlighted the specific vulnerabilities of these tribes.

Criminal Tribes Inquiry Committee (1947)– Initial inquiry into the status of these tribes.

Ananthasayanam Ayyangar Committee (1949)– Crucially recommended the repeal of the Criminal Tribes Act, leading to the "de-notification" in 1952.

Kaka Kalelkar Commission (1953) & Mandal Commission (1980)– Addressed backward classes but highlighted DNT issues peripherally.

NCRWC Findings (2002)– The National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution observed that DNTs were wrongly stigmatized as crime-prone and routinely subjected to exploitation by police and society.

Renke Commission (2008)– Officially highlighted that most DNT/NT/SNT communities lacked basic identity documents, housing, and livelihood support.

Idate Commission (2014)– Established under the chairmanship of Bhiku Ramji Idate.

Mandate– To prepare a comprehensive statewide list of DNTs.

Objective– Identify communities left out of SC/ST/OBC lists and recommend welfare measures.

Developmental Schemes for DNT/NT/SNTs

The government has launched specific schemes to address the gaps in welfare for those not covered under SC/ST/OBC.

Dr. Ambedkar Pre-Matric and Post-Matric Scholarships (Launched 2014–15)– A centrally sponsored scheme providing financial aid for education to DNT students **not included** in SC/ST/OBC categories.

Nanaji Deshmukh Hostel Scheme (Launched 2014–15)– Provides hostel facilities specifically for DNT boys and girls who do not fall under the SC/ST/OBC umbrella.

Scheme for Economic Empowerment of DNTs (SEED)

Objective– Comprehensive development support.

Budget– Allocated ₹200 crore over five years (starting 2021–22).

Components– Free coaching for competitive exams. Health insurance coverage. Housing support. Livelihood assistance.

Implementation– Managed by the DWBDNC.

Institutional Mechanism– The Welfare Board

To institutionalize support, the government created a dedicated body.

Name– Development and Welfare Board for De-notified, Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Communities (DWBDNC).

Establishment– Constituted on 21 February 2019.

Legal Status– Registered as a society under the Societies Registration Act, 1860.

Headquarters– New Delhi.

Nodal Ministry– Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.

Leadership & Composition–

Chairperson– Bhiku Ramji Idate (Appointed by Govt of India).

CEO/Member Secretary– Officer of the rank of Joint Secretary to the Govt.

Members– 3 Ex-Officio Members and 5 Nominated Members.