

A SINGLE CONSTITUTION FOR THE ENTIRE COUNTRY

How will Jammu, Kashmir & Ladakh benefit?

In recent weeks, important decisions have been taken regarding Jammu and Kashmir. Articles 370 & 35 A have been abrogated or substantially modified and other important changes have been made. How will these changes benefit the common man? What advantages will accrue to the region?

Article 370 and 35A Responsible for Backwardness of J&K

For many years in the past, the state of J&K has been the victim of anti-national propaganda and terrorist actions against innocent citizens. The Articles 370 and 35 A became handy tools for mischievous elements to fan separatism and promote terror. These two articles kept the state isolated and away from the development processes in the country for a long time. The special status benefited only a select few e.g. Hurriyat leaders and people working for them. Despite massive fund allotment there was only limited improvement in the conditions of the poor and disadvantaged. Similarly even though the Parliament passed a number of progressive laws for the benefits and welfare of people yet most of them could not be extended to J&K, thereby denying the people of J&K the benefits, which are available to all other citizens in India.

How will this change now? How will this lead to end of poverty and a boost to development and growth?

Here are a few ways in which development and progress will percolate down to the grassroots. Investors will pump in capital and resources, industries and services will be set up, employment opportunities will multiply, big educational institutes will proliferate, health sector will grow, agricultural sector will be transformed, agro-processing will take a leap forward, ecological and environmental provisions will be enforced and natural beauty will be preserved. All fundamental rights enjoyed by citizens in the rest of the country will be now available to the residents of Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh.

Benefits for Scheduled Tribes

- Despite having nearly 12% population, the ST community (*Gujjars, Bakerwals* and others) had no political reservation
- STs will now get political representation through reservation in Assembly seats like in the rest of the country
- The Scheduled Tribes & other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 has now been made applicable. There was no corresponding State Act.
- Rights of Tribal/ST Communities residing in forests since generations will now be protected.

Gender discrimination to end- Women to get full rights

- Property and all other rights of women marrying outside the State will now be fully protected
- So many women from the state have married and settled in other parts of the country and even abroad
- All such women will now retain full and legal rights on land and all other rights
- All Central Acts and Laws protecting the rights of women and children to be made fully applicable to the State e.g. Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, Juvenile Justice Act etc.
- The Commission for Protection of Child Rights Act, 2005 provides for speedy trial of offences against children, violation of child rights etc. This act will now be applicable here and will ensure adequate protection of women and child rights

- The 86th Constitutional Amendments Act, 2002 (Right to Education RTE) makes education a fundamental right for Children in the age group of 8-14 years. Benefits which were available under RTE now shall be extended to J&K as well ensuring universal education coverage

Benefits to Scheduled Castes and OBCs

- SC employees were not getting full benefits of reservation especially in promotion like their colleagues in the rest of the country
- *Safai karamcharies* in the state were being denied citizenship rights- as a result they could not get jobs forcing them to remain sanitation workers
- All *safai karamcharies* will now get full citizenship and other rights and benefits- Manual scavenging will stop
- National Commission for *Safai Karamchari* Act, 1993 will now apply
- This will improve working conditions of *Safai karamcharies* and provide for redressal of grievances
- OBCs in J&K to get their due in employment and education- they will get full benefits of reservation now like in the rest of the country

Justice for West Pakistan Refugees (WPRs)

- Over 20,000 West Pakistan Refugees (WPRs) were hitherto aliens in their own country
- They were denied all democratic rights as well as citizenship and property rights
- They will now enjoy all democratic and other rights as citizens of the country

