



CIVIL

# Child of Inter-Caste Parents Not Automatically Entitled to SC Certificate: Bombay High Court Clarifies

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## Introduction

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In a ruling clarifying the law on caste validity disputes, the Bombay High Court has held that a child born to parents from different castes, including where one parent belongs to a Scheduled Caste, cannot automatically claim Scheduled Caste status without proving that they faced real social discrimination, disadvantage, or deprivation associated with that caste. In *Sujal Mangala Birwadkar v. State of Maharashtra & Ors.* [Writ Petition No. 13016 of 2024], a Division Bench comprising Justices Revati Mohite Dere and Dr. Neela Gokhale dismissed a student's plea seeking a caste validity certificate under the Chambhar (SC) category, finding no evidence that the petitioner had suffered any social disadvantage that would justify recognition as a Scheduled Caste member.

## Factual Background

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The petitioner, an 18-year-old student, was born to a Hindu Agri father, an upper-caste community, and a Chambhar mother, which is recognised as a Scheduled Caste. After his parents divorced in 2016, he was raised solely by his mother, adopted her surname, and later obtained a caste certificate categorising him as Chambhar.

However, the District Caste Certificate Scrutiny Committee, Raigad, rejected his claim in April 2024, holding that there was no material to prove that he had experienced social stigma, discrimination, or other disadvantages typically faced by members of the Scheduled Caste community.

## Arguments Before the Court

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The petitioner argued that since his father had abandoned him and never contributed to his upbringing, and since his mother raised him alone, he should rightfully be treated as belonging to his mother's caste. His counsel contended that he had endured deprivation and humiliation linked to his mother's community and therefore qualified for Scheduled Caste status.

The State, through the Additional Government Pleader, opposed the petition, pointing to the Vigilance Inquiry Reports that indicated the petitioner's father had in fact attempted to maintain contact and that the mother, a government employee, was financially independent. School records revealed that during his early years, the petitioner was recorded as Hindu Agri, not Chambhar. The State argued that there was no proof that he suffered any social stigma or bias.

## Judicial Reasoning

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The Court examined the evidence and found that the petitioner had not demonstrated any factual basis for a claim of disadvantage arising from caste identity. Relying on its earlier decision in *Swanubhuti Jivraj Jain v. State of Maharashtra* [2025 SCC OnLine Bom 322], the Bench reiterated that children born to inter-caste parents must establish that they faced real social prejudice due to the Scheduled Caste lineage.

Justice Dr. Neela Gokhale, speaking for the Bench, observed that the petitioner enjoyed good educational opportunities, did not suffer any economic hardship, and his mother continued in stable government service. The Court noted that the petitioner's caste was recorded as Hindu Agri during his formative years, which indicated that he initially identified with his father's upper-caste status.

"There is nothing on record to indicate that the petitioner's mother suffered any humiliation which was manifested onto the petitioner," the Bench remarked. It further held that there was no material showing that the petitioner faced any of the typical challenges, that would justify Scheduled Caste recognition.

## Implications for Future Claims

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The ruling clarifies that mere biological connection to a backward community is insufficient to claim the benefits of reservation policies in India. The claimant must establish that they have faced systemic social disadvantage linked to that community status.

This decision will have implications for inter-caste families, especially where one parent is from an upper-caste background. The verdict underscores that caste identity under constitutional law is not a matter of convenience but must be rooted in demonstrable social realities.

## Policy Considerations

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The Court's decision aligns with the broader principle that affirmative action must reach those who genuinely suffer from social discrimination and backwardness. It ensures that the safeguards for historically marginalised communities are not diluted by purely formal or technical claims.

## Conclusion

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In *Sujal Mangala Birwadkar v. State of Maharashtra & Ors.*, the Bombay High Court has drawn a clear line: a child raised by a backward-caste parent must show that they have faced actual discrimination or disadvantage to be entitled to Scheduled Caste status. This judgment reiterates that social context and lived experience remain central to determining caste validity.

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