

Adivasis wants protection of identity & rights, not uniform laws: Prof Virginus Xaxa

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Professor Virginus Xaxa — who headed the High-Level Committee set up by the Prime Minister’s Officer to probe into “the socio-economic, educational and health status of tribal communities” — has said that uniform laws have proved “detrimental” to the interests of the Adivasi community.

In an [online interview](#) with the author, Prof. Xaxa said that the generalised [uniform] laws imposed from the top had negatively affected the Adivasi society, eroding their customary practices and taking away their resources. Instead of such laws, he supported the policy of respecting cultural diversity and ensuring the vulnerable groups their rights enshrined in the Indian Constitution.

Elaborating on this issue, Prof Xaxa said the need of the hour was to protect the Adivasi identity and defend their interests. He argued the imposition of uniformity was not desirable.

Prof Xaxa, who taught sociology at several prestigious educational institutes before his retirement, said that the uniform laws were justified in the name of the larger public good, but they resulted in nullifying some of the protective provisions, which were given to the Adivasi community by the Constitution. “The generalized laws have been detrimental to the Adivasis”, he added.

Former deputy director of Tata Institute of Social Sciences (Guwahati), Prof. Xaxa, therefore, opposed the imposition of uniformity. He expressed disappointment that the discourse on the

uniform civil code was being carried out without seeking the informed consent of the people, particularly those who were the most vulnerable and disadvantaged.

Prof. Xaxa, who worked extensively on the lives of Adivasis, criticized the Government for not placing the report of the 21st Law Commission before the larger public. As a result, the citizens were not facilitated to have informed ideas about the subject.

He called it “unfortunate” that the discourse of the UCC was being held “in a vacuum.” without any preparation by the Government. He, therefore, expressed concern that such a policy might affect religious minorities negatively and adversely impact the Adivasi community as well.

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