

Uniform Civil Code anti-tribal, will destroy ethnic identity: NDA ally CK Janu

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Janadhipathya Rashtriya Party (JRP) chairperson C K Janu

Topic | Wayanad

Wayanad: Noted tribal activist C K Janu, leader of the Janadhipathya Rashtreeya Party (JRP), a constituent of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) in Kerala, came out in opposition of the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) proposed by the Centre. She termed the UCC 'anti-tribal' which would destroy the ethnic identities of tribespeople.

Talking to Onmanorama on Monday on the raging discussions over UCC

at various platforms, Janu said the indigenous people of India who constitute more than 8.6% of the total population are not even considered first-grade citizens of the nation. "What the government should do is first elevate us into the mainstream conferring us first-grade citizenship and then include us in the UCC," she said.

"Until then it is quite unbecoming of the state to include us in the UCC framework," she added.

Janu cited the land distribution system in the country including in Kerala for the landless tribals where the individual is only a possessor of the land who has been denied the right to either sell or pledge it to avail of loans. "When the approach of the state towards tribals is as aforementioned, how could you impose the UCC on us?" she asked.

A contestant of the NDA panel in the last election to the state legislature from the Sulthan Bathery constituency, Janu had shot to fame in 2003 when she led a weeks-long agitation of landless tribals in the Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary that demanded land for all the landless tribespeople of Wayanad.

"Any concept imposed in the name of development which would jeopardise the tribal identity is not acceptable," Janu said.

"There are 36 ethnic tribal groups in Kerala and 705 in India, each having their own customs, traditions, language, education and living standards. Some of them live away from the public domain following their own way of life. If any of our customs and traditions cause any damage to the existence of other communities, to nature, or to earth, we are ready to change. If you want to treat us as equals under the law, first you should make us equals in all spheres of life," she said.

Meantime, Janu termed the anti-UCC campaign of CPM an eyewash. "We will not join CPM in the agitation against UCC but will remain in the NDA and fight for justice in NDA platforms," she said.

From the primary school dropout of the early 1980s, Janu, the passionate voice of tribal rights, has come a long way. Starting out as a member of the farm labourers' wing of CPM, Janu would later leave the left party.

She first came to the limelight in 1992 while organising the South Indian tribal conclave under the banner of South Indian Adivasi Forum which voiced the issues faced by landless tribespeople. The late 1990s witnessed the rise of Adivasi Gothra Maha Sabha (AGMS), founded by Janu along with M Geethanandan, a dalit activist, which spearheaded the Muthanga agitation.