

# What is an affinity test?

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**In news**– Recently, The Supreme Court of India has held in a judgment that an affinity test cannot be the litmus test to decide a caste claim.

## What is the affinity test?

An affinity test mandates **the study and preparation of a report by authorities on caste/tribe claims based on the peculiar anthropological and ethnological traits**, deities, rituals, customs, mode of marriage, death ceremonies, methods of burial of dead bodies, etc, **of the particular caste or tribe and the applicants knowledge of them.**

## What did the Apex Court bench say?

- A three-judge Bench said that an **affinity test is not an essential part of the process of the determination of correctness of a caste or tribe** claim in every case.
- But the court said an **“affinity test can never be conclusive” to prove a caste/tribe claim.**
- The judgment pointed out that an applicant may have “good knowledge” about these traits without belonging to the particular caste or tribe.
- Besides, the bench reasoned that if the “applicant has stayed in bigger urban areas along with his family for decades or if his family has stayed in such urban areas for decades, the applicant may not have knowledge of the facts.
- In some cases, even the parents of the applicants would be unaware of intrinsic tribal or caste traits for the reason that for several years they have been staying in bigger urban areas.
- The court was settling conflicting views on the value of affinity tests to prove caste/tribe claims.

- One view held that if a candidate failed the affinity test at any stage, a caste validity certificate cannot be granted to him.
- The second view was that the affinity test was not the only criterion for deciding a caste claim based on a caste certificate issued by a competent authority.
- **It was held that the affinity test could be used only as a means to corroborate the documentary evidence.**