




Sleepy Classes IAS
Awakening Toppers

SOCIOLOGY

CURRENT AFFAIRS

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Transforming 'men'-talities, redefining masculinity

January 14, 2025, The Hindu

Chapter:

5 - Stratification and Mobility

C-1 Visions of Social Change in India

C-5 Social Movements in Modern India



Introduction

- **Global Perspective:** On November 25, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, attention is drawn to the stark reality that one in three women worldwide faces violence by men.
- **Potential for Change:** Although men are statistically identified as primary perpetrators, two decades of academic and grassroots research indicate they can serve as powerful catalysts for reducing gender-based violence.
- **Emerging Awareness:** Heightened recognition of men's role in promoting gender equality has led to new strategies that urge men to confront and revise conventional masculinity.

'Change also becomes possible when men and boys have positive role models demonstrating equitable behaviours' | Photo Credit: Getty Images/Stockphoto

UNESCO's "Transforming MENTalities" initiative and the India Report

- **Transformative Framework:** UNESCO's "Transforming MENTalities" initiative invites men to move beyond passive endorsement of women's rights and engage as proactive agents of social change.
- **Core Objectives:** By questioning restrictive ideas of masculinity, the initiative encourages positive, supportive male roles aligned with the global goals of Agenda 2030.
- **Collaboration with ICRW:** In partnership with the International Center for Research on Women, UNESCO released "*Engaging Men and Boys: A Report on Pathways to Gender Equality in India*," documenting ten innovative programmes across India that directly involve men in addressing gender inequities.

Key Strategies and Interventions

- **Critical Dialogues:** The highlighted programmes foster open discussions to challenge entrenched gender norms, encouraging participants to reassess behavioral patterns rooted in traditional masculinity.
- **Community-Centric Focus:** Each intervention emphasizes activities—such as education sessions and collective forums—that inspire men to become advocates for equality in their homes, schools, and broader communities.

Illustrative Examples

Mardon Wali Baat ("A man's thing")

- **Approach:** Led by The YP Foundation, it utilizes storytelling and social media to foster conversations around positive masculinities with young men on campuses and in communities.

- **Aim:** Facilitates self-reflection on societal narratives about manhood and promotes core values of respect and equality.

Gender Equity Movement in Schools (GEMS)

- **Collaborators:** ICRW and the Rajasthan Department of Education.
- **Methodology:** Adolescent boys participate in interactive classroom sessions that address toxic masculinity, aiming for sustained changes in attitude.

Dekh Rekha ("caring for each other") and Hamari Shaadi ("our marriage")

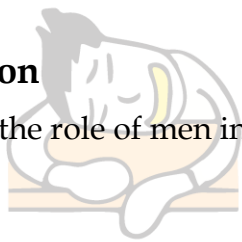
- **Focus:** Encouraging men's active participation in everyday family responsibilities, ranging from nutrition to shared decision-making.
- **Impact:** Demonstrates that incremental, daily efforts can dismantle deeply held biases when men are recognized as key contributors to gender equity.

Concluding Reflections

- **Redefining Masculinity:** The initiatives underscore that men's engagement in practical, everyday matters is vital to cultivating more equitable social environments.
- **Path Forward:** As men and boys increasingly redefine their roles, collective efforts to eradicate violence against women can gain momentum, supporting a vision of gender equality where all individuals can thrive without fear of violence.

Question

Discuss the role of men in promoting gender equality.



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The oligarchy we see today

January 23, 2025, The Hindu

Chapter:

7 - Politics and Society

Introduction

Emergence of a New Oligarchy

- In his final remarks as U.S. President, Joe Biden warned that an oligarchy was forming in America, recalling the historical concern expressed by **Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1961 about the “military-industrial complex.”**
- **Biden specifically highlighted the rise of a “tech industrial complex,”** suggesting a modern Gilded Age of “robber barons” that **could undermine hard-won political and civil freedoms.**



Guests including Mark Zuckerberg, Jeff Bezos, Sundar Pichai and Elon Musk, arrive before the 60th Presidential Inauguration in the Rotunda of the U.S. Capitol in Washington D.C. on January 20, 2025. (Photo Credit: AP)

Political and Economic Entanglement

- **Thirteen billionaires held positions within Donald Trump’s cabinet,** a fact often cited as evidence of unprecedented elite influence within the executive branch.
- **Elon Musk,** whose net worth surpassed \$400 billion, openly discussed imposing “temporary hardship” on the public to reduce government spending via a proposed **Department of Government Efficiency.**
- **Prominent tech CEOs** such as Jeff Bezos (Amazon), Tim Cook (Apple), and Mark Zuckerberg (Meta) **attended Trump’s inauguration, illustrating how major corporate leaders maintain proximity to key political events,** especially when their companies have substantial contracts with the government.

[Reflects C. Wright Mills’ Power Elite – Mills argued that power in modern societies is concentrated among political, military, and economic elites who collaborate to control key institutions.]

Defining Oligarchy

Aristotelian Distinction

- **Aristotle originally used the term “oligarchy” to describe the rule of a few wealthy individuals who govern primarily for “corrupt and unjust purposes.”**
- This model contrasted with “aristocracy,” wherein a small but ostensibly virtuous upper-class rules for the broader public good.

Pathways to Power

- Wealthy elites can leverage financial contributions to political campaigns or leverage social, military, religious, and educational ties to secure favorable government actions and policies.
- Such mechanisms consolidate disproportionate influence and shape policy outcomes in ways aligned with the benefactors’ interests.

Jeffrey A. Winters (2011) (*American political scientist*)

- In *Oligarchy*, Winters emphasizes the concept of “wealth defense” as fundamental.
- He argues that oligarchs – be they ancient, medieval, or modern – constantly seek to protect their resources. Their methods, whether based on personal coercion or collective safeguards, define the specific nature of oligarchy across different historical contexts.

Oligarchy in Historical Context and Shifting Manifestations

Comparative Examples

- **Roman Era: Marcus Licinius Crassus** exemplified a classical oligarch who sought high office (consul) largely to safeguard his wealth and business interests.
- **Modern Parallel:** In 2009, Michael Bloomberg’s bid for a third term as mayor of New York prompted analogies to Crassus, although commentators suggest **contemporary oligarchs may sometimes pursue office more for personal prestige than purely existential economic defense.**

“Evil” Oligarchy

- According to Aristotle and Robert Michels, oligarchic rule becomes oppressive when it:
 - Erodes the rule of law.
 - Dismantles or circumvents checks and balances on power.
 - Places private gain above collective wellbeing.

Global Instances

- **Philippines:** Often categorized as an oligarchy due to the dominance of powerful families, a legacy of colonial history.
- **China:** Self-proclaimed as a communist “People’s Republic,” but some observers see an oligarchic structure, given decades of concentrated leadership power.
- **Russia:** The term “oligarch” is frequently used to describe the country’s wealthy businessmen who prospered after the Soviet era.
- **Bernie Sanders’ Observation (2022):** While oligarchs clearly exist in Russia, he contends that the United States itself is also under the influence of a small, ultra-wealthy elite.

The American Variant of Oligarchy

Ron Formisano’s *American Oligarchy: The Permanent Political Class* (2017)

- Identifies a growing, entrenched “permanent political class” marked by corruption, nepotism, and self-dealing, which exacerbates inequality.
- Argues this class extends beyond politicians to include lobbyists, consultants, appointed bureaucrats, pollsters, celebrity journalists, and billionaires, all of whom interact to maintain elite advantage.

Simon Johnson’s Analysis (*British-American economist*)

- Proposes that an American “financial aristocracy” solidified specifically during the 2008 financial crisis, when financial sector bailouts and regulatory shifts favoured elite interests.

Jimmy Carter (2015)

- Described the U.S. as an “oligarchy with unlimited political bribery,” attributing this to the Citizens United v. FEC Supreme Court ruling in 2010, which removed many restrictions on political donations, thereby amplifying elite influence in electoral politics.

Bernie Sanders’ Global Perspective

- Stresses that oligarchic tendencies are not unique to one country. Instead, a “small number of incredibly wealthy people” can be seen directing policy in numerous nations worldwide.

Democracy vs. Oligarchy

Aristotle’s Politics

- Contrasts oligarchy with democracy, arguing democracy is “safer and freer from civil strife.” The fundamental premise is that broader participation in governance mitigates elite dominance.

Robert Michels’ “Iron Law of Oligarchy”

- Michels maintained that true democracy inevitably succumbs to oligarchic rule due to the practical necessities of large-scale organization and division of labor. Over time, leadership circles centralize power, effectively sidelining full democratic participation.

John Adams’ Early Warning

- Over two centuries ago, Adams foresaw the risk that a concentrated “power elite” might emerge, hinting at a perennial tension in republican governance.

Contemporary Concerns

- With intensifying inequality and rapidly evolving technological tools (e.g., Artificial Intelligence), wealth and influence may concentrate even further.
- This can exacerbate oligarchic structures if robust institutional safeguards are not maintained.

Concluding Observations

- Modern democracies continue to grapple with the possibility that elite interests, fueled by vast wealth and global-scale corporate power, may overshadow broader public governance.
- While some thinkers (e.g., Aristotle) champion democracy as a protector against the undue power of the few, others (e.g., Michels) argue that the centralization of authority in any large organization is virtually inevitable.
- The ongoing debate centers on whether current political structures and reforms can contain the rise of oligarchic power or whether this “iron law” ultimately prevails in complex societies.

Question

Discuss the concept of oligarchy and its impact on democracy

Discuss how oligarchy can exist within democratic societies. Explain the factors that sustain elite power.

Youth at the forefront of climate litigation

January 02, 2025, The Hindu

Chapter:

7 - Politics and Society

Introduction

- **Youth Leadership in Climate Cases:** Young litigants worldwide argue that insufficient climate action amounts to a human rights violation, given the disproportionate impacts on future generations.
- **Demand for Systemic Change:** Their lawsuits call for large-scale reforms to confront the escalating climate emergency, emphasizing the urgency of robust policy measures to safeguard human rights and the environment.



Youth plaintiffs in the *Held v. Montana* climate case leave the Montana Supreme Court on July 10, 2024, in Helena, Montana. Photo: Independent Record via AP

[Alain Touraine's theory of new social movements underlines that contemporary collective action often focuses on cultural and social goals—like environmental justice—rather than solely economic interests.]

Major Milestones

Held v. State of Montana (United States)

- A 6-1 decision in the Montana Supreme Court ruled that the State's fossil fuel policies infringed on youth plaintiffs' constitutional rights, marking the first time a **U.S. court upheld young people's right to a clean and healthful environment in the climate context.**

La Rose v. His Majesty King (Canada)

- **Young plaintiffs contend Canada's climate policies violate their rights under Section 7 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.**
- The government chose not to dismiss the case, allowing an eight-week trial set for October 2026.
- **Plaintiffs seek a court-mandated, science-based climate recovery plan.**

Other Global Examples

- **Netherlands:** A court ruling required stricter emissions targets.
- **Colombia:** The Supreme Court acknowledged the Amazon rainforest as a legal entity, mandating its protection for future generations.
- **Germany:** The Constitutional Court compelled stronger climate policies to uphold youth rights.

India

- **Ridhima Pandey's Petition (2017):** Filed before the National Green Tribunal, calling for climate change integration into environmental impact assessments, a national greenhouse gas inventory, and carbon budgets.
- Dismissed by the NGT in 2019; now on appeal to the Supreme Court, where the court has sought government inputs.

- The petition has heightened awareness of intergenerational equity in India's climate debates.

Transformative Implications

- **From Awareness to Litigation:** Youth-led actions extend beyond protests, using courts to enforce government accountability and highlight the intersection of human rights with environmental protection.
- **Global Movements and Policy Shifts:** Successes in courts inspire broader campaigns, pressuring authorities to reevaluate inadequate climate measures.
- **Challenges in India:** Youth face increased constraints on public protests but persist by using digital platforms and aligning with broader social movements, aiming to influence policy outcomes through legal battles.

Conclusion

- By leveraging judicial avenues, young activists shape climate policies worldwide, ensuring that long-term environmental interests remain central to national and global agendas.

Question

"What role do youth-led movements play in shaping environmental policy, and how do these movements reflect broader shifts in contemporary social activism?"



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The Cycles of Global Hierarchies

Reversals of Fortune: Why the Hierarchy of Nations So Often Turns Topsy-Turvy by Ashok Sanjay Guha, New Delhi: Routledge, 2020.

Vol. 60, Issue No. 3, 18 Jan, 2025, EPW

Chapter:

10 - Social Change in Modern Society

Introduction

Context of Global Transformations

- In the wake of the Cold War's end and the collapse of the Soviet Bloc, many observers heralded a new era of global liberalism. **Scholars like Francis Fukuyama (1989) even predicted an "end of history" in which liberal democratic capitalism would be universally adopted.**

[As per Marx history ends with communism (classless society). Fukuyama reversed Marx's idea and argued that liberal democracy and capitalism, not communism, mark the final stage of human political evolution.]

- This **optimism quickly waned, however, as neo-liberal reforms led to significant socio-economic hardships.** In many Western economies, the period of post-war prosperity gave way to stagnation and austerity measures that rolled back labour rights.
- In the global South, these reforms exacerbated poverty, undermined state capacity, and deepened external debt, leading to the discrediting of the Washington Consensus.**

[Dependency theorists argue that such reforms often reinforce core-periphery inequalities, placing developing regions at a structural disadvantage.]

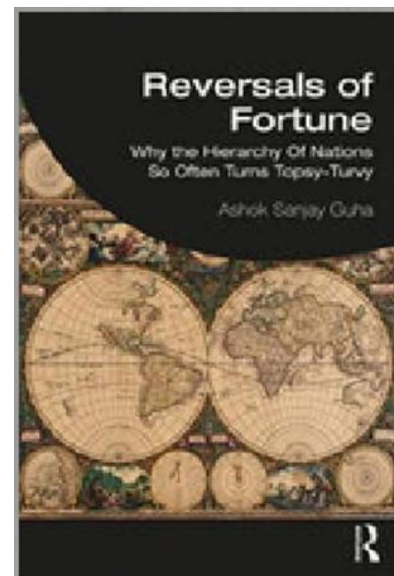
- Against this backdrop, **mainstream economics shifted to examine "extra-market" forces—social, institutional, geographical, and cultural factors—that shape economic performance (World Bank 2002).** This emerging field is often termed the New Development Economics (NDE).

[New Development Economics (NDE) can be seen as an overlap between economy and sociology]

Central Thesis of Reversals of Fortune

Focus on Cyclical Hegemonies

- Ashok Sanjay Guha's book Reversals of Fortune:** Does not merely analyse one-way convergence or divergence of economies. Instead, it **emphasizes the recurring upheavals in global power structures, exploring how and why certain nations or regions ascend at specific historical junctures while others decline.**
- The author's essential inquiry centers on explaining why world leadership in wealth and power can pass from Asia to Europe (in early modern history), from the Netherlands to Britain (in the 17th and 18th centuries), and from the West to parts of Asia in the contemporary period.



Two Key Contributions

- **Shifting the Analytical Lens:** Instead of focusing solely on indicators such as GDP per capita, Guha foregrounds the broader questions of changing hierarchies and how states experience periodic rise and fall.
- **Synergies of Geography, Technology, and Trade:** Guha critiques the NDE literature, which often **highlights** either geography or institutions as the chief determinant of national prosperity. He instead underscores how these factors (i.e. **geography or institutions**) **combine with technological and commercial developments to create “fits,” which are contexts wherein a region’s geographic advantages align with global trade patterns and available technology, triggering economic ascent.**

The Synergy of Geography, Technology, and Trade

Moving Beyond Unidimensional Explanations

- The NDE field has seen an ongoing debate between scholars who emphasize the deterministic role of geography (for example, climatic conditions or natural resources) and those who focus on institutional factors (property rights, rule of law, governance structures).
- Guha rejects this binary. He contends that a **nation’s success at any historical moment arises from how effectively it leverages its geographic features** (coastlines, mineral deposits, topography) **in conjunction with prevailing global technologies** (such as maritime navigation or industrial manufacturing) **and trade networks** (access to markets, shipping routes, and capital flows).

Defining ‘Fits’

- In this framework, **geography is not a constant asset but an evolving one that gains or loses importance depending on the state of technology and trade.** A resource-rich hinterland is useless if roads, rail, or maritime capabilities are inadequate to carry those resources to markets.
- Successful “fits” occur when technological innovation and trade patterns complement a region’s physical landscape and policy environment, incentivizing investments in production, commerce, and military capacity. These investments, in turn, reinforce the region’s comparative advantage, contributing to shifting global hierarchies.

Historical Illustrations of Shifting Hegemonies

From Asia’s Dominance to Europe’s Ascendancy

- Guha notes that land-based Asian empires, rich in agricultural yields and internal trade, did not prioritize maritime exploration or naval weaponry. Conversely, Europe’s fragmented geography (with extensive coastlines and overseas interests) compelled its states to develop maritime technologies.
- This geographical emphasis on the seas fostered stronger ships, better navigational techniques, and more advanced firearms, eventually enabling European powers to penetrate and control oceanic trade routes.

Transition from Spain/Netherlands to Britain

- Early modern Spain and the Netherlands were leaders in global exploration and shipping. However, Britain’s “fit” was superior in certain critical respects.

- Britain's island geography offered a degree of military security that Spain and France lacked. This lack of immediate land-based threat meant Britain could dedicate its financial and human resources more fully to naval power and maritime commerce.
- As maritime ventures produced wealth, a new mercantile elite emerged in Britain, challenging feudal landowners. This societal shift facilitated freer markets, stoking further commercial expansion and industrialization.

[This aligns with Marxist theories of historical materialism, which emphasize how economic transformations lead to social and political change.]

The Contemporary Era and the Rise of Asia

- The final chapter argues that today's technological advances—such as container shipping, telecommunications, and advanced manufacturing—may favour certain regions in Asia that have cultivated export-oriented industries (exemplified by East Asian Tigers, and more recently China and India).
- The book suggests we could be witnessing a realignment of global power towards Asia, driven by its growing technological capacity and its resourceful adaptation to new trade landscapes.

Critique: The Limits of 'Fixed' Geography

Relevance of Global Connectivity

- Guha's explanations rely heavily on how nations' geographic characteristics align with technological and commercial demands at a given time. Yet, from a sociological and geographical perspective, this approach can risk treating geography as static and inherently "local."
- Critics like Sheppard (2002, 2011) argue that geography should also be viewed relationally, highlighting how global flows of labour, capital, and knowledge—and historically, colonial extraction—shape a region's capacity to benefit from trade or technology.

Overlooking Colonial Networks and Capital Flows

- Scholars like Giovanni Arrighi, Andre Gunder Frank, and Anibal Quijano emphasize that Europe's 16th- and 17th-century rise was embedded in colonial domination, the plunder of the New World, and the appropriation of knowledge (including technology borrowed from Asia).
- While Guha acknowledges European incursions into Asia, his analysis positions colonial conquests as an aftereffect of Europe's maritime strength, rather than integral to its original leap to hegemony.
- By underplaying the exploitative relationships between rising and peripheral regions, the book may neglect how forced extraction, slavery, and colonial trade monopolies actively created the European "fit."
- Economic data show vast transfers of wealth from the global South to the global North persist in the current era (Hickel et al 2022). Moreover, US-led military interventions and sanctions continue to shape global hierarchies.

Conclusion

- Guha's multi-causal framework enriches standard development economics by showing how geography, technology, and trade interlock to produce cycles of ascendancy and decline.

Ambedkar supported caste census, not its politicisation

Jan 16, 2025, Indian Express

Chapter:

B-2 Caste System

C-6 Population Dynamics

Introduction

- **Caste Data in Independent India:** Since 1951, census reports have collected and published data only for Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs), stopping short of detailed caste-specific information.
- **Demand for Caste Census:** Proponents argue it would facilitate more effective affirmative action; however, the latest push seems closely tied to political strategies rather than purely administrative or social objectives.
- **Ambedkar's Name Invoked:** Leaders and parties often cite Ambedkar to support the idea of a caste census, making it necessary to analyze his stated views.



There were at least two occasions when BR Ambedkar expressed his displeasure with the decision of not collecting caste-specific information. (Express Photo by Bhupendra Rana)

Ambedkar's Advocacy of Caste Data

Critique of 1951 Census

- Ambedkar criticized the omission of detailed caste statistics, noting that categorizing only by religion or "untouchable" status provides limited sociological insight.

Thoughts on Linguistic States (1955)

- He regretted that colonial-era practice of documenting caste distributions was abandoned post-Independence.

Untouchables or the Children of India's Ghetto (1935):

- He defended Herbert Risley's classification of castes (1901 Census) by social precedence, arguing that Indian society's strict hierarchical gradations warranted systematic data collection.

Constituent Assembly Debates (1948, 1949)

- Ambedkar insisted on accurate enumeration of SCs and STs, given their electoral representation depends on exact population figures.

Concerns Over Politicization

Manipulation of Census Figures

- **Mr Gandhi and Emancipation of the Untouchables (1943):** Ambedkar observed that census numbers were often artificially inflated or "cooked" for political advantage.
- **Meeting with British Authorities (1946):** He expressed doubts about officially recorded SC populations, attributing inconsistencies to political influences on the census.

States and Minorities (1947)

- This memorandum from his Scheduled Caste Federation **underscored that census-taking had “ceased to be an operation in demography,”** warning how communities might exaggerate their numbers for electoral power.

Contemporary Implications

Methodological Hurdles

- **Overlapping Categories:** Caste frequently intersects with linguistic, tribal, or regional identities, making clean classification challenging.
- **Multiple Labels and Identities:** Variations in local caste nomenclature can complicate uniform data collection.

Room for Political Maneuvering

- Historical instances of strategic identity claims suggest that any **new caste census could again be exploited for partisan ends** – precisely what Ambedkar cautioned against.

Conclusion

- Ambedkar championed detailed caste enumeration as a means to understand social stratification, yet he firmly opposed processes driven by electoral maneuvering rather than genuine demographic inquiry.
- Modern advocates of a caste census should heed his warnings about politicization, ensuring data collection remains scientifically grounded and free from partisan distortions.

Question

Critically analyse the significance of caste enumeration in understanding social stratification in India. What are the potential social and political consequences of conducting a caste census?

Criminalising beggars in India: A colonial legacy

Jan 2, 2025, Indian Express

Chapter:

C-1 Visions of Social Change in India

C-3 Industrialization and Urbanisation in India

C-7 Challenges of Social Transformation



Introduction

- **Recent Prohibitory Orders:** On December 16, **Indore's district collector invoked Section 163** of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS) to ban giving alms to "beggars."
- **SMILE Scheme (2022):** Under the Union government's **Support for Marginalised Individuals for Livelihood and Enterprise (SMILE)** initiative, the stated goal is to **"rehabilitate beggars"** through healthcare, education, and skills training, ultimately making Indian cities "beggar-free" by 2026.

Constitutional and Historical Underpinnings

Concurrent List, Entry 15: The Indian Constitution empowers both the Union and State governments to legislate on "vagrancy, nomadic and migratory tribes."

Constituent Assembly Debate (September 1, 1949)

- **Raj Bahadur's Proposal:** Argued for adding "control and eradication of beggary" to the Union List, viewing some **beggars as "lazy" and a social burden.**
- **Ambedkar's Position:** Opposed separate listing, stating "vagrancy" already included beggary, thus both Centre and States could address it.

History of Criminalising Beggars

- **William Chambliss (A Sociological Analysis of the Law of Vagrancy):** Traces **English vagrancy laws** to the Ordinance of Labourers (1349), **enacted post-Black Plague to retain a cheap labour supply for feudal lords.**
- **Marie-Eve Sylvestre ("Crime and Social Classes"):** Shows how **Anglo-Saxon laws portrayed the poor as morally inferior and inherently "lazy," paving the way for treating them as criminals.**
- **1871 Criminal Tribes Act:** British policy **labeled numerous nomadic groups as "criminal" to facilitate forced sedentarisation and exploit them for wage labour.**
- **Meena Radhakrishna's Work (Dishonoured by History):** Demonstrates how colonial prejudice and economic motives drove the classification of itinerant communities as criminal.

Retention of Colonial Logic in Indian Statutes

Bombay Prevention of Begging Act, 1959

- **Definition of Begging:** **Goes beyond soliciting alms to encompass street performances, small-scale vending, or "appearing" destitute.**

- **Implications:** This broad scope often criminalises not just the urban poor but also nomadic communities, enabling authorities to remove them in “beautification” drives.
- **Case Study of Delhi:** Police and municipal officials historically used such laws to target vulnerable groups in public spaces, mirroring colonial practices.

Emerging Shifts in Jurisprudence

Delhi High Court (2018)

- Struck down portions of the Bombay Prevention of Begging Act as “manifestly arbitrary,” violating the right to live with dignity (Article 21).
- Observed that criminalising begging is contradictory when the state itself fails to meet citizens’ basic needs.

Supreme Court (July 2021)

- Refused a PIL seeking to remove beggars from public areas, rejecting an “elitist view.”
- Recognised begging as a socio-economic challenge, warranting systemic solutions rather than punitive measures.

Conclusion

The SMILE scheme could address urban poverty by offering constructive avenues for healthcare, education, and skill-building.

However, reliance on colonial-era laws and broad anti-beggary statutes could undermine genuine rehabilitation, perpetuating stigma and criminalisation.

Question

How have colonial laws and urban policies influenced India's treatment of beggars?

Unveiling Kudumbashree

Empowering Women and Combating Poverty in Kerala

Poverty, Women and Capability: A Study of Kerala's Kudumbashree System by K P Kannan and G Raveendran, Thiruvananthapuram: Laurie Baker Centre for Habitat Studies, 2023

Vol. 60, Issue No. 3, 18 Jan, 2025, EPW

Chapter:

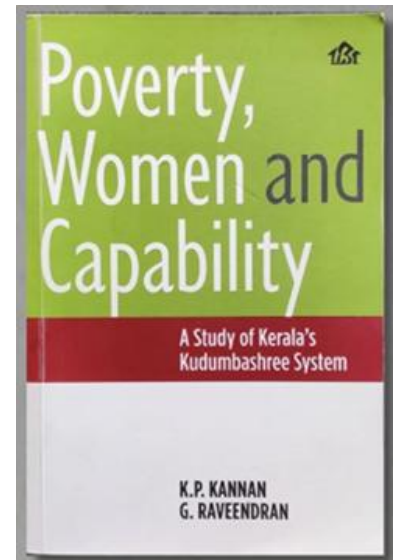
C-2 Rural and Agrarian transformation in India

C-5 Social Movements in Modern India

C-7 Challenges of Social Transformation

Introduction

- Initiated by the Government of Kerala in 1998 as the state's poverty eradication programme, Kudumbashree (meaning "prosperity of the family") is a network of women's self-help groups operating through a three-tier structure at the local government level (city, municipality, and gram panchayat).
- Conceived to tackle the multi-dimensionality of poverty by explicitly recognizing women's agency, Kudumbashree diverged from earlier top-down poverty alleviation strategies by situating women as principal agents of change.
- Situated within the broader discourse on microfinance and self-help groups in the global South, Kudumbashree aims not only at poverty reduction but also at enhancing the capabilities of women participants.
- As part of Kerala's devolved governance system, the programme is integrated with local bodies (panchayats, municipalities), enabling a participatory approach to planning and implementing development schemes.



Kudumbashree and Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE)

- The SSE is often described as an intermediary sector distinct from both the state and market, emphasizing cooperative or associative economic activities for social goals rather than profit maximization.
- Decisions within SSE models typically follow democratic or participatory processes, and members share both benefits and responsibilities in fostering mutual well-being.
- Kudumbashree operates as a crucial pillar of Kerala's SSE by organizing poor women into collectives that address household income generation, capacity-building, and community development.

Main Themes and Arguments from the Book

- Poverty, Women and Capability: A Study of Kerala's Kudumbashree System* by K P Kannan and G Raveendran uses representative sample surveys to assess whether Kudumbashree meets its stated objectives of alleviating poverty and empowering women.
- The authors highlight how the programme positions women as primary actors in development interventions, challenging traditional, male-centric models.

- Given Kerala's high degree of decentralization, Kudumbashree benefits from robust linkages with local governance structures.
- The authors underscore that **by serving as official implementing agencies for important public works like MGNREGS, the Kudumbashree federations** (known as community development societies, CDSs) facilitate women's direct involvement in local decision-making processes.

Critical Appraisals of Kudumbashree

- Some scholars (Biju and Kumar 2013) view Kudumbashree as a legitimate union-like space that can cultivate women's collective interests, while others (Devika and Thampi 2007) question whether it truly empowers women to contest patriarchal power.
- Critics point out that despite its discourse on women's agency, Kudumbashree might not effectively mobilize women as a distinct political constituency; instead, it may reinforce an apolitical "consumer" identity.
- By presenting women's empowerment primarily through income-generation and consumption capacity, Kudumbashree may be reinforcing a depoliticized form of citizenship.
- Studies (Williams et al 2011, 2012) note how government-led poverty management programmes often overlook deeper power dynamics and socio-political structures that reproduce poverty.
- This critique suggests that addressing poverty requires acknowledging and confronting entrenched inequalities related to caste, religion, and class, yet Kudumbashree's official framing may sidestep these more politicized concerns.
- The authors note under-representation of minority religious households (Muslim and Christian) in Kudumbashree, indicating possible exclusionary tendencies.
- Ongoing political shifts—including right-wing mobilizations—add complexity to how Kudumbashree women navigate local alliances and broader state-level electoral contests.
- The book aligns with a capability-centric view of poverty, suggesting that microfinance alone does not suffice. Rather, social and political empowerment are integral to robust poverty eradication strategies.
- The authors propose that if implemented with genuine participatory engagement, Kudumbashree can enhance women's self-efficacy and financial security, thus contributing to broader socio-economic uplift.

Conclusions

- Kudumbashree provides a case study on how state-led interventions can blend economic assistance with grassroots participation, illustrating concepts of empowerment, collective action, and the significance of local governance. Yet, critical readings highlight the need to address the deeper societal structures—gender inequalities, social stratification, and communal politics—that shape who benefits from such programmes and how.

Question

How does Kerala's Kudumbashree programme seek to empower women and reduce poverty, and what are some key challenges it faces in achieving these goals?

Tackling delimitation by reversing population control

January 02, 2025, The Hindu

Chapter:

C-4 Politics and Society

C-6 Population Dynamics

Introduction

- Focus on proposed delimitation and potential reduction in parliamentary seats for Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, and other southern States.
- Concern arises because these regions, having lower fertility rates, might be “penalised” for successful population control efforts.
- Political leaders like N. Chandrababu Naidu and M.K. Stalin have raised the possibility of reversing previous family planning laws, indicating a strategy to safeguard representation by encouraging larger families.



“One person one vote” may well be ideal but the difference in numbers of political representation in one region will be skewed beyond proportions” | Photo Credit: The Hindu

Attempts to Reverse or Influence Fertility

- Andhra Pradesh had once prohibited individuals with more than two children from contesting local polls but repealed this law; there is now talk of reinstituting or reversing similar measures.
- Policy shifts hint at using incentives or benefits to raise fertility, suggesting a direct political linkage between population growth and representation.

[Michel Foucault's concept of “biopolitics” suggests how states manage populations and bodies through policies on reproduction.]

- Global evidence indicates that deliberate increases in fertility typically meet limited success; once fertility has declined, it tends to remain low despite policy interventions.

Lessons from China's One-Child Policy

- China's restrictive population strategies curbed overall growth but led to adverse effects, including an unbalanced sex ratio, challenges in the marriage market, and a high dependency burden.
- Excessive intervention in demographic trends often introduces unforeseen social and economic strains, making any reversal of low fertility extremely difficult.
- China's ongoing attempts to boost birth rates illustrate how swift, top-down regulation can produce outcomes that are resistant to later policy corrections.

[Warren Thompson's demographic transition model implies that once fertility has declined, government interventions to reverse it face structural challenges.]

Varied Population Counts and Political Representation

- Southern States' fertility decline outpaces that of northern States, creating uneven population momentum across regions.

- Relying purely on population counts to determine political seats risks penalising progressive family planning outcomes.
- **Scholars argue for rethinking delimitation methods**—potentially incorporating factors like educational development—so that States are not disadvantaged for achieving lower fertility.

Impact on Women

- **Encouraging higher fertility overlooks the disproportionate social, economic, and health costs women face in childbearing and childrearing.**

[Feminist sociologists, like Ann Oakley, highlight how reproductive burdens fall disproportionately on women, often with minimal state support.]

- Despite the broader demographic “dividend” from reduced population growth, gains for women remain uneven, highlighting the gap between national policy goals and on-the-ground gender realities.
- **Any plan to reverse fertility trends requires substantial support systems, including guaranteed benefits and compensation for women’s reproductive roles.**

Conclusion

- While reversing fertility might help preserve seat allocations for lower-growth regions, the broader demographic and social complexities often outweigh political benefits.
- Experiences in China and other nations demonstrate that forced or incentivised reversals of fertility trends produce limited results and can introduce long-term demographic imbalances.
- A more sustainable resolution involves reassessing how parliamentary seats are apportioned, ensuring that successful family planning initiatives do not translate into diminished political representation.

Question

What political factors influence population policies? How do State-led pronatalist policies affect women? What challenges do governments face in trying to change fertility rates?

Michael Burawoy's legacy: Why sociology must engage with the public for a more just world

Feb 11, 2025, Indian Express

Chapter:

1 - Sociology - The Discipline

5 - Sociological Thinkers



Few have believed as deeply in the promise of Sociology as Michael Burawoy, Emeritus professor at the University of California, Berkeley. (Photo - UC Berkeley)

Introduction

- **Michael Burawoy**, Emeritus professor at the University of California, Berkeley passed away in Oakland, California, following a hit-and-run incident on February 3
- Few have believed as deeply in the promise of Sociology as Michael Burawoy, Emeritus professor at the University of California, Berkeley.
- His call to do public sociology not only inspired a generation of scholars, activists and educators but also helped provincialise a discipline that has long held a Euro-American bias.

Definition of Public Sociology:

- Public Sociology, as defined by Michael Burawoy, involves sociology actively engaging with broader publics outside academia. Its goal is to address societal issues by fostering dialogues between sociologists and communities, influencing positive social change and reducing inequalities.

Core Principles of Public Sociology:

- **Dialogue and Engagement:** Actively communicating sociological knowledge beyond academia to diverse publics.
- **Moral Commitment:** Integrating scholarly work with moral responsibility, focusing on marginalized and oppressed perspectives.
- **Interdisciplinary Collaboration:** Encouraging productive exchanges among disciplines while resisting narrow economic or policy-driven paradigms.
- **Inclusivity and Representation:** Challenging the Euro-American dominance of sociology to incorporate broader global perspectives.

Need for Public Sociology:

- Academic sociology often remains insular and disconnected from urgent societal concerns.
- There is a growing neoliberal pressure on academia, prioritizing market-driven outcomes over intellectual autonomy and social justice.
- Critical engagement is necessary to address systemic inequalities, political

disenfranchisement, and various forms of social oppression.

Examples of Public Sociology:

- Advocating for public education amidst student debt crises in the U.S.
- Critically addressing global conflicts, such as the Israeli-Palestinian issue and settler colonial violence.
- Engagement with civil rights and feminist movements, demonstrating sociology's impact on policy and public awareness.
- Promoting student participation in translating private experiences into public dialogues for social reform.

Transformative Potential of Public Sociology:

- Public Sociology aims to move beyond describing social realities to actively influencing and transforming society.
- Burawoy emphasizes exploring "real utopias," practical alternatives existing within the current societal framework, enabling transformative social change.
- It encourages sociologists to reject bureaucratic constraints, such as publication metrics, fostering genuine, impactful engagement with society.

Burawoy's Contribution in Public Sociology:

- Burawoy's seminal 2004 presidential address at the American Sociological Association emphasized sociology's active role in public dialogue.
- Advocated tirelessly for sociology's moral and ethical responsibility to address social injustices and inequality.
- Championed sociology's engagement with civil society, promoting a responsive rather than detached academic stance.
- Highlighted the dangers of neoliberalism's impact on academia and critiqued the market-driven erosion of critical scholarly independence.
- Inspired a generation of scholars, activists, and educators to prioritize active, moral, and practical engagement in their sociological practice.

Question

What are the core principles of Public Sociology, and why is there a need for sociology to engage actively beyond academia?

Women do unpaid domestic work for over 7 hours while men socialise, relax: Govt survey reveals deep-rooted gender bias

Chapter:

5 - Stratification and Mobility

B-5 Systems of Kinship in India

B-6 Religion and Society



The situation of unappreciated unpaid labour by women in families was shown in the movie Mrs.(PC:X)

Introduction:

- The **Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation** released the **Time Use Survey (TUS)** on February 25, detailing how Indians spent their time throughout **2024**. The survey includes self-care, leisure, socializing, and unpaid domestic work.

Key Findings:

Self-care Activities:

- Men spend 49.3% and women 49% of their total time** on self-care (sleeping, eating, hygiene).

Unpaid Domestic Work:

- Women dedicate 19.8%** of their total daily time to unpaid domestic responsibilities (household chores, caregiving).
- Men allocate only 2.7%** of their daily time to similar unpaid tasks.
- Daily breakdown:
 - Women: 426 minutes (7 hours 6 minutes).
 - Men: 163 minutes (2 hours 43 minutes).

[Sociological Concept: "Second Shift" (Arlie Hochschild) - refers to the dual responsibilities of paid and unpaid work primarily borne by women. This highlights the invisible domestic labor that women disproportionately undertake.]

Socializing and Leisure:

- For men, socializing and leisure** constitute the **second-largest time activity at 20.3%**.

Gender Disparity in Employment:

- Employment activities** occupy:
- Men: 19.9%** of their daily time.
- Women: only 4.9%.**
- Employment participation among females aged 15-59 improved slightly from 21.8% in 2019 to 25% in 2024.

- Daily average employment activity time:
 - Men: 473 minutes.
 - Women: 341 minutes.

[Relevant Sociologist: Talcott Parsons' Functionalism—gender roles are divided clearly, often placing women in expressive roles (caregiving and emotional support) and men in instrumental roles (economic provision and public interaction), which reinforces traditional gender inequalities.]

Implications:

- The findings underscore significant gender inequalities rooted in traditional roles.
- Women's excessive unpaid domestic workload severely limits their employment participation and opportunities for social and leisure activities.
- Incremental improvements in women's employment participation show progress but highlight persistent structural and cultural barriers.

[Relevant Sociologist: Sylvia Walby, in Theorizing Patriarchy, highlights six structures that sustain male dominance and gender inequality: paid work, beauty standards, sexuality, violence, the state, and household relations.]

Conclusion:

- Addressing these deep-rooted gender biases requires societal, cultural, and policy-level interventions to redistribute unpaid domestic responsibilities and improve women's representation in employment and leisure activities.

Question

Critically analyse how the gendered division of unpaid domestic labour contributes to sustaining patriarchal structures in contemporary Indian society.

Unlocking Women's Workforce Potential in India

February 12, 2025, The Hindu

Chapter:

5 - Stratification and Mobility

C-3 Industrialization and Urbanisation in India

C-7 Challenges of Social Transformation



'A staggering 60% of India's women of working-age remain outside the labour force, depriving the economy of their contributions' | Photo Credit: Getty Images/Stockphoto

Introduction:

A recent study by Aakash Dev and Ratna Sahay, published by the National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER), examines two significant barriers hindering women's labour force participation in India:

1. The disproportionate burden of unpaid care work on women.
2. Lack of formal part-time employment opportunities.

Current Situation and Barriers:

- **India's** Female Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) is low at **37%**, compared to the global average of **47%** and **OECD average of 67%**.
- **Barrier 1: Unpaid Care Work**
 - Indian women spend more than twice as much time as men on unpaid domestic responsibilities (Time Use in India Report, 2019).
 - Responsibilities include child-rearing, elder care, and household chores, severely limiting paid employment opportunities.
- **Barrier 2: Absence of Formal Part-Time Work**
 - India lacks formal and legally protected part-time employment, unlike advanced economies.
 - **Globally, 57% of women in part-time jobs value flexibility;** in India, lack of formal recognition forces women into informal, insecure employment without benefits or protections.

Key Study Findings:

- **Addressing these barriers could increase India's female LFPR from 37% to 43% (an increase of 6 percentage points).**

The Study Identified Key Interventions:

1. **Formalising Part-Time Employment:** Introducing recognized part-time contracts with pro-rated wages and benefits.

2. Redistribution of Unpaid Care Work: Implementing paid parental leave, investing in childcare infrastructure, and promoting cultural shifts away from traditional gender roles.

Best Practices from Advanced Economies:

- **Scandinavian countries:** Comprehensive part-time employment policies, generous parental leave, subsidised childcare.
- **France:** Equal rights and protections for part-time and full-time employees.
- **European Union directives (late 1990s):** Mandate equal pay and social security for part-time workers.
- India's labour laws currently lack such protections, perpetuating gender inequalities.

Policy Recommendations:

- **Formalisation of Part-Time Work:** Define clear guidelines including hourly minimum wages, job security, and social security benefits.
- **Investment in Care Infrastructure:** Public and private sectors to develop affordable childcare and eldercare services, generating new employment in the care economy.
- **Promoting Gender Equality in Caregiving:** Implementing paid parental leave for both parents, tax incentives for shared caregiving responsibilities, and public awareness campaigns challenging traditional norms.
- **Flexible Work Policies:** Employers encouraged to offer remote work, adjustable schedules, enhancing employee productivity and retention.

Economic and Social Benefits:

- **Closing the gender gap could increase India's GDP by 27% (IMF estimate).**
- Higher LFPR translates to increased household income, better living standards, and higher productivity.
- Societal benefits include changing gender perceptions, improved health, education outcomes, and broader cultural shifts towards gender equality.

Challenges to Implementation:

- Deep-seated cultural norms resist changes in caregiving roles.
- Employers may hesitate to adopt flexibility without legislative support.
- Informality in India's labour market (over 80% informal employment) complicates formalisation.

Conclusion and the Way Forward:

- A coordinated approach involving policymakers, employers, and civil society is crucial.
- Policymakers must lead with legislative reforms and investment.
- Employers should recognize the economic advantages of workforce diversity and flexible policies.
- Civil society organizations must advocate continuously for gender equality.

- As India aspires to be a developed nation by 2047, maximizing women's workforce potential through these targeted interventions is imperative.

Question

Discuss how gender roles and the structure of the labour market influence social mobility in contemporary India.



Sleepy Classes IAS
Awakening Toppers

ASER reveals gender gap in digital literacy. We must ensure that no girl is left behind

Feb 3, 2025, Indian Express

Chapter:

5 - Stratification and Mobility

C-7 Challenges of Social Transformation



In an era where smartphones can help you access information and education at your fingertips, this disparity places girls at a significant disadvantage, exacerbating existing inequalities. (Representational image)

Introduction:

- The Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) 2024 by Pratham highlights significant gender disparities in smartphone access and use among rural children in India.
- Digital connectivity is crucial for empowerment and agency, yet boys substantially outpace girls in digital access and utilisation.

[Sociological Concept: Pierre Bourdieu's "Cultural Capital" – highlights how differential access to digital resources constitutes a modern form of cultural capital, crucial for educational success and social mobility.]

Key Data from ASER 2024:

- Availability of smartphones at home (ages 14-16): Boys – 90.2%, Girls – 88.1%.
- Actual access to devices for digital tasks: Boys – 70.2%, Girls – 62.2%.
- Ability to use smartphones: Boys – 85.5%, Girls – 79.4%.
- Personal ownership of smartphones: Boys – 36.2%, Girls – 26.9%.

Regional Disparities:

- Higher digital educational engagement observed in Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Haryana, and Sikkim due to better infrastructure and proactive educational policies.
- States with lower digital educational engagement include Meghalaya, Mizoram, Chhattisgarh, and West Bengal, highlighting the need for region-specific interventions addressing digital literacy and socio-cultural challenges.

Implications of the Data:

- Availability does not equate to accessibility due to systemic barriers such as social norms, parental control, and prioritisation of boys' education.
- Gender gap in digital literacy mirrors deep-rooted societal gender biases and traditional norms prioritising boys over girls.
- Digital exclusion of girls reinforces structural inequalities and hinders progress towards gender equity.

- Lack of personal smartphone ownership among girls severely limits independent exploration, learning, and skill development.
- Smartphones offer essential access to online education, skill-building, and social mobility, particularly important for rural girls.
- Gender disparities in digital access perpetuate socio-economic inequalities and negatively impact girls' competitiveness in the job market.

[Sociological Concept: "Social Exclusion" highlights how exclusion from digital technology access limits opportunities for educational and economic advancement, reinforcing gender-based inequalities.]

Conclusion:

- Bridging the digital divide is critical and non-negotiable for inclusive education and gender equality.
- Ensuring digital access and ownership among girls is essential for national progress and achieving true social equity.

Question

In what ways does differential access to digital technology reinforce existing structures of stratification and hinder social transformation in contemporary India?



Sleepy Classes IAS
Awakening Toppers

Construction of Small-family Norm in Post-independence India

Vol. 60, Issue No. 7, 15 Feb, 2025, EPW

Chapter:

B-5 Systems of Kinship in India

C-1 Visions of Social Change in India

C-6 Population Dynamics



Introduction:

- The **small-family norm** has been central to India's post-independence development **discourse**, promoting the idea that limiting family size is essential for national progress.
- However, this norm, **largely influenced by international neo-Malthusian pressures and domestic elite interests**, has often disregarded socio-cultural realities and deeper inequalities within Indian society.

Evolution of the Small-family Norm:

- **Initially introduced by institutions like the Indian Army and advocated by figures such as R. A. Gopalaswami**, the small-family norm transitioned from a general preference for two-to-three children in the 1950s-60s to a **rigid two-child policy by the 1980s** which was explicitly promoted by government initiatives like Rajiv Gandhi's Twenty-Point Programme.
- This evolution was significantly shaped by international influences, including the United States' neo-Malthusian ideologies and funding agencies promoting population control measures through incentives and coercive sterilizations.

Influence of Neo-Malthusian Ideology:

- **Global neo-Malthusian discourses shaped national policies, turning population growth into a central economic problem.**
- **Prominent demographers like Kingsley Davis and Frank Notestein introduced population control as an economic imperative, influencing Indian policy directions profoundly.**

Social Construction of Norms:

- The small-family norm was socially engineered through **aggressive campaigns (e.g., the Red Triangle campaign funded by the Ford Foundation)**, deliberately invoking shame and stigma to change social behavior.
- This **strategy sought to construct smaller families as symbolic of modernity, morality, and economic prudence.**

Critical Analysis of Social Impacts:

- **Small-family policies significantly impacted marginalized groups**, including lower castes, tribal populations, Muslims, and women, exacerbating existing social inequalities.

- The gendered implications were severe, including increased **sex-selective abortions, female infanticide, neglect of girls, and heightened discrimination within families.**
- **Coercive population control mechanisms targeted socio-economically vulnerable groups.**
- For instance, incentives like sterilization bonuses disproportionately pressured poor and marginalized communities, exemplified by **coercive sterilizations during the 1975 Emergency period.**

Resistance and Sociocultural Resilience:

- Despite aggressive policy implementation, surveys revealed consistent resistance rooted in socio-cultural values, indicating limited public acceptance and the resilience of traditional family-size preferences.
- **The Mysore Population Study (1961) found decisions on family size deeply rooted in emotional satisfaction, socio-economic security, and cultural preferences (e.g., son preference, elder care), rather than irresponsibility or ignorance.**
- **National surveys by Operations Research Group (1971) indicated persistent preferences for larger families driven by cultural, emotional, and economic motivations despite coercive policies.**
- **The 1980 Family Planning Association of India study revealed widespread popular prioritization of economic and employment concerns over population control, underscoring the socio-cultural resilience against imposed norms.**

Role of Power and Inequality:

- Population policies illustrate elite domination, where powerful social groups control the reproduction practices of marginalized populations.
- Statements by influential leaders like Indira Gandhi during the Emergency emphasized sacrificing individual rights for perceived national progress, disproportionately burdening marginalized groups.
- The imbalance of power is evident in state-backed coercive measures and elite framing of marginalized sacrifices as necessary for national interest.

Conclusion

- A sociological critique reveals how India's population control policies reinforced structural inequalities and social injustice through coercion and social control.
- Moving forward, policies must prioritize understanding and addressing underlying socio-economic and cultural determinants of family size, embracing inclusive, community-sensitive strategies rather than coercive, externally imposed norms.

Question

Critically analyse the impact of India's post-independence small-family norm.

The Gender and Social Equity Question in Low Carbon Transitions

Vol. 60, Issue No. 6, 08 Feb, 2025, EPW

Chapter:

C-1 Visions of Social Change in India

C-7 Challenges of Social Transformation



Introduction:

- The **transition to low-carbon energy** is critical for climate mitigation globally, but it carries significant sociological implications.
- Such transitions **disproportionately affect marginalised communities, intensifying existing inequalities**, especially in terms of gender, caste, class, and rural-urban divides.

[Sociological Concept: Intersectionality (Kimberlé Crenshaw) - highlights how overlapping identities (gender, caste, class) amplify vulnerability and marginalisation in social changes such as energy transitions.]

Social Inequities in Energy Transitions:

- Although Gujarat and Karnataka rank high in clean energy transitions (IEEFA Report 2024), the report neglects social equity and gender justice aspects.
- **Low-carbon transitions, while necessary, often exacerbate vulnerability by displacing marginalised communities. Arundhati Roy (1999) refers to such displaced communities as "refugees of an unacknowledged war," highlighting their social invisibility.**

Case Studies – Political Economy of Solar Projects:

Charanka Solar Park (Gujarat):

- Despite promises of socio-economic development (jobs, education, housing), **local marginalised communities faced displacement, loss of livelihoods, and disruption in access to basic resources** (water and electricity).
- **Social reproductive burdens, such as water and firewood collection, disproportionately fell on women, exacerbating gender inequalities** (Stock 2021a).
- **Rabari women (OBC agro-pastoralist community) faced systematic exclusion from employment and skill training initiatives** (Stock 2021b).
- Villagers expressed preference for basic infrastructure (water canals) rather than solar parks, reflecting local socio-economic priorities (Kaur 2022).

Shakti Sthala Solar Park (Karnataka):

- **Communities in Pavagada faced exclusion in decision-making and insufficient compensation for leased lands**, demonstrating asymmetrical power relations (Pratap et al. 2019).

- Mechanisation of solar panel cleaning due to water scarcity led to local job losses, deepening economic marginalisation.
- Intimidation and silencing by corporations reinforced social power dynamics, restricting community voices and perpetuating local inequalities (Menon 2022).

[Sociological Concept: Michel Foucault's idea of "Power and Discourse" - corporations' control over narratives and decision-making suppresses local voices, reinforcing hierarchical power structures.]

Gender Dynamics and Green Jobs:

- India aims to create 35 million green jobs by 2047 (Skill Council for Green Jobs).
- The International Labour Organization defines green jobs as contributing to environmental sustainability. However, current trends show gender disparities:
 - Water resource management, critical for renewable energy, offers substantial employment opportunities, especially for women who traditionally manage water at household and community levels. Yet, globally, women constitute only 17% of workers in this sector, typically restricted to informal or voluntary roles (Kumar 2023).
 - Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), significant for green transitions, employ disproportionately fewer women (24%), who also face institutional barriers like limited credit access, technological know-how, and skill training (Chakraborty et al. 2022).
 - Gender stereotypes ("infrastructure industry as a man's world") further restrict women's participation in sectors critical for green transitions, excluding them from potential socio-economic benefits (Confederation of Indian Industry, 2019).

Strategies for Inclusive and Equitable Transitions:

Cooperative Models:

- Promote local ownership and equitable distribution of transition gains. Example: Barefoot College's "Solar Mamas" project trains semi-literate rural women as solar engineers, empowering communities and women economically and socially (Iqbal 2017).

[Sociological Concept: Amartya Sen's "Capability Approach" - enhancing women's capabilities through education and skill development fosters empowerment and economic independence.]

Care Infrastructure as Green Jobs:

- Recognising care infrastructure jobs as green jobs enhances women's participation in energy transitions.
- Climate changes increase women's unpaid care workload (fetching water, firewood collection). Integrating care services (childcare, elderly care) as part of green transition policies can significantly reduce these burdens, thereby allowing women greater involvement in formal economic activities and transitions (UN Women 2023).

Sociological Perspective on Just Transition:

- Just transition emphasises addressing power inequalities and prioritising marginalised groups' needs, ensuring transitions do not replicate existing structural injustices (class, caste, gender).

- True equity requires democratising energy transition processes—who decides, who benefits, who is affected—highlighting political economic dimensions.

[Sociological Concept: Nancy Fraser's "Redistribution, Recognition, and Representation" model advocates for equitable distribution, cultural recognition, and political inclusion to achieve genuine justice in transitions.]

Conclusion:

- Evaluating energy transitions solely on technological efficiency without addressing gender and social equity undermines justice and deepens existing disparities.
- For transitions to be truly just, they must incorporate social and gender-sensitive policies, explicitly acknowledging and redressing embedded inequalities.

Question

Explain how India's transition to low-carbon energy can deepen social and gender inequalities. Suggest strategies for ensuring inclusive and equitable outcomes



Sleepy Classes IAS
Awakening Toppers

The missing worker in the 'work culture' debates

Feb 28, 2025, Indian Express

Chapter:

C-2 Rural and Agrarian transformation in India

C-3 Industrialization and Urbanisation in India



India's labour market challenges: addressing bonded labour, migrant worker welfare, and work culture. (File Photo)

Introduction:

- **The Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act (BLSA)**, enacted on February 9, 1976, aimed at eliminating economic and physical exploitation of workers.
- Despite almost 50 years since its enactment, bonded labour continues to exist, necessitating a critical re-evaluation.

[Sociological Concept: "Reserve Army of Labour" by Karl Marx - Bonded labour persists due to an oversupply of vulnerable workers, who can easily be exploited due to limited alternatives.]

Profile of Bonded Labourers:

- The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) identifies informal and unorganised sectors as major sites of bonded labour.

[Supreme Court in ASIAD-82 case said: Anyone who's paid less than minimum wages is a bonded labour.]

- Ministry of Labour's E-Shram portal indicates nearly 90% of informal workers earn below Rs 10,000 per month, highlighting persistent economic vulnerability.
- Victims primarily include women, children, and distressed migrant families working under harsh conditions, threats, and coercion.
- Over 80% of rescued labourers belong to marginalised groups, predominantly Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) (Ministry of Labour and Employment).

[Sociological Concept: "Social Exclusion" - Marginalised groups face structural exclusion, reinforcing vulnerability to bonded labour.]

Mechanisms Leading to Bonded Labour:

- Recruitment through informal social networks and intermediaries who promise high wages or offer large advances.
- Workers often become entrapped in sectors like brick kilns, construction, textiles, stone quarries, agriculture, with restricted freedom of movement.
- Women and children frequently forced into unpaid or minimally compensated labour.

[Sociological Concept: "Deproletarianisation of agricultural Workers" by Tom Brass - Workers are dispersed - Difficult to organize - Become Bonded.]

[Thinker: Surinder S. Jodhka - Workers keeping getting attached voluntarily - Constantly into relations of mortgaging (and they keep returning the debt with their labour)]

Current Scenario and Data:

- No comprehensive national survey conducted on bonded labour in the past 40 years.
- ILO (2021) estimated global forced labour at 28 million, with Asia-Pacific hosting over half (15.1 million).
- From 1978-2023, approximately 3,00,000 bonded labourers have been released and rehabilitated in India (Ministry of Labour).
- Between 2019 and January 2023, 2,650 people rehabilitated; NCRB reports 2,978 bonded labour cases within the same period.

Challenges:

- Discrepancies and inadequacies in rehabilitation and prosecution data.
- Low prosecution rates due to complicated employment relationships and intermediary involvement.
- Ineffective implementation of field surveys despite central funding.
- Absence of clear mechanisms for tracking state-level disbursement of rehabilitation benefits.
- Supreme Court's judgment in Neeraja Chaudhary case (1984) emphasized state responsibility for timely and sufficient rehabilitation to prevent re-bonding.

Recommendations and Way Forward:

- Establish robust monitoring mechanisms for state-level implementation of rehabilitation schemes (Central Sector Scheme for Rehabilitation of Bonded Labourer, 2021).
- Conduct comprehensive impact evaluations of rehabilitation schemes to identify strengths and address gaps.
- Encourage states excelling in bonded labour law enforcement and human trafficking prevention to share best practices.
- Strengthen legal measures against exploitative intermediaries and agents targeting vulnerable groups.
- Broader discourse on inclusive "work culture" and equitable "work hours," addressing all workers irrespective of social background.

Conclusion:

- Achieving India's economic aspirations necessitates addressing structural inequalities and safeguarding informal workers against exploitative conditions.
- Without securing workers' rights and welfare, India's larger goals of poverty alleviation and social justice risk failure.

Question

Explain why bonded labour continues to persist in India despite legal abolition and discuss the factors contributing to its prevalence

Japan's birthrate hits new low: Expert warns only one teenager will be left by THIS year in world's 4th biggest economy

Feb 27, 2025, Economic Times

Chapter:

C-6 Population Dynamics



Representative Image

Introduction:

- Japan recorded a historically low birthrate in 2024, with 720,988 births, down 5% from the previous year – the lowest since records began in 1899.
- Deaths in the same year reached 1.62 million, significantly exceeding births.
- Japan's population currently at approximately 125 million is projected to decline to 87 million by 2070.
- Professor Hiroshi Yoshida estimates a severe demographic contraction, suggesting by 695 years from now on, the number of children will fall to just one.

[Sociological Concept: "Demographic Transition Theory" – describes stages countries undergo from high birth and death rates to low birth and death rates, leading to population decline in advanced economies like Japan.]

Economic and Workforce Impact:

- Workforce shrinking since 1995; expected labour shortfall of 11 million by 2040 (Recruit Works Institute).
- Record 342 companies declared bankruptcy in 2024 due to labour shortages (Teikoku Databank).
- Shrinking workforce leads to reduced tax revenue, heightened social security costs, and increasing strain on pension systems.
- Social security budget has grown nearly 20% in the past decade, reaching ¥37.7 trillion in the upcoming fiscal year.

[Sociological Insight: Talcott Parsons' Structural Functionalism – indicates that the declining working-age population destabilizes the social system by disrupting economic productivity and social security.]

Marriage and Cultural Barriers:

- Birthrates closely tied to marriage rates, which dropped below half a million in 2023 – the lowest in 90 years.
- Dr. Ekaterina Hertog (Oxford Internet Institute) highlights deterrents including traditional male-breadwinner expectations, economic challenges, and high child-rearing costs.

- Cultural norms obligating children to eldercare further deter younger women from childbearing and marriage due to conflicting priorities.

[Sociological Concept: Arlie Hochschild's "Second Shift" - emphasizes that women often carry dual responsibilities, which significantly impact decisions about childbirth and employment.]

Work Culture:

- Japan's demanding work culture discourages parenthood, particularly impacting women's career and family choices.
- Tokyo government introduced a four-day workweek and allowed early leave for parents of young children, but with salary reductions.
- Despite policy entitlements (12 months of parental leave), male participation remains low at 3% (2019), indicating limited success unless traditional gender roles evolve.

Government Initiatives and Effectiveness:

- Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba implemented a ¥3.6 trillion childcare package to address birthrate decline.
- Unconventional strategies: Tokyo Metropolitan Government launched a state-run dating app addressing issues such as work-life balance and housing.

Immigration as a Potential Remedy:

- Japan is slowly opening immigration channels, relaxing visa restrictions particularly in elder care and agriculture sectors.
- Government aims to triple foreign worker numbers by 2040.

Conclusion:

- Japan faces a critical demographic crisis requiring holistic strategies addressing cultural norms, economic structures, and labour policies. Without substantial societal transformation, Japan's future remains uncertain, characterized by a continuously diminishing population and growing elderly demographic.

Question

Explain how changing patterns of marriage and family norms affect population dynamics in contemporary societies.

The female gaze in AI regulation

24 March 2025, Deccan Herald

Chapter:

10 - Social Change in Modern Society



Introduction

- **Artificial Intelligence (AI)** has transformative potential but poses sociological concerns regarding **algorithmic bias**, particularly gender bias, due to the mirroring of existing societal inequalities.
- India's **India-AI Mission** seeks to use AI for societal benefits (healthcare, agriculture, disaster management), yet **unchecked biases within AI threaten equitable outcomes**, especially impacting women, who constitute 48.8% of India's population.

[Sociological Concept: Pierre Bourdieu's "Habitus" – It describes the deeply ingrained, taken-for-granted ways of perceiving and acting in the world—ways that arise from one's social environment and lived experiences.]

When we apply this idea to AI, we see that the technology does not exist in a vacuum; it is created, trained, and deployed by people who themselves carry these implicit dispositions and biases. Put differently, AI systems inherit and reflect the "unconscious" beliefs and tendencies—our collective habitus—embedded in the data and assumptions with which they are built.]

Concept of Algorithmic Bias

- **Algorithmic Bias occurs when AI systems reproduce and reinforce societal inequalities** such as those based on gender, caste, or race.
- **Causes of Bias:**
 - Skewed datasets predominantly reflecting male experiences.
 - Human coders' unconscious prejudices embedded into AI algorithms.

Studies and Examples of Gender Bias

- **UNESCO Study (2023):** Revealed **significant gender biases** in large language models like OpenAI's ChatGPT and Meta's Llama. Models associated:
 - **Women with domestic and family roles** ("home," "family," "children").
 - **Men with professional and leadership roles** ("salary," "executive").
- **Amazon's Hiring Tool (2018):**
 - Algorithm **displayed gender discrimination against female candidates** as it was trained on historical data dominated by male hires.

Gender Disparity in AI Development:

- Globally, only 22% of AI professionals are women.
- In India, representation is even lower at 14% women in STEM research.
- Limited diversity in AI creators intensifies gender-blind spots and perpetuates bias in AI applications.

[Sociological Insight: Dorothy Smith's "Standpoint Theory" - lack of women's perspectives in technology results in biased and partial understandings of social reality.]

Repercussions of Algorithmic Bias:

- AI amplifies biases at scale, with significant societal consequences due to automated and widespread deployment.
- Amplifies traditional gender roles.
- Restricts women's access to employment and professional opportunities, exacerbating gender inequality.

Concept of Female Gaze in AI

- It refers to designing, interpreting, or interacting with Artificial Intelligence systems through a lens that reflects women's experiences, perspectives, and needs—as opposed to the traditionally dominant male gaze, which often centres male perspectives.
- It also implies incorporating feminist perspectives in AI regulation to address gender bias.
- **Goals:**
 - Challenge "male standard" in technology and law.
 - Embed feminist and inclusive principles to create unbiased, equitable AI systems.
- **Approach:**
 - Regulating AI development, deployment, and diffusion.
 - Ensuring coder diversity and mandating bias-mitigation mechanisms in regulatory frameworks.

Best Practices Globally

European Union's Artificial Intelligence Act:

- Mandates rigorous testing for bias detection and mitigation in high-risk AI systems before market deployment.
- Regulatory requirements serve as a global standard to prevent gender and other biases, thus embedding female gaze principles.

Way Forward:

A dual-entry intervention is recommended for embedding a female gaze in AI:

1. Affirmative Actions:

- Government-sponsored scholarships and mentorship programs targeting women in STEM fields.
- Creating a diverse workforce in AI research and development.

2. Robust AI Regulation:

- Enforcement of accountability laws akin to General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).
- Promoting bias-mitigation tools such as:
- Explainable AI (transparent algorithmic decision-making).
- Ethical testing frameworks.
- Continuous fairness monitoring to prevent discriminatory practices.

Conclusion

- Achieving AI-for-All demands a proactive approach to remove biases, particularly gender bias. Effective AI regulation grounded in feminist insights will result in more inclusive, just, and humane technological futures.

Question

How can gender bias in Artificial Intelligence reflect and reinforce existing social inequalities in society?



Sleepy Classes IAS
Awakening Toppers

Marx's Epistemology

A Case of Bipartisan Thinking

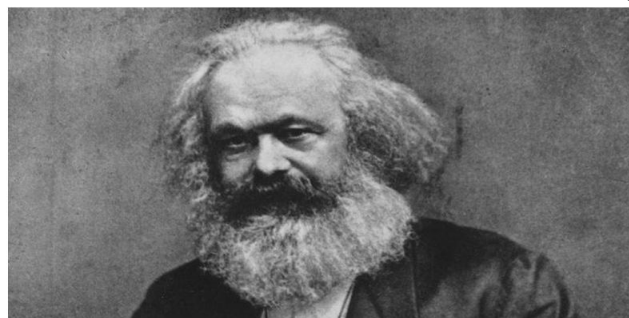
Vol. 60, Issue No. 16, 19 Apr, 2025, EPW

Chapter:

4 Sociological Thinkers

Introduction

- Marx's epistemology is characterised by synthesizing seemingly opposite philosophical ideas, rather than strictly adhering to a single position.
- Marx proposes a balanced, bipartisan way of thinking about knowledge, bridging key philosophical divides:
 - Materialism and Idealism
 - Rationalism and Romanticism
 - Positivism and Hermeneutics



1. Synthesis of Materialism and Idealism

- **Idealism:** Views human consciousness (ideas, thoughts) as primary in shaping history.
- **Materialism:** Emphasizes material conditions (economics, environment) as determining historical change.

Marx's Synthesis ("New Materialism"):

- Neither pure ideas nor material conditions alone shape history; both interact through human activity (praxis).
- Marx argues human beings consciously act upon material conditions to transform society and nature.

Example from Marx's works:

- In *Das Kapital* (Volume I), Marx uses the example of the Architect vs. Honeybee:
 - A honeybee instinctively builds its hive without conscious thought.
 - An architect first conceptualizes the structure mentally and then physically constructs it, demonstrating the interaction between consciousness (idealism) and material activity (materialism).
 - This illustrates human labour's creative and transformative role—conscious intention shaping material reality.

2. Synthesis of Rationalism and Romanticism

- **Rationalism:** Emphasizes logic, reason, and systematic thinking as superior forms of knowledge.

- **Romanticism:** Highlights human sensibility, feelings, emotions, and lived experiences as critical sources of knowledge.

Marx's Synthesis:

- **Accepts reason's systematic and holistic perspective** (influenced by Hegel's idea of reason).
- Recognizes the limitations of pure reason and **incorporates insights from human sensibilities and everyday experiences (romanticism)**.
- Marx argues theory (reason) must remain open to empirical reality and lived experiences of ordinary people (sensibility).
- **Example from Marx's works:**
- Marx acknowledges **capitalism's destructive emotional and social impacts inspired by romantic critiques** (e.g., Rousseau's critique of modernity).
- Concepts such as **alienation, fetishism of commodities, and commodification of labour (in Das Kapital)** reflect the **romantic insight** into lived experiences of common people in capitalist societies.
- Marx **utilizes vivid metaphors** ("vampire-like" nature of capital, "dead labour") indicating the interplay between rational analysis and romantic sensibility.

3. Synthesis of Positivism and Hermeneutics

- **Positivism:** Argues society can be studied scientifically and objectively, like natural phenomena, using empirical data to uncover universal laws.
- **Hermeneutics:** Focuses on interpreting human actions, intentions, meanings, and traditions, recognizing that humans actively create their historical realities.

Marx's Synthesis:

- **Accepts positivism's empirical rigor** and the idea that material transformations in society (like economic changes) can be scientifically analyzed.
- **Also acknowledges hermeneutics' insight that human societies are historically specific, shaped by intentional human actions, meanings, and traditions, requiring interpretative understanding.**
- Marx insists on studying material conditions scientifically while interpreting ideological and cultural aspects historically.

Example from Marx's works:

- In the Preface to "*A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*," Marx distinguishes clearly between:
 - **Material transformations** of society (economic processes) that can be scientifically analyzed with precision.
 - **Social transformations** (politics, law, religion, culture) requiring interpretative methods since they involve human consciousness, intentions, and historical traditions.

- Marx's historical method in *The German Ideology* stresses empirical verification of how real individuals interact with given material conditions and reshape their world through practical human activities, combining positivist empiricism with hermeneutic interpretation.

Conclusion: Marx's Bipartisan Epistemology

- Marx's epistemology synthesizes and balances opposing philosophical viewpoints rather than strictly choosing one side.
- He integrates insights from:
 - **Materialism and Idealism:** Human consciousness and material conditions interact through praxis.
 - **Rationalism and Romanticism:** Theory must be rational yet remain open to everyday lived experiences.
 - **Positivism and Hermeneutics:** Objective scientific analysis complements historical interpretation of human meanings and actions.
- **Marx thus offers a nuanced method for understanding society**, emphasizing empirical validation, theoretical openness, and recognition of human creativity and historical specificity.

Question

Explain how Marx combined different philosophical ideas to understand society.



Sleepy Classes IAS
Awakening Toppers

The road to gender-equal pay

April 13, 2025, The Hindu

Chapter:

5 Stratification and Mobility

Introduction

- Gender inequality is a global structural phenomenon manifesting across economic, political, and cultural domains.
- India reiterated its commitment to gender equality at the UN Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on the Beijing+30 Review (Nov 2024).
- Government initiatives include gender budgeting of \$37 billion and having the highest proportion of women in STEM globally.
- However, persistent gender pays disparities undermine these achievements and remain a central axis of structural gender inequality.
 - [Sociological Concept: Sylvia Walby's theory of Patriarchy - identifies the workplace and the state as key patriarchal structures contributing to systemic gender inequalities like the pay gap.]*



Empirical Evidence of Gender Pay Gap

- WEF Global Gender Gap Report (2024): India ranks 129 out of 146 countries, having closed 64.1% of its gender gap.
- Azim Premji University (2023) Report:
 - Salaried women in India earn 76% of salaried men's income.
 - Self-employed women earn only 40% of self-employed men's income.
- World Bank Data:
 - Indian women's labour force participation in 2023 stood at 33%, compared to 77% for men.
 - COVID-19 worsened the maternal pay gap, with the gender wage gap increasing by 7% (2019–2021).

Structural and Cultural Barriers

- Gendered division of labour rooted in patriarchy leads to women's disproportionate caregiving responsibilities.
- Career advancement is hindered by social norms associating domestic responsibilities with women, affecting promotion and negotiation.
 - [Sociological Insight: Arlie Hochschild's "Second Shift" - women's dual burden of paid and unpaid work contributes to income disparities and limited career progression.]*

- As careers progress, the gender wage gap often widens (**vertical occupational segregation**).
 - *[Sociological Concept: "Glass Ceiling" - invisible structural barriers prevent women from advancing to top positions, contributing to wage disparities.]*
- The **digital gender divide (ASER 2023): Girls in rural India have less access to technology**, reducing their participation in digital economies.

Way Forward:

Policy and Infrastructure Interventions

- Education and Skill Development:
 - Investment in secondary education and soft-skill acquisition is critical to enhance women's employability.
 - Addressing child marriage is essential to reduce school dropouts among girls.
- Care Infrastructure:
 - Expand access to affordable and quality childcare through public-private partnerships and tax incentives.
 - Improve public infrastructure (transport safety, lighting) to facilitate safe mobility for women.

Socio-Cultural Reforms

- Challenge patriarchal ideologies through community-based initiatives and behavioural change communication.
- Use collectives to provide childcare, raise awareness, and challenge stereotypes regarding women's economic roles.
- Involve men and boys in campaigns promoting gender equity and shared domestic responsibility.
 - *[Sociological Insight: Nancy Fraser's model of Redistribution, Recognition, and Representation - comprehensive gender justice requires addressing economic, cultural, and political inequalities.]*

Legal and Organisational Mechanisms

- Strengthen anti-discrimination laws and establish pay transparency norms in corporate settings.
- Conduct regular gender pay audits and implement corrective action plans.
- Introduce gender-sensitive HR policies supporting recruitment, promotion, parental leave, and flexible work.
- Promote women in leadership to break the glass ceiling and serve as role models.

Gender Budgeting and State Responsibility

- Institutionalise gender-responsive budgeting to support initiatives that reduce the gender pay gap.
- Programmes must balance productivity with equity by promoting work-life integration.

- The state must ensure enforcement of equal pay provisions under the Equal Remuneration Act and expand its scope to the informal sector.
 - *(The Equal Remuneration Act 1976 Act no longer exists, its core protection – equal pay for equal work – continues under the Code on Wages, 2019.)*

Conclusion

- The gender pay gap is not merely an economic disparity but a manifestation of broader social inequality.
- A multipronged strategy involving legal reform, social norm transformation, and institutional accountability is imperative.
- Bridging the gender wage gap is pivotal not only for justice and equality but also for national economic progress and inclusive development.
 - *[Sociological Perspective: Amartya Sen's Capability Approach – reducing the gender pay gap enhances women's real freedoms and capabilities, contributing to overall societal well-being.]*

Question

Explain how structural and cultural factors contribute to the persistence of gender pay gaps in contemporary India. Suggest strategies to overcome these disparities.



Sleepy Classes IAS
Awakening Toppers

What the UK can learn from India about trans rights and inclusive feminism

Apr 25, 2025, Indian Express

Chapter:

7 Politics and Society

C-5 Social Movements in Modern India

Introduction: Recent UK Supreme Court Ruling

- **Case:** For Women Scotland Ltd vs The Scottish Ministers (2024)
- **Judgment:** UK Supreme Court clarified "woman" and "sex" in the Equality Act 2010 refer strictly to biological sex at birth.
- **Implication:** Organisations can lawfully exclude transgender women from single-sex spaces (hospital wards, women's shelters, sports categories), even if they hold Gender Recognition Certificates (GRCs).
- Reflects prevailing trans-exclusionary attitudes and biological essentialism dominating the current UK social climate.
- Sociologically significant as it reinforces existing patriarchal and transphobic prejudices, potentially eroding hard-won rights for transgender persons.



Campaigners take part in a rally organised by trans rights groups, trade unions, and community organisations following the Supreme Court ruling on the definition of a woman in equalities law, at Parliament Square, central London. (AP)

Anti-Discrimination Laws: Comparing UK and India

UK Context:

- Equality Act 2010 offers structured protections (albeit now narrowed due to recent court interpretations).

India Context:

- No comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation currently enacted.
- Rights primarily enforceable vertically (individual against state), rarely horizontally (individual against individual).
- Article 15(2), Indian Constitution: Offers limited horizontal protection, prohibiting discrimination in access to public spaces like hotels, shops, restaurants on grounds including sex.
- Potential conflict with individuals' freedom of association (right to exclude others based on personal preference).

Judicial Clarification:

- **Kaushal Kishor v State of UP (2023):** Supreme Court clarified absence of explicit horizontal rights protection does not mean rights don't exist; reaffirmed state's duty to broadly protect citizens' rights.

Debate within Feminism: Exclusion vs Inclusion of Trans Women

Historical Context:

- Feminist movements (1970s–1980s) challenged binary gender definitions, viewing gender as a social construct rather than biological determinant.
- *[First Wave: Fought for legal rights like voting and property (19th-early 20th century).*
- *Second Wave: Focused on social equality, reproductive rights, and challenging patriarchy (1960s-1980s).*
- *Third Wave: Advocated inclusivity, intersectionality, and diverse identities (1990s onwards).]*

Current Trans-exclusionary Feminism:

- Reject inclusion of trans women in category "woman," emphasizing biology.
- Scholar **Andrea Long Chu** ("*On Liking Women*," 2018) argues:
 - Not a simple generational clash (older second-wave feminists vs younger queer activists).
 - Trans-exclusionary feminists are often highly networked and engage in targeted "online trolling."
 - Chu emphasizes trans women do not aspire to become women; they already are women.

Indian Context: Feminism and Trans-Inclusive Politics

Inclusive Historical Trajectory:

- Indian feminism, since the 1980s, has generally refrained from excluding trans persons from definitions of "woman."
- Women's studies and national feminist conferences have consistently challenged singular or normative definitions of "woman," fostering a more inclusive and flexible feminist discourse.

Intersectional Sociological Analysis:

- Scholar **Janaki Nair** ("*Women and Colonial Law: A Feminist Social History*," 2025) argues historically "woman" was never a uniform legal or social category in India, always differentiated by caste, class, region, and ethnicity.
- Highlights intersectionality: legal and social discrimination impacts women unevenly.

Cultural and Regional Dimensions of Trans Identities:

- **Gayatri Reddy** ("*With Respect to Sex*," 2005) explores hijra identity in South India, arguing hijra identities cannot be reduced merely to legal categories like "third gender."
- Hijras understand themselves through complex cultural practices and moral economies such as **izzat (honour)** and historical religious roles (e.g., roles at shrines/tombs), shaping their sociocultural identities distinctly from Western categorisations.

Queer and Feminist Mobilisation: Examples from India

- Queer feminist communities in Bengaluru exemplify solidarity, inclusivity, and openness.

- Transgender individuals have notably led queer mobilisations despite societal marginalisation.
- **"All Sorts of Queer" Group:**
 - Held "townhall" discussions (both offline and online) focusing on identity, inclusion, and collective ethics.
 - Emphasized community trust, openness, dialogue as strategies against exclusion and marginalisation.
- **Payoshni Mitra**, internationally recognised athlete rights activist:
 - Campaigns against invasive and discriminatory sex-testing practices in sports.
 - Proposes inclusive, transformative sports policies affirming trans, intersex, and gender-diverse athletes.

Question

Critically discuss the tensions within feminist movements concerning the inclusion and exclusion of transgender identities.



Pratap Bhanu Mehta writes: How technology affects balance of power – and the lesson for India

Apr 19, 2025, Indian Express

Chapter:

10 Social Change in Modern Society

Introduction

- Technological change plays a pivotal role in altering the global balance of power among nation-states.
- The ongoing US-China rivalry is fundamentally about technological dominance.
- Does technological leadership in specific industries drive national power, or is there a deeper structural factor?



Institutions oriented towards creating innovations or cornering profits in leading sectors are often very different in kind from institutions that allow for the diffusion of GPTs across a whole range of applications. (Source: File)

Conventional Wisdom: Leading Sector Dominance

- Traditional development models assume first-mover advantage in leading sectors (like textiles, cars, consumer electronics) gives countries an edge.
 - **Britain:** Textile innovations in the First Industrial Revolution.
 - **Japan:** Electronics and automobiles in the late 20th century.
 - **China:** Electric vehicles and high-tech manufacturing today.
- This reflects a sector-based, elitist, top-down model of industrialization — focus is on urban innovation clusters and strategic industries.

Jeffrey Ding's Reassessment: Diffusion of General Purpose Technologies (GPTs)

- **Jeffrey Ding's book** *Technology and the Rise of Great Powers* (Princeton University Press) is upending a lot of conventional wisdom
- **His Main Argument:** National power stems not from dominance in select sectors, but from the ability to diffuse GPTs widely across society and economy.
- **Key Distinction:**
 - **Leading Sector Technologies:** Narrow in application, provide monopoly benefits but limited systemic impact.
 - **General Purpose Technologies (GPTs):** Transform multiple sectors by raising overall productivity (e.g., electricity, computing, AI).
- Historical Examples
 - **Britain's Rise:** Success in Industrial Revolution due not to textiles alone but to diffusion of iron machinery and engineering across sectors.
 - **Japan vs US (20th Century):** Japan led in electronics but could not diffuse computerisation as effectively as the US.

Implication

- Power lies in social capacity to absorb and spread technology, not just create it.
- *[Sociological Insights – Applying William Ogburn's Cultural Lag Theory one could argue that technological advancement (or creation) outpaces society's ability to absorb and adapt to it.]*
- *Here, Cultural Lag refers to the delay or gap between technological advancements (material culture) and social institutions, norms, or values (non-material culture) adapting to those changes.]*
- Institutions enabling diffusion (education systems, regional capacity, standards, public investment) matter more than institutions that focus only on profits or innovation in elite sectors.
- *[Sociological Insights – Bourdieu's idea of cultural capital (education and skills) and social capital (networks, institutions) are critical for democratizing access to technology.]*
- Sustainable national development depends on inclusive technological capacity, not sectoral success.

Lessons for India: From Sectoral Boost to Systemic Transformation

- **India's Current Industrial Focus:** Emphasis on specific sectors (EVs, semiconductors, etc.) through PLI (Production-Linked Incentive) schemes.
- **Needed Shift:**
 - Invest in general human capital, not just elite skills.
 - Encourage interoperability, basic engineering, and adoption of technologies in small towns, MSMEs, informal sector.
 - Reform institutions to make technology accessible and adaptable across diverse socio-economic strata.

Conclusion

- Power today lies not in technological invention alone, but in the social architecture that enables its diffusion.
- For India, this means investing in education, decentralised innovation, inclusive access, and institutional ecosystems that promote technological equality.
- The focus should shift from the elite to the everyday – “engineers who tweak”, not just inventors in hubs.

The Multiple Lives of Caste

The Oxford Handbook of Caste edited by Surinder S Jodhka and Jules Naudet, Oxford and New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2023.

Vol. 60, Issue No. 17, 26 Apr, 2025, EPW

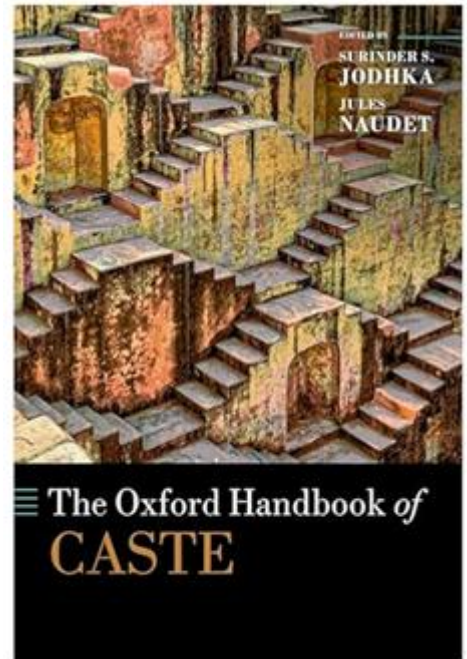
Chapter:

A-2 Impact of colonial rule on Indian society

B-2 Caste System

Introduction to "The Oxford Handbook of Caste"

- Edited by **Surinder S Jodhka** and **Jules Naudet**, featuring 42 international scholars.
- Explores caste from diverse perspectives, challenging simplistic views.
- Emphasizes caste's persistence in contemporary India, contrary to expectations of its disappearance with modernization.
- Contextualizes recent debates like the Bihar caste census and sub-quotas within reserved categories, reflecting caste's continued relevance.



Moving Beyond Orientalism and Modernisation Theory

- Early scholars viewed caste as a rigid, hierarchical, religiously defined system, predicted to decline with India's modernization.
- Editors argue these views—derived from colonial and Orientalist frameworks—are overly simplistic and ignore caste's complexity and adaptability.

Conceptualisation of Caste

Ritualistic vs Other Dimensions of Caste

- **Louis Dumont** viewed caste as purely hierarchical (purity/pollution framework).
- **Ambedkar** challenged Dumont, arguing caste's root was in power dynamics, exploitation, and inequality rather than merely religious hierarchy.

Colonialism's Impact:

- Colonial administration reinforced caste rigidly through censuses, creating fixed caste identities and encouraging caste associations.
- Colonial rulers utilized caste for governance, reshaping pre-existing fluid structures into rigid classifications.

Caste and Kingship:

- Scholars debate kings' roles in maintaining caste hierarchy; some argue kings reinforced caste via patronage of Brahmins, while Louis Dumont considered kingship as secular and separate from caste.

Sanskritisation (M.N. Srinivas):

- Lower castes adopting upper-caste practices to gain social mobility.
- Critiqued for portraying lower castes as passive imitators, ignoring agency and structural barriers especially for Dalits and women.

Intersection of Caste and Class:

- Caste and class intersect and reinforce each other; caste does not simply evolve into class but remains distinct yet congruent, jointly structuring social inequalities.

Caste and Capitalism:

- Scholars challenge the assumption that caste hinders capitalism; caste networks like **Marwaris** and **Patels** illustrate how caste facilitated business and economic mobility, serving as resources for capital accumulation.
- Thus, caste has adapted to modern capitalist structures, blurring the lines between traditional caste roles and contemporary economic practices,

Caste and Kinship:

- Marriage practices (endogamy) rigidly maintain caste boundaries; contemporary challenges like cross-caste marriages provoke violence (honour killings), highlighting enduring caste structures.

Religion, Nationalism, and Transcendence of Caste

Hindu Nationalism (Hindutva):

- Hindutva ideology attempts to integrate Dalits within a Hindu framework, blaming caste divisions on historical Muslim rule, rather than internal Hindu social structures.
- Caste remains problematic for Hindutva, highlighting tensions between vertical caste divisions and horizontal Hindu unity.

Caste Beyond Hinduism:

- Caste systems exist among Muslims (biradri/zat), Christians, and Sikhs, challenging perceptions of caste as exclusively Hindu.

Caste and Electoral Politics

Dominant Caste (M.N. Srinivas):

- Dominant castes exercised rural political power through land ownership and resource control.
- Recent scholars critique dominant caste theory for oversimplifying complex rural caste politics.
- They argue that dominance often depends on vertical alliances between caste groups, centred around influential individuals rather than entire castes.
- These critiques suggest that rural politics, while shaped by caste, is more fluid and factional than the dominant caste theory implies.

Voting Patterns:

- Voting behavior influenced by multiple factors—caste important but not sole determinant; economic development, local issues, party politics equally influential.

- Emergence of "neo-middle class" (upwardly mobile OBCs) complicates simplistic caste-voting analysis.

Criminalisation of Politics:

- Caste remains integral to the workings of criminal-political networks.
- Local strongmen, or *dabangs*, often come from so-called "martial" or dominant castes and use their influence to control both political and criminal networks.
- Reflects caste's adaptation to new political-economic environments, retaining significant local power.

Regional Specificities:

Chamars in Uttar Pradesh (R Rawat)

- Chamars are widely stereotyped as leather workers (occupational stigma).
- 1871 Census showed only 4% of Chamars were actually engaged in leatherwork, contradicting the stereotype.
- Many Chamars historically engaged significantly in agriculture as rent-paying peasants.
- Colonial policies reinforced their association with leatherworking, entrenching their marginalisation
- Rawat emphasizes re-examining caste history beyond occupational stereotypes, highlighting the complex relationship between land tenure and caste oppression.

Urban Brahmins (Haripriya Narasimhan)

- Narasimhan challenges the notion that urbanization diminishes caste distinctions. She argues that cities can exacerbate caste differences
- Urban Brahmins maintain caste identity through traditional practices while pursuing modern careers and education.
- **Regional differences highlighted:**
 - **South India:** Strong anti-Brahmin movements historically causing anxiety among urban Brahmins about maintaining social status.
 - **Bengal and Maharashtra:** Brahmins relatively better adapted to modernity; experience less social anxiety about caste identities.

Banias (Agarwals in Delhi) (Ujithra Ponniah)

- Agarwal Banias demonstrate how caste networks facilitate modern capitalist success.
- Rose from middling social status historically to upper-caste through robust business and financial networks.
- Caste networks provide social capital that helps them navigate regulations, access credit, and secure labour, underscoring the resilience of caste even in modern capitalist settings.
- Gender hierarchy remains pronounced; women remain mostly invisible in decision-making despite their integral role in social reproduction and caste continuity within business families.

Tamil Nadu (Zoe Headley)

- Historical caste divisions traced to medieval categorization: “left-hand” (artisan, mercantile groups, craft working groups) vs. “right-hand” (agricultural, land owning, dominant groups) castes.
- These traditional divisions persisted into the 20th century, shaping regional caste dynamics distinctively.
- Examines caste identities' fluidity; people often adopt multiple caste names contextually for status negotiation.

Bengal (Sarbani Bandopadhyay)

- Challenges longstanding perception of Bengal as predominantly class-based or casteless.
- Bhadrak (middle-class elite) historically perceived as class-based but inherently reinforced caste privileges (Brahmins, Kayasthas, Baidyas).
- Partition of Bengal (1947) intensified caste inequalities:
 - Upper-caste refugees secured favorable settlement opportunities in Calcutta.
 - Marginalized castes displaced to less advantageous regions, reinforcing caste-based marginality and inequalities subtly yet significantly.

Punjab (Surinder Jodhka)

- Punjab seen as egalitarian due to Sikh religious ethos, rejecting Brahminical authority.
- Despite egalitarian ideals, caste significantly shapes Punjab's social and political life.
- Green Revolution intensified caste-based tensions, especially between dominant agricultural Jat castes and Dalit agricultural laborers, over land and resources.
- Dalit assertion movements historically visible, e.g., Ad Dharm movement (1920s) and contemporary Ravidassia community, reflecting political consciousness and mobilization along caste lines.

Nepal (David Gellner)

- Gellner argues that caste in Nepal cannot be attributed to British colonialism, offering a unique case for understanding non-colonial caste structures in South Asia.
- Caste system was formalized via Nepal's Muluki Ain (1854) legal code, maintaining strong social stratification.
- Caste-like categorization:
 - Janajati groups resemble Scheduled Tribes (India).
 - Khas-Arya category includes upper-caste Brahmins and Chhetris dominating politics and society.
 - Dalits remain severely marginalized, facing social exclusion.

Margins Speak: Dalits, Adivasis, and Denotified Tribes:

Untouchability and Pollution (Suryakant Waghmore)

- Traditional untouchability outlawed legally yet persists subtly in modern urban environments.
- Urbanization and political mobilization created new opportunities, simultaneously fostering new subtle forms of exclusion and discrimination.
- Reflects adaptability and resilience of caste-based oppression, persisting despite legislative reforms.

Mahar-Dalit Movement (Harish Wankhede)

- Historical mobilization of Mahar Dalits (prominent Dalit group in Maharashtra), reflects political consciousness against caste-based oppression.
- Outlined five key political trends:
- Persistent caste atrocities despite legislative protections.
 - Rise in assertive Dalit politics and visible symbolic presence in public spaces.
 - Emergence of caste-specific demands leading to fragmented Dalit political unity.
 - Rise of Dalit right-wing elements causing ideological splits.
 - Shift from broad social justice to more localized and fragmented identity politics, complicating Dalit political unity and direction.

Transnational Dalit Activism (E M Hardtmann)

- Dalits increasingly utilizing international platforms (United Nations, global human rights forums) since 1990s–2000s.
- Successfully globalized caste discrimination discourse, framing caste analogous to racial discrimination, gaining recognition and solidarity abroad.
- Strategic international alliances and advocacy expanded the visibility and legitimacy of Dalit struggles beyond national boundaries.

Caste and Race (Deepa Reddy)

- Explores theoretical intersection between caste discrimination and racial discrimination.
- Strategic comparison made internationally to highlight universal dimensions of caste oppression.
- Controversial within India (government resistance to caste-race analogy), yet crucial in international human rights discussions and advocacy, particularly successful in the US and UN forums.
- David Mosse (2018) noted India's reluctance to internationally acknowledge caste (e.g., 2001 Durban World Conference against Racism), underscoring caste's contentious visibility.

Scheduled Tribes (STs) and Denotified Tribes (DNTs) (Kalpana Kannabiran)

- Denotified Tribes historically stigmatized as "criminal tribes" under British Criminal Tribes Act (1871).

- Post-independence denotification (1952) inadequate in removing stigma; DNTs remain socioeconomically marginalized, facing systemic discrimination.
- Continued struggles include low education, extreme poverty, resource exclusion, highlighting lasting colonial classifications' social damage.

Invisible Grip of Caste on New Spaces:

Caste and Merit (Ajanta Subramanian)

- Critiques the perception of "merit" as caste-neutral.
- She highlights how in elite institutions (like IITs) merit is often framed as independent of caste to protect upper-caste dominance.
- Affirmative action portrayed as a threat to meritocracy, reinforcing privileged castes' structural advantages.

Caste and Social Mobility (Divya Vaid)

- Despite educational opportunities and affirmative action, caste remains a barrier limiting upward occupational mobility significantly.
- Gains made by Dalits and Adivasis remain limited compared to privileged castes.
- Intersection of caste and gender intensifies barriers; Dalit women face particularly severe mobility restrictions, reflecting compounded marginalization.

Caste and Gender (Pushpesh Kumar)

- Examines intersections of caste and gender as interlocking oppressive systems, specifically highlighting Dalit women's experiences.
- Dalit women challenge exclusion by upper-caste feminist movements (ignoring caste) and patriarchal Dalit movements (ignoring gender).
- Rise in Dalit feminist activism via literature, art, and social movements, challenging both caste and gender discrimination simultaneously.

Caste and Diaspora (Radha Modi)

- Caste persists in diaspora communities despite geographical distance from India.
- Social networks, endogamous marriages, caste-based associations reproduce caste abroad (notably in the US, UK).

Conclusion

- "The Oxford Handbook of Caste" underscores caste's adaptability, persistence, and diversity.
- Encourages nuanced sociological perspectives beyond traditional frameworks, essential for contemporary analysis and policy discussions.

Question

Critically examine how colonial rule shaped and reinforced caste identities in India.

Discuss the changing nature and persistence of caste identities in contemporary India.

Evaluate the role of caste in electoral politics and political mobilization in India.

Discuss how regional variations shape the dynamics of caste identity.

Karnataka's caste survey: It opens a door, but the direction we walk in is still uncertain

Apr 15, 2025, Indian Express

Chapter:

C-1 Visions of Social Change in India

C-4 Politics and Society

C-6 Population Dynamics

Introduction:

- The **Karnataka caste survey** ("Socio-Economic and Educational Survey") was **conducted in 2015 but tabled only recently (2025)**.
- Covers 5.98 crore people, about 94% of Karnataka's total population.



Karnataka's caste survey is not just a local development. (Source: File)

Key Findings of the Survey:

- **Dominant castes traditionally perceived as powerful:**
 - **Lingayats:** Only 11.09% of the population.
 - **Vokkaligas:** Only 10.31% of the population.
- **Other Backward Classes (OBCs)** form the largest social group at a massive 70%.
 - **Muslims** (under OBC category II B) constitute 12.58%.
- **Scheduled Castes (SCs):** 18.27%.
- **Scheduled Tribes (STs):** 7.15%.
- **General Category** (including Brahmins and other upper castes): 4.97%.

This data fundamentally challenges existing assumptions about demographic power structures.

Policy Recommendations and Legal Implications:

Karnataka's Backward Classes Commission has now recommended changes to existing reservations:

- **OBC Reservations:**
 - **II A (Kurubas & other OBCs):** 15% → 22%
 - **II B (Muslims):** 4% → 8%
 - **III A (Vokkaligas):** Proposed at 7%
 - **III B (Lingayats):** Proposed at 8%
 - **I A (Most Backward Classes):** 4% → 6%
- **ST Reservations:** Increase from 7.5% to 9.95%.

Cumulative reservation proposed at 73.5%, significantly exceeding the Supreme Court's 50% ceiling.

- Relevant Judgments:
 - Indra Sawhney (1992): Established a 50% reservation ceiling.
 - Reaffirmed by Supreme Court in the Maratha Reservation Case (2021).

Raises a constitutional dilemma of aligning data-driven equity with existing legal boundaries.

Possible Solution from Telangana's Case:

- Telangana increased OBC reservations to 42% and implemented intra-SC sub-classifications.
- Emphasis on scientific justification using:
 - Population data.
 - Socio-economic indicators such as education, employment, political representation.
- As Courts have clarified historical backwardness alone insufficient; contemporary socio-economic disadvantage must be demonstrable.

Karnataka might follow Telangana's legal strategy by demonstrating extraordinary socio-economic conditions beyond mere demographic strength.

Political Implications:

- Strong objections from dominant castes (Lingayats and Vokkaligas) alleging survey underrepresentation and flawed methodology.
- Internal contradictions within the ruling Congress:
 - Some support robust implementation.
 - Others fear political backlash and fragmentation of coalitions.
- Reflects how caste-based policies intersect with power politics, revealing deeper ironies about social justice vs. political expediency.

Social Implications:

- Potential contradiction between the goal of social justice and divisive electoral politics:
- Caste data, while intended for social empowerment, risks being exploited for electoral mobilisation, fracturing broader social coalitions.
 - *[Sociological Insight: Surinder S. Jodhka warns against caste census becoming identity politics rather than addressing socio-economic issues]*
- Raises fundamental sociological concerns:
 - Can caste data truly uplift marginalized groups without reinforcing divisions?
 - Illustrates the enduring dilemma in India's social justice discourse.

Way Forward:

- Crucial to ensure transparency and integrity in implementation:
 - Public scrutiny and judicial validation essential for data collection methods.

- **Reservation recommendations must demonstrate empirical rigour**, responding to judicial scrutiny (as Telangana attempts).
- **Calls for evolving India's reservation policy beyond rigid quotas and political appeasement.**
 - *[Sociological Insight: Suhas Palshikar calls for developing Backwardness Index that capturing holistic socio-economic backwardness and replacing rigid caste categories]*
- Data collection must translate into genuine empowerment rather than mere electoral calculations.
- Sociologically, stresses the ethical principle: counting (caste census) must lead to genuine caring (social justice outcomes).
 - *[Sociological Insight: Suhas Palshikar's view - "Counting caste can only be a pseudo-radical gesture unless coupled with more fundamental shifts in the social justice policy."]*

Conclusion:

- Karnataka's caste survey symbolizes a crucial national test case, not merely a local policy shift.
- Reflects broader sociological challenge: transitioning from a 20th-century affirmative action framework towards a nuanced 21st-century tool of equity.
- Ultimately a moral challenge: reservation policy as a tool for justice rather than mere statistical representation.
- **Framed correctly, caste surveys represent constitutional opportunities rather than political liabilities, capable of shaping India's future social justice landscape profoundly.**
 - *[Sociological Insight: Herbert Risley's view - "so long as caste continues to be used as one of the distinguishing features of an individual's official and social identity it cannot be claimed that a decennial enumeration helps to perpetuate an undesirable institution."]*

Question

Discuss the implications of using caste-based surveys for social justice policies in India

Difficult Fraternities

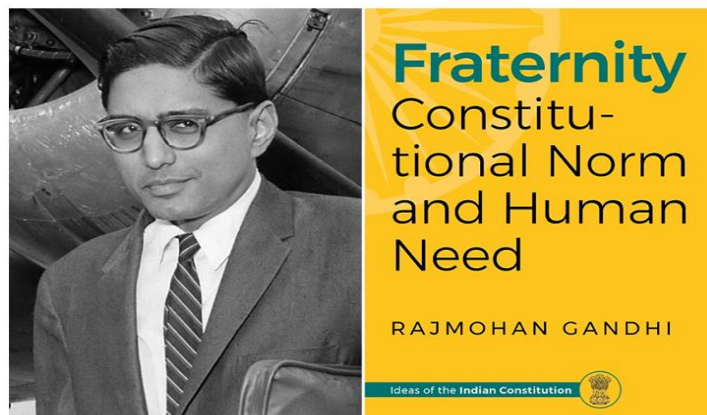
Fraternity: Constitutional Norm and Human Need by Rajmohan Gandhi, New Delhi: Speaking Tiger, 2024

Vol. 60, Issue No. 15, 12 Apr, 2025, EPW

Chapter:

C-1 Visions of Social Change in India

C-7 Challenges of Social Transformation



Introduction:

- Rajmohan Gandhi in his book "*Fraternity: Constitutional Norm and Human Need*," interprets fraternity as a sense of belonging.
- He argues that regardless of our other identities, Indians should belong to one another.
- This, in his view, represents the constitutional idea of fraternity.
- However, inclusiveness in all its forms tends to exclude someone.

Marxist view on Fraternity:

- Marxist fraternity aimed for solidarity among the proletariat to end exploitation.
- However, Practical Marxism (Soviet-style socialism) led to coercion and authoritarianism, contradicting its fraternity ideals – evidenced by gulags and restrictive state practices.

Fraternity in Christianity

- Rooted in values of equality and brotherhood, but initially excluded women.
- Inclusion of women in public spheres came after long legal and political struggles in the West.
- While liberalism focused on individual rights, collective fraternal culture emerged only through radical moments like the French Revolution.

Fraternity in Islam

- Islamic fraternity, exemplified by the Muslim Brotherhood, created solidarity based on religious identity but often resulted in violence and intolerance against secular groups and minorities.
- This ideological rigidity influenced Islamic movements globally, including West Asia, South Asia, and parts of Africa, undermining local practices and diversity.

Hindu Fraternity (Hindutva):

- Hindutva ideology seeks Hindu fraternity rooted in political and religious dominance rather than inclusive spiritual diversity.

- Hindutva's fraternity fails to genuinely address caste, creating hierarchical brotherhood dominated by upper-castes.

Fraternity of Caste:

- Caste-based fraternity deeply influences Indian identity, shaping kinship, family structures, and individual socialisation.
- Caste fraternity reinforces social divisions, limiting genuine fraternity as envisaged by the Constitution.

Radical Solutions & their Limitations:

- Periyar proposed abolishing family structures to dismantle caste, but such radical ideas remain impractical for wider society, particularly in rural areas.
- Communist ideology suggests socialist revolution as the solution, but historical experiences indicate socialism without democratic foundations fails to realise social democracy.
- Spiritual reformers like Basavanna, Ramalinga Vallalar, and Narayana Guru promoted fraternity through religious inspiration but made limited impacts in dissolving caste loyalties.

Role of Law and Constitutional Morality:

- Ambedkar stated, "Rights are protected not by law but by the social and moral conscience of society."
- The Constitution promotes fraternity as a moral ideal rather than a legally enforceable right.
- Legal frameworks alone cannot instil genuine fraternity; societal attitudes must evolve through education, rational thinking, and broad socio-cultural reforms.

Conclusion:

Genuine fraternity requires more than legal enforcement—it needs deep societal transformation and the cultivation of constitutional morality.

Question

Discuss the challenges in achieving genuine fraternity in diverse societies like India.

Violence against women is more than crime – it's a public health issue

Apr 7, 2025, Indian Express

Chapter:

C-7 Challenges of Social Transformation



We also need a strong public awareness campaign – much like those for polio or family planning – to break the silence around gender-based violence. (File photo)

Introduction

- Gender-based violence (GBV) is not merely a criminal or legal issue—it constitutes a public health emergency.
- On World Health Day, we should start recognizing GBV as an urgent concern affecting women's well-being and equity in healthcare.

Defining GBV

- GBV includes physical, sexual, emotional, psychological, and economic abuse.
- These forms of violence are systemic and normalised by entrenched patriarchal structures.
- GBV exemplifies structural violence, where institutional and cultural norms sustain harm.
 - *[Sociological Insight: Veena Das in 'Mirrors of Violence' – sees atrocities on women as reflections of patriarchal cultural boundaries]*
 - *[Sociological Insight: Rashida Manjoo, UN Special Rapporteur on VAW – identifies causes like historically unequal power, cultural justifications, control over sexuality, privacy doctrine, war and state inaction.]*
 - *[Sociological Insight: Dipankar Gupta – links dowry violence to consumerism under capitalism.]*

Empirical Evidence

- NFHS-5 (2019–21):
 - 1 in 3 ever-married women aged 18–49 have experienced intimate partner violence.
 - In Bihar, this rises to nearly 50%.
 - Only 14% of women sought institutional help (police/social workers).
 - 37% of women and 34% of men justified wife-beating under specific circumstances.
 - *[Sociological Insight: Pierre Bourdieu's "Symbolic Violence" – GBV is often legitimized through language and social norms, making violence appear natural or invisible.]*
- NCRB 2023 Report:
 - 4,45,256 cases of crimes against women in 2022.
 - These constitute 8% of all cognisable crimes and saw a 4% increase from the previous year.

Health Impacts of GBV

- Physical outcomes: injuries, fractures, infections, complications from unsafe abortions.
- Reproductive outcomes: chronic pelvic pain, STIs, unwanted pregnancies.
- Mental health outcomes: depression, PTSD, anxiety, substance abuse, and suicide.
- GBV contributes to intergenerational trauma and undermines reproductive and public health goals.

Systemic Gaps in Health Sector Response

- Health systems lack the capacity to identify, respond to, or refer survivors.
- There is an absence of screening protocols, trauma-informed care, and safe counselling spaces.
- Healthcare workers are not adequately trained in GBV response despite being frontline contacts.
- This neglect reflects a biomedical model that fails to integrate gender-sensitive approaches.

International and Comparative Models

- **Brazil:** One-Stop Crisis Centres integrate medical, legal, and psychosocial support.
- **Malaysia:** Domestic violence screening embedded within maternal care.
- **Rwanda:** Coordinated health-police-judiciary response under Ministry of Health.
- India has partially adopted these models but needs scale and systemic integration.

Policy Recommendations and Institutional Reform

- Embed GBV response in national health programmes:
 - Routine screening, trained staff, clear referral pathways.
 - Special focus on reproductive, adolescent, and maternal services.
- Train ASHAs (Accredited Social Health Activists) and ANMs (Auxiliary Nurse Midwives) as first-line responders using WHO's LIVES framework (Listen, Inquire, Validate, Enhance safety, Support).
- Invest in rural shelters, helplines, legal aid, and trauma-informed counselling.
- Budgetary allocations must reflect GBV response and prevention with transparency and accountability.

Cultural Change and Social Behavioural Interventions

- Launch national awareness campaigns (like Polio and Family Planning) to destigmatize survivors and promote help-seeking.
- Focus on behavioural change communication to dismantle gendered norms.
- Engage men and boys in sensitization efforts to address perpetration.
 - *[Sociological Insight: Andre Beteille – emphasizes that while law can show the direction of change, culture often determines how society actually evolves, thus requiring simultaneous legal and cultural reform.]*

Conclusion

- GBV must not be siloed as a 'women's issue' but treated as a multidimensional public health and human rights crisis.
- A multisectoral response involving government, civil society, academia, and community actors is necessary.

Question

Examine gender-based violence through the lens of structural violence, highlighting its implications for women's health and societal well-being in India.



West Bengal violence: On the ground, shifting ideas about religion and identity

Apr 16, 2025, Indian Express

Chapter:

C-7 Challenges of Social Transformation



The rise of Hindutva organisations and recent violence with Waqf protests indicate a radically changing landscape.

Introduction:

- The recent fatalities during Waqf-related protests in Murshidabad underscore the intensifying communal polarisation in West Bengal.
- The unrest cannot be solely attributed to the debated legislative bill; rather, it reflects deeper socioreligious transformations and contestations.
 - *[Sociological Insight: Reflects Jose Casanova belief that in contemporary Societies of world, religious beliefs and practices are not dying out but have increasingly re-entered public sphere.]*

Islamic Puritanism and the Internal Reconfiguration of Muslim Identity

- Suman Nath's (teaches anthropology at Dr APJ Abdul Kalam Government College, Kolkata) work point to an observable grassroots-level radicalisation within Islam, coinciding with the rise of Hindutva ideologies.
- There is a marked shift from syncretic Sufi-Pir practices — historically embedded in Bengal's religious landscape — to more puritanical Wahhabi and Salafi orientations:
 - Notable instances include gender and non-Muslim exclusions at Sufi shrines in Pandua, and the demolition of the pir badar mazar in Hulaspur.
 - The proliferation of mosques in impoverished areas like Rejinagar since 2010 coincides with a decline in Sufi visibility and increased dominance of Shariyati influences.

Jalsas, Mosque Committees, and Political Patronage

- Islamic jalsas function as influential platforms for articulating and disseminating prescriptive Islamic norms, contributing to a homogenised religious identity.
- The growing interdependence between mosque committees and local political apparatus, particularly the TMC, is evident:
 - State stipends for imams and muezzins post-2012 institutionalised mosque authority.
 - This centralisation has marginalised previously decentralised, syncretic forms of Muslim religiosity.

Parallel Consolidation of Hindutva and Symbolic Contestation

- The rise of Hindutva represents a simultaneous and competitive identity assertion, employing the idioms of victimhood and cultural revivalism.
- Social media serves as a potent instrument of symbolic violence – depicting rival narratives of victimisation and religious encroachment.
- Both communities engage in the mutual construction of an ‘enemy other’, sustained by:
 - Partition-era trauma
 - Stereotypes of demographic invasion
 - Communal symbolism and emotive imagery.

Implications

- The West Bengal case exemplifies how religious identities are not static but are continually reshaped by political patronage, institutional religious structures, and cultural reinterpretation.
- The shift from pluralistic Sufi traditions to scripturally rigid forms illustrate a broader pattern of religious homogenisation.

Conclusion:

- The communal dynamics of West Bengal necessitate a nuanced sociological lens.
- Future inquiry should critically examine the intersections of religion, politics, and cultural identity, rather than resorting to simplistic communal binaries.

