Sleepy Classes IAS
Awakening Toppers

SOCIOLOGY
CURRENT AFFAIRS

July – December
2024

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October 2024

November 2024

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Best of both sides: We're already too late - India needs a menstrual leave policy now

July 19, 2024, Indian Express

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5 - Stratification and Mobility

C-1 Visions of Social Change in India

C-7 Challenges of Social Transformation

DIS/AGREE
THE BEST OF BOTH SIDES

TOO LATE, IT SHOULD HAPPEN NOW
MANJIMA BHATTACHARJYA

Context

- **Supreme Court Decision (2024)**: The Court dismissed a petition to mandate menstrual leave, arguing it might lead to women being excluded from the workforce.

- **Parliamentary Debate**: Former Union Women and Child Minister opposed the idea, stating it could lead to discrimination and argued that a woman's menstrual cycle is private and should not enter the workplace.

Model Menstrual Leave Policy:

- The Court's suggestion for the government to consult and design a menstrual leave policy is an opportunity to develop practical solutions.

- Typically, menstrual leave includes a paid day off, without requiring certificates, aimed at improving workplace comfort for women.

Examples:

- **Japan**: Despite having menstrual leave since 1947, cultural taboos prevent many women from using it.

  [Stigma" (Erving Goffman): Goffman's concept of stigma can explain why women in Japan may hesitate to use menstrual leave. Menstruation is stigmatized, leading women to avoid taking leave out of fear of being judged or treated differently]

- **Spain and Ireland**: Recently passed menstrual leave legislation after successful trials.

- **India**: Bihar has had a provision since 1992, and Kerala introduced policies in 2023, with no reported impact on women's hiring due to menstrual leave.

Debate on Discrimination

- Some argue menstrual leave could fuel discrimination against women, while others believe it may be viewed as discriminatory towards men.

  [Glass Ceiling: The concept of the glass ceiling reflects the argument that menstrual leave could create another invisible barrier preventing women from advancing in their careers, as it may reinforce stereotypes about women's "biological weaknesses"]

- **Male Privilege**: Men benefit from gender pay gaps, boys' clubs, and glass ceilings, making the perceived advantage of menstrual leave negligible.

Feminist Perspectives

- **Gloria Steinem's Satirical Essay (1978)**: In "*If Men Could Menstruate,*" Steinem imagines a world where men menstruate, and it becomes a source of pride, highlighting the gendered taboos surrounding menstruation.

Conclusion

- Menstruation is a regular biological fact that should not be shameful. Allowing women to take menstrual leave without penalty is a step towards normalizing the conversation around periods and supporting women's health and well-being in the workplace.

Does Gender Budget 2024 address women's employment?

July 31, 2024, Indian Express

Chapter:

5 - Stratification and Mobility

C-1 Visions of Social Change in India

C-7 Challenges of Social Transformation

Context

- Gender Budget 2024-25 addresses the structural barriers women face in participating in the workforce, despite India's growth.

- Key focus areas include increasing women's employment and entrepreneurship, with new schemes and programs aimed at removing long-term structural barriers.

Challenges to Women's Participation in the Labour Force

- **Historical Barriers**: Occupational segregation limited women to low-growth, low-productivity sectors.

- *[Occupational Segregation: Hartmann's theory of occupational segregation explains how labor markets divide based on gender, with women clustered in lower-paying, less prestigious jobs, thereby reinforcing economic disparities.]*

- **Social norms**: Unpaid work and mobility restrictions reduced women's job opportunities.

- *[The "Second Shift" (Arlie Hochschild): Hochschild's concept of the "second shift" explains how women continue to shoulder the burden of unpaid domestic labor even when they are employed, which limits their opportunities for economic advancement.]*

- **Education and Skilling Gaps**: Gender gaps in education and skill development disqualified many women from emerging sectors.

- *[Human Capital Theory (Gary Becker): Becker's human capital theory suggests that education and skill development are critical for labor market participation. Gender disparities in these areas reduce women's chances of accessing higher-paying jobs.]*

Changing Condition

Shifting Attitudes:

- Consultations undertaken by Nikore Associates with women-led organizations (2020-2023) indicate older women now aspire for their daughters and daughters-in-law to join the workforce, albeit in "appropriate" jobs (safe locations, regular hours, proximity to home).

Women's Labour Force Participation Rate (WLFPR):

- India's WLFPR is rising, from 23% in 2017-18 to 37% in 2022-23.

- This increase is driven primarily by rural women, with rural WLFPR at 41% and urban WLFPR at 25%.

[Feminization of Labor (Diane Elson): Elson's concept of the feminization of labor highlights the increasing participation of women in the workforce, particularly in rural areas, despite facing significant structural barriers.]

Gender Budgeting

Financial Allocations:

- The Gender Budget for 2024-25 is Rs 3.2 lakh crore, the highest allocation since gender budgeting began in 2005.

- It constitutes 6.8% of the total expenditure budget and around 1% of GDP, marking a 37% increase from 2023-24.

    [Gender Mainstreaming (UN Women): The allocation towards gender-responsive budgeting reflects the strategy of gender mainstreaming, which involves integrating gender perspectives into policy-making and budgetary processes.]

Key Allocations:

- Focus on rural employment (MGNREGA), affordable housing, education for the girl child, nutrition, and water supply.

- New programs aim to ease structural barriers to women's employment and entrepreneurship.

Key Initiatives in Gender Budget 2024-25

Investments in the Care Economy:

- Rs 2,300 crore under the **Samarthya umbrella program** for building 17,000 crèches by 2025-26 under the **Palna scheme**.

Skill Training for Women in Non-Traditional Areas:

- **Skill India Mission**: Rs 760 crore to enhance women's skill training programs.

- **Ministry of Electronics and IT**: Rs 270 crore allocated for women's capacity-building programs.

- **Ministry of Science and Technology**: Rs 135 crore under the DISHA program.

Women's Entrepreneurship Development:

- **National Rural Livelihood Mission**: Rs 15,000 crore for self-help groups (SHGs), 4.5% of the total Gender Budget.

- **Ministry of MSMEs**: Rs 2,700 crore for women entrepreneurs' access to credit and markets.

- **NAMO Drone Didi Program**: Rs 500 crore for equipping women from 15,000 SHGs to operate drones for agricultural purposes.

Empowerment and Further Recommendations

- **Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs)**: Expand childcare and elder care services through government subsidies and private sector incentives. Skill training in the care economy can create 11 million jobs, 70% for women.

- **Urban Focus and Gender Safety**: Strengthen women's safety programs like the Nirbhaya program. Replicate Gender Labs in cities to ensure gender-sensitive urban planning.

- **Digital Literacy**: Prioritize digital literacy for rural women and girls. Introduce tailored courses for women entrepreneurs on digital marketing and payments, and integrate digital literacy in school curricula.
- **Employment-Linked Incentive Schemes**: Set gender-based targets for job creation programs and track women's participation through gender-disaggregated data.

Conclusion

While the 2024-25 Gender Budget signals progress toward enhancing women's labour force participation, more focused interventions and data tracking are needed to address structural barriers and further boost women's employment.

Ashutosh Varshney writes: James C Scott, scholar of resistance

July 28, 2024, Indian Express

Chapter:

7 - Politics and Society

C-4 Politics and Society

Context

- James C. Scott, Yale professor of political science, passed away on July 19 at 87.

- Author of *Weapons of the Weak (1985)*, a landmark work on peasant and subaltern resistance.

Background

- Scott's work emerged during a period when peasant rebellions were a topic of interest across the political spectrum.

- The Maoist regime's Great Leap Forward (1958-61) and Cultural Revolution (1966-70) caused millions of deaths, illustrating the disconnect between revolutionary ideals and the everyday realities of peasants.

- Scott's Early Work: *The Moral Economy of the Peasant (1979)* was based on archival research. To understand peasant life first-hand, Scott lived in a Malaysian village for nearly two years.

Resistance

- **Everyday Resistance**: Scott's research revealed that peasants engaged in subtle forms of resistance to avoid direct confrontation.

- Forms of resistance included:

  o Foot-dragging, false compliance, feigned ignorance, sabotage, and pilfering.

  o These "everyday forms of resistance" were essential for survival and avoided retaliation.

  o This challenged the theory of hegemony by demonstrating that the absence of collective protest did not imply acceptance of the dominant power's worldview.

  o Scott's work reshaped the study of subaltern resistance, highlighting that small acts of defiance could be more effective than open rebellion in oppressive contexts.

Critique of the State and Modernism

- *Seeing Like a State (1998):* A critique of "high modernism" by which Scott meant the modern state's project of "legibility", its imposition of top-down version of progress on powerless citizens, ignoring local knowledge and wisdom ("metis").

- In the context of James C. Scott's book "legibility" refers to the state's attempt to simplify and standardize complex social realities in order to make them more easily understandable and controllable by the government.

- **Examples of "Legibility":** Modern impositions such as permanent last names, cadastral surveys (land measurement in standardized units), and numbered street grids in cities like New York.

- **Examples of Neglect of "metis":** Monoculture destroyed local knowledge of diverse crops suited to specific environments.

Destructive State Interventions:

- Collectivization in the Soviet Union, forced villagization in Tanzania, and Brasilia's construction as a capital city brought untold destruction.

- Some state-led initiatives, such as vaccination programs, succeeded in enhancing welfare.

- Chandigarh: Scott also studied India's planned city, but found no systematic destruction there.

Long-Term Impact of Resistance and Development

- *Weapons of the Weak (1985)*: These everyday forms of resistance prevented the worst outcomes in power-laden situations but didn't necessarily offer a sustainable solution.

- While small acts of defiance helped peasants survive oppressive conditions, durable welfare gains for peasants often required leaving agriculture.

- Empirical evidence suggests that agricultural sectors cannot grow as fast as non-agricultural ones, meaning peasant welfare is enhanced by creating opportunities outside agriculture.

Example from Malaysia:

- Peasants in Malaysia eventually transitioned away from agriculture, aided by education and state infrastructure. This led to a disappearance of poverty in Malaysia, illustrating the long-term benefits of migration and non-agricultural opportunities.

Conclusion

Scott's work fundamentally reshaped how scholars understand resistance, revealing the effectiveness of everyday acts of defiance in maintaining dignity under oppressive systems.

However, for long-term welfare improvement, transitioning from agriculture to non-agricultural sectors was key, as demonstrated by the example of Malaysia's development.

James C Scott: A scholar who went against the grain

July 30, 2024, Indian Express

Chapter:

7 - Politics and Society

C-4 Politics and Society

Context

- James C. Scott, a leading scholar and Sterling Professor of Political Science Emeritus at Yale University, passed away on July 19 at the age of 88.

- His work reshaped disciplines like political science, history, and anthropology, with a particular focus on Southeast Asia and ancient Mesopotamia.

- He had significant influence on scholarship regarding popular resistance, state formation, and environmental history.

James C. Scott on Resistance

- Scott explored the theme of resistance, especially focusing on the subtle and hidden forms of peasant resistance to domination.

- He was in dialogue with **Ranajit Guha**, founder of Subaltern Studies, who explored similar ideas, particularly in his classic *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency* (1983).

Subaltern Resistance:

- Both Scott and Guha shared a focus on the "subaltern" groups, emphasizing everyday resistance over large-scale revolutions.

- Scott's *Weapons of the Weak* (1985) detailed how subaltern groups create hidden forms of resistance or "transcripts" that remain invisible to the elites.

- This resistance does not necessarily lead to a grand revolution but demonstrates subtle acts of defiance in everyday life.

Distinction from Revolution:

- While both valued resistances, they rejected the idea of a formal, organized "capital R" Revolution, especially under the leadership of a communist party.

- Guha focused on "everyday rebellion" as a key form of resistance rather than a full-scale revolution led by an organized party.

James C. Scott on the State

Critique of the State:

- Scott developed a strong critique of the state and the nation-state form, arguing that they represented oppressive institutions.

- He critiqued the state's "ways of seeing," noting that state theories of civilization often suppress and exploit nomadic, unsettled, and mobile ways of living.

- **Key Work**: *Against the Grain: A Deep History of the Earliest States* (2017).

- This book challenges the traditional narrative of state formation, offering a deep historical analysis that critiques the state's role in human civilization.

- Scott saw the state as morally wrong, believing it perpetuated oppression and restricted human freedom.

James C. Scott's Broader Intellectual Contributions

Modernization Critique:

- Scott questioned the idea that modernization is the ultimate goal of political life.

- He emphasized that political science could benefit from insights found in anthropology and history.

- **Creativity in Defiance**:

- For Scott, the capacity to defy authority was central to human creativity, both historically and academically. Defiance, when done judiciously, leads to innovation and progress in various fields.

Conclusion

James C. Scott's work highlights the importance of everyday resistance and critiques the oppressive nature of the state. His interdisciplinary approach, drawing from anthropology, history, and political science, offers new ways of understanding power, resistance, and civilization.
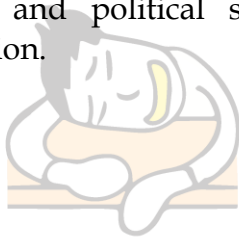
Supreme Court is right — caste discrimination in Indian prisons cannot be allowed to go on

July 20, 2024, Indian Express

Chapter:

B-2 Caste System

B-3 Tribal communities in India

C-1 Visions of Social Change in India

C-7 Challenges of Social Transformation

Context

- **Public Interest Litigation (PIL)**: *Sukanya Shantha vs Union of India (2024)* highlights systemic caste-based discrimination and segregation in the Indian prison system, especially against Denotified Tribes (DNTs).

- The petition calls for addressing discriminatory provisions in prison manuals.

Key Issues Highlighted in the PIL

Segregation and Discrimination:

- **Marginalized communities**: Inmates from these groups are often forced into cleaning and manual scavenging, while dominant castes are given higher-status tasks like cooking.

- *[Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital explains how caste-based privileges in prison are a reflection of the cultural capital that upper-caste individuals bring with them, reinforcing their dominance even in confined spaces like prisons.]*

- **Violation of Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers Act (2013)**: Although manual scavenging was legally abolished, it continues in prisons.

Caste-based Privileges:

- **Caste hierarchy in prisons**: Upper caste inmates receive preferential treatment, entrenching social inequalities within prisons.

- **Example**: Tamil Nadu's Palayamkottai Central Jail has caste-based segregation in barracks to prevent caste rivalries.

Denotified Tribes (DNTs):

- Historically labeled as "criminal tribes" under the British Criminal Tribes Act of 1871 (now repealed), they are still classified as "habitual offenders" in prison manuals, leading to further social and economic marginalization.

  [Howard Becker's Labeling theory can be used to understand how DNTs continue to be stigmatized through their classification as "habitual offenders," which perpetuates their marginalization and criminalization even after the formal repeal of discriminatory laws.]

- This practice violates the principles of natural justice and modern criminal law.

Constitutional Violations

Fundamental Rights:

- The caste-based segregation and discrimination violate the Right to Equality (Article 14), Right to Life (Article 21), and Right to Personal Liberty enshrined in the Indian Constitution.

- These practices contradict the principles of social democracy as emphasized by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar.

Government Response and Efforts

Model Prison Manual (2016):

- Developed by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) to modernize and standardize prison administration.

- Despite this, many state prison manuals continue enforcing outdated and discriminatory caste-based practices.

Need for Uniformity:

- A uniform anti-discrimination policy across all state prisons is essential to uphold constitutional rights and eliminate caste-based discrimination.

Conclusion

- The case has significant implications for the Indian justice system and democracy.

- The pending Supreme Court verdict could be a turning point in combating caste-based discrimination in prisons and reinforcing the constitutional promise of equality for all.

De-Sanskritisation of Kurmi Identity in Jharkhand

Chapter:

B-2 - Caste System

B-3 - Tribal communities in India

C-5 Social Movements in Modern India

Context

- The Kurmi community, traditionally categorized as an Other Backward Class (OBC), is seeking Scheduled Tribe (ST) status in states like Jharkhand, West Bengal, and Odisha.

- Despite their social and economic progress, Kurmis claim tribal ancestry and aim to de-Sanskritise their identity.

  ["De-Sanskritisation" is a reversal of the process of Sanskritisation (M.N. Srinivas), where a caste group moves away from adopting the customs of higher castes, often to claim a more indigenous or tribal identity. It reflects how groups may alter their identity to access political or economic benefits.]

Historical and Socio-Economic Background

- **Origins**: Kurmis trace their lineage to the Kshatriyas (warrior caste), who became farmers. They are widely known as an agricultural caste with a strong presence in farming and trade.

- **Caste Identity**: Despite socio-economic advancement, Kurmis are still viewed as a backward class, but they claim tribal roots and demand inclusion in the ST category.

- **Political Mobilization**: Kurmis have made political strides and have leaders advocating for their inclusion in the ST list to gain constitutional benefits, such as reservations in jobs and education.

Government Rejection and TRI Report

- **Jharkhand Government's Recommendation (2004)**: The state government recommended the Kurmi community's inclusion in the ST list, but the Government of India rejected it based on the Tribal Research Institute (TRI) report.

- **TRI Findings**: The report concluded that Kurmis (or Kunbis) are a **sub-caste** and do not belong to any tribal group. The community is strong socio-economically, and it does not face stigmas like untouchability.

- *[The rejection by the government based on ethnic and cultural criteria reflects Clifford Geertz's concept of primordial attachments, where ethnic and tribal identity is defined by deeply ingrained cultural traits. The Kurmis' inability to meet tribal criteria reflects these inherent cultural boundaries.]*

- **Census Classification**: Historically, the 1872 Census did not classify Kurmis as tribes, but as "Jari Kurmi" or Kurmis of the Woods. The Chhota Nagpur Tenancy Act (CNT) 1908 also listed Kurmi (Mahto) as a backward class, not a tribe.

Opposition from Tribal Communities

- **Tribal Protests**: Over 50 tribal organizations, led by Adivasi Adhikar Raksha Manch, have protested against the Kurmis' demand for ST status, arguing that Kurmis' language, culture, and traditions differ from those of tribal communities.

- **Cultural Differences**: The Kurmi/Kudmi language belongs to the Indo-Aryan family, while tribal languages are part of the Dravidian and Austro-Asiatic families, further separating them from tribals.

ST Status and Affinity Test

- Ministry of Tribal Affairs' Criteria for ST Status:

  - Primitive traits, distinct culture, geographic isolation, reluctance or shyness to integrate with the broader community, and backwardness.

  - In legal parlance, this is called the "affinity test" which needs to be fulfilled to be categorised as a tribal group.

- Affinity Test: A legal tool used to determine whether a community qualifies as tribal. However, this test is debated and not explicitly defined in the Constitution.

- Supreme Court Case (2011): In Anand v Committee for Scrutiny and Verification of Tribe Claims, the Court acknowledged that the affinity test cannot be the sole criterion for identifying tribal groups and suggested that a larger bench should examine the issue.

Political Context and Kurmi Mobilization

- **Political Influence**: Kurmis have historically aligned with various political parties, especially in states like Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. Despite being fewer in number than other dominant groups like Yadavs, Kurmis have gained political leverage.

- **Fragmentation**: The Kurmi community remains fragmented, relying on regional leaders and political affiliations to pursue their demands.

  [Kurmis' ability to gain political leverage can be understood through Bourdieu's concept of political capital, which is accumulated through alliances and social networks. Kurmis use their political capital to demand ST status and secure resources.]

- **Election Considerations**: The demand for ST status and the resulting political agitation could become a significant factor in Jharkhand's upcoming assembly elections, as Kurmis seek increased political representation and access to reservations in jobs and education.

Conclusion

- The legal and political battles over the Kurmi community's identity will likely continue, with significant implications for tribal politics and elections in Jharkhand.

Sikh Struggles for Identity Consolidation in East and Northeast India

Chapter:

B-2 Caste System

B-6 Religion and Society
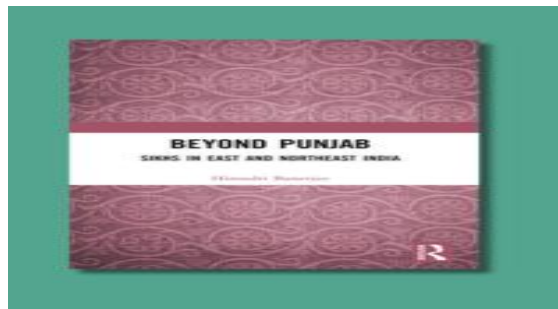
Context

- Himadri Banerjee's book, *Beyond Punjab: Sikhs in East and Northeast India (2023)*, presents an in-depth study of Sikh identity consolidation outside Punjab.

- The book explores Sikh communities' internal conflicts and interactions with host societies in Bihar, Odisha, Kolkata, Assam, Meghalaya, and Manipur, focusing on the 16th to early 20th centuries.

Sikh Identity and Hierarchies

- **Caste in Sikhism**: Sikhism, despite its promise of egalitarianism, is deeply influenced by caste hierarchies, which persist in marriage, occupation, and religious practices across the states studied.

- **Khalsa and Pluralism**: While the Khalsa identity solidified in Punjab, the book highlights the significant role of other Sikh factions, such as Nanakpanthis and Agrahari Sikhs, in shaping Sikh identity outside Punjab.

Sikhism in Bihar, Odisha, and Kolkata

- **Bihar**: Home to Agrahari Sikhs and Kurmi Sikhs, who originated from local trading castes. The Sodhi Khatris, followers of Khalsa ideals, maintained religious purity, creating internal divisions.

- **Odisha**: The Sikh mathas established by Nanakpanthis and Udasis contributed to Sikhism in the state. Punjabi Sikhs later dominated, marginalizing local Sikh groups.

- **Kolkata**: Sikhs here faced caste-based conflicts between Amritdharis and Agrahari Sikhs. Amritdharis eventually gained control, especially after the 1946 communal riots.

Caste and Sikhism in Assam, Meghalaya, and Manipur

- **Assam**: The Ramgarhias and Jats dominated, while Mazhabis and local Barkandaz Sikhs were marginalised. Mazhabis, a Dalit group, remained at the lowest rungs of the caste hierarchy.

- **Meghalaya**: Here, caste influences were significant, with Mazhabis in slums and sanitation jobs, while Ramgarhias dominated transport services and prospered.

- **Manipur**: Burmese Sikhs, mostly of the trading caste Khatris, emerged as a dominant group. The local Sikh population remained fragmented along caste lines.

Intersection of Caste and Religion

- **Caste Hierarchies**: Banerjee discusses how caste hierarchies shape Sikh interactions outside Punjab. The Jat Sikhs dominate, while Mazhabis (Dalits) face marginalisation in sacred spaces and professions, reflecting Sikhism's caste psyche across regions.

- **Historical Context**: McLeod (2007) pointed out the existence of 30 different Sikh castes, reflecting the caste divide within Sikhism. Punjab's Scheduled Caste population is 31.9%, the largest in India, a fact mirrored in Sikh communities in the east and northeast.

Caste-Based Conflicts and Local Adaptations

- **Cultural Adaptation**: In Bihar, Nanakpanthis practiced a syncretic faith, adapting to local customs and caste hierarchies. In contrast, Sodhi Khatris attempted to maintain Khalsa ideals.

- **Caste and Occupation**: In Shillong, Mazhabis were confined to sanitation work, while Ramgarhias prospered in transportation, illustrating caste-based occupational divides.

- **Manipur's Burmese Sikhs**: The Burmese Sikhs, though fragmented by caste, consolidated their religious and social dominance due to their trading background.

Theological and Pluralistic Tensions

- **Sikh Pluralism**: The book illustrates the theological and cultural plurality within Sikhism, with groups like Nanakpanthis and Sahajdharis adapting to local religious practices but being marginalised within mainstream Sikhism.

- **Sikh Identity**: The dominance of the Khalsa identity led to the marginalisation of other Sikh factions, despite their role in shaping Sikhism in eastern and northeastern India.

Conclusion

- **Caste and Sikh Identity**: Despite Sikhism's theological claim to egalitarianism, caste continues to shape Sikh communities outside Punjab.

The problems with sub-caste reservations

July 18, 2024, The Hindu

Chapter:

B-2 Caste System

C-1 Visions of Social Change in India

C-7 Challenges of Social Transformation

Context

The Supreme Court has reserved judgment on sub-caste reservations for SC/STs, and the justification for such reservations must be rooted in both legal and academic grounds. The academic justification, however, appears weak.

Government's Policy So Far:

1. **Legal safeguards** against caste discrimination.

2. **Reservations** in legislatures, public jobs, and educational institutions.

3. **Economic empowerment** measures to improve ownership of capital assets like land, businesses, and education levels.

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's Stance:

- Ambedkar justified these policies due to widespread denial of equal rights, employment, education, and the isolation faced by untouchables as a whole, not specific sub-castes.

- These three measures were meant to complement each other, not function as standalone solutions.

Interconnection Between Policies

- **Legal Safeguards**: Ambedkar's first step was legal measures against caste discrimination.

- **Reservations**: Legal safeguards alone were insufficient; hence, reservations were introduced to ensure untouchables receive a fair share in the "present."

- **Economic Empowerment**: Addressed the limitations of legal safeguards and reservations by aiming to improve capital ownership, education, and employment opportunities among untouchables, helping them utilize reservations effectively.

Social Group vs. Individual Focus

- **Reservations**: Focused on untouchables as a *social group*.

- **Economic Empowerment**: Focused on *individuals* within the community who lacked capital assets and education.

On Sub-Caste Reservation:

Supporters' Argument for Sub-Caste Reservation:

- Some sub-castes have benefited more than others, and those lagging should get separate quotas.

- *[Tadpole Theory (R.H. Tawney): Tawney's Tadpole Theory suggests that only a small fraction of the disadvantaged group (The "top of the bottom" as phenomenon mentioned in the Tadpole Theory) rises with state support, leaving the majority behind.]*

- *[Sachidanand Sinha's "Harijan Elite" and S.D. Badgaiyan's "Tribal Elite" concepts suggest that a small, privileged group within the Dalit and tribal communities has benefitted disproportionately from reservation policies.]*

Key Question:

- Are certain sub-castes lagging due to internal discrimination by other sub-castes or due to lack of education and income-generating assets?

Challenges with Sub-Caste Reservation:

- If the issue is lack of capital and education, policies should focus on enhancing these aspects rather than introducing sub-caste reservations.

- Providing reservations without addressing these economic and educational deficiencies may perpetuate under-representation.

Legal and Economic Realities

- Legal solutions to discrimination must consider economic and social realities.

- The Court must assess whether under-representation is due to discrimination by other sub-castes or lack of capabilities (income and education).

Conclusion

- If sub-caste reservations are implemented without proper academic and data-backed justification, it risks failing to solve the underlying problem.

- Such a policy could open demands from other sub-castes, leading to fragmented caste-based reservations that mirror the caste hierarchy.

- *[Dalit Consciousness (Gail Omvedt): Gail Omvedt argues that the Constitution played a crucial role in awakening Dalit consciousness aimed at creating an inclusive society.*

- *It implies that the introduction of the creamy layer within SC/STs, alongside sub-categorization, might fragment this unified struggle by dividing the community based on economic lines, potentially weakening their collective power.]*

- *[Dalit Mobilization (Lancy Lobo): Lancy Lobo suggests that Dalit mobilization is still in its formative stages.*

- *It implies that the introduction of the creamy layer and sub-categorization could dilute this emerging political force by creating internal divisions based on economic status, hindering the potential for collective action and progress.]*

More to digitality inequality than access to phones

July 7, 2024, Indian Express

Chapter:

B-2 Caste System

C-7 Challenges of Social Transformation

Context

- **Caste and Digital Inequality**: Caste inequalities, deeply rooted in Indian society, have extended into the digital sphere.

- Scholars like Nicholas Dirks and Jan Van Dijk emphasize that addressing structural inequalities in the digital realm is crucial for future societies.

- While digital access has been studied, the full scope of digital inequality includes access, digital skills, and empowerment—areas impacted by caste.

Reproduction of Caste Inequalities in Digital Access

Study in Kerala:

- Research involving students from various schools (government, CBSE, international, vocational) revealed that upper-caste students have access to high-end devices and Wi-Fi, enhancing digital learning.

- Dalit students mostly rely on low-quality smartphones, which limits their digital engagement.

- Vikki Katz's concept of "under-connected" explains this disparity, where access to multiple devices increases digital autonomy.

Sociocultural Factors Driving Digital Inequality

English Language Proficiency:

- Dalit students face challenges with English, making it harder to navigate AI-based learning tools, while upper-caste students excel in these areas.

  [Linguistic capital is part of Bourdieu's cultural capital, where mastery of dominant languages (like English) provides social advantages. Dalit students limited English proficiency restricts their ability to fully engage with digital resources.]

Family Income and Occupation:

- Upper-caste parents, equipped with more education and social capital, encourage their children to use digital tools for advancement.

- Dalit families, due to low-wage jobs and limited exposure, are unable to provide similar support.

  [Bourdieu's theory of social reproduction explains how inequalities are passed down through generations. Upper-caste families use their social and economic capital to provide better digital opportunities for their children, reinforcing existing inequalities.]

Digital Inequality and Neighborhood Influence

Neighborhood Exposure:

- Upper-caste students from better neighborhoods are encouraged to integrate technology into learning, while Dalit students, often from poorer areas, lack this social pressure, worsening the gap.

Rural-Urban Divide:

- Although the rural-urban divide in access is shrinking, location-specific inequalities persist, often aligning with caste-based segregation.

Digital Choices and Feedback Loops

Shared Devices and Algorithms:

- Dalit students often share devices with family, leading to limited educational use. Recommendation algorithms reinforce these patterns, creating a cyclical inequality in digital learning.

Widening Caste Disparities in the Digital Society

Access to Digital Resources:

- Platforms like Khan Academy are predominantly accessed by upper-caste students, widening gaps in education, economic mobility, and political participation.

  [Meritocracy (Michael Young): Young's critique of meritocracy is relevant here, as access to educational platforms is skewed by social factors like caste, questioning the idea that digital platforms offer equal opportunities.]

Systemic Failures:

- The focus on closing basic digital access overlooks the need for digital skills and empowerment, reinforcing stereotypes of Dalits' "inability" to use technology, rather than addressing systemic issues.

Call for a Holistic Approach

Revised Framework:

- Addressing digital inequality requires a broader framework that includes AI, language proficiency, and digital literacy to equip Dalits with necessary skills.

Policy and Educational Reforms:

- Policymakers must ensure that Dalit communities can fully engage with digital resources, preventing further marginalisation in the digital age.

  [It reflects the concept of digital citizenship which emphasizes the importance of digital literacy and access to technology in promoting inclusive participation in the digital world, something that is crucial for Dalits to overcome marginalization.]

Conclusion

- Caste-based digital disparities are likely to increase unless policies focus on skills and empowerment, not just access. Without systemic changes, technology will continue to reinforce existing social inequalities.

What ghettoisation has cost Indian Muslims

July 14, 2024, Indian Express

Chapter:

B-6 Religion and Society

C-7 Challenges of Social Transformation

Context

Let's examines the socio-economic and political consequences of ghettoisation for Indian Muslims, discussing how segregation has reinforced their marginalisation and limited access to opportunities.

Socio-Economic Challenges of Indian Muslims

Educational and Health Disparities:

- According to the National Family Health Survey (NFHS) 2019-21, the median years of schooling for Muslim male heads of households are nearly two years lower than the national average.

- Urban infant mortality among Muslims is 5% higher than the average, and Muslim children under five suffer from higher rates of malnutrition.

- These indicators show that the gaps in human development between Muslims and the rest of India have remained stagnant over the years.

- *[Robert Merton's concept of cumulative disadvantage explains how initial social or economic disadvantages, like lower education levels, lead to further disadvantages, such as poorer health outcomes and lower socio-economic mobility]*

Residential Segregation and Ghettoisation

Segregation as a Cause and Consequence:

- Residential segregation of Muslims is both a reflection of socio-economic inequality and a major factor in their marginalisation.

- This segregation is often driven by discrimination in housing and land markets, reinforced by fear of communal violence.

- **Example**: In Vadodara, protests erupted when a Muslim woman was given housing in a non-Muslim area, showing resistance to integration.

  [David Harvey's theory of spatial segregation highlights how marginalized communities are often confined to specific areas, limiting their access to resources and reinforcing their socio-economic disadvantages]

Impact on Public Goods:

- Segregated Muslim communities face worse access to public services like health and education.

- Anjali Adukia's research using SECC and Economic Census data confirms that in cities with larger Muslim populations, access to these services is poorer.
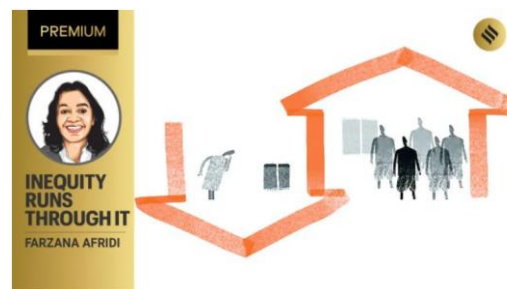
- Segregation also means that Muslim-majority areas within cities consume fewer public goods, worsening socio-economic outcomes for this minority group.

Education and Gender Disparities

Access to Education:

- Limited access to quality education due to residential segregation leaves Muslims at a disadvantage in the job market.

- The Sachar Committee Report (2006) debunked the myth that most Muslim children attend madrasas, showing that only 3% do so.

- Instead, the issue lies in poor access to mainstream educational institutions.

- Madrasas often emerge where mainstream schooling is inaccessible due to segregation.

Gender Gap in Education:

- Muslim women face significant educational barriers, with lower levels of attainment, particularly in higher education.

- This correlates with higher fertility rates among Muslim women, reflecting poor access to education rather than prosperity.

- In segregated communities, educating girls is often culturally discouraged, whereas in mixed communities, girls are more likely to continue their education beyond secondary school.

- *[Ann Oakley's work on gender and education highlights how patriarchal norms restrict women's access to education, particularly in marginalized communities like Muslims, leading to broader socio-economic disparities]*

Under-representation in Public and Political Sectors

Public Sector Discrimination:

- Muslims are significantly under-represented in civil services, judiciary, and other positions of influence, making up only 3-6% of IAS, IPS officers, and judicial officers despite forming 14% of the population.

- This absence in influential roles limits their visibility and access to decision-making.

Political Representation:

- In the **Lok Sabha**, Muslims have consistently been under-represented, comprising only 4-9% of MPs since Independence. This political marginalisation further restricts their ability to influence policy changes that could improve their socio-economic conditions.

Policy Recommendations and International Comparisons

International Models of Desegregation:

- In Singapore, the Ethnic Integration Policy mandates quotas for Chinese, Indians, and Malays in public housing to ensure ethnic diversity, preventing segregation.

- This model could be adapted to India to encourage integration by influencing bank loans, public land sales, and housing societies.

Affirmative Action:

- Existing policies could be expanded to include economic disadvantage, such as the EWS category, in housing, education, and employment.

Conclusion

- Desegregation policies are crucial for fostering social cohesion. When communities live and interact together—children attending the same schools and families sharing public spaces—it helps break down cultural barriers and promotes unity.

  [Contact Hypothesis (Gordon Allport): Allport's contact hypothesis suggests that under appropriate conditions, intergroup contact can reduce prejudice and foster mutual understanding. Desegregation policies aim to create such environments.]

- Ghettoisation has hindered the socio-economic mobility of Muslims in India. Addressing this segregation through equitable policies is essential for creating a more inclusive and cohesive society.

Hillary Clinton says Kamala Harris could break the 'glass ceiling' with her nomination. What does it mean?

August 23, 2024, Indian Express

Chapter:

5 - Stratification and Mobility

Introduction

- Hillary Clinton, at the Democratic National Convention (August 19, 2024), expressed optimism that Kamala Harris could shatter the "glass ceiling" by becoming the 47th President of the United States.

U.S. Vice President and Democratic presidential nominee Kamala Harris. (REUTERS/Marco Bello)

Understanding the Concept of the Glass Ceiling

Definition (Encyclopedia of Race, Ethnicity, and Society):

- The "ceiling" implies a limit to advancement despite qualifications.

- The "glass" aspect reflects that this barrier is invisible but real, allowing individuals to see opportunities but not access them.

- Even without explicit policies preventing women's advancement, subtle cultural and institutional barriers persist.

Origin of the Term 'Glass Ceiling'

- Marilyn Loden, a management consultant, coined the term "glass ceiling" during a 1978 panel discussion on women's career advancement.

Historical Context and Legislative Efforts to Address the Glass Ceiling

- The Second Wave of Feminism (1960s–70s) brought attention to gender inequality in the workplace.

- Title VII of the Civil Rights Act (1964):

    o Prohibited sex-based discrimination in employment.

- Glass Ceiling Commission (1991):

    o President George HW Bush established the commission to investigate workplace gender inequality.

    o Findings: Women made up 46% of the workforce and earned over half of master's degrees but held only 5% of senior management roles.

Current Status of the Glass Ceiling: Evidence from Key Studies

Marianne Bertrand's 2018 study on corporate boards:

- In the European Union (2016):

    o 23.3% of board members in publicly listed companies were women.

    o Only 5.1% of CEOs were women, despite women forming 45% of the workforce.

Political Underrepresentation:

- In 2022, women held 29% of seats in the U.S. House of Representatives, marking the highest percentage ever but still far from parity.

Criticism of the Glass Ceiling Concept

Criticism:

- The glass ceiling metaphor often centers on affluent, upper-middle-class white women, excluding marginalized groups.
- Women from racial minorities, lower-income backgrounds, or backward castes face even greater challenges, often excluded from entry-level opportunities.

India's Perspective:

- For women from backward castes, exclusion from the formal economy compounds the effect of social discrimination, making the metaphor less relevant for them.

Why Does the Glass Ceiling Persist? Competing Explanations

Sheryl Sandberg's "Lean In" book (2013):

- Sandberg argued that women should assert themselves', increase ambition, make behavioral adjustments to advance in their careers.

Marilyn Loden's Critique of Sandberg:

- Loden argued that structural barriers—not individual behavior—limit women's career progression.
- Sandberg's advice of applies primarily to elite women and overlooks issues like: Inflexible work schedules, Gender bias, Wage disparities.

Claudia Goldin's Perspective (Career & Family: Women's Century-Long Journey Toward Equity, 2021):

- Senior-level jobs are often "greedy," requiring significant time commitments.
- As long as such jobs remain inflexible, women's career progress will lag behind men's.
- Workplace policies must normalize time-offs for men to share caregiving responsibilities equally.

Conclusion

- The glass ceiling remains relevant as a metaphor for the persistent challenges women face in achieving top positions. Overcoming these barriers requires: Cultural change in workplace attitudes. Policies that promote work-life balance and equal caregiving responsibilities for men and women.

Question

- What is the concept of the "glass ceiling," and how does it affect the career advancement of women and marginalized groups in society?

A Hopeful Treatise on the Revival of Social Democracy

A World of Insecurity: Democratic Disenchantment in Rich and Poor Countries by Pranab Bardhan.

Vol. 59, Issue No. 32, 10 Aug, 2024, EPW

Chapter:

7 - Politics and Society

C-4 Politics and Society

Introduction

- Bardhan presents an analysis of the erosion of liberal democracy and suggests social democracy as a possible solution to restore and strengthen democratic institutions.

- The chapters connect under the theme of how social democracy can combat rising populism, nationalism, and authoritarianism.
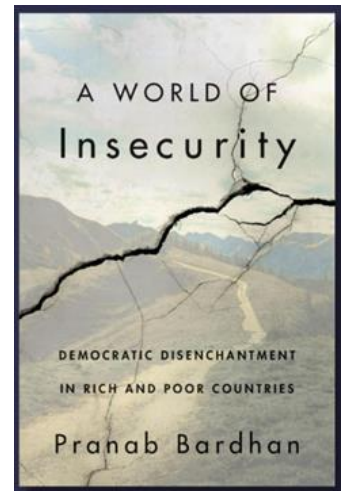
Decline of Liberal Democracy: Key Statistics (V-Dem Institute)

- Bardhan begins by highlighting some chilling statistics from the V-Dem Institute (University of Gothenburg), revealing the widespread decline of democracy:

    1. 87 autocratic regimes now govern 68% of the world's population.

    2. Liberal democracies govern only 14% of the global population (31 countries).

    3. 2.6 billion people live in countries undergoing autocratization, while only 4% of the world's population live in countries becoming more democratic.

    4. Major countries experiencing autocratization include Brazil, India, Poland, Turkey, and the United States.

- This data sets the stage for the analysis of democratic backsliding and the increasing appeal of authoritarianism.

Insecurity, Inequality, and Democracy (Chapter 1)

- **Core argument**: The populist backlash against the liberal order is driven more by insecurity than by inequality.

- Threats to jobs and livelihoods are central, but Bardhan expands this concept to include cultural insecurity.

- Populist resentment is often directed at cultural and professional elites, who are perceived as disconnected from the everyday struggles of the common people.

- Interestingly, financial elites are less frequently the target of this resentment.

- **Key dividing lines**:

    o In developed countries, immigration is a key source of cultural polarization.

    o In developing countries like India, Brazil, and Turkey, religion becomes a significant dividing line.

- Bardhan notes that social media amplifies cultural divides, contributing to polarization by allowing the rapid spread of toxic, polarizing content.

- Takeaway: The challenge for liberal democracy is to address not only economic disparities but also the cultural insecurities that fuel populist movements.

Taking Back Control: The Role of Local Communities (Chapter 2)

- Bardhan explores the need to restore autonomy and control to local communities, particularly in the face of state and market failures.

  o State failures: Bureaucratic inefficiencies and corruption lead to distrust in government institutions.

  o Market failures: Economic inequality and lack of social protections leave many people vulnerable.

- Bardhan discusses how communitarianism could provide an alternative, with local communities playing a more prominent role in decision-making.

- **Challenges of communitarianism**:

  o Political and economic pitfalls arise, including the danger of parochialism (narrow-mindedness) and exclusion of minority groups.

  o Local communities may lack the capacity to effectively manage resources or ensure inclusiveness.

Resurgence of Nationalism: Civic vs. Ethnonationalism (Chapter 3)

- Bardhan contrasts the rise of ethnonationalism form of nationalism based on ethnicity, tribe, or religion—with inclusive civic nationalism.

  o Civic nationalism: Historically seen in countries like the US and India, where national identity was inclusive and focused on shared democratic values.

  o Ethnonationalism: More recent nationalist movements emphasize exclusivity based on race, religion, or ethnicity, deepening divisions within society.

- **Economic consequences**:

  o Ethnonationalism often leads to exclusionary economic policies that hurt marginalized communities and undermine national unity.

  o Civic nationalism, on the other hand, promotes economic integration and a sense of belonging for all citizens, regardless of background.

- Takeaway: Bardhan warns against the economic and social dangers of ethnonationalist movements, advocating for a return to inclusive civic nationalism to preserve democratic values.

The Allure of Authoritarianism (Chapter 4)

- Authoritarianism is often perceived as offering efficiency and strong governance, especially in developing countries where people believe that only a powerful state can deliver economic progress.

- Bardhan challenges this notion by pointing out the economic constraints imposed by authoritarian regimes.

- **Economic stagnation:** Tight control over information and media restricts innovation, particularly in fields like artificial intelligence.

  - **Social costs:** Authoritarianism imposes significant social costs in terms of lost freedoms, repression, and human rights abuses.

- The chapter underscores how democratic governance—while imperfect—allows for entrepreneurial and social freedoms necessary for long-term economic growth.

Majoritarianism and Minority Rights (Chapter 5)

- Majoritarianism refers to political systems in which the majority's interests consistently override those of minorities.

  - Bardhan explains that in such systems, minorities—whether ethnic, religious, linguistic, or gender-based—are vulnerable to discrimination and exclusion.

- The rise of elected authoritarian regimes—sometimes called illiberal democracies—poses a grave threat to minority rights.

  - These regimes, even though elected democratically, often pursue policies that undermine civil liberties and marginalize minority groups.

- Bardhan highlights the importance of institutions—such as independent judiciaries and civil rights organizations—that protect minority rights and ensure that democracy serves all citizens, not just the majority.

Revival of Social Democracy (Chapter 6)

- Bardhan presents social democracy as a system that balances liberty, equality, and social justice.

  - It offers a middle path between unregulated capitalism and state socialism, ensuring that both economic growth and social welfare are priorities.

- **Decline of social democratic parties**:

  - Social democracy has weakened due to the rise of populist, nationalist ideologies, which appeal to those left behind by globalization.

  - To revive social democracy, Bardhan argues that labour unions and civil society organizations must address the real concerns of workers, especially their communitarian needs (a sense of belonging and security).

  - Cultural distance between working-class communities and cosmopolitan liberals needs to be bridged to avoid further alienation.

Restructuring the Relationship between Social Democracy and Capitalism (Chapter 7)

- Bardhan explores the need to reform capitalist governance so that labour, capital, and citizens all benefit.

- Key reforms discussed:

  - **Technological innovation**: Drawing on the work of Acemoglu and Johnson (2023), Bardhan suggests that technological progress, particularly in artificial intelligence, should be harnessed for socially beneficial purposes, rather than exacerbating inequality.

- o **Financial sector reforms**: Bardhan emphasizes the need for more transparent election funding and regulations to prevent corporate influence from distorting democratic processes.
- o **Labour market reforms**: Social democracy must ensure worker protections while still encouraging entrepreneurship and innovation.

Conclusion

- The book suggests that democratic resilience depends on addressing both economic insecurity and cultural divides and ensuring that all citizens—regardless of identity—have a stake in the democratic process.

Question:

- What are the key principles of social democracy, and how can they contribute to addressing social and economic inequalities in modern societies?

The collapse of categories and post-individualism

August 31, 2024, The Hindu

Chapter:

10 - Social Change in Modern Society

Introduction: Categorization as a Pillar of Governance

'That there is nothing permanent about an individual being a man or woman is a bewildering post-truth' | Photo Credit: Getty Images/iStockphoto

- Categorization—the act of labeling people, places, events, and activities—has historically been essential for governance and politics.

- However, these categories are now increasingly contested, revealing both rigidity and fluidity in their application.

- **Case of Imane Khelif** (2024 Paris Olympics):

  o Algerian boxer Imane Khelif, though identified as female on her passport and assigned female sex at birth, faced disqualification in world championship in 2023, based on gender eligibility tests.

  o Khelif's case exemplifies how sex, once considered an objective and biological fact, is now treated as subjective and alterable.

- Traditional sex categories (based on chromosomes, hormones, and genitalia) are disputed, especially in Western contexts where gender identity is increasingly seen as personal choice.

- The debate over sex and gender has become a major source of social and political tension in the West.

Governance Challenges: The Fluidity of Categories

- Categories such as citizenship, crime, and borders have always been contested, leading to conflicts and wars.

- Examples of such challenges include:

  o Kamala Harris's ethnicity: Is she Asian-American or African-American?

  o India's SC/ST sub-categorization debate: Should Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe communities be further divided to ensure better social justice outcomes?

- These debates make clear agreements difficult to achieve and governance increasingly complex.

- Social conflicts arise when categories shift, requiring new laws and policies to address these changes.

Sex as a Traditional Binary: A Universal Agreement Now in Question

- Traditionally, the binary categorization of sex—male and female—was accepted universally by science, religion, and politics.

- Richard Dawkins, an evolutionary biologist, defends the binary nature of sex:

- While most natural categories are fluid, male and female remain stable **because reproduction requires the union of male and female gametes.**

- Intersex individuals exist, but they are exceptions that reinforce rather than disprove the binary model.

Gender as Choice: A New Perspective Shaping Policy

- According to the Canadian Institutes of Health Research:

  - Sex refers to biological characteristics such as chromosomes and reproductive anatomy.

  - Gender refers to socially constructed roles, behaviors, and identities that exist on a continuum and may change over time.

- Policy debates on gender transitions raise key questions:

  - Should individuals be allowed to undergo gender-affirming surgeries?

  - What should be the age of consent for such medical interventions?

  - Should public schools and healthcare systems support gender transitions?

  - These questions have become divisive political issues, particularly in the U.S. election cycle, reflecting deeper cultural divisions within society.

Mind-Body Relationship: The Shift in Individual Autonomy

- **Traditional view:**

  - An individual's thoughts and feelings (mind) shaped their identity, but the body was seen as fixed and unchangeable.

  - People could change their faith or politics without altering their bodies.

  - Medical interventions aimed to restore normal bodily function rather than transform the body.

- **Modern view:**

  - In gender-affirming care, the body is altered to align with the mind's perception of gender.

  - Sexual binaries are reinforced through medical transitions, as individuals seek to achieve normative male or female anatomy.

- **Post-individualism:**

  - The idea that the body must adapt to the fluidity of the mind challenges the notion of a composite self.

  - Individual autonomy is taken to a point where the self becomes fragmented, with mind and body no longer coherently aligned.

Liberalism's Paradox: The Tension between Freedom and Fragmentation

- Liberalism promotes individual freedom but must also tolerate illiberal practices in the name of diversity.

  - Example: Religious or cultural practices that may restrict individual rights are still accommodated within liberal societies.

- This paradox creates social fragmentation:
  - Identity politics divides society into smaller factions, with groups advocating for specific rights and recognition.
  - At the same time, post-individualism introduces fragmentation within individuals, as identity becomes fluid and unstable.

Science and Technology: Shaping New Realities of Identity

- Both proponents and opponents of gender-affirming care use scientific data to support their arguments.

- Technology plays a dual role:
  - It enforces categories through digital profiling but also enables individuals to defy these categories by crossing social and geographical boundaries.

- Medical interventions are shifting from being restorative to transformative, reflecting a broader trend where the body is no longer treated as fixed.
  - Gender transitions demonstrate how science creates new realities by aligning the body with individual choice.
  - As sex becomes a matter of personal identity, individuals are increasingly defined by what they claim to be, rather than by traditional biological markers.

Question

- In what ways do evolving understandings of gender challenge traditional notions of sex in society?
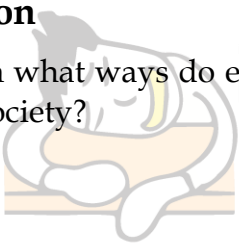
Casteing Lives
An Everyday Phenomenon

Caste in Everyday Life: Experience and Affect in Indian Society edited by Dhaneswar Bhoi and Hugo Gorringe.

Chapter:

B-2 Caste System

C-7 Challenges of Social Transformation

Introduction

- Visibility of caste is generally limited to formal contexts like reservations, marriages, and politics.

- The book focuses on how caste manifests subtly and pervasively in everyday life, often through social practices, emotional interactions, and structural exclusions.

- The book aims to explore caste as an affective and performative phenomenon, showing how it shapes the lives of both privileged and marginalized groups.
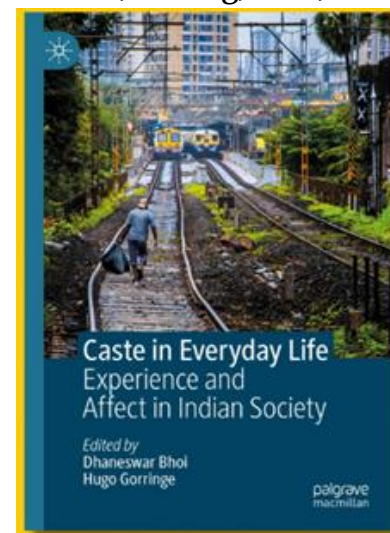
Caste and Psychosocial Violence

G C Pal's Chapter:

- Focuses on caste-related violence through socio-psychological frameworks.

- Paradox: Dalit empowerment triggers resentment among upper castes, increasing the likelihood of violence against assertive Dalits.

- Socio-economic mobility of Dalits is perceived as a threat to the social dominance of upper castes, reinforcing existing power dynamics.

- Result: Better-off Dalits face higher violence due to their assertion of identity and improved economic conditions, demonstrating the complexity of violence based on social perception.

Dhaneswar Bhoi's Chapter:

- Investigates suicides among Dalit students in top institutions, treating them as institutional murders.

- Rather than challenging caste-based hierarchies, universities perpetuate discrimination through social exclusion.

- Humiliation and neglect within educational spaces deepen the sense of precariousness among Dalit students, harming their decision-making capacity.

- Academic mistreatment, combined with the burden of family expectations, creates a toxic environment, leading to suicides.

Caste and Exclusion in Education

Subhadarshee Nayak's Chapter:

- Conducted Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with parents and students in Kalahandi, Odisha, revealing systemic issues in education.

- Schools in Dalit-majority villages lack essential infrastructure and support from the state.

- Classrooms act as 'caste rooms', where Dalit students receive unequal treatment from teachers and peers.

- Mid-day meal segregation: Dalit students are served separately, reinforcing caste-based superiority and inferiority.

- The chapter demonstrates that state interventions like mid-day meals can backfire, entrenching caste hierarchies instead of dismantling them.

Stigma of Caste in Temples and Community Spaces

Dhivya Sivaramane's Chapter:

- Examines Jaggi Vasudev's "Free Hindu Temples" campaign, advocating for the return of temple control to priestly communities.

- Temples, previously considered imperial revenue sites, have become arenas for caste exclusion.

- Case Study: 85 panchayats in Madurai district show that when temple management shifts to the community, Dalits are excluded from rituals, spaces, and resources.

- Active exclusion: Restricting Dalit access to religious spaces.

- Passive exclusion: Denial of amenities like food and water resources near temples, deepening their marginalization.

The Banality of Caste: Food and Language as Tools of Exclusion

Rohini Srikumar and Amritha Mohankumar's Chapter:

- Analyzes how caste ideology extends into food habits to create "gastro-political" messages.

- Case Study: Brahmins Group, a private company promoting the "vegetarian promise," uses food to assert cultural and economic capital.

- Sanskritisation helps the brand gain influence by embedding Brahminical purity into the market economy.

- The chapter illustrates how food practices serve as symbolic markers of caste, transforming cultural practices into profitable ventures.

Ankita Bhatkhande's Chapter:

- Investigates linguistic exclusion in Marathi, focusing on the concept of "Pramaan Bhaasha" (standardized language).

- Retroflex nasal 'n' pronunciation becomes a tool to differentiate Brahmins from non-Brahmins, reinforcing caste boundaries through language.

- Standardization of Marathi erases linguistic pluralism and strengthens caste hierarchies.

- Conclusion: Language homogenization invalidates the diversity of voices, marginalizing non-Brahmin communities.

Caste, Employment, and Migration

Neelima Rashmi Lakra's Chapter:

- Focuses on migrant laborers from Odisha working in Telangana's brick kilns.

- Migrants hope to escape caste hierarchies in urban areas but find caste-based segregation reproduced at the workplace.

- Caste-based division of labor persists: Dalits perform menial tasks, while upper-caste workers (uncha-jati lok) maintain social distance and perform purification rituals.

- Women face sexual harassment and are subjected to discriminatory practices in food allocation, wages, and housing.

Afterword by Surinder Jodhka

Surinder Jodhka's Afterword:

- Argues that caste privilege is often invisible to the privileged sections of society.

- Everyday practices of privileged castes are shaped by caste habitus, reinforcing social advantages without conscious recognition.

- The book challenges the myth of "castelessness" among the privileged, showing that caste remains embedded in everyday interactions.

Conclusion

- The book helps debunk the idea of a casteless society, showing how even privileged groups are deeply shaped by caste practices.

Question:

- **How do every day social practices reinforce structural inequalities in society?**
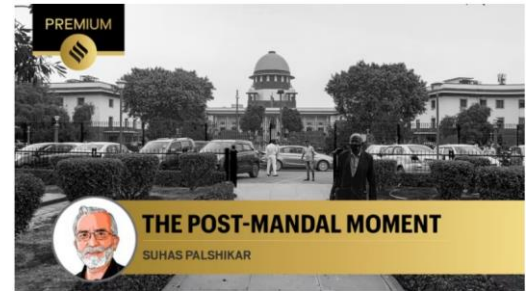
The post-Mandal moment is here — and it calls for a new politics

August 14, 2024, Indian Express

Chapter:

- *C-1 Visions of Social Change in India*

- *C-4 Politics and Society*

- *C-5 Social Movements in Modern India*

Introduction: Shifting Dynamics of Reservation Politics

- Supreme Court ruling: Allowed states to sub-classify SCs and STs to enhance the effectiveness of reservation policies.

- Political parties: Reluctant to take a clear stance on the ruling, showing discomfort with the evolving political landscape of post-Mandal politics.

- Proponents of reservations: Critical of the ruling, reflecting a growing disconnect between traditional caste blocs and emerging social realities.

- This post-Mandal moment reflects a need to rethink the goals of social justice and adapt policies beyond Mandal-era frameworks.

Evolution of Mandal Politics

1. **Pre-Mandal Phase:**

   - Anchored in anti-caste movements led by Jyotiba Phule, Periyar, and B.R. Ambedkar.

   - Focused on eliminating caste-based injustices and promoting social equality.

   - In the 1960s, backward castes (pichchadas) began to attract attention in electoral politics, marking the rise of caste-based mobilization.

2. **Mandal Commission Report:**

   - Mandal Commission Report (1980) emphasized reservation for OBCs to address historical exclusion and inequality.

   - The implementation of the report in 1990 by V.P. Singh's government triggered major social and political shifts.

   - This phase resulted in the mainstreaming of reservation politics and emphasized numerical representation over structural reforms.

3. **Post-Mandal Phase (Early 2000s to Present):**

   - The post-Mandal moment is marked by fragmentation of caste blocs and the bureaucratization of reservations.

   - Major political parties, including BJP and Congress, adopted Mandal politics, reducing social justice to competitive reservation policies.

   - Result: Focus shifted away from anti-caste struggles to bureaucratic reservation frameworks.

Contradictions and Complexities within Mandal Politics

1. **Representation and Power Sharing:**

   - Mirror representation exposed the narrow social base of elites.

   - Highlighted power asymmetries and raised questions about fair power distribution beyond numerical quotas.

   - However, focusing only on numerical representation risks oversimplifying the complex nature of inequality.

2. **Strengthening Reservations vs. Structural Reforms:**

   - Mandal politics led to demands for reservations beyond SCs and STs and reservations in promotions.

   - It rejected the merit vs. reservation binary, emphasizing social justice.

   - However, reservations alone became an easy escape for policymakers, diverting attention from structural reforms.

   - The bureaucratization of reservation resulted in judicial interventions rather than substantive policy innovations.

3. **Social Bloc Formation vs. Fragmentation:**

   - Mandal encouraged the formation of coalitions among backward communities, enriching democracy.

   - Simultaneously, individual caste identities began competing for power, leading to political fragmentation.

   - Gains from collective mobilization were often undermined by short-term tactical compromises.

Supreme Court Ruling: Implications for the post-Mandal Era

- **Criticism of Ruling:**

  o Many prefer maintaining old caste blocs from the Mandal era, avoiding uncomfortable questions about beneficiaries within reserved categories.

  o The creamy layer debate adds complexity by questioning whether the most disadvantaged truly benefit from reservations.

- **Three Critical Questions Raised by the Ruling:**

  o How can reservation policies evolve to ensure marginalized sub-groups receive meaningful benefits?

  o As caste, class, and power relations change, how can new power asymmetries be addressed?

  o Should SC, ST, and OBC categories remain fixed blocs, or is it time to imagine new social coalitions?

Conclusion

- The post-Mandal moment demands a shift from traditional reservation politics to new frameworks that reflect evolving social realities.

- While some elements of Mandal-era politics will remain relevant, new challenges require innovative responses.

- Future politics must balance:
    o Addressing internal divisions within reserved categories.
    o Confronting power asymmetries that no longer align with traditional caste and class divisions.
    o Creating inclusive social blocs that adapt to changing socio-economic dynamics.

Question

- Discuss the impact of Mandal politics on social justice and the political landscape in India. How has it shaped caste-based mobilization and reservations?

Navigating the Generational Shift
Gender-neutral Policies for Eldercare

Chapter:

C-6 Population Dynamics

C-7 Challenges of Social Transformation

Introduction: The Growing Pressure on Employees to Manage Eldercare

- Employees face challenges managing extended work hours along with elderly caregiving responsibilities.

- **Lack of support systems:** No robust care infrastructure exists, increasing emotional, financial, and time burdens on caregivers.

- **Cultural expectations:** Family care responsibilities are expected, but no public discourse or policy supports caregivers adequately.

Demographic Changes and the Ageing Population in India

Rapid demographic transition:

- 104 million elderly individuals (aged 60+) recorded in the 2011 Census (53 million women, 51 million men).

- **Projected growth:**

  o 138 million elderly by 2021, with women outnumbering men.

  o By 2046, 20% of India's population will be elderly, surpassing the 0-15 years population.

  o Super seniors (80+ years) will grow 279% by 2050.

Policy implications:

- The growing elderly population creates a need for long-term eldercare strategies.

- Workplaces must address eldercare responsibilities to retain talent and improve productivity.

Challenges of Eldercare in India

- **Cultural barriers:**

  o Caregiving is seen as a personal duty, leading to organizations neglecting eldercare policies.

  o No legal frameworks require eldercare support in the workplace.

- **Impact on caregivers:**

  o Caregivers experience emotional stress, burnout, guilt, and mental health challenges.

  o Low-income caregivers face additional financial difficulties managing caregiving expenses.

- **Workplace challenges:**
    - Employees with caregiving duties struggle to balance personal and professional commitments.
    - Lack of flexible work policies reduces productivity, increases absenteeism, and limits career advancement.

The Need for Gender-Neutral Eldercare Policies

Breaking gender stereotypes:

- Caregiving responsibilities disproportionately affect women, resulting in missed career opportunities and lower workforce participation.

Gender-neutral policies:

- Distribute caregiving responsibilities across genders, fostering workplace equality.
- Promote inclusive participation in the economy, benefitting both employees and organizations.

Work-life balance:

- Gender-neutral policies improve employee well-being and reduce caregiving stress.

Key Components of Eldercare Policies for Organizations

- **Flexible work arrangements**: Remote work, part-time roles, and flexible schedules.
- **Paid senior care leave**: Leave policies focused on eldercare responsibilities.
- **Affordable eldercare services**: Support networks with professional caregiving centers.
- **Community engagement programs**: Networks to share knowledge and caregiving experiences.
- **Awareness campaigns**: Educate employees on eldercare and challenge gendered caregiving roles.

Collaborative Solutions for Effective Eldercare

Public-private collaboration:

- Governments, private companies, and NGOs can work together to improve caregiving infrastructure.
- Specialized eldercare centers can offer medical care, social activities, and mental health support.

Community outreach programs:

- Media campaigns through TV, radio, and social media to raise awareness about caregiving responsibilities.

Support networks:

- Knowledge-sharing platforms to empower caregivers with resources and tools.

Conclusion:

- Workplace eldercare policies are more than just corporate responsibility; they reflect societal values and ethical commitments.

- Supporting caregivers improves employee morale and workplace retention.
- Fosters a compassionate society that values the dignity of the elderly.

Formalised 'gender apartheid': What Taliban's new 'morality law' means for Afghan women

September 8, 2024, Indian Express

Chapter:

5 - Stratification and Mobility

B-6 Religion and Society

C-4 Politics and Society

The code makes it mandatory for a woman to veil her entire body at all times in public, and deems a face covering as "essential to avoid temptation and tempting others". (Via Wikimedia Commons/Tasmin News Agency)

Introduction

- Afghanistan's Taliban leader, Hibatullah Akhundzada, instructed officials to formalize Afghanistan's "morality law."

- Ministry of Propagation of Virtue, Prevention of Vice, and Hearing Complaints published a comprehensive 114-page code in October 2023, formalizing laws since the Taliban takeover in August 2021.

  [Reflects Max Weber's concept of traditional authority, where power is derived from long-standing customs and religious norms rather than legal or rational-legal systems.]

Key Provisions of the Morality Law

- **Veiling Requirement**: Women are required to cover their entire bodies in public, with face coverings emphasized as necessary to prevent temptation.

- **Restrictions on Women's Voices**: Women's voices are labeled "intimate," banning singing, reciting, or reading aloud in public and, reportedly, even within their homes.

- *[Echoes Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity, where controlling women's voices and actions enforces rigid gender norms, shaping how they "perform" femininity.]*

- **Prohibition on Music and Interaction**: Music playing is banned; men and women unrelated by blood or marriage are prohibited from interacting or even looking at each other.

- **Dress Code for Men**: Men are restricted from wearing shorts above the knee and closely trimming their beards.

- **Sanctions on LGBTQ and Religious Minorities**: The law imposes additional restrictions and persecution on LGBTQ individuals and religious minorities.

- **Global Criticism**: UN Human Rights official Ravina Shamdasani states the law effectively renders women "faceless, voiceless shadows."

Implications of the Morality Law

- **Repression and Enforcement**: UN reports indicate that similar Taliban policies in the past have involved threats, arbitrary detentions, and the use of excessive force.

  [This is related to Hannah Arendt's idea of totalitarianism, where oppressive systems use violence and fear to control populations and suppress dissent.]

- **Formalization of Existing Restrictions**: According to Heather Barr of Human Rights Watch, these rules, though previously practiced informally, are now codified, intensifying Taliban control over women's rights.

- **Empowerment of Morality Inspectors**: The new law allows morality inspectors to detain and punish individuals with broad discretion. Citizens are encouraged to report violations, increasing fear and surveillance in Afghan society.

Comparison to Earlier Taliban Regime (1996-2001)

- **Gender Apartheid**: UN experts classify these measures as "gender apartheid," closely resembling policies under the former Taliban regime.

- **Ban on Girls' Education**: Education for girls beyond Class 6 remains prohibited.

- **Public Punishments**: Instances of public stoning, flogging, and executions have been reported, signaling a return to severe corporal punishment.

Sub-classification verdict through Ambedkar's ideals

September 05, 2024, Indian Express

Chapter:

B-2 Caste System

C-1 Visions of Social Change in India

'The judgment is a reflection of years of grass-root activism and demands for sub-categorisation' | Photo Credit: Getty Images/iStockphoto

Introduction: Supreme Court Judgment on Sub-Classification

- The Supreme Court of India's judgment on August 1, 2024, in The State of Punjab and Ors. vs Davinder Singh and Ors. reflects a commitment to social jurisprudence, aiming to ensure social justice for the most marginalized sections within the Dalit community.

- This judgment resonates with B.R. Ambedkar's ideals of fraternity and Maitri, which advocate cooperation and mutual respect among Scheduled Castes.

Judgment through Ambedkar's Social Justice Lens

- Ambedkar, in examining India's social structure, noted that each jati holds a distinct place within the social hierarchy.

- This judgment addresses these nuanced internal divisions, urging a more granular approach to social justice.

- In a 1944 conference, Ambedkar emphasized the importance of unity among Scheduled Castes despite internal divisions, an idea now mirrored in this judgment.

Criticism from within the Dalit Community

- Some Dalit leaders have raised concerns that the sub-classification could fragment Dalit unity and reduce political influence.

- This fear primarily comes from segments of the Dalit leadership in North India, who worry about potential divisions within the Dalit political identity.

Historical Context and Realities of Sub-Classification

- History shows that Dalit politics has always been diverse, with different movements representing various dimensions of Ambedkarite consciousness.

- For example, the Madiga Dandora in South India and the Mang mobilizations in Maharashtra demonstrate distinct but unified commitments to Ambedkar's ideals.

- In South India, where sub-classification has been largely accepted, Dalit organizations see it as a pathway to equitable representation, contrasting with North Indian resistance.

- The judgment is a response to years of grassroots advocacy from groups like the Madiga Reservation Porata Samithi (MRPS) and movements by the Mang and Valmiki communities.

- Recognizing that the SC community is not homogenous, this judgment affirms the diversity within the category, acknowledging that each jati faces distinct challenges and social realities.

- This recognition goes beyond caste essentialism, as even within the SC community, intermarriage restrictions reflect these complex social dynamics.

- The judgment offers an opportunity to address the diverse needs of each jati and promote fair representation.

Benefits of Sub-Classification

- Sub-classification strengthens social justice at the jati level, empowering marginalized SCs and furthering Ambedkarite ideals.

- Sub-classification could strengthen the collective identity of SCs, furthering the Ambedkarisation process by including those on the margins.

- It aligns with Kanshiram's principle of representation based on population, "Jiski Jitni Sankhya Bhari, Uski Utni Hissedari," advocating for equitable representation.

- This framework includes historically marginalized groups like the Valmikis and Musahars in North India, embodying an inclusive approach to social justice.

Conclusion: Toward an Inclusive Society

- Embracing this verdict in the spirit of fraternity, as envisioned by Ambedkar, could help democratize the reservation system.

- This approach aims to build a more inclusive society, allowing for equitable representation of all Dalit castes, and ultimately upholding the core principles of social justice.

Question

Evaluate the Supreme Court's 2024 judgment on the sub-classification of Scheduled Castes from the perspective of Ambedkar's vision of social justice.

Sanjay Srivastava writes: Why we must talk about caste

September 7, 2024, Indian Express

Chapter:

B-2 Caste System

C-7 Challenges of Social Transformation

Caste hierarchy creates a form of cultural wealth through inventing "meritorious" capacities for "people like us" and violent and uncivilised characteristics for others. (C R Sasikumar)

Introduction

- There is a common misconception in some Indian circles that ignoring caste will diminish its impact.

- This perspective, however, usually reflects the privilege of those unaffected by caste, indicating that the ability to ignore caste signals privilege, not its absence.

Operation of Caste

- Caste discrimination functions on both formal and informal levels:

  o *Informal Discrimination*: Everyday attitudes and behaviours that diminish self-worth among marginalized groups.

  [Aligns with Erving Goffman's concept of stigma, where marginalized groups are often made to feel inferior through daily interactions and stereotypes.]

  o *Formal Discrimination:* Material inequalities that limit career and life opportunities.

  [Reflects Max Weber's notion of status and life chances, where one's caste status affects opportunities for social mobility and access to resources.]

- These formal and informal aspects are deeply interlinked, reinforcing one another to perpetuate caste-based discrimination.

Cultural Wealth and Its Transmission

- Unlike economic wealth, cultural wealth (values, beliefs, behaviors passed down within upper-caste families) is harder to measure but influential.

  [Reflects Talcott Parsons's concept of socialization, where cultural values and norms are transmitted within families and communities, reinforcing caste hierarchies.]

- Spaces like household conversations, university discussions, and exclusive clubs provide insights into the distribution of cultural wealth.

  [Aligns with Pierre Bourdieu's idea of cultural capital, where the transmission of cultural knowledge and behaviors reinforces social inequalities.]

- Caste-based notions of "aptitude" and "merit" have historical roots, partly from colonial classifications like "criminal tribes."

- This thinking promotes the idea that certain castes are inherently "meritorious," whereas others are stereotyped as lacking merit.

- Such caste hierarchies establish "cultural wealth" by associating specific abilities and "merit" with privileged castes, while attributing negative traits to marginalized groups.

Consequences of Ignoring Caste

- Simply avoiding discussions about caste does not dismantle caste systems; instead, it solidifies existing inequalities in cultural and economic wealth distribution.

Question

Examine the challenges of addressing caste-based inequalities in contemporary India. How do cultural and economic factors contribute to the persistence of caste hierarchies?

Satyashodhak Samaj's Sesquicentennial
An Opportunity Lost

Chapter:

C-5 Social Movements in Modern India

Origin and Establishment of Satyashodhak Samaj

- Founded in 1873 by Jotirao Phule and colleagues in response to the inadequacies of upper-caste reformist movements in Pune and Mumbai.

- Earlier organizations like Paramahansa Mandali (1849), Prarthana Samaj (1867), and Sarvajanik Sabha (1870) focused on colonial modernity but did not actively seek to eliminate caste.

- Brahmo Samaj in Bengal allowed only Brahmins to perform rituals, highlighting limited caste reform.

Radical Goals of Satyashodhak Samaj

- Established to protect the interests of lower castes, inspired by figures like Gautama Buddha Kabir, and Sant Tukaram.

- Declared goals to liberate Shudras from the exploitation of Brahmins, rejecting caste hierarchy.

- Focused on enlightening Shudras on their rights and challenging Brahminical scriptures.

- The ultimate goal of the Samaj was the freedom of the Shudras from mental servitude.

- *[Arguing that objective material conditions do not get translated into class consciousness automatically or inevitably, Antonio Gramsci (1891–1937) sees freedom from mental slavery as a precondition for revolution.*

- *The task of the abolition of hegemony undertaken by the Satyashodhak Samaj was, in Gramscian terms, revolutionary.]*

Reform Measures and Key Areas of Focus

- *Family Reform*: Promoted egalitarian marriage rituals and the restructuring of the patriarchal family.

  [Echoes Radical Feminist perspectives that challenge patriarchal structures within the family as a root of gender oppression]

- *Education*: Pioneered educational efforts for Shudras, including taking children to school and establishing night schools.

  [Relates to Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital, as education becomes a means of empowering marginalized groups and challenging entrenched hierarchies.]

- *Caste Annihilation*: Phule saw caste elimination as essential for resolving class exploitation.

- *Colonial State*: Recognized British exploitation but also showed solidarity with oppressed groups, like Black Americans.

Scope of Satyashodhak Samaj

- Contrary to conservative critiques, it was not limited to Pune but had statewide influence and connections with movements like E.V. Ramasamy's Self-respect Movement as per Gail Omvedt.

- Historians documented 596 activists, writers, and artists affiliated with the movement across Maharashtra.

Influence on Other Social Movements

- Inspired subsequent social movements in Maharashtra, influencing peasants, women, Dalits, and working classes.

Decline in the 20th Century

- In the early 20th century, Satyashodhak Samaj's radicalism faded, shifting towards class and caste conciliation, diminishing its revolutionary stance.

- Instead of taking note of the growing class antagonism in the Samaj, the idea of class harmony remained influential in the Satyashodhak movement.

- Class conciliation was supported by caste conciliation.

  [Relates to Karl Marx's idea of false consciousness, where class and caste compromises might obscure the underlying conflicts that need resolution.]

Current Status of Satyashodhak Samaj

- Modern descendants of the Samaj have shifted focus, aligning with Bahujan elites (sugar and educational barons) rather than challenging capitalist structures.

- Present India remains divided by caste and class, with unresolved caste issues and incomplete class formation.

- The 150th anniversary is seen as an opportunity to revive the Samaj's progressive goals.

Question

Analyze the approach of the Satyashodhak Samaj in addressing caste-based inequalities in colonial India.

Patriarchy and violence against women

Chapter:

C-7 Challenges of Social Transformation

Introduction

- Recent cases highlight systemic gender violence, such as:

  o **August 9, Kolkata:** Trainee doctor's rape and murder.

  o **Malayalam film industry:** Sexual harassment claims in the Justice Hema Committee report.

  o **Odisha:** Alleged police custody harassment.

- Outrage against gender violence often leads to calls for addressing patriarchy, a root cause.

Defining Patriarchy

- **Nivedita Menon** (in her book *Seeing Like a Feminist*) describes patriarchy as a system of power structures based on gender and age hierarchies, with adult male dominance taking precedence.

- Menon outlines three interconnected aspects that reinforce patriarchy in Indian society:

  1. **Patriliny** – inheritance of property and family name along the male line.
  2. **Virilocality** – the custom of women moving to their husband's household after marriage.
  3. **Male Authority** – positions of power and decision-making are primarily held by men.

- **V. Geetha** (in her book *Patriarchy*) emphasizes that patriarchy is sustained by social and cultural norms that define rigid masculine and feminine roles, privileging male desires, choices, and authority over women's.

- **United Nations**: Defines gender as the "social attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female," shaped through socialization rather than biology.

  [Aligns with Simone de Beauvoir's idea that "one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman," emphasizing social constructions of gender.]

Patriarchy in Practice

- Patriarchal norms shape household roles, workplace hierarchies, media portrayal of gender.

- Victim-Blaming: Instances where advisories or responses implicitly hold women accountable for violence.

- **Menon**: Notes that patriarchy treats rape as a crime against family honor, linking family honor to women's sexuality.

Selective Outrage and Intersectionality

- Society's reaction to violence against women often varies, reflecting deeper issues of selective outrage.

- For example in Ujjain, a woman was raped in public view without intervention; a passerby even filmed the incident rather than helping.

- Such incidents reveal a societal trend of desensitization, voyeuristic tendencies, and objectification of women.

- Scholars argue that responses to gender violence are influenced by caste, class, and social standing.

- Violence against women from marginalized backgrounds or lower castes often receives less public attention or sympathy, underscoring the importance of intersectionality.

  [Relates to Kimberlé Crenshaw's concept of intersectionality, highlighting how overlapping identities like caste and gender affect experiences of violence.]

- Public outrage is more likely when the violence is extreme or particularly brutal, while less visible forms of violence or harassment often go unnoticed.

Public and Legislative Interventions

- **West Bengal's Aparajita Woman and Child Bill, 2024** (Anti-Rape Bill): Strengthened laws against sexual violence.

- **Historical legislation:** 2013 Nirbhaya Act (post-2012 Delhi gang rape); however, rape cases rose to 39,000 in 2016, with over 31,000 cases reported in 2022.

- **NCRB 2023:** Crime against women increased by 4%, suggesting laws alone are insufficient.

Civil Society's Role in Behavior Change

- **Bottom-Up Approach**: Civil initiatives needed for behavioral change in society.

- **Women in Cinema Collective (WCC)**: Formed after 2017 Malayalam film actress assault; an example of advocacy in public spaces.

- Ongoing protests by doctors after the August 9 incident highlight the struggle for gender justice.

Question

Examine how patriarchal structures contribute to gender-based violence in India, with reference to recent cases and legislative interventions.

Atrocities Against SCs and STs

September 22, 2024, Indian Express

Chapter:

C-7 Challenges of Social Transformation

Context:

The union government recently released a report under the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989, which highlights the alarming status of atrocities committed against Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) in 2022.

Key Findings:

- **Case Statistics:** In 2022, 51,656 cases of atrocities were reported against SCs and 9,735 against STs. A vast majority of these cases (97.7% for SCs and 98.91% for STs) occurred in just 13 states.

- **States with the Highest Incidents:** For SCs, six states contributed to 81% of the total cases: Uttar Pradesh (23.78%), Rajasthan (16.75%), and Madhya Pradesh (14.97%) were among the highest. For STs, Madhya Pradesh (30.61%) and Rajasthan (25.66%) had the highest number of incidents.

- **Conviction Rates:** The conviction rate under the Act dropped from 39.2% in 2020 to 32.4% in 2022, reflecting a decline in judicial outcomes.

Reason Behind Crimes Against SCs and STs:

- **Caste Prejudice:** Persistent caste hierarchies result in deep-rooted discrimination, where SC/ST communities face violence and exclusion based solely on their birth status.

- **Land Alienation:** SC/ST communities often struggle with land ownership, facing disputes and violence from dominant castes over land access and rights.

- **Economic Marginalization:** Limited access to education, employment, and resources leaves SC/ST communities economically vulnerable, making them easy targets for exploitation and violence.

- **Power Imbalance:** Dominant castes often wield significant political and social power, enabling them to perpetuate discriminatory practices with impunity.

- **Ineffective Law Enforcement:** Despite protective laws, weak enforcement and institutional bias in the police and judiciary prevent victims from receiving justice.

- **Political Manipulation:** Caste tensions are frequently exploited by political actors for electoral gains, further dividing communities and increasing conflict.

Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989:

- **Objective:** The Act was enacted to protect SCs and STs from caste-based violence, upholding Article 15 and Article 17 of the Constitution.

- **Key Provisions:** It defines various offences against SC/ST members, prescribes stricter punishments, excludes anticipatory bail, and mandates special courts for speedy trials.

- **Recent Amendments:** The 2015 amendment expanded the list of offences, including acts like forced manual scavenging and social ostracism. The 2018 amendment allowed for immediate arrests without prior approval from senior officials.

Way Forward:

- **Strengthen Legal Framework:** Enhance the infrastructure for special courts and increase the number of trained personnel to handle SC/ST cases more effectively.

- **Improve Reporting Mechanisms:** Implement better systems to encourage victims to report atrocities without fear of retaliation.

- **Raise Awareness:** Conduct widespread education campaigns to inform communities about SC/ST rights and the protections provided by the Act.

- **Targeted Interventions:** Focus on atrocity-prone districts, identifying root causes of violence and implementing local solutions.

- **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Establish strong monitoring mechanisms to assess the effectiveness of interventions, ensuring accountability and ongoing improvement.

- **Collaborate with NGOs:** Partner with civil society and non-governmental organizations to support victims and advocate for stronger protections and policies.

On gender performativity: how it challenges the gender binary

October 13, 2024, The Hindu

Chapter:

5 - Stratification and Mobility

10 - Social Change in Modern Society

Introduction

- **Judith Butler,** in her 1990 book *Gender Trouble,* introduced the concept of gender performativity, challenging essentialist views that link biological sex to binary gender roles.

- Butler's work is foundational in third-wave feminism and queer theory, providing a fluid understanding of gender and dismantling fixed notions of identity.

Key Ideas in Gender Performativity

Social Construction of Gender:

- Gender is not innate; it is constructed, reproduced, and maintained through repeated actions, behaviours, and discourses.

- Social norms create the illusion of naturalness but rely on repetition for stability.

- Resistance and subversion of these norms can transform societal understandings of gender.

Essentialism vs. Social Constructivism:

- **Essentialism**: Gender is biologically determined by sex chromosomes and DNA, with traits naturally aligning with masculinity or femininity.

- **Social Constructivism**: Gender identity is shaped by discourse (language, actions, and behaviours) and societal norms.

    o Example: Gendered expectations in schools, such as girls maintaining long hair or boys being criticized for growing theirs, reinforce traditional norms.

    o Example: Cultural norms around gender roles and symbols (e.g., pink being masculine in the 19th century) shift over time, demonstrating the constructed nature of gender.

Distinction Between Sex and Gender:

- Butler critiques the second-wave feminist view (e.g., Gayle Rubin - American cultural anthropologist) that sex is biological and gender is socially constructed.

- Instead, Butler argues that even biological sex is socially interpreted, and both sex and gender are social constructs shaped by cultural discourses.

Gender as a Verb:

- Gender is performed, not possessed. It involves stylized repetition of acts over time, much like speaking a language.

- Example: Girls playing with dolls reinforces caregiving stereotypes as "natural," though these are learned behaviors shaped by societal expectations.

Performativity vs. Performance

- **Performance**: Conscious role-playing to align with societal expectations of masculinity or femininity.

- **Performativity**: Unconscious and repetitive enactment of societal norms, creating the illusion of natural gender roles.

- Example: Giving dolls to girls reinforces nurturing roles, while repeated actions produce the impression of fixed gender identities.

Other Influential Thinkers

Simone de Beauvoir (*The Second Sex*, 1949):

- Famous assertion: "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman."

- Gender identity is shaped by societal norms, not innate qualities.

Iris Marion Young ("*Throwing Like a Girl*," 1980):

- Explores how gender norms influence physical comportment and movement.

- Example: Girls are socialized to act in restrained ways, such as using less energy or physical space.

Critiques and Expansion of Butler's Theory

Critiques by Transgender Theorists:

- **Julia Serano** (*Whipping Girl*):
  o Challenges both essentialist and constructivist theories for failing to explain the gender experiences of transgender individuals.
  o Argues that gender identity often emerges from an intrinsic "*subconscious sex*," independent of societal norms.
  o *[Subconscious sex refers to the intrinsic sense of one's gender identity that emerges from within an individual's mind, independent of external social or cultural norms.]*
  o Transgender experiences highlight that gender identity is shaped by internal inclinations and societal influences.

Integration of Social and Internal Factors:

- Serano emphasizes the brain's role in gender identity, where cisgender individuals align with societal norms, and transgender individuals experience a mismatch, leading to gender dissonance.

- Agrees with Butler and de Beauvoir that societal norms still play a significant role in shaping and interpreting gender.

Conclusion

- Butler's concept of gender performativity reveals how deeply ingrained societal norms shape gender identities.

- While criticisms, such as those by Julia Serano, highlight gaps in addressing intrinsic aspects of gender identity, Butler's work remains a cornerstone in understanding gender as a social construct.

Question

Explain Judith Butler's concept of gender performativity and its role in challenging the gender binary.

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Gender Question in the Gig Economy
Patriarchal Discrimination and Capitalist Relations

Chapter:

5 - *Stratification and Mobility*

6 - *Works and Economic Life*

Introduction

- Gig Economy refers to freelance and short-term jobs mediated by platforms on a non-permanent basis. Workers are often classified as "independent contractors" rather than employees.

- There is an increase in participation of women (feminisation), raising questions about the structural gender biases in the gig economy.

Categories of Gig Work

Online Web-Based Platforms:

- Tasks performed virtually, including content writing, digital marketing, software development, legal work, and telemedicine.

- Workers can perform these jobs globally, providing flexibility.

Location-Based Platforms:

- Jobs tied to specific locations, such as personal transport (Uber, Ola), food delivery (Swiggy, Zomato), and e-commerce services (Amazon, Flipkart).

- Managed through mobile apps.

Appeal of the Gig Economy:

- Flexibility in working hours.

- Independence from traditional nine-to-five structures.

- *[Aligns with Zygmunt Bauman's concept of liquid modernity, where individuals prioritize flexibility over stability in their professional lives.*

- *Here by liquid modernity, we refer to the contemporary phase of modernity characterized by constant change, uncertainty, and fluidity in social, economic, and personal life.]*

- Attracts diverse workers, including women balancing domestic and paid work.

- *[Connects with Arlie Hochschild's concept of the "second shift," which highlights how women juggle paid labor and unpaid domestic responsibilities.]*

Quality of Gig Work

Fairwork Project (2020): Developed five metrics to assess platform working conditions:

1. **Fair Pay**: Workers should earn a living wage.

2. **Fair Conditions**: Policies must ensure worker health and safety.

3. **Fair Contracts**: Terms and conditions must be clear, accessible, and fair.

4. **Fair Management**: Algorithmic management should be transparent, with grievance mechanisms in place.

5. **Fair Representation**: Platforms should allow worker collectivisation and engage with worker bodies.

Findings (as per the rankings conducted by Fairwork ratings of 2020):

- In evaluations of 11 platforms in India and South Africa, only two (Urban Company and Flipkart) scored >5 out of 10 points.

- India's leading platforms, Uber, Ola, Swiggy, and Zomato, scored poorly, reflecting low compliance with fair work principles.

Women's Participation in the Gig Economy

Increasing Participation:

- Women are entering gig work due to flexible schedules that accommodate domestic responsibilities (BCG 2021).

- TeamLease (2019) highlights growing representation of women in front-line roles in internet-based companies.

Challenges Faced by Women:

- **Lower Income**: Women earn 8–10% less than men for similar work (Abigail Hunt & Emma Samman, 2019).

- **Job Concentration**: Women dominate low-paying jobs like domestic services, beauty care, and cleaning work (Rathi & Tandon, 2021).

- **Exclusion from Benefits**: Denied employment benefits like paid leave, maternity leave, and health insurance due to their classification as "independent contractors."

- *[Illustrates Guy Standing's concept of the precariat, where workers face unstable employment with little to no social protection.]*

- **Gender Pay Gap:**

  o Evidence of lower earnings across regions, including Asia, North America, and Europe.

  o Food delivery services (e.g., Swiggy, Zomato) show persistent wage disparities between genders.

- **Workplace Harassment**: Women face safety concerns and sexual harassment in the workplace and public spaces (Times of India, 2019).

- **Unpaid Care Work**:

  o Women's unpaid domestic labor remains undervalued in economic theory.

  o Feminist economists like Nancy Folbre (2020) argue that this limits women's bargaining power within households and the labor market.

  [Relates to Maria Mies' (German Sociologist) idea of "housewifization," which critiques how capitalism exploits unpaid domestic work to sustain labor markets.

Here housewifization refers to the process by which domestic labor has been privatized and confined to the home, and made to appear as women's work.]

Gender-Specific Prerequisites for Improving the Gig Economy

Recommendations (Tandem Research, 2020):

1. Upgrading labour laws and instituting social protection for gig workers.

2. Extending protection against workplace harassment to gig workers.

3. Strengthening the bargaining power of women gig workers and supporting their collectivisation to demand better rights from their employers.

4. Redressing sexual harassment and data surveillance as demanded by gig workers.

5. Tracking gender-related and intersectional data on women gig workers.

Conclusion

- The gig economy has the potential to empower women but remains riddled with patriarchal and capitalist biases.

- Women gig workers need:
  - Gender-neutral work environments that challenge traditional notions of masculinity.
  - Recognition of their contributions beyond stereotypical views of productivity as "gossip."

- Future reforms must address systemic biases to create a truly inclusive and equitable gig economy.

Question

Discuss the challenges faced by women in the gig economy and suggest measures to address them.

Can NGOs Change the World?

Anchoring Change: Seventy-Five Years of Grassroots Interventions That Made a Difference edited by Vikram Singh Mehta, Neelima Khetan and Jayapadma R V, Gurugram: HarperCollins, 2022

Chapter:

7 - Politics and Society

C-4 Politics and Society

Introduction

- The book is a collection of 24 grassroots interventions in India since the 1960s, focusing on NGOs, state initiatives, and social enterprises.

- **Objective**: Highlight disruptive innovations in development and the tensions NGOs face as service providers and change-makers.

Rise of NGOs

Post-Independence Context:

- NGOs emerged to address gaps left by the state in meeting societal needs.

- Advocated for accountability and welfare measures.

- *[Reflects J.S. Mill and Alexis de Tocqueville's views on civil society as a check on state excesses, fostering participatory democracy]*

Post-Emergency Period (1970s):

- NGOs became influential in shaping policies in health, education, and employment.

Post-Liberalisation Era (1990s):

- With state withdrawal and privatisation, NGOs often became primary service providers.

- Criticised for promoting neoliberal agendas and private interests over systemic equity.

  [Reflects Jan Aart Scholte's caution about civil society being co-opted by neoliberal forces, thus sometimes undermining its role in fostering democracy.]

Some Imp NGOs and Their Interventions

Eklavya Foundation -

- **Work**: Focused on educational reforms in Madhya Pradesh, promoting scientific and flexible teaching methods in government schools.

- **Approach**: Partnered with state governments and maintained a flat organisational structure for adaptability.

Gram Vikas -

- **Work**: Started in Odisha, opposing exploitative moneylenders and supporting Adivasis with education; later transitioned to large-scale rural development projects.

- **Approach**: Began as grassroots activists and later collaborated with the state for technical
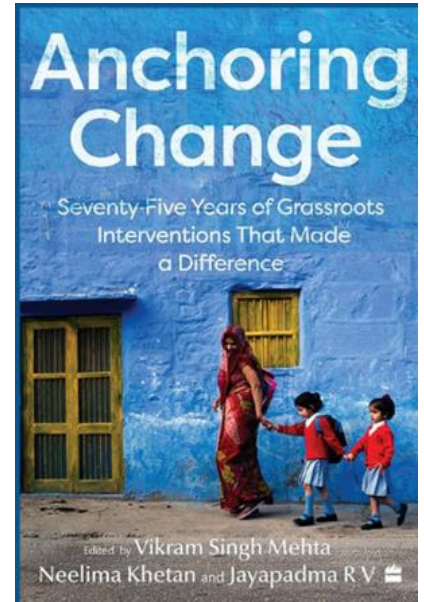
and financial support.

Jamkhed Model -

- **Work**: A holistic health intervention in Maharashtra addressing the root cause to health disparities i.e. caste and gender disparities; inspired the ASHA programme under the National Rural Health Mission.

- **Approach**: Rights-based, participatory framework focused on systemic health determinants.

Mitanin Programme -

- **Work**: Tackled health disparities in Chhattisgarh while advocating for food security and forest rights.

- **Approach**: Combined immediate healthcare delivery with systemic advocacy, rejecting healthcare privatisation.

- **ANANDI (Area Networking and Development Initiatives) -**

- **Work**: Addressed gender violence and systemic inequities by combining material needs with gender justice.

- **Approach**: Formed grassroots organisations and bridged practical gender needs with strategic interventions.

Ajeevika Bureau -

- **Work**: Organised informal labourers, offering legal aid, labour helplines, and unions; advocated systemic change in labour markets.

- **Approach**: Shifted from individual assistance to collective empowerment, advocated for policy changes with the International Labour Organization.

Dastkar -

- **Work**: Empowered artisans by connecting them to fair trade markets and bridging gaps between producers and products.

- **Approach**: Collaborated with SEWA (Self-Employed Women's Association) to restructure exploitative markets.

SELCO Foundation -

- **Work**: Delivered sustainable energy solutions, integrating them with education, health, and livelihoods.

- **Approach**: Multi-pronged strategy: for-profit ventures for installations (solar panel), non-profit initiatives for community development, and innovation labs for technological advancements.

Seva Mandir -

- **Work**: Empowered tribal communities in Udaipur; focused on governance, water management, and natural resource conservation.

- **Approach**: Combined community-driven participatory methods with broader systemic advocacy (e.g., MGNREGA, RTI), balancing seva (voluntary service) with kranti (systemic reform).

Learning from The NGOs

Strengthen Community Engagement: Ensure decision-making inclusivity to address structural exclusions.

Build Alliances: Collaborate with movements, unions, and networks to amplify systemic change.

- *Example*: Seva Mandir combined voluntary work (*seva*) with revolutionary change (*kranti*), aligning with broader movements like RTI and MGNREGA.

Reorganise Markets: Empower producers and workers to challenge market inequities.

- *Example*: Ajeevika Bureau organised informal laborers into collectives, pushing for systemic changes in labor rights and market practices.

- *Example*: Dastkar partnered with SEWA to realign markets for artisans, ensuring fair producer-market linkages.

Adopt Holistic Models: Address immediate needs while tackling root causes of inequality.

- *Example*: Jamkhed Model linked health outcomes with broader determinants like caste and gender inequality, inspiring government initiatives like the ASHA programme.

- *Example*: Mitanin Programme combined healthcare delivery with advocacy for food security and forest rights.

Innovate Financial Sustainability: Develop hybrid models balancing profit and social objectives.

- *Example*: SELCO Foundation created a hybrid model integrating for-profit energy ventures with non-profit initiatives, addressing both structural and grassroots needs.

Advocate for Policy Change: Leverage grassroots insights to push for pro-people policies.

- *Example*: Ajeevika Bureau worked with the International Labour Organization to advocate for labor-friendly policy changes, demonstrating the power of collective advocacy.

Issues/Challenges Faced by NGOs

State Dependency: Collaborations with the state often result in dependency, risking loss of autonomy:

- *Example*: Eklavya Foundation's educational reforms were dismantled when the government withdrew support, disrupting years of work and highlighting how state partnerships can lead to vulnerability.

Market Inequities: NGOs often face unaccommodating market structures that limit their ability to sustain interventions:

- *Example*: Dastkar faced challenges in reorganising markets for artisans, requiring partnerships with SEWA to overcome exploitative practices.

- *Example*: SELCO Foundation's reliance on profit-driven wings limited its ability to serve poorer communities, shifting focus to wealthier customers.

Exclusion of Marginalised Groups: Participatory models sometimes fail to include the most vulnerable voices, reinforcing hierarchies:

Balancing Activism and Service Delivery: NGOs often struggle to balance grassroots activism with partnerships:

- *Example*: Liby Johnson, the executive director of Gram Vikas, points to the organisation being pulled away from village communities in those intervention areas, having to compromise on their core principle of involving every person in the village.

Shrinking Resources: Limited funding forces NGOs to narrow their focus, reducing their ability to engage in advocacy or systemic reforms:

- *Example*: Many organisations in the book are constrained by single-issue interventions due to resource limitations.

Accountability: NGOs are criticised for depoliticising civil society, suppressing protests, and enabling neoliberal agendas:
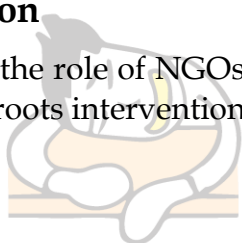
- *Example*: Scholars like Fong and Naschek (2021) argue that NGOs sometimes prioritize service delivery over addressing systemic inequities.

Conclusion

- NGOs are critical for driving social change but face significant challenges, including state dependency, market inequities, and accountability issues.

- The book showcases the importance of balancing service delivery, advocacy, and systemic reforms, offering lessons for NGOs to navigate these tensions.

Question

Discuss the role of NGOs in India, highlighting their contributions and challenges, with examples of grassroots interventions

SC ruling on child marriage: why it's important to go beyond just punishment

November 1, 2024, Indian Express

Chapter:

C-1 Visions of Social Change in India

C-6 Population Dynamics

Introduction

- **Case**: Society for Enlightenment and Voluntary Action v. Union of India.

- **Significance**: Supreme Court shifted focus from penalising actions to addressing the harm faced by victims of child marriage.

- Institutional response has traditionally centered on prevention and prosecution (e.g., Assam's mass arrests).

- SC emphasized a comprehensive approach, including efforts to empower victims and help them reclaim agency.

Data on Child Marriage

NFHS Data:

- Decline in child marriage among women aged 20-24:

    o 47.4% (2005) → 26.8% (2016) → 23.3% (2021).

- Despite progress, achieving the UN SDG goal of eradicating child marriage by 2030 seems ambitious.

Legal Framework on Child Marriage

Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006 (PCMA):

- Defines child marriage as involving a husband under 21 or a wife under 18.

- Such marriages are "voidable" (valid unless annulled by the underage party).

State-Specific Laws:

- Karnataka and Haryana: Child marriages are void ab initio (from the beginning).

Criminal Provisions:

- **PCMA**: Criminalises performing, promoting, or participating in child marriages.

- **POCSO Act, 2012** and **Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023**:

    o Criminalise sexual activity with minors, including within child marriages.

Concerns with Criminal Action

Vulnerability of Victims:

- Criminalisation can leave the girl in vulnerable situations without adequate support, as entire families (parents, husband, in-laws) may face legal consequences.

Barriers to Healthcare:

- Fear of triggering criminal action can deter minors from seeking sexual and reproductive healthcare.

Complex Realities of Child Marriages:

- **Data on Self-Initiated Marriages:**
  - Study (2008-2017): PCMA criminal provisions used more often in self-initiated marriages than arranged ones.
  - 2024 Study: Found 49.4% of PCMA cases in Assam, Maharashtra, and Tamil Nadu involved self-initiated marriages.

- **Reasons for Self-Initiated Marriages:**
  - Escape from abuse, neglect, or forced marriages.
  - Assertion of agency in patriarchal contexts, where elopement is used to legitimise relationships.

Impact of Criminal Provisions:

- Criminal prosecution often overlooks the complex motivations behind child marriages and unintentionally harms adolescents asserting their autonomy.

Significance of the Supreme Court Judgment

Focus on Rehabilitation:

- The judgment directs the introduction of a special scheme to rehabilitate women exiting child marriages. This includes:
  - Skill development and vocational training for economic independence.
  - Monitoring and follow-up support to ensure social and economic reintegration.
  - Consideration of compensation under victim compensation schemes to aid recovery.

Agency Within Marriages:

- Recognises that not all women in child marriages wish to exit.
- Emphasizes tools to strengthen their ability to make decisions in areas like reproductive rights, education, and employment, helping them advocate for their needs within the marriage.

Sex Education for Adolescents:

- The judgment highlights the need for comprehensive sex education to equip young individuals with the skills and knowledge required to navigate relationships effectively. This is seen as critical to addressing the issue of child marriage holistically.

Acknowledgment of Social and Economic Sanctions:

- Recognises that exiting child marriages often leads to social and economic penalties, underscoring the importance of proactive support measures to empower affected women.

Conclusion

- The Supreme Court judgment highlights the evolving nature of child marriage, including trends of youth elopement.

- A holistic, agency-affirming approach is more effective than over-reliance on criminal prosecution.

- Comprehensive measures — addressing education, rehabilitation, and autonomy — can help eliminate child marriage in India while safeguarding the dignity and agency of those affected.

Question

Examine the challenges in addressing child marriage in India and suggest effective measures to overcome them.

Caste bias, segregation in prisons violate dignity: Supreme Court

October 04, 2024, The Hindu

Chapter:

C-1 Visions of Social Change in India

C-7 Challenges of Social Transformation

Introduction

- The Supreme Court of India declared that caste-based discrimination in prisons violates fundamental human dignity and constitutional rights.

- Practices such as segregation of work based on caste, labeling of denotified tribes as "habitual offenders," and caste-based barrack segregation were identified as oppressive and unconstitutional.

Key Judgments and Directions by the Supreme Court

Revision of Prison Manuals:

- Directed revision of prison manuals across India within three months to remove provisions enabling caste-based discrimination.

- Ordered the deletion of the 'caste column' and any caste-related references in prison registers for undertrials and convicts.

- *[Aligns with Weber's theory of rational-legal authority, where modern institutions should be governed by rational and impartial laws rather than traditional hierarchies.]*

Ban on Caste-Based Work Assignment:

- Declared that compelling inmates from marginalised castes to perform tasks such as cleaning latrines or sweeping without choice constitutes coercion and discrimination.

- Affirmed the applicability of the Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013, within prisons.

Protection for Denotified Tribes:

- Held that inmates from denotified tribes must not face arbitrary arrests or be subjected to the label of "habitual offenders."

Examples of Caste-Based Discrimination in Prisons

Manual Scavenging and Forced Labour:

- Inmates from marginalised castes were forced into cleaning and sanitation work, aligning with caste hierarchies.

- Such practices were in violation of the Manual Scavengers Act, 2013.

  [Connects with Louis Dumont's view of caste as a hierarchical system based on purity and pollution, where such practices perpetuate systemic inequalities.]

Barrack Segregation:

- Instances like the separation of Thevars, Nadars, and Pallars in Palayamkottai Central Jail, Tamil Nadu, highlighted caste-based segregation of barracks.

Discriminatory Prison Manuals:

- Over 10 States, including Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Maharashtra, and Tamil Nadu, had discriminatory provisions in their prison manuals, legitimising forced labour and segregation.

Constitutional and Legal Context

Fundamental Rights:

- Caste-based discrimination in prisons violates Article 14 (Right to Equality), Article 21 (Right to Life and Dignity), and Article 17 (Abolition of Untouchability) of the Constitution.

Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013:

- Prohibits manual scavenging in any form and applies to prisons.

- Emphasises rehabilitation of marginalised workers subjected to such tasks.

Protection of Denotified Tribes:

- Arbitrary arrest and labeling of individuals from denotified tribes as "habitual offenders" contravene human dignity and violate constitutional protections.

Conclusion

- The Supreme Court's judgment is a significant step toward dismantling caste-based discrimination in prisons, ensuring that constitutional principles of equality and dignity extend to even the most vulnerable.

  [Relates to Ambedkar's vision of social justice, which emphasizes dismantling caste-based practices to ensure equality and human dignity.]

- The judgment underscores the need for institutional reforms in prisons to address systemic bias and uphold human rights.

- It also reinforces the constitutional mandate of equality, marking a pivotal moment in the fight against caste-based oppression in India's criminal justice system.

Ensuring a proper social safety net for the gig worker

October 15, 2024, The Hindu

Chapter:

C-3 Industrialization and Urbanisation in India

Introduction

- The Union Ministry of Labour and Employment is drafting a national law to incorporate gig workers into social security schemes, addressing the absence of health insurance, retirement savings, and other benefits.

- Gig workers are currently excluded from traditional employer-employee protections, making social safety measures critical for this growing workforce.

Features of the Draft Law

- Aggregators (e.g., platform companies) must contribute 1%-2% of revenue to a social security fund for gig workers, covering health insurance and other benefits.

- A welfare board model will be established to manage this fund and provide dispute resolution mechanisms.

- Mandates registration of gig workers on the e-Shram portal, enabling access to life and accidental insurance benefits.

- Ensures transparency in automated systems and requires a 14-day notice with valid reasons for worker termination.

Gig Workers in Labour Codes

- India introduced four labour codes between 2019–2020, merging 29 central labour laws under:

    1. Wage Code

    2. Social Security Code

    3. Industrial Relations Code

    4. Occupational Safety, Health, and Working Conditions Code

- Gig workers are explicitly mentioned only in the Social Security Code, 2020, categorised as part of the informal sector.

- **Social Security Code provisions:**

    o Gig workers are eligible for certain social security schemes (e.g., maternity benefits, health insurance).

    o Workers must register on the e-Shram portal via self-declaration.

Issues with Existing Provisions

Undefined Employment Relationships:

- Gig workers are classified as independent contractors, not employees, leaving them outside the scope of traditional labour protections like minimum wages and dispute resolution.

- Aggregators intentionally obscure employment relationships to avoid compliance with labour laws.

- *[Reflects Gramsci's concept of hegemony, where dominant groups maintain control by shaping narratives, such as portraying gig workers as independent entrepreneurs.]*

Gaps in Social Security:

- Formal workers enjoy institutional social security, such as paid maternity leave (26 weeks under the Maternity Benefit Act, 1961).

- Gig workers receive limited social security schemes, such as one-time cash maternity benefits of ₹5,000–₹10,000.

- *[Highlights Feminist critiques of labour markets, such as those by Sylvia Walby, who emphasize the systemic undervaluation of women's contributions.]*

- Key protections like occupational safety and minimum wage laws are absent.

- *[Connects with concept of the commodification of labour, where gig work reduces labour to a market-driven commodity.]*

Limited Effectiveness of Welfare Boards:

- Past welfare boards, such as those for construction workers, failed to ensure adequate benefits due to weak implementation.

Exclusion from Key Labour Codes:

- Gig workers are excluded from the Industrial Relations Code, denying them access to dispute resolution mechanisms.

Core Issue

- The absence of explicit employment relationships is the crux of the problem.

- Aggregators avoid recognition as employers, depriving gig workers of rights guaranteed under formal labour laws.

- **International Precedent**: The UK Supreme Court's 2021 Uber ruling defined Uber drivers as "workers," compelling Uber to comply with labour laws, setting a valuable precedent for India.

Way Forward

Define Employment Relationships:

- Recognise aggregators as employers to ensure gig workers receive protections under existing labour codes.

Integrate Gig Workers into Labour Codes:

- Once employment relationships are clarified, gig workers can benefit from wage protection, occupational safety, and dispute resolution mechanisms under the current labour codes.

Reassess Welfare Board Model:

- Ensure more robust implementation of welfare boards to avoid the shortcomings experienced in the construction sector.

Simplification over Segmentation:

- Separate legislation for gig workers undermines the aim of labour code simplification. Instead, integration into broader labour laws is more effective.

Conclusion

- Recognising gig workers as employees rather than independent contractors is the first step toward ensuring their inclusion in India's formal labour framework.

- Addressing the employment relationship issue will enable gig workers to access rights and protections under the four labour codes, aligning their treatment with the broader goals of rationalisation and simplification in labour laws.

Question

Critically examine the challenges faced by gig workers in India. Discuss the role of proposed legal measures in addressing these challenges.

New additions to classical languages list: Yet another divide-and-rule strategy

Oct 8, 2024, Indian Express

Chapter:

C-4 Politics and Society

C-5 Social Movements in Modern India

Introduction

- The British colonial regime used "divide and rule" to horizontally fragment Indian society through culture, geography, and social divisions.

- In post-colonial India, vertical divisions (based on caste, religion, and language) have become a tool for electoral politics.

- The Union Cabinet's decision to add Bangla, Assamiya, and Marathi as "classical languages" illustrates how such recognition of language may lead to societal fragmentation.

The Concept of Classical Language

Definition:

- A classical language is a historical and cultural descriptor, not a linguistic feature.

- Historically tied to ancient languages that contributed root words and affixes (e.g., Latin's "intelligentia" in "artificial intelligence").

Origins:

- Emerged in 16th-century English to describe Greek and Latin as markers of cultural superiority.

  [Can be viewed through Pierre Bourdieu's concept of Cultural Capital, where certain languages are valued over others, perpetuating inequalities in cultural and social status.]

- Expanded to include languages like Sanskrit, Tamil, Arabic, Chinese, and Persian.

Modern Usage in India:

- India currently recognises 11 classical languages: Sanskrit, Tamil, Kannada, Malayalam, Telugu, Odia, Marathi, Assamiya, Bangla, and others.

- This categorisation creates linguistic hierarchies, marginalising smaller languages.

Fragmentation and Linguistic Hierarchies

Census Data:

- 1961 Census recorded 1,652 "mother tongues," reduced to 1,369 by 2011.

- Of these, 121 were classified as "languages", with 22 included in the 8th Schedule and 11 recognised as "classical."

Hierarchy:

- Language classification forms a pyramid structure, similar to the chaturvarna system:
  - At the top: Classical languages.
  - At the base: Hundreds of mother tongues, many on the brink of extinction.

Impact:

- Smaller languages and mother tongues are excluded, as seen in the rejection of 1,474 mother tongues by the Census office in 2011.

Implications

Marginalisation of Smaller Languages:

- Recognition of select languages as "classical" marginalises others, risking the extinction of smaller linguistic identities.
- Example: Pali and Prakrit, historically significant, are recognised as "classical" but excluded from the 8th Schedule.

Majoritarian Politics:

- Language recognition becomes a tool for majoritarian pride, dividing communities along linguistic lines, akin to divisions based on caste or religion.
- *[Aligns with Paul Brass' views of ethnic identities as political tools manipulated by elites to achieve power.]*

Cultural Inequality:

- Drawing from George Orwell's Animal Farm, the policy fosters a republic of languages where "all languages are equal, but some are more equal than others."

Loss of Cultural Diversity:

- Smaller languages risk being overshadowed, reducing the cultural richness of India's linguistic diversity.

Conclusion

- Recognising classical languages celebrates cultural heritage but deepens linguistic hierarchies, marginalising smaller languages.
- Every language deserves equal respect and state support to preserve India's linguistic and cultural diversity.
- Policies should aim for inclusive language preservation rather than selective honouring for electoral or cultural dominance.

How circular migration can help meet global skill shortage and lift Indians out of poverty

Oct 5, 2024, Indian Express

Chapter:

C-6 Population Dynamics

Introduction

- 997 youth from Maharashtra secured jobs in Israel under a government-to-government (G-to-G) agreement, with monthly salaries of Rs 1.37 lakh, along with accommodation and social security.

- India has signed labour mobility agreements with countries like Germany, Japan, and Israel to meet global skill shortages while benefiting Indian workers.

- These initiatives are part of the Circular Migration.

- *[Connects to Immanuel Wallerstein's World-Systems Theory, which highlights the core-periphery relationship. Developing countries like India supply skilled labour to developed nations (core), while benefiting from remittances and skill enhancement upon workers' return.]*
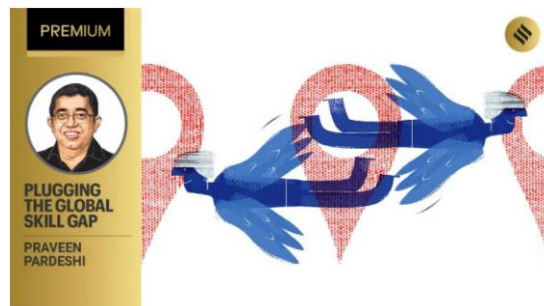
What is Circular Migration?

- Circular migration is a structured system where workers migrate temporarily, contribute their skills in destination countries, and return with enhanced expertise.

- **Benefits of Circular Migration:**

  o Workers meet skill deficits in developed countries.

  o Employers provide assured wages, social security, and accommodation.

  o Workers return with enhanced skills and experience, benefitting the home country's economy.

- Example: Israel's demand for 100,000 skilled masons, carpenters, and caregivers.

  [Relates to Anthony Giddens' concept of globalization, emphasizing the interconnectedness of economies and labour markets through structured migration systems.]

  [Can also be viewed through Dependency Theory by Andre Gunder Frank, as developed countries depend on cheap labour from the Global South to sustain their economies, perpetuating global economic inequalities.]

Opportunities for Circular Migration

Demographic Shifts in Developed Countries:

- The Economist magazine, quoting Charles Goodhart, Manoj Pradhan and Pratyancha Pardeshi, has surmised that the ageing population in Western Europe and Japan can incentivise the flow of skilled workers and caregivers from the developing world.

- Germany's Federal Minister for Economic Affairs, Robert Habeck, highlighted workforce shortages as a key challenge for growth.

- Demand for workers in infrastructure, healthcare, and advanced technology sectors.

- *[Connects to Demographic transition theory which refers to the shift from high birth and death rates in underdeveloped societies to low birth and death rates in developed societies, driven by advancements in technology, education (especially of women), and economic development, with transitional stages in between.]*

- *[Also connects to Karl Marx's concept of Reserve Army of Labour, as surplus labour in India is mobilized internationally to meet the demands of capitalist economies.]*

Skill Gaps in Emerging Sectors:

- Opportunities in quantum computing, healthcare, and infrastructure.

- Circular migration positions India as a global source of human capital.

India's Demographic Dividend:

- Large youth population offers a chance to uplift socio-economic status through skill-based migration.

- Circular migration agreements ensure safe and structured placements, safeguarding workers' rights.

Challenges

Skill Gaps and Compliance:

- Skills must match the exact protocols of destination countries, requiring additional training.

- Example: ITI Pune fabricated specific bar bending machines for Israeli tests.

Language Barriers:

- Workers need proficiency in local languages like German, French, or Japanese.

Documentation Issues:

- Fast-tracking passport issuance was critical for many candidates.

Government Response

Skill Training and Certification:

- NSDC and ITIs provide refresher training and booster programs to meet international standards.

Streamlined Processes:

- Passport issuance fast-tracked by the Ministry of External Affairs.

Language Training:

- Workers offered training in languages like German and Japanese.

Database Creation:

- Dynamic databases developed by MITRA (Maharashtra Institution for Transformation) to identify and prepare skilled workers.

Conclusion

- Circular migration is a win-win model, addressing global skill shortages and uplifting Indian workers through international exposure and experience.

- India's demographic advantage positions it as a global hub for human capital, leveraging structured agreements and skill development.

- Returning workers will benefit industries back home, enabling economic growth and socio-economic upliftment.

Question

Discuss the concept of circular migration, highlighting its potential opportunities and challenges.

National interest, financial rewards do little to convince families to have more children

Chapter:

C-6 Population Dynamics

Introduction

- In 1944, Joseph Stalin's Mother Heroine Award encouraged women to have 10 or more children to rebuild Russia's population post-WWII. Despite these measures, Russia's fertility rates fell, reaching 1.16 in 1999, rebounded briefly, and declined again to 1.4 by 2023.

- This example illustrates that nationalistic appeals and financial incentives alone fail to convince families to have more children unless it aligns with their perceived interests.

Key Lessons from Global Fertility Transitions

European Fertility Trends:

- Fertility has fluctuated in Europe, dropping to "lowest-low fertility" (TFR < 1.3) around 2000, rebounding to 1.8–1.9 by 2010, and declining again to 1.4–1.6 in 2023.

- *[Reflects Demographic Transition Theory, which explains how fertility and mortality decline as societies modernize.]*

- **Tempo Effect:** Rising marriage ages temporarily reduce fertility in younger age groups but may later stabilise as delayed childbearing occurs.

- **Implication for India:** Similar trends may occur as education and marriage age increase, leading to temporary fertility declines.

East Asian Fertility Decline:

- Countries like Korea (TFR 0.8), Singapore, and China show extremely low fertility despite the high importance of children in these societies.

- **Parental Trade-Offs:** Intense investments in a single child's education often limit family size.

- **India's Case:** Research by Alaka Basu and Sonalde Desai shows similar patterns, with Indian parents often prioritising one child's education over larger families.

Southern Europe and Japan Fertility Trends:

- In Japan and Southern Europe, women's economic aspirations clash with patriarchal family norms and inflexible workplaces, leading many to forgo marriage and childbearing.

- Example: In Japan, lifelong singlehood rose from 2% (men) and 3.3% (women) in 1971 to 28% (men) and 18% (women) in 2020.

Contrasting Policy Approaches

China:

- Relaxed its one-child policy, allowing up to three children, but this had little effect on fertility rates.

- **Reasons**: Economic liberalisation reduced state childcare support, lowering women's labour force participation from 90% to 61%.

Sweden:

- Adopted family-friendly policies including generous maternity/paternity leave, childcare facilities, and shared parenting norms.

- Maintained a TFR of 1.9 (2015–2020) despite fluctuations.

Conclusion

- Human Rights Perspective: Decisions about childbearing are fundamental human rights, as highlighted by sociologist Judith Blake: "People do not have birth rates; they have children.

- **Policy Recommendations:**

  1. Adopt family-friendly policies like Sweden to support families and address fertility challenges.

  2. Promote migration from populous states like Uttar Pradesh to aging regions such as Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh to mitigate demographic challenges.

Question

Examine the factors influencing fertility rates globally and discuss how policy measures can address declining fertility trends.
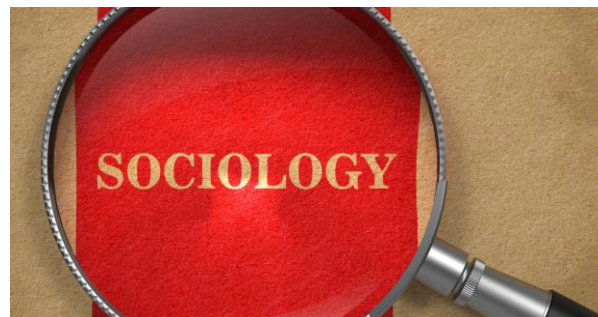
Barriers to Understanding Theory

Chapter:

3 - Research Methods and Analysis

Introduction

- Social theory is foundational to sociology but often intimidates and alienates students.

- The apprehension towards theory is particularly pronounced among students from marginalized backgrounds.

Barriers in Understanding Theory

Abstract Nature of Theory:

- Like complex mathematical formulae, theory requires high-level conceptual thinking. (For ex. Talcott Parsons' Theory of Social Action)

- Without proper guidance, this abstraction can deter student engagement.

Linguistic Challenges:

- The language of theoretical texts often uses elite, academic dialects.

- English dominance and lack of vernacular translations intensify inequalities, disadvantaging students not fluent in the dominant academic language.

Cultural Capital (Bourdieu's Concept):

- Cultural capital refers to the familiarity with cultural codes, language, and academic discourse.

- Students from privileged backgrounds often have greater cultural capital, making theory more accessible to them.

- Marginalized students may lack such exposure, turning theory into an exclusionary mechanism that maintains educational and social hierarchies.

Institutional Reinforcement of Inequalities

- Educational institutions often privilege students who quickly grasp theoretical concepts.

- Curricula rarely accommodate students unfamiliar with dense theoretical material, reinforcing existing class and cultural divides.

- Lack of supportive resources (e.g., simplified texts, translations) widens this academic gap.

Political and Eurocentric Dimensions of Theory

- Theories developed in Western contexts are sometimes applied uncritically in non-Western settings, ignoring cultural and historical differences.
- This reflects a form of academic Orientalism, where Western knowledge is privileged and local, indigenous perspectives are marginalized.
  [Orientalism refers to the Western portrayal of Eastern societies as exotic, inferior, or backward, often used to justify colonial dominance and marginalize indigenous perspectives.]

- As a result, the lived experiences of marginalized communities may be misrepresented or overlooked when forced into ill-fitting theoretical frameworks.

Hierarchies within Theory: Grand Theory vs. Empirical Research

- C. Wright Mills' Critique:
  o Grand theory can impose homogenized explanations that fail to capture the diversity of real-life experiences.
  o Abstract empiricism risks reducing research to data collection without meaningful theoretical interpretation.
  o *[In Indian context Gopal Guru made provocative distinction between theoretical Brahmins and empirical Shudras in Indian academia]*
- The solution: Develop "middle-range theories" that balance conceptual insight with empirical grounding, making theory more relevant to actual social phenomena.

The Need for Decolonizing and Democratizing Theory

- Decolonization of Theory:
  o Move beyond Eurocentric perspectives to include non-Western viewpoints.
  o Ensure theory is accessible to all socio-economic groups, not just the privileged.
- Intellectual arrogance, manifested in convoluted prose and jargon, alienates students and limits critical engagement.
- Emphasize theory as a tool to understand everyday life rather than as an abstract intellectual luxury.
- Erving Goffman's work exemplifies how theoretical concepts can be rooted in daily interactions and lived realities.
- *[For example, Erving Goffman's dramaturgical approach to explore how individuals perform roles in daily interactions.]*

Conclusion:

- Social theory becomes elitist and inaccessible when detached from everyday experiences.
- Addressing "theory-phobia" involves:
  o Recognizing and dismantling linguistic, cultural, and academic barriers.
  o Adopting inclusive pedagogical approaches that clarify abstract concepts.
  o Encouraging dialogic, relatable teaching methods that present theory as "storytelling" connected to real-life contexts.
- By reframing theory as an inclusive, critical, and context-sensitive practice, educators can foster greater engagement, reduce academic hierarchies, and enrich the sociological imagination for all students.

Question

What are the major challenges associated with the development and understanding of theoretical concepts in social sciences?

'No sex with Trump voters': The ABC of the 4B movement

November 11, 2024, Indian Express

Chapter:

7 - Politics and Society

9 - Systems of Kinship

Introduction to the 4B Movement

- **Context:** Emerged as a radical feminist response, initially in South Korea, now gaining traction in the U.S. amidst Donald Trump's return to political prominence.

- **Definition of '4B':** Refers to "four nos" (in Korean: bihon, bichulsan, biyeonae, bisekseu), i.e., no (heterosexual) marriage, no childbirth, no romance, and no sexual relationships with men.

- **Underlying Idea:** Proponents argue that heterosexual relationships often reflect and reinforce patriarchal, misogynist structures. By abstaining from these, women express political dissent and seek autonomy.

   [The movement can be understood in terms of "New Social Movements" theory, which focuses on identity, personal life, and cultural change rather than just class-based struggles.]

Origins in South Korea

- **Genesis (2016):** Sparked after a young woman's murder in a Seoul subway, where the killer claimed he felt "ignored by women."

- **Other Prevailing Issues:** Women faced rampant "spycam" crimes (covert filming in washrooms or during sex) and hostile police responses.

- **Influence of #MeToo:** Gave women a platform to voice struggles and push for rights more assertively.

- **Response:** The 4B movement developed as a collective refusal to participate in institutions (marriage, family roles, sexual relationships) that perpetuate women's subordination.

Core Principles of the 4B Movement

- **Radical Feminist Stance:** Heterosexual relationships, marriage, and family structures are seen as oppressive.

- **Critique of Marriage and Motherhood:**
   o Dowry and domestic burdens in some cultures (like India) highlight entrenched gender inequalities.

   o Women bear disproportionate workload in child-rearing and household management.

   o Workplace penalties for motherhood and common domestic violence underscore persistent gender bias.

- o *[Arlie Hochschild's "Second Shift" theory: women do most unpaid domestic labor despite working outside the home.]*

- **Call for Accountability:** The movement suggests women should withhold love, emotional labor, and childbearing until men actively work towards gender equality.

Broader Social and Individual Benefits

- **Lee & Jeong, Yonsei University:** The 4B movement critiques pro-natalist state policies and encourages women's self-help, planning their futures without patriarchal constraints.

- **Envisioning Alternatives:** Women imagine roles beyond "wife" and "mother," focusing on personal goals, hobbies, and well-being.

- **Solidarity Among Women:**

  - o Encourages building supportive women-only networks, friendships, or even lesbian relationships.

  - o Aims to foster emotional and communal support independent of men's involvement.

  - o *[Intersection with Bell hooks' idea of sisterhood as a healing, collective solidarity against patriarchal oppression.]*

- **Expansion to 6B4T:** Some advocates extend refusal to include boycotting misogynist firms, rejecting beauty standards aligned with the male gaze, and distancing from toxic fandom cultures.

Historical and Global Parallels

- Political Lesbianism & Separatist Feminism (1960s-1980s):

  - o Challenged heterosexuality as a tool of male supremacy.

  - o Influential Text: "*Love Your Enemy*" (1979, Sheila Jeffreys et al.) argued that heterosexual marriage sustains male dominance.

  - o Proposed that women withdraw from relationships with men.

- Cell 16 (U.S., late 1960s-70s): Encouraged women's celibacy, separation from men, and learning self-defense to resist patriarchal violence.

- Boysober (U.S.): Preceded 4B, where women avoided relationships with men for safety and personal happiness.

- *[Reflects Zygmunt Bauman's "liquid modernity": individuals increasingly question traditional intimacies, opting for flexible, self-protective choices.]*

Criticisms and Limitations of the 4B Movement

- **Impact Measurement Issues:** Difficult to correlate directly with broad social changes like low birth rates.

- **Potential Reinforcement of Stereotypes:** By expecting women to withdraw, some say it excuses men's bad behavior and avoids demanding men's accountability or reform.

- **Risk of Exclusion:** Totalizing doctrines can marginalize transgender individuals and reduce the complexity of gender issues to a binary men-vs.-women framework.

- **Alternative View:** Some argue meaningful change requires engaging men in transformation and pushing for accountability within relationships and social institutions.

Contemporary U.S. Context: The Trump Presidency and Women's Rights

- **Overturning Roe v. Wade (2022):**
  - Eroded a 50-year precedent protecting abortion rights, reverting control over women's bodies to state laws.
  - 21 states now have bans or severe restrictions. Some states criminalize aiding in abortion access.

- **Trump's Influence:**
  - Installed Supreme Court justices who facilitated Roe's reversal.
  - Publicly degraded childless women, calling them "psychotic" and "cat ladies."
  - Men's rights activists promoted slogans like "Your body, My choice," normalizing forced pregnancy and threatening women's bodily autonomy.

- **Setback to Feminist Gains:** Echoes second-wave feminist struggles of the 1960s, where women fought similar battles for bodily autonomy and equality.

Conclusion

- The 4B movement, like its historical counterparts, highlights how personal choices (such as intimacy and marriage) are linked to broader social structures, inequalities, and institutions.
- Ultimately, the 4B movement's emergence in both South Korea and the U.S. context underscores the ongoing global struggle for gender justice, the complexity of feminist strategies, and the contested terrain of personal, political, and legal reforms.

Question

What is the 4B movement, and how does it contribute to the feminist struggle for gender justice?

The Burden of Manxiety

Tracing the Urban Shift from Patriarchy to Masculinity

Chapter:

9 - Systems of Kinship

Manxiety

- **Definition:** "Manxiety" is a term used to describe the heightened insecurity and self-doubt men face when traditional patriarchal anchors weaken. Under longstanding patriarchal norms, men rarely had to question their roles. They were assured of authority, clear hierarchies, and stable social support. As social changes—especially urbanization—erode these old certainties, men struggle to redefine themselves, leading to a form of anxiety unique to their shifting circumstances.

From Patriarchy to Masculinity under Urbanization

- **Eroding Patriarchy:** In traditional patriarchy, men enjoyed predefined authority and respect. Their status was assured by familial and community structures, and male elders guided younger men. As the world moves towards urban settings, these stable village-based hierarchies' fade. Younger men can no longer rely on senior male figures or the old social order for validation.

- **Urban Complexity:** Cities offer opportunities but also uncertainties—competitive job markets, uncertain futures, weaker family ties, and isolation. Men must now create their own standards of success. They experience a sense of "manxiety" as they attempt to prove their worthiness without the ready-made script that patriarchy provided.

Masculinity as a Response to Manxiety

- **Shift in Focus:** Where patriarchy focused on controlling women and securing male dominance through established roles, masculinity in urban, post-patriarchal contexts becomes an inward struggle. It is less about subjugating others and more about proving oneself—physically, economically, emotionally—to oneself and to other men.

- **Performing Manhood:** Influenced by thinkers like Judith Butler, masculinity is understood as a performative act, not a fixed identity. Men must continually demonstrate strength, capability, and independence. This relentless self-assessment is stressful. They turn to physical fitness, gym culture, and idealized male figures (heroes, corporate icons, fictional superheroes) for templates of manhood. Manhood becomes "precarious," requiring constant effort and validation.

Economic and Social Pressures

- **Blocked Aspirations:** The pressures of urban life intersect with class and wealth-based inequalities. Many men believe that their rightful opportunities are blocked by entrenched elites. Feeling cheated and overlooked, they invest more in proving their masculine worth.

- **Employment Challenges:** High unemployment rates, particularly for educated youth, intensify manxiety. Failure to secure stable, respectable jobs makes men feel inadequate. Since masculinity demands personal success without the old patriarchal safety net, any shortfall in economic achievement deepens self-doubt.

  [Robert Merton's strain theory suggests a disjunction between cultural goals (masculine success ideals) and institutional means (limited job opportunities) creates frustration and anxiety.]

Masculinity, Violence, and Mental Health

- **Aggression as Outlet:** To counter inner insecurities, some men resort to aggression or emphasize muscular strength. However, such aggression often targets other men rather than women, reflecting a competitive struggle for status within a male peer group.

- **High Suicide Rates:** The psychological toll is severe. Reluctant to show vulnerability—an act that would contradict masculine ideals—men internalize stress. This contributes to higher male suicide rates, as men silently grapple with feelings of failure and despair.

  [Erving Goffman's "stigma" concept: showing vulnerability stigmatizes men, preventing help-seeking.

  Durkheim's study of suicide underscores how weakening of traditional social ties and norms (anomie) can raise suicide rates; similarly, manxiety could be linked to anomic conditions for men.]

Cultural Symbols and Transitions

- **Symbols in Pop Culture:** In India and elsewhere, popular culture (films, fitness culture) now highlights strongly muscled male heroes, reflecting the anxiety-driven need for visual proof of strength. Traditional patriarchal images of flabby, secure elder males are replaced by lean, defined, and anxious young males striving to meet an ever-shifting ideal.

- **Icons and National Narratives:** Historical and religious figures, like Lord Rama, resonate with young men feeling thwarted by contemporary elites. Such icons are reimagined to emphasize moral strength, perseverance, and the triumph against odds, aligning neatly with the anxieties and aspirations of today's urban youth.

Towards the Future: Beyond Manxiety

- **An Ephemeral Phase:** Manxiety, and the intense masculinity it births, can be seen as a transitional phenomenon. As societies grow more urban and individualistic, patriarchy's protective framework disappears, but full gender equality and stable new norms have not yet arrived. Men are caught in this in-between stage.

  [Zygmunt Bauman's concept of "liquid modernity": everything, including gender roles, is in flux. Men's anxiety stems from living in a transitional period without clear norms.]

- **Reduced Tension through Equality:** Over time, as gender roles become more flexible and women share economic and social responsibilities, men may no longer feel solely burdened with proving their worth. Such shifts, observed in western contexts, could eventually ease manxiety. The end point might be a more balanced scenario where mutual respect replaces rigid hierarchy and relentless self-testing.

  [Relates to Peter Willmott and Michael Young's concept of a symmetrical family, where both spouses share responsibilities equally, including paid work, domestic labor, childcare, and decision-making.]

Question:

Examine how urbanization has transformed traditional patriarchal structures and impacted the roles and expectations of men in contemporary society.

Can understanding caste as a 'way of life' bring about true equality or inclusion?

Nov 15, 2024, Indian Express

Chapter:

B-2 Caste System

Introduction

Caste Transformation: Caste practice in India has evolved from traditional social hierarchies to three key stages:

1. **Secularisation of caste:** Reduced direct religious sanction; caste identities entering public spheres (education, jobs, etc.).

2. **Politicisation of caste:** Caste groups mobilizing politically for rights and representation.

   [According to Rajni Kothari, politicisation of caste in India played a very important role in developing party politics]

3. **Culturalisation of caste:** Viewing caste as a "way of life," incorporating cultural practices (food, marriage, worship) into a broader social-cultural identity rather than just a hierarchical structure.

Culturalisation of Caste

- **Meaning:** Culturalisation involves recognizing and celebrating distinct cultural practices—rituals, deities, occupations, and ceremonies—associated with particular castes.

- **Cultural Integration:** These cultural markers connect smaller caste groups to a larger cultural landscape, potentially broadening a sense of unity while still acknowledging differences.

- **Globalisation's Impact:** Castes increasingly seek cultural recognition within the nation-state framework, retaining traditional practices while integrating into modern economies and institutions.

   [Can connect this with "Traditionalization of modernization" (Yogendra Singh) as per which modernization in India adapts rather than rejects traditional values. Traditional elements integrate with modern practices, creating a blend where tradition is reinterpreted to fit modern needs.]

Ambedkar vs. Gandhi on Culturalisation:

Ambedkar's View:

- Varna/caste systems are inherently prejudicial.

- He supported articulating differences to aid the mobility of depressed classes.

- Inclusion should be based on modern fraternity (informed by Buddhist notions of "maitreyi" or friendship).

- Opposed Dalits identifying as Hindus if it meant accepting caste oppression.

- Warned against Dalit conversion to Islam/Christianity as potentially "denationalizing," yet acknowledged a cultural unity in peninsular India.

Gandhi's View:

- Emphasized varnashrama dharma as promoting self-control, co-responsibility, and cultural heterogeneity within a unity.

- Valued common cultural sensibilities to maintain collective identity.

- Wanted Dalits to remain Hindu to ensure their inclusion into the broader cultural fold.

Present Political Context

Shift to the Right:

- A "Hindu" civilizational unity is increasingly employed to include Dalits and OBCs as part of a broader cultural entity, not merely religious, but communal and civilizational.

Mobilisation of Sub-Castes:

- Smaller caste groups are integrated into a Hindu narrative by reinterpreting their local deities as manifestations of Hindu gods, as seen in RSS outreach to tribal communities.

- This can be seen as "forceful assimilation" that blurs distinctions.

Caste-Based Occupations as Cultural Identity:

- Economic policies now honor and fund traditional caste-based occupations, merging economy and culture.

- **PM Vishwakarma Scheme:** Provides loans and incentives for artisans (blacksmiths, potters) to preserve and promote their caste-based skills.

- **Regional Examples:** Leaders like K Chandrashekar Rao provide modern equipment and funding for caste-based professions, framing skill development as part of preserving a cultural way of life.

Education, Skill Development, and Inequality

National Education Policy (NEP):

- Mandatory vocational courses till Class 8 can reinforce traditional caste-based occupations as dignified career paths.

- NEP allows opting out of formal education for skill-based careers, potentially stabilizing caste-based occupational divisions.

  [Bourdieu's 'cultural reproduction' theory applies: educational structures can perpetuate existing social hierarchies; by channelling different groups into predetermined occupational niches.]

Mohan Bhagwat's Argument:

- Links unemployment to lack of dignity for traditional labor.

- Suggests restoring dignity to caste-based work as a solution, potentially reinforcing occupational stratification.

Risk of Re-Inscribing Inequality:

- A cultural approach to caste may ensure "inclusion" of marginalized groups in the national narrative but not necessarily create substantive equality.

- Certain castes might remain tied to manual labor while others dominate higher education and mental labor, perpetuating inequalities under the guise of cultural celebration.

Question:

What is meant by the culturalisation of caste, and how can it influence caste relations and social mobility in contemporary society?

Indians need to share contraceptive responsibility

November 30, 2024, The Hindu

Chapter:

B-5 Systems of Kinship in India

B-6 Religion and Society

C-6 Population Dynamics

'As a first step, sensitisation should begin during early adolescence in schools' | Photo Credit: Getty Images/iStockphoto

Historical Context

- **Pioneering Family Planning (1952):** India launched a national family-planning programme in 1952 with an initial focus on improving maternal and child health, which later shifted towards population stabilization.

- **Early Emphasis on Male Sterilization:** During 1966-70, approximately 80.5% of all sterilization procedures were vasectomies. Over time, however, policy shifts and other factors led to a declining emphasis on male sterilization.

- **Declining Trends:** The National Family Health Survey (NFHS) data across five rounds indicate a continuous decrease in male sterilization, stabilizing around 0.3% in NFHS-4 (2015-16) and NFHS-5, a stark drop from earlier decades.

Policy Targets and Gender Disparities

- **National Health Policy 2017 Goal:** Section 4.8 aimed to increase male sterilization to at least 30%. Current levels (0.3%) fall significantly short of this target.

- **Female vs. Male Sterilization Rates:** There is a large disparity: female sterilization is at 37.9% compared to 0.3% for males, indicating women shoulder almost all contraceptive responsibilities.

- *[Feminist theorists like Simone de Beauvoir have highlighted how reproductive roles often fall on women due to existing patriarchal structures.]*

- **Awareness Initiatives:**

  o **Vasectomy Day:** Observed internationally on the third Friday of November (in 2019, it was on November 15).

  o **Vasectomy Fortnight (India, 2017):** An attempt to reinvigorate awareness, generate demand, and debunk myths about vasectomies.

Factors Affecting Male Participation

- Perceptions and Beliefs:

  o Women often internalize the responsibility for sterilization.

  o Men may avoid vasectomies due to misconceptions (e.g., reduced libido), ego, family opposition, and limited understanding of their role in reproductive health.

  [Erving Goffman's "stigma" concept can be applied here – men may fear stigmatization or loss of status if they undergo vasectomy]

- Educational Barriers: Illiteracy and lack of accurate information about male sterilization contribute to low acceptance rates.

- Lack of Skilled Providers: Rural areas particularly face a shortage of trained health professionals. Even community health workers often lack adequate knowledge about no-scalpel vasectomies.

Interventions Needed

- **Early Sensitization:** Begin awareness during adolescence through school-based programmes and peer discussions, normalizing the idea of shared contraceptive responsibilities.

  [Socialization theory (Mead, Parsons) suggests that shaping attitudes early can change cultural norms.]

- **Behavior Change Communication:**

  o Public health campaigns to debunk myths and destigmatize vasectomies.

  o Highlight that vasectomy is safer, simpler, and less invasive than tubectomy.

- **Incentivization:**

  o Use conditional cash incentives to encourage male participation.

  o Evidence from Maharashtra (2019) shows increased uptake after financial incentives. Madhya Pradesh's 50% increase in incentives in 2022 is a promising step.

- **Health System Strengthening:**

  o Improve training for health professionals to provide the procedure.

  o Invest in technological advancements for no-scalpel vasectomies.

  o Align national health strategies with policy objectives to foster shared contraceptive responsibility.

Learning from International Examples

- **South Korea:** High vasectomy prevalence linked to progressive norms and greater gender equality.

- **Bhutan:** Widespread social acceptance, easy availability of quality services, and government-run vasectomy camps have increased uptake.

- **Brazil:** Mass-media awareness campaigns raised vasectomy prevalence from 0.8% in the 1980s to 5% in the last decade.

  [The concept of State Feminism: proactive state policies can reshape gender relations and normalize male participation in family planning.]

Conclusion and Way Forward

- Greater public awareness of vasectomies allows both partners in a union to make informed family planning decisions. In tandem, the government must strengthen the national health system to align with policy objectives.

Question

Discuss the factors that influence the unequal distribution of reproductive responsibility in India and their implications for gender equality.

It's not social constraints or access anymore — women are held back by lack of employment opportunities

Nov 13, 2024, Indian Express

Chapter:

B-5 Systems of Kinship in India

B-6 Religion and Society

C-7 Challenges of Social Transformation

Introduction

- Economic theorists often blame conservative social norms for women's low workforce participation in India. However, recent data challenges the assumption that social constraints alone hold women back.

- The India Human Development Survey (IHDS) by the University of Maryland and NCAER, tracking 42,000 households from 2004 to 2024, provides critical insights into the changing lives and aspirations of Indian women.

Educational Attainment and Delayed Marriage

Educational Improvements:

- Previously existing gender gaps in education have nearly disappeared.

- In 2011-12, 27% of women (20-29 years) had completed Class 12 and 12% held a college degree. By 2022-24, these numbers rose to over 50% having Class 12 and 26% holding college degrees.

- Gender parity in higher education: By 2022-24, equal proportions of young men and women hold college degrees.

- *[Human capital theory (Gary Becker) would suggest that as women invest more in education, their productivity and employability should rise—if the labor market responds fairly.]*

Delayed Marriage:

- In 2011-12, 76% of women in their 20s were married; by 2022-24, this fell to 66%.

- This delay in marriage prolongs "girlhood," giving women more freedom and time to build capabilities.

Shifts in Personal Autonomy and Household Negotiations

Marriage Choices:

- Increased input in partner selection: from 42% in 2012 to 52% in 2022.

- More premarital contact: in 2011, 30% met their husbands before marriage and 27% connected via phone or internet; by 2022, 42% had met in person and 54% communicated virtually before marriage.

Changing Attitudes:

- **Preference for sons declining**: 23% of young women in 2012 felt more sons than daughters were essential; by 2022, only 12% felt this way.

Greater Societal Engagement

Mobility and Public Presence:

- **Women comfortable traveling alone** short distances by public transport increased from 42% to 54%.

- **Membership in Self Help Groups** rose from 10% to 18% among women in their 20s.

- *[The concept of "social capital" suggests that as women become more confident in public spaces and form collective networks, they increase their capacity for civic engagement and empowerment.]*

Political Participation:

- **Attendance at local political meetings** (e.g., gram sabha) rose from 6% in 2012 to 8% in 2022.

Stagnation in Wage Employment Opportunities

Work on Family Farms:

- Women's contributions to family farm work **increased** (as noted by the Periodic Labour Force Survey), yet these are often **unpaid or undercounted**.

Low Paid Employment Participation:

- **Wage labor participation for women (20-29 years) dropped from 18% in 2012 to 14% in 2022.**

- **For women in their 30s, wage labor participation remained stagnant despite improved qualifications and delayed marriages.**

Willingness to Work:

- **In 2011, 73% of married, non-employed women said they would work if suitable jobs were available; by 2022, this rose to 80%.**

- 72% reported their families would allow them to work if jobs were suitable.

Evidence from MGNREGA:

- **Equal pay for women under MGNREGA led to high female participation, indicating that when viable opportunities arise, women eagerly take them.**

Reconceptualizing the Barriers

- The data contradicts the narrative that social norms alone restrict women's work participation. Instead, a lack of suitable employment opportunities is a key barrier.

- Improvements in transport and supportive policies (like MGNREGA) increase women's workforce involvement, demonstrating that structural factors and market conditions matter.

  [Sylvia Walby's concept of "patriarchy" highlights how social structures often limit women's opportunities, but this data suggests that while patriarchal norms matter, structural economic conditions are equally crucial.]

Conclusion:

- Women's empowerment can be viewed across four domains: personal efficacy, intra-household negotiations, societal engagement, and access to income-generation.

- Women have shown gains in the first three areas, but employment access lags behind.

- The data shows that Indian women are ready, educated, supported by families, and willing to work. Policymakers and employers must now ensure they have meaningful, equitable economic opportunities to fully harness India's "gender dividend."

Question

How have social and economic changes affected gender roles in India's labor market?

Feminist ideology in India's constitutional discourse

November 26, 2024, The Hindu

Chapter:

C-1 Visions of Social Change in India

Members of the Constituent Assembly sign the new Constitution of India during the Assembly's final session on January 24, 1950. Photo: PIB via The Hindu Photo Archives

Introduction:

- The term "founding fathers" erases the significant contribution of "founding mothers" who co-authored India's Constitution.

- *[From a Discourse Analysis perspective (Michel Foucault), this phrase shapes how history is understood by reinforcing patriarchal power structures and normalizing male-centred narratives.]*

- Achyut Chetan (in his book *Founding Mothers of the Indian Republic: Gender Politics of the Framing of the Constitution (2022)*) emphasizes that each constitutional article represents a milestone in Indian feminism, crafted through women's active consent, will, and at times dissent.

- Yet, patriarchal narratives have obscured these women's roles, denying them recognition as equal architects of the republic's foundational document.

Contribution of Founding Mothers

- The founding mothers, aligning with B.R. Ambedkar, challenged deep-seated brahmanical patriarchy and resisted romanticized notions of Indian culture that upheld male dominance.

  [Brahmanical Patriarchy is a concept coined by Uma Chakravarti to describe the intersection of patriarchy and caste-based hierarchy in Indian society. It refers to the control of women's sexuality, labor, and reproduction to maintain caste purity and social status, particularly in upper-caste Hindu communities.]

- The founding mothers envisioned Fundamental Rights as not just protections against state overreach but also instruments to combat entrenched patriarchal power within family and religious domains.

- Hansa Mehta and Amrit Kaur advocated placing a Uniform Civil Code (UCC) under Fundamental Rights to limit patriarchal authority in personal spheres.

- When relegated to Directive Principles, they ensured these principles were declared "fundamental in the governance of the country," increasing their legal prominence.

- Begum Aizaz Rasul praised secularism, while Hansa Mehta (in the Sub Committee on Fundamental Rights) sought to restrict religious freedoms that could undermine women's equality.

- Amrit Kaur's dissent (on the 'Freedom of Religion') warned that unchecked religious rights could invalidate progressive reforms such as the Widow Remarriage Act or laws abolishing sati.

Unfulfilled Promises and Ongoing Struggles

- Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay initially saw the Constitution as heralding a transformative era for women's equality.

- The 1974 *"Towards Equality: Report of the Committee on the Status of Women in India"* report by the Government of India found that constitutional promises had not translated into real equality for women, confirming that patriarchal practices persisted despite formal guarantees.

- With the passing of the founding mothers, sustained feminist constitutionalism waned.

- Women's representation in top political and judicial roles remained scarce, and no prominent feminist stateswoman or jurist rose to fulfil the original egalitarian vision.

  [Reflects the "Glass Ceiling" phenomenon (Marilyn Loden) and the continued male domination in power structures described by Joan Acker's theory of "gendered organizations."]

- The UCC, intended as a powerful instrument to dismantle gender injustice, became an unrealized promise.

- Successive governments failed to honour this commitment, despite ample jurisprudential scope to do so.

- Christine Keating (in her *Framing the Postcolonial Sexual Contract: Democracy, Fraternalism, and State Authority in India (2007)*) describes a "postcolonial sexual contract" where women were granted public equality but remained constrained by discriminatory personal laws to satisfy patriarchal interests.

Conclusion

- Although the founding mothers infused feminist ideals into India's Constitution, entrenched patriarchal, religious, and cultural forces have hindered the realization of true gender equality.

- The tension between constitutional principles and sociopolitical realities persists, as seen in the failure to implement a UCC that could challenge the supremacy of patriarchal traditions and personal laws.

  [Indira Jai Singh: All laws of entitlements based on patriarchy than gender equality]

- The legacy of the founding mothers endures as a reminder that legal frameworks alone cannot guarantee women's emancipation without sustained political will, social reform, and active feminist leadership.

Question

Discuss the contributions of India's 'founding mothers' in shaping the Constitution and examine how patriarchal structures have hindered the realization of gender equality in India.

From a republic to a republic of unequals

November 27, 2024, The Hindu

Chapter:

C-1 Visions of Social Change in India

C-7 Challenges of Social Transformation

'Social capital and economic advantages overlap in India' | Photo Credit: Getty Images/iStockphoto

75 Years of the Constitution (1949-2024):

- Constitution Day (November 26, 2024) marks 75 years of India's constitutional governance.

- **Founding vision:** A liberal framework combined with state intervention to reduce inequalities and improve poor social indicators post-Independence.

Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP):

- **Article 38(2):** State must minimize income inequalities and eliminate inequalities in status, facilities, and opportunities.

- *[T. H. Marshall's theory of social citizenship highlights that beyond legal-political equality, welfare provisions ensure genuine social and economic rights.]*

- **Article 39(c):** Emphasizes that the economic system should prevent the concentration of wealth and ensure resources are not monopolized by a few to the detriment of many.

- *[Marx's critique of capitalism—concentration of wealth and class dominance—finds a partial remedy here: the Constitution aimed to counteract class stratification through policy.]*

- **Article 39(b):** The State shall, in particular, direct its policy towards securing that the ownership and control of the material resources of the community are so distributed as best to sub serve the common good;

- *[Can be related to Socialism which is an economic and social system where the means of production, distribution, and exchange are owned or regulated by the community or the state to ensure equal wealth distribution and reduce social inequality.]*

Judicial Interpretations Supporting Egalitarianism

D.S. Nakara & Others vs Union of India (1982):

- Supreme Court linked "socialism" in the Constitution to providing a decent standard of life and social security.

- Reinforced the welfare state's role in ensuring dignity and security from "cradle to grave."

Air India Statutory Corporation vs United Labour Union & Ors (1996):

- Court recognized that the Preamble, Fundamental Rights, and DPSP collectively aim to establish an egalitarian social order.

- Emphasized social and economic justice, equality of status, and opportunities.

Samatha vs State of Andhra Pradesh & Ors (1997):

- Interpreted "socialism" as reducing income inequalities and offering equal opportunities to all.

- Affirmed the Constitution's vision for an egalitarian society.

State Of Karnataka & Anr vs Shri Ranganatha Reddy & Anr (Justice V.R. Krishna Iyer's Interpretation):

- Held that both public and private resources can be treated as community resources.

- Supported the state's redistributive role, aligning with the constitutional aim of resource distribution for common good.

Recent Judicial Shift

9-Judge Constitution Bench (November 5, 2024) Property Owners Association v State of Maharashtra:

- Held that the government cannot simply acquire and redistribute all privately owned property under Article 39(b).

- This overturning of earlier interpretations indicates a narrower view of the state's power in preventing wealth concentration.

Rise of Inequality Post-Neoliberal Reforms

Neoliberal Turn (1990s Onwards):

- Constitutional welfare goals receded, replaced by market-centric policies and reduced state intervention in social welfare.

- The state actively promoted and supported private capital rather than focusing on redistribution and equality.

Data by Lucas Chancel and Thomas Piketty (Indian Income Inequality, 1922-2015: From British Raj to Billionaire Raj?):

- During British rule (1930s): Top 1% held <21% of total income.

- Post-Independence, with welfare interventions (till 1980s): Top 1% share fell to about 6%.

- After neoliberal reforms (post-1990s): Top 1% share surged back to 22%, surpassing even pre-Independence inequality levels.

- By 2022-23: Top 1% income share rose to 22.6% and wealth share to 40.1%.

"State of Inequality in India Report" (2022, Institute for Competitiveness commissioned by EAC-PM):

- Using PLFS 2019-20 data: Top 10% earn around ₹25,000/month (~₹3 lakh/year).

- Remaining 90% earn less than ₹25,000/month, indicating stark income inequality and a departure from egalitarian constitutional ideals.

Economic Inequality Overlapping with Social Inequalities

World Inequality Lab Report "Towards Tax Justice and Wealth Redistribution in India" (2024):

- By 2022-23, 90% of billionaire wealth is held by upper castes.

- OBC have a mere 10% presence in billionaire wealth.

- Scheduled Castes have a 2.6% representation in billionaire wealth.

- Scheduled Tribes have zero presence in billionaire wealth.

- OBC representation in billionaire wealth fell from 20% (2014) to 10% (2022), while upper caste share rose from 80% to 90%.

- This underscores how historically privileged groups accumulate more economic power, reinforcing social hierarchies.

  [This aligns with Bourdieu's concept of "social reproduction" and Pierre Bourdieu's notion of cultural capital intersecting with economic capital.

  Also, it resonates with M. N. Srinivas's concept of caste and hierarchy, showing how caste stratification persists and evolves in modern economic scenarios.]

Oxfam International (2023):

- Billionaires increased from 9 (2000) to 119 (2023).

- Extreme pay disparities: A minimum wage earner would need 941 years to match a top corporate executive's annual earnings.

Conclusion:

- The constitutional blueprint aimed at an egalitarian social order, reducing inequalities in income, wealth, and status.

- Neoliberal policies have reversed earlier gains, leading to the concentration of wealth and reinforcing social hierarchies.

- Current inequalities starkly contrast the original constitutional ideology, posing critical questions on the state's role and the realization of true social justice and equality in India.

Question

Discuss how economic inequality in India intersects with social hierarchies like caste, reinforcing existing social stratification.

Demystifying Ageing in India

A Comprehensive Review with Legal Implications

Ageing Issues and Responses in India edited by Mala Kapur Shankardass, Singapore: Springer, India: Rawat Books, `9,332 (hardcover), 2020

Vol. 59, Issue No. 46, 16 Nov, 2024, EPW

Chapter:

C-6 Population Dynamics

Introduction

- The book edited by Mala Kapur Shankardass highlights a "contemporary phase" in the study of ageing in India, marking a shift towards addressing emerging issues in geriatric care and policy.

Dimensions of Vulnerabilities

- **Health Vulnerabilities (Ch 2, Archana Kaushik):** Factors like poverty, dependency, gender discrimination, and high medical costs contribute to poor health among older adults. Social vulnerabilities arise from migration, widowhood, and resultant elder abuse.

Social Isolation and Living Arrangements

- **Elderly Living Alone (Ch 13, Jagriti Gangopadhyay):** Highlights the personal and social problems faced by older adults living alone.

Urbanization, Migration, and Distance Care

- **Urban Infrastructure and Parental Protection (Ch 6, Archana Kaushik):** Factors like urban migration, educational and career aspirations, and women's employment lead to distance care for elderly parents. Even economically stable older adults experience profound loneliness without regular family contact.

  [Georg Simmel's urban sociology: In modern cities, individuals are often more isolated despite proximity.

  Anthony Giddens' "disembedding" processes explain how traditional support structures weaken as people relocate and pursue modern careers.]

Gendered Aspects of Ageing

- **Ageing Women's Vulnerabilities (Ch 8, Pamela Singla):** Older women are particularly vulnerable due to sedentary lifestyles and weaker social positions.

- *[Feminist theory (Ann Oakley, Sylvia Walby) addresses how patriarchal structures persist, making elderly women doubly marginalized due to gender and age (double jeopardy).]*

- **Menopause and Health (Ch 12, Meena Yadav):** Biological and hormonal changes during menopause can lead to mood swings, depression, and metabolic disorders.

- **Elder Abuse and Gender (Ch 14, Asha Banu Soletti and P V Laavanya):** Qualitative, phenomenological studies reveal patterns of abuse within families, especially targeting older women, underscoring the need for more gender-sensitive policies.

  [Yogendra Singh - Parents are welcomed home for looking after the new-borns in urban nuclear families become unwanted guests when their service is no more needed.]

Role of Local Governance and Preventive Measures

- **Local Interventions (Ch 4, Biju Mathew):** Emphasizes the crucial role of local governments and self-help groups in creating supportive environments for the elderly.

- **Preventive Geriatrics (Ch 3, Anand Ambali):** Highlights the importance of preventative measures (physical, mental, emotional) in ensuring well-being in late life. Early interventions and preventive healthcare can delay the onset of chronic conditions.

Cultural and Therapeutic Interventions

- **Yoga and Music Therapy (Ch 15, Vidya Shenoy):** Suggests that yoga and music can positively impact patients with dementia, contributing to holistic geriatric care.

Policies, Programmes, and Legal Frameworks

- National Policies and Laws (Ch 5, K R Gangadharan; Ch 11, Sarita Kapur):

- Discuss the current national policies, welfare programmes, and legal measures for elderly care in India.

  - Emphasize the welfare state's responsibility: healthcare, human rights, retirement benefits, and social security provisions for older citizens.

    [T.H. Marshall's concept of citizenship rights (civil, political, social) is relevant here.]

    [Article 41 of the Constitution provides that "the State shall make effective provision of public assistance for the benefit of disadvantaged and weaker section including aged.]

Conclusion

- The book provides a sociological framework to understand the complexities of ageing: health, gender, social support, policy, and cultural dimensions.

- Policies need to be future-oriented, integrative, and sensitive to the evolving demographic realities, ensuring that the elderly are supported not just through welfare measures but also through inclusive, community-driven initiatives.

Question

Discuss the different types of vulnerabilities faced by elderly populations in India?

Proudhon's theory of mutualism: a critique of capitalism and authoritarianism

December 31, 2024, The Hindu

For representative purposes. | Photo Credit: iStockphoto

Chapter:

4 - Sociological Thinkers

Introduction

Core Idea

- Mutualism emphasizes voluntary cooperation, reciprocity, and fair exchange.

- It envisions a society where individuals and communities cooperatively own and manage resources (land, tools) for the benefit of all, free from both central authority and capitalist exploitation.

Property vs. Exploitation

- As per Mutualism, ownership of land or tools is not inherently exploitative; rather, it becomes problematic when it leads to profit-driven control over others.

- It contrasts with capitalism, where profit is often derived from labor exploitation.

Origins of the Theory

Pierre-Joseph Proudhon (19th Century)

- Coined the term "mutualism."

- Famous for "Property is theft!" in *What is Property?* (1840), but his stance was more nuanced than outright abolition of ownership.

Critique of Capitalism and Authoritarianism

- He developed mutualism to challenge both the inequalities of capitalism and the coercive power of the state.

- He proposed a reimagining of property so that it serves collective well-being and fairness rather than private accumulation.

Mutualism and Property

- Proudhon made distinction between "Property" and "Possession"

- "Property" (in the capitalist sense) can be used to exert control over others and enable exploitation.

- "Possession," by contrast, allows individuals to use resources without infringing on others' freedoms.

- So, mutualism emphasises a form of ownership based on usage rather than accumulation and profit.

- Mutualism opposes state-enforced property rights that perpetuate inequality; advocates reciprocity and local, voluntary governance over resources.

Mutualism and Anarchism

- Rejects state-enforced property rights, aligning with anarchist opposition to centralized authority.

- Some early anarchists saw mutualism as individualist (focus on personal freedom and right to possess land/tools).

- Others viewed it as more socialist (emphasis on cooperation, collective resource management).

- However, it shares principles with both individualist anarchism (prioritizing personal autonomy) and social anarchism (prioritizing collective management and social equality).

- Proudhon maintained that a mutualist society could be organized without a state, relying instead on cooperative principles and voluntary contracts.

The Collective and the Individual

- Mutualism promotes worker self-management, mutual credit systems, and voluntary cooperation.

- Aims to replace competition and exploitation with solidarity and reciprocity.

- Balances individual freedom with community well-being.

- Stefano Bellucci and Andreas Eckert (in *General Labour History of Africa: Workers, Employers and Governments, 20th-21st Centuries*) highlight traditional African societies that practiced communal land ownership and collective labor, reflecting mutualist principles.

- Positions mutualism as a form of libertarian socialism, seeking to avoid both capitalist and state-socialist hierarchies.

Critiques of Mutualism

Structural Limitations

- Critics argue that small-scale property ownership may not counteract large-scale structural inequalities of modern capitalism.

- Doubts about feasibility: building a purely voluntary, cooperative society on a large scale may be overly idealistic.

Marxist Critique

- Contends that mutualism does not fully dismantle the exploitative relations of production.

- Emphasizes that small producers are still vulnerable within a larger capitalist system; mutualism's stance on opposition to collectivism may overlook the reality of class struggle.

Conclusion

- Mutualism remains a radical alternative to both capitalist exploitation and authoritarian state power.

- While it has not resolved all issues of inequality, it offers valuable insights into decentralized, voluntary frameworks.

- Continues to inform discussions on libertarian socialism, cooperative ownership, and non-hierarchical social organization.

Question

Critically examine Proudhon's theory of mutualism as an alternative to both capitalism and authoritarianism. Discuss its relevance and limitations in addressing structural inequalities in contemporary society.

We need a reformation: Caste salience must fall for India's social capital to rise

15 Dec 2024, mint

Chapter:

5 - Stratification and Mobility

B-2 Caste System

C-7 Challenges of Social Transformation

Introduction

- In India, social capital is insufficient, leading to issues such as unmanageable urban congestion, capital-starved small enterprises, and distrust of institutional mechanisms to solve environmental problems (e.g., Delhi's smog).

- Social Capital here refers to networks, norms of reciprocity, and trust that facilitate cooperation within or among groups.

- *[Emile Durkheim's concept of "social solidarity" is also relevant: societies with high social cohesion have fewer collective action problems.]*

- The high prominence of caste in Indian society undermines broader social cohesion and reduces overall social capital.

- Trust often exists only within one's caste community, rather than across different groups.

Shortfall of Social Capital in India

Role of Caste

- Segregation into Jatis: Over 70 generations, Indians have been segregated into numerous endogamous communities (jatis) that forbid inter-marriage and inter-dining, leading to minimal cross-community trust.

  [B.R. Ambedkar's critique of caste calls it an "ascending scale of hatred and a descending scale of contempt," emphasizing its fragmentary effect on social unity.]

- David Reich's Finding: Genomic historian David Reich describes India as "an extremely large number of small populations," highlighting how fragmented the social landscape is.

Societal Impact

- Hyper-Diversity & Fragmentation: Religious and ethnic diversity also map onto the caste framework, creating multiple layers of division.

- B.R. Ambedkar's Warning: A society divided into castes cannot truly form a unified nation; the fragmentation obstructs nation-building and social solidarity.

- M.N. Srinivas: In his later work, noted the resurgence of horizontal caste identities through democratic politics.

Consequences of Low Social Capital

Public Goods & Infrastructure

- Lack of trust and community feeling discourages cooperative efforts.
- Cities face problems like traffic congestion because of an "every-man-for-himself" mindset, eroding generalized social trust and perpetuating a vicious cycle of public neglect.

Small Enterprises

- Struggle to expand due to lack of broad-based financial support or trust networks that transcend caste ties.
- [Max Weber's notion of "social closure" describes how certain groups limit access to resources or opportunities based on group membership—caste in this context.]

Environmental Challenges

- Tackling large-scale issues like pollution and smog requires collective action and trust in institutions; the social capital deficit makes such cooperation difficult.

Proposed Solutions & Reforms

Reducing Caste Salience

Inter-Caste Marriages:

- Seen as a powerful way to weaken caste boundaries.
- However, public policy cannot (and should not) force matrimonial choices; the state's minimal duty is to protect inter-caste couples from coercion, which it is currently failing to do.

Inter-Dining (Communal Dining):

- Considered an easier step compared to changing marriage practices.
- Hosting shared meals breaks age-old identity barriers.
- Examples: Common canteens in workplaces and educational institutions; common seating areas at street food stalls (similar to food courts); public feasts on national holidays to foster a collective civic identity.

Institutional & Technological Interventions

Digital Payments & OCEN (Open Credit Enablement Network):

- Reduces dependence on caste-based financial networks by offering broader access to credit and financial services.
- This can erode the "economic walls" of caste over time.

Universal Public Schooling & Early Exposure

- Universal public schooling from kindergarten onward, where children from different backgrounds learn together, can foster egalitarian attitudes.
- Psychological Studies (Marjorie Rhodes & Andrew Baron): Infants in diverse, multicultural settings develop familiarity and comfort with various racial and ethnic groups.
- Role of Parents & Adults: Modeling inclusive behavior and attitudes is vital, as children pick up cues from the adults around them.

Conclusion

- India must address its deep-rooted caste divisions to build the social capital necessary for national development, effective governance, and cohesive society. Overall, an intentional, multi-faceted effort—spanning social norms, institutions, and personal choices—is required to bring down caste salience and elevate India's social capital.

Question

Analyse the impact of caste salience on the development of social capital in India. How does the lack of social capital affect societal progress and collective action? Discuss the measures required to foster broader social cohesion and trust.

On the Futures of Caste

Chapter:

B-2 Caste System

Introduction

Why Caste Persists: Surinder S Jodhka deals with the question – why caste remains so entrenched in 21st-century India, where modern democracy and urban life are assumed to make such hierarchies irrelevant.

Core Arguments and Focus

Challenging Simplistic Frames: Jodhka critiques three common views:

1. That caste is intrinsically tied to Hinduism (thus ignoring non-Brahminic traditions).

2. That it is embedded in an unchanging "typical" Indian village, a myth popularized by British colonial rulers

3. That it is merely a traditional lifestyle destined to disappear with modernization.

Jodhka argues such frames overlook caste's presence in economic life and its diverse historical contexts (including non-Hindu communities).

India's Modernity and Democratic Deepening

Economic Growth

- Last 75 years: Rapid expansion of urban population, rising non-farm incomes, and the weakening of older rural structures (e.g., jajmani, semi-feudal).

- Jodhka notes significant transformations in rural life, with more Indians working outside villages.

Wider Participation in Democracy

- India's electoral framework, though institutionally fragile, has broadened political representation for marginalized castes and groups.

- Many historically oppressed communities (Dalits, "backward" groups) have stake in the electoral process.

Changing Caste: Multiple Sources of Transformation

Push from Below

- Social Movements: Even pre-independence, marginalized-caste movements challenged "traditional" hierarchies.

- Leaders like Ambedkar, Kanshi Ram: Mobilized Dalits politically, established fresh models of collective identity and pressure groups.
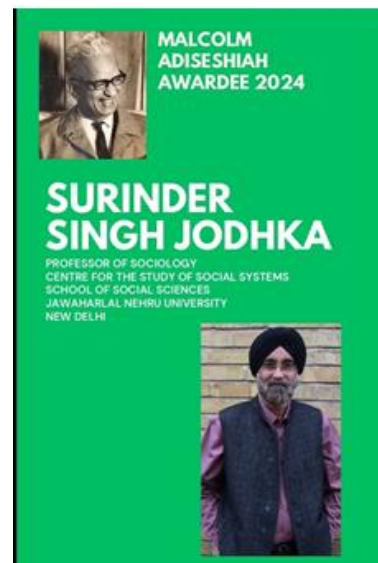
Initiatives from Above

- Constitutional Democracy: Recognizes every citizen as equal, providing language that delegitimizes hierarchy and humiliation.

- Reservations: Targeted policies for SCs, OBCs enable education and mobility, producing a "new" middle class advocating marginalized interests.

Colonial and Postcolonial Pressures

Colonial Census

- Integrated subcontinent under a unified governance structure.

- Caste classification reoriented local identities, sometimes solidifying previously fluid hierarchies.

Industrialization, Green Revolution

- Large-scale agrarian changes from the 1970s drastically altered local caste dynamics (Jodhka 1994, 2014).

- In his field studies (Haryana, Punjab), older caste occupations (e.g., barbers, scavengers) converted to wage or service-based work, diminishing paternalistic norms.

Empirical Evidence of Decline and Continuance

Decline

- Traditional dependency relations weakened, with Dalits often distancing themselves from stigmatized tasks.

- Shared spaces, like temples and gurdwaras, became arenas for new claim-making—challenging upper-caste control of village resources.

- Other scholars (Beteille 1996; Breman 1974; Thorner 1982) observed similar shifts across regions.

- Dalits no longer regard themselves as "impure," instead demanding dignity and improved material conditions (Deliege 1999; Gorringe 2017).

Persisting Identities

- Despite these changes, caste affiliation remains strong; most Indians marry within caste networks, and caste-based associations have grown in urban centers.

- The apparently innocuous moves of *samaj*–making among jatis and jati-clusters do not function merely as spaces for cultural comfort but also as exclusionary processes.

Two Major Claims on Caste's Future

Eternity Thesis

- A section of social scientists and many Dalit activists argue that real changes are superficial while the essence of Hindu/Indian life (rooted in concepts of purity/pollution) remains.

- Louis Dumont (1971) conceptualized the "Indian caste system" as structured by the pure-impure binary.

- Gopal Guru describes caste as "sanatan," changing only in appearance, not essence.

Modernisation or Disappearance Thesis

- Modernists see Indian democracy, economic development, and secular constitutions as undermining caste from within.

- Some suggest that caste would have vanished but for policies like reservation or vote-bank politics.

- Dipankar Gupta argues, castes survive as identities, but their underlying structure has nearly disappeared, a modernisation with an Indian flavour.

- M N Srinivas (1962) argued that modern technology, representational politics, and new communications foster "horizontal consolidation" of caste, changing its nature but not erasing it.

Alternative View: Materiality of Caste

Relational Hierarchy

- Jodhka argues that caste is not merely ritual or "traditional"; it is entrenched in economic power, social domination, and humiliation.

- Large empirical literature (Omvedt 1976; Pandian 2006; Jaffrelot 2003) shows caste as contested terrain, shaped by local mobilizations and conflicts.

- Caste and kinship-based communities actively try to preserve their "monopolies" even in the urban markets

- Thus, caste in the urban context does not work merely as identity; it also reproduces itself as an exclusionary structure—a site of what Tilly (1999) calls "opportunity hoardings

- Harriss-White (2003) finds caste networks shape labor recruitment, contracts, and resources in the informal economy.

- Dalit entrepreneurs or job-seekers often face prejudice and lack social capital, which entrenches inequalities.

- Some "dominant castes" (Jats, Patidars, Marathas) feel marginalized in new corporate economies, demanding OBC status to regain competitive advantage.

Comparative "Categorical Inequalities"

- Caste functions similarly to race, gender, and other structural inequalities.

- Non-Hindu contexts also exhibit caste-like exclusions, indicating its roots are broader than Brahminic Hinduism alone.

- For example, untouchable worker in the South Asian context or the Burakumin in the Japanese context.

Conclusion

Beyond Religious Framing

- Jodhka insists that seeing caste purely as a religious practice of Hindus is too narrow. Historical and regional evidence shows broader, multifaceted underpinnings.

Active Inequalities

- Caste thrives where inequality (economic, symbolic) is undismantled. Ritual condemnation alone will not suffice; real social change requires addressing power relations.

Comparative and Empirical Re-imagination

- Stresses the need to move away from "exceptionalist" or purely binary frames (eternity vs. disappearance).

- Urges grounded, data-based study of how caste morphs under modern conditions and how contested politics, economic shifts, and societal mobilizations shape its evolving forms.

Question

Examine how caste continues to influence social and economic structures in contemporary India, despite claims of modernization and social mobility.

Way Forward

Strengthen and Enforce Laws

- Robust implementation of the 1993 Prohibition Act and stringent accountability for employers who violate safety standards.

- Timely justice and fair compensation for victims' families to ensure legal deterrence.

Policy and Safety Measures

- Mandatory safety gear, regular monitoring of sewer systems, and strict guidelines for contractors and municipal bodies.

- Comprehensive training for sanitation workers on handling toxic materials and responding to emergencies.

Social and Economic Rehabilitation

- Provision of alternative livelihoods with skill development to break the caste-occupation nexus.

- Public awareness campaigns that challenge social stigma, supported by local governance bodies and civil society.

Changing Social Perceptions

- Bindeshwar Pathak, in *Road to Freedom: A Sociological Study on the Abolition of Scavenging in India*, underscores that liberation from manual scavenging is not merely about providing alternatives but also about altering perceptions and relationships within society.

Question

Analyze how caste-based inequalities perpetuate the practice of manual scavenging in India. Discuss the role of legal and social interventions in addressing this issue.

Myth of meritocracy, caste-based disparities in IT sector

December 25, 2024, The Hindu

'The labour market disparities in IT also affect other vulnerable sections, especially women' | Photo Credit: Getty Images

Chapter:

B-2 Caste System

C-3 Industrialization and Urbanisation in India

C-7 Challenges of Social Transformation

Introduction

Overview of India's IT Sector

- Rapidly growing, contributes over 7% to India's GDP.

- Internationally lauded model for software exports.

- Often viewed as a performance-driven, high-paying sector characterized by a supposedly *skill-based meritocracy*.

Questioning the Meritocracy Narrative

- Contrary to popular belief that social background is irrelevant, emerging data indicate significant caste-based disparities in the sector's hiring and wage practices.

- *[Pierre Bourdieu's concept of "field" and "habitus" applies: even in seemingly meritocratic spaces, social and cultural capital can advantage certain groups—often upper castes— while marginalizing others.]*

- *[Max Weber's concept of "life chances" highlights how caste affiliations can shape career opportunities in ways meritocratic ideals overlook.]*

- *[Michael Young's critique of 'meritocracy' also points out how structural inequalities undermine genuine equal opportunity.]*

Study & Data Sources

Researchers

- Conducted by Irfan Ahmad Sofi, Santosh Mehrotra, and Arun Kumar Bairwa.

Data Sets

- NSS 78th Round (2020-21) and NSS 68th Round (2011-12) from the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO).

- Nationally representative household surveys capturing employment, wages, and social characteristics.

Sample Size

- 29,289 individuals: 20,437 (from NSS 78th round) + 8,852 (from NSS 68th round).

- Variation due to differences in overall sampling between the two rounds.

Methodology

- *Employment probabilities* (likelihood of being employed in the IT sector) were calculated after controlling for factors like education, gender, and rural-urban background.

- Public-sector-dominated industries served as a benchmark for comparison.

Findings Related to Caste

Employment Probabilities

- Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST): Only 10% probability of being employed in IT (vs. 27% for upper castes).

- Even after controlling for education, gender, and region, lower castes remain at a disadvantage.

Trends Over Time

- 2011-12 (NSS 68th Round): SC/ST had 6% probability vs. 17% for upper castes (gap of 11%).

- 2020-21 (NSS 78th Round): SC/ST at 10% vs. 27% for upper castes (gap of 17%).

- Although *both* groups saw increased probabilities overall, the *deficit widened* for lower castes.

  [Robert Merton's concept of the "Matthew Effect" (in a sociological sense) can be invoked here: privileged groups accumulate advantages over time, amplifying disparities.]

Wage Disparities

- SC Workers: Wage differential of -24.9% vs. upper castes in IT.

- Other Backward Classes (OBCs): Wage differential of -22.5% vs. upper castes.

- These differentials persist *even after* accounting for similar levels of education and regular vs. temporary employment.

Labour Market Segmentation Theory

- Predicts a dualistic market in which marginalized groups face structural barriers to upward mobility.

- Lower castes remain in lower "segments," with limited returns on their educational and skill investments.

Findings Related to Gender Inequality

Wage Gaps

- Female workers in IT earn 26.2% less than male counterparts, regardless of caste.

Employment Probabilities

- Although female employment probabilities are relatively close to men's, the *wage gap* underscores persistent gender-based inequities.

- *[Joan Acker's theory of "gendered organizations" demonstrates how seemingly gender-neutral workplaces still sustain unequal practices and pay scales.]*

Broader Socio-Economic Implications

Exclusionary Outcomes

- A significant portion of the population is systematically excluded or under-rewarded.

- The industry sacrifices *economic efficiency* (by missing out on diverse talent) and *social justice* (by perpetuating inequalities).

Vicious Circle of Low Investment in Skills

- Marginalized groups may be discouraged from investing in higher education/skills due to limited returns and pervasive discrimination.

- *[Pierre Bourdieu's reproduction theory shows how existing inequalities deter marginalized groups from investing in skill acquisition, thus sustaining a cycle of disadvantage.]*

Importance of Diversity

Economic & Innovative Advantage

- International Labour Organization (2022 Report): Companies with higher diversity show greater productivity and innovation.

- Network for Business Sustainability (Canada): Each 1% increase in racial diversity in management yields an annual productivity gain of $729 to $1,590 per worker.

IT Sector's Shortcomings

- Lack of genuine inclusivity could stifle sustainable growth and innovation in India's IT industry.

Suggested Policy Steps

Transparency in Workforce Diversity

- Companies should disclose their *workforce diversity matrix* publicly (e.g., on their websites).

- Encourages accountability and drives employers to proactively address disparities without mandating fixed quotas.

Promote Lower-Caste Entrepreneurship

- Provide *greater incentives and training* for marginalized communities to enter high-productivity sectors.

- Stimulates inclusive economic participation and breaks the cycle of underrepresentation.

- *[Amartya Sen's capability approach underlines enhancing opportunities so that individuals from marginalized backgrounds can choose different career paths without structural constraints.]*

Address Skill Gaps

- Tailored programs to bolster education and skills among marginalized groups.

- Could include targeted scholarships, mentorship, or skill-development initiatives.

Question

Critically analyze how social inequalities, such as caste and gender, challenge the notion of meritocracy in contemporary professional sectors.

The Pandemic and the Need for a Multi-sectoral Approach

Chapter:

C-3 Industrialization and Urbanisation in India

C-4 Politics and Society

C-7 Challenges of Social Transformation

Introduction

- The Book reviews the wide-ranging economic and social effects of COVID-19.

- This volume traces pandemic consequences across politics, society, ecology, and economy in India and beyond.

Politics and Society

Political Economy and Labour Market Changes

- Technological interventions and increased mechanisation reshaped labour markets globally.

- These shifts prompted sociopolitical transformations, reinforcing domestic welfare schemes yet foregrounding nation-first approaches.

Re-Emergence of Populism

- Initially, a rise in populist leadership and centralised power was noted, but public trust soon demanded government accountability.

- Suggests a tension between populism and good governance, with citizens placing emphasis on transparency.

Lockdown and Administrative Strategies

- India's lockdown was considered a "severe restriction"; a more decentralised approach could have better protected vulnerable groups (particularly the elderly).

- Kerala and Karnataka stood out for more localised decision-making.

"Shadow Pandemic" of Domestic Violence

- Reported across many countries (Albania, Argentina, Australia, Canada, etc.), with Peru and Panama enforcing gender-based lockdowns.

- Indicates the need for stronger measures to address domestic violence during crises.

Communal Conflicts and Infection Spread

- The book notes a correlation suggesting riot-prone areas might have had lower severity of COVID-19.
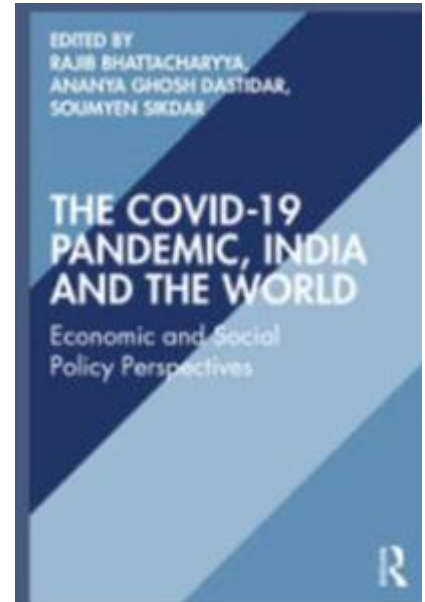
Economy and Ecology

Informal Economy and Household Vulnerability

- India's large informal sector faced heightened risks; households reliant on daily wages were hit hardest.

- Government policies did not adequately compensate for lost income or consumption needs.

Health Sector

- Health expenditure proved crucial: countries like Bangladesh outspent India, underscoring how health infrastructure is vital in crises.

- Higher government investment needed to improve health infrastructure—a clear lesson from COVID-19.

- Findings indicate gender disparities—especially for widowed/elderly women with limited healthcare spending.

Migrants

- Positive link found between outmigration and higher infection rates, exposing policy failures regarding migrant workers.

- Urgent need for bottom-up planning to include migrant stakeholders in crisis policies.

- Post-lockdown labour shortages led to excessive working hours for remaining workers, intensifying health risks and economic precarity.

Education Crisis

- Digital divide, especially in rural areas, hampered online teaching and learning.

- Many higher education institutions already lacked adequate faculty and resources; pandemic conditions exacerbated these shortfalls.

Environmental Implications

- Temporary improvements in air quality and reduced plastic usage occurred, yet deeper sustainability measures remain necessary.

- Pandemic highlights urgent climate-change concerns that require integrated economic and environmental policies.

Conclusion

COVID-19's impact on health, economy, and politics is multi-layered, requiring sector-specific and holistic analyses.

- Income subsidies for vulnerable groups could mitigate the pandemic's economic fallout.

- Income distribution (universal basic income, cash transfers) can sustain demand and bolster healthcare.

Question

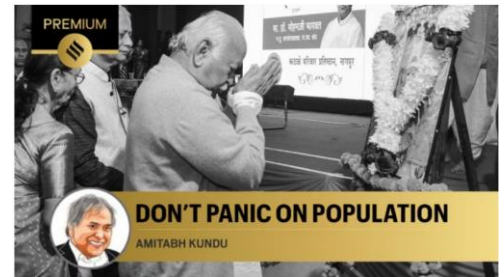Discuss the socio-economic and political challenges exposed by the COVID-19 pandemic in India.

Mohan Bhagwat's three-child plan: Why concern about India's falling fertility rate is misplaced

Dec 8, 2024, Indian Express

Chapter:

C-6 Population Dynamics

Introduction

- India's total fertility rate (TFR) has dropped significantly, from over five births per woman in 1965 to 2.01 in 2022, below the replacement rate of 2.1.

  [Demographic Transition Theory explains how industrialization and social development generally lower birth rates over time.]

- A Lancet study forecasts a further decline, with India's TFR potentially falling to 1.29 by 2050.

- Bhagwat's three-child proposal is rooted in fears about declining fertility, echoing problems seen in Japan, China, and other countries.

  [Modernization Theory indicates that as societies advance, fertility often declines due to changing lifestyles, greater women's empowerment, and higher costs of child-rearing.]

- India is already on track to reach 1.6 billion people, so encouraging bigger families risks overpopulation in poorer states like Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, and Jharkhand.

  [Robert Merton's "unintended consequences" may apply here: well-intentioned calls for higher fertility could exacerbate poverty and resource constraints in vulnerable regions.]

Regional Representation

- Bhagwat also echoed the southern states worry about losing political clout and financial allocations if they have lower population growth.

- States like Andhra Pradesh have scrapped the two-child limit for local election candidates and are exploring incentives for larger families. Telangana is considering similar moves.

- States such as Tamil Nadu and Kerala, which have successfully stabilized population growth, fear adverse impacts on Finance Commission grants and parliamentary representation.

- Rather than boosting birth rates, they can demand seat-allocation and funding formulas that value efficiency or performance, not just population size.

Labour and Mobility

- Concerns about future labor shortages are exaggerated; many regions still have fertility at or above replacement levels.

- Historical precedent shows that labor gaps can be filled through migration and skill-building programs, not necessarily by higher birth rates.

[Everett Lee's Migration Theory highlights how labor shortages often spur in-migration from regions with surplus labor, balancing demographic disparities.]

Women's Participation

- Female Labour Force Participation is at 37%, this rate may decline further as caregiving responsibilities increase

  [Arlie Hochschild's "Second Shift" concept suggests that without social support or policy interventions, women bear disproportionate domestic burdens, affecting their workforce participation.]

- The current demographic transition can help more women enter the workforce.

- With better skills and modern manufacturing or service-sector growth, workers can shift from low-productivity roles to higher-value jobs.

Ageing and Elderly Care

- Some states face an ageing population, but overall elder dependency rates are below global averages.

- Policy attention should focus on improved healthcare, partial or flexible employment options for older adults, and stronger social security measures.

  [T.H. Marshall's concept of social citizenship implies that the state has a responsibility to ensure dignity and support for the ageing population]

Conclusion

- Calls for higher fertility often stem from political or cultural fears rather than urgent demographic needs.

- A balanced approach—facilitating labor mobility, enhancing skills, boosting women's participation, and providing robust elder support—will serve India better than simply advocating larger families.

Question

Discuss the implications of declining fertility rates in India. Critically analyse the consequences of state-driven initiatives promoting higher fertility rates.

The digital frontier of inequality

December 16, 2024, The Hindu

Chapter:

C-7 Challenges of Social Transformation

India's digital transformation has unlocked immense opportunities for empowerment. Representational file image. | Photo Credit: Reuters

Introduction

- Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana expanded account coverage four-fold since 2015; 55.6% of these are women's accounts.

- Jan Dhan-Aadhaar-mobile linkages enable direct benefit transfers and cashless transactions, especially in rural settings.

- The narrowing digital gender divide is progress, but increased connectivity exposes women to newer forms of online harassment.

- *[Feminist scholars like Ann Oakley highlight how technological advancements do not automatically dismantle patriarchy]*

- Tech-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV) is on the rise, threatening women's digital safety and overall empowerment.

- The Ministry of Women and Child Development launched the campaign "Ab Koi Bahana Nahi" in alignment with UN Women's global '16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence'.

Understanding Tech-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence (TFGBV)

Forms of TFGBV

- Cyberstalking, online trolling, non-consensual sharing of intimate images, impersonation through fake profiles, grooming, and voyeurism.

- Often forces women to retreat from digital platforms and social media.

- *[Michel Foucault's notion of power and surveillance applies: digital spaces can become sites of panoptic control, deterring women's free participation.]*

Prevalence

- Urban Areas: Women journalists, politicians, and other public-facing roles face rampant online abuse.

- Rural India: According to a 2021 Nielsen report, rural areas have 20% more Internet users than urban areas, yet women's digital literacy and awareness of rights remain low.

Impact on Women's Participation

- Societal norms can restrict online engagement; many are unaware of reporting mechanisms or legal protections available.

Steps Taken to Combat TFGBV

Legal Frameworks

- Information Technology Act, 2000: Addresses certain forms of cybercrime and digital violations.

- Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2024: Includes provisions against digital offenses and related gender-based violence.

Reporting Mechanisms and Awareness

- National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal: Enables anonymous reporting of cybercrimes.

- Information Security Education and Awareness Programme (government-led): Increases digital safety awareness among the public.

Women-Specific Initiatives

- Digital Shakti (by the National Commission for Women): Trains women in secure online navigation.

- Global Digital Compact (UN Summit of the Future, 2023): India is a signatory, reinforcing commitments to counter and eliminate tech-facilitated violence.

Progress and Gaps

- These measures mark significant headway but uneven enforcement, lack of awareness, and continuously evolving digital threats remain challenges.

- *[Ulrich Beck's "risk society" concept highlights how new technologies create evolving hazards that require adaptive legal and social responses.]*

Way Forward

Enhancing Legal and Policy Measures

- Stricter laws and swifter justice for online violence perpetrators.

- Accountability of social media platforms for abusive content, ensuring user protection and transparent reporting protocols.

Bolstering Digital Literacy

- Expanded digital education in rural areas, targeting women and girls.

- Integrating safe online practices into school curricula and community workshops (for both women and men) to create an informed, vigilant community.

- *[Paulo Freire's "conscientization" approach: empowering individuals through critical education so they can recognize and address oppressive structures online and offline.]*

Challenging Societal Norms

- Nationwide campaigns that engage men and boys as allies in creating respectful digital environments.

- Cultural shift towards viewing women's safety online as a shared responsibility, not an individual burden.

Collaboration with Tech Industry

- Platforms to enhance safety features (e.g., privacy controls, user-friendly reporting tools).

- AI-based detection of harmful or abusive content, with human oversight to ensure fairness and accuracy.

Robust Support Systems for Survivors

- Accessible helplines (e.g., TechSakhi) offering counselling, legal aid, and rehabilitation services.

- Increasing the capacity of existing helplines and referral mechanisms to ensure timely, effective assistance to survivors.

Question

Discuss how digital inequality intersects with gender in India. Highlight the challenges posed by tech-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV) and suggest measures to address these issues.