

UPSC Sociology Optional

Cheat Sheets

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Inequality in India: Economic, Social and Emerging Dimensions

1. Conceptualising Inequality

- Inequality refers to unequal distribution of income, wealth, opportunities, dignity, and power.
- **Marx** viewed inequality as rooted in class conflict; **Weber** emphasized class, status, and power.
- **T.H. Marshall** highlighted the need for social citizenship—ensuring welfare and economic rights beyond legal equality.

2. World Inequality Report 2026:

- In India, **income inequality** remains very high, with the **top 10% earning 58% of national income** while the **bottom 50% receive only 15%**.
- **Wealth inequality** is even sharper, as the **richest 10% hold around 65% of total wealth** and the **top 1% alone hold nearly 40%**.
- This shows that inequality is not only about income but also about assets, creating deeper long-term stratification across generations.
- WIR highlights a structural red flag: the **hollowing out of India's middle class**.
- The middle 40% receives only about 30% of total income, much below the 40–45% seen in more equal economies. This suggests that India's growth is not creating a broad-based consumer class, but a dual economy of a small prosperous elite and a large struggling majority.
- Globally too, wealth is highly concentrated, with the top 10% owning around 75% of wealth while the bottom 50% hold only about 2%.
- WIR projects that about **1 percent of Global GDP flows from poorer countries to richer countries** annually through net foreign income flow and returns on external assets.

3. Other Reports:

- By 2022–23, India's top 1% held 22.6% of national income and 40.1% of wealth, as reported in **Lucas Chancel and Thomas Piketty's** paper "*Indian Income Inequality, 1922–2015: From British Raj to Billionaire Raj?*" and its subsequent updates.
- According to Piketty and Chancel, income inequality surged post-reforms:
 - Top 1% income share rose from 6% (1980s) to 22.6% (2022–23).
 - Wealth share of top 1% reached 40.1%.
- India's inequality levels now surpass even British colonial-era levels—marking the rise of a "Billionaire Raj" (Piketty and Chancel).
- **Oxfam International reports** that India's billionaires rose from 9 in 2000 to 119 in 2023, and a minimum wage worker would take 941 years to earn what a top corporate executive makes in one year.

- India lifted 171 million people out of extreme poverty between 2011-12 and 2022-23, reducing the extreme poverty rate from 16.2% to 2.3%, according to the **World Bank's 'Poverty & Equity Brief,' April 2025.**

4. Caste-Class Nexus

- Inequality in India is not just economic – it is deeply shaped by caste.
- **World Inequality Lab (2024):** 90% of billionaire wealth is held by upper castes; SC/ST presence is negligible. (Report Name - Towards Tax Justice and Wealth Redistribution in India).
- **The Telangana Caste Survey** challenges the **myth of “poverty is the only caste,”** as poor General Caste children earning below ₹1 lakh annually had **eight times more access to private education** than equally poor SC and ST children.
- This reflects Bourdieu's concept of **social and cultural capital** – upper castes pass privilege through education, networks, and norms.
- **M.N. Srinivas's** view on caste hierarchy remains relevant as caste and class reinforce each other.
- **Max Weber's** idea of “status groups”, “social closure” explains how caste maintains prestige and power even across generations.

5. Gendered Inequality

- Indian women earn only 64% of what men earn over a lifetime (WTW's **Gender Wealth Inequality Index, 2022**).
- **Nikore Associates:** "Missing working women" is a serious concern – women exit the workforce over the last five decades despite rising household incomes and narrowing gender gaps in education
- Gender gaps persist in wages, workforce participation, asset ownership, and entrepreneurial support.
- Gender inequality is compounded by caste and class – creating a **triple disadvantage** for Dalit and Adivasi women.

6. Digital Inequality

- **Digital inequality** refers to disparities in access, use, and impact of digital technologies across different sections of society. Unlike mere access (digital divide), it includes issues of digital literacy, affordability, content relevance, and meaningful use.
- **Digital Capital** refers to the accumulation of digital skills and technology, aiding social mobility. It includes embodied digital capital (skills, motivation, experience) and objectified digital capital (devices and tech access linked to economic status).
- The **Global Education Monitoring report (UNESCO 2023)** points out how the unequal distribution of digital resources along region, ethnicity, caste, and race has been one of the glaring aspects of this digital expansion.

- According to **Internet in India 2024 report**, internet penetration is 75% in urban India but only 49% in rural India.
- **NFHS-5** shows that only 33% of rural women have ever used the internet, compared to 57% of rural men.
- **NSO MIS 78th and 79th rounds** show high absence of ICT skills among marginalised groups: STs 89.49%, SCs 86.62%, OBCs 81.73%, compared to 73.71% among Others.
- Access to a computer with internet is only 6.8% among the poorest 20%, compared to 66.3% among the richest 20%.
- According to **ASER 2024** Digital learning is higher in Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Haryana, and Sikkim due to better infrastructure, while states like Meghalaya, Mizoram, Chhattisgarh, and West Bengal lag, needing region-specific interventions.
- **Scholars Jan Van Dijk and K Hacker** have rightly predicted that “preventing structural inequalities in the digital domain would be the fundamental task of the future society”.

7. Climate Inequality

- **World Inequality Report 2026** highlighted the climate crisis stating that the poorest half of the global population accounts for only 3 per cent of carbon emissions associated with private capital ownership, while the top 10 per cent account for 77 per cent of emissions.
- The wealthiest 1 per cent account for 41 per cent of private capital ownership emissions, almost double the amount of the entire bottom 90 per cent, the report stated.
- **Mukul Sharma** in his book *Dalit Ecologies: Caste and Environmental Justice*, argues that environmental justice in India needs plural definitions that explicitly include caste, not only class/poverty or generic “vulnerability.”
- **Shishir Priyadarshi** in a recent event “*Climate Futures Through a Gender Lens*” stated that climate justice and gender justice are inseparable. Sustainable policies must be equitable, inclusive, and people-centric, ensuring that social justice is embedded in climate action.

7. Global and Comparative Perspective

- India ranks among the highest globally in income and wealth inequality.
 - Top 1% income share: 22.6% (2022–23), higher than US and comparable to countries like Peru and Yemen. (World Inequality Lab’s 2024 “Billionaire Raj” Report)
- Nordic countries and Japan maintain low inequality through progressive taxation and decentralised development.

8. Measures and Policy Interventions

- **Legal/Constitutional:** The Constitution envisions a just social order through Articles 38(2), 39(b), and 39(c), aimed at reducing inequality and preventing wealth concentration.
[Recent judicial trend: The *Property Owners Association v State of Maharashtra* (2024) ruling limited the state's power under Article 39(b); the court held that the government cannot simply acquire and redistribute all privately owned property under this provision, signaling a narrower interpretation of the state's redistributive authority.]
- **Taxation:** As per World Inequality Report 2026 elites pay proportionally less than most of the households that earn much lower incomes.

This regressive pattern deprives states of resources for essential investments in education, healthcare, and climate action. Oxfam report (Survival of the Richest: The India Story, 2023) estimates that a 5% global wealth tax on billionaires could raise \$1.7 trillion annually – enough to lift 2 billion people out of poverty. In India, a 3% wealth tax on billionaires could fund the National Health Mission for five years.

- **Public Investment/Redistribution:** The World Inequality Report 2026 suggests that inequality can be reduced through strong public investment in schools, healthcare, childcare and nutrition, along with redistributive measures like cash transfers, pensions, unemployment benefits and targeted support for vulnerable households.
- **Regional Equity:** Decentralizing investments across regions, as seen in Japan, helps reduce regional inequality by ensuring balanced infrastructure and human capital development.
- **Gender Focus:** Promoting rural women's entrepreneurship, as in Bangladesh, aids in wealth creation and narrowing gender wealth gaps through targeted financial and training support.
- **Regulatory Institutions:** Strengthening regulatory frameworks, like the UK's Ofcom and CMA, helps limit monopolistic profits and reduce wealth concentration.

9. Sociological Insights

- **Relative Deprivation:** High inequality can intensify perceptions of unfairness even when absolute incomes rise, because reference groups shift upward and the "distance" to aspirational standards grows.
- **C. Wright Mills:** Power elite in India – corporate, bureaucratic, and political – concentrate decision-making and benefits.
- **Bourdieu:** Cultural capital helps elites reproduce privilege – seen in legacy admissions, English fluency, and elite schooling.
- **Life chances (Max Weber):** Inequality is about unequal chances to improve one's position, not just unequal present income.
- **Social closure (Max Weber):** Privileged groups retain advantages by restricting access to opportunities; useful for explaining weak upward mobility of SCs and other disadvantaged groups.
- **Opportunity Hoarding (Charles Tilly):** Privileged groups monopolise opportunities and prevent wider social mobility.
- **Crenshaw:** Intersectionality reveals how caste, class, and gender combine to deepen disadvantage.
- **Amartya Sen:** Development must enhance people's capabilities, not just increase income.
- **P B Mehta:** Equality is not the enemy of growth - oligarchy is.
- **Brad DeLong's "An Economic History of Twentieth Century"** shows, high inequality is far more likely to impede growth than sustain it.

9. Conclusion

- India's constitutional promise of social, economic, and political justice remains unfulfilled in practice.
- Post-reform growth has not translated into inclusive development—inequality is now systemic and intergenerational.
- Sociology reveals that inequality is not natural but constructed—and can be reversed through ethical, inclusive policymaking.
- A renewed commitment to egalitarianism, informed by the Constitution and sociological insights, is essential for democratic renewal.



Sleepy Classes IAS
Awakening Toppers

Care Work, Affection Economy & Intersectionality

1. Introduction

- In **Shishu Pal @ Shish Ram v. Surjeet**, the Supreme Court recognised the unpaid domestic and care work of homemakers while calculating motor accident compensation.
- The Court fixed **₹30,000 per month** as the notional income of a homemaker, with 10% upward revision every three years.
- It observed that homemakers are “**nation builders**” and their work cannot be treated as economically insignificant.
- Care work in general refers to the labour involved in looking after children, the elderly, the sick, persons with disabilities, households and communities.
- It includes both:
 - visible work such as cooking, cleaning, feeding, nursing and household management;
 - invisible work such as emotional support, supervision, companionship, planning and maintaining relationships.
- Sociologically, care work is important because it sustains social reproduction – the daily and generational reproduction of families, workers and society.
- However, care work is often treated as women’s natural duty rather than as socially and economically valuable labour.
- In India, care work is not only gendered but also caste-structured, as Dalit, Adivasi and lower-caste women often perform the most devalued forms of care labour.
- Therefore, care work must be studied through the intersection of gender, caste, class, family, economy and social power.

2. Meaning and Nature of Care Work

- Care work is not merely physical labour; it is also emotional, relational and moral labour.
- **Annemarie Mol**, in *The Logic of Care*, describes care as “persistent tinkering,” meaning a continuous process of adjusting and responding to changing needs.
- **Nancy Folbre**, in *The Invisible Heart*, argues that care work has economic value but remains unpaid, undervalued and disproportionately performed by women.
- **Eva Feder Kittay**, in *Love’s Labor*, argues that care reflects human interdependence and must be recognised as a collective social responsibility.
- Care work shows that human beings are not fully independent individuals; they depend on networks of care at different stages of life.

3. Care Work and the Affection Economy

- The affection economy refers to a system where value and power are created through trust, belonging, kinship, care, community and emotional bonds.
- Historically, different eras had different sources of power:
 - **Agrarian society** → fertile land and manual labour

- **Industrial society** → machines, factories, minerals and organised labour
- **Knowledge / Information society** → data, skills, innovation and attention
- **Affection economy / Care economy** → trust, emotional labour, belonging, care and social networks
- In this sense, care has moved beyond the private household and has become a social, political and economic resource.
- States, corporations and leaders increasingly try to build affection capital through empathy, engagement, trust and community-building.
- For example, India's **use of "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" in diplomacy** reflects the use of kinship language to build solidarity and soft power.
- Thus, care is not only a family responsibility; it is also linked to community formation, social trust and political legitimacy.

4. Theoretical Foundations

- **Karl Marx's historical materialism** helps us understand how the material base of society shapes power and social relations. Care work, though often unpaid, supports the reproduction of labour power.
- **Gary Becker's idea of human capital** shows that health, education, nutrition and emotional support contribute to productivity. Care work plays a key role in building human capital.
- **Pierre Bourdieu's concept of social capital** explains how relationships, trust and networks become resources. Care creates and sustains such relational capital.
- **Ferdinand Tonnies'** distinction between **Gemeinschaft** and **Gesellschaft** helps explain the renewed importance of community in an individualised and impersonal modern society.
- **Robert Putnam, in *Bowling Alone***, argued that declining civic associations weaken social capital and produce isolation.
- **Durkheim's idea of anomie** is relevant because weakening community bonds can produce isolation, normlessness and insecurity.
- **Manuel Castells' idea of network society** helps explain how care, belonging and social relations are now increasingly organised through digital and networked forms.

5. Why Care Work Has Become Sociologically Important Today

- **Individualisation** has weakened traditional community bonds and increased dependence on nuclear families and market-based care.
- **Covid-19 exposed the importance of care work**, especially in health, domestic life, elderly care and community support.
- **Ageing populations** have increased the demand for elderly care, long-term care and palliative care.
- **Women's entry into paid work** has created a "**care deficit**," where families need care but traditional unpaid care arrangements are weakening.
- **Migration and urbanisation** have weakened extended kinship networks, making care more fragmented and difficult.
- **Digital platforms** have created new forms of care work, such as platform-based domestic work, nursing, childcare and elderly care services.

- Hence, care work has become central to debates on family, labour, gender justice, welfare and social policy.

6. Care Work as Gendered Labour

- Care work is deeply gendered because women are expected to perform childcare, eldercare, cooking, cleaning and emotional support as part of their natural role.
- This makes care invisible because it is treated as love, sacrifice or duty rather than as labour.
- **Marilyn Waring and Gloria Steinem** criticised mainstream economic data for excluding unpaid care work.
- **Diane Elson** argued that labour markets are shaped not only by economics but also by social norms and power relations.
- **Arlie Hochschild's** idea of emotional labour is useful because care involves patience, comfort, affection, listening and emotional management.
- Women therefore perform both physical care and emotional care, but both remain undervalued.
- **This creates a paradox:** care work is essential for society, but caregivers receive low recognition, low wages and low social status.

7. Caste and Care Work in India

- In India, care work cannot be understood only as a gender issue; it must also be understood through caste.
- Upper-caste motherhood is often associated with purity, sacrifice, honour and respectability.
- **Sarah Lamb** shows that motherhood and ageing in India are shaped by caste-based ideas of dignity, purity and family honour.
- Dalit motherhood is often devalued and linked with labour, servitude, impurity and bodily work.
- Dalit and lower-caste women often perform:
 - unpaid care within their own households;
 - low-paid domestic and care work in upper-caste households;
 - caste-based labour that is not fully recognised either as work or as care.
 - Care given to upper-caste households may come at the cost of care within their own families.
- This shows that care work is shaped by intersectionality, where caste, gender and class operate together.

8. Important Examples

- **Bag and Podh's 2024 study** from western Odisha shows that upper-caste families may place sick children in the care of Dalit women due to caste-based beliefs around impurity and death.

- This reflects how care can be shaped by ritual hierarchy, impurity and servitude.
- **Rupa Viswanath's** work on colonial Madras shows how caste servitude and ritual degradation pushed untouchable communities into dependent labour relations.
- **Gita Ramaswamy** argues that manual scavenging by Dalit women should not be seen merely as labour exploitation but as a caste atrocity.
- These examples show that care work in India is not simply about affection or service; it is also structured by caste power.

9. Sociological Analysis

- **Gendered division of labour:** Women bear disproportionate care responsibilities, but this burden varies across caste and class.
- **Intersectionality:** Care work is shaped by the combined effect of caste, gender, class and social location.
- **Triple oppression:** Dalit women experience overlapping burdens of caste, gender and class in care work.
- **Social reproduction:** Care work sustains households, labour power and everyday life, yet remains undervalued.
- **Invisible labour:** Essential household and emotional labour is often not recognised as productive work.
- **Emotional labour:** Care includes affection, patience, comfort, listening and emotional management.
- **Time poverty:** Lower-caste and poor women face severe pressure because they combine paid work, unpaid care and caste-based obligations.
- **Informalisation of care:** Much care work takes place in poorly paid, informal and unprotected settings.
- **Epistemic injustice:** Dominant surveys and policy frameworks often fail to represent the lived realities of marginalised women.

13. Way Forward

- Recognise care work as valuable social and economic labour.
- Improve time-use surveys to capture multitasking, emotional labour and caste-based care obligations.
- Generate gender-disaggregated and caste-disaggregated data on care work.
- Provide better wages, dignity and social security to domestic workers, ASHA workers, Anganwadi workers, nurses and informal caregivers.
- Invest in childcare, elderly care, palliative care, disability care, healthcare and nutrition.
- Treat care as a collective social responsibility rather than merely a private family duty.
- Use ethnographic and participatory methods to understand the lived realities of marginalised care workers.
- Build an intersectional care policy that recognises caste, gender and class together.

14. Conclusion

- Care work is the invisible foundation of social life.
- It sustains families, communities, labour markets and the emotional fabric of society.
- Therefore, care work must be recognised not merely as private duty, but as a social, economic and ethical responsibility.
- A sociological understanding of care must move beyond gender alone and recognise the caste-structured realities of labour, dignity and inequality.



Sleepy Classes IAS
Awakening Toppers

Caste Census & Evidence-Based Social Justice

This provides a highly objective, rigorously structured analysis of the Caste Census debate, tailored specifically for UPSC Sociology revision for mains 2026. It integrates institutional data, theoretical debates, and contemporary case studies to ensure maximum analytical depth.

1. Introduction: The Sociological Imperative

The Caste Census involves enumerating the population based on caste identities beyond the Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) to comprehensively map social stratification.

Historical Gap: Post-independence Indian censuses have recorded SC and ST data but excluded other caste groups since 1951, making 1931 the last comprehensive caste-based census.

Structural Relevance: Caste remains the primary axis dictating socio-economic mobility, educational access, employment, and political representation.

Policy Deficit: The lack of updated data severely limits the effectiveness of policy targeting and broader social justice initiatives.



Statistics on caste in India

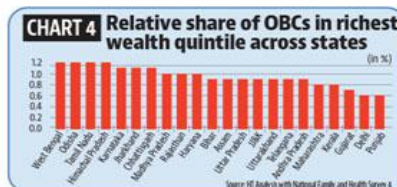
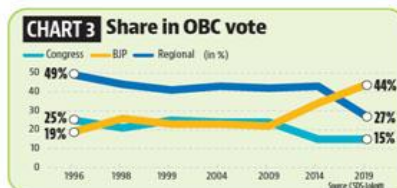
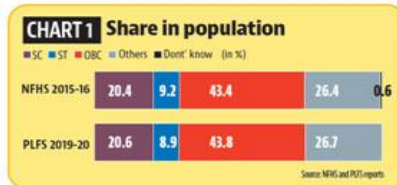


CHART 2 Mandal Commission's estimations on India's caste-wise population

Category	Percentage
SC & ST	
Scheduled Caste	15.05%
Scheduled Tribe	7.51%
Non-Hindu Communities, Religious Groups etc.	
Muslims (other than STs)	11.19%
Christians (other than STs)	2.16%
Sikhs (other than SCs & STs)	1.67%
Buddhists (other than STs)	0.67%
Jains	0.47%
Forward Hindu Castes and Communities	
Brahmins (including Bhumi-hars)	5.52%
Rajputs	3.9%
Marathas	2.21%
Jats	1%
Vaishyas-Bania etc.	1.88%
Kayasthas	1.07%
Other forward Hindu caste groups	2%
Backward Hindu Castes and Communities	
Remaining Hindu caste groups which come in the category of "Other Backward Classes"	43.7%
Backward non-Hindu Castes and Communities	
52% of religious groups under section B may also be treated as OBCs	8.4%
The approximate derived population of other backward classes including non-Hindu Communities	52%

Source: Report of the Backward Classes Commission, 1980

2. Theoretical Foundations & Thinkers

Utilize these sociological perspectives to elevate the quality of your arguments regarding state enumeration and identity.

Thinker	Key Argument / Concept	Application in Answers
B.R. Ambedkar	Supported Herbert Risley's classification, arguing that the strict hierarchical gradations of Indian society necessitated systematic data collection.	Use to counter arguments that counting caste creates casteism; data is needed to dismantle hierarchy.
Herbert Risley	Argued that enumeration does not perpetuate caste as long as caste remains a distinguishing feature of official and social identity.	Use when discussing the colonial roots and continuity of enumeration.
Satish Deshpande	A caste census ends the "statistical anonymity" of Upper castes. It reveals how they disproportionately benefited from state-led development and market growth.	Use to demonstrate how caste-blind policies often reproduce and mask caste inequality.
Anupama Rao	"Administrative Visibility"	Explain how enumeration turns lived suffering into actionable data, though it risks depoliticizing the issue into mere numbers.
Ram B. Bhagat	Colonial vs. Postcolonial Categorization.	Show how the state actively reorganizes identities: colonial censuses used fine differentiations, whereas postcolonial states pushed homogenized categories.
Trina Vithayathil	"Bureaucratic Deflection".	Argue that omitting caste data is a technocratic deflection to resist redistribution and protect upper-caste power, disguised as administrative burden.

3. Historical Trajectory & Institutional Evasions

Understanding the timeline is crucial for tracing state responses to caste enumeration.

- **Colonial to Post-Colonial Shift:** Caste was enumerated from 1871 to 1931 [cite: 87]. Post-1951, the state stopped counting Other Backward Classes (OBCs) under the justification of promoting castelessness .
- **SECC 2011 Failure:** The Socio-Economic and Caste Census of 2011 lacked standardization, and the data was ultimately withheld .
- **Marginalized Exclusions:**
 - There are 75 Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) whose data is hidden within broader ST categories, prompting demands for separate enumeration in 2027.
 - Similarly, Denotified and Nomadic Tribes (DNTs) lack a separate column; the government and Supreme Court confirmed that only SC, ST, and general data will be collected in 2027.

4. Contemporary Case Studies

Use these recent state surveys to demonstrate empirical realities of backwardness and challenge mainstream assumptions.

State Survey	Key Findings & Sociological Impact
Bihar (2023)	OBCs and EBCs constitute over 63% of the population, while the General category is just over 15.5%. This directly sparked demands to breach the 27% reservation cap
Karnataka (2025)	Dominant castes like Lingayats (11.09%) and Vokkaligas (10.31%) are demographically small, while OBCs form 70%. This prompted recommendations to raise quotas to 73.5%, bypassing the 50% Indra Sawhney cap. Data also highlighted extreme marginalization within OBCs Note: M.N. Srinivas noted Vokkaligas as dominant, but sub-castes span both forward and backward categories

State Survey	Key Findings & Sociological Impact
Telangana (2024)	Evaluated using a Composite Backwardness Index (42 parameters), proving backwardness is multidimensional. SCs/STs are 3x and BCs 2.7x more backward than General Castes. Debunked the myth that "poverty is the only caste" by showing poor General children had 8x more access to private education than equally poor SC/ST children [cite: 108, 109]. Proved that urbanization does not erase caste gaps and exposed severe labor inequalities

5. Core Sociological Concerns & Dilemmas

- **Substantialisation of Caste:** Surinder S. Jodhka warns that a census might fuel identity politics rather than address socio-economic deficits. This aligns with Louis Dumont's concept where fluid castes harden into fixed, essentialized cultural units
- **Stigma and Data Distortion:** Marginalized individuals may conceal their identity. For example, the Paliya caste in Bengal identified as Rajbanshi to avoid social stigma, affecting data accuracy
- **Electoral Demobilization:** Data could be weaponized to redraw electoral boundaries, potentially demobilizing certain social groups
- **Data Manipulation:** Ambedkar historically noted that census figures were often artificially inflated for political leverage
- **Representation Models:** It sparks a debate between the "portrait" model (representatives who look like the demographic) versus the "proxy" model (representatives who act on their behalf)
- **Legal Paradoxes:** States want to exceed the 50% Indra Sawhney cap. The Supreme Court struck down the Maratha quota based on this cap but simultaneously upheld the EWS quota beyond 50%, creating legal contradictions.

6. UPSC Previous Year Questions (PYQs) for Practice.

1. How do caste and class come together in creating the category of extreme poor? (2014)
2. Is caste system changing, weakening or disintegrating in India? (2015)

7. Way Forward & Conclusion

A caste census is a fundamental prerequisite for evidence-based policymaking, capturing a "self-portrait" of the nation. However, as Suhas Palshikar argues, counting caste is a "pseudo-radical gesture" if not paired with fundamental structural shifts in social justice policy **Methodological**

Rigor: Enumerators must receive ethnographic training to navigate stigma and self-identification nuances. The process must be highly transparent

- **Index Development:** Move toward a holistic Backwardness Index replacing rigid categories [cite: 140]. However, as Kathleen Gough and Yogendra Singh note, caste and class represent interlinked structural realities, which any new index must accommodate.
- **Sub-Categorization:** Address "Dominant Caste Capture" by recognizing internal inequalities within OBCs and SCs to redistribute resources effectively

Enumeration must move beyond symbolic politics to drive actionable institutional reforms in education, employment, and health.

Probable Questions

1. How has the modern state shaped the caste system in India? Explain with reference to caste census. (Paper 2)
2. "Write a short note on: Census and Caste." (Paper 2)

UGC Equity Regulations, 2026 & Campus Discrimination

1. Context & Evolution of the Regulations

- The UGC Promotion of Equity in Higher Education Institutions Regulations, 2026 seek to address discrimination inside higher education institutions.
- These are an updated version of the UGC Equity Regulations, 2012.
- The revision gained attention after the Supreme Court case filed by the mothers of Rohith Vemula and Payal Tadvi, who became symbols of caste-based exclusion in higher education.
- Currently, after objections from some groups, the Supreme Court kept the 2026 regulations in abeyance and allowed the 2012 regulations to continue.
- Historically, education policies (like the Radhakrishnan and Kothari Commissions) focused heavily on access and expansion rather than internal campus discrimination. The entry of marginalized groups made this internal discrimination more visible.

2. The Nature & Evidence of Campus Discrimination

Discrimination is rarely just open abuse; it is often systemic and operates through everyday subtle practices.

- **Subtle Practices:** Biased evaluation, exclusion from peer groups, surname-based identification, and social isolation in hostels.
- **Impact:** It heavily affects not just academic performance, but self-esteem, mental health, and long-term aspirations.

Evidence:

- The Thorat Committee at AIIMS found serious caste-based discrimination, including inadequate teacher support and classroom humiliation.
- A Delhi University study (600 SC students) found discrimination in grading, hostel life, and interpersonal relations.
- An IIT Bombay 2023 survey noted casteism begins from day one, linking it to severe mental health issues.

3. Sociological Analysis (Theories & Thinkers)

Use these thinkers to elevate your answers from general studies to sociology.

Thinker / Concept	Explanation	Real-Life Example
Pierre Bourdieu (Cultural Capital & Habitus Mismatch)	Marginalised students often lack the elite social codes (Cultural Capital) rewarded by institutions. They feel alienated because the institutional culture is unfamiliar (Habitus Mismatch).	<i>A first-generation learner might be academically brilliant but struggles in an elite college debate club because they lack the "polished" English accent or awareness of Western pop culture, making them feel out of place.</i>

Thinker / Concept	Explanation	Real-Life Example
Pierre Bourdieu (Symbolic Violence)	Making marginalized groups feel inferior through subtle, everyday disrespect and underestimation.	<i>A professor expressing visible surprise when a student from a marginalized background gives the most complex, correct answer in class.</i>
Erving Goffman (Stigma)	Labels like "reservation candidate" attach a negative, spoiled identity to students, weakening their confidence and belonging.	<i>Peers refusing to share study notes with a student who entered through affirmative action, automatically assuming they are "less meritorious."</i>
Howard Becker (Labelling Theory)	Once institutions label someone as "inferior," they are treated through that lens, which limits their opportunities and participation..	<i>A teacher assumes a rural student won't understand a complex topic, so they stop calling on them in class, causing the student to actually fall behind.</i>
Michael Young (Myth of Meritocracy)	Claims of "pure merit" hide the hidden advantages of upper-class wealth, English fluency, and unequal schooling.	<i>Two students score the same in an exam, but one had access to private tutors, AC rooms, and high-speed internet, while the other studied under streetlights. Comparing them purely on "merit" ignores structural reality.</i>
Kancha Ilaiah Shepherd	Universities exclude Dalit-Bahujan "productive caste" knowledge, privileging theoretical "knowledge of the head" over practical "knowledge of the hand".	<i>Agriculture degrees focus heavily on lab science but completely ignore the multi-generational, practical farming techniques developed by marginalized farming communities.</i>

4. Features and Limitations of the 2026 Regulations

- **Key Features:** Aims to eliminate discrimination based on religion, race, gender, caste, birth, and disability. Mandates Equity Committees, Equal Opportunity Centres, and 24x7 helplines
- **Preventive Approach:** Moves beyond punishment by suggesting orientation programs and transparent hostel/mentoring allocations to create a culture of equality
- **Limitations:**
 - The definition of discrimination lacks terms like harassment, victimisation, and contempt
 - Excludes grounds like language, age, sexual orientation, and place of origin.
 - Risk of "performative compliance" (committees existing only on paper) and fear of complaining against powerful faculty
 - Fails to address deeper structures like faculty recruitment and academic gatekeeping.

5. Way Forward & International Context

- A fair university must provide not just access, but dignity, representation, and justice.
- Move from token inclusion to meaningful participation in research and governance.
- Learn from global models:
 - **USA:** The civic learning and democratic engagement (CLDE) model includes structured teaching on racism and classism.
 - **Japan:** Dowa education directly addresses discrimination against Burakumin through the curriculum.
- These show that anti-discrimination requires both legal rules and deep cultural/educational transformation.

6. UPSC Previous Year Questions (PYQs) for Practice

1. Comment on the critical issues of commercialization of higher education in India (2019)
2. Instead of promoting equality in society, the present system of education itself has contributed to increased socio-economic disparities." Comment. (2022)

Digital Social Movements and the Changing Nature of Youth Politics

1. Introduction

- Digital social movements refer to collective actions that use online platforms such as Facebook, X, Instagram, YouTube, WhatsApp and Telegram for mobilisation, expression and political participation.
- These movements show that politics is no longer limited to parties, unions, streets and formal organisations.
- Social media has become a new public sphere where citizens, especially youth, express anger, build identities, mobilise support and challenge power.
- From the Arab Spring in Egypt to the Gen Z agitation in Nepal, digital platforms have moved from being tools of protest to becoming the very object of protest.
- Thus, youth politics today is shaped by a combination of digital communication, political alienation, unemployment, censorship, algorithmic visibility and search for belonging.

2. Meaning of Digital Social Movements

- Digital social movements are movements where mobilisation, communication and symbolic expression take place through digital networks.
- They are often: decentralised, leaderless, youth-driven, issue-based, emotionally charged, visually expressive, rapidly mobilised.
- **Manuel Castells** calls such movements **networked social movements**, as they are organised through horizontal communication rather than traditional hierarchical organisations.
- **Alain Touraine's** idea of **New Social Movements** is also useful because these movements are often identity-driven, self-organised and focused on dignity, freedom, rights and participation.

3. Evolution of Social Media in Protest Politics

a) Social Media as an instrument of mobilisation

- During the Arab Spring, especially in Egypt in 2011, social media was used to coordinate protests, bypass censorship and spread counter-information.
- The Facebook page "We Are All Khaled Said" helped mobilise Egyptian youth after the killing of Khaled Said.
- Twitter hashtags connected protesters across Egypt, Tunisia and Syria.
- Sociologically, this created a **digital public sphere**, where citizens could challenge the state's monopoly over information.
- Habermas' idea of the **public sphere** is relevant here, as digital platforms became spaces for debate, dissent and political communication.

b) Social Media as a site of contestation

- In Nepal, the 2025 Gen Z agitation began after the government banned 26 social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, X and YouTube.
- The protest was not only through social media, but also for social media.

- This shows a shift from “using social media to protest” to “protesting for digital access itself.”
- Social media came to represent freedom of expression, identity, livelihood and citizenship.
- Digital access is therefore becoming a political right and a marker of social inclusion.

c) Social Media as a structure of power

- In the contemporary phase, governments and corporations increasingly use algorithms, surveillance, platform control and data to manage dissent.
- This shows that digital platforms are not neutral spaces.
- Gramsci’s idea of **hegemony** is relevant because cultural and ideological control is now exercised through digital visibility and algorithmic power.
- **Shoshana Zuboff’s** idea of **surveillance capitalism** explains how platforms commodify attention, participation and even dissent.
- Therefore, digital platforms both empower citizens and expose them to new forms of control.

4. Changing Nature of Youth Politics

- Youth politics is increasingly moving away from traditional party-based and union-based mobilisation.
- Many young people now express political identity through memes, reels, hashtags, satire, digital campaigns and online communities.
- Youth movements are often leaderless and decentralised, as seen in the Nepal Gen Z agitation.
- Young protesters often distance themselves from traditional political parties because they associate them with corruption, hierarchy and old elites.
- This reflects **Robert Michels’ Iron Law of Oligarchy**, where political organisations tend to concentrate power in the hands of a few leaders.
- Youth politics is also shaped by frustration with unemployment, migration, informal work, rising costs, corruption and shrinking freedoms.
- Thus, digital youth politics is not only about technology; it is also about alienation from older political and economic institutions.

5. Youth Alienation and Political Fatigue

- The Nepal Gen Z protest reflected youth anger against political corruption, censorship and lack of accountability.
- Since Nepal’s transition to a democratic republic in 2008, power remained concentrated among older political elites.
- This created political fatigue among young citizens who felt excluded from decision-making.
- **Durkheim’s** idea of **anomie** is useful here because youth experience normlessness when institutions fail to provide direction, security and trust.
- **Marx’s** idea of **alienation** is also relevant because young people feel disconnected from work, state institutions and meaningful political participation.

- **Merton's strain theory** can be applied because youth are promised education, mobility and success, but blocked opportunities produce frustration and protest.

6. Digital Citizenship and Rights

- Social media is increasingly linked to citizenship because it enables expression, association, livelihood and access to information.
- In the Nepal case, the ban on social media was seen not only as censorship but also as an attack on digital livelihood and everyday participation.
- Many small businesses, creators, migrant families, tourism workers and remittance networks depend on digital platforms.
- Therefore, digital access is becoming part of democratic citizenship.
- **Foucault's** idea of **power/knowledge** is relevant because control over information becomes control over citizens.
- The struggle over digital platforms is therefore also a struggle over who controls truth, visibility and legitimacy.

7. Class Character of Digital Youth Politics

- Digital youth politics often has a strong urban middle-class character.
- The **Cockroach Janta Party** example shows how urban Gen Z politics may be driven by the anxiety of a class that once felt insulated from insecurity.
- Workers, farmers, Dalits, Adivasis, minorities and informal labourers have faced structural violence for years, but their struggles often received limited attention from the metropolitan digital class.
- Political outrage becomes stronger when unemployment, censorship and algorithmic invisibility begin to affect urban educated youth.
- This can be understood as **class anxiety** rather than full class solidarity.
- Marx's idea of **class consciousness** is relevant because digital anger may not automatically become structural political consciousness.
- Bourdieu's idea of **cultural capital** also helps explain why English-speaking, digitally connected youth dominate online political narratives.

8. Performative Politics and Instagramisation of Resistance

- A major feature of contemporary youth politics is the rise of performative resistance.
- Politics is increasingly expressed through viral posts, memes, slides, reels, slogans and online identities.
- This may create visibility, but not necessarily organisation.
- Social media rewards outrage, emotional intensity and shareability more than ideological clarity or long-term commitment.
- As a result:
 - posting may replace participation,
 - visibility may replace organisation,
 - anger may become branding,

- rebellion may become online identity.

- This reflects the **commodification of dissent**, where even resistance becomes part of platform capitalism.

9. Strengths of Digital Social Movements

- They democratise voice by allowing ordinary citizens to speak outside traditional media.
- They enable rapid mobilisation across regions and borders.
- They help bypass censorship and expose state violence or institutional failure.
- They create new forms of solidarity among youth, minorities and marginalised groups.
- They make politics more accessible through memes, videos, satire and emotional storytelling.
- They challenge the monopoly of political parties, mainstream media and state institutions over public discourse.

10. Limitations of Digital Social Movements

- They may remain short-lived if not connected to organisations, unions, parties or long-term campaigns.
- They may produce visibility without structural transformation.
- They can be dominated by urban middle-class concerns while marginalising workers, farmers and caste-oppressed groups.
- Algorithms may reward sensational content over serious political education.
- Online anger may become performative rather than participatory.
- Digital platforms can also be used for surveillance, misinformation, trolling and repression.
- Therefore, technology alone cannot create democratic transformation unless it is linked with organisation and ideology.

11. Way Forward

- Digital mobilisation must be connected with grassroots organisation, student unions, labour movements and civil society groups.
- Online anger should be converted into political education and democratic consciousness.
- Digital rights must be protected, including freedom of expression, privacy, transparency and platform accountability.
- Political movements must move beyond urban comfort and include workers, farmers, Dalits, Adivasis, minorities and informal labourers.
- Algorithms and platforms should be made more accountable to prevent manipulation, censorship and unequal visibility.
- Youth politics must combine digital creativity with long-term democratic organisation.
- The aim should be to build **digital democracy**, where access, accountability, transparency and participation become part of citizenship.

12. Conclusion

- Digital social movements have transformed the nature of youth politics.
- Social media is no longer only a tool of protest; it is now a public sphere, a political right, an economic resource and an ideological battlefield.
- Youth politics today reflects both democratic energy and deep alienation from old institutions.
- However, digital visibility is not enough. The challenge is to convert scattered online anger into organised democratic action.
- Therefore, the future of youth politics will depend on whether digital resistance can move from performance to participation, and from algorithmic visibility to structural transformation.



Sleepy Classes IAS
Awakening Toppers

AI, Inequality and Social Change

1. Introduction

- **Artificial Intelligence (AI)** is not merely a technological advancement—it is a socially embedded system shaped by existing ideologies, power structures, and cultural values.
- The concept of **technological determinism** explains how AI can drive social transformation in areas like governance, economy, and intimacy.
- However, it also creates a **cultural lag**, where societal norms and legal frameworks struggle to keep pace with rapid technological change.

2. AI Bias

- **Aylin Caliskan et al. (2017)** showed that language models trained on ordinary text can absorb human-like implicit biases already present in everyday language.
- **MIT Media Lab** found facial recognition tools misidentify darker-skinned and female faces more frequently — a case of algorithmic caste/racial/gender bias.
- **Xuechunzi Bai et al., PNAS (2025)** showed that AI systems may pass surface-level safety checks but still retain hidden biases.
- AI systems tend to replicate and reinforce social hierarchies of caste, class, race, and region.

3. AI and Class

- Pierre Bourdieu's idea of *Cultural capital* explains how access to AI (i.e. **digital capital**) becomes a new form of social advantage.
- India's India-AI Mission seeks to use AI for societal benefits (healthcare, agriculture, disaster management), yet unchecked biases within AI threaten equitable outcomes, especially impacting women, who constitute 48.8% of India's population.
- **Engels' pause:** AI pioneer Geoffrey Hinton warns that AI may make a few people richer while making the majority poorer - signalling a possible "modern Engels' pause."
- The concept of Engels' Pause, coined by Robert Allen (Oxford economist), refers to 19th-century Britain where industrial productivity surged but workers' living standards stagnated, as first observed by Friedrich Engels in *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (1845).

4. AI and Caste

- In India, lack of caste-sensitive data sets risks deepening historical inequalities, prompting calls for "anti-caste" algorithmic audits.
- **DECASTE, Prashanth Vijayaraghavan et al. (2025)** found that caste cues like Indian surnames and personas reinforce stereotypes in AI models.
- **Khyati Khandelwal et al. (2024), Indian-BhED** found that popular models show measurable preference for stereotypical outputs related to Indian categories like caste and religion.

- **Inioluwa Deborah Raji et al. (2020, FAccT)** emphasised that AI auditing should be built into the governance process, not applied only after harm occurs.

5. AI and Gender

- AI systems trained on gender-skewed datasets (e.g., job hiring resumes dominated by male profiles) reproduce workplace discrimination.
- **Amazon's scrapped AI hiring tool** in 2018 that showed systematic downgrading of women's resumes.
- **UNESCO 2023 study** (*Bias Against Women and Girls in Large Language Models*) showed that large language models associated women with "home" and "children", while men were linked with "executive" and "salary".
- **Tolga Bolukbasi et al.** demonstrated that bias appears in computational word space, where "programmer" is placed closer to "male" and "homemaker" closer to "female."
- Only 14% of STEM researchers in India are women, contributing to a global trend where just 22% of AI professionals are women, reinforcing a "male gaze" in AI development.
- The **female gaze in AI**, which involves designing systems around women's perspectives and addressing gender bias through feminist insights, is becoming essential.
- Feminist approaches advocate coder diversity, gender impact assessments, and bias-mitigation frameworks in AI regulation.

6. AI, Labour, and Economic Change

- **Amazon's 2025 layoffs**, affecting **14,000 employees** globally including around 1,000 in India, were linked to AI-led efficiency gains and organisational restructuring, highlighting how automation can contribute to job displacement.
- According to **finalroundai.com**, by mid-2025, around 78,000 tech workers lost their jobs due to AI – roughly 500 per day.
- The **World Economic Forum's (WEF) Future of Jobs Report 2025** predicts AI & tech will create 170 million jobs while displacing 92 million, urging upskilling to prepare workforces for the AI-driven future.
- **India's Economic Survey 2023-24** had flagged that AI could cast a "huge pall of uncertainty" on workers across skill segments in India.
- According to the **QS World Future Skills Index 2025**, India ranked considerably low in terms of skills fit for the AI world.
- Marx's theory of the *means of production* explains how AI enriches tech capitalists, exacerbating inequality between capital and labor.
- **Surveillance capitalism** is an economic model where companies like Google and Facebook extract and sell personal data to predict and influence user behavior for profit.
- Gig economy workers (e.g., Uber drivers) are managed by AI algorithms with little job security also reflecting *surveillance capitalism*.

- The **2025 study, "The Impact of AI Anxiety on Employees' Work Passion,"** uncovered something unsettling: The more anxious humans about machines, the less they care about their work.
- AI anxiety, as defined by the study, has two faces. One look outward, fearing job replacement and sensing that one's labour can be replicated by code.
- The other looks inward, the fear of inadequacy, of being forever behind the next algorithmic update. Both, the study reveals, crush work passion.

7. AI and Family / Intimacy / Social Relations

- **AI-powered home assistants** (Alexa, Google Home) reshape family roles, communication styles, and privacy dynamics.
- **Chatbots** like Anima and Replika are increasingly used as companions, friends, or romantic partners – raising concerns about emotional authenticity.
- Jean Baudrillard's *hyperreality* explains how AI can simulate intimacy so realistically that it replaces genuine human connections.
- **Companion robots** and elder-care bots can on one hand address gaps in family support systems, especially in ageing societies but it also poses ethical dilemmas about emotional labor, care, and human bonds.

8. AI and Knowledge, Power, and Surveillance

- AI enables large-scale data collection, behavioral profiling, and predictive policing – raising ethical concerns about autonomy and consent.
- Foucault's *power/knowledge* and *panopticism* are reflected in state surveillance programs like China's facial recognition and social credit systems.
- Cambridge Analytica's data manipulation in elections shows how AI can shape knowledge, beliefs, and democratic choices.
- The **EU AI Act and UNESCO's ethical guidelines** are attempts to rein in AI's epistemic and disciplinary power.

9. AI and Democracy

- Rise of **"AI Ministers" (e.g., Diella in Albania)** reflects bureaucratic automation and techno-governance.
- **"AI Steve,"** an AI avatar running in the UK elections, reflects Weber's idea of "rationalization", where efficiency and predictability are achieved through technological means.
- In contrast, **China's Cyberspace Administration mandates** that AI outputs must align with core socialist values and avoid content that challenges state authority – highlighting how AI can be used to enforce ideological control and limit democratic expression.
- Further, AI tools (e.g., deepfakes, micro-targeting ads) threaten the integrity of elections and democratic deliberation.

- **Mark Coeckelbergh** warns of AI diminishing citizen's *epistemic agency* – the ability of citizens to think, judge, and act autonomously.
- Scholars argue for strengthening digital literacy and regulatory safeguards to protect participatory democracy.

10. AI and Education

- AI tutors and adaptive learning platforms personalize education, potentially enhancing access and outcomes.
- The **world's first AI University** in Abu Dhabi, the Mohamed bin Zayed University of Artificial Intelligence (**MBZUAI**) is an example of the role of skilling and new generation AI-related human capital creation.
- However, digital infrastructure gaps and unequal access to devices worsen the rural-urban divide.
- AI's replacement of teachers may hinder peer learning and emotional development – challenging the socialization function of education.
- India's National Education Policy includes coding and AI, but UNESCO calls for ethical AI use in schools, citing risks of misinformation and surveillance.

11. Way Forward

- **Regulation:** Enact flexible, principle-based AI laws; mandate audits and algorithmic fairness (e.g., EU AI Act).
- **Ethics-by-design:** Adopt explainable AI, ensure human oversight, and include social impact assessments.
- **Inclusive participation:** Empower marginalized voices through scholarships, mentorships, and inclusive coding practices.
- **Initiatives like K2Think.ai (UAE) and Apertus (Switzerland)** aim to make AI infrastructure open-source, democratizing access to technological capability **Education:** Scale AI literacy across schools, colleges, and civil society; train educators and bureaucrats in ethical AI use.
- **Global cooperation:** Follow global frameworks (UNESCO, OECD) and engage in cross-border AI standard-setting.
- **Robot tax** can be used to make companies share part of the gains from automation and support workers displaced by AI.
- **Universal Basic Income (UBI)** can provide a minimum income floor to citizens in an economy where automation reduces stable employment.
- **Chan-Zuckerberg Initiative** reflects a philanthropic redistribution model, where private tech wealth is redirected toward areas like education, health and social welfare.

12. Conclusion

- AI is a mirror of society — magnifying its inequalities, ideologies, and aspirations.
- Sociological insights are essential to understand and govern AI in a just, inclusive, and ethical manner.
- A human-centered, rights-based approach, grounded in diversity and democracy, is crucial for AI to serve society and not dominate it.



Changing Marriage and Family in India

1. Introduction

- Marriage and family are core social institutions that regulate social reproduction, emotional bonds, caregiving, and cultural transmission.
- Marriage in India is near-universal, a family-family union embedded in a hierarchical socio-cultural order (KM Kapadia 1966).
- In India, the institution of marriage is deeply linked to caste, kinship, patriarchy, and community honor.
- However, modern socio-economic changes have led to a transformation in both structure and meaning of marriage and family.

2. Traditional Norms Around Marriage and Family

- **Joint family system** prioritized lineage continuity, economic cooperation, and ritual obligations.
- **Caste and religion-based endogamy** was maintained to preserve purity (Louis Dumont, Uma Chakravarty).
- The **India Human Development Survey (IHDS)** conducted by the NCAER found that only about 5% of surveyed women report being in inter-caste marriages, with rates nearly identical between rural and urban areas.
- **Arranged marriages** with minimal agency for women were preferred, with marriage being a family, not individual, affair.
- **Heteronormativity** was the cultural norm; gender roles were rigid, with women largely confined to domestic roles.
- **Hyper gamy:** Louis Dumont observed that hypergamy aligns with the ideology of kanyadan, which dictates that a virgin daughter is to be gifted to a man of superior status. In a hypergamous society, wife-takers are considered superior to wife-givers.
- As per data from IHDS-II, majority of women marry more-educated men (Educational Hypergamy)
- **Village Exogamy/Endogamy:** Harold A Gould noted that exogamous marriages in North India are associated with mutually exclusive kinship ties. This pattern contrasts with the endogamous marriage practices prevalent in the south and other parts of India.
- **Dowry:** Historically, dowry was primarily practised among upper castes, but over time, it spread to lower castes as they began emulating the customs of upper castes—a process known as Sanskritisation (Srinivasan 2005).
- According to the NCRB data, cases registered under the Prohibition of Dowry Act and dowry-related deaths have significantly increased in India over the past decade, with Bihar and Uttar Pradesh reporting the highest rates of dowry deaths (NCRB 2022).

- **G.S. Ghurye:** Described Indian family as patriarchal, patrilineal, patrilocal, and hierarchically organized.

3. Emerging Contemporary Trends

- **Nuclear families** becoming the norm in urban and migrant households due to mobility and individualism.
- **Love marriages**, inter-caste, and inter-faith unions rising, though not without resistance.
- **Live-in relationships** gaining legal recognition under the Domestic Violence Act, 2005.
- **Recognition of LGBTQ+ relationships**, though same-sex marriage is not yet legalized (e.g., *Supriyo v. Union of India*, 2023).
- **Delayed marriage and childbearing** among urban youth due to education, career, and lifestyle choices.
- The IHDS shows that women in their 20s who were married fell from 76% in 2011–12 to 66% in 2022–24, delaying marriage and allowing more time for personal growth and freedom.
- According to a 2021 Pew Research Center report, 61% of millennials said they are not having children primarily due to financial constraints.
- **Educational hypogamy** (women marrying less-educated men) is rising in recent decades, indicating slow shifts in marital sorting (Lin et al., 2020).
- **Changing patterns of partner-less population:** According to the **Sample Registration System Statistical Report 2024**, India's widowed/divorced/separated population declined from **4.1% in 2014 to 3.5% in 2024**. However, women remain disproportionately affected (**5.4% women vs 1.6% men**), reflecting gendered widowhood, stigma and lower remarriage. Southern states like **Tamil Nadu and Kerala** buck the national trend, suggesting higher female literacy, autonomy and social acceptance of marital exit.
- **Technological mediation** in partner selection through dating apps like Bumble, Tinder.
- **DINK (Dual Income, No Kids)** lifestyle is rising globally, with variants like DINKWAD (Dual Income, No Kids, With A Dog), GINK (Green Inclination, No Kids), and THINKERS (Two Healthy Incomes, No Kids, Early Retirement), reflecting shifts in priorities toward pets, sustainability, and financial independence.
- India's DINK population is growing at 30% annually, according to the Gitnux Market Data report 2024.
- **Preference for Non-Working Women:** A study by Farzana Afridi and Kanika Mahajan on matrimonial website found that women in masculine jobs in India faced more discrimination, especially if they wished to continue working after marriage.

4. Drivers of Change

- **Urbanization and migration** break down traditional surveillance structures and kin obligations.

- **Education and employment**, especially for women, have increased aspirations for autonomy and equality.
- **Legal and policy reforms** such as Hindu Succession (Amendment) Act, 2005 and Right to Education Act have empowered girls.
- **Media and globalization** have introduced alternate family models, shifting aspirations among youth.
- **Economic factors** like cost of child-rearing, housing constraints influence family choices. Research by Alaka Basu and Sonalde Desai shows that Indian parents often prioritise one child's education, leading to smaller family sizes.

5. Theoretical Perspectives

- **Structural Functionalism (Parsons)**: Nuclear family is best suited for modern societies due to role specialization (instrumental vs. expressive roles).
- **Feminist Theory (Ann Oakley, Sylvia Walby)**: Patriarchal family reinforces women's unpaid labor and dependence; changes challenge gender inequality.
- **Michael Young and Peter Willmott**: In their "The Symmetrical Family," argued that family life was evolving toward a more equal distribution of roles and responsibilities between husbands and wives.
- **Anthony Giddens - Plastic Sexuality**: Relationships in late modernity are based on personal fulfillment rather than duty or tradition. 'Forever love' changing into 'love till further notice' ('plastic love').
- **Zygmunt Bauman - Liquid Love**: Relationships are increasingly fluid, disposable, and individualized in postmodern societies.
- **Queer Theory**: Challenges heteronormativity in defining family; validates diverse identities and kinship formations.
- **Beck & Beck-Gernsheim - Individualization Thesis**: Modern life allows people to construct their own life trajectories, weakening traditional obligations.

6. Legal and Policy Developments

- **Special Marriage Act, 1954**: Enables interfaith and inter-caste marriage outside religious frameworks.
- **Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005**: Recognizes live-in relationships for legal protection.
- **Equal inheritance** rights for daughters under Hindu Succession (Amendment) Act, 2005.
- **Same-sex marriage debate**: Supreme Court's recent refusal to legalize it shifts responsibility to Parliament (2023).
- **Proposal to raise women's age of marriage to 21** to ensure parity and maturity.
- **Assisted reproductive technology and surrogacy regulations** impacting family formation.

- **ICSSR** has launched a new research scheme titled “*Family and Family System in India (Kutumb Vyavastha)*,” to study the changing nature of Indian family structures under the pressures of urbanisation, migration, technology, and globalisation.

7. Resistance and Contradictions

- **Honor killings and khap panchayat diktats** continue to penalize inter-caste and love marriages.
- **Stigma against divorcees, single parents, and LGBTQ+ individuals** persists in conservative settings.
- **Legal rights often not matched by social acceptance**, especially in rural areas.
- **Family remains a site of control and surveillance**, particularly over women’s sexuality and choices.

8. International Comparisons

- **Scandinavian countries** (Sweden, Norway): High acceptance of cohabitation, equal parenting roles, and legal recognition of diverse families.
- **France**: PACS (civil union) that leads to legal partnership without full marital obligations is popular alternative to marriage.
- **Japan and South Korea**: Japan’s birthrate decline is linked to record-low marriage rates in 2023, with factors like male-breadwinner norms, economic strain, and high child-rearing costs, notes Dr. Ekaterina Hertog. Delayed marriage, low fertility rates, and elder care burden mirror India’s urban trends.
- **OECD average**: Increasing age at first marriage and rise in single-person households.

9. Implications for Indian Society

- **Fertility decline**: India reached replacement-level fertility (2.0 TFR) according to NFHS-5.
- **Changing gender roles**: Need for redistribution of unpaid domestic work.
- **Legal ambiguity** in new family forms: Need for recognition of non-traditional households in policy.
- **Elder care and intergenerational dependency** issues in nuclear setups.
- **Cultural lag**: Legal reforms outpacing social mindset in many regions.

10. Conclusion

- The evolution of marriage and family reflects broader processes of modernization, globalization, and democratization of personal life.
- While trends toward individual choice and diversity are gaining ground, traditional structures continue to exert strong influence.
- Sociological insight is key to understanding this dynamic interplay of continuity and change.

Gig Economy, Informalisation and Labour Rights

Introduction

- **Rising labour unrest:** Gig-worker protests have intensified in 2023–25, from Zepto workers in Hyderabad, Blinkit workers in Varanasi, Urban Company cleaners, and BluSmart drivers, to the December 2025 nationwide delivery strikes by workers of Swiggy, Zomato, Zepto, Blinkit, Amazon and Flipkart.
- The 2025 Christmas strike reportedly involved around 40,000 workers, disrupted deliveries in cities like Pune, Bengaluru, Delhi and Hyderabad, and raised demands around fair pay, safety, job security, algorithmic control and social security.
- **Rapid growth of platform work:** India's gig workforce is projected to expand dramatically (NITI Aayog 2022: from ~7.7 million in 2020–21 to ~23.5 million by 2029–30, ≈4% of jobs).
- **Legal recognition but implementation challenge:** With the four Labour Codes, including the Code on Social Security, 2020, coming into effect from 21 November 2025, gig and platform workers now have formal recognition.
- However, the central question is whether this will ensure actual welfare benefits, social security and protection against platform exploitation.

Nature and Characteristics of Gig Work

- **Platform-mediated labour:** Gig work is typically short-term, task-based work arranged via digital apps. It involves a *triangular relationship*: consumers (demand services), gig workers (provide services), and platforms/aggregators (intermediate).
- Platforms coordinate everything via the network, fitting Castells' notion of a "network society" where digital connectivity drives economic activity.
- **Types of gig jobs:** Two broad categories exist: (1) **Online/Web-based** gigs (e.g. freelance coding, writing, tele-consultation) that can be done from anywhere. (2) **Location-based** gigs (e.g. ride-hailing like Uber/Ola, food/e-commerce delivery like Swiggy, Zomato, Flipkart) tied to physical geographies. Both are organized through mobile apps and payment per task.
- **Appeal of gig work:** Workers are drawn by flexible hours, autonomy of schedule, and escape from 9–5 routines. Gig work attracts diverse populations (including students and homemakers), potentially empowering women balancing family care.
- **Platform control:** Despite the "independence," platforms exert strong control. Workers must follow app-dictated rules (specific routes, uniforms, performance targets) and cover their own costs (vehicle, fuel, smartphone, data).
- Algorithms assign tasks, rank workers, and enforce cancellation penalties. In short, firms distance themselves as mere "technology facilitators," yet tightly manage the workforce, enabling control without the responsibilities of an employer.

Key Issues and Challenges

Misclassification and Algorithmic Control

- **False independence:** Gig firms classify workers as self-employed “partners,” outsourcing liabilities. In reality, workers lack bargaining power – they must accept platform-dictated terms to get work.
- Misclassification denies them labour protections (minimum wage, overtime, benefits) and collective bargaining rights.
- **Algorithmic oversight:** Platforms use complex algorithms to assign tasks, set dynamic pricing, and rate performance. This creates a form of digital control akin to Taylor’s scientific management (“algorithmic Taylorism”).
- Drivers and delivery agents are constantly GPS-tracked and scored, fostering fear and competition among workers. Such control is impersonal but invasive.
- **Cost burden:** Workers bear all operational expenses (vehicles, maintenance, fuel, gadgets, data plans) and have no guarantee of income. They often work extended hours to make ends meet.
- Yet if they complain or refuse jobs, the app can restrict access to future assignments. This “arm’s-length” setup preserves company profits and legal insulation at the worker’s expense.

Legal and Policy Gaps

- **Inadequate legislation:** India’s existing labour laws were designed for traditional industries. The Unorganised Workers’ Social Security Act (2008) broadly covered informal labour but did not explicitly address digital platforms.
- Now the Code on Social Security, 2020 does defines “gig workers” and “platform workers” and provides for social security schemes and a social security fund. However, the real challenge lies in effective implementation, registration of workers, aggregator contributions, and actual delivery of benefits.
- **Data vs. benefits:** The government’s e-Shram portal registers unorganised workers (including gig workers) to provide a Universal Account Number. While this collects data on millions of workers, it has yet to deliver significant benefits – critics say it amounts to “surveillance without welfare”.
- Overall, gig workers are counted in policy documents but remain effectively invisible in legal enforcement and benefit schemes.
- **Informalisation trend:** Scholars note that policy is normalizing informality. Jan Breman’s concept of labour “informalisation” is evident: the gig sector operates largely outside formal regulations, and platforms resist responsibilities of formal employment.

Gendered Inequalities

- **Feminisation and flexibility:** A notable feature of the gig economy is the growing participation of women seeking flexible income.
- Studies (BCG 2021; TeamLease 2019) note more women entering front-line gig roles, attracted by adjustable schedules. This could potentially empower women to combine paid work with domestic duties.
- **Persistent pay gaps:** Despite higher entry, gender inequalities prevail. Female gig workers often earn **8–10% less** than men for similar tasks (Research by Abigail Hunt & Emma Samman, 2019).
- Women are overrepresented in lower-paying gig niches (domestic help, beauty services, cleaning) and underrepresented in higher-paying ones (like driving) (Research by Rathi & Tandon, 2021). This reflects and reinforces existing societal wage gaps.
- **Lack of benefits:** As with men, women gig workers are denied employment benefits (paid maternity leave, healthcare insurance, provident fund) since they are labeled contractors.
- Thus, women face a double burden: insecure paid work plus the unpaid “second shift” of household labor (Hochschild’s concept). The undervaluation of this unpaid care (as noted by feminist economists like Nancy Folbre) further weakens women’s bargaining power.
- **Safety and harassment:** Many women report safety concerns. Female delivery workers or drivers risk harassment on the job and during commutes. Platforms currently lack gender-sensitive policies (e.g. panic buttons, restrictions on night shifts for women).
- **Calls for reform:** Tandem Research, 2020, urges targeted measures: extend anti-harassment laws and workplace protections to gig settings; ensure social security (including maternity benefits) for women platform workers; support women’s collective organizing to demand better pay and conditions. Addressing these could help prevent gig work from deepening patriarchal inequalities.

Structural Informalisation

- **McJobisation of gig work:** Gig work increasingly resembles a “McJob” – low-paid, low-prestige and insecure work with limited skill development or upward mobility.
- Like fast-food jobs, workers’ activities are tightly regulated, but in the gig economy this control is exercised through apps, ratings, incentives and algorithms rather than direct managers.
- **Compressed Time Discipline:** Models like 10-minute delivery intensify labour by turning speed into a condition of survival.
- **Statistical invisibility:** Official surveys subsume gig work under generic categories (self-employed, casual labor). For example, the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) includes gig workers as “own-account” or “casual labour” without distinction.
- This masks gig workers’ unique vulnerabilities (task-based pay, algorithmic control, multi-platform jobs), making policy planning difficult.

State and Policy Responses

National and State-Level Initiatives

- **Central policy steps:** The 2020 Social Security Code legally recognized gig and platform workers for the first time. It envisions a national Social Security Board and dedicated welfare fund. In the 2025 Budget, the finance minister promised new welfare schemes for online platform workers.
- **Registry and ID:** The Government launched e-Shram, a national database for unorganised workers. Gig workers registering here get a Universal Account Number (UAN) to access insurance and pension schemes.
- **Subnational laws:** Rajasthan, Jharkhand, Bihar, Karnataka and Telangana have enacted gig/platform worker welfare laws. These provide for registration, unique IDs, welfare boards and social security funds financed partly by platform/aggregator contributions, aiming to redistribute a share of platform revenue toward worker welfare.

Global Comparisons

- **UK – Uber v. Aslam (2021):** The UK Supreme Court held that Uber drivers are “workers” entitled to minimum wage, paid leave and other protections. The ruling rejected the idea that platform contracts alone can define drivers as independent contractors when the platform exercises significant control over fares, ratings, work allocation and service standards
- **EU model:** The EU Platform Work Directive, adopted in 2024, seeks to improve working conditions by helping determine correct employment status and by regulating algorithmic management through transparency, human oversight, fairness and accountability. This is useful for India because gig work is not only a wage issue but also an algorithmic control issue.
- **Singapore / Canada model:** Singapore’s Platform Workers Act came into force from 1 January 2025, providing protection through CPF contributions, work-injury compensation and legal representation. In Canada, provinces like Ontario and British Columbia have created specific protections for digital platform workers, such as minimum wage, transparency and workplace safety coverage
- **Lessons for India:** The global debate is shifting from whether gig workers are “employees” or “contractors” to how flexibility can be combined with minimum security. India can learn from the UK’s worker-status model, EU’s algorithmic transparency model, and Singapore’s sector-specific welfare model that excessive reliance on flexibility may weaken labour rights.

Sociological Perspectives

- **Karl Marx (Capitalism & Alienation):** Marx’s analysis of capitalism illuminates gig work. Gig platforms extract surplus value from labour without offering security or belonging. A large supply of underemployed urban workers acts as a *Reserve Army of Labour* which allows platforms to keep bargaining power weak and replace workers easily.

Workers are alienated – they control neither the labour process (dictated by the algorithm) nor the product (service outcome). The expansion of gig labour deepens capitalist contradictions: workers sell labour-power piecemeal under their own name, yet still serve the platform's capital interests.

- **Antonio Gramsci (Hegemony):** Gramsci's ideas on ideology apply to the gig narrative. Platforms legitimize themselves by promoting "gig freedom" (flexible hours, autonomy), creating a hegemonic belief that gig work is empowering. In reality, this masks exploitation. However, recurrent strikes and organizing among gig workers indicate a growing counter-hegemonic consciousness – a refusal to accept the "new normal" of precarious work.
- **Zygmunt Bauman (Liquid Modernity):** Bauman argued that modern life values flexibility over stability – exactly the appeal of gig work. Workers today trade lifetime jobs for fluid, on-demand gigs. But this liquidity also breeds uncertainty and anxiety, as seen in the precarity of gig jobs. Bauman would note how workers embrace unpredictability until it becomes a constraint.
- **Manuel Castells (Network Society):** Castells' framework of the network society highlights how economic and social relations are now mediated through digital networks. Gig platforms are archetypes of this: they connect individuals across urban networks. The gig economy exemplifies how cities and livelihoods are being reshaped by information flows.
- **Guy Standing (Precariat):** Standing coined the term "precariat" for workers with precarious employment and eroded class identity. Gig workers fit this mold precisely: no long-term contracts, no job ladders, and chronic insecurity. Standing emphasizes the political consequences – a class without stakes may resist collective solidarity, or alternately may lead new forms of labour movement.

Reforms and Way Forward

- **Extend labour rights:** Lawmakers should consider extending core labour law protections to gig workers. This could include minimum wage floors (state-level), limits on working hours, paid leave/maternity leave, and safety standards.
- **Data and surveys:** PLFS and other labour surveys should incorporate explicit codes for platform work. This would help track the true scale and issues of gig labour.
- **Collective bargaining:** Gig workers' organizations and unions (e.g. IFAT – the App-Based Workers federation) should be legally recognized. Platforms should be required to negotiate with these bodies. This could curb unilateral fare cuts and allow workers to demand better terms.
- **Algorithmic transparency:** Regulations should mandate transparency in how platforms use algorithms. Workers should be informed about rating systems, incentives, and deactivation criteria. Potential reforms include third-party audits of algorithms and grievance redressal mechanisms that workers can access.

- **Gender-sensitive measures:** Any gig reforms must address women's needs. This includes extending POSH (sexual harassment at work) protections to ride-sharing and delivery platforms, providing maternity benefits to female gig workers, and subsidizing child care or travel allowances to enhance safety.
- **Social security funding:** Gig-worker welfare can be financed through a mix of platform welfare fees, aggregator contributions and state support. Rajasthan's law provides for a welfare fee on platform transactions, while the Code on Social Security, 2020 provides for aggregator contributions of 1-2% of annual turnover, subject to a cap.
- These funds can support accident insurance, health cover, maternity benefits, pensions and old-age protection. However, safeguards are needed to ensure that platforms do not pass the burden back to workers through reduced incentives or lower take-home pay. Existing schemes like Ayushman Bharat, PMSBY and PM-SYM may also be converged with gig-worker registration, wherever eligibility conditions permit.

Conclusion

- The Indian gig economy sits at a crossroads. On one hand it offers new opportunities and aligns with modern tech-driven aspirations (echoing Bauman and Castells).
- On the other, it has produced a vast, **precariat** workforce living on the edge of informality (as Standing and Marx would critique).
- Recent strikes and proposed laws indicate growing recognition of gig workers' collective power and rights.
- Digital platforms are pivotal in transforming the nature of work, necessitating international policy dialogue (ILO 2021 Report).
- Any reforms should balance flexibility with dignity of labour – ensuring gig work does not become a permanent reserve army of expendable labour.

Falling Fertility and the Sociology of Demographic Transition

1. Introduction

- The Total Fertility Rate (TFR) is the average number of children a woman is expected to bear during her reproductive years. The replacement level fertility is considered to be 2.1, which ensures population stability in the absence of migration.
- **SRS 2024 shows India's TFR has fallen to 1.9**, below the replacement level of 2.1.
- India's TFR is projected to fall to 1.29 by 2050 (Lancet, 2023).
- This trend is part of a global demographic transition observed in several Asian and European countries, such as Japan, South Korea, and China, which are already facing demographic aging and labor shortages.
- From a sociological perspective, fertility trends are important as they impact population structure, social mobility, gender relations, state policy, and intergenerational equity.

2. Theoretical Perspectives

- **Demographic Transition Theory (Warren Thompson):** Suggests societies transition from high birth and death rates to low birth and death rates through stages of industrialization and development. India is in the late third stage, where fertility and mortality rates both declines.
- **Modernization Theory:** As societies modernize through urbanization, education, and economic growth, people begin to have fewer children due to increased costs of child-rearing and shift in values towards individualism and nuclear families.
- **Ulrich Beck's Risk Society:** In a world of ecological crises and economic instability, individuals perceive having children as a risk. Climate anxiety and job insecurity cause a shift towards smaller families or childfree lives.
- **Relative Deprivation Theory (R.K. Merton):** Rising aspirations, driven by social comparison and media, create frustration among youth who cannot meet these goals. This disillusionment contributes to the postponement or rejection of parenthood.
- **Feminist Sociology (Arlie Hochschild's "Second Shift"):** Women increasingly enter the workforce but continue to bear the burden of unpaid domestic labor, leading to a "double shift" that discourages childbearing.
- **T.H. Marshall's Social Citizenship:** The state's obligation to ensure rights such as healthcare, childcare, and pensions becomes crucial in shaping reproductive choices.

3. Fertility Decline in India: Data and Trends

- According to **SRS Statistical Report 2024**, India's TFR has fallen to **1.9**, below the replacement level of **2.1**.
- India's TFR has declined sharply from **5.2 in 1971** to **1.9 in 2024**, marking a silent demographic transition.

- Fertility decline is highly uneven: **Bihar has the highest TFR at 2.9**, followed by **Uttar Pradesh at 2.6**, while **Delhi has the lowest TFR at 1.2**.
- Southern and more urbanised states have entered very low fertility: **Tamil Nadu, Kerala and West Bengal have TFR of 1.3 each**.
- The rural-urban divide remains significant: **rural TFR is 2.1**, while **urban TFR is only 1.5**.
- The issue is no longer just population control; India now faces **regional imbalance, ageing in low-fertility states and continued high fertility in some northern states**.
- The Lancet estimates that by 2050, 20% of India's population will be over 60 years old, implying a demographic transition towards an aging society.
- The trend is also class-differentiated, with urban middle-class families adopting fertility-limiting practices earlier than rural and lower-income groups.

4. Causes of Fertility Decline

- **Economic Factors:**
 - **Job insecurity:** Over 90% of youth are employed in the informal sector (India Employment Report 2024).
 - **Income inequality:** India's top 1% control 40% of national wealth (World Inequality Report 2026), creating a sense of exclusion among youth.
 - **High cost of raising children** in urban areas, especially in education and housing, discourages larger families. **Research by Alaka Basu and Sonalde Desai** shows that Indian parents often prioritise one child's education, leading to smaller family sizes.
- **Social and Psychological Factors:**
 - Growing anxiety over the future due to climate change, economic instability, and global crises.
 - Young adults are disillusioned by lack of social mobility, delayed marriages, and a search for personal freedom and meaning (India ranks 116th, World Happiness Report 2026).
 - India's freedom score has declined (Freedom House), suggesting institutional distrust among the youth.
- **Gender-related Factors:**
 - Patriarchal gender norms continue to expect women to assume caregiving roles, despite their increased aspirations.
 - Gendered division of labor, lack of family-friendly work policies, and inadequate public childcare infrastructure act as deterrents.

5. Global Experiences and Lessons

- **Japan:** TFR at 1.14. Government incentives like state-run dating apps, parental leave, four-day workweek, and financial support have had little impact. Professor Hiroshi Yoshida estimates a severe demographic contraction, suggesting by 695 years from now on, the number of children will fall to just one. Deep-rooted cultural norms and gender inequality remain unaddressed.
- **Russia:** Cash incentives and awards (Joseph Stalin's Mother Heroine Award) for multiple children failed to yield sustained fertility increase. Economic stagnation and lack of support for working mothers undermined the policies.
- **China:** Despite ending the one-child policy in 2016 and allowing three children per family, fertility remains low. Economic liberalisation reduced state childcare support, lowering women's labor force participation from 90% to 61%.
- **Sweden:** Despite generous paid parental leave, public childcare and gender-equal employment policies, Sweden's TFR has declined sharply from around 1.98 in 2010 to 1.43 in 2024 and 1.42 in 2025. This shows that welfare support reduces the burden of parenting, but by itself may not reverse low fertility unless issues like housing cost, job insecurity, delayed marriage/parenthood and changing aspirations are addressed.

6. Implications for India

- **Demographic Dividend at Risk:** India's window for demographic dividend may close by 2040 with the working-age population set to peak between the late 2030s and early 2040s. Without job creation and skilling, this dividend may remain unrealized.
- **Youth Alienation and Deviance:** Educated but unemployed youth may experience frustration, leading to social unrest or crime (Merton's Strain Theory).
- **Opportunity for Gender Equity:** Low fertility offers an opportunity to increase FLFP. Sonalde Desai and Sojin Yu's analysis of NFHS data shows that women's time spent on childcare fell from 14 years in 1993 to 8 years in 2021, but this freed time hasn't led to higher workforce participation. Necessitating improved labor laws, work-from-home flexibility, and investment in care infrastructure.
- **Pressure on Elderly Care:** UNPF's India Aging Report projects the elderly population to grow from 149 million in 2022 to 347 million by 2050. With fewer working-age adults and longer life expectancy, pressure on healthcare, pensions, and eldercare will rise. For example, Japan's Social security budget has grown nearly 20% in the past decade.
- **Care Economy:** With a shrinking young population and rising elderly, demand for eldercare workers and infrastructure will rise. State policy must prepare for this shift.
- **Interstate Inequality:** Southern states with low TFR may lose fiscal and political influence in national planning, leading to demands for reallocation of tax revenues and representation.

- **Migration:** Fertility decline may spur internal migration from high-fertility states (UP, Bihar) to aging states (TN, Kerala) to fill labor shortages. This may trigger cultural and linguistic tensions.

8. Policy Responses and Strategies

- **Short-term:**
 - Expand public childcare facilities, healthcare, and maternity benefits.
 - Integrate Anganwadi and MGNREGA to support rural women's care work and employment.
- **Medium-term:**
 - Implement National Education Policy (NEP) to emphasize vocational skills from middle school.
 - Create job guarantee programs and employment incentives for youth.
 - Encourage gender-sensitive tax and welfare policies that support both men and women in caregiving roles.
- **Long-term:**
 - Facilitate voluntary inter-state migration to redistribute labor more equitably.
 - Build robust eldercare infrastructure including insurance-based long-term care and community homes.
 - Institutionalize family support systems that recognize the social value of caregiving.

9. Rebutting Pronatalist Demands

- Demands for a three-child policy or incentive-based pronatalism ignore the structural reasons for fertility decline.
- Coercive or incentive-based models (as seen in Russia and China) have failed to increase fertility sustainably.
- Real solutions lie in enhancing education, employment, gender equity, and social security, which will create conditions for voluntary and informed reproductive choices.

10. Conclusion

- The declining fertility rate in India is part of a global transformation, not a crisis. It must be understood sociologically and managed with inclusive policy responses.
- Instead of viewing fertility in isolation, the focus should shift to ensuring equitable access to employment, healthcare, and family support systems.
- This demographic shift is an opportunity to restructure Indian society towards justice, gender equality, and intergenerational solidarity.
- Decisions about childbearing are fundamental human rights, as highlighted by **sociologist Judith Blake: "People do not have birth rates; they have children."**

Gendered Violence and Social Control

1. Introduction:

- Violence Against Women (VAW) is a multifaceted issue that encompasses more than physical harm – it includes structural inequalities, cultural subordination, and systemic neglect.
- **VAW is defined by the UN** as "any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering to women."
- It manifests both in public and private spaces and is often normalized within patriarchal structures.
- It highlights unequal power relations and is perpetuated through cultural practices, socialization, state inaction, and economic dependence.

2. Typologies and Forms of VAW

- **Structural Violence (Johan Galtung):** Harm caused by social structures and institutions that deny women access to resources and rights. E.g., lack of healthcare, police bias, and legal delays.
- **Symbolic Violence (Pierre Bourdieu):** Subtle, often unnoticed violence that is normalized through language, traditions, and media – women accept subordination as 'natural'.
- **Intimate Partner Violence (IPV):** NFHS-6 shows IPV as the most widespread form of violence in India, often underreported due to stigma and economic dependence.
- **Cultural and Traditional Violence:** Practices like dowry deaths, honor killings, female genital mutilation (FGM), and early marriage.
- **Tech-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence (TFGBV):** Includes cyberstalking, online trolling, non-consensual sharing of intimate images, impersonation through fake profiles, grooming.

3. Empirical Trends and Data

- **NFHS-6 (2023-24):**
 - Nationally, **22.3% of ever-married women aged 18–49** reported experiencing spousal violence, down from **29.2% in NFHS-5**.
 - **Rural women remain more vulnerable:** 24.4% reported spousal violence compared to 17.5% in urban India.
 - In **Bihar**, spousal violence remains high at around **36.1%**, though lower than NFHS-5.
 - Violence during pregnancy declined slightly from **3.1% to 2.7%**, showing that domestic violence continues even during women's reproductive vulnerability.
 - Young women experiencing sexual violence before age 18 declined from **1.2% to 0.7%**, but it still points to early gendered vulnerability.

- **NFHS-5 (2019-21):**
 - Only around **14.2%** of women facing physical/sexual IPV sought any help, mostly from informal sources such as family.
 - 45.4% of women and 44.2% of men justified wife-beating in at least one situation.
- **NCRB Report 2024:**
 - Total crimes against women in **2024: 4.41 lakh cases**, showing a **1.5% decline** from **4.48 lakh cases in 2023**.
 - Crime rate against women declined from **66.2 per lakh female population in 2023** to **64.6 in 2024**.
 - Most common category remained **cruelty by husband or relatives**, with **over 1.20 lakh cases**, accounting for around **27%** of crimes against women.
 - This was followed by **kidnapping and abduction of women** with **67,829 cases**, **POCSO cases** with **67,809 cases**, and **assault on women with intent to outrage modesty** with **48,303 cases**.
 - Conviction rate remains low.
- **UNDP Gender Social Norms Index (2023):**
 - 90% of people (globally) hold at least one bias against women.
 - In India, large proportion of population believes men make better political leaders and business executives.
 - Shows persistence of patriarchal ideology despite legal reforms.

4. Dowry Death

- Recent high-profile cases of dowry-related violence show that the marital household can become a site of structural violence where patriarchy, kinship hierarchy and dowry demand make the bride vulnerable.
- Dowry death cases declined from **6,450 in 2022** to **6,156 in 2023**, while conviction rate increased slightly from **33.4% to 35.0%**. However, this still means nearly two-thirds of completed trials did not end in conviction.

Reason for Violence

- **Dowry death is not only domestic conflict; it is structural violence** produced by patriarchy, patrilocal marriage and unequal power within the marital household.
- **Patrilocality:** After marriage, the woman leaves her natal home and enters the husband's family with weak bargaining power, where she is expected to adjust, obey and perform domestic labour.
- **Mother-in-law as agent of patriarchy:** Violence by female relatives should not be seen simply as "women against women." Older women may reproduce patriarchal control because their own status comes through sons and household authority.

- **Patriarchal bargain:** Deniz Kandiyoti's idea is useful here. Women may cooperate with patriarchy because it gives them limited power within the family, especially as mothers of sons.
- **Son preference:** A woman's status improves after giving birth to a son. If she gives birth to daughters, she may face greater humiliation because daughters are seen as future dowry liabilities.
- **Female socialisation into control:** Women are socialised to police other women's mobility, sexuality, dress, fertility and domestic behaviour. This makes patriarchy self-reproducing inside the family.

Regional Variation (As per Dipankar Gupta)

- **Patriarchy alone cannot explain dowry deaths**, because patriarchy exists across India, but dowry deaths are much higher in North and Central India than in South India.
- In North India, the **bride-giver's family is considered lower** than the bride-taker's family. This creates a permanent status inequality between the two families.
- Practices like **kanyadaan** symbolically present the bride as a "gift," and this begins a continuing logic of gift-giving from the bride's side.
- The bride is treated as an outsider in her marital home, which increases her vulnerability to harassment and violence.
- In parts of South India, practices like **cross-cousin marriage** reduce this sharp divide between bride-giver and bride-taker.
- Since the bride may already be part of the extended kin network, she is less of a stranger and the wife-giving/ wife-taking hierarchy is weaker.
- Thus, dowry deaths are better understood through a combination of **patriarchy + kinship structure + marriage customs + status hierarchy**, not patriarchy alone.

5. Structural and Cultural Roots of VAW in India

- **Patriliny and Virilocality:** Nivedita Menon (in her book *Seeing Like a Feminist*) highlights patriliny, virilocality, and male authority as key factors reinforcing patriarchy in India and reinforcing their secondary status
- **Control over Female Sexuality:** VAW often justified as a means to "discipline" female behavior and preserve family honor.
- **Family as a Site of Violence:** Veena Das (in her book *'Mirrors of Violence'*) highlights how violence is embedded within the private domain of family (patriarchal cultural boundaries), making it harder to detect and address. Murray Strauss said "Marriage license is a hitting license".
- **Normalization in Cinema and Culture:** Glamourization of stalking, victim-blaming, and toxic masculinity perpetuate a culture of silence.

- **Rashida Manjoo, UN Special Rapporteur on VAW** – identifies causes like historically unequal power, cultural justifications, control over sexuality, privacy doctrine, war and state inaction.
- **Dipankar Gupta** – links dowry violence to consumerism under capitalism.

6. Legal Framework and State Response in India

- **Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005:** Recognizes emotional and economic abuse along with physical harm; allows for civil remedies.
- **Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013 (Nirbhaya Act):** Introduced stricter punishment for rape, acid attacks, voyeurism; set up fast-track courts.
- **Digital Shakti (by the National Commission for Women):** Trains women in secure online navigation.
- **One Stop Centres (OSCs):** Intended to provide integrated services (medical, legal, police, counselling), yet underfunded and inaccessible in many states.
- **Fast Track Special Courts (FTSCs):** Established for handling rape and POCSO cases; but suffer from manpower shortage.

7. Gaps in Implementation and Systemic Failures

- **Low Awareness:** Women, especially in rural areas, are unaware of their legal rights and support systems.
- **Police and Judiciary Bias:** Victim-blaming attitudes, delays in filing FIRs, and poor prosecution rates hinder justice.
- **Underreporting:** Due to fear of retaliation, shame, and lack of trust in institutions.
- **Healthcare Gaps:** WHO's LIVES model (Listen, Inquire, Validate, Enhance safety, Support) rarely institutionalized in Indian public hospitals.

7. Role of Civil Society and Social Movements

- **Women in Cinema Collective (Kerala):** Formed after 2017 Malayalam film actress assault, took a stand against powerful actors and producers shielding abusers.
- **Doctors' Protests (Kolkata):** Highlighted systemic gendered harassment in healthcare sector.
- **#MeToo Movement:** Triggered widespread public disclosures; increased awareness but lacked formal redressal mechanisms.
- **Local Women's Groups:** Grassroots efforts (e.g., self-help groups) in UP, Odisha offer psychosocial support and legal aid.

8. International Best Practices

- **Brazil:** Operates more than 500 One Stop Centres offering legal, health, and psychological support under one roof.

- **Malaysia:** Embeds domestic violence screening within maternal and child health programs.
- **Rwanda:** Gender-based violence handled by units housed within the Ministry of Health, offering streamlined services.
- **Scandinavian Countries:**
 - Legal reforms ensuring gender parity.
 - Comprehensive sex education and early sensitization.
 - Family-friendly work policies reduce domestic stressors.

9. Pathways for Reform

- **Institutional Reforms:**
 - Increase budget allocation to women's safety schemes.
 - Mandate gender-sensitization training across judiciary, police, and medical staff.
 - Train ASHAs and ANMs as first-line responders using WHO's LIVES framework (Listen, Inquire, Validate, Enhance safety, Support).
- **Behavioral Change Communication (BCC):**
 - Large-scale campaigns (like Pulse Polio model) to challenge normalization of violence and victim-blaming.
 - Andre Beteille emphasizes that while law can show the direction of change, culture often determines how society actually evolves.
- **Education and Curriculum Reform:**
 - Include gender sensitivity and rights awareness in school syllabi.
 - Train teachers and community leaders.
- **Community-Based Interventions:**
 - Involve men and boys in gender sensitization.
 - Promote local women's watchdog committees.
- **Data and Monitoring:**
 - Improve data collection disaggregated by caste, religion, and geography.
 - Monitor implementation and evaluation of schemes like OSCs.

10. Conclusion

- VAW is not merely a legal issue but reflects deep-rooted social, economic, and cultural inequalities.
- Addressing it requires a **multi-sectoral approach** involving law, health, education, media, and civil society.
- Transformative change is possible only through **structural reforms**, cultural shifts, and community engagement to create a society based on dignity, equality, and safety for all women.

Ageing, Care and Social Change

1. Introduction

- Ageing is defined as a demographic shift wherein the proportion of people aged 60 years and above increases within a population.
- India is witnessing a rapid ageing process due to declining fertility rates and increasing life expectancy. According to the **UNFPA India Ageing Report (2023)**, the elderly population (60+) is projected to rise from 149 million (10.5%) in 2022 to 347 million (20.8%) by 2050.
- This transition is occurring before India attains developed-country-level income and healthcare infrastructure, thus leading to "ageing before affluence".
- The issue intersects with key sociological themes such as structural functionalism, patriarchy, generational contract, social inequality, and care economy.

2. Global and National Demographic Trends

- **Global Context:**
 - The global elderly population will double from 1.1 billion in 2022 to 2.1 billion by 2050.
 - Asia accounts for 58% of the world's aged population; Japan has over 28% of its population aged 65+.
 - David Bloom, writing for IMF in 2020, observed, "greying" is the dominant trend in the 21st century.
 - Developing nations, including India, are facing aging populations at a lower economic threshold compared to developed countries.
- **India's Context:**
 - Elderly population will surpass the child population under 15 by 2046.
 - India's old-age dependency ratio projected to increase from 16% (2022) to 36% (2050).
 - Regional imbalance: Southern and Western states have higher ageing rates due to early demographic transition (e.g., Kerala).
- **Theoretical Link:**
 - **Demographic Transition Theory** explains India's stage in the shift from high birth/death rates to low ones.
 - **Disengagement Theory (Functionalist):** Proposes that the withdrawal of the elderly from social roles is natural and beneficial, as it allows younger members to assume those roles, ensuring social equilibrium.
 - **Activity Theory:** Ageing becomes healthier when elderly people remain active in family, community and social life. Instead of withdrawing, they need meaningful roles, interaction and participation.

- **Continuity Theory:** Elderly people adjust better when they can continue their earlier habits, relationships and identity. Sudden break from work, family role or social status can create loneliness and stress.
- **Modernisation Theory of Ageing:** In traditional societies, elders had authority because they controlled land, family decisions and traditional knowledge. With urbanisation, migration, education and nuclear families, their authority and status decline.
- **Political Economy Theory of Ageing:** Problems of old age are not only due to biological ageing. They are shaped by class, pension, healthcare, property, retirement and welfare policies. Thus, poor elderly people suffer more than rich elderly people.
- **Feminist Theory of Ageing:** Ageing is gendered. Older women often face widowhood, poverty, property exclusion, loneliness and care dependence more sharply than men.

3. Key Characteristics of Ageing in India

- **Feminisation of Ageing:**
 - Women constitute over 51% of elderly population.
 - More prone to widowhood, economic dependency, and health neglect.
- **Ruralisation of Ageing:**
 - Over 70% of elderly live in rural areas (Census 2011).
 - Inadequate access to geriatric care, social security, and transport.
- **Ageing of the Aged:**
 - Increasing population of 80+ age group necessitates long-term care systems.
- **Economic Insecurity:**
 - Elderly men often continue to work in informal sectors, while elderly women depend on family support. Very few of elderly receive formal pensions.
- **Multiple Vulnerabilities:**
 - Intersection of caste, class, gender, and disability worsens their quality of life.

4. Socioeconomic Implications

- **Burden on Workforce:**
 - Rising old-age dependency could strain working-age population.
 - Need for increased public investment in elderly care infrastructure.
- **Pension and Welfare Systems:**
 - India lacks a universal pension system.
 - National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP) provides low pensions (~INR 200-500/month).

- **Healthcare System Unpreparedness:**
 - Geriatric care not integrated in primary health systems.
 - High prevalence of non-communicable diseases (NCDs), hearing and vision loss, dementia.
- **Urban Challenges:**
 - In cities, increasing number of elderly live alone due to migration of children and shrinking family sizes.

5. Social Challenges of Ageing

- **Social Isolation:**
 - Loneliness and depression among elders due to breakdown of joint family.
 - 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.
- **Elder Abuse:**
 - A WHO-supported Lancet study estimates that 16% of the global elderly population face abuse.
 - HelpAge India Report (2018): Over 25% urban elderly report abuse.
 - Common forms: verbal abuse, neglect, financial exploitation.
- **Digital Exclusion:**
 - Older adults struggle to access e-governance, digital payments, telemedicine.
- **Neglect and Ageism:**
 - **Robert Butler's concept of Ageism** explains stereotyping and discrimination based on age.
 - Increasing cultural narratives portraying elderly as 'burdens'.
 - **Pradeep Kumar Panda (Orissa study):** Found that economic stress in families leads to reduced quality of elder care, indicating how structural pressures shape familial responsibilities.
- **Structural Violence:**
 - Systemic neglect in public policy and services amounts to indirect violence.
 - Steven Spitzer (1980) points out that a profit-oriented society devalues any category of people that is less productive.
- **Ritualised Geronticide:**
 - Practices like *Thalaikoothal* in Tamil Nadu highlight extreme cultural devaluation of elderly lives.

6. Policy Measures and Gaps

- **National Policy for Senior Citizens (2011):**
 - Covers healthcare, income, shelter, protection; lacks rigorous implementation.
- **MWPSC Act (2007):**
 - Makes it obligatory for children to maintain parents; 2019 amendment strengthens penalties.
- **State-Level Best Practices:**
 - **Kerala:** Vayomithram scheme, day-care centers (Pakal Veedu). Kerala established the **Department of Senior Citizens Welfare** in 2026, becoming **India's first state to create a dedicated administrative department** for the elderly. Prior to this, elderly welfare was handled by the Social Justice Department.
 - **Odisha:** Senior citizen welfare cell, assisted living facilities. (Odisha State Policy for Senior Citizens 2016)
- **Policy Gaps:**
 - No universal healthcare or pension.
 - Schemes poorly integrated with panchayati raj institutions or urban bodies.
 - **The Sankala Foundation report “Ageing in India: Challenges and Opportunities”**, based on LASI Wave 1, highlights widening healthcare and social security gaps among the elderly, the need for long-term and palliative care, and a growing intergenerational disconnect.

7. Community and Therapeutic Interventions

- **Role of Panchayats and SHGs:** Can provide socialization, health monitoring, and localized care for elderly.
- **Therapeutic Measures:** Music therapy, yoga, meditation shown to reduce anxiety and enhance well-being.
- **Elder Clubs and Community Support:** Promote dignity, intergenerational exchange, and reduce loneliness.
- **NGO Involvement:** Organizations like HelpAge India conduct surveys, run helplines, and advocate elder rights.

8. Way Forward

- **Universal Social Security:** Expansion of pension schemes, inclusion of informal workers. 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.
- **Integrated Elder Care:** Combine healthcare, social services, and legal support for holistic elder care.

- **Care Economy:** Invest in trained caregivers, community care centres, home-based elder care and respite services, so that ageing is not managed only through unpaid family care, especially by women.
- **Age-Friendly Infrastructure:** Modify housing, transport, and public spaces for mobility and safety.
- **Redefining Elderly as Resource:** Encourage voluntary work, mentorship, flexible employment for active ageing. A study titled "*Postponing Old Age...*" in the *Psychology and Aging* journal shows that people now perceive old age as starting later, reflecting shifting social and lifestyle norms.
- **Combating Ageism:** Media literacy campaigns, intergenerational education to promote empathy and respect.



Sleepy Classes IAS
Awakening Toppers

Gender, Sexuality and Social Justice

1. Introduction

- The recent controversy around the **Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Amendment Act, 2026** has once again brought LGBTQ+ and transgender rights into public debate.
- The law has been **criticised for moving away from self-identification towards medical and bureaucratic certification of gender identity**.
- LGBTQIA+ individuals comprise a diverse group that challenges rigid binaries of sex, gender, and sexuality.
- The Indian Constitution guarantees equality and dignity, yet LGBTQ persons have historically faced legal, social, and institutional exclusion.

2. Historical and Legal Landscape

- **Colonial criminalisation:** Section 377 IPC criminalized 'unnatural sex' since 1861, marginalizing non-heteronormative identities.
- **Navtej Singh Johar v. Union of India (2018):** Landmark SC judgment decriminalized consensual same-sex relations, affirmed right to identity, autonomy, dignity.
- **NALSA v. Union of India (2014):** Recognized transgender persons as the third gender, upheld right to self-identification and equality.
- **Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019:** Prohibits discrimination in employment, education, healthcare; mandates welfare schemes but criticized for undermining self-ID and overregulating community.

3. Theoretical Perspectives

- **Structural Functionalism:** Historically reinforced heterosexual nuclear family as norm, excluding queer kinship forms.
- **Essentialism:** Sees gender as biologically fixed.
- **Social constructivism:** views gender as shaped by societal norms and discourse. For example, pink was considered masculine in the 19th century, showing how gender symbols can shift over time, highlighting the constructed nature of gender.
- **Judith Butler:** In *Gender Trouble* (1990) argues that Gender is performative, not innate; challenges heteronormativity and binary frameworks.
- **Foucault's The History of Sexuality:** Sexual identities are socially constructed; state and institutions control sexuality through discourse.
- **Simone de Beauvoir:** In *The Second Sex* (1949), Beauvoir famously stated, **"One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman."** By this she meant that society socializes individuals into gender roles.

- **Gayle Rubin:** Sex is biological and gender is socially constructed.
- **Julia Serano:** In *Whipping Girl* argues that transgender experiences reveal gender identity as shaped by both social factors and an intrinsic “subconscious sex” that existing theories often overlook. 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.
- **Gayatri Reddy:** In *With Respect to Sex* (2005) explores hijra identity in South India, arguing hijra identities cannot be reduced merely to legal categories like “third gender.”
- **Dalit-Queer Intersectionality:** Scholars argue for analysing how caste and gender-sexual marginality intersect. Scholar Janaki Nair (*“Women and Colonial Law: A Feminist Social History,”* 2025) argues historically “woman” was never a uniform legal or social category in India, always differentiated by caste, class, region, and ethnicity.
- **Trans-exclusionary Feminism:** Reject inclusion of trans women in category “woman,” emphasizing biology. Celebrated UK Supreme Court recent clarification that “woman” and “sex” in the Equality Act 2010 refer strictly to biological sex at birth.

4. Current Policy and Legal Measures

- **Transgender Persons Act (2019):** Bans discrimination, provides ID certificates, mandates welfare boards. Criticized for requiring a medical board for gender change.
- **Transgender Persons Amendment Act, 2026:** The amendment narrows the definition of “transgender person” and moves away from the earlier principle of self-perceived gender identity.
- **Right to Education and Employment:** NEP 2020 emphasizes inclusive education; UGC guidelines advise inclusive campus policies.
- **Marriage Equality Case (2023):** SC (in *Supriyo v. Union of India* case) refused to legalize same-sex marriage but urged state to ensure civil rights (equality, dignity, privacy and non-discrimination).
- **State Policies:** Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra have initiated trans welfare boards, housing schemes, scholarships.
- **NHRC Guidelines:** Direct state authorities to respect dignity of queer persons in public institutions, including police and hospitals.

5. Challenges and Discrimination

- **Education:** Bullying, dropouts, lack of gender-neutral infrastructure.
- **Healthcare:** Denial of treatment, stigma in reproductive and mental health services.
- **Employment:** High unemployment, workplace discrimination, token inclusion without rights.
- **Housing:** Landlords deny housing to LGBTQ tenants; many face homelessness.

- **Legal identity:** Bureaucratic delays and invasive procedures in gender ID certification.
- **Violence:** Physical and sexual abuse, conversion therapy, honor killings.
- **Digital Harassment:** Cyberbullying, doxxing, and exploitation through dating apps.

6. Social Attitudes and Cultural Representation

- **Family rejection:** Many queer individuals face disownment or forced marriages.
- **Popular media:** Changing trends—mainstream movies like 'Shubh Mangal Zyada Saavdhan' and web series like 'Made in Heaven' offer nuanced portrayals.
- **Pride Marches:** Cities like Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, and Bhopal host regular LGBTQ pride parades.

7. Civil Society and Grassroots Movements

- **Naz Foundation, Humsafar Trust, Sappho for Equality:** Key role in legal battles, community support, HIV awareness.
- **Queer collectives and campus groups** promote awareness, counseling, and rights-based mobilization.
- **Legal advocacy:** Lawyers Collective, Alternative Law Forum advancing LGBTQ jurisprudence.

8. Implications for Indian Society and Governance

- **Need for intersectional policy:** Recognize overlaps of caste, class, gender, and region.
- **Legal harmonization:** Ensure consistency across laws (marriage, adoption, property).
- **Inclusion in Census and Surveys:** Currently excluded from official data collection.
- **State responsibility:** Move from token welfare to full rights-based inclusion.
- **Cultural pluralism:** Encourage community-level acceptance, alternative family models, queer affirmative education.

9. Conclusion

- Despite progressive judgments, social and legal recognition remains fragmented.
- Queer rights in India are not just a matter of legal reform but require broader structural, cultural, and institutional transformation.
- A rights-based, inclusive, and intersectional approach is essential for meaningful equality.

Uniform Civil Code: Equality, Diversity and Personal Laws

1. Introduction

- The **Uniform Civil Code** refers to the idea of having a **common set of civil laws** for all citizens, irrespective of religion, caste, gender or community.
- It seeks to replace religion-based personal laws in matters such as marriage, divorce, inheritance, adoption, guardianship and succession.
- In India, the debate around UCC is linked to **Article 44 of the Constitution**, which places it under the Directive Principles of State Policy.
- The issue is sociologically important because it involves the relationship between law, religion, family, gender, cultural identity and state power.
- The UCC debate is not merely legal; it reflects the larger tension between equality and diversity, modernity and tradition, individual rights and community autonomy.

2. Why UCC is Debated in India

- India has multiple personal laws based on religion, community, custom and region.
- These laws govern intimate areas of life such as marriage, divorce, inheritance and family relations.
- Many personal laws have historically reflected patriarchal norms, especially in matters of women's property rights, marital rights and divorce.
- At the same time, personal laws are also seen by communities as markers of identity, autonomy and religious freedom.
- Therefore, the UCC debate becomes a conflict between:
 - gender justice and community rights,
 - legal uniformity and cultural diversity,
 - constitutional morality and religious autonomy,
 - individual freedom and social tradition.

3. Arguments in Favour of UCC

- UCC can **promote equality before law** by ensuring that all citizens enjoy the same civil rights irrespective of religion.
- It can **strengthen gender justice** by removing discriminatory provisions in personal laws related to marriage, divorce, inheritance and guardianship.
- It can support **national integration** by reducing legal fragmentation in civil matters.
- It can **modernise family law** by replacing outdated and patriarchal customs with rights-based legal principles.
- **Yogendra Singh** argues that the **legal system acts as an indicator, initiator and integrator of social change** in India's modernisation process.
- UCC can therefore be seen as part of India's movement from traditional authority to modern legal-rational authority.

4. UCC and Gender Equality

- Gender equality lies at the centre of the UCC debate.
- Many personal laws have historically given men greater control over marriage, divorce, inheritance and sexuality.
- A gender-just UCC can ensure equal inheritance rights, equal marital rights and equal protection in divorce and maintenance.
- **Engels’** argument that **gender inequality is historically linked to property relations** is useful here, because inheritance and property rights are central to women’s emancipation.
- However, uniformity alone does not guarantee equality.
- A UCC must focus on substantive equality, not merely formal equality.
- For example, if a UCC gives equal inheritance shares but allows unrestricted testamentary freedom, women may still be disinherited through wills.
- Thus, the key question is not whether the law is uniform, but whether it actually protects women’s rights in practice.

5. Concerns Against UCC

- Critics argue that **India’s cultural and religious diversity** cannot be addressed through a one-size-fits-all legal framework.
- **Ashis Nandy’s** view that every culture seeks to maintain its uniqueness helps explain resistance to excessive legal-cultural uniformity.
- There is a fear that **UCC may become majoritarian in practice** if the “common” law reflects the norms of the dominant community.
- **Flavia Agnes** cautions that even the consolidation of **Hindu personal law historically privileged upper-caste Brahmanical practices** over diverse local customs.
- Personal laws are often seen by **minorities and tribal communities** as part of their **identity and cultural autonomy**.
- Therefore, a poorly designed UCC may weaken pluralism and create anxiety among minorities and marginal groups.
- The concern is not against equality, but against **homogenisation in the name of equality**.

6. State, Family and Individual Freedom

- UCC also raises the question of how far the state should enter personal and intimate life.
- Family law regulates marriage, sexuality, inheritance, kinship and domestic relations.
- If reform is not carefully designed, the **state may become a moral regulator rather than a protector of rights**.
- This concern becomes visible in debates around live-in relationships, interfaith unions and non-marital intimacy.
- A rights-based UCC should protect individual freedom, not merely impose social morality through law.
- **Floya Anthias and Nira Yuval-Davis’** work is relevant here because **women’s bodies and sexuality are often controlled in the name of community honour and national culture**.

7. Implementation Challenges

- **Marriage practices differ** widely across communities and regions.
- For example, some communities prohibit close-kin marriages, while others allow cross-cousin or parallel-cousin marriages.
- **Inheritance laws are even more complex** because they differ across religious, regional and customary systems.
- Hindu inheritance law includes the idea of joint family property and coparcenary, which does not exist in the same form in other personal laws.
- Muslim law restricts the right to will away property beyond one-third, while Hindu, Christian and Parsi laws allow broader testamentary freedom.
- Tribal communities have distinct customary laws related to marriage, inheritance, land and kinship.
- Therefore, drafting one uniform law for all communities requires careful consultation and sensitivity to lived social practices.

8. Muslim Personal Law and the Question of Women's Rights

- The UCC debate is often framed as a way to improve Muslim women's rights, but the issue is more complex.
- Muslim Personal Law **gives daughters a mandatory inheritance** share, though usually half that of sons.
- It also **restricts testamentary freedom** by limiting wills to one-third of the property.
- A will in favour of an existing heir generally requires the consent of other heirs.
- These restrictions **prevent women from being completely disinherited**.
- Some UCC models provide equal shares to sons and daughters but allow unrestricted wills.
- In such cases, **Muslim women may receive equality in theory but lose protection in practice**.
- Therefore, a UCC must not weaken existing protective provisions while trying to create uniformity.

9. Uttarakhand UCC as a Case Study

- Uttarakhand became the **first state to implement a state-level UCC framework**.
- It bans polygamy and bigamy, fixes minimum marriage age and provides rules for property inheritance.
- However, it also **mandates registration of live-in relationships**.
- Non-registration of live-in relationships can invite penalties, which raises concerns about **surveillance of private life**.
- This shows that UCC can be used both for gender justice and for moral regulation.
- The regulation of live-in relationships may affect individual freedom, privacy and cross-cultural relationships.
- From a Durkheimian lens, such provisions appear more repressive than restitutive because law is being used to enforce dominant moral beliefs.

10. Sociological Analysis

- **Durkheim (Law and Collective Conscience):** UCC reflects an attempt to create a shared moral-legal framework, but India's diversity makes this collective conscience contested.
- **Weber (Legal-Rational Authority):** UCC represents the modern state's attempt to rationalise diverse customary and religious practices through uniform law.
- **Yogendra Singh (Modernisation):** Law can act as an instrument of social change, but Indian modernisation involves negotiation between tradition and modernity, not simple replacement of tradition.
- **Ashis Nandy (Cultural Uniqueness):** Resistance to UCC reflects the desire of communities to preserve cultural autonomy and distinct identity.
- **Flavia Agnes (Gender and Legal Pluralism):** Gender justice should not be reduced to uniformity, because uniform laws may also carry dominant cultural biases.
- **Engels (Property and Patriarchy):** Inheritance reform is central because control over property is directly linked to women's subordination.
- **Anthias and Yuval-Davis (Gender and Nation):** Women's sexuality and family roles are often regulated as symbols of community and national honour.
- **Formal vs Substantive Equality:** Treating everyone the same legally may not produce equal outcomes socially.
- **Cultural Relativism vs Universalism:** UCC reflects the tension between respecting community-specific traditions and enforcing universal principles of equality.

12. Possible Approach

- UCC should not be imposed suddenly as a single uniform framework.
- A **gradual, consultative and rights-based approach** is more suitable.
- The **Special Marriage Act, 1954** can serve as a **useful template** because it treats marriage as a civil contract where religion is not central.
- **Donald Eugene Smith** called the **Special Marriage Act** a "**germinal version**" of the **Uniform Civil Code**.
- Reform can also proceed domain-wise, beginning with areas such as inheritance, marriage age, consent, divorce and maintenance.
- The **2018 Law Commission** approach of reforming existing personal laws to make them more gender-just can be a practical starting point.
- **Ambedkar** had suggested that a **future code could initially be voluntary**, applying to those who declare willingness to be governed by it.
- This shows that gradualism and consent can help reduce fear and resistance.

13. Way Forward

- Conduct wide consultations with women's groups, minority communities, tribal groups, legal experts and civil society.
- Ensure that gender justice remains the central aim of reform.
- Protect individual freedom, privacy and dignity in matters of marriage, sexuality and family life.

- Avoid majoritarian or homogenising tendencies in the drafting of a common code.
- Preserve beneficial provisions from existing personal laws, especially those that protect women's property and marital rights.
- Reform personal laws internally wherever immediate consensus on UCC is difficult.
- Address tribal customs separately with respect for autonomy and constitutional safeguards.
- Frame the UCC around constitutional morality rather than religious majoritarianism or social conservatism.

14. Conclusion

- The UCC debate is not simply about replacing personal laws with one common law.
- It is about how India balances equality, diversity, gender justice, religious freedom and individual autonomy.
- A meaningful UCC must not create a homogenised society; it must create equal citizenship.
- Uniformity should not become an end in itself.
- The real test of UCC is whether it expands justice, protects women's rights, respects diversity and strengthens constitutional values.
- Therefore, a sociologically sensitive UCC must be inclusive, consultative, gender-just and rooted in substantive equality.



Sleepy Classes IAS
Awakening Toppers

Climate Change and Society

1. Introduction

- Climate change is not merely an environmental or scientific issue; it is a social crisis shaped by unequal relations of class, caste, gender, region, occupation and global power.
- Its causes and consequences are socially distributed: those who contribute least to climate change often suffer its harshest effects.
- Sociologically, climate change must be understood as a question of environmental justice, social vulnerability, development, displacement and unequal access to resources.
- It affects agriculture, labour, migration, health, family, gender roles, caste relations, urban settlements and international relations.
- Therefore, the central issue is not only climate change, but climate inequality.

2. Climate Change as a Sociological Problem

- Climate change shows that society and nature are not separate domains; social systems shape ecological outcomes and ecological crises reshape social relations.
- Industrialisation, consumerism, fossil-fuel capitalism and unequal development have produced ecological risks that now threaten livelihoods and social stability.
- **Ulrich Beck's idea of "risk society"** is useful here, as modernity produces risks such as heatwaves, floods and ecological disasters that cannot be contained by traditional institutions.
- However, these risks are not experienced equally. The poor, informal workers, women, Dalits, Adivasis and small farmers are more exposed and less protected.
- Thus, climate change converts existing social inequality into ecological vulnerability.

3. Climate Inequality and Class

- Climate responsibility is deeply unequal.
- **The World Inequality Report 2026** shows that the **poorest half of the global population accounts for only 3% of carbon emissions** linked to private capital ownership.
- In contrast, the **top 10% accounts for 77% of such emissions**, while **the wealthiest 1% alone accounts for 41%**.
- This shows that climate change is not caused equally by "humanity" as a whole, but by unequal patterns of wealth, consumption, ownership and investment.
- The rich contribute more through high-carbon lifestyles and ownership of carbon-intensive assets, while the poor face greater exposure to climate shocks.
- This reflects the **political economy of climate change**: ecological crisis is linked to class power, capital accumulation and unequal consumption.

4. Climate Change and Gender

- Climate change is gendered because women often bear the burden of household survival during ecological stress.
- Droughts, water scarcity, food insecurity and health crises **increase women's unpaid care work**.

- Women may spend more time collecting water, managing household nutrition, caring for the sick and adjusting family survival strategies.
- At the same time, women often have limited access to land, credit, technology, climate information and leadership positions.
- Climate policy often treats gender as a symbolic “checkbox” rather than as a structural issue.
- A gender-responsive climate framework must therefore move beyond token inclusion and recognise women as knowledge holders, planners and decision-makers in adaptation and resilience.
- **Shishir Priyadarshi** (former WTO Director) in a recent event “*Climate Futures Through a Gender Lens*” stated that climate justice and gender justice are inseparable.
- This links with feminist sociology and the idea of social reproduction, where women’s unpaid labour sustains families and communities during crisis.

5. Climate Change and Caste

- In India, climate vulnerability is also structured by caste.
- **Mukul Sharma’s work on Dalit Ecologies** argues that environmental justice in India must explicitly include caste, not only class or general poverty.
- Caste-neutral climate policy can make Dalit experiences invisible by merging them into broad categories like “poor” or “vulnerable.”
- This invisibility may be understood as **climate casteism**, where caste-based ecological suffering remains unrecognised in policy language.
- Dalits and lower-caste groups are often concentrated in manual, outdoor, hazardous and stigmatised work such as sanitation, waste work, construction and agricultural labour.
- This makes them more vulnerable to heatwaves, floods, disease, unsafe housing and poor access to clean water.
- Caste can also shape access to wells, relief, rehabilitation, land, compensation and local decision-making.
- Thus, climate change does not create inequality from outside; it intensifies caste-based inequalities already embedded in Indian society.

6. Heatwaves and Embodied Inequality

- A **United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization and World Meteorological Organization** report published in April states that rising temperatures, prolonged heatwaves, and shifting climate patterns are already disrupting crop yields, livestock health, water availability, and rural livelihoods – with **impacts falling disproportionately on the most vulnerable**.
- Heatwaves show how climate change affects the body through social inequality.
- Rising temperatures affect outdoor workers, construction labourers, street vendors, sanitation workers, delivery workers, agricultural labourers, elderly people and slum dwellers more severely.

- A person's ability to avoid heat depends on class location, housing quality, occupation, access to cooling, water, healthcare and social protection.
- Small and marginal farmers face additional risks because heat stress affects crop yields, livestock health, water availability and rural income.
- Underreporting of heat-related illness and deaths weakens policy response and hides the social scale of the crisis.
- **Heat Action Plans**, early warnings and awareness campaigns are important, but their implementation remains uneven.
- Heatwaves therefore reveal embodied inequality: climate risk is experienced through the unequal capacity of bodies to work, rest, cool and survive.

7. Climate Change and Rural Livelihoods

- The UN ESCAP classifies Indian agriculture as "high risk" from heat stress.
- Agriculture is highly vulnerable to climate change because it depends on rainfall, soil quality, temperature, water and livestock.
- Rising temperatures, prolonged heatwaves and shifting rainfall patterns affect crop yields, rural wages and food security.
- Small and marginal farmers face greater vulnerability due to limited savings, insurance, irrigation, credit and access to adaptive technology.
- Livestock loss further affects rural households by reducing milk output, fertility and animal survival.
- Climate shocks increase debt, distress migration and livelihood insecurity.
- Since rural India is already marked by land inequality, caste hierarchy and class stratification, climate change deepens agrarian distress.

8. Climate Displacement and Migration

- Climate change is increasingly linked to displacement caused by droughts, floods, cyclones, sea-level rise, land degradation and livelihood loss.
- However, the term "**climate refugee**" remains legally ambiguous because there is no universally accepted definition.
- UNHCR prefers the phrase "**persons displaced due to climate change and disasters.**"
- Climate displacement is difficult to classify because migration is usually caused by multiple factors: climate stress, poverty, debt, disease, weak governance, conflict and lack of livelihood security.
- **People in the Global South are more vulnerable** because of dependence on climate-sensitive agriculture and limited adaptive capacity.
- Climate migration therefore reflects both ecological stress and structural inequality.
- Sociologically, displacement also disrupts kinship, community, identity, informal networks and social security.

9. Climate Change, Urbanisation and Informality

- Urban areas are becoming major sites of climate vulnerability.

- Informal settlements are often located in low-lying, flood-prone, poorly serviced and densely populated areas.
- Slum dwellers face risks from heat, waterlogging, disease, poor drainage, lack of sanitation and insecure housing.
- **Informal workers (including the Gig workers)** cannot easily stop working during heatwaves or disasters because their income depends on daily earnings.
- Climate change therefore intensifies the vulnerability of informal urban life.
- Urban climate policy must recognise that resilience is not only about infrastructure, but also housing rights, labour protection, health systems and social security.

10. Just Transition and Global Inequality

- Just transition means that the shift towards a low-carbon economy should not harm workers, poor communities or developing countries.
- It asks: who will bear the cost of climate action?
- Developing countries argue that just transition must include finance, capacity-building, technology transfer and nationally determined development pathways.
- They link climate transition with poverty eradication, development rights and concessional finance.
- Developed countries often define just transition more narrowly as workforce reskilling and knowledge-sharing.
- This difference reflects the larger North-South divide in climate politics.
- For the Global South, just transition is not merely about green jobs; it is about historical responsibility, climate finance and the right to development.
- The principle of **Common but Differentiated Responsibilities** is important because countries have unequal historical responsibility and unequal capacity to respond.

11. Sociological Analysis

- **Environmental Justice:** Climate change involves unequal distribution of ecological harms and environmental resources.
- **Risk Society (Ulrich Beck):** Modern development produces large-scale risks, but these risks are experienced unequally.
- **Political Economy of Climate Change:** The crisis is linked to capitalism, consumption, ownership, extraction and unequal development.
- **Intersectionality:** Climate vulnerability is shaped by the combined effects of caste, class, gender, occupation, region and age.
- **Environmental Racism / Environmental Casteism:** Marginalised communities often live and work in more polluted, hazardous and climate-vulnerable spaces due to structural exclusion.
- **Ecofeminism:** Women's role in care, subsistence and household survival makes climate change a gendered issue.
- **Social Reproduction:** Climate shocks increase unpaid care work and household survival labour, especially for women.

- **Climate Apartheid:** The wealthy can insulate themselves through cooling, insurance, mobility and private infrastructure, while the poor are left exposed to heat, floods and displacement.
- **Slow Violence (Rob Nixon):** Climate change produces gradual and invisible harm through heat stress, drought, crop loss, water scarcity and displacement, unlike spectacular disasters.
- **Metabolic Rift (Marxist Ecology):** Capitalist development creates a rupture between society and nature through extractive production and unsustainable consumption.
- **Global Stratification:** The Global North and wealthy classes have contributed more to emissions, while the Global South bears disproportionate vulnerability.
- **Substantive Climate Justice:** Equal climate policy is insufficient unless it accounts for unequal social locations and capacities.

13. Way Forward

- Climate policy must integrate social justice as a core principle, not as an add-on.
- Climate vulnerability mapping should include caste, gender, class, occupation, region, disability and age.
- Gender-responsive climate action should include women's leadership, gender budgeting, participatory planning and accountability mechanisms.
- Dalit, Adivasi and marginalised communities must be included in local climate planning and disaster governance.
- Heat Action Plans should include public cooling spaces, drinking water access, labour protections, health surveillance and better reporting of heat deaths.
- Climate migration needs legal recognition, rehabilitation, livelihood support and portable social security.
- Just transition must protect workers, farmers and informal communities affected by both climate change and decarbonisation.
- Developed countries must provide finance, technology and capacity-building support to developing countries.
- Climate governance should move from a purely technocratic model to a democratic, community-centred and justice-oriented model.

14. Conclusion

- Climate change is a social crisis expressed through ecological disruption.
- It exposes and intensifies existing inequalities of caste, class, gender, occupation, region and global power.
- The central question is not only how to reduce emissions, but how to ensure that adaptation and transition are just.
- A sociological approach shows that climate justice must include gender justice, caste justice, livelihood security, migration justice and global equity.
- Therefore, the future of climate policy must be inclusive, participatory and rooted in substantive environmental justice.

Women's Workforce Participation in India: A Sociological Analysis

1. Introduction

- Women's workforce participation refers to the proportion of women engaged in economic activity for income or sustenance, including formal, informal and unpaid sectors.
- It is an important indicator of gender equality, socio-economic development and the democratic character of institutions. However, India presents a paradox: despite improvements in women's education, health, banking access and mobility, women's participation in paid work remains low and uneven.
- The issue is not merely economic. It intersects with patriarchy, caste, class, family structure, labour market changes, unpaid care work, globalization and state policy.

2. The Indian Paradox: Improved Empowerment but Limited Workforce Participation

2.1 Progress in education and empowerment

NFHS-6 shows some improvement in women's education and empowerment:

- Female population aged 6+ who ever attended school increased to **73.7%**, from **71.8%** in NFHS-5.
- Women who worked in the last 12 months and were paid in cash increased from **25.4%** to **30.8%**.
- Women with a bank/savings account they themselves use rose to **89%**.
- Women having a mobile phone they themselves use rose to **63.6%**.

2.2 Labour force data

- According to PLFS 2025, India's Female Labour Force Participation Rate, age 15+, is around:
 - **45.9% in rural areas**
 - **27.7% in urban areas**
- India's female LFPR is around **40%**, compared to the global average of **48.9%** and OECD average of **67%**. Men's LFPR in India is much higher at **79.1%**.

2.3 Informality and vulnerability

- Over **90% of working women** are employed in agriculture, construction and informal sectors. This means that women's employment is often low-paid, insecure, unprotected and poorly recorded.
- CMIE data from 2022 showed that India lost **7 million jobs during the pandemic**, and women accounted for over **60% of those losses**.

2.4 Development paradox

- Claudia Goldin's **U-shaped hypothesis** helps explain this pattern. Female employment may decline during moderate development as household incomes rise and women withdraw from low-status work. It may rise again when better jobs, education and social support expand.

- **Karuna Ahmad** also identifies important trends in women's employment:
 - Pink-collarisation of women's work.
 - Clustering in low-status occupations.
 - Lower salaries than men.
 - High unemployment among educated and professionally trained women.

3. Structural Barriers to Women's Workforce Participation

3.1 Patriarchal family structure

- The family remains a key site where gender roles are reproduced. Women are expected to perform domestic responsibilities, caregiving and emotional labour.
- Oxfam India's household care survey also found that **1 in 3 respondents justify wife-beating for inadequate caregiving**, showing how care work is enforced through patriarchal norms and even violence.

3.2 Lack of gender-friendly infrastructure

- Women's participation is restricted by: Unsafe public transport, Poor workplace safety, Lack of public toilets, Absence of affordable childcare, Inadequate crèche facilities.
- These barriers show that labour markets are not gender-neutral. They are often designed around a male worker who is free from care responsibilities.

3.3 Occupational segregation

- Women are concentrated in low-paid sectors such as: Education, Health, Tailoring, Domestic work, Care work, Agriculture and allied work.
- At the same time, women have limited access to STEM, technology, high-skill and leadership roles.

3.4 Digital gender divide and skilling gap

- Women have lower access to digital devices, internet and digital literacy. This restricts their entry into online work, platform work and gig-based employment.
- Existing skilling programmes also often fail to match women's aspirations or local job markets.

3.5 Workplace discrimination

- A **Reuters investigation** found that **Foxconn's Tamil Nadu plant discriminated against married women** in hiring, citing family duties, pregnancy and cultural factors.
- This reflects a broader labour market bias where marriage and motherhood are treated as liabilities.

4. Cultural and Normative Constraints

- Women's paid work is also shaped by social norms.
- In many communities, honour, modesty and family reputation restrict women's mobility. Marriage and motherhood are treated as natural exit points from paid employment, creating both **marriage penalties** and **motherhood penalties**.

- Caste and religious norms also matter. Among upper-caste and conservative communities, social honour is often linked to women's home-bound role. In some regions, especially rural North India, women working outside the home is viewed as a sign of economic desperation or moral weakness.
- Thus, women's low workforce participation is not only a labour market problem; it is also a problem of social legitimacy.

5. Gendered Nature of Work

5.1 Unpaid care work

- Women perform childcare, cooking, cleaning, eldercare and emotional labour, much of which remains outside GDP.
- Time Use Survey 2024 shows that women spend far more time on unpaid domestic and care work. Among participants, women spend about **7.4 hours daily** on domestic and care work, compared to **2.7 hours for men**.
- Employment activities take up only **4.9% of women's time**, compared to **19.9% for men**.
- UN Women and UNDESA's **Gender Snapshot 2023** warns that without urgent action, a whole generation of women will continue to bear a disproportionate burden of unpaid housework due to persistent gender norms.

5.2 Invisible labour

- Women's work in family farms, family businesses and household enterprises is often unrecorded.
- PLFS 2025 shows that:
 - **64.2% of female workers are self-employed.**
 - **28.3% of all female workers are unpaid helpers in household enterprises.**
- Women's unpaid domestic and care work is outside GDP, though its estimated value is around **15–17% of GDP**.

5.3 Double burden syndrome

- **Arlie Hochschild's** idea of the **double burden** is highly relevant. Even when women enter paid work, they continue to carry the primary responsibility of household work and caregiving.

5.4 Glass ceiling

- Despite rising education levels, women remain under-represented in top leadership roles in the private sector, bureaucracy, academia and politics.

5.5 Recent study on care work

- A study by **Aakash Dev and Ratna Sahay, NCAER**, finds that unpaid care work and lack of formal part-time jobs hinder women's labour force participation in India. Addressing these barriers could raise India's FLFPR from **37% to 43%**, an increase of **6 percentage points**.

6. Menstrual Leave and Women's Work

- The menstrual leave debate shows that women's workforce participation is shaped not only by jobs and wages but also by gendered bodily realities that workplaces often ignore.
- The **Supreme Court recently observed** that compulsory **menstrual leave may discourage employers from hiring women**, thereby worsening labour market discrimination.
- However, menstrual pain and fatigue can affect attendance, concentration and productivity. This creates both absenteeism and presenteeism. Therefore, the issue is linked to substantive equality, not merely formal equality.
- Empirical studies strengthen this claim:
 - A large BMJ study of **32,748 women** found that menstrual symptoms cause significant productivity loss.
 - A study in the **Journal of the Egyptian Public Health Association** found that dysmenorrhea affects both attendance and work performance.
- Sociologically, the idea of a **"neutral worker"** is often implicitly male. Menstrual leave challenges this by demanding recognition of embodied inequality in the workplace.
- However, **Richard Lewontin's critique of biological determinism** is relevant. Menstrual leave should not be used to naturalise the idea that women are weaker or less dependable workers.
- **Leela Dube and Rituparna Patgiri** help show how menstruation becomes part of gender socialisation in patrilineal settings, where girls learn rules of body control, shame and restricted mobility.
- **Chris Bobel's work** reminds us that bleeding is material, but menstrual stigma is cultural. Hence, policy must recognise pain without reinforcing stigma.
- Therefore, menstrual leave should be placed within a broader framework of workplace dignity, flexible work, sanitation, menstrual products, medical support and protection against labour market discrimination.

7. Emerging Patterns and Contradictions

7.1 Gig economy and remote work

- Post-pandemic work has created new spaces for women in home-based work, beauty services, online tuition and platform-based services.
- These forms of work provide flexibility but often lack social security, collective bargaining, safety nets and career mobility.

7.2 Reverse migration

- Post-COVID lockdowns saw many women return to villages and take up MNREGA, farming and other rural work.

7.3 Distress-driven employment

- A rise in women's employment does not always mean empowerment. Many women enter self-employment, petty trade or informal work due to distress and lack of alternatives.

7.4 Educational mismatch

- Many educated women withdraw from the labour force because available jobs do not match their qualifications, status expectations, safety concerns or family norms.

8. State Policies and Institutional Measures

8.1 Labour and welfare laws

- **Maternity Benefit Amendment Act, 2017** increased paid maternity leave to 26 weeks but has been criticised for creating hiring bias against women in small enterprises.
- **Equal Remuneration Act, 1976** mandates equal pay for equal work, but enforcement remains weak.
- **Labour Code on Social Security, 2020** made crèches a gender-neutral entitlement, recognising care as a parental responsibility, though it applies only to establishments with 50 or more employees.
- **Gig Workers' Social Security Code, 2020** recognises platform workers but still lacks comprehensive social security coverage for women workers in platforms like Urban Company or Amazon Saheli.

8.2 Schemes and institutional measures

- **PMKVY** aims to provide market-aligned skill training but has limited female-centric courses.
- **Mahila Shakti Kendras** provide community-level interventions for rural women but remain underfunded.
- **NRLM** uses the SHG model to support rural women's income generation and collective bargaining.
- **Gender Budgeting**, institutionalised in 2005, remains largely symbolic without measurable outcomes.
- **Palna Scheme under Mission Shakti** allows states to set up standalone crèches or convert Anganwadi centres into crèches.

8.3 Judicial recognition

- In **Shalini Dharmani v. State of Himachal Pradesh**, the Supreme Court held that women's workforce participation is a constitutional entitlement under Article 15, not a privilege. The Court emphasised that the state must address women's specific needs, including childcare leave.
- In **Shishu Pal @ Shish Ram v. Surjeet**, the Supreme Court recognised the economic value of unpaid domestic and care work of homemakers while calculating motor accident compensation. The Court fixed **₹30,000 per month as the notional income of a homemaker**, with 10% upward revision every three years, and **observed that homemakers are "nation builders"**.

The Economic Survey 2022–23 also proposed recognising unpaid work as a productive endeavour contributing to the standard of living.

9. Theoretical Perspectives

9.1 Functionalism: Talcott Parsons

- Parsons saw men as breadwinners and women as caregivers, treating this division as functionally necessary for social stability. However, this view has been criticised for legitimising patriarchal gender roles.

9.2 Feminist theory

- Liberal and radical feminists argue that patriarchy and capitalism systematically devalue women's labour. Unpaid work, wage gaps, occupational segregation and exclusion from leadership are forms of institutional sexism.

9.3 Pierre Bourdieu: Habitus and symbolic violence

- Bourdieu's idea of habitus explains how women internalise gendered roles through socialisation. Symbolic violence is visible when women accept domesticity, dependence or labour market marginality as natural.

9.4 Kimberlé Crenshaw: Intersectionality

- Women's work is shaped not only by gender but also by caste, class, religion and region. Dalit women, for example, often face a triple burden of caste, class and gender.

9.5 Amartya Sen: Capability approach

- Women's participation should not be evaluated only through numbers. The real question is whether women have the freedom, mobility, education, safety, dignity and agency to choose work. Empowerment means expansion of capabilities, not merely labour force entry.

10. Case Studies and Regional Insights

10.1 Kerala

- Kerala has high literacy and strong health indicators, yet women's employment remains limited. PLFS Oct-Dec 2025 shows Kerala's female LFPR at **33.8%** and female WPR at **29.9%**, reflecting an education-employment paradox.

10.2 Bihar

- Bihar's female LFPR remains low at **23.7%**, due to low non-farm jobs, mobility constraints, unpaid care work, safety concerns and patriarchal norms.

10.3 Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh

- SHGs in Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh have moved beyond savings and credit towards livelihood generation, entrepreneurship and women's collective bargaining power.

10.4 Karnataka

- Karnataka's **Koosina Mane crèches** are a strong example of childcare support for working mothers, with thousands of centres started.

10.5 Urban gig work

- Platforms like Urban Company have enabled flexible employment for women but also reproduce precarity, weak safety nets and lack of social protection.

10.6 International examples

- A four-day workweek with full pay, currently being experimented with in Europe and led by Belgium, aims to improve work-life balance and reduce gender disparities by easing women's unpaid care burden.
- Reduced workweek trials in Iceland and Spain have improved work-life balance, happiness and productivity. However, such reforms are only one part of a broader strategy needed to address gender inequality.
- Japan introduced **Eruboshi certification**, a five-star system that recognises companies committed to workforce diversity.

11. Pathways for Transformation

11.1 Redistribution of care work

- There is a need for public investment in crèches, eldercare and community kitchens. Paternity leave and shared household roles must also be promoted.

11.2 Recognition of unpaid work

- Unpaid care work should be integrated into national accounts through models such as Satellite Accounts.

11.3 Labour law reforms

- Social security must be extended to gig workers, domestic workers, informal workers and unpaid helpers in household enterprises.

11.4 Digital inclusion and skilling

- Gender-sensitive skilling programmes should be aligned with women's aspirations and local job markets. Women's access to smartphones, internet and digital literacy must be expanded, especially in rural areas.

11.5 Changing social norms

- Gender sensitisation in schools, workplaces and communities is necessary to challenge the idea that care work is naturally women's work.

11.6 Economic benefits

- The IMF predicts that India's GDP could increase by **27%** with equal female participation in the labour force.

11.7 Better enforcement

- There is a need for stronger grievance redressal systems, workplace harassment watchdogs, labour audits and gender-sensitive inspection mechanisms.

11.8 Public-private partnerships

- Employers must be encouraged to provide flexible work, safe transport, crèche facilities, menstrual support, gender-sensitive HR policies and pathways for leadership.

12. Conclusion

- Women's workforce participation in India cannot be understood only through employment numbers. It reflects the deeper organisation of family, caste, patriarchy, care work, labour markets and state policy.
- The challenge is not merely to bring women into the labour force, but to transform the social and institutional conditions under which they work. A meaningful approach must combine recognition of unpaid labour, redistribution of care, gender-sensitive infrastructure, social security, anti-discrimination safeguards and cultural change.
- Thus, women's work is not just an economic question. It is a question of dignity, citizenship, equality and social democracy.



Sleepy Classes IAS
Awakening Toppers

Naxalism: Inequality, Violence and Governance

1. Introduction

- The **recent sharp decline of Left-Wing Extremism, with Maoist influence now largely confined to a few districts**, has renewed debate on whether Naxalism is nearing collapse or merely changing form.
- Naxalism/Maoism refers to the armed Left-wing extremist movement inspired by **Maoist ideology**, especially the idea of revolutionary peasant struggle against oppressive social and economic structures.
- In India, Maoism emerged from the **Naxalbari uprising of 1967 in West Bengal**.
- The early Naxalite groups viewed India as a “**semi-feudal, semi-colonial**” society and argued that only armed peasant struggle could bring land, dignity and justice to the rural poor.
- Sociologically, Naxalism is not merely a law-and-order problem. It must be understood through agrarian inequality, caste oppression, Adivasi marginalisation, displacement, weak state presence and failure of justice.
- The core issue is that Maoism grew where the formal state lacked legitimacy and where insurgent groups appeared to provide an alternative structure of authority.

2. Historical Emergence

- The movement began with the Naxalbari uprising in 1967, which was rooted in land struggles and peasant mobilisation.
- It drew inspiration from **Mao's idea of armed agrarian revolution** and the mobilisation of peasants against feudal and state power.
- Over time, the movement spread across the “**Red Corridor,**” especially in forested and **tribal regions of Andhra-Telangana, Bihar, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and Odisha**.
- Its social base developed mainly among landless peasants, Dalits and Adivasis.
- These groups often experienced the state as distant, predatory or absent in everyday life.

3. Social Base of Maoism

- Maoism gained support among communities facing multiple forms of deprivation.
- **Landless peasants** were attracted by demands for land redistribution and agrarian justice.
- **Dalits and lower-caste groups** were drawn by resistance to caste oppression, bonded labour and rural domination.
- **Adivasis** supported the movement where forest rights, land rights and local autonomy were threatened.
- The movement grew especially in areas where people lacked access to justice, welfare, employment and accountable governance.
- Thus, Maoism was not sustained by ideology alone, but by lived experiences of exclusion and humiliation.

4. Structural Causes Behind Maoism

a) Failed land reforms

- Incomplete land reforms allowed unequal land relations and rural hierarchies to continue.
- Landlessness and dependency created conditions where radical demands for redistribution appeared meaningful.

b) Caste oppression and bonded labour

- In many rural regions, caste domination combined with economic exploitation.
- Bonded labour, social humiliation and violence against lower castes created anger against the existing order.
- Maoism found support where inequality was both economic and social.

c) Adivasi marginalisation

- Adivasi communities were often excluded from control over land, forests and local resources.
- In many forest regions, the state appeared more as an agent of extraction than welfare.
- This created alienation from formal governance.

d) Displacement without rehabilitation

- Dams, mines and industrial projects displaced local people, especially Adivasis.
- Lack of proper rehabilitation deepened distrust toward the state.
- Development was often experienced as dispossession rather than progress.

e) Predatory local state

- Corruption, police brutality, harassment by forest officials and weak administration produced resentment.
- The state was often seen as coercive rather than protective.

f) Absence of accessible justice

- Formal courts, grievance redressal and administrative mechanisms were weak in many villages.
- Maoists gained acceptance by offering rough dispute resolution, wage enforcement and action against local oppressors.

5. Why Poverty Alone Cannot Explain Maoism

- Poverty creates vulnerability, but it does not automatically produce extremism.
- Many poor regions in India did not witness large-scale Maoist mobilisation.
- **Studies by the National Bureau of Economic Research and the University of North Carolina show that poverty and unemployment alone do not predict terrorism or political violence.**
- These studies find that **ideology, weak state capacity, and identity-based grievances are stronger drivers of extremism.**
- **Maoism was concentrated in areas where poverty combined with weak state capacity, forest isolation, caste oppression, land alienation and political neglect.**

- Therefore, the more accurate explanation is not poverty in isolation, but poverty combined with exclusion, humiliation and lack of institutional access.

6. How Maoism Sustained Itself Socially

a) Parallel governance

- Maoist groups gained influence where they performed limited governing functions.
- They mediated disputes, enforced wages, punished local oppressors and regulated local power relations.
- In weak state regions, they became an alternative authority.

b) Coercion and consent

- Maoist control was not based only on popular support.
- It combined coercion with claims of justice, dignity and protection for marginalised groups.
- This dual character helped the movement survive in fragmented and poorly governed regions.

c) Control over isolated spaces

- Forested and remote regions allowed Maoists to control movement, information and local networks.
- Weak roads, poor communication and limited state penetration helped insurgent consolidation.

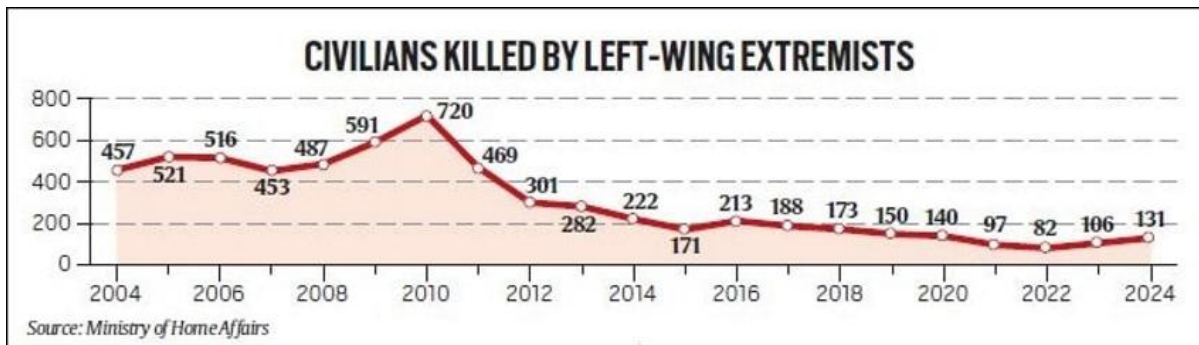
d) Moral claim of justice

- Maoists presented themselves as defenders of the exploited.
- This moral language gave them legitimacy among groups who felt abandoned by constitutional institutions.

7. Decline of Maoism

- Maoist influence has declined significantly in recent years.
- This decline was due to a combination of security expansion, better intelligence, local policing and administrative penetration.
- The government adopted a **Naxal-Mukt Bharat approach** that combines security measures with governance reforms.
- The **state adopted a “clear, hold and develop” approach**, combining security operations with infrastructure and governance expansion.
- Roads, mobile towers, schools, police stations, health centres and welfare delivery reduced the isolation of former Maoist zones.
- Improved connectivity weakened Maoist control over movement and information.
- Local people increasingly realised that destruction of schools, roads, railways and telecom towers harmed employment and development.
- **Average annual civilian deaths due to Left-Wing Extremism fell from 480 (2004–2013) to 152 (2014–2024).**
- **The number of Naxal-affected districts reduced from 126 in 2014 to 18 in 2024.**

- Only six districts are now classified as severely affected, indicating a major contraction of insurgent influence.



- Thus, the decline of Maoism shows that insurgency weakens when the state becomes more visible, capable and responsive.

8. Security Victory and the Question of Legitimacy

- The decline of violence does not automatically mean that the underlying social questions have been resolved.
- A security victory must be converted into democratic legitimacy.
- The key question is whether the state can provide justice, dignity, welfare and participation in regions formerly affected by Maoism.
- If governance remains weak, a **post-Maoist vacuum may emerge**.
- Such a vacuum can be **filled by criminality, new forms of alienation or issue-based radicalism**.
- Therefore, the long-term solution lies not only in state presence, but in trusted and responsive state presence.

9. Can Maoism Return?

- The old Maoist model of controlling isolated forested territories has weakened.
- Roads, mobile phones, social media, migration and greater information flow have reduced the possibility of sealed-off insurgent zones.
- However, the social conditions that produced Maoism have not completely disappeared.
- Inequality, land acquisition, displacement, environmental injustice, precarious work and automation can still create new forms of radical politics.
- The likely future may not be a return of the old Red Corridor, but issue-based radicalism around land, livelihood, forest rights and development injustice.

10. Urban Naxalism: A Contested Category

- “Urban Naxalism” is a contested term used in public discourse to describe alleged **urban networks that provide ideological, logistical or intellectual support** to Maoist politics.
- Unlike classical Maoism, which was rooted in forests, peasant struggles and Adivasi regions, the urban form is **associated with universities, civil society spaces, labour networks, media, legal activism and rights-based campaigns**.
- It reflects **a shift from territorial insurgency to networked forms of political mobilisation**, where ideas, narratives, legal support and symbolic legitimacy become important.

- **Gramsci's idea of counter-hegemony** is useful here, as radical politics in urban spaces often challenges dominant state and development narratives.
- **Resource Mobilisation Theory** also applies, as urban networks may provide access to communication, legal aid, intellectual legitimacy and organisational resources.
- However, the term must be used cautiously because it can blur the distinction between violent insurgency and democratic dissent, rights activism or criticism of the state.
- From a **power perspective**, the label may also function as a tool of securitisation, where certain forms of protest or dissent are framed as threats to national security.
- Therefore, the key concern is not only whether Maoism has urban links, but how the state, media and civil society define the boundary between legitimate dissent and extremist politics.

11. Sociological Analysis

- **Relative Deprivation (Ted Gurr):** People rebel not simply because they are poor, but because they experience a gap between expectations and lived exclusion.
- **State Legitimacy (Max Weber):** When the state fails to deliver justice, security and welfare, armed movements can gain moral credibility.
- **Internal Colonialism:** Adivasi regions are often integrated into the nation through extraction, control and displacement rather than equal citizenship.
- **Accumulation by Dispossession (David Harvey):** Land, forests and minerals are taken for development, pushing already vulnerable communities into deeper insecurity.
- **Development-Induced Displacement:** Dams, mines and industries created alienation where development was experienced as land loss, cultural disruption and dispossession rather than progress.
- **Subaltern Resistance:** Maoism can be seen as a form of politics emerging from groups historically excluded from elite-controlled democratic channels.
- **Hegemony Failure (Gramsci):** The state may control territory formally but fail to win moral and ideological consent from local communities.
- **Legitimation Crisis (Habermas):** When institutions fail to justify their authority through justice and welfare, alternative forces gain space.
- **Structural Violence (Johan Galtung):** Harm is produced not only by direct violence but also by unequal land relations, displacement, exclusion and lack of justice.
- **Symbolic Violence (Bourdieu):** Caste humiliation and routine domination can make inequality appear natural and acceptable.
- **Social Disorganisation (Chicago School):** Violence grows where local institutions such as schools, courts, administration and welfare systems are weak or absent.
- **Citizenship Deficit:** Affected populations may be legal citizens but lack substantive access to rights, dignity, justice and voice.
- **Peripheralisation:** Resource-rich regions may remain socially and politically marginal while being integrated into the economy for extraction.

12. Way Forward

- **Strengthen land rights**, forest rights and rehabilitation mechanisms.
- Ensure **meaningful implementation of PESA** and **Forest Rights Act** in tribal regions.
- **Build** trusted local **institutions** such as schools, health centres, grievance redressal systems and local administration.
- Improve access to justice through legal aid, mobile courts and accountable policing.
- Recruit local youth in administration, policing, education and welfare delivery.
- Ensure that development projects involve consent, fair compensation and rehabilitation.
- **Address caste oppression, bonded labour** and local social domination through active enforcement of law.
- Combine security measures with democratic inclusion and social justice.
- Shift from a purely coercive model to a **legitimacy-based model of governance**.

13. Conclusion

- Maoism in India emerged from a combination of agrarian inequality, caste oppression, Adivasi exclusion, displacement, predatory bureaucracy and weak state legitimacy.
- Its decline shows the importance of security, connectivity and administrative expansion.
- However, the deeper sociological question remains whether democratic institutions can address inequality, humiliation and exclusion in a durable way.
- Sustainable peace requires justice, inclusion and accountable governance.
- Therefore, the best antidote to extremism is not only force, but development rooted in dignity, rights and trust.

Migration, Informality and Citizenship

1. Introduction

- Migration is one of the most important processes shaping contemporary Indian society.
- It links villages with cities, agriculture with industry, informal labour with urban growth, and Indian households with global labour markets.
- Migrants are not a single category. They include seasonal workers, circular migrants, construction workers, domestic workers, gig workers, women marriage migrants, students, professionals, return migrants, climate-displaced persons and overseas workers.
- Sociologically, migration is important because it reflects inequality in development, labour informalisation, urban exclusion, caste-class mobility, gendered family structures and changing ideas of citizenship.
- The core contradiction is that migrants are economically indispensable but socially and politically invisible.

2. Scale and Recent Data

- **Census 2011 recorded around 455.7 million internal migrants in India.**
- Of these, more than **45 million migrated for work.**
- However, official data underestimates migration because short-term, seasonal, circular and commuting migrants are poorly captured.
- **MoSPI's Migration in India 2020-21** estimated India's **migration rate at 28.9%.**
- The **urban migration rate was higher at 34.9%**, showing the importance of migration in urbanisation.
- **Female migration rate was 47.9%**, much higher than male migration rate of 10.7%, mainly because **marriage remains a major reason for female migration.**
- This shows that migration in India is not only labour migration; it is also shaped by marriage, kinship, family and patriarchy.

3. Changing Patterns of Migration

- **EAC-PM-linked work ("400 Million Dreams!")** by Debroy and Misra used railway ticketing, telecom roaming and banking data to study **recent migration trends.**
- It suggested a **12% decline in migration between 2011 and 2023, linked to better education, health, connectivity and opportunities at source regions.**
- **Most migration occurs within 500 km**, supporting Ravenstein's law that short-distance migration forms the largest share.
- **New migrant-receiving states such as West Bengal, Rajasthan and Karnataka** have become important destinations.
- This suggests that migration is becoming more regionally dispersed, not restricted to traditional destinations such as Delhi, Maharashtra and Gujarat.
- However, digital-trace-based studies must be used carefully because they may miss the poorest migrants who have weak access to phones, banking and formal systems.

4. Types of Migration in India

- **Rural-to-rural migration:** Often linked to marriage, agriculture, seasonal work and caste-community networks.
- **Rural-to-urban migration:** Linked to construction, manufacturing, domestic work, transport, services and informal employment.
- **Urban-to-urban migration:** Increasingly linked to education, skilled work, professional employment and service-sector mobility.
- **Circular migration:** Workers repeatedly move between village and city rather than settling permanently.
- **Seasonal migration:** Common among agricultural labourers, brick-kiln workers, sugarcane cutters, construction workers and tribal communities.
- **Internal diaspora:** Long-distance internal migration across linguistic and cultural zones creates diaspora-like experiences within India.
- **International migration:** Indian workers migrate to the Gulf, Southeast Asia, Europe, North America and other regions for low-skilled and high-skilled work.

5. Causes of Migration

- Migration is shaped by both distress and aspiration.
- **Distress-driven migration** arises from poverty, landlessness, agrarian distress, caste oppression, debt, lack of local jobs and climate shocks.
- **Aspiration-driven migration** arises from education, better wages, urban lifestyles, professional opportunities and social mobility.
- **Everett Lee's push-pull theory** is useful, but migration cannot be reduced to individual choice.
- Migration is also shaped by kinship networks, caste networks, contractors, labour intermediaries and historical routes.
- For many poor workers, migration is not upward mobility but survival through mobility.

6. Migrants as Footloose Labour

- **Jan Breman describes migrant workers as "footloose labour"** because they are mobile, insecure and easily discarded when not needed.
- Migrants function as a **reserve army of labour** in Marxist terms, keeping wages low and labour replaceable.
- They are concentrated in construction, domestic work, street vending, transport, manufacturing, mines, plantations, hospitality and gig work.
- Their work is often temporary, informal, low-paid and weakly protected.
- Many migrants lack written contracts, paid leave, social security, health insurance, safe housing and collective bargaining power.
- This reflects **informalisation of labour**, where economic growth depends on cheap and flexible labour without corresponding labour rights.

7. Urban Migrants and Citizenship Deficit

- Indian cities depend on migrants but rarely recognise them as full urban citizens.
- Migrants build roads, houses, metros, malls and offices, but often live in slums, labour camps, rented rooms, worksites or informal settlements.
- They face weak access to housing, sanitation, healthcare, schooling, ration, voting rights and legal protection.
- **Henri Lefebvre's idea of the Right to the City** is useful because migrants help produce urban space but do not equally access its resources.
- **Saskia Sassen's idea of the global city** is also relevant because metropolitan economies depend on low-cost labour that remains invisible in urban governance.
- Urban planning often prioritises beautification, smart infrastructure and middle-class consumption while pushing migrant workers to the city's margins.
- This **creates a citizenship deficit**: migrants are citizens in law but not in everyday access to rights.

8. Pandemic and the Visibility of Migrants

- The Covid-19 lockdown exposed the invisibility of migrant workers.
- The sudden migrant exodus showed that cities were dependent on migrant labour but had not provided them housing, social security or crisis protection.
- Migrants were treated as temporary labour rather than as members of the urban community.
- The **crisis revealed the limits of residence-based welfare systems**, where access to ration, health care and relief depends on local documents.
- It also **showed the importance of portability of rights** across states and cities.

9. Gendered Migration

- Female migration in India is numerically high, but **much of it is recorded as marriage migration**.
- This reflects **patrilocality**, where women move to the husband's place after marriage.
- However, women also migrate for domestic work, care work, garment work, education, nursing, construction and family survival.
- Migrant women face layered vulnerabilities: low wages, unsafe housing, harassment, lack of childcare, poor sanitation and weak legal protection.
- **R. B. Bhagat highlights** that migrants are not homogeneous; **migrant women face compounded vulnerabilities**.
- **Intersectionality** is important because Dalit, Adivasi, Muslim and poor migrant women experience migration differently from middle-class professional women.
- Migration may increase women's mobility and income, but it does not automatically produce empowerment.

10. Internal Diaspora and Cultural Identity

- **Migration within India can create diaspora-like experiences** because people cross linguistic, regional and cultural zones.

- **Odia workers in Surat calling it “videsh”** shows that diaspora is not only about crossing national borders; it may also emerge through cultural distance.
- **Chinmay Tumble’s work on internal and international diasporas** suggests that counting internal diasporas raises India’s total diasporic experience from about 30 million international migrants to well over 100 million when internal diasporas are included.
- **Large language groups such as Punjabi, Malayalam and Tamil show high dispersion.**
- Migrant associations such as Bengali Durga Puja committees, Marathi Mandals and Gujarati Samaj bodies help preserve identity and provide mutual support.
- **Robert Putnam’s distinction between bonding and bridging social capital** is useful here: migrant networks provide security, but they can also remain socially separate from host communities.

11. Climate Migration and Disaster Displacement

- Climate change is making migration more complex.
- Droughts, floods, cyclones, heatwaves, land degradation and loss of livelihoods can push people into temporary or permanent movement.
- **IDMC’s GRID 2025 recorded 5.4 million disaster displacements** in India in 2024, the country’s highest figure since 2012.
- Climate migration is difficult to define because migration is usually caused by multiple factors: poverty, landlessness, debt, weak governance, agrarian distress and ecological shocks.
- Migrant workers are also vulnerable to heat stress in cities.
- Recent research on migrant labourers in Indian cities shows that heat stress can reduce labour productivity and disproportionately affect migrants in physically demanding jobs.
- Climate change therefore intensifies existing inequalities of class, caste, occupation and region.

12. International Migration and Remittances

- India is one of the world’s largest sources of international migrants.
- **Over 17 million Indians live abroad**, with many working in the Gulf, Southeast Asia, Europe, North America and other regions.
- **As per World Migration Report 2026 India remained the world’s largest recipient of remittances in 2024.**
- Also, India was the only country to cross \$100 billion in remittance inflows.
- **World Bank estimates India received around \$129 billion in remittances in 2024**, making it the largest remittance recipient globally.
- Remittances support household consumption, education, health care, housing, debt repayment and local economies.
- **But international migration also involves risks:** recruitment fraud, debt bondage, wage theft, unsafe work, contract substitution and weak embassy-level grievance redress.
- Low-skilled workers, domestic workers and construction workers are more vulnerable than elite professional migrants.

- **Wallerstein's world-systems theory** is useful because labour often flows from poorer or semi-peripheral regions to richer core economies.

13. Overseas Labour Protection

- Migration governance for Indian workers abroad has long relied on the Emigration Act, 1983.
- The proposed **Overseas Mobility (Facilitation and Welfare) Bill, 2025** seeks to modernise **migration governance** but has been criticised for weak enforceable protections.
- Key concerns include lack of clear guarantees for minimum wages, rest days, overtime, employer accountability, multilingual counselling, gender-sensitive safeguards and reintegration mechanisms.
- There are also concerns that **migrant databases may become tools of surveillance** if privacy safeguards are weak.
- Sociologically, **overseas migrants can be seen as "denizens"** – economically useful but politically vulnerable and weakly protected.

14. Policy Developments in India

- Important legal frameworks include the Inter-State Migrant Workmen Act, Contract Labour Act, Building and Other Construction Workers Act and Unorganised Workers' Social Security Act.
- However, implementation remains fragmented and weak.
- The **e-Shram portal, launched in 2021**, created a **National Database of Unorganised Workers**.
- By August 2025, nearly 31 crore unorganised workers had registered on e-Shram.
- The portal includes migrant workers, gig workers, domestic workers, street vendors, agricultural workers, ASHAs and anganwadi workers.
- But **registration alone does not guarantee wage security, housing, social protection or labour rights**.
- **One Nation One Ration Card improves food security portability** by allowing NFSA beneficiaries to access ration from any ePoS-enabled fair price shop.
- This is important for migrants, but portability must extend beyond ration to health care, schooling, pensions, housing and voting rights.

15. Core Sociological Concepts

- **Ravenstein's Law of Migration:** Most migration tends to be short-distance and shaped by economic opportunity.
- **Push-Pull Theory – Everett Lee:** Migration is shaped by distress at source and opportunities at destination.
- **Footloose Labour – Jan Breman:** Migrants are mobile, insecure and easily discarded by labour markets.
- **Reserve Army of Labour – Marx:** Migrants act as surplus labour that keeps wages low and labour replaceable.

- **Precarity – Guy Standing:** Migrants face unstable jobs, insecure income and weak social protection.
- **Depeasantisation:** Workers move away from agriculture without necessarily entering secure industrial employment.
- **Circular Migration:** Migrants repeatedly move between source and destination rather than settling permanently.
- **Right to the City – Lefebvre:** Migrants produce the city but are denied full access to urban resources.
- **Global City – Saskia Sassen:** Urban economies depend on low-cost migrant labour that remains invisible in planning.
- **Symbolic Violence – Bourdieu:** Migrants are labelled as outsiders, encroachers or temporary labour, making exclusion appear normal.
- **Epistemic Violence – Spivak:** Urban planning often ignores migrant knowledge and lived realities.
- **Intersectionality – Crenshaw:** Migrant vulnerability differs by caste, class, gender, religion, language and region.
- **Transnationalism:** Migrants maintain ties across borders through remittances, digital communication, family networks and cultural practices.
- **Internal Diaspora:** Cultural distance within India can produce diaspora-like identity even without crossing national borders.

17. Way Forward

- Create a comprehensive national migration policy covering internal, circular, seasonal and international migrants.
- Build a robust migration database that captures short-term, circular, seasonal and commuting migrants.
- Strengthen portability of ration, health care, pensions, education, housing and social security.
- Ensure affordable rental housing, worker hostels, sanitation and health facilities in migrant-dense urban areas.
- Recognise migrants as urban stakeholders in municipal planning and governance.
- Provide multilingual legal aid, helplines and grievance redress systems.
- Enforce minimum wages, occupational safety and social security for migrant workers.
- Protect migrant women through safe housing, childcare, sanitation, workplace safety and gender-sensitive complaint systems.
- Support migrant children through flexible school admission, bridge courses and language support.
- Regulate recruitment agents and foreign employers for overseas migration.
- Treat migration as a normal part of development, not as a problem to be controlled.

18. Conclusion

- Migration is not a marginal issue; it is central to India's labour markets, urbanisation, family life, regional development and global economy.



- Migrants sustain cities, infrastructure, services and remittance economies, yet often remain invisible in policy and public imagination.
- The sociological issue is not migration itself, but unequal and insecure migration.
- A just migration framework must ensure dignity, portability, housing, labour rights, social protection and political voice.
- Therefore, migration policy must move from registration and control to inclusion, rights and substantive citizenship.



Sleepy Classes IAS
Awakening Toppers

Decolonisation, Indian Knowledge Systems and Epistemic Justice

1. Introduction

- **Decolonisation** originally referred to the end of formal colonial rule and the achievement of political independence by colonised societies.
- In contemporary academic debates, the term has expanded beyond political freedom to include the decolonisation of knowledge, culture, curriculum, language and institutions.
- In India, the debate has gained renewed importance through discussions on **Indian Knowledge Systems, National Education Policy, curriculum revision**, language politics and the critique of colonial-era institutions.
- Sociologically, decolonisation is important because colonialism did not operate only through political domination. It also shaped knowledge, identity, culture, education, law, language and social hierarchy.
- The central question is: Can societies become intellectually independent after becoming politically independent?

2. Meaning of Decolonisation

- In its narrow historical sense, decolonisation means the transfer of power from colonial rulers to self-governing nations.
- This meaning is linked to anti-colonial struggles, national independence, sovereignty and self-determination.
- In its broader sociological sense, decolonisation means questioning the continuing influence of colonial power in knowledge, culture, language, institutions and everyday consciousness.
- Decolonial theorists argue that **coloniality survives colonialism**. Formal empire may end, but **colonial hierarchies may continue through education, research, development models, language and state institutions**.
- Thus, decolonisation is not merely about replacing foreign rulers; it is also about transforming structures of thought and power.

3. Difference between Colonialism, Postcolonialism and Decoloniality

- **Colonialism** refers to direct political, economic and cultural control by one society over another.
- **Postcolonialism** studies the condition after colonial rule and examines how colonial memories, identities and institutions continue to shape society.
- **Decoloniality** goes further and argues that modern knowledge, science, development and power structures often still carry colonial assumptions.
- **Postcolonial theory** often focuses on representation, discourse and culture.
- **Decolonial theory** focuses more sharply on coloniality of power, knowledge and being.
- Therefore, decolonisation must be understood as both a historical process and a continuing intellectual project.

4. Colonialism and Knowledge Production

- Colonial rule produced knowledge about colonised societies in ways that often served governance and control.
- **Census, law, ethnography, maps, surveys and education** were used to classify and administer colonised populations.
- **Edward Said's idea of Orientalism** is important here: the East was represented as backward, irrational and passive, while the West was projected as rational, modern and superior.
- This created a hierarchy where Europe became the subject of theory and the rest of the world became the object of study.
- Decolonisation challenges this hierarchy by asking whose knowledge is treated as universal and whose knowledge is treated as local, traditional or inferior.

5. Macaulay, Education and Colonial Modernity

- **Macaulay's 1835 education policy** is sociologically significant because it used education as a tool of governance.
- English education helped produce an intermediary elite that could mediate between colonial rulers and Indian society.
- However, **colonial education had a dual character**.
- On one hand, it **reproduced hierarchy** by making English a route to state employment, elite status and cultural capital.
- On the other hand, it also **provided tools for anti-colonial critique**, constitutionalism and political mobilisation.
- Therefore, colonial education should not be seen only as domination or only as liberation. It was a site of both reproduction and resistance.

6. Language, Power and Cultural Capital

- Language is central to decolonisation because colonial power often worked through linguistic hierarchy.
- **English became embedded in high-power institutions** such as courts, bureaucracy, universities, diplomacy and elite employment.
- **Bourdieu's idea of linguistic capital** is useful because English functions as a scarce resource that converts into jobs, status and institutional access.
- This creates inequality between English-speaking elites and those educated in regional languages.
- However, **Indian languages are not automatically democratic or liberating**.
- They can also reproduce caste, gender and regional exclusions depending on who controls them.
- Therefore, the key question is not English versus Indian languages, but whether education is democratic, critical and enabling.

7. Indian Knowledge Systems and Decolonisation

- Indian Knowledge Systems have become a major contemporary site of decolonisation.
- IKS seeks to recover intellectual traditions that were marginalised under colonial and Eurocentric knowledge frameworks.
- It includes traditions in philosophy, logic, grammar, mathematics, astronomy, medicine, ecology, aesthetics, ethics, polity, agriculture and crafts.
- In a positive sense, IKS can become a project of epistemic justice by recognising Indian traditions as valid sources of knowledge.
- It also connects with the **idea of "Swaraj in ideas,"** where independence is extended from political rule to intellectual self-confidence.
- However, IKS must be approached critically and pluralistically.
- **Indian knowledge cannot be reduced only to ancient, Sanskrit or textual traditions.**
- It must also include Buddhist, Jain, Bhakti, Sufi, tribal, vernacular, oral, women's, artisanal, ecological and Dalit-Bahujan knowledge traditions.

8. Decolonisation versus Majoritarianisation

- A major sociological concern is that decolonisation can be appropriated by majoritarian politics.
- **If "Indian knowledge" is equated only with Sanskrit, Brahmanical or Hindu traditions, then decolonisation may become exclusionary.**
- This would marginalise Dalit-Bahujan, Adivasi, Islamic, Christian, regional, folk and non-textual traditions.
- In such a case, decolonisation may challenge Western dominance but reproduce internal caste and cultural hierarchies.
- The question, therefore, is not whether Indian knowledge should be included, but whose Indian knowledge is being selected and legitimised.
- **Decolonisation must not become cultural homogenisation.**

9. Caste, Gender and the Limits of Cultural Revival

- A return to tradition cannot be treated as automatically emancipatory.
- **Many indigenous or local traditions also contain caste hierarchy, patriarchy, exclusion and ritual inequality.**
- Therefore, decolonisation must be combined with social justice.
- **Phule, Ambedkar and Periyar** are important because they showed that oppression in India was not only colonial but also internal.
- Ambedkar's critique of caste reminds us that recovering the past without questioning hierarchy can strengthen social domination.
- Feminist and Dalit perspectives are essential because they ask whether decolonisation includes women, Dalits, Adivasis and other marginalised groups as knowledge producers.
- Thus, a **democratic decolonisation** must challenge both colonial domination and indigenous forms of inequality.

10. Decolonisation and Social Sciences

- Social sciences in India have long relied heavily on European and American theories.
- Thinkers such as **Marx, Weber, Durkheim, Parsons and Merton remain central to sociological training.**
- Decolonisation does not mean rejecting these thinkers.
- It means questioning their universalisation and placing them in dialogue with Indian and Global South thinkers.
- Indian thinkers such as Ambedkar, Gandhi, Phule, Periyar, G.S. Ghurye, M.N. Srinivas, A.R. Desai, Irawati Karve, Yogendra Singh, André Bêteille and Satish Deshpande can help build context-sensitive sociology.
- A decolonised sociology should not replace one canon with another.
- It should create theoretical plurality, where Western, Indian, Dalit, feminist, tribal, subaltern and Global South perspectives are studied together.

11. Positive Implications of Decolonisation

- It **challenges Eurocentrism** in curricula and academic theory.
- It gives **recognition to intellectual traditions** from the Global South.
- It questions whose knowledge becomes universal and whose remains local.
- It **broadens social theory** beyond Europe and North America.
- It **promotes epistemic justice** by recognising marginalised communities as knowledge producers.
- It encourages students to critically examine colonial categories, language hierarchies and inherited institutional structures.
- It can make education more rooted, inclusive and culturally meaningful.

12. Critiques and Risks

- Decolonisation is often used loosely to mean diversity, inclusion, representation or nationalism, which **weakens conceptual clarity.**
- It **may become symbolic** if limited to renaming institutions or replacing texts without changing structures of inequality.
- It **may ignore political economy** if it focuses only on culture and knowledge.
- **Rigid binaries** such as West versus non-West or modernity versus tradition **oversimplify history.**
- Some modern ideas such as rights, citizenship, democracy and constitutionalism also helped anti-colonial struggles.
- Therefore, **equating modernity entirely with colonialism is misleading.**
- **Decolonisation may become politically appropriated** if it is used to justify majoritarian identity politics or uncritical glorification of the past.
- It can also **reproduce caste and gender hierarchy** if it treats all indigenous traditions as automatically liberating.

13. Sociological Analysis

- **Power/Knowledge (Foucault):** Decolonisation is about who has the authority to define valid knowledge.
- **Cultural Capital (Bourdieu):** Western theories and English language operate as academic capital, giving advantage to students and scholars familiar with elite codes.
- **Linguistic Capital (Bourdieu):** English remains a high-return resource in education, employment and administration.
- **Hegemony (Gramsci):** Dominant knowledge becomes common sense, making alternative traditions appear inferior or unscientific.
- **Orientalism (Edward Said):** Colonial knowledge produced the East as an object of study rather than as a producer of theory.
- **Epistemic Injustice (Miranda Fricker):** Marginalised groups suffer when their knowledge is not believed or when their experiences lack recognised concepts.
- **Standpoint Theory (Dorothy Smith / Patricia Hill Collins):** Theory-building from marginalised locations changes what questions are asked and what counts as evidence.
- **Subalternity (Spivak):** Some groups are structurally prevented from speaking within elite institutions of knowledge.
- **Epistemicide (Boaventura de Sousa Santos):** Colonialism destroyed or suppressed entire knowledge systems, especially oral, local and indigenous traditions.
- **World-Systems Theory (Wallerstein):** Knowledge flows follow global core-periphery relations, where theories from the core travel as universal.
- **Dependency (Andre Gunder Frank):** Global South institutions may remain dependent on Northern funding, journals, rankings and standards.
- **Imagined Communities (Benedict Anderson):** Language and curriculum help construct national identity and decide who belongs to the national story.
- **Symbolic Violence (Bourdieu):** Dominant knowledge hierarchies are internalised so exclusion appears natural or merit-based.

14. Conclusion

- Decolonisation is a powerful framework for understanding how colonial power continues through knowledge, language, culture and institutions.
- However, its value depends on clarity, inclusiveness and critical method.
- Decolonisation sociology should be understood not as rejection of modern knowledge, but as the expansion of intellectual freedom, epistemic justice and critical self-reflection.