

UPSC PREPARATION

Vulnerability Due to Caste

Caste systems were established on the basis of the hierarchy of occupations where work related to leather, cleaning dead cattle from village grounds, work related to funeral ceremonies etc. were placed at the bottom.

Common caste inequalities are listed below:

People or castes who were performing the task of eliminating the polluted elements from society were considered 'untouchables'. Due to the caste system, the ones at the lowest strata of society are forced to do the dirtiest, menial and hazardous jobs, forced labour and bonded labour. Due to such exclusion activities, vulnerable caste groups have limited access to resources, services and development which keeps them in perpetual poverty. Structurally the lower castes were economically dependent on the higher castes for existence. The Scheduled Caste (lower castes) remained economically dependent, politically powerless and culturally subjugated to the upper caste. This impacted their overall lifestyle and access to food, education and health.

The common untouchability practices are listed below.

1. Separating houses, schools and cremation grounds.
2. Prohibition of inter-caste marriages
3. Prohibiting ownership of land
4. Denying access to public services such as water taps, health care, and education.
5. Prohibition of access to public places like roads, temples.

Reasons for prevalence of caste inequalities in India:

1. Racial difference segments the members in the category of touchable and untouchables.
2. Some segments of existing religious literature are said to be rigid and biased against backward castes.

E.g.:

1. The ideal order was laid down in the Dharmasutras and Dharmashastras. Brahmanas claimed that this order, in which they were ranked first, was divinely ordained while placing groups classified as Shudras and "untouchables" at the very bottom of the social order. Positions within the order were supposedly determined by birth.
2. The Manusmriti laid down the "duties" of the chandalas. They had to live outside the village, use discarded utensils, and wear clothes of the dead and ornaments of iron. They could not walk about in villages and cities at night. They had to dispose of the bodies of those who had no relatives and serve as executioners.

Source: NCERT

3. Indian society functions with in a deep-rooted caste system with strict endogamous marriages.
4. Societal and cultural attitudes have not changed much even after people getting educated because of habitual obedience.
5. Some social scientists believe that, poverty and illiteracy among lower castes resulted into unavailability of resources, hindering economic upliftment. Most of the jobs like manual scavenging and cleaning sewage drains are done by people of lower castes. (Supreme Court on Manual

Scavenging - Although over 70 years have passed since the Independence, caste discrimination still persists in the country)

Some types of disadvantages of Backward castes:

According to the view of many historians and social scientists, the Backward castes experience the following disadvantages:

1. Restriction or denial of access to public facilities such as wells, roads, post offices and courts.
2. Restriction or denial of access to temples because their presence might pollute the diety and higher caste worshippers.
3. They are excluded from honourable and profitable employment and relegation to dirty and menial occupations (like manual scavenging).
4. Denial of access to services such as those provided by barbers, laundrymen, restaurants, shops and theatres or requiring the use of separate utensils and facilities within such places.
5. Restrictions on lifestyle like the use of goods indicating comfort or luxury(footwear, gold and silver ornaments, the use of palanquins to carry bridegrooms).
6. Requirements of difference in forms of address, language, sitting and standing in the presence of higher castes.
7. Restrictions on movement: SCs might not be allowed on roads and streets within a prescribed distance of houses or persons of higher castes.
8. More vulnerable to bonded labour.

Data on Discrimination of Backward castes:

- According to NCRB's(National Crime Records Bureau) report 2019 ,the violence against SC/STs is on the rise.
 - Crime against SCs increased by over 7% and crimes against STs increased by 26% in the year 2019 when compared to 2018.
 - Uttar Pradesh has recorded the highest number of crimes against SCs in 2019, followed by Rajasthan and Bihar.
 - Madhya Pradesh has recorded the highest number of cases against STs, followed by Rajasthan and Odisha.
- As many as 422,799 crimes against Dalits or scheduled castes (SCs) and 81,332 crimes against adivasis (STs)were reported between 2006 and 2016.
- A crime is committed against a Dalit every 15 minutes. Six Dalit women are raped every day. (NCRB report)
- Between 2007 and 2017, there has been a 66% growth in crime against Dalits.

Some of the measures we can take to eliminate caste discrimination are listed below.

1. Equal access to education in rural areas where the majority of the Indian population resides.
2. Better access to skilled jobs with adequate training
3. Provide housing facilities since many of them live in slum areas with limited access to electricity, water, sanitation facilities.
4. Completely eliminate jobs like manual scavenging.
5. Create more awareness of discrimination using mass media.

Manual Scavenging

To stop Manual scavenging Government of India has implemented Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act 2013. Various United Nations Organizations UNICEF, ILO, UNDP are working with various stakeholders to end manual scavenging and rehabilitate communities with access to decent employment.

In December 2015, the Indian Parliament passed the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes Prevention of Atrocities Amendment Act, 2015. This act aims to prohibit and punish for offences committed against members of SC and ST. It gives provision for the establishment of special courts to conduct trials of such offences and rehabilitation of victims.

Constitution of India – Articles for Upliftment of SC/ST

1. Article 17 – Abolishes Untouchability
2. Article 46 – As per this article states will have to promote and protect the educational and economic interests of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes
3. Article 16 (4A) – In services coming under the states, they have to provide reservation to Scheduled Castes or Scheduled Tribes in matters of promotion.
4. Article 330 and 332 – Provision for reservation of seats for scheduled castes and scheduled tribes in the Parliament, legislative assemblies of states, municipalities, panchayats.
5. Article 338 – Gives provision for the establishment of National Commission to safeguard the interests of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes

Efforts of State for Dalit emancipation:

1. Political representation of Backward castes in assemblies of states and in the parliament.
2. Education; development initiatives such as scholarships, hostels for boys and girls, financial assistance to pursue professional courses at elite institutions.
3. Prevention of untouchability and atrocities against Dalits through Protection of civil rights act, 1974 and the SC/ST Prevention of atrocities act 1989.
4. Pradhan Mantri Adarsh Gram Yojana aims at integrated development of SC majority villages.
5. Stand up India scheme facilitates bank loans to SC/ST and women entrepreneurs.
6. 102nd CAA provided constitutional status to National Commission for Backward Classes.