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Mains Practice Questions

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Case Study

You are the Sarpanch of a Panchayat. There is a primary school run by the government in your area. Midday meals are provided to the children attending the school. The Headmaster has now appointed a new cook in the school to prepare the meals. However, when it is found that the cook is from Dalit community, almost half of the children belonging to higher castes are not allowed to take meals by their parents. Consequently the attendance in the school falls sharply. This could result in the possibility of discontinuation of midday meal scheme, thereafter of teaching staff and subsequent closing down the school.

(a) Mention ethical issues of the case and also discuss some feasible strategies to overcome the conflict and to create the right ambience.

(b) What should be the responsibilities of different social segments and agencies to create positive social ambience for accepting such changes?

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Introduction

The given case deals with the ethical issue of social (caste) discrimination on one side and issue of children dropping out of the school on the other. The ethical dilemma for the Sarpanch is keeping the dalit cook employed and also encouraging parents to send their kids to school.

Body

Stakeholders of the case

- The Sarpanch
- Headmaster of the school and the cook in the school.
- The kids and their parents belonging to higher castes.
- Dalits in the society.
- Civil societies, NGOs working in social development.
- District administration, State and central governments.

Ethical issues involved in the case

- **Caste-based Discrimination:** The students are not attending the school after their parents are against the cook from Dalit community. It is the issue of still prevalent caste based social discrimination in the society.
It is against humanity which focuses on the equality of all men.
- **Constitutional Morality:** Our constitution confers equal rights to all men and discriminating on the grounds of caste is against the constitutional morality.
According to the constitution untouchability is a crime and can not be promoted in any form.

Some possible strategies to overcome the conflict

- **Persuading the Parents:** I will hold a series of meetings with the school administration and the parents of the kids from higher caste communities.

The parents can be persuaded to send their kids to school for the sake of their kids' studies and career.

- **Cook can be rested for some days:** I will also hold meetings with all the communities of the village and try to build a society based on harmony, empathy and compassion.

Meanwhile cook from the dalit community can be relieved from the job for a few days in order to calm down the immediate situation distrust and students would return to the school.

- **Setting an Example:** I will ask my family members and like-minded relatives to send their kids to government school and eat the mid day meal cooked by the dalit cook.

This can set an example for other upper caste families to follow the suit.

Responsibilities of different social segments and agencies to create positive social ambience

- **School and Education system:** Our education system must focus more on propagating social elements such as equality in society.

If these values are inculcated in students of today they can become better citizens of tomorrow.

- **Gram Sabha:** Gram sabha has a responsibility to bring a social change in the village. Being a Sarpanch, I will have this duty to inform all the members of the Gram Sabhas about the evils of casteism and untouchability and have launched a campaign for the boycott of these evils.

- **Reducing conflicts:** Efforts are to be made to remove the conflicts between different social groups that can give rise to fights. If this can be eliminated then it would be a big achievement in bringing social equality.

- **Local Administration and Civil Society:** Local administration, police and civil societies have a responsibility to spread the awareness about the rights of lower caste communities. They should continuously work towards the integration of the society.

Conclusion

The measures taken for correcting the evil of social discrimination may not show immediate impacts but the efforts should continue. Tactics of social influence and persuasion will surely help in reducing caste barriers and achieving an equal society.