



Mains Practice Question

Q. In India it is said that the wealth hierarchy mimics the caste hierarchy. In the light of this statement establish the relationship between caste and economic inequality in India and highlight the initiatives taken to address the caste inequality. (150 words)

31 Dec, 2020 GS Paper 2 Social Justice

Approach

- Introduce by explaining the given statement with relevant facts and data.
- Discuss the relationship between caste and economic inequality in India.
- Highlight the policy measures and other initiatives designed to address caste inequality.

Introduction

Caste hierarchy is one of the major reasons for this perpetual difference in socio-economic status in India. In most of the surveys it has been found that economic inequality in India is mostly along the caste lines for instance according to a recent paper by the World Inequality Database, India's upper caste households earned nearly 47% more than the national average annual household income in 2012. Besides, India has been ranked 129 among 158 countries in the 2020 Commitment to Reducing Inequality (CRI) Index.

Body

Relationship between caste and socio-economic inequality in India

- **Linkage Between Caste & Educational Backwardness:** The literacy rate for SCs is around 66% which is less than the national average of 74%. This disadvantage of education leads to their economic deprivation.
- **Linkage Between Caste & Employability:** Due to low education, lower castes are stuck in low salaried employment as agricultural labourers or low-skill labourers in the non-agricultural sector.
- **Linkage Between Caste & Land Ownership:** Upper castes are also major land owning classes in India. Being landless, lower castes have to resort to manual wage employment for their livelihood.
- **Linkage Between Caste & Entrepreneurship:** The NSSO data of 2011-12 shows that Dalits are least likely to start their own enterprises and most likely to work as labourers for others, with Scheduled Castes (SC) having the lowest relative share in the self-employed category and the highest share in the casual labourer category.

Policy measures designed to address caste inequality

Constitutional measures: In the Directive principles of the state policy and the Fundamental rights provisions have been made to equality in social order.

- **Article 15** prohibits the discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth.
- **Article 16** ensures equality of opportunity in matters of public employment.
- **Article 38** promotes welfare of the people by securing a social order permeated by justice- social, economic and political- and to minimise inequalities in income, status, facilities and opportunities

- **Article 46** requires the State to promote the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people, and, in particular, of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes.

Legislative measures: They aim to prevent the commission of offences of atrocities against the members of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes so that they could be secured and could improve their socio-economic status.

- The Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act 1989
- The Protection of Civil Rights Act 1955
- The 'Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act 2013'

Economic measures: Various agencies have been established to provide financial assistance to lower caste population to address prevailing economic inequalities:

- National Scheduled Castes Finance and Development Corporation- to promote prosperity among Scheduled Castes by improving flow of financial assistance and through skill development & other innovative initiatives.
- National Safai Karamcharis Finance and Development Corporation for economic upliftment of safai karamcharis who mostly come from lower castes.
- Venture Capital Fund for Scheduled Castes to promote young entrepreneurs.
- Standup India scheme and Credit Enhancement Guarantee Scheme for Scheduled Castes.

Conclusion

Thus it is necessary to address the caste inequality if India aspires to end extreme poverty and attain the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.

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