



Concerns of Caste-Based Discrimination

For Prelims: [Fair Price Shops \(FPS\)](#), [Suicide](#), [Scheduled Castes \(SCs\)](#), [Scheduled Tribes \(STs\)](#), [Other Backward Classes \(OBCs\)](#), [National Food Security Act 2013](#), [Ethics](#), **Values, Morals**.

For Mains: Impact of various caste-based discriminatory practices prevalent in the society on Ethics in Governance and Administration.

Source: DTE

Why in News?

The recent directive by the Patan District Collector, mandating the transfer of all ration cards from a Dalit-run [Fair Price Shop \(FPS\)](#) in Kanosan village to a neighboring village, raises important ethical and constitutional questions.

What is a Fair Price Shop (FPS)?

- FPS is a government-run or government-regulated retail outlet or store in India.
 - The primary purpose of fair price shops is to **distribute essential commodities like food grains, edible oils, sugar**, and other basic necessities to the public at subsidized or fair prices.
 - These shops are typically part of **government welfare programs** aimed at ensuring food security and reducing the economic burden on low-income households.
 - This system has a robust mechanism for verification of beneficiaries through [Aadhaar authentication](#) and has features to monitor transactions online with the help of electronic Point of Sale (e-POS) machines.
 - The **e-PoS devices have been integrated with electronic weighing machines** to ensure the beneficiaries get the correct amount of ration.
 - These FPSs and ePOS machines have proved instrumental in the effectuation and seamless implementation of the One Nation [One Ration Card Scheme \(ONORC\)](#).

What are the Different Ethical Aspects Involved in the Incident?

- **Ethical Issues:**
 - **Discrimination and Social Equity**
 - The core ethical issue in this case is [discrimination](#) based on caste leading to the transfer of ration cards.
 - **Dereliction of Duty:**
 - The district collector's directive to transfer ration cards can be seen as a **dereliction of duty**.
 - The ethical principle of integrity, where public officials are expected to act in the best interest of all citizens without favoritism should be practiced.
 - **Mental Health and Well-being**
 - The mental trauma experienced by, the victim of caste-based discrimination,

leading to a suicide attempt and physical injury, is a significant ethical concern.

- Ethical principles of [compassion](#), [empathy](#), and **the duty to protect individuals' well-being become important.**
- **Use of Legal Framework**
 - The convenors of the [Right to Food Campaign](#) call for the application of legal frameworks like the SC/ST Act and National Food Security Act.
 - Ethical principle of upholding the [rule of law](#) and respecting the constitution should be abided by.
- **Empowerment of Marginalized Communities**
 - The violation of the mandated principles related to the empowerment of [marginalized communities](#) is a key ethical concern.
 - Ethical principles of fairness, equity, and non-discrimination, justice and equality should be adhered to.
- **Moral Responsibility**
 - The [moral responsibility](#) of the district collector and the upper caste households in addressing the consequences of their actions is raised.

What are the Other Perspectives of the Incident?

- **Violation of Constitutional Mandates:**
 - The Indian Constitution enshrines fundamental values of **equality, justice, and non-discrimination as enshrined under [Fundamental Rights \(FRs\) in Part-III \(Article 17\)](#)** of the Constitution.
 - **Discriminatory actions** such as actions based on caste contradict these constitutional principles
- **Violation of Statutory Mandates:**
 - **Non-implementation of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989 (Amended 2015):**
 - The discriminatory treatment of a Scheduled Caste person falls under the purview of [SC/ST Act, 1989](#) which aims to prevent and punish atrocities against marginalized communities.
 - It emphasizes the **need for strict action against caste-based discrimination and violence.**
 - **National Food Security Act:**
 - The act upholds the democratic empowerment of FPSs in villages, advocating for distribution control to marginalized communities.
 - The transfer of ration shops to another FPS violates the spirit of this legislation.

What Action Could be Taken in the Similar Situations?

- **Preventive Steps:**
 - **Raising Awareness:**
 - Model of [Mid-Day Meals Scheme](#) implementation can be adopted where high dignitaries eat the cooked food to bust the myths of caste-stigma and discrimination.
- **Punitive Action:**
 - Further legal action must be taken to address the **caste-based discrimination and social boycott effectively.**
 - Linking such erroneous activities with **Annual Confidential Reports** of Bureaucrats such that it acts as a deterrence in the future.
 - **License Revocation:**
 - The impending **revocation of the Dalit FPS dealer's license** raises concerns about economic repercussions and livelihoods.
- **Call for Suo Motu Cognizance:**
 - The Right to Food Campaign urges the **High Courts or Chief Minister's Office** of the government to take [Suo Motu cognizance](#) of the discriminatory ration card transfers.
 - Such action is essential to uphold the rule of law and constitutional values.
- **Democratic Empowerment and Inclusivity:**
 - **Role of Fair Price Shops (FPSs):**

- FPSs play a crucial role in **ensuring food security and access to essential commodities** for marginalized communities.
- Democratic empowerment of FPSs is vital to promote inclusivity and economic well-being.

Conclusion

- Caste-based discrimination and social boycott have inflicted severe harm on shop owners, emphasizing the urgent need for **justice and accountability**. **Upholding the values of social equity, justice, and inclusivity is not just a legal obligation but a moral imperative for a democratic and diverse society.**
- This incident serves as a stark reminder of the ongoing challenges in **eradicating caste-based discrimination and upholding constitutional values in India.**

UPSC CSE PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTIONS (PYQs)

Q 1. The crisis of ethical values in modern times is traced to a narrow perception of the good life. Discuss **(2017)**

Q 2. Explain the process of resolving ethical dilemmas in Public Administration. **(2018)**

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