



Mains Practice Question

Q. "Social justice without economic justice is incomplete." In light of this statement, examine how India's affirmative action policies have addressed both dimensions of justice. **(250 words)**

24 Dec, 2024 GS Paper 2 Social Justice

Approach

- Introduce the answer by highlighting the relation between Social justice and economic justice
- Give Key Policies Addressing Both Social and Economic Justice Simultaneously
- Cite the Challenges and Suggest a Way Forward
- Conclude suitably.

Introduction

Social justice and economic justice are deeply interconnected dimensions of equity. Social justice ensures **equality in social structures and representation**, while economic justice focuses on **equitable access to resources and opportunities for livelihood**.

- The affirmative action policies in India aim to **bridge these dimensions simultaneously by addressing historical discrimination** while uplifting marginalized sections economically.

Key Policies Addressing Both Social and Economic Justice Simultaneously:

- **Reservation Policies in Education and Employment: Articles 15(4) and 16(4)** empower the state to provide reservations for socially and educationally backward classes in public institutions and employment.
 - **Social Justice:** Reservations in public sector jobs and higher education institutions ensure representation for **SCs, STs, and OBCs in decision-making roles**.
 - **Economic Justice:** Access to stable government jobs and quality education leads to **economic upliftment of these communities**.
 - Also, Implementation of the **Post Matric Scholarship for SC/ST Students** has supported millions in pursuing higher education, directly leading to better job opportunities.
- **Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA):** Article 41 directs the state to ensure the right to work as part of the Directive Principles of State Policy.
 - **Social Justice:** Provides equal employment opportunities to socially marginalized groups, **especially Dalits, Adivasis, and women**.
 - **Economic Justice:** Guarantees **100 days of wage employment** per year, providing financial stability.
- **Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY):** Promotes social and economic equality as envisaged in the **Preamble and Directive Principles**. Over **54 crore accounts have been opened under this**.
 - **Social Justice:** Brings marginalized sections into the formal financial system, reducing financial exclusion.
 - **Economic Justice:** Facilitates savings, credit access, and direct benefit transfers (**JAM Trinity**), providing economic security.

- **Stand-Up India Scheme:** Promotes equality of opportunity under **Article 16 while addressing historical exclusion.** As of 2023, the scheme has sanctioned over **₹40,000 crore in loans.**
 - **Social Justice:** Targets women and SC/ST entrepreneurs, providing them opportunities for social mobility.
 - **Economic Justice:** Offers loans of **₹10 lakh to ₹1 crore** for setting up businesses, ensuring economic empowerment.
- **Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006:** Article 46 obliges the state to promote the interests of **SCs, STs, and weaker sections.**
 - **Social Justice:** Recognizes tribal communities' rights over forest land, addressing historical marginalization.
 - **Economic Justice:** Secures livelihoods by enabling **sustainable use of forest resources and access to land for farming.**
- **Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY):** Promotes living standards as part of the right to an adequate standard of living under **Article 21.** Over **3 crore houses are constructed under PMAY.**
 - **Social Justice:** Provides housing to the urban and rural poor, reducing homelessness and improving dignity. Having **houses registered in the name of women** contributes significantly to women's empowerment.
 - **Economic Justice:** Ensures property ownership, a critical economic asset that improves financial security.
- **Ayushman Bharat - Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY):** Upholds the **right to health** under Article 21 and the Directive Principles for public health. Over **36 crore** beneficiaries have been verified under AB PM-JAY.
 - **Social Justice:** Provides **healthcare access to socially disadvantaged groups, reducing disparities.**
 - **Economic Justice:** it aims to provide health insurance plan of **upto Rs. 5 lakh annually per family** for secondary and tertiary care hospitalisation

Challenges in Bridging Social and Economic Justice:

- **Exclusion of Marginalized Communities from Policy Benefits:** Certain communities, such as **Denotified Tribes (DNTs) and Nomadic Tribes,** often fall outside the purview of reservation benefits due to lack of recognition.
- **Implementation Gaps in Affirmative Action Schemes:** Corruption, inefficiency, and leakages in welfare delivery dilute the intended impact of policies.
 - For instance, **CAG's Performance Audit of Ayushman Bharat** revealed that **more than 7 lakh beneficiaries** were linked to a single mobile number.
- **Stigma and Societal Discrimination:** Social discrimination based on **caste, tribe, and gender** persists despite legal safeguards, limiting the full realization of justice.
 - India's **Global Gender Gap Index 2024** ranking slipped to **129th out of 146 countries,** reflecting ongoing challenges in achieving gender parity.
- **Limited Awareness Among Beneficiaries:** Many intended beneficiaries are unaware of their rights or the existence of government schemes.
 - This limits participation and perpetuates socio-economic exclusion.

Way Forward:

- **Strengthening Delivery Mechanisms:** Leverage technology for **direct benefit transfers (DBT)** to minimize corruption and ensure funds reach beneficiaries without delays.
- **Expanding Inclusivity** Identify and recognize marginalized groups like Denotified and Nomadic Tribes and include them in affirmative action policies.
- **Enhancing Awareness and Outreach:** Conduct targeted campaigns in **regional languages** to educate marginalized groups about their rights and the availability of schemes.
- **Addressing Regional Disparities:** Focus on infrastructure development in backward regions to improve access to social and economic benefits.
 - The **Aspirational Districts Program (ADP)** can be replicated to cover **tribal-dominated regions** with a focus on housing, healthcare, and employment.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation of Policies:** Establish independent monitoring bodies to evaluate

the efficacy of affirmative action policies and recommend mid-course corrections.

- The **SECC (Socio-Economic and Caste Census)** can be periodically updated to ensure real-time tracking of the socio-economic conditions of beneficiaries.

Conclusion

While India's affirmative action policies have made strides in addressing social and economic disparities, **their effectiveness is hampered by challenges like regional disparities, lack of inclusivity, and implementation gaps.** Addressing these challenges with **data-driven strategies, enhanced governance, and targeted outreach** can ensure that social and economic justice evolve as complementary pillars of an equitable society.

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