



The Persistence and Perils of Caste Based Violence in India

This editorial is based on [Caste has no place in a modern democracy](#) which was published in Hindustan Times on 25/07/2023. It talks about the issues of caste-based violence in India.

For Prelims: [Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes \(Prevention of Atrocities\) Act, 1989](#), [National Crimes Records Bureau](#), [Forest Rights Act, 2006](#), [Article 14](#), [Panchayats](#), [Municipalities](#), [Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1955](#); [Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013](#).

For Mains: Causes and Consequences of Caste Based Violence

Caste-based violence in India is a **form of discrimination and oppression** that targets people belonging to Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs), who are historically marginalized and disadvantaged groups in Indian society.

Despite the constitutional safeguards and special legislation, such as the [Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes \(Prevention of Atrocities\) Act, 1989](#) being in place, caste-based crimes continue to occur in various forms and regions, violating the [fundamental](#) and [human rights](#) of millions of people.

How Prevalent are Caste-based Crimes in India?

▪ Caste-Based Crimes in India:

- Caste-based crimes can **include physical assault, murder, rape, sexual harassment, torture, arson, social boycott, economic exploitation, land grabbing, forced displacement**, and other forms of humiliation and violence.
- According to the Annual Crime in India Report 2019 published by the [National Crimes Records Bureau](#), crime against **SCs and STs has recorded an increase of over 7% and 26% respectively in the year 2019.**
 - The same report also produced that **88 rape cases are recorded every day in India. Some of the cases are related to caste-based crimes.**

▪ Regional Differences in Crime Rates and Charge Sheets:

- Caste-based crimes are also **influenced by regional specificities and differences** in the strategies employed by various states to fight them.
- For example, **Madhya Pradesh (MP) had the highest crime rate against SCs in 2021.**
 - The state also had the **highest crime rate against SCs in 2020** and was ranked second (behind Rajasthan) in 2019.
- But data also showed that **the rate at which charge sheets were filed was higher in MP than in most Indian states.**
 - Its neighbour, Rajasthan, was far lower on this aspect, highlighting that state police needed to do a lot more.

What are the Causes of Caste-Based Crimes in India?

- **Caste System and Hierarchical Structure:**
 - The caste system, an **ancient social stratification based on descent and occupation**, creates a rigid hierarchical structure where individuals are categorized into specific castes.
 - This system **fosters a sense of superiority among upper castes** and a feeling of inferiority among lower castes, leading to discrimination and violence against the latter.
- **Social Norms and Cultural Beliefs:**
 - Social norms and cultural beliefs, often passed down through generations, reinforce the notion of caste-based superiority and inferiority.
 - These **norms normalize discriminatory attitudes and practices**, making it challenging to break free from caste-based violence.
- **Economic Exploitation:**
 - Caste-based violence is sometimes driven by economic motives. Lower caste individuals may be **subjected to exploitation, forced labour, and economic oppression** by dominant caste groups, leading to conflicts and violence.
- **Political Power Struggles:**
 - Caste-based violence is also linked to political power struggles. Dominant caste groups may **use violence to suppress the political aspirations and representation** of lower caste individuals, maintaining their own dominance and influence.
- **Inter-Caste Marriages:**
 - Inter-caste marriages, challenging the traditional caste boundaries, are sometimes **met with hostility and violence** from conservative sections of society, seeking to protect their caste purity.
- **Lack of Implementation of Laws:**
 - Despite legal protections, the effective implementation of laws against caste-based violence remains a challenge in some regions, leading to a culture of impunity for the perpetrators.

What are the Implications of Caste-Based Crimes?

- **Human Rights Violations:**
 - Caste-based violence results in severe human rights violations, including the **right to life, dignity, equality, and liberty**.
 - Victims of such violence suffer physical and psychological harm, leading to **trauma and long-term emotional distress**.
- **Social Fragmentation:**
 - Caste-based violence **deepens social divisions and creates animosity among different caste groups**.
 - It **hampers social cohesion** and undermines the efforts towards building a harmonious and inclusive society.
- **Fear and Insecurity:**
 - Caste-based violence creates a climate of fear and insecurity among marginalized communities.
 - The fear of **violence and discrimination can lead to self-censorship** and restrict the freedom of expression and movement of affected individuals.
- **Obstacles to Development and Empowerment:**
 - Caste-based violence **hinders the development and empowerment** of marginalized communities.
 - It limits their access to **education, healthcare, and economic opportunities**, preventing them from realizing their full potential.
- **Loss of Trust in Institutions:**
 - Caste-based violence erodes trust in state institutions, law enforcement agencies, and the justice system. Victims and their communities may be **hesitant to seek justice or report incidents** due to fear of further victimization or lack of faith in the system.
- **International Reputation:**
 - The persistence of caste-based violence **negatively impacts India's international reputation as a democratic and progressive nation**.
 - It raises concerns among the global community about the prevalence of discrimination and

violence based on caste identities.

What are the Safeguards Provided against Caste Based Discrimination?

- **Constitutional Provisions:**
 - **Article 15:** The State shall not discriminate against any citizen on the basis of **religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them.**
 - **Article 16:** No citizen shall be disqualified for any office under the State on the basis of **religion, race, caste, sex, descent, place of birth or any of them.**
 - **Article 335:** Provides that the **claims of the members of the SCs/STs** shall be taken into account, along with the maintenance of efficiency of administration, in the making of appointments to services and posts in connection with the affairs of the Union or of a State.
 - **Article 330 and Article 332:** Reservation of seats for SCs/STs in the **Lok Sabha and State legislative assemblies.**
- **Constitutional Bodies:**
 - [National Commission for Scheduled Castes.](#)
 - [National Commission for Scheduled Tribes.](#)
- **Statutory Provision:**
 - [Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes \(Prevention of Atrocities\) Amendment Act, 2018.](#)

What are the Possible Solutions to Prevent and Redress Caste-Based Crimes in India?

- **Strengthening Implementation of Laws:**
 - **SC/ST Act, 1989;** [Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1955;](#) [Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013.](#)
- **Enhancing State Institutions:**
 - Police, Judiciary, Education, Health, and Welfare sectors to prevent, investigate, prosecute, punish, and rehabilitate offenders.
- **Promoting Awareness and Sensitization:**
 - Among all stakeholders, including upper castes, lower castes, civil society organizations, media, academia, religious leaders, and political parties.
- **Empowering SCs and STs:**
 - Through education, employment, land rights, political representation, **social mobilization, legal aid,** and counselling services.
- **Fostering Dialogue and Reconciliation:**
 - Building trust and solidarity, challenging stereotypes and prejudices, and **promoting respect for diversity and human dignity.**

Drishti Mains Question:

Caste-based violence is a serious social problem that violates the constitutional rights and human dignity of the victims. Discuss the causes and consequences of caste-based violence in India.

UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year's Question (PYQs)

Mains:

Q1. Has caste lost its relevance in understanding the multi-cultural Indian Society? Elaborate your answer with illustrations. **(2020)**

Q2. "Caste system is assuming new identities and associational forms. Hence caste system cannot be eradicated in India." Comment. **(2018)**

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