



Mains Practice Question

Q. Despite comprehensive legislative measures to protect Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, atrocities against these communities continue to persist in India. Examine. **(250 words)**

24 Sep, 2024 GS Paper 2 Social Justice

Approach

- Introduce by mentioning constitutional provisions related to SC and STs
- Give legislative measures to protect Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes
- Highlight Reasons for Persistence of Atrocities Against the Communities
- Give Measures to Address the Issue:
- Conclude suitably.

Introduction

The **Indian Constitution** ensures equality, justice, and dignity for all citizens, with specific provisions for the protection of SCs and STs, such as **Article 15(4)** for their advancement, **Article 16(4)** for reservation in employment, and **Article 17** for the abolition of untouchability.

- Despite these safeguards, atrocities against these communities persist, reflecting deep-rooted societal discrimination and challenges in law enforcement.

Body

Legislative Measures to Protect Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes:

- **Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1955:** Enacted to enforce the abolition of untouchability and punish offenses arising from it.
- **Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989:** Aims to prevent atrocities, provide relief, and rehabilitation to victims.
 - **52,866 cases** of atrocities against **Scheduled Castes (SCs)** and 9,725 cases of **Scheduled Tribes (STs)** under that act in 2022.
- **Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Amendment Act, 2015:** Expanded the scope of offenses and established special courts for speedy trials.
- **Forest Rights Act, 2006:** Recognizes the rights of forest-dwelling STs and other traditional forest dwellers.
 - Odisha is one of the leading States in implementation of FRA with distribution of **4.56 lakhs of individual forest right (IFR) titles**.

Reasons for Persistence of Atrocities Against the Communities

- **Deep-rooted Social Prejudices:** Centuries-old caste-based discrimination continues to influence social interactions.
 - The **2020 Hathras gang rape case in Uttar Pradesh** highlighted how caste prejudices can affect even criminal investigations and justice delivery.

- **Economic Disparities:** Persistent poverty and lack of economic opportunities make SC/ST communities vulnerable to exploitation.
 - According to **Global Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) estimates**, five out of every six multidimensionally poor in India belong to SC, ST or Other Backward Class (OBC) households.
 - **ST with more than 50% multidimensionally poor**, followed by **SC with 33.3%**
- **Limited Access to Education:** Despite reservations, educational attainment remains low, perpetuating cycles of disadvantage.
 - The gross enrolment ratio for STs in higher education was **only 21.2% in 2021-22**.
- **Ineffective Implementation of Laws:** Lack of awareness, resources, and sometimes willingness among law enforcement agencies hampers the effectiveness of protective legislation.
 - The **2018 Bhima Koregaon violence** saw delayed action against perpetrators, highlighting implementation gaps.

Measures to Address the Issue:

- **Strengthening Education and Awareness:** Implement comprehensive education programs focusing on constitutional values and anti-discrimination like **Eklavya Model Schools**.
- **Economic Empowerment:** Enhance skill development programs and provide better access to credit and entrepreneurship opportunities.
 - The **Stand-Up India scheme** can be further expanded and strengthened.
- **Improved Law Enforcement:** Sensitize police forces and establish special units dedicated to SC/ST protection in high-risk areas.
- **Strengthening Grassroots Governance:** Empower Gram Sabhas and local bodies to play a more active role in preventing atrocities
 - **Kerala's Kudumbashree mission** has successfully integrated SC/ST women into local governance structures.
- **Leveraging Technology:** Use digital platforms for quick reporting, tracking, and resolving cases of atrocities.
 - The **Atrocity Tracking and Monitoring System (ATM)** has improved case monitoring and victim compensation delivery, and **can be further enhanced using AI and ML**.

Conclusion

While India has made significant strides in legislative protection for SC and ST communities, the persistence of atrocities underscores the need for a multi-pronged approach. This approach must combine stricter **law enforcement, social awareness and economic empowerment**.