

Q 1. Is 'feminism' a wrongly perceived and widely misunderstood concept today? Critically comment. What in your opinion is the true meaning of feminism? Explain with the help of suitable examples.

Introduction:

Feminism is the advocacy of women's rights on the grounds of the equality of the sexes. It means that there should be equality of the sexes economically, socially, politically and personally.

Body:

Misunderstood Concept of feminism:

Misunderstanding this concept had evidently caused many people--both men and women--to hate it and stir away from it. The concept of feminism is misunderstood today in the following ways:

- "Feminism" is considered synonymous to male-hating, men-bashing, and female-superiority.
- It does support the notion about how all men are the same or that they are all sexist.
- One cannot be feminist if they love marriage institution and prefer having kids and being housewives.
- Men cannot be feminist. Many may view feminism merely as a "woman's issue" and therefore something men are excluded from.
- Many men believe it is not "manly" to be a feminist.
- Worst of all, some men think giving women equal rights means having to give up their own rights.
- Many women believe that given them special privileges is against feminism. For example, they don't prefer sitting on seats reserved for women in bus or metro train.

This false definition is widely accepted and is easily the reason the word feminism has acquired such a negative connotation. The subjective definition of the word feminism has been a topic of debate for years, perhaps centuries, and with various arguments over what the word means, the true meaning of the term for gender equality is lost.

Truth and reality about feminism: In Reality, feminism is very different from the misunderstood concept. In true sense, it will have the following component.

- It advocates for both men and women receive equal opportunities in all spheres of life.
- Women should get a fair share of the rights they deserve and gain economic independence along with social and political equality.

- Women should enjoy their discretions and should have decision making power for their own lives. For example, decisions of career and profession to choosing dress and life partner, she should be given discretion.
- In no way does it mean to strip men of their rights and considered women superior to men.
- One need not be a woman to support feminism-- you can be male, female, or any gender to advocate for women's rights.
- Cultural and religious constraints should no longer hold women who are strong, intelligent and have a sense in achieving what they believe in.
- Feminism is only trying to level the playing field, not give women extra privileges.
- Being a feminist does not mean you have to leave your husband or son(s) behind and become a solitary figure. It does not mean you are against the institution of marriage or that you don't value giving birth. Feminism is not against women who want to become mothers; it is against society's idea where women are regarded as nothing more than childbearing machines.

Conclusion:

The word "feminism" has been dragged through the mud and has been misunderstood by so many people the world over, but if we are to see greater strides in equality for all, it is necessary to address major misconceptions and include men, women, and all genders in our quest to attain true equality.

2. The 21st century woman is subjected to unrealistic beauty standards and face multitude of body image issues. Comment. What according to you are the primary factors responsible for such obsession?

Introduction:

Our life revolves around ideologies. Ideologies have shaped our society so much so that even if women have gained rights in the legal, reproductive and socio-political ambit, are no longer restricted to the domestic space, and have over turned stereotypical beliefs about their roles in the socio-cultural space – ideologies of unrealistic beauty parameters continue to be a norm in most occasions.

Body:

Various 'trends' or beliefs around how an ideal woman should look have infested the 21st century. **Primary factors responsible for such obsessions are:**

- **Size and shape:** Intolerance of body diversity has a lot to do with prejudice of size and shape in our culture. Being lean toned and muscular has become associated with the hard-working, successful, popular, beautiful, strong, and the disciplined. Being fat is associated with the lazy, ugly, weak, and lacking in will-power. It's an indication of moral character and we are conditioned to think that fat is bad.

- **Social Media, Movies etc.:** In this modern age of social media and weekly movies, one is constantly being bombarded with photo shopped images of perfect bodies which create a myth of an ideal beauty in the mind of people which in turn leads to body image issues. This perception is based on both self-observation and the reaction of others. Negative body image can be caused by a feeling of inadequacy towards one's own body caused by the creation of an ideal body image that is unrealistic and unattainable.
- **Advertising by Beauty products:** Products promising fairer skin and that claim to help in losing weight, also contribute to the creation of a myth that beauty lies in having fair skin and a slim body. Advertisements of such beauty products are made in such a way that they promise happier lives on achieving fairer skin and slender bodies, thereby creating set ideals of beauty. When people cannot adhere to this standard of beauty they tend to suffer from low confidence and depression.
- **Narrow/Skewed societal view:** Often we are told or advised to be a certain way, have a certain colour etc. to be accepted well among our own society. This narrow minded perception often results in many women having a low self-esteem about their natural selves and wanting to become 'better' in society's eyes.
- **Endorsement by Celebrities:** Though celebrities endorse products that are for the welfare of their audience too, there are many that are a part of products that encourage women to be unrealistically perfect, rendering many women to fall prey to those products in awe of being able to reach the said standards.

Steps to prevent such obsessions:

- De-emphasise numbers: Kilograms on a scale don't tell us anything meaningful about the body as a whole or our health. Eating habits and activity patterns are much more important. We need to appreciate the uniqueness of what we have – and work with it.
- Focus on fitness and health which is more imperative, rather than purely on looks and unrealistic patterns.
- Celebrities must be careful with their endorsements, as they impact a very large section of young people. They must break stereotypes and be inclusive of all body types so that these unrealistic beauty standards can be shattered and every body type be encouraged.
- Evaluate social media content and prioritize constructive self-development.

Conclusion:

These unrealistic beauty standards and its pressure leads to unhealthy behaviours in women and a preoccupation with appearance in every person, and it compromises the ability of women to be effective in and accepted by society. Ideologies are important for any society to grow, but only to the point where it does not harm or impact you and your surroundings negatively.

3. What is 'hash tag activism'? Has it been successful in bringing about positive transformation? Critically examine.

Introduction

Hashtag activism is the act of fighting for or supporting a cause that people are advocating through social media like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and other networking websites. This is the kind of activism that does not require any action from the person other than sharing or "liking" a post or "retweeting" tweets on Twitter.

Body

Impact of hashtag activism:

- **Powerful tool:** Hashtag activism can be a powerful way to control a narrative regarding a common cause that has either been neglected or misrepresented by corporate media.
- **Unify people across globe:** It offers the opportunity for communal participation across the globe. For instance, in the case of #BlackLivesMatter, this hashtag has become a unifying theme of multiple stories around racial injustice.
- **Larger goal is emphasized:** Social media has become just another tool with this larger goal for activists.
- **Multiplier effect:** There are roughly 2 billion people on Facebook and users spend an average of an hour a day on the site. Huge impact on society across globe.
- **Monetary benefits:** Can raise huge money and help the cause. Example ice bucket challenge.
- **More reach to common people:** Those who were more naïve about the social injustices happening were able to witness what was happening and join the conversation by simply using the hashtag.

Criticism of hashtag activism:

- **More efforts to make it famous:** Digital activists have to work twice as hard to ensure their movement or cause in people's minds when it's no longer a trending topic on Twitter.
- **Big number to get attention:** It is different from real live activism which is normally dependent on numbers.
- **Tool for harassment:** They can create a negative impact on someone's image or organisation, which might also demolish the purpose of which they are formed. Example me too movement
- **Deviate from the cause:** Most of them fail because they are controversial and have a goal to destabilise societies, rather than building them before you

form a hashtag, arranging it, knowing who it is for, and the purpose you are forming it.

- **Purpose is not solved:** Just because a hashtag is trending doesn't mean the issue is being dealt with. For issues such as world hunger, using #hunger isn't going to solve anything other than raise awareness.
- **Distort our realities:** Filter bubbles are described as algorithms that dictate what users encounter online. Many sites offer users the opportunity to control what information others see about them and also what the users want to see themselves.

Conclusion

Hashtag activism is a great way to get involved in social justice issues, but it should not be seen as the endpoint to social activism. Ideally, for those of us seeking to change our culture for the better, this will become a first step in introducing potential activists to like-minded peers, connect and organize events, learn more about issues, and begin the often long and arduous process of social activism.

4. Identify the key priority areas that need policy impetus to reap India's demographic dividend.

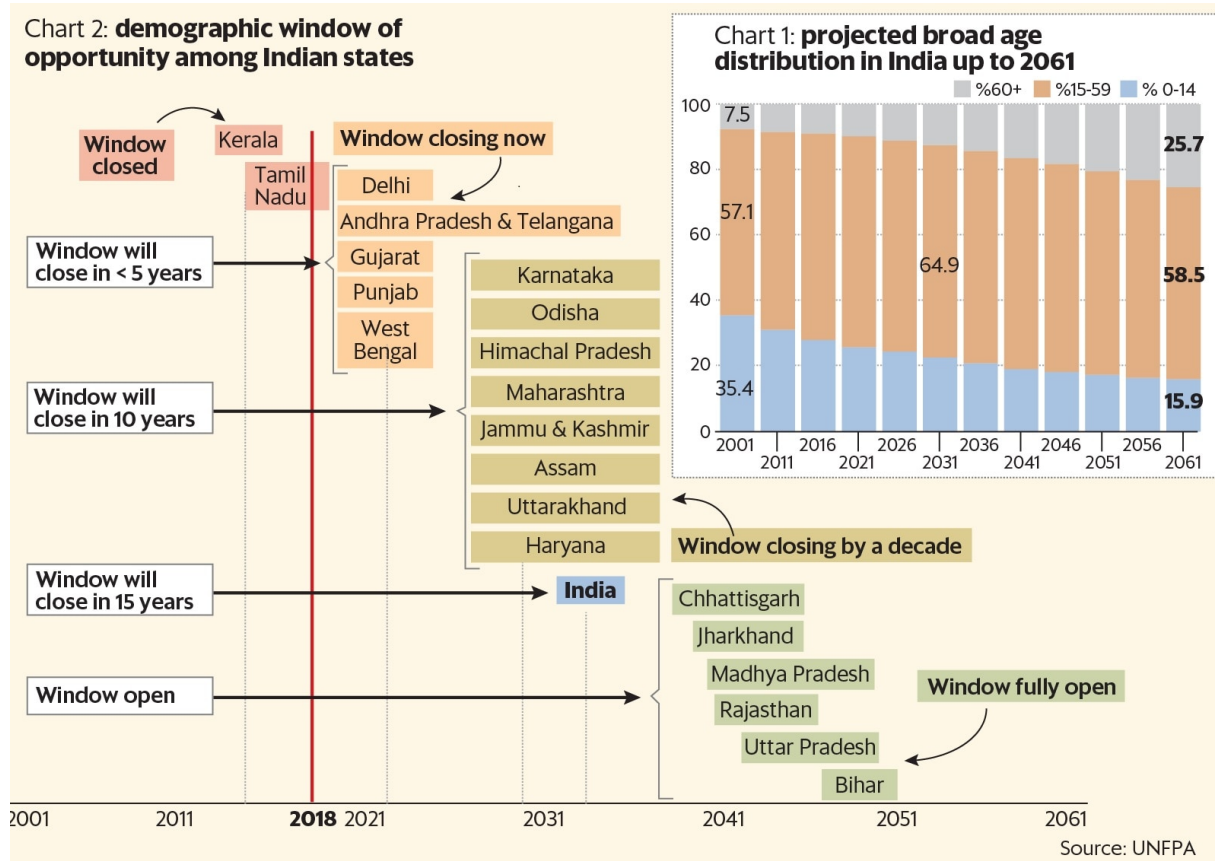
Introduction

Demographic dividend refers to the growth in an economy that is the result of a change in the age structure of a country's population. The change in age structure is typically brought on by a decline in fertility and mortality rates.

Body

India has one of the youngest populations in an ageing world. By 2020, the median age in India will be just 28. Demographics can change the pace and pattern of economic growth. While China's spectacular growth has already benefited from a demographic dividend, India is yet to do so.

Accordingly, UNFPA advocates a **differential approach** in forward-looking policymaking and programme planning to harness the demographic dividend opportunity.



- The focus in the states where the window is closing soon (Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Delhi, Gujarat etc.,) will have to be on ageing and migrant-friendly policies and programmes
- The focus in the states where the window is open and will close in the next 10-15 years (Karnataka, Odisha, Haryana, Assam etc.,) will have to be on empowering girls and women, provisioning of health, education and skill development for young people, and employment generation.
- The focus in the states where the window is yet to open (Chattisgarh, UP, Bihar etc.,) will have to be threefold—addressing harmful practices such as child marriage, access to quality sexual and reproductive health services and family planning services to all, and provisioning of health, education, life and vocational skills to all the young people.

On the whole, the key priority areas to reap India's demographic dividend are:

Nutrition mission:

- Around two-thirds of the working population in India are earning 13% less than other normal working people because of stunting in childhood— being excessively short for their age—one of the world's highest such reductions in per capita income.

- key nutrition-specific and sensitive interventions such as exclusive breastfeeding, complementary feeding and micronutrient supplementation are the need of the hour.

Education:

- India is home to the world's largest concentration of illiterate people in the world. It has made gains in human development, but challenges remain, including big barriers to secondary schooling, low-quality public services, and gender discrimination.
- The **draft National Education Policy 2019** provides for reforms at all levels of education from school to higher education. It seeks to increase the focus on early childhood care, reform the current exam system, strengthen teacher training, and restructure the education regulatory framework.

Employment:

- Lack of jobs combined with a demographic dividend will increase the share of the population that is dependent on the working population. This will increase the economic insecurity of the elderly, as there will be fewer people generating wealth.
- Removing structural bottlenecks to the manufacturing sector is key to promoting job creation in more productive and better-paid activities

Providing Skills:

- According to the National Sample Survey, out of the 470 million people of working age in India, only 10% receive any kind of training or access to skilled employment opportunities.
- Though recent initiatives such as "**Skill India Mission**" aim to train and create an employable skilled talent pool of 500 million people by 2020, there still is a long way to go.

Human capital:

- Investing in people through healthcare, quality education, jobs and skills helps build human capital, which is key to supporting economic growth, ending extreme poverty, and creating more inclusive societies.
- There is a need to invest in research and analysis which will help build relevant training modules and syllabi as per the changing industry requirements.

Conclusion:

Fine-tuning the planning and implementation of schemes and programmes by factoring in population dynamics is likely to yield greater socio-economic impact and reaping the demographic dividend.

5. What is 'social capital'. Discuss the significance of population as social capital.**Introduction**

The term social capital was popularized by Robert Putnam and can be defined as networks together with shared norms, values and understandings that facilitate co-operation within or among groups (as per OECD).

Body

Types of social capital:

- **Bonds**- Links to people based on a sense of common identity (“people like us”) – such as family, close friends and people who share our culture or ethnicity (homogenous groups).
- **Bridges**: Links that stretch beyond a shared sense of identity, for example to distant friends, colleagues and associates (heterogeneous groups).
- **Linkages**: Links to people or groups further up or lower down the social ladder.

Significance of population as social capital:

- **Civil society**- A proactive civil society can take up the cause of common people and work towards their welfare, for example HelpAge India NGO working for disadvantaged elderly of India.
- **Women’s organisations**- Organisations like Bhartiya Grameen Mahila Sangh, Nirbhaya centres etc, are helping in socio-economic empowerment of women.
- **Self-help groups**- Plays an important role in mobilizing the distressed rural populace through entrepreneurship development, promotion of thrift savings etc.
- **Education**- Quality of education can be improved by active work of population as social capital, eg. social audit of schools.
- **Health**- A good social capital leads to reduced isolation due to urban lifestyle, improved health service delivery among people and helps improve the average mortality rates.
- **Crime prevention**- Social capital can act as a security system. It is evident in traditional societies where gram sabha would serve as the judicial authority to take concrete actions like social boycott against criminals or evildoers.
- **Environment**- Community based organization preserve the environment and sustain resources. Sacred groves are an excellent example of role of social capital in preservation of environment.
- **Water use and sanitation**- The success of Swachh Bharat abhiyan is attributed to a large extent to Swachhagrahis and active participation of gram sabha.
- **Economic development**- A good social capital will enhance trade relations among people and nations, thus helping in mutual economic development, for example India’s trade with Bangladesh is better as compared to Pakistan due to better social capital in former case.

Limitations of social capital

- **Decay-** Social capital does not stay same and needs constant efforts to be maintained or else it decays over time.
- **Lack of equity-** Not everyone has equal access to the social capital, rich or politically powerful have more influence compared to others.
- **Lack of individuality-** Often group and social norms limit the individual growth and personal creativity is stifled by traditions.
- **Separatism-** When bonding social capital is dominant as compared to bridging, the groups develop a notion where it perceives societal and its own interests as exclusive of each other, for example current situation in Jammu & Kashmir.
- **Personal political gains-** If the political institution and democracy in a specific country is not strong enough and it can be overpowered by the social capital groups, for example Jat and Maratha agitation and subsequent reservation.

Conclusion

Social capital is essential for proper functioning of society, however care must be taken about the capital being present equally in terms of bonding and bridging capital for a harmonious and prosperous society.

