1. Does economic empowerment through poverty alleviation schemes and various other financial supports lead to social empowerment? Critically examine.

Introduction:

India, being a welfare state, has many poverty eradication and poverty minimization programs, and provides subsidies and pension schemes to poor people below the poverty line for their socio-economic empowerment.

Body:

Some of the poverty elevation programs and schemes for Socio-Economic empowerment are:

- **National Rural Livelihood Mission-** employment to the rural poor.
- **Food Security Bill-** one of the largest food security schemes across the world.
- **Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojna-** provides skill training to youth.
- **Farm Loan Waiver**
- **10% Quota to Economically Weaker Sections**
- **National Social Assistance Program-** pension for elderly people and destitute women.
- **MGNREGA**- for livelihood security of the rural poor by generating wage employment.
- **Ayushman Bharat Mission**- to provide health security to poor people.
- **Educational Scholarships to SC, ST, Minorities.**
- **Subsidies in LPG and electricity connection.**

Economic Empowerment through Poverty Alleviation Schemes Leads to Social Empowerment:

- With these schemes and supports**,** India halved its poverty rate in the last 10 years. In absolute terms, the number of poor fell from 630 million to 360 million during this period. So it is evident that these schemes are reducing poverty.
- Through public expenditure on social consumption needs — provision of PDS for food grains, education, health and water supply—people's living standard improves.
- Programmes supplement the consumption of the poor, create employment opportunities and bring about improvements in health and education.
- Better availability of material goods such as cooking fuel, sanitation facilities, and household assets leads to a decrease in poverty headcount.

Counter Arguments: Despite poverty minimization programs by various government schemes, the situation is worrisome as more than 22 per cent of the population still live in poverty. Reasons for the continuation of poverty in India can be attributed to:

- Weak implementation and corruption of schemes. Ex. fudging of MGNREGA payroll registers, Leakages in PDS system.
- Limited government resources when compared to the population.
- Neglecting areas for development leading to insurgency and Naxalism. This further perpetuates poverty as insurgents block government efforts to address poverty in the area.
- High illiteracy leads to lack of awareness regarding their Rights as beneficiaries in the schemes, leading to denying of rights as well as providing avenues for corruption.
- Lack of accountability and low scope for social audit of the schemes.
- Weak healthcare infrastructure leads to out of pocket expenditure pushes people back into the poverty who are at the boundary of the poverty line.
- Farm loan being criticized as it was a temporary relief from the debts; it is not a long term solution to the main problem of poor farmers.

Way forward:

After so many years after independence, the continuation of poverty is a poor indicator of the performance of government and needs redressal. Steps must be taken to improve the situation such as:

- Fulfilling basic necessities of people such as food, education and health. Government efforts such as NFSM, Ayushman Bharat etc should be implemented in letter and spirit.
- PDS should be made robust and leak proof.
- Use of ICT and JAM trinity for better delivery and transparency.
- Direct Benefit Transfers (DBT) so that people use the cash to buy goods of their choice from open markets.
- Universal Basic Income (UBI) to be provided to the poor female household.

2. Communal intolerance is the enemy of progress and growth. Do you agree? Substantiate.

Introduction:

Religious violence, communal polarisation and intolerance have increased in contemporary world and it is a continuous obstacle in the progress and growth of a country, as observed many times even in India, which is reputed for its diverse ethnicity, community, religion, language and culture, which few nations can boast of.

Body:

Communal intolerance hampers the growth and progress in the following ways:

- **Destruction of Social harmony**: Due to the communal intimidation and hatred being spread, the very fabric of a society is being diminished in the larger sense, rendering a weak and divided social strength. **For ex**- Assimilation with accommodation, stable patterns of pluralism, inequality and integration etc. constitute the basic fabric of Indian society, which when tainted with communal intolerance get divided and internally threatened.
- **Economy**: Disturbances caused due to communal intolerance largely impact the local economy due to the disruptive activities like strikes, riots, destruction of public property etc against each other, and also disturb the macro-economic outlook of countries on the global sphere as a result of the apprehensions of investors or economic giants of a good work environment. **For ex**- Many global indices consider all round social parameters and societal tolerance to rank countries which in turn are considered for economic reports, positive indicators etc.
- **Political instability**: At times massive communal clashes result in political blame game, interference and unnecessary measures, projecting an unstable political atmosphere. Welfare of the nation is mainly side-lined and the representatives are caught in inconsequential issues. **For ex**- as seen in Sri Lanka, communal clashes and violence often divide the nation and the common masses bringing in a total instability.
- **Deprivation of amenities**: Victims of intolerance are found to be deprived of facilities and opportunities, thus excluding them from contributing to the overall development of the society and subsequently lose out on self-development too. **For ex**- Minorities of a certain place not being allowed to work, settle down, and reside in places where they are a minority or not accepted well.
- **Curbing of individual freedom**: Any form of illogical intolerance often leads to taking away of individual freedom and rights. Constructive criticism and debates over various aspects are absent and dominance of one ideology takes over. Any society plagued by this halts the overall growth and progress of the collective.

Conclusion:

Secularism with tolerance acts as a special and critical pillar in our democracy, which has been loudly supported by people like Gandhi, Swami Vivekananda and even preamble of our constitution. People of this great nation should be reminded of the value and guiding principles in life that have nurtured compassion, forbearance and

tolerant accommodativeness in the people of the subcontinent from time immemorial.

3. Comment upon the evolving trends of regionalism in India and the government's response to it.

Introduction

Regionalism is defined as a political ideology that favours a specific region over a greater area. It usually results due to political separations, religious geography, cultural boundaries, linguistic regions, and managerial divisions.

Body

Evolving trends in regionalism

- Separation of Telangana from Andhra Pradesh in 2014 which recently happened.
- Demand for creation of new states from Darjeeling region of west Bengal, Vidarbha region from Maharashtra, splitting up of Uttar Pradesh into four, Union territory status for Kodagu region etc.
- Pathalgadi movement: Started in parts of Eastern India, the movement is based on self-assertion and governance based on customary laws and rejection of Central government laws.
- Regional politics: Regionals parties like BSP, TMC, YSRCP, JDS, JDU have cropped up from national parties and demanding more rights for states in form of transferring items from Union and Concurrent list to State lists, residuary powers to states among others.
- Dravidian state: There has been demand for separate Dravidian land consisting of 4 southern states from certain fringe/regional political parties. Ex: United states of South India.
- Demand for reservation in Jobs: Certain groups in states like Karnataka, Maharashtra have started demanding for reservation in jobs for local people. Ex: Slogans like Mumbai for Mumbaikars etc.
- Maharashtra's Shiv Sena, Punjab's khalistan movement, ULFA in Assam for securing their boundaries, Telangana movement are some of the movements related to regionalism.

After independence Indian government adapted various strategies to overcome the issue of regionalism.

- Provision of autonomy within 5th Schedule and 6th Schedule.
- The States Reorganisation Commission (SRC) was a body constituted by the Central Government of India in 1953 to recommend the reorganisation of state boundaries

- Linguistic reorganization of states with passage of States Reorganization Act of 1956.
- North eastern reorganization act, 1971
- Three language formula, special grants to backward states.
- Federal institutions like Inter-State Council, NITI Aayog, GST Council.
- Creation of new states like Telangana and Uttarakhand.
- Initiatives like 'Ek Bharat Shreshta Bharat' to promote the spirit of national integration through a deep and structured engagement between all Indian States and Union Territories through a year-long planned engagement between States.
- Incentives for Promoting Investment in Backward Regions like Income Tax Concession and tax Holiday in order to give stimulus to new industries in backward regions.

Conclusion

Regionalism in India is the Expression of the neglected socio-political elements which not succeed to find expression in the mainstream polity and culture. These feelings of frustration and annoyance resulting from exclusion and neglect find demonstration in regionalism

4. Do you find any contradictions in the prevalent notion, understanding and practice of secularism in India? Critically comment.

Introduction

Secularism means separation of religion from political, economic, social and cultural aspects of life, religion is treated as a purely personal matter. It stands for equal opportunities for followers of all religions, and no discrimination and partiality on grounds of religion.

Body

Understanding the concept of secularism:

- **Separation of state and religion-** Religious groups don't interfere in affairs of state, and the state doesn't interfere in religious affairs.
- **Religious freedom**- Defend the absolute freedom of religious and other belief. It protects the rights of both believers and non-believers.
- **Equal access to public services**- No discrimination is allowed to access public services on the basis of religion. State-funded schools are non-religious in character.
- **Protection of free speech and expression**- Religious people have the right to express their beliefs publicly but so do those who oppose or question those beliefs.

- **Promote the idea of democracy**- All citizens are considered equal irrespective of their religious affiliation and universal human rights precedes religious demands.

Prevalent notion and Practice of secularism in India:

- Secularism in India does not mean that the state cannot intervene in religion and its affairs, but that any intervention should be within the limitations prescribed by the Constitution.
- According to the concept of principled distance, a secular state may keep a principled distance from religion to promote peace between communities and it may also intervene to protect the rights of specific communities.
- Indian philosophy of secularism is related to **"Sarva Dharma Sambhava"** which means equal respect to all religions rather than western philosophy of 'Dharma nirapekshata' i.e. the indifference of state to religion.
- **No clear distinction between state and religion**- State interferes in religious issues when they involve human rights, for example banning untouchability and passage of triple talaq bill.
- **Constitutional provisions**- India has provided religious safeguards under constitution through
  - Freedom of Religion as guaranteed under article 25, 26,27 and 28, supporting the idea of practicing any religious practice as long as it does not harm the social and moral order of society.
  - Article 29 and 30 provides special protection to religious minorities and their educational institutions.
  - Article 44 in DPSP makes a constitutional obligation on State to bring uniform civil code.
  - Article 51A call upon the citizens to upholds principles of fraternity and brotherhood, and to endure religious diversities
- **Freedom for individual and community-** Religious minorities have the right to practice and propagate their religion.

There are few contradictions too:

- **Problem of Uniform Civil Code**: Till now no progress has been made in the evolution of a uniform Civil Code and today its adoption appears to be more problematic than it was at the time when the Constitution was framed.
- **Rise of communalism**- Riots, Mandir-Masjid issues keep cropping up every now and then.
- **Politics and Religion**: The Supreme Court had observed in the Bommai case that if religion is not separated from politics, the religion of the ruling party tends to become the state religion.

- **Uneven development among different religious groups**- Political mileage has prevented necessary interventions in some communities resulting in their backwardness.

Conclusion

Indian secularism is sometimes criticized for being interventionist, but it is this intervention that has helped maintain a balance in society. Political masters need to look beyond vote bank and step forward to undertake some long due religious reforms
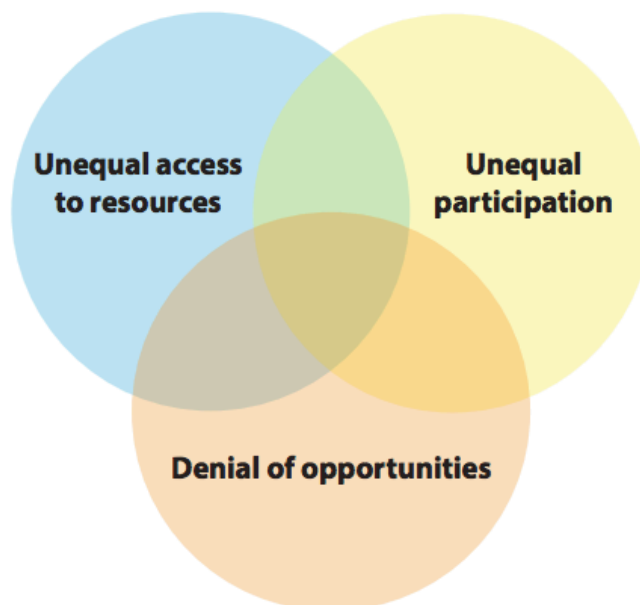
5. What are the predominant modern age factors of social exclusion? Explain.

Introduction

Social exclusion is a form of discrimination that occurs when people are wholly or partially excluded from participating in the economic, social and political life of their community, based on their belonging to a certain social class, category or group.

Body

Symptoms of exclusion

Predominant modern age factors of social exclusion:
- **Poverty**- Lack of material resources like income, land, employment etc, prevents people from participation in social or cultural life, for example, poverty results in denial of health, education, insurance etc.

- **Caste**- In India, caste is a major factor for social exclusion, where still lower castes are excluded from things considered as the exclusive domain of upper castes, like priesthood.
- **Gender**- Women are excluded from religious practices like temple entry on certain days, from economic participation due to preference given to household work and from political sphere as well.
- **Religion**- Religion often shapes the access to resources and community participation, for example certain religious groups are ultra-rich whereas others are considered poor. Also, community participation differs for different religions.
- **Ethnicity**- There exists a north-south, east-west divide as well as discrimination against tribal that limits the social participation of these groups across country. For example, racial attacks on people from North-East.
- **Disability**- Lack of disabled friendly infrastructure, social discrimination, does not help in assimilating the disabled community with the mainstream society.
- **Sexual orientation**- LGBT communities face discrimination and exclusion because of their sexual orientations and gender identities.
- **Status**- In modern age, people tend to communicate and make social circle with people of similar economic status, thus making status a major factor of social exclusion.
- **Education**- In India, quality education and English language skills are considered synonymous and hence social as well as economic exclusion is seen in case of lack of language skills or les than optimal education.
- **Geographical location**- With increasing regionalization, people identify more with their own regions than the whole nation, leading to exclusion based on location, for example migrants are excluded from government jobs in many states.

Conclusion

Social exclusion is a structural phenomenon and requires solutions that incorporate all stakeholders panning across various sectors as well a focused approach to reduce the gap between socially excluded groups and the rest of the population.