

Q.1) "The destiny of India is not caste in stone." In light of this statement, examine the evolving nature of caste in contemporary India. (150 words, 10 marks)

Introduction

The caste system is a hereditary, hierarchical, and **ascriptive social system** dividing people by birth. With over **3,000 castes** in India, its influence is deep, but today, it is changing, showing that India's destiny is not fixed by caste.

Body

Destiny of India is not Caste in Stone

- 1. Political Empowerment:** Marginalised castes are gaining political power through reservations and elections.
Example: Leaders like **Mayawati** and parties like BSP have come to power with Dalit support.
- 2. Legal Safeguards:** Laws have been made to protect lower castes from discrimination and violence.
Example: The SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act was used in the **2016 Una flogging case**.
- 3. Economic Mobility:** Many people from lower castes are now getting better jobs and starting businesses.
Example: **Kalpna Saroj, a Dalit woman**, became a successful business leader.
- 4. Urbanisation:** In cities, caste matters less because people focus more on skills and work.
Example: In IT companies, teams work together without asking about caste.
- 5. Youth and Inter-caste Marriages:** Young people today are more open to marrying outside their caste.
Example: In the Hadiya case (2018), the Supreme Court supported inter-caste marriage.



Some Elements of Caste Continue even today

Caste is changing in many ways, but some old habits and problems still exist, especially in villages and social life.

- 1. Social Discrimination:** People still face caste-based insults and untouchability in rural areas.
Example: The **2023 NCRB report** shows many cases of violence against Dalits.
- 2. Caste-based Politics:** Many parties still use caste to get votes during elections.
Example: In Bihar, **caste census** and caste-based promises are common during campaigns.
- 3. Marriage Norms:** Most people still marry within their own caste due to family and society pressure.

Example: According to the **2011 Census**, only about **6 percent of marriages** are inter-caste.

- Economic Inequality:** Lower castes still own less land and have fewer financial resources.
Example: **NSSO data** shows Dalits have less agricultural land compared to upper castes.

Conclusion

Caste in India is mostly changing with better laws, awareness, and progress, but some old practices still remain. **As Deepankar Gupta said, "Caste is not a thing of the past, but it need not be our future."**

Q.2) "The institution of family and marriage in India is witnessing a paradigm shift." Examine the changing trends in family structures and marriage practices in contemporary India. (150 words, 10 marks)

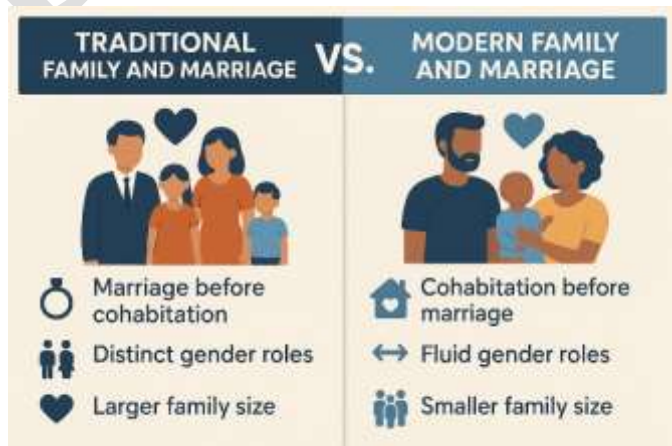
Introduction

Family is a group of people **related by blood or adoption** living together, while marriage is a **socially approved union** between partners. In India, both are evolving rapidly due to modern forces, leading to a shift in traditional patterns.

Body

Changing Trends in Family Structures

- Rise of Nuclear Families:** More couples move to cities for jobs and raise children independently, preferring nuclear setups over joint families.
- Single-parent Households:** Due to divorce or personal choice, more families are now headed by one parent, especially in urban areas.
- Changing Role of Women:** Women are more independent today, delaying marriage, pursuing careers, and actively participating in family decisions.
- Live-in Relationships:** Some couples live together without marriage, which is gaining legal acceptance and becoming more common in cities.



Changing Trends in Marriage Practices

- Delayed and Convenient Marriages:** Youth are marrying later due to career focus, and some enter short-term marriages for immigration or financial benefits, especially in states like Punjab.

2. **Love, Inter-caste and Interfaith Marriages:** Personal choice is becoming more important in urban areas, and slowly breaking traditional marriage boundaries.
3. **Rise in Divorces:** More couples now separate when unhappy, showing a growing acceptance of divorce as a valid choice.
4. **Same-sex Relationships:** LGBTQ+ relationships are gaining visibility and legal recognition, though same-sex marriage is not yet legal.

Some Traditional Values Still Remain

While new patterns are emerging, many traditional ideas around family and marriage still continue in India.

1. **Preference for Arranged Marriages:** NFHS data shows around 85% of Indian marriages are still arranged by families.
2. **Patriarchal Norms:** In many rural areas, women still need permission for basic choices like work or mobility.
3. **Family Honour and Social Approval:** Honour killings and opposition to inter-caste marriages are still reported in states like Haryana.
4. **Importance of Marriage:** Social stigma around being unmarried still exists, especially for women, in both urban and rural areas.

Conclusion

Family and marriage in India are clearly changing with time, yet some traditional ideas remain strong. According to **NFHS-5 and Pew Research surveys**, while modern patterns are rising, Indian society still strongly values family ties and marriage customs.

Q.3) Women's movements in India have transitioned from a focus on welfare to one of empowerment. Critically examine the contribution of women's organizations in driving this transformation. (150 words, 10 marks)

Introduction

The women's movement in India has evolved from welfare work to empowerment strategies. Women's organizations have driven this transformation by shifting from **addressing symptoms to dismantling root causes** of gender inequality.

Body

Earlier Focus on Welfare and Protection

1. **Charity and Relief Work:** Early organizations provided immediate relief without questioning structural inequalities. **Example:** Bharat Stree Mahamandal (1910s) provided aid to widows while reinforcing dependency.
2. **Mother-Child Care Services:** Welfare paradigm emphasized reproductive roles over individual agency. **Example:** Women's groups supported ICDS, positioning women as beneficiaries rather than decision-makers.

3. **Vocational Training Centres:** Skills limited to traditionally feminine occupations within social boundaries. *Example:* AIWC established tailoring centers, maintaining gender-segregated skill sets.
4. **Focus on Moral and Domestic Roles:** Early interventions strengthened patriarchal norms. *Example:* Reform movements promoted homemaking ideals, limiting aspirations to domestic spheres.

Shift Toward Empowerment

1. **Legal Reforms and Justice:** Organizations demanded systemic legal changes over individual interventions. *Example:* Mathura rape case protests led to Criminal Law Amendment Act, 1983.
2. **Economic Independence:** Focus expanded to comprehensive economic empowerment including asset ownership. *Example:* SEWA enabled collective bargaining, microcredit access, and cooperative ownership.
3. **Political Participation and Voice:** Organizations demanded representation in decision-making institutions. *Example:* Sustained advocacy resulted in 33% reservation for women in Panchayati Raj institutions.
4. **Reproductive and Bodily Autonomy:** Contemporary movements challenge patriarchal control over women's bodies. *Example:* CREA and TARSHI pioneered discussions on sexual rights and consent.

Key Contributions of Women's Organizations

1. **Shaping Laws and Policy:** Organizations evolved from requesting intervention to actively drafting legislation. *Example:* Lawyers Collective advocated for 2013 POSH Act and developed implementation guidelines.
2. **Grassroots Mobilization:** Groups built feminist consciousness at village level. *Example:* Mahila Samakhya created alternative educational spaces challenging gender roles.
3. **Breaking Social Taboos:** Organizations transformed private issues into public concerns. *Example:* Breakthrough's Bell Bajao campaign encouraged community intervention in domestic violence.
4. **Digital and Public Campaigns:** Modern movements leverage technology for solidarity networks. *Example:* Digital collectives like Sayfty and #MeToo created safe spaces for survivors.

Challenges and Limitations

1. **Urban-Rural Disconnect:** Empowerment strategies remain concentrated in urban centers. *Example:* Rural women face barriers in accessing justice mechanisms compared to urban counterparts.
2. **Resource and Funding Issues:** Organizations struggle to secure sustained financial commitment. *Example:* Grassroots collectives operate on uncertain funding, limiting intervention scaling.
3. **Resistance and Backlash:** Empowerment strategies face organized opposition from established power structures. *Example:* Conservative groups opposed sex education programs in several states.

4. **Intersectional Gaps:** Movement sometimes overlooks caste, class, and religious intersections. **Example:** Dalit women's organizations highlight mainstream feminism's failure to address caste-based violence.

Conclusion

Women's organizations have transformed India's approach from welfare to empowerment, reimagining women as **agents of change** rather than recipients of protection. However, gaps remain in rural access, funding, and **intersectional inclusivity** that require sustained attention.

Q.4) India's strength lies in its pluralism and diversity, but these are increasingly under strain. Critically analyse. Suggest suitable measures to preserve and promote India's pluralistic ethos. (250 words, 15 marks)

Introduction

India is a land of immense pluralism, with over **120 languages**, various faiths, and vibrant regional identities coexisting. This diversity is the foundation of India's unity. However, changing social dynamics and global trends have posed new challenges to this pluralistic fabric.

Body

Indian Pluralism and Diversity



Emerging Strains on Pluralism and Diversity

1. **Social Divides and Misunderstandings:** Growing differences in belief and lifestyle sometimes lead to social tension.
Example: The **2020 Northeast Delhi riots** reflected how misinformation and polarised narratives can disturb communal harmony.
2. **Linguistic Concerns and Regional Sensitivities:** At times, regional cultures and languages feel underrepresented.
Example: The **anti-Hindi protests in Tamil Nadu** and Karnataka reflect concerns over preserving linguistic identity.
3. **Declining Inter-community Engagement:** Urbanisation and digital lifestyles reduce personal interaction across groups.
Example: In several metros like **Bengaluru and Mumbai**, gated communities often form along linguistic or cultural lines.
4. **Pressure on Artistic and Cultural Expression:** Some creative works face challenges when touching upon sensitive issues.
Example: Protests around the release of films like "**Padmaavat**" and "Lipstick Under My Burkha" illustrate sensitivities in artistic narratives.
5. **Spread of Misinformation:** Social media can rapidly spread unverified content, leading to confusion and mistrust.
Example: Fake news on WhatsApp groups has been linked to several mob violence cases, like in **Maharashtra's Dhule district in 2018**.
6. **Limited Representation of Marginal Voices:** Certain communities seek better participation in institutions and media.
Example: The demand for **DNT (Denotified Tribes)** representation and inclusion in public discourse is an ongoing issue.
However, India's pluralism remains vibrant and visible in many ways, showing that its inclusive fabric continues to hold strong.

Signs of Vibrant Pluralism

1. **Peaceful Democratic Transitions:** Power changes at the centre and states often happen peacefully across diverse regions.
Example: Voter participation across states and communities reflects trust in democratic institutions.
2. **Cultural Festivals Celebrated Nationwide:** People from different faiths often celebrate each other's festivals.
Example: Holi, Eid, Christmas, and Pongal see wide participation beyond religious boundaries.
3. **Cross-community Educational Institutions:** Schools and colleges continue to host students from varied backgrounds.
Example: Central universities and coaching institutions foster unity through shared learning.
4. **Constitutional Safeguards Actively Invoked:** Courts and citizens regularly turn to constitutional rights to protect diversity.

Measures to Preserve and Promote Pluralistic Ethos

- 1. Reaffirming Constitutional Values through Education:** Promoting equality, liberty, and fraternity in schools and society.
Example: Curriculum encouraging appreciation of all cultures can foster mutual respect from a young age.
- 2. Promoting Inter-community Dialogue:** Creating spaces for conversations among people of different backgrounds.
Example: Community initiatives like **interfaith festivals** and youth exchange programmes help build trust.
- 3. Supporting Regional Cultures and Languages:** Encouraging local art, language, and traditions through policy and platforms.
Example: Schemes like **Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat** foster cross-cultural learning among states.
- 4. Responsible Digital Communication:** Promoting digital literacy and verification of content to prevent misunderstandings.
Example: Initiatives encouraging fact-checking and civil dialogue on social media are gaining ground.
- 5. Encouraging Inclusive Media and Storytelling:** Ensuring diverse narratives are represented across platforms.
Example: Regional cinema, multilingual publications, and inclusive journalism are key steps forward.
- 6. Grassroots and Civic Engagement:** Strengthening local harmony efforts and inclusive development.
Example: Peace-building workshops, **cultural melas**, and shared development projects promote unity on the ground.

Conclusion

India's unity through diversity remains one of its greatest achievements. As highlighted in the **India Justice Report 2022**, nurturing pluralism requires balanced policies, community effort, and mutual respect across all segments.

Q.5) What are the major challenges faced by tribal communities in contemporary India, particularly in the context of displacement, identity, and development? Evaluate the effectiveness of government measures in addressing these issues. (250 words, 15 marks)

Introduction

Tribal communities, constituting over **8.6% of India's population**, have historically lived in close harmony with nature. However, in the face of modern development and socio-economic shifts, they face critical challenges related to displacement, erosion of identity, and uneven development.

Body

Key Challenges Faced by Tribal Communities

1. **Displacement due to Development Projects:** Infrastructure, mining, and dams often displace tribals from ancestral lands.
Example: The **Polavaram Dam project** in Andhra Pradesh led to the displacement of thousands from Koya and Konda Reddy tribes.
2. **Loss of Cultural Identity:** Integration efforts sometimes dilute tribal languages, customs, and spiritual traditions.
Example: The decline of tribal languages like **Kurukh and Gondi** among younger generations is a growing concern.
3. **Inadequate Access to Education and Health:** Remote geography and systemic neglect result in poor service delivery.
Example: **NFHS-5 data** reveals higher malnutrition rates among tribal children in states like Jharkhand and Madhya Pradesh.
4. **Exploitation and Alienation from Land:** Despite protective laws, land alienation remains a major issue.
Example: In Odisha, tribal farmers have struggled with illegal land transfers despite the existence of the **PESA Act**.
5. **Livelihood Disruption and Forest Dependency:** Modern policies often overlook traditional forest-based livelihoods.
Example: Restrictions under wildlife conservation rules have impacted the **Baiga tribe's** access to forest produce in Chhattisgarh.
6. **Political Underrepresentation and Marginalisation:** Tribals often lack effective say in decision-making.
Example: Many **Tribal Advisory Councils** remain underutilized or symbolic in nature across several states.

Effectiveness of Government Measures

1. **Constitutional and Legal Safeguards:** The Fifth and Sixth Schedules, PESA, and FRA aim to protect tribal land and autonomy.
Example: **The Forest Rights Act (2006)** has enabled community claims over forest land, notably by **Dongria Kondhs** in Odisha.
2. **Educational and Health Initiatives:** Schemes like Eklavya Model Residential Schools and Van Bandhu Kalyan Yojana target tribal welfare.
Example: **Eklavya schools** have improved access to quality education in remote tribal belts of Gujarat and Chhattisgarh.
3. **Economic Empowerment and Skill Training:** TRIFED, livelihood missions, and MSP for Minor Forest Produce help boost incomes.
Example: MSP schemes have helped **Gond and Sahariya tribes** in Madhya Pradesh gain better returns on forest goods.
4. **Cultural Preservation and Promotion:** Government funds support tribal festivals, languages, and museums to preserve identity.
Example: The **Tribal Research Institutes** promote cultural documentation and archiving across multiple states.

Limitations and Concerns

- 1. Poor Implementation of Laws:** Ground-level enforcement of laws like FRA and PESA remains weak.
Example: Many states have delayed or diluted PESA rules, limiting village-level self-governance.
- 2. Top-down Development Models:** Schemes often ignore community participation and traditional knowledge systems.
Example: Large-scale afforestation without community consultation has affected tribal livelihoods in Jharkhand.
- 3. Administrative Apathy and Leakages:** Delays, corruption, and insensitivity hamper the reach of tribal welfare programs.
Example: Reports from CAG and NITI Aayog highlight underutilisation of Tribal Sub Plan funds in several regions.

Way Forward

- 1. Strengthen Grassroots Governance:** Empower gram sabhas through full implementation of PESA and FRA provisions.
- 2. Adopt Inclusive Development Models:** Ensure community consultation in planning (**Tribal advisory council**), with respect for traditional knowledge.
- 3. Improve Monitoring and Accountability:** Use **digital platforms and social audits** to ensure transparency in fund utilisation.

Conclusion

While significant strides have been made in legal and policy frameworks, challenges persist in ensuring genuine empowerment of tribal communities. As per the **Xaxa Committee Report (2014)**, success depends on inclusive governance, respect for tribal rights, and strengthening grassroots institutions to balance development with dignity.