

**Q.1) "Communalism in India is not merely a religious phenomenon but also a political and socio-economic construct" Discuss with examples and suggest solutions. (150 words, 10 marks)**

### Introduction

Communalism refers to **strong loyalty to one's religious group**, often at the cost of national unity. In India, it is not just religious but also influenced by political strategies, economic insecurities, and social conditions, making it a complex challenge.

### Body

#### Communalism as a Multi-Dimensional Construct

- Political Mobilisation:** Parties use religious identities to polarise voters and gain power. Example: The Ram Janmabhoomi movement led to the Babri Masjid demolition and large-scale riots in 1992.
- Economic Competition:** Limited resources and unemployment create tension between communities. Example: In areas of Maharashtra, competition for jobs and businesses has sparked conflict between Dalits and Muslims.
- Social Segregation and Ghettoisation:** Religious groups often live separately, reducing interaction and trust. Example: Cities like Ahmedabad and Delhi have religious enclaves where segregation limits integration.
- Historical Grievances and Stereotypes:** Past conflicts and colonial narratives fuel present-day mistrust. Example: Partition-related memories still influence communal perceptions, especially in northern India.



#### However, Religion Still Plays a Role

- Provocative Religious Events:** Processions and rituals can lead to confrontation in shared spaces. Example: In Bihar and West Bengal, communal clashes have erupted during overlapping festivals.
- Rise of Extremist Elements:** Fringe groups use religion to spread hatred and assert dominance. Example: Hate speeches by radical leaders have incited violence in parts of Karnataka and UP.
- Communal Violence:** Tensions often escalate into riots along religious lines. Example: The 2020 Delhi riots began with political protests but turned into Hindu-Muslim violence.

- 4. Media and Misinformation:** Social media spreads rumours that inflame religious sentiments.  
Example: Fake videos shared on WhatsApp have triggered mob lynchings in rural areas.

#### Addressing Communalism: Key Responses

- 1. Promote Constitutional Values through Education:** Teaching pluralism and fraternity can build mutual respect.  
Example: NCERT reforms and civic education can include stories of harmony and shared heritage.
- 2. Ensure Fair Policing and Justice Delivery:** Neutral and prompt action can reduce communal bias.  
Example: Peace was restored in Bhilwara due to timely police action and dialogue with both sides.
- 3. Encourage Interfaith Dialogue and Local Engagement:** Community events and joint initiatives foster trust.  
Example: Mohalla committees in Mumbai have helped prevent escalation during tense periods.
- 4. Regulate Hate Speech and Digital Content:** Monitoring platforms and spreading awareness can stop false narratives.  
Example: The IT Rules 2021 and fact-checking efforts like PIB Fact Check work to counter fake news.

#### Conclusion

Communalism in India is driven by overlapping religious, political, and socio-economic forces. While challenges remain, education, fair governance, and dialogue can preserve harmony. The **Sachar Committee** rightly noted that inclusive development is key to lasting communal peace.

**Q.2) "Globalization has simultaneously fostered cultural homogenization and the strengthening of local identities. Analyze this paradox in the Indian context." (150 words, 10 marks)**

#### Introduction

Globalization, as defined by the **World Bank**, is the growing integration of economies and societies across the world. In India, it has led to cultural convergence in some areas, while simultaneously fueling a reassertion of local and regional identities.

#### Body

##### Cultural Homogenization in India

- 1. Western Lifestyles and Media Influence:** Global pop culture shapes urban youth behavior, values, and choices. Example: **Netflix, McDonald's**, and Instagram dominate urban spaces, altering traditional social norms and preferences.
- 2. Linguistic Dominance of English and Hindi:** Regional dialects are being sidelined in media and education. Example: Advertising and digital content often use English or Hinglish, even in regional states.

3. **Uniform Consumer and Shopping Culture:** Malls and e-commerce promote standard experiences across cities. Example: Malls in **Jaipur and Kochi** now offer similar brands like Zara and Starbucks.
4. **Decline in Traditional Clothing and Food Habits:** Global fashion and fast food alter everyday cultural practices. Example: **Jeans and burgers** are replacing dhotis and traditional meals, especially among youth.

#### Strengthening of Local Identities in India

1. **Revival of Indigenous Arts and Crafts:** Traditional art forms are being actively preserved and promoted. Example: GI tags for **Channapatna toys and Madhubani paintings** ensure their cultural recognition and market protection.
2. **Growth of Regional Language Media:** Local OTT platforms and literature are gaining prominence. Example: Platforms like **Planet Marathi** showcase regional stories and talent.
3. **Cultural Festivals Gaining Wider Attention:** Local celebrations are now embraced beyond their native regions. Example: Hornbill Festival in Nagaland and **Onam in Kerala** draw national and international visitors.
4. **Pride in Ethnic and Linguistic Identities:** States are promoting their own heritage and identity actively. Example: **Tamil Nadu's push for classical Tamil** and Kerala's promotion of Malayalam literature.

#### Conclusion

Globalization in India has created a dynamic interplay of cultural blending and revival. While some aspects are homogenized, local identities continue to thrive. As per the **UNESCO Cultural Diversity Report (2022)**, culture adapts, resists, and redefines itself in global contexts.

**Q.3) Examine the role of the 'Gig Economy' in the process of empowerment of women in India. Also, suggest measures to overcome the challenges faced by women in this sector. (150 words, 10 marks)**

#### Introduction

The gig economy refers to **flexible, short-term work** arrangements often mediated by digital platforms. In India, it is emerging as a significant driver of employment, especially for women, by offering flexible hours and remote options that align with domestic responsibilities.

## Body

### Empowerment through Gig Economy

- 1. Flexible Work Opportunities:** Women can balance domestic duties and earn through part-time gigs. Example: Freelance writing, graphic design, and data entry allow rural and urban women to work from home.
- 2. Increased Digital Participation:** Gig platforms promote digital and financial literacy among women. Example: Women using apps like Meesho or UrbanClap for entrepreneurship or service-based work.
- 3. Entry into Non-Traditional Sectors:** Gig jobs reduce gendered barriers in areas like delivery and driving. Example: Swiggy and Uber now onboard women delivery agents and drivers in select cities.
- 4. Boost to Rural Female Workforce:** Digital platforms help women from small towns connect to urban markets. Example: Rural artisans sell products via Amazon Karigar and Flipkart Samarth.



### Challenges Faced by Women in the Gig Sector

- 1. Lack of Job Security and Benefits:** No fixed salaries, maternity leave, or social protection. Example: Most women gig workers are excluded from ESI or PF coverage.
- 2. Gender-Based Harassment and Safety Risks:** Women face unsafe working conditions, especially in public gigs. Example: Delivery partners and beauticians report unsafe client interactions and lack of redressal mechanisms.
- 3. Digital Divide and Skill Gap:** Limited access to technology and low digital literacy affect participation. Example: Many women in Tier-2/3 cities lack smartphones or digital payment skills.
- 4. Algorithmic Bias and Lack of Representation:** Women often get lower ratings or visibility due to biased systems. Example: Studies show male workers get more high-paying gigs in ride-hailing apps.

### Way Forward

- 1. Inclusive Social Security Schemes:** Extend benefits like health insurance and paid leave to gig workers under the **Social Security Code 2020**.
- 2. Strengthening Legal Frameworks:** Ensure workplace safety, anti-harassment mechanisms, and grievance redressal for women on platforms.
- 3. Digital and Skill Literacy Campaigns:** Promote digital training for women, especially in semi-urban and rural areas.

**4. Gender-Sensitive Platform Design:** Encourage platforms to ensure fair algorithms, visibility, and feedback systems for women workers.

### Conclusion

The gig economy holds strong potential to empower Indian women but needs targeted reforms. According to the **ILO 2024 report**, inclusive digital policies and gender-responsive social protection can make gig work a sustainable avenue for women's economic and social mobility.

**Q.4) "Regional aspirations in India often emerge from a perceived denial of cultural identity, autonomy, and development. Critically examine the factors fueling regionalism in contemporary India and suggest balanced approaches to address them." (250 words, 15 marks)**

### Introduction

Historian **Bipan Chandra** defined regionalism as an expression of group identity based on culture, language, or territory. In India, it emerges when regions feel denied fair development, representation, or recognition in the national mainstream.

### Body

#### Factors Fueling Regionalism in Contemporary India

- 1. Perceived Economic Disparities:** Unequal development among states fuels resentment and demands for special status.  
Example: Backward regions like **Vidarbha and Bundelkhand** cite poor infrastructure and economic neglect as reasons for separate statehood.
- 2. Assertion of Cultural and Linguistic Identity:** Communities resist perceived cultural homogenization.  
Example: Protests in **Tamil Nadu** against the imposition of Hindi and for Tamil pride reflect deep-rooted linguistic regionalism.
- 3. Demand for Political Autonomy:** Ethnic and tribal groups seek greater administrative control.  
Example: **Gorkhaland and Bodoland movements** stem from a desire for self-governance and local representation.
- 4. Migration and Demographic Changes:** Influx of migrants causes fear of cultural dilution and economic competition.  
Example: Movements in **Assam and Meghalaya** against "outsiders" are driven by anxieties over identity and resources.
- 5. Historical Neglect and Identity-Based Mobilisation:** Legacy of colonial boundaries and post-independence neglect fuels sentiments.  
Example: **Telangana statehood movement** was rooted in historical neglect by the Andhra region post-merger in 1956.

#### Balanced Approaches to Address Regional Aspirations

- 1. Strengthening Cooperative Federalism:** Promote dialogue and equitable resource-sharing between Centre and States.

Example: Use of Inter-State Council and **NITI Aayog** to address regional concerns collaboratively.

2. **Inclusive Development Policies:** Target backward regions with special packages and decentralised planning.

Example: **Aspirational Districts Programme** aims at balanced development across lagging districts.

3. **Cultural Recognition and Promotion:** Protect and celebrate regional languages, festivals, and heritage through official platforms.

Example: Inclusion of regional languages in education and public services strengthens cultural pride.

4. **Responsive Political Representation:** Empower local governance and ensure regional voices in decision-making.

Example: Formation of **autonomous councils** under the Sixth Schedule in Northeast India has helped address tribal aspirations.

5. **Strengthening Fiscal Federalism:** Ensure fair devolution of funds through Finance Commissions.

Example: Timely transfers and special grants to lagging states help reduce economic imbalances.

6. **Transparent Grievance Redressal:** Establish credible mechanisms to address regional demands democratically.

Example: Addressing issues through commissions and consultative bodies builds trust and avoids conflict escalation.

### Conclusion

While regionalism poses challenges, it also reflects India's pluralist strength. As **Rajni Kothari** said, "**India is a country held together by political and cultural diversities.**" Acknowledging and accommodating these diversities is key to ensuring national unity and democratic vitality.

**Q.5) "Despite the legal recognition of transgender persons, meaningful empowerment in social, economic, and political spheres remains elusive. Examine the barriers faced by the transgender community in India and suggest ways to ensure inclusive development." (250 words, 15 marks)**

### Introduction

As per the **2011 Census**, **4.88 lakh** individuals in India identified as transgender, but experts estimate the actual number to exceed **25 lakh** (NHRC, 2023). Despite the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019, systemic exclusion continues to hinder their empowerment.

### Body

#### Key Features of the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019

- **Right to self-perceived identity** – Legal recognition of transgender identity via self-identification.
- **Prohibition of discrimination** – Protection from discrimination in education, employment, healthcare, etc.

- **Welfare and rehabilitation** – Mandates government schemes for education, livelihood, and support.
- **Access to healthcare** – Ensures healthcare access, including SRS and HIV centres.
- **National Council formation** – Sets up a statutory body for monitoring and advising on trans rights.

### Persistent Barriers to Transgender Empowerment

1. **Social Discrimination and Stigma:** Despite legal protection, trans persons face ostracisation, violence, and prejudice in families and communities.  
Example: **NHRC (2023)** found **92%** trans persons faced public humiliation or job denial.
2. **Exclusion from Education and Employment:** Dropout rates are high; job opportunities remain limited due to workplace bias.  
Example: Ministry of Social Justice (2023) noted over **70%** trans persons lack formal employment.
3. **Health and Housing Insecurity:** Gender-affirming healthcare, mental health support, and housing access are often absent.  
Example: **NALSA** reports (2022-23) indicate over **50%** of trans persons live in insecure housing.
4. **Lack of Political Representation and Legal Gaps:** Trans persons lack meaningful political presence; law enforcement is weak.
5. **Limited Awareness of Legal Rights:** Many trans individuals are unaware of the provisions under the 2019 Act.  
Example: Transgender Welfare Board (2023) highlighted that fewer than **20%** of trans persons had accessed welfare schemes.
6. **Documentation Challenges:** Obtaining gender-appropriate documents remains complex and bureaucratic.  
Example: As per **SMILE scheme** implementation review (2023), only **16%** trans applicants successfully updated all official IDs.
7. **Intersectional Discrimination:** Trans persons with disabilities, or from Dalit and Adivasi communities, face compounded marginalisation.  
Example: A **2023 study by TISS** found such groups face multiple exclusions, even within marginalised communities.

### Measures to Ensure Inclusive Development

1. **Inclusive Education and Skill Development:** Promote gender sensitisation in schools and expand vocational training for trans youth.  
Example: **SMILE scheme** includes education and rehabilitation for trans persons.
2. **Affirmative Action and Employment Quotas:** Introduce reservations and incentivise private sector hiring.  
Example: **Tamil Nadu** offers job quotas for trans persons in public service.
3. **Comprehensive Healthcare Access:** Ensure insurance coverage, trained staff, and dedicated clinics for trans persons.  
Example: **Ayushman Bharat** now covers gender affirmation procedures.



4. **Political Empowerment and Representation:** Reserve seats or ensure active political inclusion and leadership training.  
Example: Kochi elected a trans mayor; others have contested state polls.
5. **Ease of Documentation and Legal Aid:** Simplify gender ID processes and provide legal support for discrimination cases.  
Recommendation: Link gender ID change to Aadhaar with fewer verification hurdles.
6. **Community-Led Policy Engagement:** Engage trans collectives in designing welfare schemes and monitoring implementation.  
Recommendation: Involve grassroots groups like **Sangama or Humsafar Trust** in policymaking.

### Conclusion

As the **UNDP** notes, inclusive development is impossible without addressing the marginalisation of **gender minorities** through sustained, intersectional, and community-led efforts. Therefore, uplifting the Transgender population is the need of the hour.