Competitive Backwardness

Why in news?

- A study analysed large-scale data from the India Human Development Survey (IHDS) and compared Patels, Marathas and Jats to other major groups.

What is the issue?

- The Jat agitation for quotas is back with additional demands for withdrawal of charges against those booked for the protests last year.
- The Patidar agitation is on the verge of revival.
- Maratha community reiterated the demand to be designated as one of the Other Backward Classes (OBC) during the second half of 2016.
- Thus the demand by powerful groups to be considered “backward”, based on the narrative of deprivation and marginalisation continues to be a major issue.

What is Competitive backwardness?

It refers not only to more and more people wanting to claim backwardness, but also to more and more people claiming even greater backwardness.

What are the findings of the study?

- The study found that these three castes are closer to the socio-economically dominant caste groups like Brahmins and Other Forward Castes in their respective states on a variety of indicators.
- These indicators include per capita consumption expenditure (PCCE), poverty status, educational attainment and occupational status compared to the existing disadvantaged groups i.e OBCs, SC/STs.
e.g the PCCE of the Jats is 33 and 43 per cent more than that of the OBCs and SC-STs and not different from that of the Brahmins and Forward Castes, Patels are 5 & 15% less likely to be poor as compared to the OBCs and SC-STs.

It found that Jats, Patels and Marathas have increased their relative advantage between 2004-05 and 2011-12.

Thus, the analysis shows that not only do Jats, Patels and Marathas possess an advantage over the lower-ranked marginalised groups they also have consolidated their relative position.

It also found that though the relative advantage of the Jats, Patels and Marathas in the agricultural sector is greater than in the non-agricultural sector, they still do better in absolute terms than the socially disadvantaged groups in the non-agricultural sector.

This indicates that the narrative of being backward is largely based on perceptions, and has little empirical support in the data.

What is the reason for agitation?

This raises a question about the factors that underlie in creating and sustaining powerful movements, which have been sufficiently large and disruptive, in spite of lack of any support of data

Jats, Marathas and Patels are among the most powerful communities in their respective states.

Land ownership and cultivation have been their economic backbone.

They are well connected to local political networks, both within and outside their communities, and that this might be an important factor underlying their massive mobilisation.
These communities feel their power slipping away or eroding, in addition to feeling ill prepared to shift towards urban, formal sector livelihood opportunities.

They feel that the real economic power lies in the hands of the big corporations, and the state, overtly or covertly, acts in their interest.

Individuals or communities that feel strongly that the odds of economic success are stacked against them, are more likely to feel deprived.

What should be done?

It should be noted that given increasing privatisation, the total jobs eligible for reservations is already shrinking.

Data also shows that existing OBCs and SC-STs are increasingly lagging behind upper castes in a range of material indicators.

In this context, extending quotas to relatively richer and powerful groups would amount to diluting the already small and shrinking entitlement for communities that are truly disadvantaged and discriminated against.

Source: The Hindu

Open Camps for Sterilisation

Why in news?

Over 27 months after 13 women died and 65 took ill at a State-run mass sterilisation camp in Chhattisgarh.

Following this, the State government has now discontinued all sterilisation services.

What was the recent move?
- Open camps were discontinued.
- The doctor who performed the surgeries has been terminated and representatives of the pharmaceutical company which supplied the medicines are in jail.
- These moves are taken as per the recommendations of a judicial commission headed by retired district judge Anita Jha.

**What is the effect of it?**

- Health facilities, including district hospitals have also stopped sterilisations.
- Instead of providing quality sterilisation services in the aftermath of so many deaths, the government has responded by discontinuing the services.
- As a result of discontinuing them, women have turned to private clinics for family planning.
- It costs around Rs. 8,000-10,000.
- Those who couldn't afford are required to go to neighbouring Jharkhand and Madhya Pradesh.
- Tribal areas have suffered the most.
- Since the discontinuation of open camps, sterilisation rates in Chhattisgarh for both men and women have dropped drastically.

**What should be done?**

- It has been a long-standing demand of the health movement in India that open camps be discontinued.
- However, they have to be replaced by adequate facilities at CHCs and district hospitals.
- It needs to be accompanied by awareness on male contraceptive methods such as condom use and vasectomy.
- Family planning is equally a men’s issue.
- But currently there is no stress or campaign on male contraception.
- The government does not persuade men into sterilisation the way it does for women.
- The tragedy in Chhattisgarh was a wakeup call.
- It showed that there is high demand, especially among women, despite bad quality services.
- Therefore government should respond by providing quality services to men and women, rather than withdrawing the existing services.

Source: The Hindu

**Indian Secularism**

**What is the issue?**

- In the recent judgment in Abhiram Singh v. C.D. Commachen Supreme Court rejected the identification of a secular state with any one particular religion or non-religious philosophy.
- But it injudiciously concluded that neither religion nor state can play any role in each other’s affairs.

**What is secularism?**

- Secularism is the principle of the separation of government institutions and persons mandated to represent the state from religious institutions and religious dignitaries.
• A secular state must not identify with any one religion or be controlled by it.

• It is because such identification accords privileged recognition to one religion, which violates the principle of equality

**What are the types of Secularism?**

Different states across the world achieve secularism in different ways as follows.

• By annihilation of religion. e.g practised in several communist countries.

• By distancing itself from religion by not recognising any religion at all. e.g practised in U.S

• By considering religion a strictly private matter but also punishing the practise of religion in the state institutions. e.g practised in France.

• By not allowing religion to influence legislations or goverment, but being affiliated to one religion by providing annual grants. e.g practised in Britain

**How is Indian Secularism different from the rest?**

• A distinctive feature of Indian secularism is that it rejects the ‘wall of separation’ between state and religion but demands that the state keep a ‘principled distance’ from all religions.

• The Indian Constitution allows the state to play a legitimate role in the affairs of religion. e.g Article 25 permits the state to regulate/restrict the secular activities of the religion

• Likewise, it permits religious considerations to sometimes enter governance.
Unlike the ideology of the American wall of separation, in India legitimate principled intervention of the state in religion and vice versa is constitutional.

The two are distanced but not completely separated.

Why the religion should be engaged in governance?

- State intervention does not always prohibit but rather facilitates the free exercise of religion.

- The recognition of a religious community is a positive act on the part of the state.

- e.g Granting rights to religious minorities is a form of state intervention so that they can build and maintain their own educational institutions, something large religious communities routinely do without the need for special rights.

- All religious groups have equal opportunity to avail of subsidies by the state.

- The Indian state decides which special days associated with religion are to be declared national holidays.

- All such decisions are based on religious considerations and are integral to governance.

- If hierarchical caste structure and patriarchy are intrinsic to the doctrine and practice of religions, then the state can legitimately interfere into religious matters through constitutional ban on untouchability, the opening of temples to all Hindus, judicial reform of Personal Laws etc.

- The values like freedom, equality and social harmony that prohibit the state from encroaching upon religion also allow permit the entry of religious considerations into the state.
• It requires that the state has a value-based engagement/disengagement with religion.
• Therefore Indian courts must endorse and adopt principled distance and drop the theory of strict separation.

Source: The Hindu

Prelim Bits

Zealandia
• It’s a new geological continent which was once a part of Australia.
• It broke off from Antarctica about 100 million years ago, and then from Australia about 80 million years ago.
• It meets all the criteria that are satisfied by the existing seven continents i.e it is elevated above the area that surrounds it, has its own distinctive geology, the area that it takes up is well defined and has a crust thicker & lighter continental crust than the regular ocean floor with dark volcanic rocks
• The new continent is 94% under water and made up of three major landmasses: New Zealand's north and south islands, and New Caledonia to the north
• A piece of seafloor called the Cato Trough still separates Zealandia and Australia

Kamov-226
The joint venture of Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) and Rosoboronexport and Russian Helicopters for manufacturing Kamov-226T light utility helicopters in India is likely to be signed this year.

As per the deal, 60 helicopters will be imported from Russia and at least another 140 will be built in India by the HAL with technology transfer.

The Kamov-226T helicopters are meant to replace the aging and obsolete Cheetah and Chetak fleets of the Indian Armed Forces.

India and Russia intend to export the Kamov-226T to third countries after meeting domestic requirement.

Passerine

A passerine is any bird of the order Passeriformes, which includes more than half of all bird species.

A notable feature of passerines compared to other orders of Aves is the arrangement of their toes, three pointing forward and one back, which facilitates perching.

It includes sparrows and similar small birds.