

UPSC

Candidate must adhere to the word limit specified in the question.
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Q- Seventy-five years after independence, there is a growing call to revisit India's reservation system in the larger interest of society and to advance transformative constitutionalism. Critically analyse the need for reassessing the reservation policy to ensure social justice and inclusive development.

Ans. Article 15 and 16 are the bedrock of positive discrimination in India. India's reservation policy has been a cornerstone in addressing historical injustice and promoting social equity.

Transformative constitutionalism refers to the infusion of the values of liberty, equality, fraternity and dignity in the social order.

Benefits of reservation —

① Social revolution —

Our constitution envisages a social revolution and affirmative policy. Reservation is first step in that direction and it ensures rights based empowerment and dignified life.

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② Historical injustice —

Reservation is a compensation for millenniums of historical justice like untouchability, gender bias, economic deprivation etc.

③ Equality of opportunity —

Social justice is not possible without equality of opportunity and it is also a value enshrined in our preamble.

④ Benefits society —

It benefits the entire society by promoting the ~~best~~ interest of the weakest in society.

Challenges in reservation —

① Economic criteria inclusion —

The introduction of 10% reservation for economically weaker sections sparked debates on need to balance economic disadvantage with social backwardness.

② Intra-community inequality —

The benefits of reservations are not equitably distributed, benefitting the more affluent within the reserved categories.

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③ Strengthens caste identity —

It strengthens caste identity which promotes caste politics

Need for reassessment —

① Transformative constitutionalism —

Evolving constitution envisages achieving ^{an} egalitarian society by addressing grievances of non-beneficiary groups to reduce social tension and promote fraternity.

② Race to Bottom —

After 1991 economic landscape changed and it integrated with global economy. Those who did not get benefits asked for reservation which is not sustainable and created domino effect.

③ Overdependence on quota —

Overdependence on quota neglects ~~to~~ capacity building and skill development.

④ Comprehensive policy making —

For comprehensive policy making there is a need to reassess reservation every 10 years. It will help to understand the impact of

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such policies on various caste, class and
regions.

WAY FORWARD —

- ↳ Use empirical data to formulate policies
- ↳ Address intra-group disparities through application of creamy layer as suggested by Supreme Court recently
- ↳ Strengthen access to quality education, healthcare, skill development to reduce reliance on reservations.
- ↳ Set clear timelines for reviewing and revising reservation policies, preventing their indefinite continuation

With evolving socio-economic dynamics there is need to reassess reservation policy so that it aligns with transformative constitutionalism and ensures social justice and inclusive development.