

Editorial of the Day – 27.12.2025**Index**

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1. Social scourge- On India and child marriages(TH)	

General Studies 1- Society

Topic- Role of women and women's organizations, population and associated issues, poverty and developmental issues.

Child Marriage in India- A Social Scourge**Introduction**

Child marriage remains a critical barrier to development in India, undermining health, disrupting education, and perpetuating intergenerational poverty. While India has aligned its goals with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to eliminate child marriage by 2030, the gap between policy intent and ground reality persists. Despite a decline in national figures, regional disparities and socio-economic vulnerabilities continue to challenge the effectiveness of intervention strategies.

India's Commitment and Policy Framework

Global Alignment- India is a signatory to the UN SDGs, explicitly committing to ending child marriage by 2030.

National Campaigns- The Union government recently marked the one-year anniversary of the Bal Vivah Mukta Bharat Abhiyan (Child Marriage Free India Campaign) with a focused 100-day nationwide awareness drive.

Intent vs. Reality- While there is strong policy intent backed by multiple schemes, achieving the zero-marriage target is still a "work in progress" due to implementation bottlenecks.

Trends and Progress

Statistical Decline- According to data from the National Family Health Survey (NFHS), the prevalence of child marriage has seen a significant steady decline

1. 2005-06- 47.4%
2. 2019-21- 23.3%

Uneven Progress- While national averages have improved, the progress is not uniform across all regions or social groups, masking deep-rooted issues in specific pockets of the country.

Regional Disparities

High Prevalence Zones- The practice remains alarmingly high among women aged 18-29 in specific eastern and northern states.

Critical States- West Bengal, Bihar, and Tripura.

States of Concern- Significant numbers are also reported in Jharkhand, Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Telangana, Madhya Pradesh, and Rajasthan.

Root Causes- These geographical patterns are indicative of entrenched regional inequalities, cultural norms, and local socio-economic realities that differ vastly from better-performing states.

Poverty and Education Linkages

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) has established a strong correlation between socio-economic deprivation and early marriage.

The Wealth Gap

1. Poorest Quintile- 40% of girls from the poorest families marry before age 18.
2. Richest Quintile- Only 8% of girls from the wealthiest families face the same fate.

Building Bureaucrats Since 2006

The Education Shield

1. No Education- 48% of uneducated girls are married early.
2. Higher Education- The figure drops drastically to 4% for those with higher education, proving that schooling is a potent deterrent.

Legal Framework and Gaps

Primary Legislation- The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act (PCMA), 2006 is the central law governing this issue.

Enforcement Issues- Low Conviction- Enforcement remains weak, with crime records data indicating infrequent application of the law and low conviction rates.

The POCSO Conflict- The strict application of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act has led to unintended consequences, often criminalizing consensual relationships among adolescents rather than targeting forced child marriages.

Health and Social Consequences

Maternal & Child Health- Child marriage is directly linked to poor health outcomes for both the young mother and her child, including higher risks of stunting and maternal mortality.

Unsafe Healthcare- Fear of criminal prosecution (under POCSO or PCMA) often pushes underage girls toward unsafe, unregulated, and clandestine health services for reproductive needs.

Cycle of Vulnerability- These health risks compound existing social vulnerabilities, trapping families in a cycle of poor health and poverty.

Schemes and Implementation Challenges

Incentive Limitations- Cash-transfer schemes aimed at encouraging girls' education exist, yet states like West Bengal (which has such schemes) still report high incidence rates, suggesting financial incentives alone are insufficient.

Central Schemes- The Beti Bachao Beti Padhao campaign needs to be recalibrated to better reach the most marginalized and vulnerable communities.

Infrastructure Deficit- Retaining girls in school requires more than just fees; it demands supportive infrastructure, including Clean and functional toilets. Safe transport options. Secure school environments.

Global and Developmental Implications

SDG Interdependence- According to the organization *Girls Not Brides*, 9 out of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals cannot be achieved without ending child marriage.

Holistic Approach Required- The policy-practice divide will persist unless India addresses the interconnected issues of poverty, education gaps, health risks, and gender inequality simultaneously.

Conclusion and Way Forward

Ending child marriage requires moving beyond legislation and singular schemes.

Multi-Pronged Strategy- Success depends on simultaneously addressing poverty, strengthening educational retention, and improving health access.

Infrastructure- Ensuring safe infrastructure for girls is non-negotiable.

Governance- Stronger implementation of existing laws, deep community engagement, and gender-sensitive governance are essential.

Final Goal- Only by aligning policy intent with ground-level practice can India protect the rights of the girl child and sustainably achieve its SDG commitments.

Source- <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/social-scourge-on-india-and-child-marriages/article70440466.ece>

2. Rebuilding Trust in Police, in Shadow of Doubt, Under Scrutiny(IE)

General Studies 2- Governance

Topic- Governance, Transparency, and Accountability; Role of Civil Services in a Democracy.(Police Reforms, Institutional Trust, and Accountability Mechanisms.)

Introduction

Public trust is the cornerstone of democratic policing, essential for internal security and law enforcement legitimacy. Currently, Indian policing stands at a crossroads, striving to balance coercive authority with public engagement. The decline in public confidence, exacerbated by allegations of internal discrimination—highlighted by incidents like the suicide of a senior officer in Haryana—underscores deep systemic challenges. Rebuilding this trust requires a dual approach—addressing citizen expectations for service delivery and ensuring internal organizational fairness.

Policing and Democratic Accountability

Source of Authority— In a democracy, police authority is derived from public trust and consent, not merely from the power of the uniform or state coercion.

Citizen Expectations— Modern citizenry demands high standards of transparency, fairness, and responsiveness from law enforcement agencies.

Internal Accountability— Accountability is not just external; it also involves ensuring that officers within the force feel protected, valued, and judged solely on performance and merit, rather than identity or caste.

Operational Measures and Significance

Targeted Operations— Initiatives such as "Operation Trackdown" and "Hotspot Domination" are critical for curbing crime.

Focus— These target habitual offenders, illegal arms suppliers, and high-crime zones.

Symbolism of Action— Such operations serve a dual purpose— they demonstrate the state's presence and effectiveness while signaling a strong commitment to public safety.

Role of Technology— While technology is a force multiplier in policing, it cannot substitute ethical leadership and sound human judgment.

Structural and Cultural Challenges

Internal Discrimination— Allegations of bias within the force highlight the urgent need for fairness in administrative decisions, including postings, promotions, and performance evaluations.

Balancing Hierarchy— The traditional, rigid command structure must be balanced with mechanisms that allow for open feedback and effective grievance redressal for junior officers.

Institutional Reform— Sustainable reform requires embedding transparency, consistency, and accountability into the organizational culture to prevent alienation within the ranks.

Policy and Legal Frameworks

Key Mandates— Reforms must be guided by historical recommendations

National Police Commission (1979)— Emphasized the need to insulate police from political interference. Supreme Court Directives (Prakash Singh vs. Union of India, 2006) Mandated structural reforms, citizen oversight bodies, and merit-based tenures. Constitutional Alignment— Operational policing must align with constitutional values of equality, dignity, and impartiality to strengthen its legitimacy.

Global and Developmental Implications

Global Best Practices— Following UNODC (2023) guidelines, successful models worldwide rely on community policing and citizen engagement.

Key Pillars— Visibility, clear communication, and ethical conduct.

Developmental Impact— Internal reforms and fair practices lead to reduced corruption, improved law enforcement legitimacy, and enhanced social cohesion, which are vital for economic and social development.

Conclusion

Restoring trust in India's police force is not merely an administrative task but a democratic imperative. It demands a shift beyond traditional law enforcement to ethical leadership and citizen-centric policing. By combining operational success (like cracking down on crime) with internal fairness and external accountability, the police can rebuild their institutional credibility. Ultimately, the police must align their values and actions with public expectations to uphold democratic ideals and earn the "consent of the governed."

Source- <https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/rebuilding-trust-in-police-in-shadow-of-doubt-under-scrutiny-10440773/>

