

Steps to address the problem

- Revamping the educational system to promote holistic development of the child and generate awareness about the potential dangers of inappropriate use of the internet.
- Mental health education and resources for dealing with symptoms should be taught and promoted from an early age.
- Family and friends need to be vigilant to early signs of depression, take them seriously and provide the necessary support system.
- Opening up of suicide prevention clinics and ensure availability of trained personnel in mental health issues.
- Restricting the access to means of suicide including measures for control of availability of pesticides, medications, etc.
- Policymakers should design interventions that can address distress amongst the young population and not aggravate by stigmatizing mental health and other social issues.

A multi-pronged approach covering all aspects of human life must be considered. The recently enacted Mental Healthcare Act 2017 has decriminalized suicide, is a step in the right direction. Further, there is a need to put more emphasis on creating awareness and infrastructure to address the problem.

- 17. Highlight the defining features of caste in India. Discuss how the present form of caste as a social institution has been shaped by both the colonial period as well as the changes that have come about in independent India.**

Approach:

- Introduce the answer by briefly explaining the caste system in India.
- Mention the defining features of caste in India.
- Discuss the effects of colonial period in shaping the caste system in India and the changes brought in independent India.

Answer:

Caste System is unique to Indian subcontinent. It developed in Later-Vedic Period in India (900-500 BC) and was based on Varna system (4-fold division). The system became rigid in Post-Vedic times. It is an exclusionary system based on hierarchies, classifications, exclusive occupational roles and limited privileges.

The defining features of caste in India are:

- Caste is determined by birth. It can not be chosen or left or changed. However, a person can be expelled from their caste.
- Caste groups are endogamous and involve strict rules about marriage, food and food-sharing.
- The system is hierarchical in nature. Brahmins are given highest status while Shudras are lowest on this scale.
- Castes were traditionally linked to occupations and were hereditary in nature. A particular occupation could only be pursued by the caste associated with it. Members of other castes could not enter the occupation.
- The caste system is associated with purity and pollution. Those considered ritually pure have high status, while those considered less pure or impure have low status.
- Castes are not only unequal to each other in ritual terms, but also complementary and non-competing groups.

The existing caste system in India has witnessed changes both in colonial times & post independence:

Effects of colonial times: Some scholars argue that what we know today as caste is more a product of colonialism than of ancient Indian tradition because: