Anti-Black Racism

What is the issue?

- In USA, a black man named George Floyd was killed after a life-extinguishing force was used by a white policeman on his neck.
- Despite the civil war and the civil rights movement, discrimination and violence against blacks persists. Racism continues unabated.

Is noticing the physical characteristics, racism?

- Noticing the physical characteristics of a person, say the colour of skin, is not itself racist.
- This need not imply the idea of race, leave alone racism.
- Good writers are expected to provide a vivid description of a character's physical features, including skin-colour.
- This description has no evaluative connotation.
- In theory, colour-consciousness should not be problematic.
- But, in reality, an acute awareness of colour is a symptom of racism lurking somewhere unnoticed.

What is the idea of race?

- Race is seen as a group with a common descent having specific bodily features (colour, nose, eye, etc.,) permanently clumped together.
- Human beings are classified based on these terms.
- Each race is then believed to be born with traits inherited from biological ancestors.
- Each race is then believed to be fundamentally, permanently different from others — differences that are innate and indelible.
- Despite many attempts to demonstrate its scientific basis, race or racial classifications have virtually no scientific foundation.
- The only conclusion from available evidence is that there are no races within humans but only one single human 'race'.
- Race is very much a cultural and social reality.

What is the problem with classification?

- The classification of humans into different races is a necessary but far from sufficient ingredient of racism, which depends on two deeply troublesome

features.

- A given set of **biological characteristics** is believed to be necessarily related to certain dispositions, traits of character and behaviour.
- Biological descent fixes a person's culture and ethics.
- These racial cultures and ethical systems are **hierarchically arranged**.
- Those on top are intrinsically superior to those at the bottom.

What is the further classification?

- Racism distinguishes even inferior races into two kinds.
- One inferior race is considered so much beyond the pale that it cannot be lived with, and must be **exterminated**.
- This was illustrated by the virulent anti-Semitism in Nazi Germany.
- Another type of race is fit only to be controlled, subordinated, **enslaved**.
- Anti-black racism, our main concern here, is an obvious example.

What is the ideology of anti-black racism?

- Racism naturalises a person's belief, character and culture.
- Blacks are seen as predatory and to have an innate streak of savagery that unless kept down by force, might explode and destroy civilisation.
- It is this ideology of anti-black racism that was seen in the video clip of the life-extinguishing force used by the police on George Floyd.
- The success of the civil rights movement that helped develop a motivated blindness to how open discrimination of blacks has been displaced by another system of **hidden discrimination**.

How discriminatory is the US criminal system?

- Systematic constraint on avenues for improving the quality of life forces their descent into crime, incarceration, stigma attached to imprisonment and the severe discrimination that follows the charge of felony.
- All these have made the criminal system produce results as vicious as generated by colour-based slavery and racial segregation.
- In several States in America, the African-Americans are 10 times more likely to go to prison than whites.
- According to the Death Penalty information Center of the US, between 1976 and 2019, black defendants sentenced to death for killing whites numbered 291, while white defendants killing blacks were only 21.
- The current criminal system awards unfair advantage and privilege to whites, while inflicting unjust disadvantages on blacks.

What is the conclusion?

- Good education and rational argument helps in dismantling racism.
- However, the fact remains that much of it lies hidden within the social structure, in habits, practices and institutions.
- Vulnerabilities amassed over centuries of anti-black racism leave African-Americans facing multiple, intersecting hurdles to a good life.
- Only a peaceful movement to end institutionalised racism, with both blacks and white participants can break the back of this evil.

Source: The Hindu

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