

1. Temple movements in India have shifted focus from being caste based to gender based. Examine. (250 words)

Answer:

Background:-

- India is a country of temples and people have been congregating at temples for various reasons. Different religions have their own temple. Over of period of time, because of wealth and influence temple had on masses, it was a seat of power struggle. Certain classes or castes were not let entry in temples. These led to different kind of movements in the country.

Temple movements in India were earlier caste based:-

- The Aravipuram movement was of far-reaching importance in South India. Inspired by its success, a number of socio-religious reform movements were launched in the South. The Temple Entry Movement is the more prominent among them.
- The struggle against the disabilities imposed on the avarnasor members of depressed classes in various parts of South India was being waged since the end of the 19th century. In Kerala, leading the struggle were several reformers and intellectuals such as Sri Narayana Guru, N. Kumaran Asan and T.K. Madhavan. In 1924, another beginning was made for opening the doors of the temples for the avarnas.
- The temple entry movement was the Gandhian or nationalist approach to fight caste oppression.
- As a result of the movement, in November 1936, the Maharaja of Travancore issued a proclamation throwing open all government controlled temples to all Hindus irrespective of caste. Madras also followed suit.
- Vaikom Satyagraha :-
- First systematically organized agitation in Kerala against orthodoxy to secure the rights of the depressed classes.
- The agitation brought forward the question of civil rights of the low caste people into the forefront of Indian politics.
- Gurdwara Reform Movement, which was actually a legislation passed by the Punjab Legislative Council which marked the culmination of the struggle of the Sikh people from 1920-1925 to wrest control of their places of worship from the mahants or priests into whose hands they had passed during the eighteenth century.

Now the shift is towards gender based:-

- Preventing women's entry to the Sabarimala temple with an notion of "purity" clearly offends the equality clauses in the Constitution.
- It denotes a patriarchal and partisan approach. The entry prohibition takes away the woman's right against discrimination guaranteed under Article 15(1) of the Constitution
- It curtails her religious freedom assured by Article 25(1)

- Prohibition of women's entry to the shrine solely on the basis of womanhood and the biological features associated with womanhood is derogatory to women, which Article 51A(e) aims to renounce
- The classification based on age is, in essence, an act of discrimination based on sex
- **Trimbakeshwar temple, Nashik**
 - The Shiva temple is also one of the places that restrict entry to women in the core area.
- Even now, some women are discouraged from approaching their temples at home or even entering the kitchen while menstruating.
- Yielding to campaign by activists, the Shani Shingnapur temple trust allowed women to enter the sanctum sanctorum, breaking the tradition followed for several decades.

Still caste discrimination persists:-

- Many temples around still practice casteism, discrimination and untouchability in the name of 'ancient tradition.'
- Lakshmi Ranganatha Swami temple in Karnataka serves as a good example of this practice. When the idol of the presiding deity is taken out for a procession during the Utsava, Dalit households are exempted.
- Though this issue can be solved if instruments like education, rationality, and proper implementation of law and order act as bulwark against them.
- The Travancore Proclamation was not the be-all and end-all of social reforms. Nor did things dramatically change for the better for Dalits immediately after 1936. But there is no doubt that the Proclamation indeed was a big step in establishing the rights of the lower castes in Kerala, and indeed the nation as a whole.

Way forward:-

- Judiciary is playing a significant role in upholding constitutional guarantees of equality for women and dalits by allowing them to enter temples. The temple being a place of faith needs to not discriminate prejudices but treat everyone equally.
- Enactment and enforcement of atrocities laws and the steps taken by temples in Maharashtra and Kerala which allowed women and persons from depressed class to be priests that there is social transformation
- It is essential to prevent monopolisation of religious rights by a few under the guise of management of religious institutions

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

Answer the following Questions

1. Gender inequalities in access to formal credit have long manifested in India's scarce gender-wise financial statistics. Analyze. (250 words)
2. Pokhran-II and what followed has given India the right to claim the tag of a responsible power – a valuable diplomatic asset. Analyze. (250 words)