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Institute Of Civil Services

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S.NO.	TOPIC
1.	Rules that Still Manacle the Captive Elephant
2.	Marginalized by Caste, Marginalized by Education
	Other Topics
3.	22% Rise in Enrolment after Smart Classroom Initiative

RULES THAT STILL MANACLE THE CAPTIVE ELEPHANT

Rules that still manacle the captive elephant

In India, where elephants are revered as sacred symbols of wisdom and strength, privately-held captive elephants live a stark contradiction. Reflecting on this grim reality, the Kerala High Court recently likened the lives of these captive animals to an "eternal Treblinka", drawing a poignant comparison to the infamous Nazi extermination camps. Elephants used for religious purposes, entertainment and tourism are subjected to much cruelty and forced to behave in unnatural ways. These social animals are subjected to isolation and abusive training methods to break their spirit. Although elephants have the highest protection under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, they have been at the forefront of practices that seek to capture them from the wild for a life in captivity.

New rules and loopholes

In its intent to regulate potential misuse of captive elephants in private custody and curb illegal captures from the wild, the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC) published the Captive Elephant (Transfer or Transport) Rules in March 2024. These rules facilitate the transport and the transfer of elephants and also specify the procedure of transfer of ownership.

However, the ambiguity in procedures and rationale for transport and/or transfer of wild elephants could pave the way for further commercial exploitation. For instance, it states that when an owner is no longer able to maintain an elephant, the ownership of that elephant may be transferred. However, there is no obligation for this exchange to be non-commercial. Elephants can, therefore, be traded as movable property.

The rules also provide for transport of the elephants temporarily. Again, there is no explicit requirement to justify the transportation of a privately owned elephant across or within State borders on an interim basis. States with a high



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There are ambiguities in the Captive Elephant (Transfer or Transport) Rules that may facilitate illegal trade in elephants

number of privately owned elephants could potentially lease their elephants to serve as props, from religious ceremonies to weddings to political rallies. These are activities that compromise the welfare of elephants even as they objectify and commodify them. This regularisation of the transfer of elephants for religious activities, tourism, or any other commercial ventures effectively contributes to the economic valuation of elephants, treating them as tools for generating income. Thus, the legislation could be misused by private elephant owners to essentially "rent out" their animals, which risks incentivising the capture of wild elephants and directly undermines elephant conservation.

Microchip misuse, births in captivity

As of January 2019, there were 2,675 documented captive elephants in the country, with a deeply disturbing implication. It has been reported that when these animals die, they are replaced by elephants captured from the wild. Most captive elephants were microchipped as part of a 2002 initiative that Project Elephant launched to track all captive elephants in India that have valid certificates of ownership. Anecdotes suggest that these microchips are retrieved from an elephant posthumously and then inserted into an elephant caught in the wild to legalise an illicit capture.

Despite this popular *modus operandi*, the Rules do not require the removal and the destruction of microchips implanted in captive elephants, which should be done in presence of forest officials. Moreover, the Rules do not require the submission of a post-mortem report in cases where an elephant dies during transfer or transportation, leaving a critical gap in monitoring and accountability. Worse, this fuels the never-ending cycle of elephants in captivity. This cycle is perpetuated by a provision in the Rules that recognises the birth of calves in captivity, allowing them to be legally classified as

owned captive elephants.

What is required instead, is a mandate to implement humane, non-invasive birth control measures for elephants in private custody, to break the cycle of commercial exploitation and prevent more elephants entering captivity through birth. Additionally, a shift from using live elephants in temples, processions, and tourism to alternatives such as electronic elephants is crucial. Civil society, temple committees and the government should lead this change to protect wild elephants.

The trade between States

Further, there are numerous reports of elephants being transported from the northeastern States to the southern and western States. One such instance involved an elephant being "gifted" to a Delhi temple by a private owner in Assam. Unfortunately, in all these transfers, the new rules have served as an enabling agent for trade in an endangered species.

In August, following reports and objections submitted by this writer and others, the Elephant Project, under the aegis of MoEFCC, took action. It issued an office memorandum that flagged the illegal transfers of captive elephants. The memorandum reiterated the need for the strict adherence to Captive Elephant (Transfer or Transport) Rules, 2024 and emphasised the mandatory digitisation of the genetic profiles of captive elephants. The Ministry's efforts to address captive elephant transfers are commendable. Yet, they fail to adequately remedy these key issues in the Rules.

Regrettably, the legislation lacks the teeth to ensure the meaningful protection of captive elephants. Without language that speaks the welfare of elephants and safeguards them from any form of commercial exploitation, the paradox of the elephant being venerated as a sacred animal while also being the most exploited wild animal will persist.

Introduction

❖ The Paradox of Captive Elephants in India

- Elephants: Sacred symbols of wisdom and strength in Indian culture
- Contradiction: Lives of captive elephants likened to "eternal Treblinka" by Kerala High Court
- Common uses: Religious purposes, entertainment, and tourism





Issues with Captive Elephants

- ❖ Cruel Realities
 - Isolation and abusive training methods
 - Forced unnatural behaviors
 - High protection under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, but compromised welfare

New Rules and Loopholes

- ❖ **Captive Elephant (Transfer or Transport) Rules, 2024**
 - Objective: Regulate potential misuse and curb illegal captures
 - Key provisions:
 - Ownership transfer allowed without a non-commercial obligation
 - Temporary transport allowed without clear justification
 - Risk: Elephants commodified as tools for income generation

Microchip Misuse and Captivity Births

- ❖ **Exploitation in Monitoring Practices**
 - Microchips reused to legalize wild captures
 - No mandatory removal of microchips post-mortem
 - No requirement for post-mortem reports for elephants dying during transfer
 - Legal recognition of calves born in captivity perpetuates the cycle

Proposed Solutions

- ❖ **Breaking the Cycle of Exploitation**
 - Implement humane, non-invasive birth control measures
 - Shift to alternatives (e.g., electronic elephants) for temples, tourism, and processions
 - Government and civil society collaboration to protect wild elephants

Elephant → Natural heritage animal of India
 → Keystone Species
 → Known for exceptional intelligence

Significance in Ecosystem

- Imp. grazers, browsers
- spread seeds
- dig for water — access for other creatures also.


Protection Status

Asian Elephant

- IUCN: Endangered.
- CMS: Appendix I
- WPA: Schedule I
- CITES: Appendix I

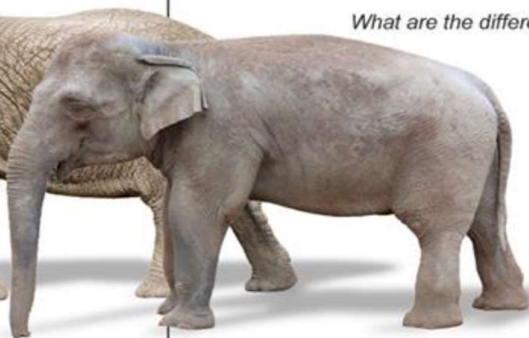
African Elephant → Endangered
 → Appendix II (CITES)
 (CMS)

AFRICAN ELEPHANT



EARS: Large, "Africa-shaped" ear
 TRUNK TIP: Two "fingers" for grasping
 HEAD: Single dome
 HEIGHT (tallest at shoulder): 9 – 13'
 WEIGHT: 8,800 – 15,400 lbs.

ASIAN ELEPHANT



What are the differences?

EARS: Small, rounded ear
 TRUNK TIP: One "finger" for grasping
 HEAD: Twin dome
 HEIGHT (tallest at back): 6.5 – 9'
 WEIGHT: 6,600 – 13,200 lbs.

TROMBON SAVANNAH



Asian Elephants in India

❖ India's Role:

- Largest and most stable population globally (60% of wild Asian elephants).
- **2017 Census:** 29,964 wild elephants.

❖ Elephant Reserves:

- 33 reserves across 14 states (~76,508 sq. km).
- Recent additions:
- Dandeli (Karnataka), Singphan (Nagaland), Lemru (Chhattisgarh).

❖ Top States (2017 Census):

- Karnataka: 6,049 elephants
- Assam: 5,719 elephants
- Kerala: 3,054 elephants





Key Facts about Asian Elephants

❖ Species and Habitat:

- Subspecies: Indian, Sumatran, Sri Lankan.
- Habitat: Grasslands and forests across 13 countries.
- Smaller herds than African savannah elephants.

❖ Biology and Behavior:

- Matriarchal herds led by the oldest female.
- Longest gestation (22 months); calves born every 4–6 years.
- **Calving Intervals:** Every 4 years (ages 14–45). Increases with age
 - 5 years by age 52
 - 6 years by age 60

❖ Cultural Significance:

- Symbols of wisdom and strength in Asian cultures.
- Close association with humans throughout history.

Initiatives.

- Elephant corridors (40+)
- Project Elephant 1992 (23 states)
- Elephant Reserves (33).
- Graj Yatra prog + Graj Shilpi Initiative.
- Graj Gourav awards
- International Agreements → MIKE (Monitoring of Illegal Killing of Elephants Prog).

MIKE sites
eg: Chirang-Lipu ER (Assam)
Mayurbhanj ER (Odisha) etc.





MARGINALIZED BY CASTE, MARGINALIZED BY EDUCATION

Marginalised by caste, marginalised in education

Atul Kumar, the son of a daily wage worker and from the Scheduled Caste community, lost his seat at IIT Dhanbad after he was unable to pay the seat booking fee of ₹17,500 that was required to secure his admission. His case gained widespread attention on social media, prompting the Supreme Court of India to intervene by exercising its extraordinary powers under Article 142 to grant him admission. There are many and similar cases like Atul's, but which never draw media attention or receive justice, leaving many deserving students without opportunities due to financial constraints and systemic inequalities.



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With rising costs in the Indian education system, many students from the marginalised communities are unable to even consider enrolling in prestigious institutions such as the IITs and the IIMs despite securing competitive ranks. As a result, while some students manage to cope with the financial burden, there are others who are overwhelmed by the stress and the inequality in academic institutions. This pressure, exacerbated by the high cost of education, has a human angle too. In 2021, data showed that over the past seven years, 122 students from the IITs and the IIMs had ended their lives, many due to the financial strain of rising fees and the anxiety of securing employment.

The issue of dropouts

Another harsh reality is that many students who manage to enrol themselves in prestigious institutions eventually drop out due to their inability to afford rising education fees. The Human Resources Development Ministry reported that 2,461 students dropped out of IITs in just two years (2017 and 2018). Last year, this issue was raised in the Lok Sabha, revealing that over the past five years, more than 13,500 students from the Scheduled Castes (SC), the Scheduled Tribes (ST), and Other Backward Classes (OBC) had dropped out of courses in the central universities, the IITs and the IIMs. Government data showed that in the central universities, 4,596 students from the Other Backward Classes, 2,424 SC students, and 2,622 ST students dropped out during this period. In the IITs, 2,066 OBC students, 1,068 SC students, and 408 ST students left. Similarly, the IIMs saw 163 OBC, 188 SC, and 91 ST students drop out over the past five years. These numbers highlight the significant challenges faced by marginalised communities in accessing and sustaining higher education in India.

One of the key reasons behind the poor economic conditions of the Dalit community is that their identity in India is still largely defined by caste. Dalits continue to be denied the opportunity to perform work that is on a par with others in society. This has not only left them economically marginalised but also socially vulnerable. Dalits in India are considered an oppressed and discriminated class, often labelled as "untouchable". Historically, this stigmatisation has meant that Dalits have been denied access to education. The term "untouchables" also refers to those who have been forced into the most undesirable and degrading jobs. A recent survey in 29 States on urban sewer and septic tank workers revealed that 92% of these workers belong to Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled

Tribes (ST), and Other Backward Classes (OBC). A 2019 report by former Education Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal revealed that 95% of faculty positions in IITs were held by individuals from upper caste backgrounds, with only 5% allocated to SC, ST, and OBC categories, despite these groups representing 70%-80% of India's population. An RTI filed by IIT-Bombay students further exposed the disparities, showing that 24 departments had no SC faculty, 15 lacked ST representation, and nine had no OBC faculty. These statistics highlight the deep-rooted caste-based inequalities that persist in both employment and education.

The barriers still exist

After Independence, with provisions in the Constitution and welfare mechanisms, Dalit school enrolment rates have improved over time. However, Dalit children continue to face significant barriers in education, including poverty, social discrimination, and caste-based prejudice. Dalit students are often judged based on their clothes, language, and other markers, making it difficult for them to integrate with their upper caste peers.

In many cases, caste-based remarks and discrimination wound these students, leading to social isolation. Some students succumb to the emotional toll of this prejudice – there are cases such as a woman postgraduate medical student in a medical college in Maharashtra and two students from IIT Bombay and IIT Delhi that are painful reminders of this reality. These incidents underscore the persistent shadow of casteism and harassment over the aspirations of many Dalit students. This troubling situation raises a critical question: how can these prestigious institutions effectively address this issue and foster a safe, inclusive environment for all students?

The unfortunate incidents of student suicides point to the immense pressure students face in the education system. Many students are burdened by their families' expectations that completing a degree will solve their economic problems. But unemployment in India is also high. An RTI filed in 2024 about IIT placements showed that approximately 8,000 students (38%) across 23 IIT campuses remained unplaced this year. For students from the marginalised communities, this struggle is even more pronounced, as their caste identity often doubles the challenges they face in securing jobs. These issues underscore the pressing need for systemic reforms in education and employment to alleviate the pressures on students and address caste-based disparities.

The rise in tuition fees

The struggles that Dalit students face echo the challenges of pre-Independence India when they were barred from enrolling in educational institutions because of their caste. While these historical restrictions were over, the situation now is more insidious. Under the "Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan", the Government of India has been pushing for self-reliance in institutions, leading to a significant increase in fees in many government colleges and universities such as the Indian Institutes of Technology (IIT), the Indian Institutes of Management, the central universities, and the National Law University. For instance, in 2016, the IIT council's standing committee agreed to increase the undergraduate tuition fees by 200%. This meant a fee increase from ₹90,000 to ₹3 lakh a year.

In response to the criticism regarding the fee increase, the committee set up by the government asserted that students from marginalised communities would benefit from the Vidyalakshmi scheme, which offers interest-free scholarships. However, while this initiative aims to provide support, it remains insufficient to fully address the financial challenges faced by these students, especially as fees continue to rise. The hike in fees that was implemented in seven IIMs including increased tuition fees; IIM-Lucknow hiked it by nearly 30%, IIM-Ahmedabad and IIM-Shillong by 5%, IIM Lucknow by 29.6%, IIM-Calcutta by 17.3%, IIM-Kozhikode by 23.1%, IIM-Ranchi by 19% and IIM-Tiruchirappalli by 20%. IIT-Delhi increased tuition fees for full-time M.Tech students in the semester in 2022-23. The total academic fee is now ₹53,100, which does not include hostel fees. This is a 100% increase from last year's fee of ₹26,450.

The frequent hikes in fees have made it increasingly difficult for students from the marginalised communities to afford higher education or even pursue studies through loans.

Rising costs in higher education are one of the many issues affecting Dalit students

Introduction

- ❖ Atul Kumar, a Scheduled Caste student, lost his IIT Dhanbad seat due to inability to pay ₹17,500 booking fee.
- ❖ Supreme Court intervened under Article 142 to secure his admission.
- ❖ Highlights systemic inequalities and financial challenges faced by many similar students.

Context:

- ❖ Historical caste-based exclusion in education persists in insidious forms post-Independence.
- ❖ Financial constraints and systemic disparities continue to marginalize Dalit students





Article 142: The SC in the exercise of its jurisdiction may pass such decree or make such order as is necessary for doing complete justice in any cause or matter pending before it.

Intervene in matters of public interest
human rights
FR, Constitutional values etc.

Eg: Cleaning of Taj Mahal, Release of Undertrials, Union Carbide Gas -
Vishakhapatnam. (SHA 2013).

Challenges of Increasing Education Costs

❖ Fee Hikes in Prestigious Institutions:

- IITs: Tuition fees increased by 200% (₹90,000 to ₹3 lakh/year in 2016).
- IIMs: Fee hikes up to 30% across campuses.
- Other examples: IIT-Delhi doubled fees for M.Tech programs.

❖ Impact:

- Marginalized students struggle to afford higher education despite ranks.
- Emotional and financial strain leads to inequality and mental health challenges.
- **Statistics:** Over seven years, 122 suicides reported in IITs and IIMs due to financial and academic pressures

High Dropout Rates Among Marginalised Communities

❖ Dropout Data:

- In two years (2017-2018), 2,461 IIT students dropped out.
- Over five years, 13,500 SC/ST/OBC students dropped out from central universities, IITs, and IIMs.

❖ Underlying Causes:

- High fees and lack of adequate financial support.
- Persistent caste-based discrimination in academic institutions.

❖ Social Inequalities:

- Dalits overrepresented in degrading jobs (e.g., 92% in urban sewer cleaning roles).
- Faculty representation starkly unequal (95% positions held by upper castes in IITs).





Barriers and the Way Ahead

❖ Persistent Challenges:

- Dalit students face poverty, caste prejudice, and social discrimination.
- Examples of caste-based harassment in prestigious institutions.

❖ Employment Struggles:

- High unemployment rate exacerbates pressure on marginalized students.
- RTI (2024): 38% IIT students unplaced, challenges compounded for Dalits.

❖ Call for Action:

- Need for systemic reforms in education and employment policies.
- Foster inclusive environments to reduce caste-based disparities and support marginalized communities





22 % RISE IN ENROLMENT AFTER SMART CLASSROOM INITIATIVE

'22% rise in enrolment after smart classroom initiative'

The initiative has improved learning experiences and attendance of students besides resulting in improved comfort of teachers and preference for smart classroom facilities, says an IIM study

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Introduction of smart classrooms under the Smart Cities Mission (SCM) has led to a 22% increase in overall enrolment as per data reported by 19 cities between 2015-16 and 2023-24, says a study by the Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore.

The national-level study said that 71 cities have developed 9,433 smart classrooms in 2,398 government schools. The highest number of smart classroom projects are in Karnataka (80), followed by Rajasthan (53). Tamil Nadu has 23 and Delhi 12. West Bengal, with just two, is among the States at the bottom of the table.

According to the report, teachers generally agree with the idea that the smart classroom initiative is improving learning experiences and attendance of students across select smart cities of the country.

Special training provid-



The study says that 71 cities have developed 9,433 smart classrooms in 2,398 government schools. FILE PHOTO

ed to teachers improved their comfort and preference for using smart classroom facilities, with senior secondary teachers showing the highest comfort levels, as compared with others.

Apart from this, 41 cities have developed digital libraries with a total of 7,809 seats, it said, highlighting the significant impact of digital libraries in cities

such as Raipur in Chhattisgarh and Tumakuru in Karnataka by providing essential educational resources and supporting students in preparations of competitive exam.

The Smart Cities Mission (SCM) was launched by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs in June 2015. The objective of the Mission is to promote cities that provide core infras-

tructure and give a decent quality of life to its citizens – a clean and sustainable environment and application of 'smart' solutions.

As on November 2024, 91% of the projects under SCM have been completed, according to the Ministry.

The mission launched a platform in 2022, named 'SAAR' (Smart Cities and Academia towards Action and Research), to bring together the academia and government to document and research new urban initiatives.

Under the SAAR initiative, the Smart Cities Mission has initiated 50 impact assessment research studies as "Sameeksha Series".

Twenty nine premier institutions of India have undertaken these 50 impact assessment studies, which include six Indian Institutes of Management, eight Indian Institutes of Technology, three Schools of Planning and Architecture and 12 specialised research institutes.

UPSC PYQ 2020

Q.1 With reference to Indian elephants, consider the following statements: (2020)

1. The leader of an elephant group is a female.
2. The maximum gestation period can be 22 months.
3. An elephant can normally go on calving till the age of 40 years only.
4. Among the States in India, the highest elephant population is in Kerala.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 and 4 only
- (c) 3 only
- (d) 1, 3 and 4 only

— Keep Learning and Keep Revising! —

