



The anatomy of anti-black racism in USA

Context:

- George Floyd who was an African-American was killed by police during an arrest (neck restraining) in Minneapolis, USA on May 25th 2020.
- This led to widespread protest in US against Police brutality and systemic racism.



What is racism?

- In a nutshell, it is this: one can tell everything important about a person, his group, its past and future, by noting the colour of his skin.
- Racism is a systematic ideology, a complex set of beliefs and practices that, on the presumed basis of biology, divides humanity into the 'higher' us and a lower 'them'.

Idea of race:

- Race is considered as a group with a common biological descent.
- This idea of race develops primarily due to following two reasons;
 - 1) Specific bodily features (colour, shape of nose, eye, lips) are permanently clumped together and human beings are classified in terms of these distinct biological clusters.
 - 2) Further, it is believed that these **shared features are inter-generationally transmitted.**
- Each race is then believed to be fundamentally and permanently different from others—differences that are innate and indestructible.
- Despite many attempts, particularly in the 1930s to demonstrate its scientific basis, race or racial classifications have virtually no scientific foundation.
- The classification of humans into different races is the starting point of all racism.
- Racism depends on two additional, deeply troublesome features.

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First is linking Biology with Behaviour:

- 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
- Racism thus naturalises a person's belief, character and culture.
- For example, being uneducated is seen not as socio-economic deprivation but a sign of inherited low IQ
- In USA, blacks are seen as predatory and savagery, which unless kept down by brute force from time to time, might explode and destroy civilisation.

Second, these racial cultures and ethical systems are hierarchically arranged:

- Racism considers that those on top are intrinsically superior to those at the bottom.
- Racism not only sustains a permanent group hierarchy but deeply stigmatises those designated as inferior.
- This sense of hierarchy provides a motive for say, whites to treat blacks in cruel ways
- Inferior races are either considered not worthy to live with (Ex: Anti-semitism in Nazi Germany that led to Holocaust) or fit only to be controlled, subordinated and enslaved (Ex: Anti-Black racism, Caste System).

How racism persists in USA despite several movements?

- Despite the civil war in US over slavery, and the civil rights movement for dignity and equality, systemic discrimination and violence against blacks persist
- Even though good education helps in dismantling racism but the fact remains that much of it **lies hidden within the social structure**, in habits, practices and institutions.
- Open discrimination of blacks has been replaced by another system of **hidden & systemic discrimination**.
- There now persists a **racialized criminal system** – one that awards unfair advantage and privilege to whites, while inflicting unmerited and unjust disadvantages on blacks
- For example, in a number of southern States in America, once declared a felon, a person is disqualified from voting
- In several States of USA, Blacks are 10 times more likely to go to prison than whites.
- In U.S., between 1976-2019, black defendants sentenced to death for killing whites numbered 291, while white defendants killing blacks were only 21.

Conclusion:

- Only a peaceful movement to end institutionalised racism, with both blacks and white participants, quite like the recent protests after Floyd's murder, can break the back of racism.