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for **BPSC 67**



INDIAN POLITY

7. Why do you think caste in contemporary India has become more political than a social category? Explain.
7. क्या आप इस बात से सहमत हैं कि समकालीन भारत में जाति एक सामाजिक श्रेणी की तुलना में अधिक राजनीतिक हो गई है? स्पष्ट करें।

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67TH BPS MAIN EXAM

Ques 7. Why do you think caste in contemporary India has become more political than a social category? Explain.

One of the most fundamental influences of Indian politics is caste. The growth of caste-based organisations and increased awareness of caste ties have changed the outlines of the Indian political system. Caste emerged as one of the most major factors of political mobilisation in India after the establishment of the universal adult franchise for all socio economic groups, including those previously excluded.

Caste system In India

- o The Indian caste system is a complicated framework in which social duties such as professions have become 'hereditary,' resulting in social mobility restrictions and entrenched status hierarchies. Furthermore, the caste's inherent quality of group identification with one's caste heightens group identification with one's caste. When group norms are breached, highly identifiable individuals of the group will safeguard the group's identity.
- o The caste system establishes a hierarchy of social roles with intrinsic features that, more significantly, remain constant throughout one's lifetime.

The caste has an underlying status, which has traditionally shifted from social to political functions:

Politicisation Of Caste

In politics, caste has a significant influence. Several studies on the relationship between caste and politics in India have underlined this reality. Castes are mobilised by political parties and caste groups to solve their problems. India's society has changed dramatically since independence. The nature of castes and politics in India has changed as a result of these changes. Caste's influence on democracy has expanded beyond its traditional role of performing caste-based jobs.

Reservation

- o Scheduled Caste and Other Backward Castes have been given reservations in public institutions in India: SCs for jobs, admission to educational institutions, legislative bodies, and institutions of local governance; and OBCs for jobs, admission to educational institutions, and institutions of local governance such as panchayats and municipalities.
- o Reservation is intertwined with caste politics. Reservation politics involves people of many castes. Excluded castes either desire quota for themselves, the removal of caste-based reservation, or the exclusion of particular castes from the category eligible for reservation.
- o Opponents of reservation believe that reservation should be based on merit and economy, that caste-based reservation harms merit and government efficiency, and that some castes on the OBC list are economically and politically dominating.
- o Supporters of reservation argue that caste discrimination still exists, that merit is determined by social inequalities, and that the constitution guarantees reservation to the socially and educationally backward communities in the case of the OBCs, particularly those belonging to economically and politically dominant OBCs.
- o Improvements in their social and economic circumstances do not imply that they are progressing socially or educationally. As a result, they are constitutionally entitled to OBC reservations.
- o Several caste-based organisations known as Senas (caste armies) arose in Bihar during the late 1970s and 1980s. These were regularly involved in caste conflicts that turned violent. Disputes over land ownership, among other issues, frequently erupted between Dalits and OBCs such as Kurmis or Yadav, or between Dalits and high castes such as Bhumihars.

Politics and Caste Symbolism

- o Caste Symbols - caste emblems, historical characters, and mythologies are powerful weapons for mobilising caste. The castes linked with such symbols gain confidence as a result of their recognition of such symbolism.
- o Four political regimes in Uttar Pradesh led by Mayawati at various periods between 1995 and 2012 emphasised the value of caste symbols, as well as mobilisation around such symbols by her party, the BSP, are noteworthy examples of caste symbols being used in politics.
- o In Uttar Pradesh, the Mayawati government designated numerous villages as Ambedkar villages. There is a sizable Dalit community in these villages. A number of measures were implemented with the aim of welfare and development of Dalits.

Caste and Electoral Politics

- The relationship between castes and political party support bases has been analysed by several researchers along with analysing the role of caste in electoral politics since the 1950s and the Centre for Political Research, has played a key role in conducting electoral studies in India.
- Since the first general elections in 1952, several studies have found that the link between caste and electoral politics has shifted dramatically. Electoral politics was dominated for the first few decades after independence by traditionally dominating castes from various parts of the country.
- Although every adult, regardless of caste, is entitled to vote under the Constitution, the ruling caste has refused to allow Dalits and other lower castes to vote on multiple occasions. This was dubbed “booth capturing” by the public. During the period of Congress dominance in the 1950s and 1960s, the Congress party received support from diverse castes in most parts of the country.
- It was led by the upper or middle castes, and it was backed in elections by castes from all levels of society. The Congress party is seen as a caste coalition due to the support of numerous caste groupings.

Despite gaining importance in the political sphere caste still has major bearing on social identities of people in the following manner:

- People derive an important part of their identity from an affirmation of membership with the group they belong to, according to social identity theory. Since any group can serve as a source of pride and self-esteem, it tend to boost our self-esteem by promoting and endorsing the status of the group we belong to, the so-called “in-group.”
- The Indian societal system provides fertile ground for the interplay of multiple identities such as religious, national, regional class, and caste, and how these identities can be discarded or fused for the sake of societal functioning.
- However, when contrasted to other social identities such as gender and race, many academics have emphasised the centrality and influence of caste as a fundamental social identity among many Indians.
- Caste identification is so important to many Indians , it is suggested that it may trump other social identities. Due to the intrinsic linkages between caste and status, it is suggested that in the context of status representation, caste identity would be the most significant identity in explaining disparities in status perception. Individuals will attempt to retain a positive picture of their caste identity, according to social identity theory.
- By relying on some caste rules, a strong caste identity might promote feelings of belonging or self-esteem. High caste persons, in particular, are known to regard caste identity as a more stable concept that is inherited at birth.
- From the later half of the nineteenth century until the post-Independence period, the caste system in India underwent major changes as a result of various socio religious and protest movements. People’s attitudes about a caste-ridden society changed as a result of these movements.
- Inter-caste marriages are quite uncommon in India in case even if inter caste marriages do happen there are cases of honour killing which are still existing in society.

Conclusion

Politics and caste are inextricably linked. They have an effect on one another. In national, state, and local elections, caste plays a different role. Not only is the caste structure of that region used to build parties, but it is also used to pick candidates. Despite the changes, caste identities remain strong, and a person’s last name is virtually always an indication of their caste. In fact, caste still remains a basic structure of Indian society.



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