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Q1(c)

Relevance of caste in contemporary Indian politics

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2016 · Anthropology GS 2 · 10 marks · Emergence, growth and development of Anthropology in India

4. Emergence, growth and development of Anthropology in India-Contributions of the 18th, 19th and early 20th Century scholar-administrators. Contributions of Indian anthropologists to tribal and caste studies.

Core demand of the question

- Write a note on relevance of caste in contemporary Indian politics
- Keep the note to a 10-mark length of about 150 words

Revision summary

Caste organises booths, tickets, and reservation blocs.

Srinivas's **dominant caste** still explains many rural seats.

Bailey treated caste teams as political machines.

Class and communal crises can cut across jati, then caste returns.

Contemporary politics uses caste as arithmetic more than as shastra.

Introduction

Caste remains the local grammar of Indian politics. Parties speak development; booths still count jati.

Body**How it works**

- **M. N. Srinivas's** **dominant caste** still delivers numbers in many rural seats.
- Reservations, OBC blocs, and Dalit parties turned jati into a constitutional vote, not only a ritual rank.
- **F. G. Bailey** already saw caste teams as political machines. Television and phones scaled that machine.

Limits

- Class, religion, and region cut the same jati. Urban youth may hide caste and still marry it.
- **Communalism** can override caste in a riot week, then caste returns at the ticket.
- Relevance is therefore high in mobilisation, not as the only identity.

Flow diagram

Caste -> Dominant caste numbers

Caste -> Reservation blocs

Caste -> Party tickets

Conclusion

Caste is still the most reliable political arithmetic in much of India. Law and media changed its form; they did not retire it.

Facts & figures

Dominant caste

Srinivas's locally powerful jati that still weighs in panchayat and assembly.

OBC politics

Post-Mandal caste blocs that reshaped state parties.

F. G. Bailey

Showed caste factions as the practical political system of the village.

73rd Amendment

Reserved panchayat seats that made caste arithmetic more visible, not less.