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Q1(d)

Caste and social capital

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2021 · Anthropology GS 2 · 10 marks · Indian Village

5.1 Indian Village-Significance of village study in India; Indian village as a social system; Traditional and changing patterns of settlement and inter-caste relations; Agrarian relations in Indian villages; Impact of globalization on Indian villages.

Core demand of the question

- Write a note on caste and social capital
- Keep the note to a 10-mark length of about 150 words

Revision summary

Social capital is usable trust and network.

Indian networks are still largely jati-based **bonding capital**.

Dominant castes convert kinship into land and office.

Graded inequality is the cost for those excluded.

Reservation and civic institutions try to build bridging ties.

Introduction

Social capital is trust, network, and reciprocal help that people can use. In India those networks are still largely caste-shaped, so caste is both a resource and a wall.

Body

Caste as a network

- **M. N. Srinivas** showed that jati organises marriage, faction, and village office. That is **bonding capital** inside the group.
- **André Beteille** and later political sociologists showed caste associations as urban clubs for jobs, hostels, and votes.
- **Robert Putnam's** language of bonding versus bridging fits: jati bonds strongly, and it bridges poorly across Dalit-Savarna lines.

Gain and cost

- A dominant caste converts kinship into land, panchayat chairs, and contractor work. That is social capital as power.
- **B. R. Ambedkar** already treated caste as graded inequality, which is negative social capital for those below the line.
- Reservation, **Article 15** and **Article 16**, and new professional networks try to build **bridging capital** the jati does not give.

Limit

- Not every success is caste. Class, party, and city also make ties. Caste remains the default rural and marriage grid.

Flow diagram

Jati network -> Bonding capital
Jati network -> Wall across ranks
Reservation parties -> Bridging capital

Conclusion

Caste is India's thickest social capital inside the jati and a barrier across jatis. Public policy has to manufacture bridges that kinship will not.

Facts & figures

Bonding capital

Dense in-group trust; in India often the jati and kin cluster.

Bridging capital

Cross-group ties that caste ranking typically withholds.

Article 16

Equality of public employment, a state attempt to offset caste networks in jobs.

Caste association

Urban jati body that pools funds, hostels, and votes as organised social capital.