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Q1(e)

Factionalism and politics in rural India.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2021 · Anthropology GS 2 · 10 marks · Evolution of the Indian Culture and Civilization

1.1 Evolution of the Indian Culture and Civilization-Prehistoric (Palaeolithic, Mesolithic, Neolithic and Neolithic-Chalcolithic), Protohistoric (Indus Civilization). Pre-Harappan, Harappan and post-Harappan cultures. Contributions of the tribal cultures to Indian civilization.

Core demand of the question

- Write a note on factionalism and politics in rural India
- Keep the note to a 10-mark length of about 150 words

Revision summary

Factions are rival village teams built on kin, caste, and a **broker**.

Lewis, Dube, and Bailey made this the rural-politics model.

Panchayati raj multiplied offices and funds as faction prizes.

Party labels often coat the same local teams.

Class and Dalit assertion can cut across vertical factions.

Introduction

Rural factionalism is organised rivalry inside a village or block, usually around kin, caste, and a leader who can deliver the state. It is the everyday form of rural politics.

Body**How factions work**

- **Oscar Lewis** at Rampur and **S. C. Dube** at **Shamirpet** showed factions as vertical teams, not as class parties.
- A faction gathers a dominant-caste core, attached clients, and a **broker** who links to police, credit, and the panchayat.
- **F. G. Bailey** treated this as a political structure of prizes: office, irrigation, and court cases.

After panchayati raj

- The **73rd Amendment** multiplied seats and reservations. Factions now contest gram sabha and chair, including women's reserved chairs by proxy.
- Party symbols enter the village, but the local unit is still often a caste-kin faction wearing a party colour.
- Development funds, **MGNREGA** lists, and beneficiary schemes are the new prizes, so factionalism follows the grant.

Limit

- Not every conflict is a faction. Land class and Dalit assertion can cut across the old vertical team.

Flow diagram

Village faction -> Kin caste core
Village faction -> Broker to state
73rd Amendment funds -> Village faction

Conclusion

Rural politics runs through factions that convert caste and brokerage into state goods. Panchayati raj changed the prizes more than it abolished the teams.

Facts & figures

Oscar Lewis

Rampur study that treated Indian village politics as factional teams.

Shamirpet

Dube's village where caste, faction, and administration already mixed.

73rd Amendment

Constitutional panchayati raj that created new elected prizes for factions.

Broker

The faction leader who translates village loyalty into police, credit, and scheme access.

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