

WRAP Exams · wrapexams.com

Prelims PYQ, Mains model answers, and copy evaluation. Write to the desk for this paper, a doubt, or the AI waitlist.

ask@wrapexams.com · +91 85951 84903 · wrapexams.com

Q2(c)

Critically describe Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's argument on the origin of Indian caste system

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2022 · Anthropology GS 2 · 15 marks · Caste system in India

3.2 Caste system in India-Structure and characteristics, Varna and caste, Theories of origin of caste system, Dominant caste, Caste mobility, Future of caste system, Jajmani system. Tribe-caste continuum.

Core demand of the question

- Critically describe Dr. B. R. **Ambedkar**'s argument on the origin of Indian caste system
- Keep the answer to a 15-mark length of about 200 words

Revision summary

Ambedkar made endogamy the origin mechanism of caste.

Brahmans closed first; others copied marriage closure.

Caste is **graded inequality**, not four neat varnas.

He rejected Risley's race and Nesfield's occupation as sufficient causes.

Annihilation and the 1956 conversion were the political end of the argument.

Introduction

B. R. **Ambedkar** treated caste as a graded, endogamous order made by rule, not as a natural race or a harmless guild. Origin, for him, was historical closure of marriage and Brahmanical law.

Body**Core argument**

- In **Castes in India** and **Annihilation of Caste**, he said endogamy is the engine. Superimposition of endogamy on exogamous clans created caste.
- Brahmans closed their own marriage first, then other groups copied closure. Surplus women and men were managed by sati, enforced widowhood, and child marriage in his early essay.
- Caste is not four varnas plus untouchability as an accident. It is a ladder of contempt, **graded inequality**.

Against rival origins

- He rejected **H. H. Risley's** racial nasal types as the source of caste.
- **He rejected occupation-only theories of** Nesfield: a potter jati is not a caste until marriage is closed and rank is religiously ranked.
- He also refused a soft Hindu reform that kept shastra while asking for temple entry alone.

Critical reading

- The endogamy thesis is strong and still used in anthropology. The early demographic devices (sati as a system-wide origin tool) are historically uneven.
- **Dumont's** later purity hierarchy overlaps the rank point but misses **Ambedkar's** politics of annihilation and conversion.
- **Navayana Buddhism (1956)** was his practical exit when reform of Hindu dharma failed.

Flow diagram

Endogamy -> Caste closure
Caste closure -> Graded inequality
Risley race -> Rejected
Nesfield occupation -> Rejected

Conclusion

Ambedkar located caste in enforced endogamy and **graded inequality**, not in race or mere occupation. The account is sharp on mechanism and politics; some origin devices in the 1916 essay are too schematic.

Facts & figures

Castes in India

1916 paper arguing that endogamy superimposed on exogamy produced caste.

Annihilation of Caste

1936 text that refused shastric reform and demanded destruction of the graded order.

Graded inequality

Ambedkar's phrase for a ladder in which each rung hates the one below.

Nagpur 1956

Mass conversion to Buddhism as a public exit from Hindu caste.

WRAP Exams · Write. Read. Analyse. Practice. · <https://wrapexams.com/upsc/mains-answers/anthropology-gs-2/2022/critically-describe-dr-b-r-ambedkars-argument-on-the-origin-of-indian-caste-system/> · ask@wrapexams.com · wrapexams.com