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Q13

Debate the issue whether and how contemporary movements for assertion of Dalit identity work towards annihilation of caste.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2015 · GS I · 12 marks · Social Empowerment, Communalism and Secularism
Social empowerment, communalism, regionalism and secularism.

Core demand of the question

- Debate whether today's Dalit identity movements help annihilate caste, and how they do so if they do
- Give Ambedkar's aim, the case for assertion, the case against, then a balanced close

Revision summary

Ambedkar's aim was to destroy caste hierarchy, not to make jati a lasting badge.

Identity assertion can help by refusing humiliation, using law, and converting out of the Hindu order.

It can hinder by turning caste into a frozen vote bank and keeping endogamy.

Symbols without land, schools, and an end to stigmatised work are not annihilation.

Assertion is needed as a path; mixed social life is still the test.

Flow diagram

Ambedkar annihilation aim -> Dalit identity assertion

Dalit identity assertion -> Dignity law office conversion

Dalit identity assertion -> Vote bank endogamy freeze

Dignity law office conversion -> Possible caste weakening

Vote bank endogamy freeze -> Possible caste weakening

Mixed life end of stigma labour -> Possible caste weakening

Conclusion

- Keep dignity movements, but measure success by mixed schools, mixed marriage freedom, exit from stigmatised labour, and declining atrocity-not only by caste census pride.

Contemporary Dalit identity movements work toward annihilation when they break silence, win rights, and exit humiliating religion and work. They work against it when they freeze jati as a permanent electoral tribe. Assertion is a means; annihilation remains the unfinished end.

Facts & figures

Annihilation of Caste, 1936

Ambedkar's text that set destruction of jati, not reform of varna pride, as the goal.

1956 Buddhist conversion

Mass conversion at Nagpur as an exit from Hindu caste rather than a bargain inside it.

Dalit Panthers

1970s Maharashtrian militant cultural-political assertion that named caste violence in a new idiom.

BSP in Uttar Pradesh

Electoral vehicle that turned Dalit identity into state power in the 1990s-2000s.

PoA Act, 1989

Atrocities law used by movements to make caste violence a public crime.

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