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Q1(b)

Affirmative action.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2021 · PSIR GS 1 · 10 marks · Equality

Equality: Social, political and economic; relationship between equality and freedom; Affirmative action.

Core demand of the question

- **Comment on the following in about 150 words:** Affirmative action. (10 marks)

Revision summary

Affirmative action gives extra access to historically excluded groups.

Ambedkar treated it as necessary for equal citizenship in a caste order.

Champakam Dorairajan forced the First Amendment and **Article 15(4)**.

Mandal and Indra Sawhney framed OBC policy and the creamy layer.

Jaffrelot shows the same tool as a political identity, not only a welfare device.

Introduction

Affirmative action is a public policy that gives extra access in education, jobs, or office to groups historically shut out. It treats formal equal chance as insufficient where the starting line is already graded.

Body**The idea**

- **Ambedkar** made group remedy a condition of political democracy in a caste society.
- **John Rawls** can support fair equality of opportunity in non-ideal theory; he does not start from caste as **Ambedkar** does.
- The policy is not charity. It is a correction of structural exclusion, closer to status equality than to a lottery.

Indian form

- **State of Madras v. Champakam Dorairajan** (1951) struck communal quotas against **Article 29(2)**, which led to the **First Amendment** and **Article 15(4)**.
- **Mandal** and **Indra Sawhney** (1992) constitutionalised OBC reservation with a creamy-layer limit.
- **Jaffrelot** and the **Rudolphs** show how reservation also became a language of political mobilisation, not only of social justice.
- Critics from a colour-blind liberalism say it freezes groups. The reply is that caste already froze groups; the state is renaming the hierarchy in order to crack it.

Flow diagram

Affirmative action -> Ambedkar group remedy
Affirmative action -> Champakam 1951
Champakam 1951 -> First Amendment Art 15 4
Affirmative action -> Mandal Indra Sawhney

Conclusion

Affirmative action is group-targeted access against inherited exclusion. In India it runs from Champakam and the First Amendment through **Mandal**. It is **Ambedkar**'s egalitarian tool, not a Rawlsian veil of ignorance.

Facts & figures

Champakam Dorairajan, 1951

Struck caste-based professional-college quotas as violating **Article 29(2)**.

First Amendment, 1951

Inserted **Article 15(4)** to save special provisions for backward classes.

Mandal

Second Backward Classes Commission; implementation in 1990 recast OBC politics.

Indra Sawhney, 1992

Upheld 27 per cent OBC reservation in central services; barred reservation in promotions as then framed, with creamy layer.