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Q6(b)

What are the major concerns of ethnic identity and religious identity in India?

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2015 · Sociology GS 2 · 15 marks · Challenges of Social Transformation

Challenges of Social Transformation: Crisis of development: displacement, environmental problems and sustainability; Poverty, deprivation and inequalities; Violence against women; Caste conflicts; Ethnic conflicts, communalism, religious revivalism; Illiteracy and disparities in education.

Core demand of the question

- What are the major concerns of ethnic identity and religious identity in India?
- Keep nation, federalism, and violence in view

Revision summary

Ethnic concerns centre language, region, tribe, and federal share.

Religious concerns centre majority-minority honour, law, and riot.

Identities are mobilised through census, party, and sacred dispute.

Assimilation versus peoplehood is the tribal hinge.

The risk is a nation that cannot hold plural selves as equal citizens.

Introduction

Ethnic and religious identities in India are concerns of recognition, security, and share in the state. They become dangerous when the nation is imagined as one majority's home and others as guests.

Body

Ethnic identity concerns

- **Language, region, and tribe seek federal voice:** state reorganisation, Sixth Schedule, and hill movements.
- **Paul Brass** and others showed ethnicity as mobilised, not primordial. Jobs, census, and parties activate it.
- **Adivasi identity concerns land and the Elwin-Ghurye choice:** peoplehood versus assimilation.

Religious identity concerns

- Majority-minority numbers, **personal law**, and sacred space (Ayodhya as a type) organise fear and honour.
- Communal riot and ghettoisation make religion a security identity, not only a faith.
- Secularism as equal respect versus secularism as distance from religion is itself a conflict.

Shared concerns

- Cross-cutting caste can split both. Ambedkarite identity is neither only religion nor only ethnicity.

Flow diagram

Language tribe region -> Federal claim
Religious majority minority -> Communal security
State census party -> Language tribe region
State census party -> Religious majority minority

Conclusion

The major concern is not that Indians have ethnic and religious selves. It is that the state and street can freeze those selves into majority rule and minority fear.

Facts & figures

State reorganisation

Linguistic federalism as an answer to ethnic claim without secession.

Paul Brass

Treated ethnic identity as politically constructed in India.

Personal law

A religious-identity flashpoint that is also a gender issue.

Sixth Schedule

Constitutional ethnic autonomy in parts of the Northeast.