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Q3(b)

Elucidate the concepts of 'majoritarianism' and 'minoritarianism' in accentuating communal tensions in India.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2016 · Sociology GS 2 · 15 marks · Perspectives on the study of Indian society

Perspectives on the study of Indian society: Indology (G.S. Ghurye); Structural functionalism (M.N. Srinivas); Marxist sociology (A.R. Desai).

Core demand of the question

- Elucidate the concepts of 'majoritarianism' and 'minoritarianism' in accentuating communal tensions in India
- Keep riot, numbers, and party in view

Revision summary

Majoritarianism treats the **census majority** as owner of the nation.

Minoritarianism is defensive bloc politics, and also a stigma used by majorities.

Each confirms the other's fear and leadership.

Riots and sacred disputes are the public form of the spiral.

Equal citizenship is the alternative language.

Introduction

Majoritarianism is the claim that the numerical majority's religion or culture should define the nation. Minoritarianism, in this debate, is both a defensive identity of threatened groups and a charge that minorities bargain as blocs. Together they thicken communal tension.

Body**Majoritarianism**

- It converts a **census majority** into a political owner of the state, shrinking Beteille's equal citizenship.
- Temple, cow, and history become tests of belonging. The minority is guest or suspect.
- It feeds riot as a method of showing who owns the street.

Minoritarianism

- Fear of the majority produces inward leadership, personal-law defence, and vote-bank talk.
- The charge of minoritarianism can itself be a majoritarian weapon against legitimate rights.
- **Paul Brass**'s riot systems show elites on both sides using identity as a resource.

Accentuation

- **Each pole confirms the other:** temple mobilisation and ghetto leadership rise together.
- Cross-cutting caste and class, which **Ambedkar** used, get silenced in the communal binary.

Flow diagram

Majoritarianism -> Nation as majority home
Minoritarianism -> Bloc defence
Nation as majority home -> Tension riot
Bloc defence -> Tension riot

Conclusion

Majoritarianism and minoritarianism accentuate communal tension by making numbers into honour. Democracy needs citizens, not a majority nation facing a minority camp.

Facts & figures

Census majority

The numerical base that majoritarianism turns into cultural sovereignty.

Paul Brass

Riot as organised production of communal identity.

Personal law

A site where minority defence and gender justice collide.

Ghettoisation

Spatial minoritarianism after violence, which then looks like separatism.

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