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Q2(a)

How has B.R. Ambedkar identified the features of caste system ? How is it different from the mainstream treatment of caste features ?

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2016 · Sociology GS 2 · 20 marks · Caste System

Caste System: Perspectives (G.S. Ghurye, M.N. Srinivas, Louis Dumont, Andre Beteille); Features of caste system; Untouchability - forms and perspectives.

Core demand of the question

- How has **B.R. Ambedkar** identified the features of caste system? How is it different from the mainstream treatment of caste features?
- Contrast with Ghurye and Dumont

Revision summary

Ambedkar stressed graded inequality, **endogamy**, and **division of labourers**.

Untouchability is structural contempt, not a side custom.

Ghurye catalogued traits; Dumont theorised purity.

Sanskritization keeps the system; **Ambedkar** seeks exit.

The difference is indictment plus a political programme.

Introduction

Ambedkar identified caste as a system of graded inequality, **endogamy**, and occupational closure that is a social order of contempt, not a harmony of functions. Mainstream catalogues listed traits; he named the mechanism and the wound.

Body

Ambedkar's features

- Caste is not a division of labour only. It is a **division of labourers**, ranked and hereditary.
- **Endogamy** is the key that reproduces the system; sati, child marriage, and bans on widow remarriage police it.
- Graded inequality sets every rung against the one below, which blocks a simple class bloc of the oppressed.
- Untouchability is the extreme of contempt, not a small ritual extra.

Mainstream contrast

- G. S. Ghurye listed segmentation, hierarchy, commensality, disability, and occupation. The list is useful; it can sound like a civilisational inventory.
- Dumont placed purity ideology at the centre and encompassed power. **Ambedkar** placed humiliation and closed doors at the centre.

- Srinivas's Sanskritization is mobility inside the ladder. **Ambedkar** wanted the ladder broken.

Difference that matters

- Mainstream often explains caste. **Ambedkar** indicts it and designs annihilation through law, conversion, and representation.

Flow diagram

Ambedkar -> Graded inequality endogamy
Ghurye list -> Features inventory
Dumont -> Purity ideology
Graded inequality endogamy -> Annihilation

Conclusion

Ambedkar's caste is graded, endogamous, and anti-democratic. Mainstream feature-lists describe the shell. He described the engine and demanded its destruction.

Facts & figures

Annihilation of Caste

The text that treats caste as a social order to be destroyed, not managed.

Division of labourers

Ambedkar's correction of the pious division-of-labour defence.

Endogamy

The reproductive lock he placed at the centre of caste.

Ghurye's features

A mainstream teaching list of structural attributes of caste.

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