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Q4(a)

Explain the concepts of dominant caste' and 'vote ' bank giving examples from specific regions

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2017 · Sociology GS 2 · 20 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

- Explain the concepts of 'dominant caste' and 'vote bank', giving examples from specific regions
- Treat as a 20-mark answer

Revision summary

Dominant caste is Srinivas's local power of numbers, land, and office.

Rampura, Jats, Okkaligas, Patidars, and similar peasant castes illustrate it.

Vote bank is the party's treatment of a community as a ballot package.

The two overlap in rural assembly politics but are not identical.

Class splits and ticket-splitting leak from both.

Introduction

Dominant caste and vote bank are two Indian tools for reading power. Dominant caste names who runs the locality through land, numbers, and office. Vote bank names how parties treat a caste or community as a bloc of ballots. They meet in panchayat and Vidhan Sabha, but they are not the same thing.

Body

Dominant caste

- **M. N. Srinivas coined it from Rampura in Mysore:** a caste that combines numerical strength, land, and local political weight, even if it is not the highest in ritual rank.
- It explains why peasant castes could outweigh Brahmins in village affairs after land and the vote.
- Functionally it organised faction, festival, and labour. Critically, A. R. Desai would still ask who extracts surplus.

Regional examples of dominance

- Okkaliga and Lingayat weight in parts of Karnataka continues Srinivas's Mysore insight.
- **Jats** in western Uttar Pradesh and Haryana combine land, khap, and farm unions.
- Yadavs in parts of Bihar and UP, Patidars in Gujarat, and Reddys and Kammas in Andhra-Telangana show dominant-caste politics at state scale.
- Andre Beteille's **Sripuram** showed that class and caste can part, so dominance is not a frozen ritual chart.

Vote bank

- A vote bank is a political assumption that a community can be delivered as a package through leaders, fear, or welfare.
- Congress's older rainbow, BSP's Dalit core, and many regional parties' caste arithmetic illustrate the practice.
- Muslims in some urban seats, or a dominant caste in a rural assembly segment, are treated as banks even when internal class splits the vote.

Relation and change

- Dominant caste often is the local vote bank, but a vote bank can also be a minority without land dominance.
- **Mandal**, media, and split tickets have muddled the bank. Discrete castes still get courted as if they were solid.
- Vote banks can freeze citizens as blocs; dominant caste can freeze labour as clients.

Flow diagram

Dominant caste land numbers -> Village and state power
Vote bank bloc -> Party arithmetic
Dominant caste land numbers -> Party arithmetic
Class split media -> Muddled delivery

Conclusion

Dominant caste is a local structure of land and numbers, born in **Rampura**'s field view. Vote bank is an electoral strategy that may ride that structure or invent a community. Regional examples show both still organise Indian democracy, even as class and split voting leak from the package.

Facts & figures

Rampura

Mysore village where Srinivas formulated dominant caste.

Jats

Landed peasant caste whose dominance in western UP and Haryana shapes farm and khap politics.

Mandal

OBC reservation politics that recast many dominant peasant groups as vote blocs.

Sripuram

Beteille's reminder that caste dominance can part from class and from ritual rank.

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