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Q1(d)

How have the struggles against untouchability changed their forms and perspective from Gandhian to Ambedkarite positions?

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2017 · Sociology GS 2 · 10 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 have the struggles against untouchability changed their forms and perspective from Gandhian to Ambedkarite positions?
- Keep the note to a 10-mark length

Revision summary

Gandhi treated untouchability as a moral sin to be cured by service and temple entry.

He kept a reformed village and varna ideal.

Ambedkar treated it as caste structure needing annihilation, rights, and exit options.

Forms moved from satyagraha to parties, conversion, and the Constitution.

Contemporary Dalit politics is largely Ambedkarite in perspective.

Introduction

Gandhian and Ambedkarite struggles both named untouchability as a wound. They disagreed on what the wound was. **Gandhi** sought moral reform inside a reformed Hindu whole. **Ambedkar** sought **annihilation of caste** as a political structure of graded inequality.

Body

Gandhian form and perspective

- **Harijan** work, temple entry, and the spinning wheel treated untouchability as a sin of caste Hindus to be washed by service and self-purification.
- Village, trusteeship, and varna as occupational duty were kept as an ideal, so the aim was inclusion without destroying the social architecture.
- Champaran-style satyagraha trained moral pressure; the same method was turned to wells, roads, and temples.

Ambedkarite form and perspective

- Untouchability was not a blot on an otherwise good dharma. It was the underside of caste, reproduced by endogamy and sacred law.
- Forms shifted to separate electorates (then **Poona Pact** contest), conversion, labour and education, and constitutional rights.
- **Annihilation of Caste** demanded that the Hindu social order itself be confronted, not only its manners.

After Independence

- **Gandhi's** idiom remains in campaigns of social harmony and some temple-entry rituals.
- **Ambedkar's** idiom organises Dalit parties, Buddhist conversion, and rights litigation.
- The present struggle uses both streets and courts; the perspective that travels further in law is Ambedkarite.

Flow diagram

Gandhi Harijan reform -> Inclusion in Hindu whole

Ambedkar annihilation -> Rights conversion law

Inclusion in Hindu whole -> Struggle against untouchability

Rights conversion law -> Struggle against untouchability

Conclusion

The change is from moral inclusion of Harijans into a purified Hindu village to a rights politics that treats caste as a structure to be broken. Forms moved from satyagraha and service to conversion, statute, and organised assertion.

Facts & figures

Harijan

Gandhi's name for a service-and-purification campaign toward caste Hindus.

Poona Pact

1932 settlement that showed the clash over separate political power for the depressed classes.

Annihilation of Caste

Ambedkar's text that refused reform of manners as enough.

Navayana conversion

1956 Buddhist conversion as exit from a Hindu sacred order.

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