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Q7(b)

To what extent does nation building depends on strengthening of pluralities in Indian society?

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

- To what extent does nation building depend on strengthening of pluralities in Indian society?
- Treat as a 20-mark answer

Revision summary

India's nation was designed around plurality, not ethnic sameness.

Linguistic states, secular citizenship, and tribal schedules are nation-building tools.

Ghurye's Hindu whole and majoritarian culture shrink the republic.

Ambedkar made caste equality a national condition.

Plurality needs a civic floor; it is not a licence for internal domination.

Introduction

Indian nation building has always had to live with plurality of language, faith, caste, and region. Strengthening pluralities is not a luxury extra. It is the extent to which a democratic nation can exist without forcing one civilisational mould. The dependence is high, and it is historically unfinished.

Body

Why plurality is constitutive

- The national movement itself was a coalition, from **Champaran** peasants to urban lawyers, not a single ethnic people.
- Constitutional secularism, federal lists, and **linguistic states** treated plurality as design, not as a problem to erase.
- G. S. Ghurye's Hindu civilisational whole is one nation theory. Adivasi, Muslim, and Dalit self-definitions refuse that reduction.

Extent of dependence

- **Language:** without linguistic federalism, secessionist pressure rises. Strengthening scripts and schools of many tongues holds the union.
- **Faith:** principled distance and equal citizenship are nation building; riot and humiliation unbuild it.
- **Caste:** **Ambedkar** made annihilation and rights the condition of a real nation of citizens, not a Hindu hierarchy wearing a flag.

- **Region and tribe:** Fifth and Sixth Schedules, and respect for custom, are how the borderlands join without only military integration.

When plurality is weakened

- Uniform cultural nationalism can mobilise a majority and shrink the nation to a core.
- Yogendra Singh's synthesis can describe mixing. It should not license swallowing minorities as 'tradition modernising'.
- **Andre Beteille's disharmony is the actual nation:** equality as creed, ranked groups as fact. Politics must civilise that tension.

Limit

- Plurality is not endless fragmentation. A shared civic floor-vote, rights, a common market-must hold.
- Strengthening pluralities means equal dignity, not veto by every sect against every law.

Flow diagram

Nation building -> Language faith caste region
Language faith caste region -> Civic equality
One-culture mould -> Shrinks the nation
Civic equality -> Democratic union

Conclusion

Nation building in India depends to a very large extent on strengthening pluralities as civic equals. A single-culture nation would be a smaller, harsher India. The extent is not total licence for inequality inside groups; it is a union that can bear difference without exile.

Facts & figures

Linguistic states

Federal redesign that treated language plurality as a way to hold the union.

Ambedkar

Nation of citizens requires a break with graded inequality, not only a flag.

Fifth Schedule

Constitutional plurality for scheduled areas rather than simple assimilation.

Champaran

Peasant satyagraha as a plural social base of the national movement.