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Q3(c)

How does Andre Beteille justify 'middle class in India?

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2020 · Sociology GS 2 · 15 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 does Andre Beteille justify 'middle class in India?

Revision summary

Beteille's middle class is built on education, occupation and official equality.

It is not only an income group and not only Desai's bourgeoisie.

Public employment and professions historically expanded it.

Caste still shadows marriage and schooling.

Disharmony is the justification's other face.

Introduction

Andre Beteille justifies the Indian middle class as a historically new formation of education, occupation, and values of equality, not as a mere income slab. It is central to his disharmonic modern India.

Body**What he means by middle class**

- It is a class of service, profession, and small property that lives by credentials more than by landed honour alone.
- Expansion after jobs in administration, teaching, and later private services made it a demographic and moral fact.
- It is not the Western bourgeoisie of industrial ownership that Desai placed at the nationalist core, though it overlaps.

Justification

- The Constitution and public employment created a career open in principle, a homo aequalis inside a still ranked society.
- **Sripuram** already showed class detaching a little from caste; the urban middle class is that split at scale.
- The middle class carries the public language of merit, secular office, and nuclear family, while practising caste in marriage.

Limits he would not hide

- **It can be caste-shadowed:** dominant-caste capital converts into degrees.

- It may preach equality and hoard school and housing, the disharmony he theorised.

Use

- Justify the middle class as a real stratum of modern India, not as a copy of Europe and not as a myth.

Flow diagram

Education office -> Middle class
Middle class -> Equality as value
Caste marriage housing -> Disharmony

Conclusion

Beteille justifies the Indian middle class as the social seat of official equality and occupational mobility. Its justification is historical: law, school, and office. Its contradiction is that it still marries and resides by rank.

Facts & figures

Sripuram

Early field site where class began to move apart from caste rank.

Disharmonic structure

Equality as creed while inequality continues, the middle class's home.

Credentialism

Degrees and office as the class's capital.

Public sector expansion

A historical engine of Indian middle-class growth.

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