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Q5(b)

Comment on the role of co-operatives in rural development

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2021 · Sociology GS 2 · 10 marks · Rural and Agrarian transformation in India

Rural and Agrarian transformation in India: Programmes of rural development, Community Development Programme, cooperatives, poverty alleviation schemes; Green revolution and social change; Changing modes of production in Indian agriculture; Problems of rural labour, bondage, migration.

Core demand of the question

- Comment on the role of co-operatives in rural development
- Keep the note to a 10-mark length

Revision summary

Co-operatives pool rural producers for credit, dairy and processing.

Amul is the strongest Indian illustration.

Dominant-caste capture and fake societies weaken the role.

They complement, and now compete with, private agrarian capital.

They aid development without automatically equalising the village.

Introduction

Co-operatives pool small rural producers so they can face markets and the state together. In India they have been a tool of rural development, strongest where a commodity and a caste-class bloc already sat together.

Body**What they can do**

- Credit, dairy, and sugar co-operatives cut the moneylender and the middleman when they actually work.
- **Amul** and the **Anand pattern** showed that small milk producers can build a national brand without each household becoming a capitalist farm.
- They can teach a civic skill of meetings and accounts, a modest school of social democracy.

Limits

- Dominant castes often capture boards, which Srinivas's village power would predict.
- Green Revolution capital and private agribusiness now compete with the co-operative, so the role is no longer the only rural modernizer.
- Paper co-operatives and political patronage empty the idea.

Comment

- Co-operatives develop the countryside when they are real associations. They do not, by themselves, annihilate rural hierarchy.

Flow diagram

Co-operatives -> Rural bargaining power
Amul Anand -> Rural bargaining power
Dominant caste capture -> Limited role
Markets agribusiness -> Limited role

Conclusion

Co-operatives are a useful instrument of rural development in credit and dairy, illustrated by **Amul**. Their role is limited wherever dominant caste and the state treat them as vote machines rather than producer power.

Facts & figures

Amul

Gujarat dairy co-operative that linked small producers to a national market.

Anand pattern

Village society plus union plus federation as a development design.

Credit societies

Intended to replace usury; often weak or captured.

Ministry of Cooperation

Recent state attention that shows the idea is politically live, not only Nehruvian.

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