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Q7(b)

Rising 'ethnocentrism' is leading to conflict in our society. Assess this statement with appropriate reasons

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2021 · 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

- Rising 'ethnocentrism' is leading to conflict in our society. Assess this statement with appropriate reasons
- Cover region, religion, and caste honour

Revision summary

Ethnocentrism ranks other groups as lesser humans.

Majoritarian, regional and caste forms all generate conflict in India.

Material competition and political organisation give it force.

Not every identity claim is ethnocentric; some are anti-exclusion.

Equal citizenship is the institutional reply.

Introduction

Ethnocentrism is the habit of treating one's own cultural we as the measure of the human. Rising ethnocentrism in India feeds conflict because it turns neighbours into lesser types. The statement is largely right, with the caveat that inequality and rumours organise the fire, not pride alone.

Body

Why the statement holds

- Religious majoritarianism treats one civilisation as the nation, which Ghurye's Hindu whole can license and which minorities experience as threat, as Sachar-type lag already showed in a colder form.
- Regional sons-of-the-soil claims, from language riots to attacks on migrants, make ethnocentrism a labour-market weapon.
- **Caste honour is ethnocentrism of the jati:** intermarriage and dining still produce atrocity, **Ambedkar's** graded inequality in motion.
- Social media amplifies in-groups and humiliation videos, speeding polarisation.

Appropriate reasons, not slogans

- Economic competition in informal cities and campuses gives ethnocentric talk a material hook.
- Political entrepreneurs convert identity politics from dignity (Dalit assertion) into domination when the we is defined by excluding a they.

- **Beteille's disharmonic order:** the Constitution's civic we competes with ethnic we; conflict is that competition turning violent.
- Yogendra Singh warned that tradition can be recast; ethnocentric recasting is one modernization of tradition.

Limits of the statement

- Not all identity is ethnocentrism. Adivasi land defence or Pasmanda claims can be anti-exclusion, not supremacy.
- Class unrest, as in farmer blockades, is not well explained as ethnicity even when a dominant caste leads.
- The state can reduce conflict by equal law; it can also stoke ethnocentrism.

Assessment

- Rising ethnocentrism is a real driver of communal, regional, and caste conflict.
- It works through organisations, media, and honour, not through a mysterious cultural essence.

Flow diagram

Ethnocentrism our culture as measure -> Communal polarisation
Ethnocentrism our culture as measure -> Sons of the soil
Ethnocentrism our culture as measure -> Jati honour atrocity
Jobs rumour politics -> Ethnocentrism our culture as measure

Conclusion

- **The statement is sound:** ethnocentrism is rising as a political style and it leads to conflict. The reasons are majoritarian nationhood, regional closure, caste honour, and mediated rumour, all riding on unequal livelihoods. Civic equality remains the counter-ethic.

Facts & figures

Sons of the soil

Regional ethnocentrism that targets migrants as outsiders to the job market.

Sachar evidence

Socio-economic lag that majoritarian suspicion can worsen into conflict, not a cause of disloyalty.

Atrocity honour

Caste ethnocentrism policing marriage and dining.

Social media rumour

Speed of in-group mobilisation that turns local insult into riot talk.