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Q2(b)

Elaborate on changing nature of caste system with suitable illustrations.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2022 · 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

- Elaborate on changing nature of caste system with suitable illustrations
- Cover **Sanskritization**, politics, law, and urban work

Revision summary

Dominant caste and **Sanskritization** changed local rank without ending caste.

Land reform and markets shifted class inside jati.

Politics and reservation made caste a public identity and a right.

Cities mix work and still police marriage.

Atrocity and endogamy show the old structure under a new language.

Introduction

- **Caste has not vanished in India. It has changed its public face:** from a village system of service and pollution toward a language of identity, vote, and opportunity, while endogamy and atrocity still show the old spine.

Body**From ritual rank to local power**

- Srinivas's Rampura showed that dominant caste could outweigh priestly rank when land and numbers sat together.
- **Sanskritization** changed diet, ritual, and claim to varna without ending the ladder. It is change of position, not exit from caste.
- Land reform and Green Revolution recast which jatis command the agrarian surplus, as Beteille saw when class and caste parted a little in **Sripuram**.

Politics and law

- Adult franchise turned caste into associations and parties. BAMCEF and later the Bahujan Samaj Party made a Dalit-Bahujan electoral bloc from an Ambedkarite reading of exclusion.
- The Constitution, reservation, and the Prevention of Atrocities law treat caste as a civil disability to be repaired, which is Beteille's disharmonic order in action.
- Mandal and OBC mobilisation showed caste as a census and quota fact, not only a temple fact.

Work, city, and marriage

- Urban occupations and the informal sector mix jatis at the shop floor, yet housing, food, and marriage often re-segregate.
- Honour control of women, which Leela Dube tied to seed and earth, still polices inter-caste marriage.
- Online matrimonials make caste a filter with a search box, a modern form of the old rule.

Illustrations of persistence

- Manual scavenging and rural labour bondage show untouchability's material continuation.
- Campus and office networks reproduce caste as social capital even when the ritual idiom is quiet.

Flow diagram

Village rank service -> Sanskritization dominant caste
Sanskritization dominant caste -> Vote reservation parties
Vote reservation parties -> Urban work identity
Urban work identity -> Endogamy atrocity persist

Conclusion

The caste system has changed from a relatively closed village hierarchy toward a politicised, legal, and partly occupational open field. Endogamy, honour, and graded inequality remain, so the nature is transformed, not abolished.

Facts & figures

Sanskritization

Srinivas's process of claiming higher rank by copying a locally prestigious lifestyle.

BSP / BAMCEF

Organisations that turned Dalit and Bahujan identity into a national political resource.

Sripuram

Beteille's case that caste, class, and power can move at different speeds.

Matrimonial market

Digital ads that keep jati endogamy while appearing modern.