Society & Social Justice · GS - I

Discuss the impact of post-liberal economy on ethnic identity and communalism.

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
2023	GS - I	Society & Social Justice

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
15	~250 words

Answer Hint

Examine how liberalisation, market integration, migration, urbanisation, consumer culture and media reshape identities; discuss both weakening of traditional boundaries through mobility and their possible reinforcement through competition, inequality and political mobilisation; emphasise inclusive growth, social cohesion and responsible media.

Model Answer

Introduction

India's post-liberalisation economy, particularly since 1991, has produced greater market integration, urbanisation, migration, private-sector growth and exposure to global culture. These transformations have had **complex effects on ethnic identities and communal relations**, sometimes weakening traditional boundaries and sometimes creating new forms of identity mobilisation.

Body

Impact on Ethnic Identity

Greater interaction:

Migration, urbanisation and modern workplaces bring people from different linguistic, regional and cultural backgrounds into greater contact, encouraging cosmopolitan identities.

Occupational mobility:

Economic liberalisation has weakened some traditional links between caste/community and occupation, creating new professional identities.

Consumer culture:

National and global brands, entertainment and digital platforms have created shared aspirations among diverse communities.

Diaspora and globalisation:

Greater international mobility has strengthened transnational cultural identities and enabled communities to maintain connections across borders.

At the same time, economic change can strengthen ethnic consciousness when groups perceive **unequal access to jobs, resources or opportunities**.

Impact on Communalism

Potentially Integrative Effects:

Markets, workplaces and urban spaces can increase inter-community interaction and create economic interests that transcend religious identities.

Competitive Effects:

Unequal development, unemployment and perceptions of economic exclusion may generate grievances that identity-based politics can exploit.

Migration and Urban Competition:

Rapid demographic change can sometimes create competition over housing, employment and public resources, contributing to social tensions.

Media and Digital Platforms:

Liberalisation and technological expansion have increased access to information, but social media can also amplify misinformation, stereotypes and polarising narratives.

Political Mobilisation:

Economic anxieties may be articulated through ethnic or communal identities, particularly when political actors frame competition in identity-based terms.

Way Forward

The response should focus on **inclusive economic growth, equal access to opportunities, social protection, quality education,**

inter-community interaction and responsible media ecosystems. Urban planning and employment policies should reduce perceptions of exclusion, while constitutional values should guide public discourse.

Conclusion

The post-liberal economy has neither uniformly weakened nor inevitably strengthened ethnic identity and communalism. It has **reconfigured the conditions under which identities are formed, expressed and mobilised**. Economic integration can promote social cohesion when accompanied by inclusion, but inequality and exclusion can make identity a vehicle for conflict. Therefore, economic modernisation must advance alongside social justice and constitutional fraternity.

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