Society & Social Justice · GS - I

Has caste lost its relevance in understanding the multi-cultural Indian Society? Elaborate your answer with illustrations.

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
2020	GS - I	Society & Social Justice

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
10	~150 words

Answer Hint

Persistence of caste; politics and elections; marriage and kinship; economic inequalities; urbanisation and education; affirmative action; changing identities; intersectionality

Model Answer

Introduction

Caste remains an important institution in Indian society, although its expressions have changed due to urbanisation, education, constitutional safeguards and economic transformation. It has not lost its relevance, but its influence varies across contexts.

Continuing relevance of caste

- **Marriage and kinship:** Endogamy remains widespread, demonstrating caste's continuing role in family formation.
- **Politics:** Caste identities influence electoral mobilisation, candidate selection and demands for representation.
- **Economic inequality:** Historical exclusion continues to affect access to land, employment, education and social networks.
- **Social discrimination:** Caste-based exclusion and atrocities persist despite constitutional guarantees.

- **Affirmative action:** Reservations and targeted welfare policies recognise caste-related historical disadvantages.

Changing nature of caste

- **Urbanisation and mobility:** Occupational diversification and migration have weakened some traditional restrictions.
- **Education and employment:** Professional opportunities increasingly enable individuals to move beyond inherited occupations.
- **Collective mobilisation:** Dalit and backward-class movements challenge hierarchy and demand dignity and representation.
- **Digital spaces:** Online platforms provide avenues for anti-caste advocacy, though caste-based prejudice can also be reproduced digitally.

Conclusion

Caste has neither disappeared nor remained unchanged. It continues to shape identity, opportunity and power, interacting with class, gender, religion and region. Understanding India's multicultural society therefore requires recognising both caste's persistence and the transformations challenging it.

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