

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION

UPSC 2019 · 10 marks

Dalit perspective on Indian national movement. Discuss.

FLOW SNAPSHOT — how the answer moves

Intro routes R1 national movement not judged by anti-colonial unity alone → real test = social emancipation

R2 Dalit lens reframes 'freedom' → political *Swaraj* meaningless without social equality

Body flow **Ambedkar**: no freedom while people remain socially enslaved → political democracy minus social democracy = contradiction → annihilation of caste as the core of nationhood → Congress upper-caste dominated / 'Brahmin-Baniya' → independence placed above caste reform → separate electorates opposed → Poona Pact compromise → **Panikkar**: disjunction between political and social-cultural struggle → **Omvedt**: anti-caste movement more democratic and 'nationalistic' than the elite Congress

Counter-view perspective not anti-national → **Gaikwad**: a rejection of elite hegemony, not of the nation

Conclusion routes R1 asks 'freedom for whom?' → no *Swaraj* without social equality
R2 Bahishkrit Bharat → Prabuddha Bharat → freedom complete only with social equality

For the Dalit perspective, the national movement could not be judged by anti-colonial unity alone. Its real test was social emancipation. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar argued that a country cannot be free if its people remain socially enslaved and that political democracy without social democracy is a contradiction.

He therefore saw annihilation of caste, not merely transfer of power, as the heart of genuine nationhood. From this view, Congress appeared upper-caste dominated, Ambedkar called it a "Brahmin-Baniya" party. He criticises congress for placing independence above caste reform, opposing separate electorates and conceding only through the Poona pact.

According to K.N. Panikkar, the movement's limitation lay in the disjunction between political and social-cultural struggle.

Gail Omvedt argues treating the anti-caste movement as more consistently democratic and more "nationalistic", than the elite-controlled Congress.

But the perspective is not anti-national. As S.N. GaiKwad views, Ambedkar rejected elite hegemony, not the nation itself. It asks freedom from whom, and whether Swaraj can exist without social equality - seeking to convert Bahishkrit Bharat into Prabuddha Bharat.