



Mains Practice Question

Q. Ambedkar warned that Bhakti in religion may be a road to the salvation of the soul, but in politics, Bhakti or hero worship is a sure road to degradation and to eventual dictatorship. Comment. (150 words)

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Approach

- Briefly introduce the Hero worship in politics.
- Enlist and describe the harmful impacts of Hero worship in politics contrasting them with democracy.
- Give conclusion

Introduction

- A strong democracy is built on strong institutions. Individual political leaders may have great achievements and great claims regarding their actions but lacks the checks and balances built in democratic processes.
- It is in this context the Ambedkar warned against Bhakti or hero worship of individual in politics and emphasized the institutional democracy.

Body

Harmful effects of Bhakti or Hero worship

- **Lack of Accountability:** In democratic system accountability of leaders is important; however hero worship of a leader reduces the willingness and ability of people to question the leader. Any reasonable question is seen as disrespectful to leader personally effectively undermining the checks and balances built in through rule of law.
- **Subversion of institutions:** John Stuart Mill argued “not to lay their liberties at the feet of even a great man, or to trust him with power which enables him to subvert their institutions”. A powerful leader who is blindly trusted by his follower can effectively subvert the institutions like judiciary, civil services, independent election machinery without raising eyebrows because of blind trust the followers put in him. This situation leads to dictatorship.
- **Compromise the role of opposition:** Opposition in democracy is axiomatic, without opposition true democracy cannot exist; this is true in case of opposition with in parliament as well as opposition in form of dissent by civil society or individuals through free speech. Hero worship threatens role of opposition. Any opposition to venerated leader is met with threats harming role of opposition and dissent.
- **Absolute power corrupts absolutely:** Absolute power wielded by an individual enjoying the blind faith of follower leads to corruption as the institutional checks are missing and accountability is not fixed for the actions of venerated leader.
- **Threat to internal party democracy:** Inner party democracy is essential for larger democratic process in a democracy e.g. individuals with right credentials may get to contest election if there is inner party democracy. On the other hand an unquestionable leader is likely to make those people contests the election, which will perpetuate his rule, the public good will not be on his priority.

Conclusion

- Ambedkar warning was issued to protect the independence India had achieved after long struggle.
- The Bhakti or hero worship in politics is road to degradation and to eventual dictatorship and will be threat to independence even though not in form of colonialism, but eventual curtailing of fundamental rights which forms building blocks of independence.

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