**Identity politics**

1) **Introduction**
- Identity politics refers to political positions based on the interests and perspectives of social groups with which people identify.
- Identity politics includes the ways in which people’s politics may be shaped by aspects of their identity through loosely correlated social organizations.
- Examples include social organizations based on age, social class or caste, culture, dialect, disability, education, ethnicity, language, nationality, sex and gender identity.

2) **Identity politics in India**
- Rise of low castes, religious identities and linguistic groups have contributed to the significance of identity politics in India.
- Identity politics thus attempts to attain empowerment, representation and recognition of social groups.
- In India we find that despite adoption of a liberal democratic polity after independence, communities and collective identities have remained powerful and continue to claim recognition.
  - **Caste**
    - Caste has become an important determinant in Indian society and politics.
    - Caste-identities have resulted not only in the empowerment of newly emerging groups but has increased the intensity of confrontational politics and possibly leading to a growing crisis of governability.
  - **Religion**
    - Identity schemes based on religion have become a major source of conflict not only in the international context but also become a challenge for Indian democracy and secularism.
  - **Language**
    - Language becomes an important premise on which group identities are organised.
    - The result of recognition for linguistic groups has disembodied the feelings of national unity and national spirit.

3) **Impact on polity:**
- Formation of coalition government based on identity and ideology.
- Rise of dominant political parties has origin in identity politics in many states.
- Rise of regional and state parties is one of the consequence of identity politics in India. For eg BSP, Shiv sena etc.
- Identity politics has made considerable impacts on international relations more on neighboring countries. One can see the impact of Tamil identity politics on India - Srilanka relations.
- Identity politics led by caste groups is at peak in India today.
- Agitation of third gender community. This is the positive development and it has led to passage of protective legislation for third gender community.
- Supreme Court’s observation on rights to third gender community highlights the importance of these groups creating their own impact on socio political sphere of country.
- Identity politics has also led to vote bank politics where political parties focusing mainly on the needs of particular social groups.
• Backward Classes occupying centre-stage in politics, a process that was accelerated after the implementation of the Mandal Commission recommendations in politics.

4) Impact on society:
   • Positives
     a. Political parties could focus on particular sections deprived of political power and economic opportunities in the society.
     b. Increase in political awareness among marginalized and weaker sections of society.
     c. Identity politics has also given better representation to socially discriminated classes and minorities.
   • Negatives
     a. Identity politics has sowed the seeds of hatred and enmity among different sections of society based on castes, religion, ethnicity etc.
     b. Identity politics is responsible for limited or narrow minded views of the citizens and political parties.
     c. Identity politics is responsible for divisive tendencies and could lead to the separatist tendencies. Eg Naga insurgency after independence, Khalistan movement etc.
   • The development of the modern LGBT movement was closely linked with identity politics.

5) Conclusion
   • Identity politics has played important role in bringing marginalized and discriminated sections of society to mainstream politics.
   • However at the same time it has brought some negative developments in Indian polity and society.
   • Thus we need to ensure that Identity politics don’t result into limited or narrow thinking while reaping its benefit.