Casteism & Gujarat

Why in news?

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- Caste related violence has been a regular occurrence lately in Gujarat.
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- Studies also point to rampant discrimination against Dalits in rural areas of the state.
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What are the recent incidences?

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- 20-year-old dalit youth was murdered for watching the garba function of an upper caste gathering.
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- Two dalits from Gandhinagar had been attacked by upper-caste Hindus for sporting a moustache.
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- In 2016, several youngsters were thrashed and paraded in Una village on the suspicion of cow slaughter. (Click here to know about **Una Model of Dalits Protest**)
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How has the political contours changed with time?

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- Post the Mandal commission report, anti-reservation riots dominated Gujarat's polity in the 1980s.
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- In the 1990's – after Babri Masjid episode, it was the politics of Hindu consolidation, which culminated in the 2002 riots.
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- Over the next decade, the pursuit of justice for the riot victims, kept the question of Muslims alienation & discrimination alive.
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- As years passed, the memory of the riots has effectively faded without proper justice and reconciliation.
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- Currently, the fault-lines within the Hindus are coming to the fore.
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- The Patidar agitation for OBC reservation in 2015 and last year's Dalit protests following the Una outrage were notable ones.
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- Importantly, the Una episode triggered a massive mobilisation in the state that culminated in the "Dalit Asmita Yatra".
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- This even pressured the government into setting up special courts for speedy trial in cases registered under the "SC/ST Prevention of Atrocities Act -1989".
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How could the future be best approached?

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- The much-touted Gujarat Model was about projecting high economic growth in building physical infrastructure.
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- The Patidar agitation demanding reservations in education and employment - indicates that the Gujarat Model could not lift all.
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- The anti-dalit violence must be addressed before it further imperils social peace in an already restless state.
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- While, free market economics provides for big GDP numbers, it doesn't mean the betterment of the masses.
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- Hence, economies need to embrace principles of 'Social Juctice' to ensure that fruits of development is shared by all.
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Source: The Indian Express

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