RASHTRA JYOTI

ANALYSIS BRIEF
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Shuddhi · From the reporting archive

Why Ghar Wapsi Rejects Birth-Based Caste as a Requirement

Original analysis by **Swati Goel Sharma and Sanjeev Newar**

The author argues that becoming Hindu through ghar wapsi does not require joining a caste and traces the practice to the Arya Samaj's rejection of birth-based caste hierarchy. The author draws on census reports and accounts of Shuddhi from the 1880s, then compares those records with contemporary accounts of how converts declare a gotra.



A picture of the 'ghar wapsi' organised in Aasan Kalan in Panipat

THE ESSENTIAL POINTS

- The authors trace modern ghar wapsi to the Arya Samaj, founded by Swami Dayanand Saraswati in 1875, and its campaign against birth-based caste hierarchy.
- Early Arya Samaj reform challenged restrictions imposed by birth by extending access to the sacred thread, yagna and Gayatri Mantra to caste groups often denied them.
- The authors answer the ritual objection about gotra by explaining that people joining the Hindu fold may name an ancestral gotra or adopt their guru's or officiant's.
- B R Ambedkar, who advocated the annihilation of caste, supported Shuddhi leader Swami Shraddhanand and praised his work for people subjected to untouchability.

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Updated from an original written by Swati Goel Sharma and Sanjeev Newar in December 2021. Summary prepared by Rashtra Jyoti Staff. Facts refer to the original reporting date.