1. The prevalence of caste politics in India is an indicator of retrograde political attitude. Do you agree? Critically comment.

Demand of the question:
It expects students to write about what role do caste politics play to influence political attitude in Indian political scenario. It also expects students to analyse both aspects of whether prevalence of caste politics in India is an indicator of retrograde political attitude or not.

Introduction:
Theoretically speaking caste and democratic political system stand for opposite value systems. Caste is hierarchical. On the other hand, democratic political system advocates freedom to an individual and equality of status. Despite this contradictory nature, caste has influenced Indian political attitude.

Body:
Politics does not function in vacuum. It operates in society in which it-is influenced by social forces and social forces are also influenced by political attitude too. In this perspective caste's influence on Indian Political attitude can be seen in following ways:

- Caste as a social stratification system is a salient feature of Indian society which has influenced the structure of society in socio-economic and political scenario.
- Political Socialisation: 'Caste values' and caste interests influence persons political thinking, awareness and participation.
- Caste and nomination of candidates: Due to this process of political socialisation of caste, 'caste consciousness' arouses among people.
- While nominating their candidates from different constituencies the political parties keep in mind the cast of candidate and caste of the voters in that particular constituency. It in turn affects democratic ideals of equality, justice.
- Caste and voting behaviour: In the election campaigns, votes are demanded in the names of caste. Which in turn affects peoples' thinking as people tend to vote to the candidate who takes interest in solving their castes problem only.
- Caste as divisive in Indian Politics: At times it leads to an unhealthy struggle for power and acts as a divisive force.
- Caste and organization of government: The caste factor affects state government policies and decisions. The ruling party tries to use its decision-making power to win the favour of major caste groups.
- Regional political power for furthering the interests of the caste groups which support or can support their regimes.
- Social and political tensions: The provisions made for the protection of interests of scheduled castes & tribes have also disturbed the social harmony in the Indian society.

But, at the same time prevalence of caste politics has resulted in the welfare and development of marginalised sections of society in following ways.

- Caste as cohesive force in Indian Politics: It is a source of unity among the members of groups and acts as a cohesive force.
- Prevalence of caste politics in India also resulted in the enactment of legislations to protect the rights of disadvantaged and marginalised sections of society. e.g. Prevention of atrocities against SC & ST's Act -1989, Protection of Civil Rights Act-1976.
- Many caste based political parties are working more efficiently to solve the problems of their respective castes people.

Though prevalence of caste politics in India has contributed in some way to modernize political attitude it doesn't indicate that it is the way through which welfare of marginalised and disadvantaged sections can be achieved.

The following points should also need to be considered to neutralise the role of prevalent caste politics in political attitude:

- The politician should rise above the politics of caste.
- Remodelling of education system on secular lines should take place which in turn help to have a more egalitarian society and will lead to change in political attitude.
- All schools must encourage community living by organizing community meals and all students should be included in it. It will result in empathy and compassion for fellow human beings.

Conclusion:

Overall it is observed that, caste has been politicised to pursue economic and social interest rather than achieving the democratic ideals of justice, equality and fraternity. This process has reached an impasse and caught into vicious circle. Hence, we need to do away with the prevalent caste politics, which will definitely result in elimination of retrograde political attitude and achieve the more egalitarian social order.

2. What role have social influence and persuasion played in containing the spread of COVID-19? Illustrate.

Demand of the question:
It expects students to write about how social influence and persuasion played role in containing the spread of COVID-19. It also expects students to write about how more effectively it can be used to contain the spread of COVID-19.

Introduction:
The government, civil society groups, Bollywood - Hollywood celebrities, common people etc used social influencing and persuasion as tools to spread the message to contain the spread of COVID-19. "Janata curfew" is a classical example of Social influence and persuasion.

Body:
Role played by social influence and persuasion to contain spread of COVID-19:
- Social influence and persuasion are the keys to bring behavioural changes to solve societal & global problems like caste system, patriarchy, climate change, solid waste management,COVID-19 etc.
- Government of India took a simple but very effective Social influencing move by putting information about COVID-19 symptoms and the following steps to tackle as the caller tune of mobile rings. It led to wide scale spread of information to people, as there are nearly 116 crore mobile phone subscribers in India today.
- Government of India's social media handles are frequently posting the information related to COVID-19 on its social media platforms like Instagram, facebook. So information with great details reached people. For instance, how to wash hands in graphical format influenced peoples hand washing habit leading to contain the spread of COVID-19.
- One of the main weapon to fight with corona virus is to social distancing. Celebrities all over the world appealed to the fellow citizens to maintain social distancing. Which considerably persuaded people and influenced their habits. e.g. Video messages by celebrities like Akshay Kumar and Amitabh Bachhan etc.
- Political leaders lead with examples, either through their speeches or acts told people what to do and what not to. For instance, Prime ministers and Presidents of various countries faced camera while giving information with mask put on.
- New York Governor, provided a great example when he made a plea for ventilators asking for anyone who could (within his state or outside) to send the ventilators they are not using and New York will gladly supply you with more later. It led to people donating ventilators to hospitals in New York.
- People who were felling low to follow home or institutional quarantine also understood the importance of the quarantine procedure and started following quarantine strictly it also helped to contain the spread of virus.

- Hence, cumulative effect can be seen that in many of the countries the COVID-19 curve has started to flatten.
- It also led to normalise the new normal i.e. wearing the mask, frequently washing hands, maintaining social distance etc.
- after a few weeks of social distancing and self-isolation because of Covid-19, we have noticed the decline in our social interactions and might have felt the change in our mental and physical health. Social influencing also helped to tackle these kind challenges too.

In this way Social influencing and persuasion have played a very effective role to make people aware and change their thinking, behaviours, attitudes & habits according to the need of time.

- Many of the false information's were also spread through the social media platforms which influenced people's minds. For instance, Corona virus also spreads through eggs, which in turn affected poultry industry.
- But in these kind of scenarios too, social influencing and persuasion played role through spread of right information. It in turn also assured the livelihood of many people and helped to contain spread of corona virus.

Also following practises can also be followed to increase the effectivity of Social influence and persuasion:

- Highlight a gap: For young people who might resist, ask what they would suggest an elderly grandparent or a younger brother or sister do. Health officials in Thailand used this approach in anti-smoking campaign. Rather than telling smokers their habit was bad, they had little kids come up to smokers on the street and ask them for a light. Not surprisingly, the smokers told the kids no.
- Pose questions : Public health messaging tries to be direct: Junk food makes you fat, Drunk driving is murder. But being so forceful can make people feel threatened. The same content can be phrased in terms of a question: "Do you think junk food is good for you?" If someone's answer is no, they're now in a tough spot. Same can be done by posing question to those people who roam around without using mask.

Conclusion:
Therefore, social influence and persuasion are dynamic & powerful tools that hold a huge potential to change the face of world. If creatively used, they can prove to be the most effective tool to tackle the fight with COVID-19 ,and win over it too.

3. What purpose does the merger of government owned banks and PSUs serve? Discuss.

Demand of the question:
It expects students to discuss the purpose behind merger of public sector banks. It also expects students to discuss both aspects of impact of merger of government owned banks and PSU's.

Introduction:
With the motive to strengthen the banking sector, expand the national presence and global reach of these banks and PSU's government announced merger of 10 public sector lenders into four bigger and stronger banks. Earlier to this the Oil & Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd (HPCL) merged together, resulted in ONGC buying up the 51% government stake in HPCL.

Body:

As the merger came in to effect there are 12 PSUs - six merged banks and six independent public sector banks.
Purpose Behind the Merger Plan
- Merger was proposed through a ministerial panel called "Alternative Mechanism" headed by Finance Minister.
- Economic Survey (2015-16) pointed out that constant failure of banks to lend credit to both emerging as well as existing industries has resulted in stagnation in the economic growth of the nation.
- Economic Survey (2015-16) also pointed out that Problem of credit lending, based on the twin balance sheet crisis, can be checked by the formation of bigger banks.
- To keep pace with the growing economy, there is a need for big banks that can lend to big industries & entrepreneurs that require large amounts of credit.
- As per banks' prudential norms, banks take risks only for those entities that are appropriate as per banks' size.
- Banks usually avoid investing in a single entity or business. Also to protect weak PSBs from loss - thereby securing customers and financial system.
- Hence to invest in large projects, banks with huge lending capacity were needed which can also lend to PSU's.
- Banks also need large credit, better customer service & connect in order to invest in mega projects through lending.
- Larger banks can invest in standardizing these processes in larger set of customer-facing entities through technology up gradation, fraud detection, etc.
- Bigger banks would also be able to adhere to BASEL III norms.
- Bigger banks & large PSU's with diverse portfolios have lesser chances of failure since it is unlikely that different sector of an economy will face a crisis at a same time.

Impact of Merger:
- Large banks will have large balance sheets which can lend to different sectors of economy as per need in turn lead to growth of Indian economy.
- The large banking entities & PSU's will be able to absorb financial shocks better. It will also build capacity in PSBs to raise resources without depending on the state exchequer.
- Consolidated banks will have a better ability to raise resources from the market.
- Large PSU's can work in synchronous with the government policies.
- A synergistic relationship would efficiently use one another's network, customer base, better managerial efficiency ,and it will also improve Operational Efficiency.
- Stronger and globally competitive banks would provide increased choices to the stakeholders.
- Because of consolidation capital allocation, performance assessment, and steering would become easier for the government.

Former RBI Governor has warned that while creating large banks one might end up with a big weak bank. Hence, challenges posed by these merger exercises can't be blindsided:
- There is a concern among employees that amalgamation may lead to rationalization of bank branches & employees.
- The merger also sends out poor signals about banking & PSU's governance which will affect trust of customers in banking system.
- A strong banks merger with a weaker and under-capitalized PSB would stall the bank's recovery efforts as the weaknesses of one bank may get transferred and the merged entity may become weak.
- Same scenario can be seen in PSU's merger.
- For instances, a weak Dena Bank (under Prompt Corrective Action) may impact stronger banks like Bank of Baroda & Vijaya Bank.
- Bigger banks & PSU's may monopolise market economy.

Conclusion:
Merged larger banks & PSU's offer more resilience to the banking & PSU's sector but blindsiding experts opinions like twin balance sheet problem, NPA's ,and risk control system would not be helpful to give boost to banking & PSU's sector. Hence, strong foundation of PSBs needed so that banking & public undertakings sector in Indian economy becomes strong enough to achieve the target of $5 trillion GDP economy by 2024.