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Q9

How is the growth of Tier 2 cities related to the rise of a new middle class with an emphasis on the culture of consumption?

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2022 · GS I · 10 marks · Indian Heritage and Culture

Indian culture will cover the salient aspects of Art Forms, literature and Architecture from ancient to modern times.

Core demand of the question

- How is the growth of Tier 2 cities related to the rise of a **new middle class** with an emphasis on the culture of consumption?
- Link jobs, housing, and malls in cities such as Indore, Coimbatore, and Jaipur to new middle-class taste
- Keep the explanation within a 10-mark length

Revision summary

Offices, colleges, and hospitals in Tier 2 cities created salaried households beyond the old metros.

Cheaper housing made apartments, vehicles, and private school feasible.

Malls, multiplexes, and online retail taught a culture of display and credit.

Spending then pulled more services into the same cities.

Informal workers still stand outside that consuming public.

Introduction

Tier 2 cities grew as offices, colleges, hospitals, and logistics spread beyond the old metros. A **new middle class** formed there around salaries, English-medium schooling, and a culture that shows itself through consumption.

Body

How Tier 2 growth made a **new middle class**

- IT parks, banks, teaching hospitals, and retail chains in cities such as Pune's wider region, Jaipur, Indore, Coimbatore, Kochi, and Lucknow created white-collar jobs outside Mumbai, Delhi, Kolkata, and Chennai cores.
- Cheaper land than the metro core allowed apartments, two-wheelers, and then cars, which are the first assets of a consuming middle class.
- Private schools, coaching, and malls clustered on the same ring roads, so status was bought as education and branded goods, not only as a government post.
- Return migrants and students who could not afford metro rents brought metro tastes home, which thickened local demand.

Culture of consumption

- Malls, multiplexes, cafes, and online marketplaces teach a lifestyle of choice, display, and credit cards rather than of joint-family thrift alone.
- Weddings, phones, and packaged food become public proof of having arrived, which sociologists call a consuming **new middle class**.
- Caste and region do not vanish; they are performed through housing societies, clubs, and branded dress in the same cities.
- Media and influencer culture make consumption a daily language of respectability for this class.

The link, with a limit

- Tier 2 growth supplies the jobs and rents that let this class exist; the class's spending then pulls more retail, real estate, and services into those cities.
- A large informal workforce still serves the mall without entering the same consuming public, so the city's growth is dual, not a single middle-class story.

Flow diagram

Tier 2 jobs colleges -> New middle class
Cheaper housing -> New middle class
New middle class -> Malls brands credit
Malls brands credit -> More retail real estate
More retail real estate -> Tier 2 jobs colleges

Conclusion

- **Tier 2 cities and the new middle class grew together:** jobs and cheaper housing created buyers, and a culture of malls, schooling, and brands marked belonging. Consumption is the badge of that class, not the whole of the city's labour.

Facts & figures

Tier 2 examples

Indore, Jaipur, Coimbatore, Lucknow, Kochi, and similar cities that took offices and retail after liberalisation.

New middle class

Post-1991 salaried and professional households whose status is shown through consumption as well as occupation.

Private schooling and coaching

Urban education market that is a first big consumption good for this class.

Mall and multiplex

Built forms of leisure shopping that mark Tier 2 high streets and bypasses.

1991 reforms

Opening that spread private jobs, brands, and credit beyond a handful of colonial metros.

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