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Q4(b)

How is poverty a form of social exclusion? Illustrate in this connection the different dimensions of poverty and social exclusion

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2023 · Sociology GS 1 · 20 marks · Stratification and Mobility: Concepts

Stratification and Mobility: Concepts - equality, inequality, hierarchy, exclusion, poverty and deprivation; Theories of social stratification - Structural functionalist, Marxist, Weberian; Dimensions - Class, status groups, gender, ethnicity and race; Social mobility - open and closed systems, types, sources and causes.

Core demand of the question

- How is poverty a form of social exclusion? Illustrate in this connection the different dimensions of poverty and social exclusion
- Keep the illustration within a 20-mark length

Revision summary

Poverty is relative deprivation and capability failure, not only a low rupee line.

Social exclusion is the process of being shut out of work, services, and belonging.

The two interlock through caste, gender, informality, and space.

Indian illustrations include hamlet services, gig work without security, and discriminatory schooling.

Measurement must join consumption lines to multidimensional and relational indicators.

Introduction

Poverty is a lack of resources relative to what a society treats as a normal life. Social exclusion is the process that shuts people out of that life in work, rights, and belonging. Poverty is a form of exclusion because low income is both a cause and a result of being kept off the common stage.

Body

Poverty as exclusion

- **Peter Townsend treated poverty as relative deprivation:** people are poor when they cannot join the ordinary diets, customs, and activities of their society.
- **Amartya Sen treated poverty as capability failure:** not only low income, but the inability to be and do what one has reason to value.
- **Exclusion names the relational side:** stigma, discrimination, and closed networks that keep the poor outside labour markets, schools, and public space.
- Ruth Levitas and others in European debate listed exclusion from work, from services, and from social relations as linked processes.

Dimensions of poverty

- Income and consumption poverty, measured in India through expert lines such as **Tendulkar and Rangarajan**, and through the Socio-Economic Caste **Census** lists.
- **Multidimensional poverty**: health, schooling, and living standards, as in the Oxford and UNDP index used in **NITI Aayog** reports.
- Time poverty, especially for women who combine unpaid care with low-paid work.
- **Asset and insecurity poverty**: no buffer against illness, crop failure, or job loss.
- Spatial poverty of slum, dry village, and Adivasi hinterland, where services do not arrive.

Dimensions of social exclusion

- **Economic**: informal labour, unemployment, and denial of credit.
- **Political**: weak voice, distance from panchayat and party, and barriers to documents that unlock rights.
- **Social and cultural**: caste untouchability, tribal stigma, disability, and minority prejudice.
- **Spatial**: gated cities and segregated hamlets.
- **Legal**: lack of enforceable contracts and delayed justice.

Illustrations

- A Dalit hamlet without a water point is income-poor and excluded from the village commons at once.
- A gig worker with a phone but no social security is inside the market and outside the citizenship of labour law.
- **Amartya Sen**'s work on famine showed that food can exist while groups are excluded from entitlement.
- Schooling without dignity, as in reports of caste discrimination in midday meals, converts a service into an exclusionary site.

How the two join

- Poverty without exclusion would be a temporary lack with open re-entry. Exclusion without income poverty can still exist as stigma of a well-off minority. In mass experience they interlock.

Flow diagram

Poverty as resource lack -> Exclusion from ordinary life
 Exclusion from ordinary life -> Work services relations
 Caste gender space -> Exclusion from ordinary life
 Sen capabilities -> Poverty as resource lack
 Townsend relative deprivation -> Poverty as resource lack

Conclusion

Poverty is a form of social exclusion because it blocks participation in the ordinary life of a society, not only because a rupee count is low. Dimensions run through income, capabilities, time, space, caste, gender, and voice. **Townsend**, Sen, and Indian measurement debates all point to that relational fact.

Facts & figures

Townsend

Defined poverty as inability to participate in the customary life of a society.

Sen on capabilities

Poverty as failure of freedoms to be and do, not only as low income.

Tendulkar and Rangarajan

Official Indian expert groups on consumption poverty lines.

Socio-Economic Caste Census (SECC)

Socio-Economic Caste Census lists used to identify deprivation for targeting.

Multidimensional poverty

Health, education, and living-standard deprivations used in UNDP and NITI Aayog reporting.

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