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Q4(c)

Compare the pressing problems of a dalit poor family living in an urban slum with a similar type of family living in a rural setting

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2017 · Sociology GS 2 · 10 marks · Rural and Agrarian transformation in India

Rural and Agrarian transformation in India: Programmes of rural development, Community Development Programme, cooperatives, poverty alleviation schemes; Green revolution and social change; Changing modes of production in Indian agriculture; Problems of rural labour, bondage, migration.

Core demand of the question

- Compare the pressing problems of a Dalit poor family living in an urban slum with a similar type of family living in a rural setting
- Keep the note to a 10-mark length

Revision summary

Rural Dalit poverty is organised by landlessness, dominant caste, and open untouchability.

Urban slum poverty is organised by informal dirty work and weak housing tenure.

The city eases some ritual exclusion and adds **eviction** and rent.

Class exploitation is shared; caste assigns the worst tasks in both places.

Marriage and honour still follow the family across the rural-urban move.

Introduction

A poor Dalit family faces graded inequality in both village and slum. The village problem is land, bonded work, and open honour. The slum problem is rent, informal wage, and a quieter but still spatial caste. Comparison shows different cages, not a free city.

Body**Rural setting**

- Landlessness and dominant-caste farms organise labour, as Srinivas's Rampura still suggests for local power.
- Untouchability at well, temple, and school can be public. Atrocity is a rural weapon.
- Housing may be a segregated hamlet; the state is the sarpanch and the police station.

Urban slum

- **Work is construction, sanitation, leather, rag-picking, or domestic service:** caste occupation recoded as informal labour.
- Tenure is illegal or weak; **eviction** and lack of water and toilets hit women hardest.
- Anonymity can ease some pollution rules, yet landlords, neighbours, and marriage still ask jati.
- **Ambedkar saw the city as an exit. The slum is a partial exit:** wages without dignity of housing.

Shared pressing problems

- Credit, health costs, children's school dropout, and violence against women.
- **A. R. Desai's class eye:** both are surplus labour. Caste decides the dirtiest tasks.

Contrast

- **Rural:** honour and land. Urban: rent and the municipal state.
- Neither family has escaped endogamy as the family's future.

Flow diagram

Rural Dalit poor -> Landless honour atrocity
Urban slum Dalit poor -> Informal wage eviction
Caste labour -> Rural Dalit poor
Caste labour -> Urban slum Dalit poor

Conclusion

The rural Dalit poor family is trapped by agrarian dominance and open untouchability. The slum family is trapped by informal work and insecure shelter. City life thins some ritual insults and thickens market precarity. Both need land or tenure, and both need annihilation of caste in everyday institutions.

Facts & figures

Rampura insight

Local dominant caste still shapes rural Dalit labour even after legal abolition of untouchability.

Ambedkar on city

Urban life as a possible exit from village caste, only partly realised in slums.

Sanitation work

Caste occupation that follows Dalit families into municipal and informal urban labour.

Eviction

Slum clearance as an urban analogue of rural dispossession.

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