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Q1(d)

Write a note on the changing roles of middle-class women in India.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2018 · Sociology GS 2 · 10 marks · Social Classes in India

Social Classes in India: Agrarian class structure; Industrial class structure; Middle classes in India.

Core demand of the question

- Write a note on the changing roles of middle-class women in India
- Keep the note to a 10-mark length

Revision summary

Education and service jobs changed middle-class women's public roles.

1991 widened office and consumer identities.

Kinship still assigns care, honour, and endogamy.

Poorer women subsidise this change as **domestic labour**.

The new role is recombination, not the end of patriarchy.

Introduction

Middle-class women in India have moved from a secluded honour role toward education, paid work, and public speech. The change is real. It is also bounded by kinship, caste endogamy, and unpaid care, so the new role is often a double shift, not a revolution.

Body**What changed**

- Schooling, delayed marriage, and office or teaching jobs after the planned economy, then IT and services after 1991, put women in public work.
- **Consumer households need two incomes. Yogendra Singh's modernisation of tradition fits:** new roles beside arranged marriage.
- Legal rights in succession and the workplace give a language of claim.

What the role still carries

- **Leela Dube's Seed and Earth continues:** she is still the field of a line, responsible for children and in-laws.
- Honour and safety limit night work and city movement.
- Paid domestic workers, often poorer caste women, subsidise middle-class women's careers.

Class specificity

- This is not all Indian women. Agrarian and slum women always worked. The 'change' is a bourgeois public visibility.

Flow diagram

Education 1991 services -> Paid public role
Seed Earth honour -> Double shift
Paid public role -> Double shift
Domestic workers -> Paid public role

Conclusion

Middle-class women's roles have expanded into school, office, and media. Household patriarchy and caste marriage have not retired. The note is of recombination: a working citizen who is still a **kulavadhu** in many homes.

Facts & figures

1991 services boom

IT and corporate work that made the working middle-class woman a visible type.

Seed and Earth

Kinship ideology that keeps the career woman responsible for the line.

Kulavadhu

The good in-married woman against whom new roles are still judged.

Domestic labour

Class hinge that lets some women work by hiring other women.

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