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Q6(b)

Is 'ageing an emerging issue in Indian society ? Discuss the major problems of the old age people in India

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2021 · Sociology GS 2 · 20 marks · Religion and Society

Religion and Society: Religious communities in India; Problems of religious minorities.

Core demand of the question

- Is 'ageing' an emerging issue in Indian society? Discuss the major problems of the old age people in India
- Cover demography, family, and inequality

Revision summary

Ageing is emerging through **demographic transition** and smaller urban households.

Most elders lack formal pensions because work was informal.

Health costs, neglect and widow dispossession are core problems.

COVID made medical and social isolation visible.

Class and caste split the experience of old age.

Introduction

Yes, ageing is an emerging issue in Indian society. Fertility has fallen, longevity has risen, and the old are more numerous in a country whose public imagination is still youthful. The issue is not only numbers. It is how family, class, and the state treat the old.

Body

Why it is emerging

- **Demographic transition is uneven:** Kerala and urban middle classes already live with a large elderly share; parts of the Hindi belt will follow.
- The joint family as co-residence is thinning in cities, as Karve's household forms meet migration and flats.
- COVID showed older bodies as medically vulnerable and socially isolable, which made ageing a public fact, not only a private duty.

Major problems

- **Income:** most Indians age without a pension. Informal workers, including returned migrants, have no second wage.
- **Health:** chronic illness, costly private care, and thin rural geriatrics turn longevity into a debt.
- **Loneliness and neglect:** nuclear urban households and younger circular migration leave elders as a leftover village.
- **Gender:** widows face property denial under Seed and Earth logics even when succession law has moved.

- **Ageism and digital exclusion:** banking, welfare, and phones assume a young user.
- **Class split:** a new-middle-class elder in a gated society and a landless Dalit elder do not share one old age.

Family and state

- Indian policy still leans on the family as the welfare state, a modernization of tradition that can become abandonment when the family is poor.
- Maintenance laws exist; shame and delay blunt them.
- Old-age homes are expanding as a market, which is differentiation of care, not always dignity.

Caste and region

- Honour may keep an elder in the house as a status object while denying autonomy.
- Adivasi and slum elders face the same exclusion sites as their juniors, plus immobility.

Flow diagram

Lower fertility longer life -> Ageing as issue
Thinner co-residence -> Income health neglect
Informal no pension -> Income health neglect
Gender widowhood -> Income health neglect

Conclusion

Ageing is emerging because demography and family change have outpaced pensions and care. The major problems are income, health, neglect, gendered **widowhood**, and a class-caste split in who grows old with rights.

Facts & figures

Demographic transition

Falling fertility and rising longevity that enlarge the elderly share.

Informal workforce

The reason old-age income security is thin for the majority.

Maintenance law

Legal claim on children that is hard to use without family rupture.

Widowhood

A gendered ageing crisis tied to property and honour, not only to years.