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Q5(c)

Urban slums are sites of social exclusion - explain

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2021 · Sociology GS 2 · 10 marks · Industrialization and Urbanisation in India

Industrialization and Urbanisation in India: Evolution of modern industry in India; Growth of urban settlements in India; Working class: structure, growth, class mobilization; Informal sector, child labour; Slums and deprivation in urban areas.

Core demand of the question

- Urban slums are sites of social exclusion - explain
- Keep the note to a 10-mark length

Revision summary

Slums house the city's labour without full urban citizenship.

Insecure tenure and missing services are material exclusion.

Caste, gender and minority status sort slum space.

COVID exposed how disposable slum workers were.

Organisation and votes exist; exclusion is still the structure.

Introduction

An urban slum is not only a shortage of brick. It is a settlement where the city uses labour and withholds citizenship. Social exclusion is that double movement.

Body**How exclusion works**

- **Tenure insecurity**, absent toilets, and cut-off water mark residents as less than planned citizens.
- Informal work, including the labour that built the formal city, keeps households in a camp economy, as **COVID reverse migration** showed.
- Caste, region, and minority status sort who lives in which pocket; the slum often replicates rural rank, not a melting pot.

What 'site' means

- Schools and clinics may be near and still treat slum children as a residual population.
- Women face crowding, unsafe toilets, and care burdens that Dube's household gender lens would not miss.
- **Beteille's disharmonic city**: equality on paper, ranked space in the ward map.

Explain, do not romanticise

- Slums are also sites of organisation and vote. Exclusion is not the same as silence.

Flow diagram

Slum -> Cheap informal labour
Slum -> Denied tenure services honour
Caste region gender -> Denied tenure services honour
Denied tenure services honour -> Social exclusion

Conclusion

Urban slums are sites of social exclusion because the city extracts cheap labour while denying secure housing, services, and honour. The exclusion is spatial, occupational, and often caste-coded.

Facts & figures

Informal labour

The economic link that makes slums functional for the planned city.

Tenure insecurity

Threat of eviction that keeps residents politically and socially precarious.

COVID reverse migration

Showed slum and migrant camps as exclusion zones when work stopped.

Caste in the city

Sanitation work and segregated pockets continue ranked exclusion in slums.

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