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Q5(c)

How do you view the growth of informal sector in india ?

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2022 · 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

- How do you view the growth of informal sector in India?
- Keep the note to a 10-mark length

Revision summary

Informal work is India's main employment form, not a side alley.

Migration and liberalisation expanded construction, street trade and home work.

COVID reverse flows exposed the absence of security.

Class, caste and gender sort who is informal.

Growth here is accumulation plus survival, not guaranteed decent work.

Introduction

The informal sector's growth is the main story of Indian work, not a waiting room before factories. It absorbs labour without absorbing rights.

Body

What grew

- Street trade, construction, home-based work, domestic service, and unregistered workshops expanded with liberalisation and urban demand.
- Agrarian change and **circular migration** feed this sector. **COVID reverse migration** showed how thin the safety net is.
- Women and Dalit-Adivasi workers are over-represented in the cheapest nodes.

How to view it

- **A. R. Desai's** political economy would treat informality as cheap labour for accumulation, not as entrepreneurial freedom alone.
- **It is also livelihood:** millions survive without being a classic industrial working class.
- **SECC** and labour counts show deprivation beside this growth, so expansion is not automatically inclusion.

Policy tension

- Formalisation without social security can destroy livelihood. Security without voice repeats patronage.

Flow diagram

Agrarian surplus migration -> Informal sector growth
Urban capital demand -> Informal sector growth
Informal sector growth -> Work without rights
Informal sector growth -> Survival livelihood

Conclusion

- **The informal sector's growth is structural:** it is how Indian capitalism employs people. View it as a labour regime of flexibility and insecurity, linked to agrarian surplus labour, not as a temporary lag.

Facts & figures

Circular migration

Workers move between village and informal urban jobs as a single livelihood system.

COVID reverse migration

Mass return showed informal jobs as instantly disposable.

Socio-Economic Caste Census (SECC)

Rural deprivation data that pairs with informal urban work, not with a full proletariat.

A. R. Desai

Frame of class and accumulation against a purely 'self-employed India' romance.