

WRAP Exams · wrapexams.com

Prelims PYQ, Mains model answers, and copy evaluation. Write to the desk for this paper, a doubt, or the AI waitlist.

ask@wrapexams.com · +91 85951 84903 · wrapexams.com

Q1(b)

Discuss the changes taking place in the industrial class structure in India.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2024 · 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

- Describe the older industrial working class and what has changed
- Cover informalisation, contract labour, services and IT, caste-gender composition, and decline of mills and unions
- Use Desai, **Holmström**, and post-1991 labour studies
- Keep it as class structure, not a list of industries

Revision summary

The older industrial class was a minority organised mill and PSU workforce.

Mills declined; contract labour, circular migration and job work expanded.

Services and IT added a salariat above a large informal industrial and logistics workforce.

Caste and gender still sort who enters secure versus hazardous work.

Unions lost the mill colony world and have only partly regrouped.

Introduction

India's industrial class was never a simple copy of the European proletariat. **A. R. Desai** placed it inside a colonial and then mixed-economy structure. **Mark Holmström** described the organised factory worker as a minority beside a vast unorganised mass. Since the 1980s, and sharply after 1991, that structure has shifted toward **contract, services, and self-employment** while a small formal core remains.

Body**From mill colony to fragmented labour**

- **The classic picture was the textile mill, steel town, and public-sector township:** relatively stable male employment, union density, housing colonies, and a visible working-class culture in Bombay, Kanpur, Jamshedpur and Ahmedabad. Deindustrialisation of mills, lockouts, and the rise of **powerlooms and job work** broke that colony. **Jan Breman's** circular migrants and footloose labour show the replacement type: rural-urban sojourners without a lifetime factory identity.

The organised sector's share of employment stayed small. What changed is the **internal composition of even registered factories:** a thin regular roll and a thick contract, trainee and apprentice belt. Labour codes and earlier Contract Labour regulation did not stop this dualism. Trade unions lost density where plants casualised. New unions appear in autos, platforms and public schemes, but they rarely match the old mill's bargaining world.

Services, IT and a split middle

Industry in the national accounts now sits beside a large **services** share. A software and BPO salariat, retail chains, and logistics parks create white-collar and grey-collar layers that older class maps called petty bourgeoisie or new middle class (**Satish Deshpande, Pavan Varma** in public debate; sociologists stress its caste and English advantages). Below them, warehouse pickers, delivery riders, and sanitation and construction crews expand an **informal working class** linked to industry without factory status.

Caste and gender structure the split. Dalit and Adivasi workers remain over-represented in hazardous and 'polluting' industrial niches. Women entered garments, electronics assembly and home-based piecework more than they entered the old heavy-industry core. The 'industrial class' is therefore not one consciousness. It is a **hierarchy of security**.

What the structure now looks like

- **One can sketch four layers:** a small **managerial-technical** stratum; a shrinking **regular industrial worker**; a large **contract and informal industrial workforce**; and an **own-account** mass in workshops and platforms. Linkages run through putting-out, brand value chains, and labour contractors. **Holmström's** 'citadel and the rest' is still a usable image, except the citadel is smaller and the rest is wired to global production.

The political effect is weaker class-for-itself action and stronger **populist, caste and regional** claims, which is why industrial class change is also a change in Indian democracy's social base.

Flow diagram

Old mill and PSU core -> Thin formal citadel
Old mill and PSU core -> Contract informal mass
Services IT logistics -> Thin formal citadel
Services IT logistics -> Contract informal mass

Conclusion

Industrial class structure in India has moved from a mill-centred organised core to a dual system of a small formal citadel and a vast contract-informal mass, now extended into services and platforms. Caste and gender sort people across those layers. The old working class has not vanished; it has been reorganised.

Facts & figures

Holmström

Industry in India as a small organised citadel surrounded by unorganised labour.

Breman

Footloose and circular labour as the typical industrial worker after mill decline.

1991 reforms

Accelerated flexibility, value chains and service growth that recast class composition.

WRAP Exams · Write. Read. Analyse. Practice. · <https://wrapexams.com/upsc/mains-answers/sociology-gs-2/2024/discuss-the-changes-taking-place-in-the-industrial-class-structure-in-india/> · ask@wrapexams.com · wrapexams.com

WRAP Exams