

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

Q8(b)

Identify different forms of inequalities associated with agrarian social structure in India

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2024 · Sociology GS 2 · 20 marks · Social Classes in India

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

Core demand of the question

- **Identify forms of inequality in agrarian social structure:** class, caste, gender, region, and tenancy
- Use **Thorner**, **Béteille**, Dhanagare, Desai
- **Give Indian illustrations:** landless labour, tenancy, Green Revolution winners, women without title

Revision summary

Agrarian structure organises land, labour, caste and household.

Class forms include owners, tenants, landless and new reverse tenancy.

Caste maps onto field labour and honour in the village.

Women's farm work without title is a central inequality.

Region and ecology split irrigated surplus growers from dryland and forest poor.

Introduction

Agrarian social structure is the organised pattern of **land, labour, caste and household** in the countryside. Inequality here is not one gap. It is several forms that overlap. **Daniel Thorner's** malik, kisan and mazdoor, **Béteille's** owners-tenants-labourers, and **Dhanagare's** peasant strata give a class language. Caste and gender decide who sits in each class.

Body

Class forms

- **Ownership inequality:** large holders, medium cultivating owners, petty owners, tenants, and landless labourers. **A. R. Desai** stressed landlord and peasant class conflict under colonialism and after. Tenancy and sharecropping shift surplus without always shifting title. Reverse tenancy in machine-owning belts is a new class twist: small owners lease out to capitalist farmers. Attached and migrant labour (**Breman**) is unfreedom as well as poverty. Green Revolution and later horticulture markets widened the gap between surplus growers in Punjab-Haryana-coastal Andhra and dryland smallholders.

Caste and status forms

- **Land maps onto jati in many regions:** dominant cultivating castes versus Dalit labour. **Béteille** showed the map is not perfect, which is why analysis needs both dimensions. Untouchability in fields, separate hamlets, and exclusion from well and temple are agrarian inequalities, not extras. OBC assertion and land reform leftovers produced new dominant groups

without equality for the landless.

Gender, generation and region

Women work in fields and lack titles; widows and daughters lose land in practice despite the 2005 succession amendment. Girls' unpaid farm work subsidises male status. Regional inequality-irrigated versus rainfed, hill versus plain, Adivasi forest versus caste village-is agrarian too. Policy (ceilings, tenancy law, MNREGA, PM-KISAN) redistributes unevenly: title-based transfers miss the landless woman.

- **Forms, listed: property class, tenancy, labour unfreedom, caste rank, gendered landlessness, and regional-ecological inequality.** They stack. A Dalit landless woman migrant is not three separate case studies. She is the structure at its intersection.

Credit, irrigation and markets are further forms. A household with a tube well and KCC sits in a different class from one that buys water. MSP-linked grain belts differ from cash-crop distress belts. Contract farming can look like opportunity and still transfer risk downward. These are agrarian inequalities even when the caste names stay the same.

The 2020-21 farmers' movement showed cultivator inequality vis-à-vis the state and corporates; it did not erase these internal forms.

Flow diagram

Land rights -> Class inequality
Tenancy and labour -> Class inequality
Caste rank -> Agrarian inequality
Gendered title -> Agrarian inequality
Class inequality -> Agrarian inequality

Conclusion

Agrarian inequality in India takes the forms of class (land, tenancy, labour), caste rank, gendered exclusion from title, and regional-ecological gaps. **Thorner** and **Béteille** still name the class skeleton. Caste and gender put flesh on who occupies each bone.

Facts & figures

Thorner

Malik, kisan, mazdoor as a simple class sketch of rural India.

Béteille

Agrarian class on land property, interacting with caste and power.

Hindu Succession 2005

Legal coparcenary for daughters; practice of gendered landlessness continues.