Q5(b)

Bring out various factors responsible for declining of village Industries in India.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2025 · Sociology GS 2 · 10 marks · Perspectives on the study of Indian society

Perspectives on the study of Indian society: Indology (G.S. Ghurye); Structural functionalism (M.N. Srinivas); Marxist sociology (A.R. Desai).

Core demand of the question

- **List structural factors in the decline of village industries:** colonial deindustrialisation, raw material, credit, power, skills, market, caste occupation
- **Bring the story to the present:** GST, cheap factory goods, migration, NEP skills, KVIC limits
- **Stay sociological:** livelihood and jati, not only a policy list

Revision summary

Village industries declined through colonial competition, forest enclosure and the collapse of patronage.

Post-independence mill goods, power-looms and plastics continued the squeeze.

Credit, GST, and migration now pull youth out of hereditary crafts.

Some clusters brand and survive; most artisan households enter informal labour.

The process reorders caste occupations, not only GDP shares.

Introduction

Village industries-handloom, pottery, oil-press, carpentry, leather, smithy-were never a romantic extra. They were a **caste-organised division of labour** tied to the agrarian surplus. Their decline is a long process with colonial roots and contemporary accelerators.

Body

Long decline

Colonial **free trade and mills** undercut weavers and many urban-rural crafts (the deindustrialisation debate). Forest law cut artisan access to wood, bamboo and lac. **Moneylenders** replaced patronage. After Independence, **KVIC, handloom boards and reservations** slowed but did not reverse the fall. Factory soap, plastic and mill cloth are cheaper than the village product. **Power-looms** ate handlooms; Chinese and Tiruppur goods ate residual niches.

Present factors

Credit is scarce without collateral; **GST and compliance** hurt tiny units. Youth **migrate** to construction and delivery rather than inherit a stigmatised craft. **Raw materials** are commercialised. Skills are not aligned with NEP 2020's promise unless local clusters (Moradabad brass, Kannauj attar, Khurja pottery) capture a brand. **Jajmani** collapse means the potter is not paid in grain by the dominant caste; he needs a cash market that the village no longer is.

Electricity, roads and mobile money did not automatically revive the workshop. They often made **urban factory goods cheaper to fetch**. Cooperative and SHG credit under NRLM helps some women weavers and food processors; it rarely rebuilds a whole jati occupation. Leather and sanitation-linked crafts still carry **pollution stigma**, so "skill India" without anti-caste dignity is a half measure.

Sociologically, decline is **occupational mobility mixed with distress**. Some artisan castes sanskritize or enter government jobs; many become footloose labour (**Breman**). Women home-based workers remain invisible in the informal sector. Village industry decline is thus a chapter in **class formation and caste re-ranking**, not only a missing subsidy.

Flow diagram

Colonial mills and forests -> Craft decline

Cheap factory goods -> Craft decline

Youth migration -> Craft decline

Craft decline -> Informal labour

Craft decline -> Surviving clusters

Conclusion

Village industries fell because cheaper manufactures, lost commons, thin credit, and out-migration destroyed their market and labour. Caste crafts became either branded clusters or residual poverty.

Facts & figures

KVIC

Khadi and Village Industries Commission; promotional body that could not halt structural decline.

Power-loom

Mechanised weaving that displaced much handloom employment while remaining semi-informal.

Jajmani

Older village service ties whose cash-and-market breakdown left artisans without assured demand.