



Mains Practice Question

Q. COVID-19 pandemic accelerated class inequalities and poverty in India. Comment. (UPSC GS-1 Mains 2020)

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Approach

- Start the answer by briefly discussing the present status of inequalities and widespread poverty in India.
- Discuss the impact of the pandemic on class inequalities & poverty.
- Conclude suitably.

Introduction

Inequality was alarmingly high and destabilizing social and political order in much of the world even before the pandemic struck. According to Oxfam report 2019, In India the top 1% hold 51.53% of the national wealth, while the remaining 99% make do with almost 48%.

However, the Inequality Virus Report, released by Oxfam International, has found that the Covid-19 pandemic deeply increased the existing inequalities in India and around the world.

Body

Impact of the Pandemic on Class Inequalities & Poverty

- India introduced one of the earliest and most stringent lockdowns in the face of the pandemic and its enforcement brought the economy to a standstill, triggering unemployment, hunger, distress migration, and untold hardship.
- The rich were able to escape the pandemic's worst impact; and while the white-collar workers isolated themselves and worked from home. However, a majority of the not-so-fortunate Indians (migrant workers) lost their livelihood.
 - India's large informal workforce was the worst hit as it made up 75% of the 122 million jobs lost.
- The unemployment rate among women rose from an already high 15% before Covid to 18%.
- Beyond income and job losses, poorer women also suffered healthwise because of the disruption in regular health services and Anganwadi centers.
- A new study from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has found that an additional 207 million people could be pushed into extreme poverty by 2030 due to the severe long-term impact of the coronavirus pandemic, bringing the total number of the world's extremely poor to more than a billion.

Conclusion

In order to combat the ill effects of Covid-19, the government has launched PM Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana and Atma-Nirbhar Bharat Abhiyan. However, undoing the impacts of Covid-19 will certainly not be a short-

term process.

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