



Mains Practice Question

Q. Do you agree that the process of urbanisation if carried out in a planned, sustainable and inclusive manner, can potentially help India mitigate the impact of all-pervasive casteism? (250 words)

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Approach

- Introduce by mentioning about casteism in general and how urbanization impacts Indian society.
- Mention the factors that indicate that urbanization helps mitigate casteism.
- Mention the limitations of above assertion.
- Conclude by mentioning the need of social aspects in urban policy formulation.

Introduction

Casteism is one of the biggest challenges that Indian society continues to face. However, urbanization is playing a role in social transformation by modifying human institutions and diluting caste-based identities. The 'relative anonymity' of an individual's identity in a city makes it difficult for 'rules of purity and pollution' to be observed and enforced in the public sphere.

Body

Factors that reflect that urbanization helps mitigate casteism in India:

- **Compulsion of urban living:** In a city, buses and trains do not segregate people on the basis of caste. Carpooling, dining in restaurants, sharing public parks, educational institutions, etc also eliminates the factor of caste and religion in the urban way of life.
- **Role of education:** Modern-day education also promotes liberal values which undermine identity-based segregation of students and professionals.
- **Individualistic society:** The hold of belongingness to a community is relatively weak in the urban landscape. People in the middle-class shift from family and caste networks to friends and professional networks.
- **Occupation:** Jobs are distributed on the basis of expertise and ability and not decided by caste. They freely allow the abandonment of traditional caste-based occupations and urban workplaces mix up castes.
- **Role of technology:** Machines replace a lot of human labour hence diminishing the sense of purity and pollution. For example, waste collection through machines eliminates the loss of dignity faced by manual scavengers.
 - Social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, etc help intermingling of thoughts and cultures which allows people to understand the lacunae of the hierarchical division of Indian society.

However, there are certain factors that highlight the limitations of the assertion that urbanization could mitigate casteism.

- **Deep-rooted prejudices:** Rural to urban migration does not abruptly erase social prejudices of

caste. Even educated urban dwellers discriminate people based on caste and ethnic identities. For eg: separate utensils are used to provide water to lower caste domestic helpers.

- **Failure of policy implementation:** The Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and Their Rehabilitation Act, 2013 bans the practice of manual scavenging. Though outlawed, the appalling practice continues to be exclusively reserved for Dalits. National Commission for Safai Karamcharis (NCSK) data reveals that at least 50 people have died cleaning sewers in the first six months of 2019 alone.
- **Role of identity-based politics:** Vote bank politics diverge societies based on caste and ethnic lines, though to a limited extent in urban areas.

Conclusion

Thus, urbanization can act as a revolutionary phenomenon in transforming social realities of Indian society. However, The change in age-old prejudices cannot be brought only by one phenomenon, it takes into account other factors like education, awareness, empathy for all the sections of the society, implementation of constitutional spirit, which largely depend on the people who form a society.

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