Society & Social Justice · GS - II

Women's social capital complements in advancing empowerment and gender equity. Explain.

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
2025	GS - II	Society & Social Justice

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
10	~150 words

Answer Hint

Social networks, trust, solidarity, SHGs, collective agency, information, financial inclusion, political participation, mobility, gender norms, intersectionality

Model Answer

Introduction

Women's social capital refers to networks, trust, reciprocity and collective relationships through which women access information, resources and opportunities. It complements economic and legal empowerment by strengthening collective agency.

1. Pathways of empowerment

Women's networks facilitate access to credit, markets, employment information, healthcare and government schemes. Self-Help Groups such as those promoted under NRLM convert individual women into collective economic actors.

Social capital also strengthens voice. Collective platforms enable women to participate in Gram Sabhas, local governance and community decision-making, thereby challenging restrictive gender norms.

Peer networks can improve mobility and access to reproductive healthcare. World Bank evidence from South Asia indicates that women's groups can improve social capital and civic inclusion.

2. Gender equity

Collective organisation creates bargaining power within households and communities. Organisations such as SEWA demonstrate how economic cooperation can be combined with rights advocacy.

However, social networks can also reproduce patriarchy if dominated by restrictive norms. Therefore, inclusive and rights-oriented networks are essential.

Conclusion

Women's social capital converts individual capabilities into collective power. Strengthening SHGs, cooperatives, digital networks and women's leadership can therefore complement education, employment and legal reforms in achieving substantive gender equality.

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