Society & Social Justice · GS - I

Does urbanization lead to more segregation and/or marginalization of the poor in Indian metropolises?

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
2023	GS - I	Society & Social Justice

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
15	~250 words

Answer Hint

Examine how land prices, informal employment, inadequate affordable housing and unequal infrastructure push the poor towards peripheral or informal settlements; discuss spatial, economic and social exclusion; also recognise urbanisation's potential for mobility and access to opportunities; suggest inclusive planning, affordable housing and basic services.

Model Answer

Introduction

Urbanisation creates opportunities for employment, education, healthcare and social mobility. However, in Indian metropolises, the poor often experience **spatial segregation and social marginalisation** because access to urban land, housing and services is highly unequal.

Body

How Urbanisation Can Produce Segregation

High land prices:

Rising land values in metropolitan cores make formal housing unaffordable for low-income households, pushing them towards slums, informal settlements and peripheral areas.

Informal employment:

A large proportion of urban workers depend on informal employment. Their uncertain incomes make access to

formal housing and social security difficult.

Peripheralisation:
Low-income communities may be relocated to peripheral areas where housing is cheaper but employment centres are distant, increasing commuting costs and reducing access to services.

Infrastructure inequality:
Informal settlements may lack adequate sanitation, clean water, healthcare, schools and waste-management facilities.

Social exclusion:
Caste, migrant status, gender and occupation can intersect with poverty, producing social as well as spatial exclusion.

But Urbanisation Can Also Enable Mobility

Urban areas provide opportunities unavailable in many rural regions. Migrants may gain access to employment, education, healthcare, markets and social networks. Informal settlements can also function as entry points into the urban economy.

Thus, **urbanisation itself is not necessarily exclusionary; exclusion is often a consequence of unequal urban planning and resource distribution**.

Way Forward

Inclusive metropolitan development requires:

Affordable housing: Expansion of rental housing and affordable housing near employment centres.

Basic services: Universal access to water, sanitation, healthcare, education and electricity.

Integrated planning: Avoiding segregation through mixed-income neighbourhoods and better public transport.

Livelihood protection: Recognition of street vendors and informal workers within urban planning.

Participatory governance: Involving slum residents and migrant communities in redevelopment decisions.

Conclusion

Indian urbanisation can deepen segregation when market forces operate without adequate social planning. The objective should therefore be to create **inclusive cities where location, income or social identity does not determine access to basic services and economic opportunities**.

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