



Question 1. Contemporary India have witnessed a significant evolution in roles of middle-class women. Discuss. (10 Marks)

Scholars like BB Mishra define middle class as inspired by modern values of rational education and driven by consumerist and non-traditional lifestyles altering traditional roles of women mainly centred around household chores.

Evolution in roles of middle class women

- Inclusion in paid market - As per Ruth Dentas' social integrationist framework, labour market has become more inclusive and welcoming for middle class educated women.
- Political Participation - Current Parliament comprises of almost 13% women leaders, showcasing increased voicing of opinions by women and hence breaking patriarchal political structures of Sylvia Walby.
- Social Movements - Urban Middle class women have been torchbearers of social movements concerning women's safety, agency and greater autonomy.



For ex- "Ujra Tod" movement criticizing strict hostel timings for women, limiting their autonomy.

- changing family dynamics - Due to nuclearisation and rise of neo-local families, there is an increase in role of "caring fathers" in spite of being merely instrumental as per Parson's framework. This has enabled sharing of care work at home.

### Critical analysis

↳ However, still unpaid care work remains primary responsibility of women, as seen from Time use survey where women spend almost 7 times more time on household work as compared to men.

↳ Also, the friction between traditional roles and evolving roles deteriorates their work-life balance.

Hence, in spite of significant evolution in patriarchal roles of women, still middle class women face barriers of limited choices constrained by role expectations.



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Question 2. Indian religions are said to spread patriarchy? Critically analyse. (10 Marks)

For Simone De Beauvoir, It is the women who does most of religious tasks and still almost all religions ascribe a "subordinate position" to women.

Relation between Indian religions and patriarchy

• Policing female sexuality - For Uma Chakravarti, religious texts like manusmriti lay emphasis on "chastity" of women building a ground for male kinsmen to police female sexuality.

• limited public participation - Several religious texts ascribe 'household roles' to women making them a moral obligation. This hinders role of women outside domestic boundaries. For MN Srinivas, lack of social participation leads to devaluation of women's work at home.

• Gendering caste - As per Uma Chakravarti, endogamous units of caste based upon 'religious purity' burdens women with maintain caste and religious structures, subscribing to Brahmanical patriarchy.



- Dignity of women - Mostly Indian religions, link women's honour to their bodies, which ultimately becomes the "family honour".

According to Arundhati Menon, this leads to seeing rape as an offence against family's honour and not women's dignity leading to victim blaming and patriarchal solutions like marrying the perpetrator.

### Critical analysis

- However, religions are not inherently patriarchal, as seen from celebrating Shakti cult witnessed during festivals like Durga Puja.
- Existence of female goddesses since the vedic times and even in present day cults, presence of female gurus highlight space for women.

Hence, although religions are not inherently patriarchal, still the normalized social norms have disrupted the essence of religions.



Question 3. In manifest practice of untouchability is checked, but in latent terms, it still exists. Discuss. (10 Marks)

untouchability refers to caste-based relations of humiliation, subordination, social distance and exploitation with the ones considered as "impure" and in "purity and pollution dichotomy".

### Forms of untouchability

◦ manifest - Due to constitutional safeguards (Article-17) and acts like Protection of Civil Rights (PCR), manifest cases of violence and non-access to public amenities are kept under check.

But, in spite of formal ban, almost 57,000 cases of violence were registered by lower castes as per NCRB data.

◦ Latent - Attitudes of people have not changed towards untouchables. As per Dumont, underlying ideological biases keep getting reflected in latent forms like :-

⇒ Almost 44% of respondents accepted using separate utensils for Palits as per social attitudes survey.



↳ only 5.8% marriages are inter-caste (2011 Census) reflecting strict enforcement of endogamy and continuance of caste hierarchies.

↳ caste gaze, subtle forms of name calling, asking surnames can be considered exclusionary as per Christine.

Bradley's framework.

↳ since commensality is a defining feature of castes, as per Churye, segregation with untouchable kids has been observed during mid-day meals.

↳ workplace discrimination has forced untouchables to hide their identities as per Equality Lab's report, where 33% respondents admitted concealing their identities.

Hence, inspite of legal safeguards, true empowerment comes through, "annihilation of caste" (Ambedkar) by promoting social mobility through education and inter-caste marriages.



Question 4. Marriage in India is increasingly seen as a personal choice rather than a social obligation. Critically examine this transformation. (10 Marks)

with increasing influence of urbanization and modern education, marriage has been transforming from being considered as a "sacrament" to "contract".

### Transformation of marriage

- Rising individualism - As per Ghurye, erosion of traditional family values has resulted in more individual autonomy for making marriage choices.
- Decline of caste system - As per Beitelle, rise of new occupations has led to weakening of caste ties and hence marriage is no longer dictated by rules of endogamy always.
- New forms of marriages - live-in relationships and same-sex marriages are altering the traditional understanding of marriage as an obligation to procreate and add new members to society.



• Economic compulsions - Rising costs of living have led to "DINK" (dual income, no kids) families challenging the necessary function of marriage of child-bearing.

• Increased agency of middle class woman has led to consideration of their personal choices as well, making marriage more about companionship and compatibility.

### Critical analysis

↳ However, only 5.8% inter-caste marriages, re-affirm idea of endogamy as per Uma Chakravarti

↳ Stigma (Erving Goffman) attached with live-in relations or same-sex marriages still persists questioning social acceptance of marriage.

Hence, inspite of rising individual agency, marriage is still seen as 'social obligation' necessary for integrating the society.



Question 5. In the age of individualism and digital connectivity, does the idea of a joint family still hold sociological relevance in India? (20 Marks)

As per Dravasti Karne, joint families traditionally have been defined by at least three generations living together with common residence, common kitchen and commensality.

### Relevance of Joint Family (JF)

• Household dimension (AM Shah) - Due to individualism, increased nuclearisation is seen in practice, however, as per Shah, families are still joint in operation.

For ex - Performing ritual obligations like "shraad" together.

• Functional obligations - As per IP Desai's study of mahua in Gujarat, he identified "degrees of jointness", where majority of traditional joint families have disappeared.

However, functional obligations like financial support and emotional connections bind people.



together.

- Common ownership of property as per Kapadia has preserved the jointness in decision-making and inheritance matters.

- Digital connectivity - As per Calin Bell, modern means of transportation and Internet connectivity has helped people to stay connected with their families.

Forex - face-time and video calls being a sense of personal interactions.

### Waning relevance of joint families

- Increased focus upon career - Due to rise of education, there has been migration of children leaving parents behind, called as 'empty nest syndrome' and creating loneliness among elderly.

- Neo-local residence - Due to urban employment, families become increasingly nuclear over



patrilocal / matrilocal residence, hence "cut-off" from joint lifestyle.

For ex - children are devoid of any quality time with their grandparents.

o. Money order Economy - Families living separated but supporting each other through remittances.

Hence, due to changing societal context and growing individualism, there is a shift in traditional joint structures, which is also because of economic necessity. However, still newer forms of connections reinforce social cohesion between families.