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Q3(b)

Differentiate between Maxian and Weberian theories of Social stratification.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2015 · Sociology GS 1 · 15 marks · Stratification and Mobility: Concepts

Stratification and Mobility: Concepts - equality, inequality, hierarchy, exclusion, poverty and deprivation; Theories of social stratification - Structural functionalist, Marxist, Weberian; Dimensions - Class, status groups, gender, ethnicity and race; Social mobility - open and closed systems, types, sources and causes.

Core demand of the question

- Differentiate between Maxian and Weberian theories of Social stratification
- Keep the differentiation within a 15-mark length

Revision summary

- **Marx:** stratification is class relation to the means of production and surplus.
- **Weber:** class, status, and party are distinct orders that combine.

Marx centres exploitation and historical modes; **Weber** centres market chance, honour, and organisation.

Caste in India is labour control and status closure at once.

Neither accepts a simple functional ladder of talent.

Introduction

Karl Marx and **Max Weber** both rejected a simple ladder of rich and poor. They differ on the number of axes, the engine of inequality, and the politics that follow. Stratification for **Marx** is class in a mode of production. For **Weber** it is class, status, and party.

Body

Marx: class as relation to production

- Class is defined by ownership of the means of production. In capitalism, bourgeoisie and proletariat are the polar types, with intermediate fragments.
- Exploitation of **surplus value** is the engine. Ideology and the state organise that relation.
- Stratification is historically specific to the mode. Caste and estate are to be read through production and extra-economic coercion, not as eternal ranks.
- Politics aims at class-for-itself and transformation of the mode.

Weber: class, status, party

- **Class situation is market chance:** property, skills, and goods. It is not only two camps.
- Status is social honour, style of life, and restricted interaction, including caste-like closure.
- **Party** is organised power in associations and the state.
- Legitimate domination and bureaucracy cut across class. A clerk and a worker may share a class fragment and differ in honour.

Differentiation

- **Number of dimensions:** Marx centres one contradiction; Weber insists on three that can combine.
- **Consciousness:** Marx expects class interest to become political. Weber treats status groups and parties as relatively autonomous.
- **Religion:** Marx reads it as ideology. Weber reads inner-worldly ethics as historically causal, as in the Protestant ethic.
- **Indian use:** caste as status closure (Weber) versus caste as a form of labour control and extra-economic coercion (Marxist readings). Both are needed.

Shared ground

- Both reject a purely individual talent story such as a naive Davis-Moore functionalism.
- Both see conflict. Marx makes it the motor of history; Weber makes it a normal plurality of orders.

Flow diagram

Marx -> Class in production
Weber -> Class market
Weber -> Status honour
Weber -> Party power

Conclusion

Marx explains stratification as class exploitation inside a mode of production. Weber explains it as intersecting class, status, and party. Use Marx for surplus and historical type; use Weber for honour, market chances, and organised power.

Facts & figures

Surplus value

Marx's account of exploitation in the wage relation under capitalism.

Class situation

Weber: typical market chance for goods, services, and income.

Status group

Weber: community of honour with restrictions on interaction and marriage.

Party

Weber: associative action aimed at power, including in the state.