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Q8(b)

Examine the dialectical relation between tradition and modernity in the study of social change.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2015 · Sociology GS 1 · 15 marks · Sociology

Sociology - The Discipline: Modernity and social changes in Europe and emergence of sociology; Scope of the subject and comparison with other social sciences; Sociology and common sense.

Core demand of the question

- Examine the dialectical relation between tradition and modernity in the study of social change
- Keep the examination within a 15-mark length

Revision summary

- **Dialectic:** each term works inside the other, not a one-way replacement.

Marx, Weber, and Parsons's critics reject a simple ascription-to-achievement line.

Invented tradition, Sanskritisation, and caste-in-democracy show the mix.

Unpaid care plus modern jobs is a gendered dialectic.

- **Method:** ask new functions of old forms, and old networks inside new firms.

Introduction

A dialectic means each term works inside the other, not a one-way replacement. Tradition and modernity in social change are not two boxes, one emptying into the next. Modern institutions remake custom; custom selects and resists what counts as modern.

Body

Against a straight line

- Early modernisation theory, and a reading of Talcott Parsons's **pattern variables**, pictured achievement replacing ascription.
- **Karl Marx** already showed that capitalism revolutionises, yet uses older extra-economic forms when useful.
- **Max Weber**'s traditional, charismatic, and legal-rational types mix in one staff.

How the dialectic works

- Tradition supplies meaning and honour that modern markets still need, as caste in Indian elections and workplaces.
- Modernity invents traditions, as Eric Hobsbawm noted, including national ritual that **Emile Durkheim** helps read as a new sacred.
- **M. N. Srinivas's Sanskritisation is change of style inside a ranked order:** modern education with traditional rank.
- George Herbert Mead's self can hold a caste generalised other and a civic other at once.

Indian change as the test

- Joint household ideals persist beside nuclear **Census** households and migrant "modern" work.
- Personal law, temple publics, and science labs coexist. Secularisation is dimensional, not total.
- **Feminist critique after Ann Oakley**: "modern" jobs plus traditional unpaid care is a dialectical load on women.

Method for studying change

- Do not code every ritual as leftover. Ask what new function it performs.
- Do not code every factory as the end of kinship. Ask how kin networks staff the informal firm.
- Robert K. Merton's latent functions catch tradition's new uses.

Flow diagram

Tradition -> Dialectical change

Modernity -> Dialectical change

Dialectical change -> New uses of custom

Dialectical change -> Ascription inside markets

Conclusion

Tradition and modernity co-produce social change. **Marx**, **Weber**, **Durkheim**, and Srinivas give tools for that dialectic. Linear replacement misses both **invented tradition** and modern ascription. Study mixes, not a finished modern.

Facts & figures

Pattern variables

Parsons's contrasts such as ascription/achievement; easily misread as a historical one-way shift.

Sanskritisation

Srinivas: mobility of ritual style inside hierarchy, often using modern resources.

Invented tradition

Hobsbawm: modern nations craft old-looking ritual.

Weber's types

Traditional and legal-rational domination combine in actual administrations.