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Q1(e)

"No society can either be completely open or completely closed." comment.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2015 · Sociology GS 1 · 10 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

- "No society can either be completely open or completely closed." comment
- Keep the comment within a 10-mark length

Revision summary

Open and closed are poles, not photographs of whole societies.

Caste and estate leak; markets still close by status, property, and gender.

Marx, Weber, Sorokin, and Srinivas describe mixed mobility.

- **Comment:** name channels, do not choose an extreme type as the whole.

Introduction

Open and closed name poles of mobility and membership. A completely open society would recruit every office by talent alone. A completely closed one would freeze every rank by birth. Empirical societies sit between the poles.

Body**Why complete closure fails**

- **Even caste and estate leak:** conversion, conquest, adoption, and M. N. Srinivas's Sanskritisation move groups inside a ranked order.
- **Karl Marx** noted circulation of persons beside persistence of class places. A closed idiom still has some movement.

Why complete openness fails

- **Max Weber's** status groups close interaction and marriage even in markets. Education and property sponsor some and exclude others.
- Pitirim **Sorokin** treated mobility as a variable of systems, not as a switch to a frictionless contest.
- Gender and unpaid care, as Ann **Oakley** showed, close "open" labour markets. NFHS and work data still show that closure.

Comment

- The statement is a warning against textbook extremes. India mixes ascription, exams, reservations, and informal labour.

- Measure both the person's move and the durability of the hierarchy.

Flow diagram

Open achievement -> Empirical mix
Closed ascription -> Empirical mix
Empirical mix -> Some persons move
Empirical mix -> Structure may hold

Conclusion

No society is a perfect contest or a sealed box. **Weber**, **Marx**, **Sorokin**, and Srinivas all describe mixed closure. The useful task is to name which channels open and which honour rules still shut.

Facts & figures

Sorokin

Mapped vertical and horizontal mobility as properties of stratified systems.

Weber

Status closure through honour and marriage can persist inside a class market.

Sanskritisation

Srinivas: group mobility of style within a ranked order, not full individual openness.

Oakley

Showed how gendered housework closes apparent openness of the wage market.