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Q1(d)

Evaluate Marx's ideas on mode of production

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2016 · Sociology GS 1 · 10 marks · Sociological Thinkers: Karl Marx

Sociological Thinkers: Karl Marx - Historical materialism, mode of production, alienation, class struggle; Emile Durkheim - Division of labour, social fact, suicide, religion and society; Max Weber - Social action, ideal types, authority, bureaucracy, protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism; Talcott Parsons - Social system, pattern variables; Robert K. Merton - Latent and manifest functions, conformity and deviance, reference groups; Mead - Self and identity.

Core demand of the question

- Evaluate **Marx's** ideas on mode of production
- Keep the evaluation within a 10-mark length

Revision summary

- **Mode of production:** forces plus relations, historically specific surplus.

It explains manor versus factory and class as a relation.

- **Strength:** historical type for capitalism and its predecessors.
- **Limits:** sacred, self, status, and unpaid gender labour need other tools.
- **Evaluate:** necessary, not a master key for all social life.

Introduction

For **Karl Marx**, a mode of production is the historically specific combination of **forces of production** and **relations of production**. It is the base from which class, state, and ideology are to be understood. The idea is powerful as a historical type, and over-stretched if it becomes a master key for every honour and rite.

Body**The idea**

- **Forces:** labour, skill, tools, and cooperation. Relations: property and surplus extraction, as in feudal rent or capitalist wage.
- Asiatic, ancient, feudal, and capitalist modes are types, not a rigid ladder in every region.
- Contradiction between forces and relations drives crisis and possible transformation.

Strengths

- It explains why work organisation differs between manor and factory, which a timeless "society" misses.
- Class is a relation, not an income layer. **Max Weber** still needed this economic core even when he added status and party.
- Indian agrarian and informal capitalism can be read as combined forms, not as a missing Europe.

Limits

- **Emile Durkheim's** solidarity and sacred, and George Herbert Mead's self, are poorly reduced to surplus alone.
- Gendered unpaid care, after later Marxists and feminists, was underplayed in the classic couple of wage and capital.
- Political and cultural relative autonomy, which **Weber** insisted on, qualifies a thin base-superstructure sketch.

Flow diagram

Forces of production -> Mode of production
Relations of production -> Mode of production
Mode of production -> Class and surplus
Mode of production -> Not all of honour meaning gender

Conclusion

Marx's mode of production remains the best type for historically specific surplus and class. Evaluate it as necessary and not sufficient. Pair it with **Weber**, **Durkheim**, and gender analysis rather than discarding the concept.

Facts & figures

Forces of production

Labour power, skills, tools, and forms of cooperation.

Relations of production

Property and command over surplus, defining classes.

Capitalist mode

Generalised commodity production and surplus value in the wage relation.

Base and superstructure

A sketch that later Marxists qualified; easy to vulgarise as economic fatalism.

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