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Q5(c)

Is religion playing an important role in increasing fundamentalism? Give reasons for your answer.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2016 · Sociology GS 1 · 10 marks · Religion and Society

Religion and Society: Sociological theories of religion; Types of religious practices: animism, monism, pluralism, sects, cults; Religion in modern society: religion and science, secularization, religious revivalism, fundamentalism.

Core demand of the question

- Is religion playing an important role in increasing **fundamentalism**? Give reasons for your answer
- Keep the answer within a 10-mark length

Revision summary

Fundamentalism is modern organised purity, not timeless faith.

Religion matters as text, **sect**, **charisma**, and moral community.

Marx, **Weber**, and **Durkheim** explain resources and meanings, not a simple piety motor.

Parties, media, and failed secular promises organise the increase.

- **Answer:** important role as idiom; not a sufficient cause.

Introduction

Fundamentalism is a modern organised claim to restore a pure, inerrant foundation against pluralism. Religion supplies symbols and congregations. It is not a sufficient cause. Politics, media, and insecurity organise the increase.

Body

Reasons to say yes, religion matters

- Sacred texts and the church as moral community, in **Emile Durkheim**'s sense, can be tightened into an exclusive we.
- **Max Weber**'s virtuoso and **sect** types train high-demand certainty; **charisma** can fuse with scripture.
- Meaning and theodicy, which **Weber** stressed, become political programmes when the world looks unjust.

Reasons not to blame "religion" as such

- **Karl Marx:** religion is protest and veil; the increase often tracks class and nation, not piety alone.
- Secularisation's incompleteness and the secular state's failures feed reactive faith, which Bryan Wilson's decline thesis did not fully predict.

- Media markets and parties instrumentalise faith. That is organisation, which Robert K. Merton would split into manifest piety and latent power.
- Indian public religion long coexisted with pluralism; the increase of **fundamentalism** is a political-historical shift, not a sudden birth of belief.

Answer

- Religion is an important resource and idiom of **fundamentalism**.
- The increase is explained by modern organisation of certainty, not by the mere existence of temples or churches.

Flow diagram

Religious symbols church -> Fundamentalism
Parties media insecurity -> Fundamentalism
Religious symbols church -> Resource not sole cause

Conclusion

Yes, religion plays an important role as sacred resource, **sect** discipline, and moral community. No, it is not an autonomous engine of the increase. **Weber**, **Durkheim**, and **Marx** together locate **fundamentalism** in modern politics using religious materials.

Facts & figures

Fundamentalism

Modern claim to inerrant foundations against pluralism and critique.

Sect

High-demand exclusive community; a organisational neighbour of fundamentalist groups.

Charisma

Weber: extraordinary authority that can fuse leader, text, and crowd.

Civil religion

Bellah: national sacred that can compete with or feed confessional politics.