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Q7(a)

"Religious pluralism is the order of present-day societies." Explain by giving suitable examples.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2016 · Sociology GS 1 · 20 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

- "Religious pluralism is the order of present-day societies." Explain by giving suitable examples
- Keep the explanation within a 20-mark length

Revision summary

- **Pluralism:** several faiths and unbelief in one public, as a modern institutional order.

Parsons, **Weber**, Giddens, and **Berger** explain differentiation and competing sacreds.

Durkheim's single church is strained; **civil religion** and fundamentalism respond.

- **Examples:** Indian legal-demographic plurality, US denominations, European new presence, Gulf migrants, online publics.

Order means managed coexistence and conflict, not harmony or the end of religion.

Introduction

Religious pluralism is the institutionalised coexistence of several faiths, and of faith with unbelief, in one public. It is a leading order of present-day societies under globalisation and the modern state. It is an order of competition as well as of peace, not a finished harmony.

Body

Why it is an "order" now

- Differentiation, in Talcott Parsons's sense, takes education and law partly out of a single church.
- **Max Weber's** disenchantment and competing value spheres make exclusive sacred monopoly harder to sustain as the only public.
- Migration and media mix congregations in cities. Anthony Giddens's stretched relations are visible in overseas temples and televised ritual.
- Peter **Berger** first tied pluralism to relativised belief, then noted that faith can also harden in a plural field.

What pluralism is not

- **Emile Durkheim's** one moral community is strained. **Civil religion** (Robert Bellah) and the nation often try to replace it.
- **Karl Marx:** the market and the state can tolerate many heavens while keeping one class order.

- Fundamentalism is a modern reply to pluralism, not proof that pluralism is absent.

Examples

- **India:** constitutional secularism, **Census** religious communities, personal laws, and shared urban festivals beside riot and polarisation. Pluralism is legal-demographic fact and political contest.
- **United States:** denominational market and **civil religion**, with evangelical politics as a player, not a monopoly church of the medieval type.
- **Western Europe:** church decline plus Muslim, Hindu, and Pentecostal presence; laïcité and multicultural policy as rival management styles.
- **Gulf labour:** Indian workers inhabit a host religious state and send remittances to plural home towns.
- **Online:** several sacred publics on one phone, a deterritorialised pluralism.

Sociological explanation

- **George Herbert Mead's self can hold more than one generalised other:** kin faith and civic peer.
- **Robert K. Merton:** manifest tolerance, latent status competition among communities.
- **William F. Ogburn:** law of equal citizenship can lag lived segregation, a lag inside pluralism.

Explain the statement's force and limit

- **Force:** few large societies now run a single unchallenged church as the only public faith.
- **Limit:** majorities still dominate; unofficial establishment and violence persist.
- Present-day order is managed pluralism, not the death of religion.

Flow diagram

Religious pluralism -> Differentiated state
 Religious pluralism -> Migration media
 Religious pluralism -> Competition fundamentalism
 India US Europe Gulf -> Religious pluralism

Conclusion

Religious pluralism is a structural order of present-day societies because states, markets, and migrations multiply authorised faiths in one public. **Weber**, Parsons, **Berger**, and **Durkheim** explain differentiation and the strained church. India, the US, Europe, and migrant circuits are examples. The order includes conflict, not only courtesy.

Facts & figures

Berger

Pluralism as a condition that can relativise or, later he stressed, also revitalise faith.

Indian **Census** religion

Official plurality of named communities inside one territorial state.

Civil religion

Bellah: national sacred that can sit beside confessional plurality.

Personal law

Indian example of legal pluralism tied to religious community, inside a secular constitutional idiom.

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