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Q1(a)

"Sociology is pre-eminently study of modern societies." Discuss

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

- "Sociology is pre-eminently study of modern societies." Discuss
- Keep the discussion within a 10-mark length

Revision summary

Sociology emerged to explain industrial, political, and secular modern order.

Marx, Weber, Durkheim, Mead, and Parsons mapped that object.

Comparison with other types is a method, not a betrayal.

Colonial India is inside modernity's history, not outside sociology.

- **Discuss:** pre-eminently modern, not exclusively the contemporary West.

Introduction

- **Sociology was born as a science of the modern:** industry, the nation-state, class, and a worldly explanation of order. The statement is historically fair as origin. It is too narrow as a permanent object, because modernity is studied through contrast with other types.

Body**Why the claim arose**

- Auguste **Comte** and the French Revolution made post-traditional order the puzzle.
- **Karl Marx** centred capitalist modernity as a mode of production.
- **Max Weber** asked why rationalisation densified in the Occident.
- **Emile Durkheim** studied the division of labour as a modern solidarity problem, using simpler types as a foil.

What "pre-eminently" should mean

- The classic questions are urban, industrial, bureaucratic, and secularising societies.
- George Herbert Mead's self in the city, and Talcott Parsons's differentiated subsystems, are modern maps.

Limits of the slogan

- Historical and anthropological comparison are internal to the discipline, as **Weber's** religions and **Durkheim's** totemism show.

- Colonial and Indian caste-agrarian worlds are modern in being transformed by empire, **Census**, and market, not only as "tradition".
- Robert K. Merton's middle-range work can study a factory or a village school with the same tools.

Flow diagram

Modern society -> SOC Sociology's birth questions

Historical comparison -> SOC

SOC -> Still mostly modern objects

Conclusion

Sociology is pre-eminently a child of modern society and still spends most of its energy there. It is not only a description of the West's present. **Marx**, **Weber**, and **Durkheim** already needed other types to know what was new.

Facts & figures

Comte

Named sociology as a positive science of order after revolutionary break.

Weber

Defined a research programme on Occidental rationalisation and modern capitalism.

Durkheim

Used elementary religion and simple solidarity as keys to modern division of labour.

Census

A modern state tool that made Indian society a sociological file, not a timeless village.