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Q8(a)

Examine any two theories of social change in detail society

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2017 · Sociology GS 1 · 20 marks · Social Change in Modern Society

Social Change in Modern Society: Sociological theories of social change; Development and dependency; Agents of social change; Education and social change; Science, technology and social change.

Core demand of the question

- Examine any two theories of social change in detail
- Keep the examination within a 20-mark length

Revision summary

- **Two theories:** evolutionary-functional change and historical materialism.
- **Durkheim and Parsons:** differentiation, solidarity, adaptive upgrading.
- **Marx:** forces and relations of production, class struggle, modes.
- **Strengths and weaknesses reverse:** order versus conflict, stages versus rupture.

India mixes Sanskritisation, class, and political reservation.

Introduction

Theories of social change try to name what moves a society from one pattern to another. Two usable theories are evolutionary-functional change and historical-materialist change. They disagree on motor, direction, and conflict.

Body**Evolutionary and functional theory**

- Auguste Comte and Herbert Spencer pictured stages toward complexity and differentiation.
- **Emile Durkheim** described the shift from mechanical to organic solidarity as division of labour thickens, with anomie as a pathological companion.
- **Talcott Parsons treated change as adaptive upgrading of AGIL subsystems:** economy, polity, law, and culture.
- **Strength:** it names differentiation, law, and education as change sites.
- **Weakness:** it underplays domination and can read history as a one-way modernisation. Dependency theory and caste persistence embarrass a smooth upgrade.

Historical materialism

- **Karl Marx** located change in contradiction between forces and relations of production, fought out as class struggle.
- Modes of production are historical types. Ideology and state are not first movers.
- **Strength:** it explains industrial capitalism, primitive accumulation, and why technology arrives inside property.
- **Weakness:** a mechanical sequence of stages, and a thin account of gender, caste, and status, which **Max Weber** and later feminists added.

Indian use of the two

- Sanskritisation and Westernisation, after M. N. **Srinivas**, look like status evolution; land reform and informal labour look like class process.
- Mandal and reservations are political change that neither Spencer nor a thin **Marx** fully scripts.

Comparison

- **Motor:** adaptation versus contradiction.
- **Direction:** differentiation versus possible rupture.
- **Agents:** system needs versus classes.

Flow diagram

Evolutionary functional -> Differentiation AGIL

Historical materialism -> Class contradiction

Differentiation AGIL -> Indian mix

Class contradiction -> Indian mix

Status gender -> Indian mix

Conclusion

Functional-evolutionary theory explains differentiation and the risk of anomie. Historical materialism explains property, class, and rupture. A full account of Indian change needs both, plus status and gender, which neither classic pair exhausted.

Facts & figures

Durkheim

Mechanical to organic solidarity as a theory of change through division of labour.

Parsons

Adaptive upgrading of AGIL as orderly social change.

Marx

Contradiction of productive forces and relations as the motor of epochal change.

Srinivas

Sanskritisation: group status change that evolutionary class models underplay.