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Q4(a)

What is Weberian critique of Marxist notion of social stratification

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2017 · Sociology GS 1 · 20 marks · Stratification and Mobility: Concepts

Stratification and Mobility: Concepts - equality, inequality, hierarchy, exclusion, poverty and deprivation; Theories of social stratification - Structural functionalist, Marxist, Weberian; Dimensions - Class, status groups, gender, ethnicity and race; Social mobility - open and closed systems, types, sources and causes.

Core demand of the question

- What is the Weberian critique of the Marxist notion of social stratification?
- Keep the answer within a 20-mark length

Revision summary

- **Marx:** stratification as class relation to production, with polarisation.
- **Weber:** class as **market situation**, plus status honour and party power.

The critique targets economic reduction and two-camp history.

Caste and bureaucracy illustrate status and staff interests.

Class is kept, not deleted.

Introduction

Karl Marx tied stratification to class as a relation to the means of production, with polarisation as the historical tendency. **Max Weber** kept class as **market situation** and added status and party. The critique is that economic class does not exhaust honour and power.

Body

Marx's notion, as Weber read it

- Class is defined by ownership and surplus extraction. Two great camps tend to form.
- Status and politics are, in the last instance, shaped by the economic structure.
- Ideology veils that structure.

Weber's three orders

- **Class:** shared market chances in goods, labour, and credit, including the propertyless who still differ by skill.
- **Status:** social honour, style of life, and restricted interaction, often through marriage. Caste is a status order of a severe type.
- **Party:** organised power in associations and the state, which can cut across class.

The critique

- Polarisation misses the middle classes, petty owners, and credentialed employees.
- Status can block market equality, as Jewish pariah groups or Indian caste show.

- The state and parties are not mere instruments of a single class. Bureaucracy has its own staff interests.
- Multiple causation replaces a last-instance economic key.

Indian bearing

- Andre **Beteille** used **Weber** to separate class, status, and power in caste villages.
- Mandal politics is party and status as well as class.
- Informal labour is a class situation that still carries caste honour at the worksite.

What **Weber** did not erase

- He still treated property as decisive for many life chances. The critique is against reduction, not against class.

Flow diagram

Marx class production -> Polarisation
Weber -> Class market
Weber -> Status honour
Weber -> Party power
Status honour -> Critique of reduction

Conclusion

Weber criticises Marxist stratification by splitting class, status, and party, and by refusing polarisation as the whole story. Caste, honour, and organised power can organise inequality beside the market. Class remains; it is no longer the only axis.

Facts & figures

Class, status, party

Weber's three dimensions of stratification in Economy and Society.

Market situation

Weber's definition of class by typical chances to goods and income.

Status group

Community of honour with restricted social intercourse.

Beteille

Applied the three orders to Indian caste, class, and power.