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Q6(a)

Discuss the nature of social organization of work in capitalist society with reference to the Limits of the working day.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2018 · Sociology GS 1 · 20 marks · Works and Economic Life

Works and Economic Life: Social organization of work in different types of society; Formal and informal organization of work; Labour and society.

Core demand of the question

- Discuss the nature of social organisation of work in capitalist society with reference to the limits of the working day
- Keep the discussion within a 20-mark length

Revision summary

Capitalist work organises time for surplus.

- **Marx**: necessary versus surplus labour; absolute and relative surplus value.

The working day's legal limit is a class outcome, then offset by intensity.

Weber, Taylor, and **Braverman** describe office and deskilling.

Indian informal and unpaid care days remain weakly limited.

Introduction

Capitalist work is socially organised to command labour time for surplus. **Karl Marx**'s chapter on the working day shows that this command meets a political and bodily limit. The organisation of work is therefore a struggle over hours, intensity, and who counts as a worker.

Body

Capital's drive

- The working day has a necessary part that reproduces labour power and a surplus part that capital seeks to extend.
- Absolute surplus value lengthens the day; relative surplus value intensifies it through machines and cooperation.

Social organisation

- The factory clock, fines, and later Taylor's split of conception and execution organise time.
- **Max Weber**'s office adds career time and files. Harry **Braverman** tied scientific management to deskilling.
- Gender organises a second unpaid day of care, which Ann Oakley made visible. Capital depends on that limit being unpaid.

The limit of the working day

- **Marx** treated the **Factory Acts** as a class victory that capital then answers with intensity.

- Law, union, and inspectorate are social organisations of the limit, not gifts of technique.
- **Informal and gig work in India often sit outside that legal day:** log-in hours, piece rates, and contractors, as Jan **Breman** showed for circulation.

Present form of the same struggle

- Overtime culture in offices, warehouse scans, and platform incentives recreate an unbounded day.
- PLFS informality means most Indian workers never had a Fordist legal day to lose.

Nature of the organisation

- It is simultaneous technical cooperation and domination.
- The working day's limit is the political skin of that organisation.

Flow diagram

Capital -> Working day
Working day -> Length
Working day -> Intensity machines
Factory Acts unions -> Political limit
Informal gig care -> Day still unbounded

Conclusion

Capitalist work organisation is command of time for surplus, through mill, office, and platform. **Marx's** working day is the key limit, always reopened by intensity and informality. Gendered unpaid hours and Indian contractors show whose day is legally bounded.

Facts & figures

Capital, Vol. I

The working day as a political-economic limit on absolute surplus value.

Factory Acts

Nineteenth-century legal shortening of hours that **Marx** read as class struggle.

Braverman

Intensity and deskilling as capital's answer inside a shorter clock day.

Breman

Indian labour circulation largely outside a protected working day.