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Q1(d)

What is the difference between natural and social inequality examples from caste and class dimensions

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2018 · Sociology GS 1 · 10 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 difference between natural and social inequality? Give examples from caste and class dimensions
- Keep the answer within a 10-mark length

Revision summary

Natural inequality is physical difference; social inequality is instituted rank.

Rousseau drew the classic cut.

Caste rank is endogamy and occupation, not nature.

Class is property and market chance, not a talent queue.

Davis-Moore naturalises class; Tumin and Marx refuse that.

Introduction

Natural inequality refers to differences of body, age, or innate capacity that no society invents. Social inequality is the ranking of those differences, and of invented ranks, into honour, property, and power. Caste and class show the social production of rank.

Body

The cut

- Jean-Jacques Rousseau separated natural or physical inequality from moral or political inequality.
- **Sociology studies the second:** rules of marriage, property, and office.

Caste dimension

- Skin, strength, or intelligence do not map onto varna-jati rank.
- Louis Dumont stressed hierarchical holism; M. N. Srinivas showed mobility of style, not a natural ladder.
- Endogamy and occupation closure are social facts, as Emile Durkheim would name them.

Class dimension

- **Karl Marx:** class is a relation to means of production, not a natural talent queue.

- Kingsley Davis and Wilbert Moore claimed unequal reward sorts natural talent. Melvin Tumin answered that blocked schooling wastes talent and naturalises class.
- A Dalit graduate in informal work shows social closure over "natural" skill.

Caution

- Bodies differ. The error is to treat caste or class as nature's own sorting.

Flow diagram

Bodily difference -> Not caste class
Instituted rank -> Endogamy honour
Instituted rank -> Property market
Nature talk -> Justifies rank

Conclusion

Natural inequality is bodily difference. Social inequality is instituted rank. Caste honour and class property are social. Treating them as nature is an ideology of the hierarchy.

Facts & figures

Rousseau

Discourse on Inequality: natural versus moral-political inequality.

Dumont

Homo Hierarchicus: caste as a social ideology of hierarchy.

Marx

Class as a social relation of production, not a natural estate.

Tumin

Critique of functional sorting: inequality blocks the talent it claims to select.