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Q4(b)

Compare and Contrast the contributions of Marx and Weber on social stratification in capitalist society

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2019 · Sociology GS 1 · 20 marks · Sociological Thinkers: Karl Marx

Sociological Thinkers: Karl Marx - Historical materialism, mode of production, alienation, class struggle; Emile Durkheim - Division of labour, social fact, suicide, religion and society; Max Weber - Social action, ideal types, authority, bureaucracy, protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism; Talcott Parsons - Social system, pattern variables; Robert K. Merton - Latent and manifest functions, conformity and deviance, reference groups; Mead - Self and identity.

Core demand of the question

- Compare and Contrast the contributions of **Marx** and **Weber** on social stratification in capitalist society
- Keep the comparison within a 20-mark length

Revision summary

- **Marx**: capitalist stratification is class from ownership and surplus value.
- **Weber**: class as market chance plus status honour plus party power.

Both reject natural talent hierarchies.

Weber's triad explains caste and lifestyle inside capitalism.

Informal labour needs **Marx**; honour and credentials need **Weber**.

Introduction

Karl Marx and **Max Weber** both placed capitalism at the centre of modern rank. **Marx** reduced stratification to class rooted in the relations of production. **Weber** kept class and added status and party. Comparison is about property versus a triad.

Body

Marx on capitalist stratification

- **Two great classes**: bourgeoisie and proletariat, defined by ownership of means of production.
- Surplus value and exploitation are the hidden engine. Other ranks are secondary or ideological.
- Polarisation, a reserve army, and class struggle are the dynamics. The state is a committee of the ruling class in the strong version.

Weber on capitalist stratification

- **Class is market situation**: goods, labour, and skills, including the propertyless with credentials.
- Status is social honour, lifestyle, and restricted intercourse. Caste is an extreme **status group**.
- Party is organised power in associations and the state. Bureaucracy is a rank of its own.

Points of contact

- Both reject a purely individual talent story such as Davis and Moore.
- Both see the market as historically specific, not natural.
- **Weber** accepted class as economically determined **life-chances**, which is a Marxist neighbourhood.

Contrasts

- **Marx**: one axis and a revolutionary horizon. **Weber**: plural axes and no guaranteed proletarian unity.
- **Marx**: labour theory of value. **Weber**: **life-chances** without that theory.
- Status can cut class, as poor Brahmins and rich traders show in India.
- Nationalist and caste parties fit **Weber's** party better than a single class party.

Capitalist society today

- Informal labour and gig work fit **Marx's** wage relation stretched thin.
- Consumption lifestyles and honour crimes fit **Weber's** status.
- **Census** and NSSO class-of-worker tables need both ownership and honour to be read.

Flow diagram

Marx -> Ownership exploitation

Weber -> Class status party

Ownership exploitation -> Capitalist stratification

Class status party -> Capitalist stratification

Conclusion

Marx contributed the property core of capitalist class. **Weber** contributed the triad of class, status, and party. In capitalist society they complement: exploitation without honour is incomplete; honour without property is incomplete. Use both on Indian caste-class.

Facts & figures

Marx

Class as relation to means of production; polarisation in capitalist society.

Weber

Class, status, party as distinct but interacting orders of stratification.

Life-chances

Weber's term for typical probabilities of goods, work, and satisfaction.

Status group

Honour-based closure, of which caste is a strong historical form.

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