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Q4(a)

Modernization presupposes class society; however caste, ethnicity and race are still predominant. Explain

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2019 · 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

- Modernization presupposes class society; however caste, ethnicity and race are still predominant. Explain
- Keep the discussion within a 20-mark length

Revision summary

Modernisation theory presupposed achievement and class in place of ascription.

Marx's class remains real; it does not erase caste, ethnicity, and race.

Srinivas, Weber, Barth, and Du Bois explain persistent closures.

These ranks organise marriage, votes, and labour inside markets.

Predominance is empirical gating, not the death of class.

Introduction

Modernisation theory expected industrial growth to replace ascriptive ranks with class in a market. Karl Marx made class the motor of capitalist society. Yet caste, ethnicity, and race still organise marriage, votes, and work. The presupposition was a hope, not a completed history.

Body**The presupposition**

- Marx treated capitalist modernity as polarising owners and workers. Status leftovers would thin.
- Talcott Parsons and later modernisation writers expected achievement, universalism, and a class society of occupations.
- Max Weber already warned that status groups and ethnic honour can close the market.

Why caste persists

- M. N. Srinivas showed Sanskritisation and vote banks, not a simple melt.
- Endogamy, ritual rank, and discrimination in hiring keep caste as a property of the modern economy, as later census-blind markets still show in NSSO work gaps.
- Louis Dumont overstated holism, but he was right that rank did not vanish at the factory gate.

Ethnicity and race

- Fredrik **Barth** treated ethnicity as boundary, not as leftover culture. Urban labour markets reproduce those boundaries.
- W. E. B. **Du Bois** and later racialisation theory show race as a modern classifier of labour, not a pre-modern residue.
- Immanuel Wallerstein placed race and ethnicity inside the world-system's labour hierarchy.

Predominance without the end of class

- Class still structures land, capital, and informal wage. Caste and race organise who enters which class slot.
- Yogendra Singh's modernisation of Indian tradition is a mix, not a replacement.
- Political ethnicity and communal mobilisation use modern media and the census category itself.

Explanation

- Modernisation needs a class map to think the market. It does not dissolve ascription.
- Predominance means these identities still gate life-chances, as NFHS and education gaps show.

Flow diagram

Modernisation script -> Class society
Actual modernity -> Class society
Actual modernity -> Caste
Actual modernity -> Ethnicity
Actual modernity -> Race
Caste -> Gate life-chances

Conclusion

Class society was the modernisation script. **Weber**, **Srinivas**, **Du Bois**, and **Barth** explain why caste, ethnicity, and race remain predominant as closures inside capitalism. **Marx**'s class is not cancelled; it is cross-cut. The factory did not finish the work of the varna or the colour line.

Facts & figures

Weber

Status and ethnic honour can close social intercourse against the market.

Srinivas

Sanskritisation and modern caste politics rather than simple dissolution.

Barth

Ethnicity as social boundary maintained in interaction, including cities.

Du Bois

Race as a modern colour line organising labour and personhood.

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