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Q1(d)

Present a sociological review on the 'new middle class'

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2019 · Sociology GS 1 · 10 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

- Present a sociological review on the 'new middle class'
- Keep the review within a 10-mark length

Revision summary

- **New middle class:** salaried professionals and managers, not owners of capital.

Mills, Wright, and Bourdieu map white-collar dependence and cultural capital.

Indian liberalisation made consumption the public face.

Caste and gender still cut the slab.

A minority layer beside informal labour.

Introduction

The new middle class names salaried professionals, managers, and service workers who live by credentials rather than by a small shop or a landed title. In India it is also a public culture of consumption. Review means placing that group in class theory, not celebrating it.

Body**Who is named**

- C. Wright Mills described white-collar employees dependent on large organisations. Erik Olin Wright placed managers and experts in contradictory class locations.
- Pierre Bourdieu stressed cultural capital: taste and education as class weapons.
- In India, Dipankar Gupta and later work on liberalisation tied the label to private jobs, malls, and English.

Review

- The group is real as a labour and consumption cluster. It is not a substitute for Marx's bourgeoisie that owns means of production.
- Caste and gender cut the same salary slab. A new flat does not erase endogamy.
- NSSO and Census work categories show a thin formal salaried layer beside a huge informal majority.

Limits of the phrase

- "New" can hide older clerks and teachers. "Middle" can hide property and rent.
- Globalisation made the culture visible; it did not make India a middle-class nation.

Flow diagram

New middle class -> Credentials salary
New middle class -> Consumption culture
Ownership of capital -> Bourgeoisie
Caste gender -> New middle class

Conclusion

The new middle class is a credentialed, often urban, consumption class with contradictory locations. **Mills**, **Wright**, and **Bourdieu** supply the tools. Indian liberalisation made it loud. It remains a minority layer, not the structure of society.

Facts & figures

Mills

White Collar: the new middle layers live by organisation, not by independent property.

Wright

Contradictory class locations of managers and experts between capital and labour.

Bourdieu

Cultural capital and habitus as class practice beyond income.

Census / NSSO

Show a small formal salaried share against a large informal workforce.