

WRAP Exams · wrapexams.com

Prelims PYQ, Mains model answers, and copy evaluation. Write to the desk for this paper, a doubt, or the AI waitlist.

ask@wrapexams.com · +91 85951 84903 · wrapexams.com

Q5(d)

State the reasons for the various religious beliefs and practices in pre-modern societies.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2020 · Sociology GS 1 · 10 marks · Religion and Society

Religion and Society: Sociological theories of religion; Types of religious practices: animism, monism, pluralism, sects, cults; Religion in modern society: religion and science, secularization, religious revivalism, fundamentalism.

Core demand of the question

- State the reasons for the various religious beliefs and practices in pre-modern societies
- Keep the statement within a 10-mark length

Revision summary

Pre-modern religion served explanation, solidarity, kinship, and kingship.

- **Tylor and Frazer:** intellectualist accounts of soul and magic.
- **Durkheim:** group ritual; variety follows social morphology.
- **Weber:** theodicy and meaning.
- **Marx:** tribute and protest in religious form.
- **Redfield:** layered little and great traditions.

Introduction

Pre-modern societies housed many beliefs and practices because religion did several jobs at once: explanation, solidarity, kingship, and seasonal work. Variety followed from ecology, kinship, and political form, not from a single superstition.

Body**Intellectual and existential reasons**

- E. B. **Tylor**'s animism and James Frazer's magic-religion-science sequence offered early intellectualist reasons: to explain dream, death, and crop.
- **Max Weber** stressed **theodicy**: suffering needs a meaningful cosmos.

Social reasons

- **Emile Durkheim:** ritual produces the sacred as the group's ideal. Clans, tribes, and castes therefore differ as groups differ.
- Ancestor cults follow descent. Irawati Karve's kinship types predict different funeral and marriage rites.

Political and economic reasons

- Kingship and priesthood dualise power. **Karl Marx** read much practice as a veil of tribute, yet peasants also protested in religious idiom.
- Agricultural calendars need festivals. Pastoral and forest groups need other spirits.

Why various, not one

- Diffusion, conquest, and little-and-great traditions, after Robert Redfield, mix layers.
- Pre-modern is not simple. Empires already had plural cults.

Flow diagram

Explain bind rule work -> Beliefs practices

Many groups ecologies -> Variety

Beliefs practices -> Variety

Conclusion

Various pre-modern beliefs and practices arose to explain misfortune, bind groups, organise kinship, and legitimate rule and work. Tylor, Durkheim, and Weber name intellectual, social, and meaning reasons. Variety tracks many groups and ecologies, not a single primitive mind.

Facts & figures

Tylor

Animism as a minimum definition of religion from dreams and death.

Durkheim

Religion as the group in sacred form; different groups, different cults.

Weber

Theodicy and paths of salvation as reasons for divergent practices.

Redfield

Little and great traditions as a reason for layered, various practice.