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Q1(e)

Critically examine Max Weber's theory of Social Stratification.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2021 · 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

- Critically examine **Max Weber's** theory of social stratification
- Keep the examination within a 10-mark length

Revision summary

- **Weber:** class, status, and **party** are distinct orders of inequality.

Class is market chance; status is honour and closure; **party** is organised power.

Caste and credentials fit status; associations fit **party**.

Marx, gender, and elite theory mark the limits.

Keep the triad; do not erase class polarity.

Introduction

Max Weber split stratification into class, status, and **party**. Class is market position. Status is honour and style of life. **Party** is organised power. The triad still explains why income, caste honour, and office do not move as one.

Body**The three orders**

- **Class situation** is chance in the commodity and labour markets, including property and skill.
- Status groups close social intercourse and marriage. Indian caste is a strong status order in this sense.
- **Parties live in the house of power:** parties, unions, and caste associations seek to influence the state.

Critical gains

- Against a one-factor Marxist reduction, a clerk and a small owner may share status honour while differing in class.
- Closure theory, later developed by Frank **Parkin**, grows from **Weber's** status and **party**.

Critical limits

- **Karl Marx** still captures the durable capital-labour split that **Weber's** market classes can fragment into a catalogue.
- Gender and race were not built in. Sylvia Walby's patriarchy and racialised labour markets need extra dimensions.

- **Party** can look plural while a power elite, as C. Wright Mills argued, still concentrates command.

Verdict

- Use **Weber** to read caste, education credentials, and organised politics beside class.
- Do not use the triad as a denial of capitalist class structure.

Flow diagram

Weber -> Class market
Weber -> Status honour
Weber -> Party power
Class market -> Stratification
Status honour -> Stratification
Party power -> Stratification

Conclusion

Weber's class-status-party model is a powerful multidimensional map, especially for honour and organised power in India. It is incomplete on gender and can underplay class polarity. Critical use keeps all three orders without flattening **Marx**.

Facts & figures

Class situation

Weber: typical chance in markets for goods and labour, shaped by property and skill.

Status group

A community of honour with restricted association and marriage.

Party

An organisation oriented to acquiring social power, often through the state.

Parkin

Developed social closure as exclusion and usurpation from Weberian status politics.