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Q8(b)

Are traditional social institutions getting weekend as agents of social change in the contemporary society ? Substantiate.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2022 · Sociology GS 1 · 15 marks · Social Change in Modern Society

Social Change in Modern Society: Sociological theories of social change; Development and dependency; Agents of social change; Education and social change; Science, technology and social change.

Core demand of the question

- Are traditional social institutions getting weakened as agents of social change in the contemporary society? Substantiate
- Keep the answer within a 20-mark length

Revision summary

School, market, and state weakened traditional monopolies over livelihood and alliance.

Caste associations, Sanskritisation, and media religion remain agents of change.

Family coresidence falls; remittance and honour politics continue.

Chipko and parties share the field with panchayat and temple.

The pattern is transformation of agency, not simple weakening to zero.

Introduction

Traditional institutions such as caste, joint family, village panchayat, and organised religion no longer monopolise social change. They are not simply dead. In contemporary society they often change their form and remain agents, sometimes as associations and media churches rather than as village custom.

Body

The weakening thesis

- Modernisation theory, from Lerner to Parsons's achievement variables, expected kinship and ascription to yield to school, market, and state.
- Urban migration, formal law, and the **Census** individual as worker and voter cut the joint household's reach.
- Love marriage, civil courts, and women's education, tracked in **NFHS**, reduce the family's exclusive control of alliance.
- Gig and factory work take livelihood off the caste occupation script, in **Marx's** sense of a labour market.

The counter-evidence

- **Lloyd and Susanne Rudolph**: modernity of tradition. Caste associations are agents of political and educational change, as **Mandal** showed.
- **M. N. Srinivas**: Sanskritisation remains a traditional idiom of group mobility.

- Robert Redfield's little and great traditions still traffic through television and pilgrimage; religion is an agent of both conservatism and reform.
- Joint family weakens in coresidence but persists in remittances, care, and property, which the **Census** household does not fully kill.
- Khap and caste panchayats still try to police honour, which is agency, even if illegal.

How to read "agent of change"

- **Weakened as sole authors of change:** yes. The state, parties, firms, and new social movements such as Chipko share the field.
- **Weakened as vanished:** no. They redirect change, block it, or ride it.
- Habermas's public sphere adds media and courts as new agents; traditional institutions enter that sphere rather than leaving the stage.
- **Gender:** patriarchy inside family and religion still shapes whose change counts, which Oakley and Walby would treat as durable structure.

Substantiation

- **Measure coresidence, endogamy, and ritual authority:** some decline.
- **Measure association, vote, and philanthropy:** reconstitution.
- The accurate sentence is transformation of agency, not a funeral of tradition.

Flow diagram

Traditional institutions -> Weaker monopoly
Traditional institutions -> Reconstituted associations media
State market movements -> Social change
Weaker monopoly -> Social change
Reconstituted associations media -> Social change

Conclusion

Traditional institutions are weaker as monopolists of social change and strong as reconstituted agents: caste associations, media religion, and translocal family. **Rudolphs**, **Srinivas**, and Redfield explain persistence-in-new-form. Contemporary change is a mixed field, not a one-way secular emptying.

Facts & figures

Rudolphs

Modernity of tradition: caste as association is an agent of democratic change.

Srinivas

Sanskritisation as traditional-institutional mobility still operating in modern India.

Mandal

Caste categories as vehicles of policy change, not as fading folklore.

NFHS

Shows shifts in women's schooling and household decision-making without a full end of family control.

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