

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(a)

Critically examine the relevance of Durkheim's views on religion in contemporary society.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2022 · 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

- Critically examine the relevance of **Durkheim's** views on religion in contemporary society
- Keep the examination within a 10-mark length

Revision summary

- **Durkheim:** religion is society in sacred form, through ritual and the church as moral community.

Civil religion, rallies, and festivals still fit.

Weber, Marx, and gender critique limit the group-mirror model.

Secularisation is unfinished; **Census** and NFHS show mixed practice.

Use **Durkheim** for solidarity; do not use him as the whole of contemporary religion.

Introduction

Emile Durkheim treated religion as society worshipping its own ideal in sacred symbols. The sacred-profane split, **collective effervescence**, and the church as a moral community remain usable. They do not exhaust politics, markets, or inner faith in the present.

Body

What still travels

- The Elementary Forms located the sacred in group assembly, not in a supernatural being as such. National days, stadiums, and disaster rituals still produce effervescence.
- Robert **Bellah's** civil religion in the United States is a Durkheimian reading of flags and founding myths.
- Indian public festivals and, in another key, mass political rallies, organise belonging through sacred-like marking of space and time.

Critical limits

- **Max Weber** stressed meaning, theodicy, and this-worldly asceticism. Contemporary evangelical and reformist currents are poorly read as only the group hugging itself.
- **Karl Marx** treated religion as protest and as a veil of class. **Durkheim** underplayed domination inside the "church".

- Bryan Wilson and later secularisation debates asked whether differentiation shrinks the sacred. **Durkheim** expected cults of the individual, not simple disappearance.
- Gendered priesthood and caste in temples show that the moral community is stratified. Ann Oakley-style questions about whose sacred order is at work are needed.
- **Census** religion tables and NFHS on practice show persistence, switching, and private belief that a clan totem model only partly fits.

Verdict

- Relevant as a theory of ritual solidarity and of the sacred as social.
- Incomplete as a theory of salvation, organisation, and religious conflict in a media-saturated world.

Flow diagram

Durkheim religion -> Sacred profane
Durkheim religion -> Collective effervescence
Durkheim religion -> Moral community
Sacred profane -> Rallies nations festivals
Weber Marx secularisation -> Limits

Conclusion

Durkheim remains relevant wherever groups make the sacred and bind themselves. **Weber**, **Marx**, and feminist and secularisation critiques show what his clan model misses: meaning, class, gender, and the unfinished death of the gods.

Facts & figures

Sacred and profane

Durkheim's basic classification of religious life, set apart by ritual interdicts.

Collective effervescence

Heightened assembly in which the group feels a force beyond the individual.

Bellah

Civil religion: national sacred without a single church, a Durkheimian contemporary type.

Census religion data

Indian official series that show persistence of named communities beside urban differentiation.