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Q4(b)

Social stratification is claimed to contribute to maintenance of social order and stability in society. Critically assess.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2022 · Sociology GS 1 · 15 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

- Social stratification is claimed to contribute to maintenance of social order and stability in society. Critically assess
- Keep the assessment within a 20-mark length

Revision summary

Functionalists claim unequal reward sorts talent and keeps order.

Davis-Moore, Parsons, and a reading of **Durkheim** support that claim.

Tumin, Marx, Weber, and Dahrendorf show circularity, exploitation, and normal conflict.

Caste, **Mandal**, gender, and world-system hierarchy illustrate order for some and injury for others.

Coordination of roles is not a moral proof of a given ranking.

Introduction

Functional theory claims that ranking people is how a society places talent, rewards duty, and keeps order. Conflict theory answers that stratification is organised advantage, and that the order it keeps is the order of the dominant. The claim is half a description of integration and half an ideology of inequality.

Body**The order-and-stability claim**

- Kingsley Davis and Wilbert Moore argued that unequal rewards attach to functionally important roles so that the able are motivated to train.
- Talcott Parsons treated stratification as a ranking of valued roles that supports pattern maintenance in the social system.
- **Emile Durkheim**'s hierarchical organisation of functions in organic solidarity can be read as a moral ranking that prevents anomic disorder.
- **Caste apologists have used a similar idiom:** each varna keeps the whole stable.

Critical assessment

- **Melvin Tumin**: barriers of birth waste talent; the theory is circular when importance is inferred from pay.
- **Karl Marx**: class is exploitation. Stability is often the stability of surplus extraction, broken by struggle, not a harmony of roles.
- **Max Weber**: class, status, and party can conflict. Status honour may freeze order while the market moves, or the reverse.
- **Ralf Dahrendorf**: authority conflict is normal in associations. Stratification organises dispute as well as quiet.
- Indian caste as "order" included exclusion, violence, and blocked mobility. **Mandal** showed that re-ranking through the state is itself a conflict over stability.
- **Gender**: Ann Oakley and Sylvia Walby show that household ranking keeps a kind of order by unpaid care. NFHS sex ratios and work gaps measure the cost.
- **Andre Gunder Frank and Immanuel Wallerstein**: global stratification can stabilise a core by destabilising a periphery.

What remains usable

- Some coordination of roles is real. Hospitals and railways need graded skills.
- The leap from "needs coordination" to "therefore this hierarchy is just and must persist" is the ideological step.
- Order can be produced by consent, as **Antonio Gramsci** argued, or by coercion. Stratification does both.

Flow diagram

Stratification -> Functional placement Davis Moore Parsons
 Stratification -> Conflict class status gender
 Functional placement Davis Moore Parsons -> Apparent order
 Conflict class status gender -> Struggle and exclusion
 Apparent order -> Whose stability

Conclusion

Stratification can coordinate roles and so look like stability. Davis-Moore and Parsons named that function too cleanly. **Marx**, **Tumin**, **Weber**, and Indian caste and gender files show that the same ranking manufactures conflict and waste. Assess who is stabilised, and at whose cost.

Facts & figures

Davis and Moore

1945 thesis: unequal rewards as a device to place talent in functionally important positions.

Tumin

Replied that stratification limits discovery of talent and justifies itself after the fact.

Mandal

Conflict over OBC ranking in the state; "stability" was precisely what was in dispute.

Wallerstein

World-system stratification can stabilise cores while locking peripheries into dependent roles.

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