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Q1(a)

Salient features of A.R. Desai's Marxist Sociology

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2016 · Sociology GS 2 · 10 marks · Perspectives on the study of Indian society

Perspectives on the study of Indian society: Indology (G.S. Ghurye); Structural functionalism (M.N. Srinivas); Marxist sociology (A.R. Desai).

Core demand of the question

- Salient features of A.R. Desai's Marxist Sociology
- Keep the note to a 10-mark length

Revision summary

Desai applied Marxism to nation, agrarian structure, and the Indian state.

Nationalism is read as a bourgeois project in a colonial economy.

Village harmony is rejected for landlord-peasant-labour relations.

The state and planning are class instruments, not neutral tools.

Caste is real but not the first mover in his scheme.

Introduction

A. R. Desai's Marxist sociology reads Indian society through class, colonial capitalism, and the state, not through purity or village harmony. Its salient features are historical materialism applied to nation, land, and planning.

Body**Features**

- **Social Background of Indian Nationalism** treats the national movement as bourgeois-led inside a colonial economy.
- Rural India is landlord, rich peasant, and labour, not only jajmani. Land reform is incomplete bourgeois change.
- The post-independence state is not class-neutral. Planning and development can serve dominant proprietary classes.
- Caste and religion are acknowledged but placed in a class field, against Dumont's ideological whole and against Srinivas's functional village.

Method

- He used documents, history, and political economy more than a single Rampura monograph.
- Conflict, not solidarity, is the default.

Flow diagram

Desai -> Class colonial capitalism
Class colonial capitalism -> Bourgeois nationalism
Class colonial capitalism -> Agrarian classes
Class colonial capitalism -> Class state

Conclusion

Desai's Marxist sociology is class-first, state-critical, and historically colonial. It is the necessary counter to harmony village studies, even when caste needs a fuller relative autonomy.

Facts & figures

Social Background of Indian Nationalism

Desai's key book on class formation under colonialism.

Incomplete land reform

His judgement that abolition of intermediaries strengthened rich peasants more than labourers.

Class state

The view that independent India's state defends proprietary interests.

Anti-functionalism

A standing critique of Srinivas-type solidarity language.

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