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Q1(a)

Caste system studies in India have been dominated by the "book-view" initially, How did the entry of "field-view" bring about a balance in the study of Indian caste system? Discuss

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2021 · Sociology GS 2 · 10 marks · Rural and Agrarian Social Structure

Rural and Agrarian Social Structure: The idea of Indian village and village studies; Agrarian social structure - evolution of land tenure system, land reforms.

Core demand of the question

- Caste system studies in India have been dominated by the "book-view" initially. How did the entry of "field-view" bring about a balance in the study of Indian caste system? Discuss
- Keep the note to a 10-mark length

Revision summary

Book-view caste is textual hierarchy and purity ideology.

Field-view caste is observed dominant caste, interaction, and split of class and power.

Srinivas, **Marriott**, and Beteille corrected Indology without erasing texts.

Balance means values plus village practice.

Singh's modernizing tradition needs both sources.

Introduction

- **Book-view caste was India as a text:** varna, purity, and sacred law. Field-view caste is India as observed rank, land, and faction. Together they stop sociology from treating either the shastra or the village as the whole story.

Body

Book-view

- Indology and Louis **Dumont**'s homo hierarchicus read caste as an ideology of purity and impurity organised from Brahmanical texts.
- G. S. Ghurye listed features from history and scripture. The living jati could look like a footnote.
- The book-view explains why hierarchy feels legitimate. It does not explain who actually commands the harvest.

Field-view as correction

- M. N. Srinivas's **Rampura** replaced varna charts with dominant caste, Sanskritization, and faction.
- McKim **Marriott**'s interactional ranking used food, honour, and transaction, not only a textual ladder.

- Andre Beteille's **Sripuram** split caste, class, and power, so hierarchy was no longer one seamless sacred order.

Balance

- Texts still matter as villagers' own language of rank. Observation shows when land, vote, and office rewrite that language.
- **Yogendra Singh's modernization of tradition needs both:** orthogenetic ideas and heterogenetic field change.

Flow diagram

Book-view texts Dumont Ghurye -> Purity hierarchy

Field-view Rampura Sripuram -> Dominant caste class power

Purity hierarchy -> Balanced caste study

Dominant caste class power -> Balanced caste study

Conclusion

Field-view balanced book-view by putting interaction, land, and politics beside ideology. Caste studies that keep **Dumont's** values and Srinivas's village together are stronger than either pole alone.

Facts & figures

Rampura

Srinivas's Mysore village that made dominant caste and Sanskritization field facts.

Sripuram

Beteille's Tanjore study that separated caste, class, and power.

Dumont

Homo hierarchicus: caste as a book of purity more than a map of land.

Marriott

Interactional ranking through food and honour transactions in the village.

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