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Q3(a)

Discuss in detail the major contribution of Prof. Yogendra Singh in theorizing India's modernization

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2021 · Sociology GS 2 · 20 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

- Discuss in detail the major contribution of Prof. Yogendra Singh in theorizing India's modernization
- Distinguish **orthogenetic** and **heterogenetic** change and test the thesis against caste, law, and inequality

Revision summary

Singh theorised Indian modernization as change of tradition, not its death.

Orthogenetic change is internal; **heterogenetic** change is contact and the modern state.

Sanskritization and Westernization fit as dual processes.

Caste and kinship recombine with vote, law and market.

Class and coercive development remain a limit of a mainly cultural map.

Introduction

Yogendra Singh's major contribution is to treat Indian modernity as a transformation of tradition, not as a Western replica that replaces a frozen past. He gave Indian sociology a vocabulary for selective, layered change.

Body**The core thesis**

- **Modernization of Indian Tradition** argues that tradition is historically active. It recasts itself under new pressures.
- **Orthogenetic change grows from inside the civilisation:** reform sects, recasting of ethics, bhakti-type critiques.
- **Heterogenetic** change arrives through Islam, colonialism, the West, science, industry, and the legal-rational state.
- Little and great traditions, elite and mass cultures, do not modernize at one speed.

What this contributed

- He linked Srinivas's Sanskritization and Westernization as dual processes inside one society, instead of treating the village as pre-modern residue.
- Caste associations, statutory panchayats, and the Rudolphs' modernity of tradition sit comfortably in his recombination model.

- He professionalised a macrosociology of India that could speak of culture, stratification, and the nation together, including work on social stratification and change.

Caste and hierarchy

- Hierarchy does not vanish; it finds new languages of identity and quota, which is Beteille's disharmony inside Singh's modernizing tradition.
- Field-view caste (Rampura, Sripuram) supplies the interaction that his cultural theory needs, so he is not a pure book-view theorist.

Law, inequality, and limits

- **The Constitution is a heterogenetic force that tradition absorbs unevenly:** equality as creed, endogamy as practice.
- **A. R. Desai's class critique still bites:** cultural modernization can underplay landlord, capital, and the developmental state's violence, as in displacement.
- Majoritarian recasting of tradition is also 'modernization of tradition'; the thesis describes recombination, it does not bless every recasting.

Place in the canon

- Beside Ghurye's Indology and Dumont's ideology, Singh is the theorist of how India stays Indian while taking on modern institutions.

Flow diagram

Orthogenetic inner reform -> Modernization of Indian tradition
 Heterogenetic West Islam state -> Modernization of Indian tradition
 Modernization of Indian tradition -> Selective caste law kinship
 Class displacement -> Limit of cultural thesis

Conclusion

Singh's contribution is a theory of Indian modernization as **orthogenetic** plus **heterogenetic** recombination of tradition. It explains caste politics, law, and mixed urban families better than a simple tradition-versus-modernity split. It is weaker if class power and majoritarian capture are treated as mere cultural mixing.

Facts & figures

Modernization of Indian Tradition

Singh's key book on selective cultural change in India.

Orthogenetic

Change generated from within the civilisation's own resources.

Heterogenetic

Change introduced through external civilisations, colonialism and modern institutions.

Srinivas link

Sanskritization and Westernization as Indian processes inside Singh's frame.

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