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Q3(b)

Discuss the material basis of patriarchy as an ideological system.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2022 · Sociology GS 2 · 15 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 the material basis of patriarchy as an ideological system
- Link property, labour, and kinship, including **Seed and Earth**

Revision summary

Patriarchy is ideology that naturalises male authority.

Its material basis is land, inheritance, unpaid care, and cheap female labour.

Dube's **Seed and Earth** ties lineage to control of women's bodies.

Caste endogamy makes sexuality a property of the jati.

Law can challenge the ideology; household title and labour often restore it.

Introduction

Patriarchy is an ideological system that naturalises male rule. Its material basis is control of property, labour, and women's reproductive power. Ideas of honour and seed do not float free of land and wages.

Body**Ideology and material base**

- Ideology here means a set of beliefs that make male authority seem natural, as in Leela Dube's **Seed and Earth**: the man names the line, the woman is the field.
- The material base is who owns land, who inherits, who commands unpaid domestic work, and who sells labour cheaply.
- Friedrich **Engels** linked the monogamous family to private property. Indian sociology must add caste endogamy, which **Ambedkar** saw as the engine of graded inequality.

Agrarian and household property

- Patrilineal joint family and village land records historically listed men. Daughters were sent out; widows were dependents.
- Land reform often titled male tillers. Operation Barga and similar records rarely put women first, so agrarian transformation could restabilise patriarchy.
- Even after Hindu succession amendments, practice in many regions keeps the natal field for brothers.

Labour

- Women's farm work, home-based informal work, and care are systematically undercounted. The informal sector's growth has feminised cheap labour without ending male control of the wage.
- Violence and seclusion cheapen women's bargaining in the market. Ideology of protection is a labour regime.

Reproduction and caste

- Control of sexuality keeps jati boundaries. Honour is the police of that boundary.
- Dominant-caste patriarchy and Dalit women's labour in the field show that patriarchy is not one experience; it is organised by class and caste.

Why call it ideological

- Schools, temples, and media repeat seed-earth and breadwinner stories so that unequal title looks like nature.
- **Law can puncture ideology:** domestic violence statutes, workplace sexual harassment law, and political reservation for women. Implementation still meets the material household.

Flow diagram

Property inheritance -> Patriarchy
Unpaid and cheap labour -> Patriarchy
Control of reproduction -> Patriarchy
Seed and Earth honour -> Patriarchy

Conclusion

Patriarchy as ideology rests on property, unpaid and cheap labour, and the policing of reproduction for caste and lineage. **Seed and Earth** is the cultural skin. Land, wage, and law are the bones.

Facts & figures

Seed and Earth

Dube's metaphor that assigns the line to men and the nutritive field to women.

Engels

Linked patriarchal family forms to the rise of private property, a starting point for material analysis.

Land title

Reform and records have often named men, reproducing household patriarchy after zamindari fell.

Informal women's work

Home-based and farm labour that subsidises capital while remaining ideologically 'help'.

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