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Q5(b)

Examine the concept of 'Cultural Pluralism' in the context of India's Unity in Diversity

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2023 · 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

- Examine cultural pluralism in the context of India's unity in diversity
- Define pluralism, show constitutional and social mechanisms, and note strains
- Keep a 10-mark length

Revision summary

Cultural pluralism is legally protected difference inside one political community.

Unity in diversity names that Indian claim.

Constitution, federalism and everyday mixing are the civic mechanisms.

Ranked caste and majoritarian pressure strain the claim.

Pluralism is practice, not only a civilisational slogan.

Introduction

Cultural pluralism means several languages, faiths, and ways of life sharing one political community without a single culture being the price of membership. India's unity in diversity is the public name for that claim. Sociology tests whether the claim is living practice or only a slogan.

Body

What pluralism is here

- It is not a melting pot. It is legally protected difference plus some shared civic rules.
- The **Rudolphs'** modernity of tradition shows communities using parties, courts, and schools while remaining plural.
- **Yogendra Singh** treats Indian unity as a civilisational field that modernizes without becoming culturally one.

Mechanisms of unity

- The Constitution recognises languages, personal laws, and minority rights, and it forbids discrimination by religion, caste, and sex.
- Federalism, festivals in public space, and inter-regional markets create everyday mixing.
- **Andre Beteille's point on equality as a new value sits beside older ranked diversity:** unity is now supposed to be civic, not only imperial or Sanskritic.

Strains

- Communal violence, language chauvinism, and majoritarian pressure treat diversity as a problem to be thinned.
- Caste pluralism is ranked pluralism; Dalit and Adivasi cultures are not equal partners if land and honour are denied.
- A. R. Desai would add that a class state can use 'unity' to police labour and protest.

Flow diagram

Languages faiths regions -> Cultural pluralism
Constitution federalism markets -> Civic unity
Cultural pluralism -> Civic unity
Majoritarianism ranked caste -> Strain on pluralism

Conclusion

- **Cultural pluralism is the sociological content of unity in diversity:** many cultures, one citizenship. It holds when law and livelihood protect difference. It fails when unity is recoded as sameness.

Facts & figures

Eighth Schedule

Constitutional recognition of scheduled languages as a pluralism device.

Articles 25-30

Faith and minority education rights that assume a plural public.

Rudolphs

Traditional communities operating as modern political actors without cultural erasure.

Yogendra Singh

Indian tradition modernizing as a multi-layered civilisation, not a single culture.

Beteille

Equality as a constitutional value that must sit with, and sometimes against, ranked diversity.