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Q1(b)

"The decade of 1950s was the golden period of village studies in Indian Sociology." Explain the statement

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2023 · 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

- Explain why the 1950s are called the golden period of village studies in Indian sociology
- Name the main field studies, the planning context, and later limits of the village-as-India idea

Revision summary

The 1950s joined planning, **Community Development**, and intensive village ethnography.

Srinivas, Dube, Marriott, Bailey, Mayer and others built the classic monographs.

Dominant caste, factions, and the field view came from this decade.

The village was treated as a keyhole to Indian society.

Beteille and class analysis later limited that claim.

Introduction

The 1950s joined new Indian universities, **Community Development**, and intensive village ethnography. Indian sociology for a decade treated the village as the keyhole through which civilisation, caste, and planned change could be seen.

Body

Why the decade was 'golden'

- Independence, the **Planning Commission**, and **Community Development** asked for field knowledge of caste, leadership, and agrarian relations.
- **Anthropology and sociology shared methods:** long residence, caste mapping, and the village monograph became the professional product.
- Funding, foreign collaboration, and the idea that India still lived in villages made the field both patriotic and scientific.

Landmark studies

- M. N. Srinivas's Rampura work developed dominant caste, Sanskritization, and the field view against a book view of India.
- S. C. Dube's Shamirpet, McKim Marriott's Kishan Garhi, Oscar Lewis's Rampur, F. G. Bailey's Bisipara, and Adrian Mayer's Ramkheri mapped rank, faction, and economy.
- M. N. Srinivas's edited village volumes and the Dumont-Pocock call for a sociology of India framed the village as a theoretical object, not only a place.

Limits already visible

- Andre Beteille later argued that a village cannot simply represent India's civilisational values, because texts, towns, and the state also make India.
- Many monographs underplayed class struggle that Desai placed at the centre, and they underplayed women and Adivasi hinterlands.
- The golden period is therefore a peak of method and archive, not a complete theory of Indian society.

Flow diagram

Community Development planning -> 1950s village studies

Field view Srinivas Marriott -> 1950s village studies

1950s village studies -> Dominant caste factions rank

1950s village studies -> Later critique Beteille Desai

Conclusion

The 1950s were golden because they produced a dense, comparable village archive just as the new state planned rural change. Later sociology kept the field view and dropped the claim that one village is India.

Facts & figures

Rampura / Srinivas

Field base for dominant caste and Sanskritization as observed processes.

Kishan Garhi / Marriott

Interactional ranking of caste through food and service exchanges.

Shamirpet / Dube

A Telangana village monograph linking social structure to development.

Bisipara / Bailey

Odisha study of caste, politics, and economic change.

Community Development

1950s state programme that demanded village-level social knowledge.

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