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Q1(b)

Justify that the Indian traditions are modernizing. Also discuss its contributing factors.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2025 · 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

- Define modernization of Indian tradition in **Yogendra Singh's** sense
- Show that traditions are not simply dying; they are being recast
- **Name contributing factors:** colonial law, education, market, media, state, and internal reform
- Give caste, family and religion as illustrations

Revision summary

Yogendra Singh treats modernization of Indian tradition as internal and external change together.

Sanskritization, westernization and the Rudolphs' modernity of tradition describe recasting, not simple death.

Law, education, media, the developmental state and the post-1991 market are the main levers.

Caste, household and religion persist in new organisational forms.

- **Unevenness remains:** mobility in class can coexist with control in marriage.

Introduction

Indian traditions are **modernizing**, not evaporating. **Yogendra Singh** argued that change comes from inside the civilisation (**orthogenetic**) and from contact with Islam, the West and the colonial state (**heterogenetic**). The outcome is a reconstituted tradition: caste associations, temple trusts, and arranged love marriages sit beside the Constitution and the market.

Body

Continuity through change

M. N. Srinivas named **sanskritization** and **westernization** as twin processes. A jati copies the diet, ritual and education of a locally higher group, and also takes English, office and the vote. **Lloyd and Susanne Rudolph** called this the **modernity of tradition**: caste sabhas become interest groups; panchayats become statutory bodies. **Milton Singer** saw the "great tradition" travelling into Madras industry through ritual and kinship.

Contributing factors are stacked. Colonial law and the census objectified community. Missionary and state **education** created a bilingual elite. Railways, print and now the

smartphone spread both katha and coaching. The post-colonial **state**-reservation, Hindu Code, **NEP 2020**-rewrites who may enter school and office. The **market** after 1991 sells lifestyle while matrimonial sites sell gotra filters. Internal reformers-Bhakti, **Phule**, **Gandhi**, **Ambedkar**-gave tradition a language of equality without always abandoning religious idiom.

Where we see it

Caste does not vanish; it **differentiates**. Endogamy remains high; occupation and politics open. The joint household may split residentially while remaining a **property and ritual unit** (I. P. Desai, A. M. Shah). Festivals become televised public culture. Yoga and Ayurveda are packaged as global wellness, which is a modern career for an old repertoire.

The risk is to call every change "modernization." **Dipankar Gupta** notes that inter-caste violence and khap diktats are also contemporary. Tradition modernizes unevenly: a software engineer may still police a sister's marriage.

Flow diagram

Orthogenetic reform -> Modernizing tradition
Heterogenetic contact -> Modernizing tradition
Modernizing tradition -> Caste as association
Modernizing tradition -> Family as flexible jointness
Modernizing tradition -> State and market

Conclusion

Indian traditions modernize by differentiation and by borrowing. The contributing factors are law, school, market, media and indigenous critique. The result is not Western replica but a layered social system that still speaks in caste, kinship and dharma while using the vote, the court and the firm.

Facts & figures

Yogendra Singh

Modernization of Indian Tradition distinguishes orthogenetic and heterogenetic sources of change.

Sanskritization

Srinivas's term for collective mobility through imitation of a locally dominant or twice-born lifestyle.

NEP 2020

Recasts schooling, mother tongue and higher education; a state-led modernization of the learning tradition.