

UPSCprep Free Daily Answer Writing Initiative

Subject: Sociology

Questions

Q1. Are social movements always influenced by ideologies? Discuss. (10 Marks)

Q2. Critically analyze the functionalist view of religion. (20 Marks)

Model Structures

Q1. Are social movements always influenced by ideologies? Discuss. (10 Marks)

Introduction

- Definition of Social movements - Collective actions, guided by values and norms, mobilisation of resources, leadership and ideology.

Main Body

- Social movements guided by Ideology:
 - Social movements are a reaction to maintenance of status quo and initiation of social change. It can be in the form of protest, collective mobilization. Marx considers that social movement is revolution driven by true class consciousness of workers for establishment of communism. This substantiated the ideological premise of social change. (EXAMPLES - Labour union movement, Naxalite Movements, Regionalism promoting movements, Dalit movements, Socio religious reform movement etc)
- Sociology as not ideology specific:
 - Max Weber considers that SM are not ideological specific but also based on type of leadership, change in value system, education etc.

- Various scholars consider that social movements are the product of political isolation or economic disparity.
- Rajni Kothari considers that the green revolution, CDPs have contributed to the rise of multi party system which contributed for social movement against single party system at the centre and thus gave rise to coalition system.
- Guha and Gadgil consider that social movements are environmental movements which are issue specific and parochial in nature.
- While Smelser considers that social movements are influenced by structural conduciveness, appropriate resources, participation, media campaigns, technology etc.

Conclusion

- Therefore it can be advocated that social movements are dynamic and participative and transformed from ideological based to issue based and this can be gauged from Anti Corruption movement, Anti Posco movement, Narmada Bachao Andolan, RTI movement for the growth of inclusive society.

Simplify your UPSC Journey

Q2. Critically analyze the functionalist view of religion. (20 Marks)

Introduction

- According to Functionalism, religion acts as a conservative force by reinforcing social norms and promoting social solidarity. Functionalists contend that religion serves several functions in society.

Main Body

Emile Durkheim

- Studied Totemism among Australian Aboriginal clans in which the sacred totem represented different clans.

- Religious symbols are simultaneously symbols of God and Society, and thus when people worship religion they are also ‘worshipping society’, religious symbols serve as a simplified representation of a more complex whole, reminding individuals that they are merely small and part of a much ‘bigger picture’.
- Religion acts as a constraining (conservative) force: through religious worship (ceremonies) the ‘collective conscience’ is imprinted on the individual: they literally ‘feel’ the weight of the community on them.
- Religion reinforces a sense of belonging and shared identity to society.

Bronislaw Malinowski-

- Religion helps individuals to deal with the psychological stresses which occur in times of social change – such as births, marriage and deaths. Beliefs can help people ‘make sense of death for example and can act as a source of catharsis for the bereaved.
- Religious rituals also help society through the disruption to social order caused by life-changing events such as death.
- Religion helps people deal with situations that they cannot predict or control – e.g. the Trobriand Islanders used religious rituals when fishing in the dangerous, unpredictable ocean, but not the calm lagoons.
- Unlike Durkheim does not see religion as reflecting society as a whole, nor does he see religious ritual as ‘worshipping society’.

Talcott Parsons

- Saw the main function of religion as being the maintenance of social order.
- Religion promotes value consensus: many legal systems are based on religious morals for example.
- Like Malinowski, Parsons saw religious beliefs and rituals as helping maintain social order in times of social change (such as death) and to help individuals make sense of unpredictable events.
- Religion can also help people make sense of contradictory events.

Criticisms of the Functionalist Perspective on Religion

- Religion does not always promote harmony: it can promote conflict: there may be conflicts within religion, or between religions for example.
- Ignores the role religion can play in promoting social change.
- Secularisation means that religion performs fewer functions today: thus functionalism may be less relevant.
- Evidence on Totemism is unsound/unreliable. Even if Durkheim is right about Totemism for the clans, this does not prove that this works for all other religions.
- Applies better to smaller-scale societies with a single religion. It is harder to apply to larger- scale societies where 2 or more religious communities (religious pluralism) may be in conflict. His theory does not explain the conflict between communities, only integration.
- Theories cannot be applied to modern society due to diversity.
- Ignore religion as a source of conflict.
- Neglects dysfunctional aspects of religion e.g. the oppression of women or the poor.
- Marxism – religion is an oppressive force that creates a false collective conscience stopping the working class from seeing inequality e.g. in Animal Farm, Moses is religion.
- Feminism – religion is patriarchal and oppresses women.
- Postmodernism – symbols have lost their meaning. Therefore, religion no longer matters. It is outdated as society is now much more secular.

Conclusion

- The functionalist views of religion are relevant in contemporary times in its function of maintaining collective solidarity and cohesion.

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A promotional banner for a Sociology course. The background is a vibrant purple and blue gradient with a network of white lines and nodes. Several stylized human figures are scattered across the network, some holding question marks or exclamation marks. In the top left, the word 'Sociology' is written in a white, cursive font inside a black speech bubble. The main title 'SOCIOLOGY COMPREHENSIVE COURSE' is in large, bold, white capital letters. Below it, 'With Mentorship' is written in a smaller, italicized white font. A white rounded rectangle on the right contains the text 'Including Test Series'. In the bottom left, 'Access for 3 years' is written in white.

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