

**Sociology Daily Answer Writing****Week 2 - Day 3****Model structures****1. Compare and contrast between functionalist and Marxist perspectives on religion. 20****Model Structure****Introduction**

- Religion is a set of beliefs, symbols, and practices (for example rituals), which is based on the idea of the sacred, and which unites believers into a socio-religious community

**Main Body**

- Durkheim defines religion as - A religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden—beliefs and practices which unite in one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them
- Durkheim provides a functionalist theory of religion with the help of Totemism
  - Totemism is a system of beliefs and rites centered around the totem.
  - The totem is very often an animal or a vegetable species or mythical ancestor.
  - The totem is sacred; it is held in respect.
  - The totem cannot be Approached without proper rites and ceremonies.
  - To Approach the totem which is sacred, one has to purify oneself both internally and externally.
  - Totem also serves as a symbol of the clan identity. Totem of the clan is also the totem of its members.
  - Against the sacred world of the totem lies the profane world. The profane world includes human beings and all that is not related with the sacred totem
- Functionalists say that there are two main functions of religion:
  - Cognitive function: Religion can mold people's thinking and so help them to live and adapt to their conditions of existence. One who participates in religious practices, emerges as a superior person with strength and vitality to face the world. This perception of religion has to be understood in the context of

Durkheim's argument that religion has continued to survive all along, because it has fulfilled certain needs. Religion generates a particular mental state within the individual, which raises one above oneself and helps us to lead a superior life

- Social function: The collective representation is the result of 'an immense cooperation'. They emerge, when the whole community comes together, to enact certain rites in response to the sacred.
- Parson's Evolutionary Structural Functional Theory of Religion
  - Religion- part of Cultural system (in AGIL framework)
    - It provides guideline in the form of belief, norms, values, etc. for the social action to be performed
      - Eg. 10 commandments in Christianity, Eightfold path in Buddhism, etc
  - Like Malinowski, he also views religion as addressing certain problems of society like unforeseeable events and uncertainty.
  - Religion helps in calming down the anxiety and stress which threaten the normal course of life
  - It provides a range of answers and makes suffering meaningful.

### **Marxist Perspective**

- In contrast to functionalists, Marxists have the opinion that religion is the *opium of masses*.
- It provides temporary respite to alienated working class and it is used by the bourgeoisie to subjugate the proletariat
- Religion propagates the ruling class ideology → thus helps in maintaining status quo
  - Men are made into believing that power lies in the supernatural and not with the men themselves
  - Religion appears to be the external force controlling the person's destiny, but in reality - it is man made.
- Marxists say that religion prevents polarization of proletariat and is a hindrance to revolution

- Lenin: *‘Religion is a kind of spiritual gin, in which, the slaves of capitalism drown their human shapes and their claim to decent life’.*
- Later sociologists like Merton provided a balanced analysis of religion
- Merton says that there are functions, dysfunctions and non-functions of any social phenomenon

**Conclusion**

- Having discussed the functions of religion, the dysfunctions of religion are communalism and fundamentalism
  - And as a solution to these dysfunctions, religion must be a non-function in the structure of polity
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**2. Elaborate on the social necessity of Religion.****10****Model Structure****Introduction**

- The sociology of religion is concerned with how different religious institutions actually function.
- In modern society sociologists focus on the organisation of religion which it survives.

**Main Body**

- Religion as a primary source of the most deep-seated norms and values - religious practices are likely to occur in home and in some other natural settings.
- Durkheim’s theory - religion as a major source of social solidarity and exultation. Religion provides believers with a common set of norms and values (unified system of belief) which helps to create a bond between moral communities. It shapes the behaviour of individuals towards one another.

- Parsons theory - religion shapes the cultural system of the community - thus it plays a role in Social Integration (Langar in Gurudwara, Maata ki chowki Bhandara) and in Social Control (Fatwa in Islam).
- Malinowski study of Trobriand islanders - religion assures continuity in the phase of discontinuity. (Alienation by stress thus people go to Ashrams)
- People often get religion when their fundamental sense of social order is threatened by the economic hardship, loneliness, grief, physical suffering or poor health.
- Religion acts as a force which mobilizes the members in Social movements (socio religious movements - Arya samaj, Deoband movement)
- Also mention the Dysfunctions of Religion in short –
  - Communal clashes, Social Disaster, Fundamentalism, etc.
  - Feminists view religion as a Patriarchal System that provides men with more rights than women
  - Marx views religion as a state instrument to propagate a ruling class ideology

**Conclusion:**

- Sociology helps to identify the forces which bring existence to religion and looks beyond the purely personal spiritual and psychological factors.