

CUET · SOCIOLOGY · CLASS XI · CODE 326

Indian Sociologists

CUET unit: Understanding Society — Indian Sociologists / Social Institutions: Continuity and Change

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Snapshot

- Traces the emergence of sociology in India: formal university teaching began at the University of Bombay in 1919, followed by Calcutta and Lucknow in the 1920s.
- Introduces two early "accidental" pioneers — L.K. Ananthakrishna Iyer and Sarat Chandra Roy — and four foundational figures: G.S. Ghurye, D.P. Mukerji, A.R. Desai and M.N. Srinivas.
- Establishes how each scholar adapted western sociology to Indian conditions: Ghurye on caste/race and tribes, D.P. Mukerji on tradition and change, Desai on the modern capitalist/welfare state, Srinivas on village studies.
- For CUET, expect direct-recall questions on biographical facts, founders/journals, the six features of Ghurye's caste definition, D.P.'s tradition principles, Desai's welfare-state features, and the Srinivas–Dumont village debate.

Detailed Notes

2.1 Core concepts

Sociology is "a relatively young" discipline even in Europe, established only about a century before the textbook was written. In India, "interest in sociological ways of thinking is a little more than a century old, but **formal university teaching of sociology only began in 1919 at the University of Bombay**" (NCERT §opening, p. 82). In the 1920s, two other universities — Calcutta and Lucknow — also began programmes of teaching and research in sociology and anthropology. Today every major Indian university has a department of sociology, social anthropology or anthropology, and often more than one of these disciplines is represented.

The Indian context raised distinctive questions that the European founders had never faced. India experienced modernity not as a self-generated transformation but through colonial subjugation; it was an ancient civilisation that nevertheless contained "primitive" societies within itself; and it was about to begin a unique experiment in planned development and constitutional democracy (NCERT §opening, p. 82). The pioneers of Indian sociology therefore had to formulate new questions for themselves rather than receive them "readymade" from European training. As is "often the case, in the beginning Indians became sociologists and anthropologists mostly by accident" (NCERT §opening, p. 83).

L.K. Ananthakrishna Iyer (1861–1937) was the first of these accidental pioneers. He began his career as a clerk, became a school teacher and then a college teacher in Cochin state in present-day Kerala. In 1902 he was asked by the Dewan of Cochin to assist with an ethnographic survey of the state — the British government wanted similar surveys done in all princely states and presidency areas. Iyer did this work on a purely voluntary basis, lecturing at the Maharajah's College at Ernakulam on weekdays and serving as the unpaid Superintendent of Ethnography on weekends. He was later invited to assist with a Mysore ethnographic survey too. He was invited to lecture at Madras University and appointed Reader at Calcutta (1917–1932), where he helped set up India's first post-graduate anthropology department. He was elected President of the Ethnology section of the Indian Science Congress, was awarded an honorary doctorate by a German university during a European lecture tour, and was conferred the titles of Rao Bahadur and Dewan Bahadur by Cochin state (NCERT §Pioneers, pp. 83).

Sarat Chandra Roy (1871–1942), a lawyer, became the second "accidental anthropologist" — the pioneering ethnographer of Chhotanagpur (present-day Jharkhand). He took his law degree at Ripon College, Calcutta, having earlier done graduate and post-graduate degrees in English. Soon after he began practising law, he went to Ranchi in 1898 to take up an English-teaching job at a Christian missionary school. He stayed there for the next forty-four years and became the leading authority on the tribal peoples of the region. His anthropological interest began when he was appointed official interpreter in the Ranchi courts and had to interpret tribal customs and laws to the judges. He produced major monographs on the **Oraon, Munda, and Kharia**, published over 100 articles, and **founded the journal Man in India in 1922** — the earliest journal of its kind in India, still published today (NCERT §Pioneers, pp. 83–84).

G.S. Ghurye (1893–1983) is considered the founder of institutionalised sociology in India. After winning a Bombay scholarship in 1919, he studied at the London School of Economics under L.T. Hobhouse, then moved to Cambridge to work under W.H.R. Rivers; when Rivers died, A.C. Haddon supervised his completion, and his Ph.D. was awarded in 1923. He took over as Head of the Bombay sociology department in 1924 and led it for thirty-five years; he **founded the Indian Sociological Society in 1951** and **launched its journal Sociological Bulletin in 1952** (NCERT §Ghurye box, p. 85). Ghurye's Bombay department was the first in India to combine teaching and research in one institution and to merge social anthropology with sociology into a composite discipline (NCERT §Ghurye intro, p. 84).

Ghurye's Cambridge doctoral thesis was published as **Caste and Race in India** (1932). He critiqued **Herbert Risley's** racial theory of caste, which proposed that caste rank was correlated with measurable racial differences between Aryans and non-Aryans (cranial index, nasal index, etc.). Ghurye, while accepting that the Aryan/non-Aryan thesis was "broadly true for northern India", insisted that outside the Indo-Gangetic plain inter-group anthropometric differences were not systematic enough to sustain Risley's claim (NCERT §Ghurye on Caste and Race, pp. 87–88). On tribes, Ghurye intervened in

the 1930s–40s debate against British administrator-anthropologists like **Verrier Elwin**, who wanted protectionist isolation of tribes. Ghurye became "the best-known exponent of the nationalist view", calling Indian tribes "**backward Hindus**" rather than distinct cultural groups, on the ground that protectionism would freeze them as "museums" of primitive culture (NCERT §Ghurye on tribes, p. 86).

Ghurye's **six-feature definition of caste** — a near-perennial CUET question — is: (i) segmental division of society; (ii) hierarchical division; (iii) restrictions on social interaction (purity/pollution, untouchability); (iv) differential rights and duties for different sections; (v) restriction on choice of occupation; (vi) strict restrictions on marriage (endogamy combined with exogamy rules) (NCERT §Ghurye on Caste, pp. 88–89).

D.P. Mukerji (1894–1961) was a key figure of the "Lucknow trinity" — **Radhakamal Mukerjee** (founder of the Lucknow department), **D.P. Mukerji**, and **D.N. Majumdar**. He came to sociology from history and economics and was strongly influenced by Marxism — but, more as a method of analysis than as a political programme. He wrote **Introduction to Indian Music**, a classic of musicology (NCERT §D.P. Mukerji intro, pp. 89–90). On tradition, D.P. observed that the Sanskrit roots of the word **tradition** are **parampara** (succession) and **aitihya** (which shares its root with **itihās**, history). He argued that Indian tradition recognises **three principles of change**: **shruti**, **smṛiti**, and **anubhava**. Of these, the last — **anubhava**, personal/collective experience — is the **revolutionary principle**. In India, **anubhava** flowered into **prem** (love) through the bhakti and Sufi movements (NCERT §D.P. on Tradition, pp. 90–91). D.P. argued that Indian culture is group/sect/caste-oriented, not "voluntaristic" or individualistic in the western sense, and that class conflict had been "smoothed and covered by caste traditions". He explicitly rejected **buddhi-vichar** (discursive reason) as the dominant agent of change in the Indian context.

A.R. Desai (1915–1994) was a life-long Marxist who was a member of the Communist Party of India (1934–39) and later of the Revolutionary Socialist Party (1953–81). He submitted his Ph.D. at Bombay under **G.S. Ghurye** in 1946; the thesis was published in 1948 as **Social Background of Indian Nationalism** — a path-breaking Marxist analysis of Indian nationalism. Other major works include **Rural Sociology in India**, **Rural Transition in India** (1961), and **State and Society in India: Essays in Dissent** (1975) (NCERT §Desai box & intro, pp. 92–93). Desai's analysis of the welfare state lists **five features**: (i) it is a positive/interventionist state, not a **laissez-faire** one; (ii) it is a democratic state — which is why most western theorists excluded socialist or communist welfare regimes; (iii) it combines a mixed economy where private and publicly-owned enterprises co-exist; (iv) it pursues redistribution and reduces inequality; and (v) it must meet test criteria including freedom from poverty, transformation of capitalist profit motives, stable development free from booms/busts, and full employment. Desai's verdict: the welfare state is "something of a myth" because most modern capitalist states fail these criteria (NCERT §A.R. Desai on the State, pp. 93–94).

M.N. Srinivas (1916–1999) earned two doctorates — Bombay (1944, under Ghurye) and Oxford (1947, under Radcliffe-Brown and then Evans-Pritchard). His Oxford thesis was published as **Religion and Society among the Coorgs of South India**. He founded the sociology department at Maharaja Sayajirao University, Baroda (1951) and the sociology department at the Delhi School of Economics (1959), and later moved to the Institute for Social and Economic Change in Bangalore (NCERT §Srinivas box, pp. 95–96). On the village, Srinivas argued — against **Louis Dumont**, who believed caste, not the village, was the relevant unit — that the **Indian village was a relevant social entity**. He criticised the British administrator-anthropologists who had portrayed the Indian village as an unchanging, self-sufficient "little republic". Village studies became the dominant field of Indian sociology in the 1950s, helped along by Srinivas together with **S.C. Dube** and **D.N. Majumdar**; they offered first-hand ethnographic methods and eye-witness accounts of the rapid social change of newly independent India (NCERT §Srinivas on Village, pp. 96–97). The four major Indian sociologists "Indianised" sociology in distinctive ways — Ghurye brought classical Indian knowledge to bear on western-trained anthropology; D.P. rediscovered tradition without being blind to its flaws; Desai brought a rare Marxist critique of the post-Independence Indian state; Srinivas designed a new village-centred agenda (NCERT §Conclusion, p. 98).

2.2 Definitions to memorise

Term	Definition	Page
Administrator–anthropologists	British colonial officials (19th–early 20th c.) who conducted anthropological surveys/censuses; e.g. Thurston, Crooke, Risley, Hutton	99
Anthropometry	Branch of anthropology that measures human body — cranium volume, head circumference, nose length — to study racial types	99
Assimilation	Process by which one (usually larger) culture gradually absorbs another, so the assimilated culture is no longer visible	99
Endogamy	Social institution that defines a boundary within which marriage is permissible; e.g. caste endogamy	99
Exogamy	Social institution defining a boundary outside which marriage must be contracted (sapinda, sagotra, village exogamy)	99
Laissez-faire	French phrase meaning "let be" — political/economic doctrine of minimum state intervention	99
Parampara	Sanskrit root of "tradition" meaning succession (D.P. Mukerji)	91
Aitihya	Sanskrit equivalent of tradition, same root as itihās (history)	91

Term	Definition	Page
Anubhava	Personal/collective experience — the revolutionary principle in Indian tradition (D.P. Mukerji)	91
Buddhi-vichar	Discursive reason — D.P. argued it was NOT the dominant change-agent in India	91
Shruti	"That which is heard" — one of the three principles of change in Indian tradition (D.P.)	91
Smriti	"That which is remembered" — second principle of change in Indian tradition (D.P.)	91
Prem	Love — the form anubhava took in the bhakti and Sufi movements (D.P.)	91
Dwija	"Twice-born" upper castes — reference group for Sanskritisation	99
Welfare state	Positive, democratic, mixed-economy state that pursues redistribution and freedom from poverty (Desai's five features)	93–94
Ethnography	Description of the way of life of a people based on fieldwork; the method of the early Indian anthropologists	83
Composite discipline	Ghurye's vision of sociology and social anthropology merged in one institutional setting	84
Village exogamy	Marriage rule (parts of north India) requiring spouses to be from outside the village	99
Indian Sociological Society	Founded by Ghurye in 1951	85
Sociological Bulletin	Journal launched by Ghurye in 1952	85
Man in India	Journal founded by Sarat Chandra Roy in 1922	84
Caste and Race in India	Ghurye's 1932 doctoral thesis publication	87
Social Background of Indian Nationalism	Desai's 1948 Marxist analysis	92

2.3 Diagrams / processes to remember

- Timeline box "Govind Sadashiv Ghurye (1893–1983)": Bombay scholarship 1919 → LSE (Hobhouse) → Cambridge (Rivers, then Haddon) → Ph.D. 1923 → Bombay Head 1924 → Indian Sociological Society 1951 → **Sociological Bulletin** 1952 (p. 85).
- Timeline box "Dhurjati Prasad Mukerji (1894–1961)": Lecturer Lucknow 1924 → Director of Information UP 1938–41 → Professor Lucknow 1949 → Presidential Address Indian Sociological Society 1955 → died 5 December 1961 (p. 89).
- Timeline box "Akshay Ramanlal Desai (1915–1994)": CPI member 1934–39 → Ph.D. under Ghurye 1946 → **Social Background of Indian Nationalism** 1948 → RSP 1953–

81 → Rural Transition in India 1961 → State and Society in India: Essays in Dissent 1975 (p. 93).

- Timeline box "Mysore Narasimhachar Srinivas (1916–1999)": Bombay Ph.D. under Ghurye 1944 → Oxford D.Phil. 1947 → Baroda 1951 → Delhi School of Economics 1959 → Institute of Social and Economic Change Bangalore 1971 (p. 96).
- Conceptual flow: Risley's race-caste thesis → Ghurye's partial critique (true only for north India) → six-feature comprehensive definition of caste (pp. 87–89).
- The "Lucknow trinity" diagram: Radhakamal Mukerjee (founder) — D.P. Mukerji — D.N. Majumdar (p. 89).
- Map of debates: Ghurye vs. Elwin on tribes (assimilation vs. protection); Srinivas vs. Dumont on the village (relevant unit vs. caste); Desai vs. liberal welfare-statists (welfare state as myth).

2.4 Common confusions / NTA trap points

- **Man in India** (1922) was founded by **Sarat Chandra Roy**, not by Ghurye; **Sociological Bulletin** (1952) was launched by **Ghurye**.
- Sociology teaching began at **Bombay (1919)**, NOT Calcutta or Lucknow (which followed in the 1920s).
- Ghurye called tribes "**backward Hindus**" (nationalist/assimilationist view) — Verrier Elwin and British administrator-anthropologists were the **protectionists**.
- D.P. Mukerji's three principles of change are **shruti, smriti, anubhava** — **anubhava** is the revolutionary one (not **buddhi-vichar**, which D.P. rejected as the dominant force).
- A.R. Desai's Ph.D. supervisor was **G.S. Ghurye** (1946) — not a Marxist scholar — even though Desai himself was Marxist.
- M.N. Srinivas argued **for** the village as a unit of analysis; **Louis Dumont** argued **against** it (caste was more important).
- **Caste and Race in India** (Ghurye, 1932) critiqued **Herbert Risley** — not Hutton or Risley's contemporary Crooke.
- Ghurye worked under **Rivers and then Haddon** at Cambridge — not under Radcliffe-Brown (who supervised Srinivas at Oxford).
- The "Lucknow trinity" includes **Radhakamal Mukerjee, D.P. Mukerji, and D.N. Majumdar** — note the **Mukerjee** (with double 'e') / **Mukerji** (single 'i') distinction in spelling.
- Desai's welfare-state list has **five** features — students who memorise only three (intervention, democracy, mixed economy) miss redistribution and the test-criteria component.
- Srinivas earned **two doctorates** (Bombay 1944 + Oxford 1947) — common distractor mentions only Oxford.

2.5 Thinkers / theories table

Name	Concept	Key Idea	NCERT page
L.K. Ananthakrishna lyer	Accidental anthropology	Volunteer ethnographer for Cochin state survey (1902); first PG anthropology dept at Calcutta	83
Sarat Chandra Roy	Tribal monographs; Man in India	Authored Oraon, Munda, Kharia studies; founded Man in India journal in 1922	83–84
G.S. Ghurye	Caste and race; tribes as "backward Hindus"; six-feature caste definition	Critiqued Risley's race theory; founded Indian Sociological Society 1951; Sociological Bulletin 1952	84–89
Herbert Risley	Racial theory of caste	Caste correlated with Aryan/non-Aryan anthropometric differences — critiqued by Ghurye	87–88
Verrier Elwin	Protectionism for tribes	Argued for isolating tribes; Ghurye's nationalist opponent	86
W.H.R. Rivers / A.C. Haddon	Ghurye's Cambridge supervisors	Trained Ghurye in British social anthropology	85
D.P. Mukerji	Tradition and change; shruti-smriti-anubhava	Anubhava (experience) is the revolutionary principle; Indian culture is group-oriented; prem via bhakti/Sufi	89–91
Radhakamal Mukerjee	Founder of Lucknow department; "Lucknow trinity"	Senior figure of the Lucknow school of sociology	89
D.N. Majumdar	Lucknow trinity; village studies	Worked with Srinivas on village ethnography	89, 97
A.R. Desai	Marxist analysis of Indian state; welfare state as myth	Social Background of Indian Nationalism (1948); five features of welfare state	92–94
M.N. Srinivas	Village as social entity; Sanskritisation; Religion and Society among the Coorgs	Argued against Dumont; founded sociology depts at Baroda (1951) and DSE (1959)	95–97
Louis Dumont	Homo Hierarchicus — caste as the relevant unit	Opponent in the Srinivas–Dumont village debate	96
			95

Name	Concept	Key Idea	NCERT page
Radcliffe-Brown / Evans-Pritchard	Srinivas's Oxford supervisors	Structural-functional anthropology lineage	
S.C. Dube	Indian village ethnography	Co-worker with Srinivas in the village-studies wave of 1950s	97

Practice MCQs

PYQ Alignment

This chapter is a perennial favourite of CUET Sociology paper-setters: typically 4–6 questions appear each year, dominated by direct-recall items on founders/journals (Ghurye, Sarat Chandra Roy, *Man in India*, *Sociological Bulletin*, Indian Sociological Society 1951), Ghurye's six-feature caste definition, D.P. Mukerji's tradition principles (*shruti*, *smriti*, *anubhava*), Desai's welfare-state features, and the Srinivas–Dumont debate on villages. Match-the-following and Assertion–Reason items are common given the dense biographical data in the four timeline boxes.