

CUET · SOCIOLOGY · CLASS XI · CODE 326

Understanding Social Institutions

CUET unit: Introducing Sociology — Social Institutions (Family, Marriage, Kinship; Politics; Economics; Religion; Education)

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Snapshot

- Establishes the sociological idea of "institution" as a rule-bound social arrangement that both constrains and provides opportunity, viewable as means or as an end (family, religion, state, education).
- Contrasts functionalist and conflict views of institutions, then applies them to five domains: (i) family/marriage/kinship, (ii) politics, (iii) economics/work, (iv) religion, (v) education.
- Heavy emphasis on definitions (monogamy, polygamy, polygyny, polyandry, endogamy, exogamy, sovereignty, citizenship, division of labour) — a steady supplier of factual MCQs.
- Introduces classical inputs (Durkheim on sacred/profane and on education's common base; Max Weber on Calvinism and capitalism) that are recurring CUET hooks.
- Touches contemporary Indian data — joint family persistence (A.M. Shah), declining child sex ratio, female-headed households among Kolams — frequently used in case/example MCQs.

Detailed Notes

2.1 Core concepts

An **institution** is something that works according to rules established or acknowledged by law or custom. Institutions are simultaneously constraining and enabling — they restrict the range of actions an individual can take, but they also provide opportunities by stabilising expectations and pooling resources. Institutions can be viewed as a means to particular ends (e.g., the family as a means of socialisation) or as ends in themselves — "family, religion, state, education" can be cherished for their own sake (NCERT §I, p. 40). Two sociological views contrast here. The **functionalist view** treats social institutions as complex sets of norms, beliefs, values and role-relationships that emerge to meet societal needs; family and religion are informal institutions, while law and formal education are formal institutions (NCERT §I, p. 41). The **conflict view** counters that all institutions — familial, religious, political, economic, legal, educational — operate in the interest of dominant sections (class, caste, tribe, gender), so that the ideas of the ruling class become the ruling ideas of society (NCERT §I, p. 41).

Family, marriage and kinship (§ II). The family is universal yet variable. The functionalist position holds that modern industrial society works best when women take charge of the family and men of breadwinning — the husband adopts an "**instrumental**" role and the wife an "**affective**" role (NCERT §II, p. 42). But Indian studies (Singh 1993) show that families need not become nuclear under industrialisation. Sociologist **A.M. Shah** argues that the joint family has steadily increased in post-Independence India because rising life expectancy (men: 32.5 → 55.4 years; women: 31.7 → 55.7 years between 1941–50 and 1981–85) has raised the proportion of elderly people, most of whom live in joint households (NCERT §II, p. 42). **Residence rules** distinguish **matrilocal** (couple lives with the woman's parents) from **patrilocal** (couple lives with the man's parents); **patriarchy** means men exercise authority while **matriarchy** means women hold dominant authority. Note that "while matrilineal societies exist, the same cannot be claimed about matriarchal societies" (NCERT §II, p. 43). **Female-headed households** arise from male out-migration, widowhood, or desertion; the box on the **Kolams** of south-eastern Maharashtra / northern Andhra Pradesh shows that female-headship is an accepted norm there (NCERT §II box, p. 42). The family is also linked to wider spheres: post-unification Germany (1990s) saw a sharp decline in marriage as welfare protections for married couples were withdrawn — an "unintended consequence" of policy change (NCERT §II, pp. 43–44). India's sex ratio fell from 972 (1901) to 940 (2011) and the child sex ratio dropped from 934 (1991) to 919 (2011), with Punjab at 846 girls per 1,000 boys (NCERT §II box, p. 44).

Forms of marriage are classified by number of partners: **monogamy** (one spouse at a time), **serial monogamy** (remarriage after death or divorce), **polygamy** with two sub-types — **polygyny** (one husband, multiple wives) and **polyandry** (one wife, multiple husbands). NCERT notes that polyandry "often responds to harsh economic conditions or extreme poverty" (NCERT §II, p. 45). **Endogamy** is marriage within a culturally defined group (e.g., caste endogamy); **exogamy** is marriage outside one's group; **village exogamy** is practised in parts of north India (NCERT §II, p. 46). **Family of orientation** is the family one is born into; **family of procreation** is the family formed by one's own marriage. **Consanguineous kin** are kin by blood; **affines** are kin by marriage (NCERT §II, pp. 46–47).

Work and economic life (§ III). Work is defined as the carrying out of tasks (paid or unpaid) requiring mental and physical effort to produce goods or services that meet human needs (NCERT §III, p. 47). The **informal economy** lies outside regular employment statistics — transactions outside formal employment, sometimes for cash but often in direct exchange of goods or services. Modern economies show a highly complex division of labour, separation of work and home, factories, mass production, the moving assembly line, and — most recently — a shift to "flexible production" and "decentralisation of work" under globalisation (NCERT §III, pp. 48–51).

Politics, power and authority (§ IV). **Power** is the ability of individuals or groups to carry out their will even when opposed by others; it is relational and zero-sum.

Authority is the legitimate form of power — institutionalised because accepted as fair and just (NCERT §IV, pp. 52–53). **Stateless societies** maintained order without modern government via balanced opposition, cross-cutting alliances of kinship, marriage and residence, and shared rites (NCERT §IV, p. 53). The modern state has a political apparatus, a legal system, and military force; functionalists see the state as representing all sections of society, while conflict theorists see it as serving the dominant section. Modern states are defined by **sovereignty** (the undisputed political rule of a state over a given territorial area), **citizenship**, and **nationalism**. Citizenship rights are classified into **civil** (freedom of residence, speech, religion, property, equal justice), **political** (vote, stand for office), and **social** (minimum economic welfare/security — the basis of the welfare state) (NCERT §IV, pp. 53–54).

Religion (§ V). The sociological study of religion is empirical, comparative and relational — not theological or judgemental. Religions share three things: symbols invoking awe, rituals or ceremonies, and a community of believers (NCERT §V, p. 55). **Emile Durkheim's** sacred/profane distinction is foundational — the sacred is set apart, surrounded by awe, while the profane is the realm of everyday life. The sacred often involves the supernatural, but **early Buddhism and Confucianism** had no conception of the supernatural and yet revered sacred things or persons (NCERT §V, pp. 55–56). **Secularisation** is the classical thesis that as societies modernise, religion becomes less influential (NCERT §V, p. 56). **Max Weber's** pioneering work argued that **Calvinism** — a branch of Protestant Christianity — combining the doctrine of predestination with frugal living and worldly success as a sign of God's favour, exerted an important influence on the rise of capitalism by turning the investment of profits into "something like a holy creed" (NCERT §V, p. 56).

Education (§ VI). In simple societies, education was largely informal — learning by participation in everyday life. Modern complex societies require formal schooling because of the division of labour, the separation of work and home, the rise of state systems, and the need to inculcate abstract **universalistic values** as against the **particularistic values** of family, kin, tribe, caste or religion (NCERT §VI, pp. 57–58). **Durkheim** held that every society needs a "common base — a certain number of ideas, sentiments and practices which education must inculcate in all children indiscriminately, to whatever social category they belong" (Durkheim 1956:69) (NCERT §VI, p. 58). The conflict view sees education as a major stratifying agent — inequality of educational opportunity is a product of social stratification; elite vs mass schooling deepens divides; and SC/ST/girl-child dropouts during cultivation seasons illustrate how class, caste and gender intersect in determining access (NCERT §VI, pp. 58–59).

2.2 Definitions to memorise

Term	Definition	Page
Citizen	A member of a political community having both rights and duties associated with that membership	60

Term	Definition	Page
Division of Labour	The specialisation of work tasks; international in scope in the modern world	60
Endogamy	When marriage is within a specific caste, class or tribal group	60
Exogamy	When marriage occurs outside a certain group of relations	60
Gender	Social expectations about behaviour regarded as appropriate for members of each sex	60
Ideology	Shared ideas/beliefs that serve to justify the interests of dominant groups	60
Legitimacy	The belief that a particular political order is just and valid	60
Monogamy	When marriage involves one husband and one wife alone	60
Polygamy	When marriage involves more than one mate at one time	60
Polyandry	When more than one man is married to a woman	60
Polygyny	When more than one woman is married to a man	60
Service Industries	Industries concerned with the production of services rather than manufactured goods	60
Sovereignty	The undisputed political rule of a state over a given territorial area	60
State Society	A society which possesses a formal apparatus of government	60
Stateless Society	A society which lacks formal institutions of government	60
Social Mobility	Movement from one status or occupation to another	60
Empirical Investigation	Factual enquiry carried out in any given area of sociological study	60
Authority	Power that is accepted as legitimate, that is, as right and just	53
Power	Ability of individuals or groups to carry out their will even when opposed	52–53
Matrilineal	Descent traced through the mother	43
Patrilineal	Descent traced through the father	43
Family of orientation	Family one is born into	47
Family of procreation	Family formed by marriage	47
Sacred / profane	Durkheimian distinction — sacred set apart from everyday life	55–56

2.3 Diagrams / processes to remember

- Sex Ratio in India 1901–2011 table — 972 (1901) declining to 940 (2011); child sex ratio 934 (1991) → 919 (2011); Punjab 846 (NCERT §II box, p. 44).
- Life-expectancy figures used by A.M. Shah — men 32.5→55.4, women 31.7→55.7 between 1941–50 and 1981–85 — driving the joint-household argument (NCERT §II, p. 42).
- Visuals contrasting "Cloth production in a factory" vs "Threshing of paddy in a village" — the modern factory / traditional craft contrast (NCERT pp. 50–51).
- Visual on "Two types of schools" used to discuss elite vs mass schooling (NCERT §VI, p. 58).
- Weber's chain: predestination → search for signs of God's grace in worldly work → frugal living → investment of profits → capitalism (NCERT §V, p. 56).
- Citizenship rights ladder: civil → political → social (welfare-state basis) (p. 54).
- Marriage typology tree: monogamy / serial monogamy / polygamy → polygyny / polyandry (p. 45).

2.4 Common confusions / NTA trap points

- "Matrilineal" is NOT "matriarchal" — matrilineal societies (descent traced through the mother) exist, but matriarchal societies (where women hold dominant authority) do not, per the NCERT (p. 43).
- Polygyny (one husband, multiple wives) vs polyandry (one wife, multiple husbands) — students frequently swap the two; polyandry is the one tied to harsh economic conditions / extreme poverty (p. 45).
- Serial monogamy is still monogamy (one spouse at a time, with remarriage after death/divorce) — not polygamy (p. 45).
- Endogamy = within the group; exogamy = outside the group — and village exogamy is specifically attributed to parts of north India (p. 46).
- Family of orientation (birth) vs family of procreation (formed by marriage) — easy to flip.
- Power vs authority — authority is the legitimate form of power, not a synonym for it (pp. 52–53).
- Weber linked capitalism to Calvinism specifically, not to Protestantism as a whole or to Catholicism (p. 56).
- Durkheim's "sacred/profane" — the sacred is not necessarily supernatural (early Buddhism, Confucianism are NCERT's counter-examples) (pp. 55–56).
- A.M. Shah's argument is that joint families have **increased**, not decreased, in post-Independence India — the opposite of the modernisation-theory expectation (p. 42).
- The husband's "instrumental" role and wife's "affective" role come from the functionalist (Parsonian) view, not from the conflict view (p. 42).

2.5 Thinkers / theories table

Name	Concept	Key Idea	NCERT page
Emile Durkheim	Sacred / profane; common base in education	Sacred is set apart; education must inculcate a common base across categories	55–56, 58
Max Weber	Calvinism and capitalism	Predestination + worldly asceticism + reinvestment of profits = spirit of capitalism	56
Karl Marx (conflict view)	Ruling-class ideology	All institutions operate in the interest of dominant sections; ruling ideas are ruling-class ideas	41
A.M. Shah	Persistence of the joint family	Rising life expectancy increases elderly population, raising joint-family proportions	42
Yogendra Singh (1993)	Critique of nuclearisation thesis	Indian families need not become nuclear under industrialisation	41
Talcott Parsons (functionalist tradition)	Instrumental / affective roles	Husband as breadwinner, wife as emotional/domestic centre — referenced as functionalist position	42
Friedrich Engels (background)	Origin of the family	Background to chapter's discussion of family/property links	42
Early Buddhism / Confucianism	Sacred without supernatural	NCERT's counter-examples to "sacred = supernatural" identification	55–56
T.H. Marshall (background to citizenship triad)	Civil / political / social rights	Background to the welfare-state discussion	54
Bronislaw Malinowski / Radcliffe-Brown (background)	Kinship terminology	Background to consanguineous / affinal distinction	46–47
Functionalist school	Institutions meet societal needs	Family, religion, law, education as need-meeting structures	41
Conflict school	Institutions serve dominant interests	Counter to functionalist optimism	41
Indian Census	Sex-ratio data	972 → 940 (1901–2011); child sex ratio 934 → 919 (1991–2011)	44



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Practice MCQs

PYQ Alignment

This chapter is a perennial CUET supplier — at least 4–6 MCQs each year across CUET 2023–25 typically cluster around the marriage typology (monogamy/polygyny/polyandry/endogamy/exogamy), Weber–Calvinism–capitalism, Durkheim's sacred/profane and education's "common base," and the power–authority–sovereignty–citizenship cluster from §IV. Direct glossary lookups and matching-type questions are the most common formats.

CUET 2025 — Actual PYQs from this chapter

Q.14 (CUET 2025) Match the following (Types of Family – Characteristics): Matrilocal Family / Patriarchal Family / Bilateral Family / Nuclear Family with — Consists of one set of parents and their children / Based on rule of residence / Family where ancestry is traced / Rule of inheritance.

- A) A-II, B-III, C-IV, D-I B) A-III, B-II, C-I, D-IV C) A-II, B-IV, C-I, D-III D) A-III, B-IV, C-II, D-I

Tests: Family typology — matrilocal (rule of residence), patriarchal (rule of inheritance/authority), bilateral (ancestry traced through both), nuclear (parents + children). **Answer:** Not in extracted key