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CUET · SOCIOLOGY · CLASS XII · CODE 326

# Introducing Indian Society

CUET unit: Introducing Indian Society

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## Snapshot

- Sociology is unlike any other school subject because students already "know" society from lived experience, so the first step in learning Sociology is "unlearning" common sense.
- **Self-reflexivity** (or reflexivity) is the ability to look critically at oneself and one's own social group "from the outside".
- A "social map" locates the student — by age, region/language, class, religion, caste/tribe — showing how individual identity is tied to membership in larger social groups.
- **C. Wright Mills'** distinguishes "**personal troubles**" (individual worries) from "**social issues**" (problems of large groups); Sociology connects the two.
- The rest of the textbook (Chapters 2–7) covers demography, caste/tribe/family, market, inequality and exclusion, diversity, and the practical component.

## Detailed Notes

### 2.1 Core concepts

Sociology is unusual among school subjects: no one starts from zero. "In one important sense, Sociology is unlike any other subject that you may have studied. It is a subject in which no one starts from zero — everyone already knows something about society" (NCERT §1.1, p. 2). Other subjects — History, Geography, Psychology, Economics — are learnt because they are formally taught, and no six-year-old is expected to know any of them on entering school. But every six-year-old already knows something about society and social relationships; an eighteen-year-old "knows a lot about the society you live in without ever having studied it". This prior familiarity is what makes Sociology methodologically distinctive.

This prior familiarity is both an advantage and a disadvantage. The advantage: students "are generally not afraid of Sociology — they feel that it can't be a very hard subject to learn." The disadvantage matters more: "in order to learn Sociology, we need to '**unlearn**' what we already know about society. In fact, the initial stage of learning Sociology consists mainly of such unlearning" (NCERT §1.1, p. 2). We must unlearn because our prior knowledge — our common sense — is acquired from a particular viewpoint: that of the social group and the social environment into which we are **socialised**. Socialisation shapes our opinions, beliefs and expectations about society

and social relations, often without our being aware of it. These beliefs "are not necessarily wrong, though they can be." The deeper problem is that they are **partial**.

The word **partial** is used "in two different senses — **incomplete** (the opposite of whole), and **biased** (the opposite of impartial)" (NCERT §1.1, p. 2). Common sense is partial in both ways. It lets us see only a part of social reality — because no single social location can give us a view of the whole — and it is tilted towards the viewpoints and interests of our own social group. The very mechanisms that make us socially competent within our family, neighbourhood, caste, class or religion simultaneously narrow the field of vision.

The reply to this problem is **self-reflexivity** — sometimes simply called **reflexivity**. It is the ability "to reflect upon yourself, to turn back your gaze (which is usually directed outward) back towards yourself" (NCERT §1.1, p. 2). This self-inspection must be **critical** — "quick to criticise and slow to praise oneself". Reflexivity in this disciplined sense is not introspection (which can easily slide into self-congratulation) but a critical self-examination of the very common-sense assumptions one began with. It is the first habit of mind a sociology student must cultivate.

A **social map** is the second key device. It locates an individual in society through a layered set of identities. For example, a seventeen or eighteen-year-old student belongs to the social group called "young people" — "**people your age or younger account for about forty per cent of India's population**" (NCERT §1.1, p. 2). The student might also belong to a particular **regional or linguistic community** — a Gujarati speaker from Gujarat or a Telugu speaker from Andhra Pradesh. Depending on parental occupation and family income, the student would belong to an **economic class** — lower middle class, upper class, and so on. The student would also belong to a **religious community, caste or tribe**. Each of these identities locates the student on a social map and within a web of social relationships. "Sociology tells you about what kinds of groups or groupings there are in society, what their relationships are to each other, and what this might mean in terms of your own life" (NCERT §1.1, p. 3).

But sociology "can do more than simply help to locate you or others in this simple sense of describing the places of different social groups". A third major idea comes from **C. Wright Mills**, a well-known American sociologist: the distinction between **personal troubles** and **social issues**, and the claim that sociology maps the links between them. **Personal troubles** are the individual worries, problems or concerns that everyone has — "you may be unhappy about the way elders in your family treat you or how your brothers, sisters or friends treat you. You may be worried about your future and what sort of job you might get. Other aspects of your individual identity may be sources of pride, tension, confidence or embarrassment in different ways. But all of these are about one person and derive meaning from this personalised perspective" (NCERT §1.1, p. 3). A **social issue**, in contrast, "is about large groups and not about the individuals who make them up". Sociology shows how the personal worry of a single individual is in fact one instance of a problem affecting a large group — the worry about a future job points to the social issue of unemployment as a labour-market structure.

This entire book introduces Indian society "from a sociological rather than common sense point of view" (NCERT §1.1, p. 3). The companion volume focuses on **social change and development** in India (NCERT §1.2, p. 3); this volume introduces the basic structure of Indian society.

The rest of the book (§1.2): **Chapter 2** covers the **demographic structure** of the Indian population — India is currently the second most populous country and is projected, "in a few decades", to overtake China to become the most populous (NCERT §1.2, p. 3). **Chapter 3** covers the basic building blocks of Indian society — the institutions of **caste, tribe and family**. Caste is "a unique feature of the Indian subcontinent" that has attracted much scholarly attention. **Chapter 4** covers the socio-cultural dimensions of the **market** as a powerful institution; the most sweeping and rapid economic changes in modern India came first through **colonialism** and then through **developmental policies**. **Chapter 5** covers **inequality and exclusion** in the contexts of caste, tribe, gender and the disabled; the caste system is "notorious as an instrument of division and injustice", and has been the object of repeated reform/abolition attempts by the state and by oppressed castes themselves. **Chapter 6** covers the challenges posed by India's immense **diversity** — communal conflict, regional/linguistic chauvinism, casteism — and the "unity in diversity" slogan. **Chapter 7** covers the **practical component** of the course (NCERT §1.2, pp. 3–4).

## 2.2 Definitions to memorise

Term	Definition	Page
Sociology	The discipline that studies society; in school context, unlike other subjects, no one starts from zero in it	2
Unlearning	The initial stage of learning Sociology, where one has to set aside common-sense beliefs about society acquired through socialisation	2
Common sense (in Sociology)	Prior, unlearnt knowledge about society acquired from a particular social viewpoint; "partial" — both incomplete and biased	2
Partial (textbook's two senses)	(i) Incomplete — opposite of whole; (ii) Biased — opposite of impartial	2
Self-reflexivity / Reflexivity	The ability to reflect upon oneself, to turn one's gaze back towards oneself; must be critical — quick to criticise and slow to praise oneself	2
Critical self-inspection	The disciplined form of reflexivity — distinct from mere introspection	2
Social map	A mapping of one's location in society through identities such as age-group, region/language, economic class, religion, caste or tribe	2–3
Age group	Identity dimension: young people (~40% of India's population)	2

Term	Definition	Page
Regional/linguistic community	Identity dimension on the social map (Gujarati speaker, Telugu speaker)	2
Economic class	Identity dimension on the social map, based on parents' occupation and family income	2–3
Religious community / caste / tribe	Identity dimension on the social map	3
Web of social relationships	The interlocking set of group memberships in which an individual is located	3
Personal troubles (C. Wright Mills)	Individual worries, problems or concerns of one person, derived from a personalised perspective	3
Social issues (C. Wright Mills)	Concerns about large groups, not about the individuals who make them up	3
Socialisation	The process through which the social group and social environment shape an individual's opinions, beliefs and expectations	2
Indian society	The substantive object of this textbook — its structure introduced here, change/development in the companion volume	3
Companion volume	The second textbook — <b>Social Change and Development in India</b>	3
Demographic structure	Subject of Chapter 2 — population composition and projections	3
Caste/tribe/family	Subject of Chapter 3 — institutional building blocks	3
Market	Subject of Chapter 4 — socio-cultural institution shaped by colonialism and development	4
Inequality and exclusion	Subject of Chapter 5 — caste, tribe, gender, disability	4
Diversity	Subject of Chapter 6 — communal conflict, regionalism, casteism, "unity in diversity"	4
Practical component	Subject of Chapter 7 — student research projects	4
Colonialism	One of the two engines of rapid Indian economic change discussed in the book	4
Developmental policies	The second engine of rapid Indian economic change — post-Independence	4

## 2.3 Diagrams / processes to remember

- **The chapter-opener collage (Chapter 1 title page):** a montage of photographs — families, a temple, a queue of voters, a Sikh man, a roadside vendor, an elderly

woman, a middle-class couple with a child, a worker — visually representing the diversity of Indian society that the book will study (p. 1).

- **The "social map" example:** a seventeen/eighteen-year-old student is located by (i) age-group "young people" (~40% of India's population), (ii) regional/linguistic community (e.g., Gujarati speaker from Gujarat, Telugu speaker from Andhra Pradesh), (iii) economic class (based on parent's occupation/income), (iv) religion/caste/tribe (NCERT §1.1, pp. 2–3).
- **The personal-troubles / social-issues linkage (C. Wright Mills):** Sociology's job is to draw the line of connection from an individual's worries (e.g., a future job) to the larger group-level structures behind them (NCERT §1.1, p. 3).
- **Roadmap of the textbook (§ 1.2):** Ch. 2 demography → Ch. 3 caste, tribe, family → Ch. 4 market → Ch. 5 inequality & exclusion → Ch. 6 diversity → Ch. 7 practical (pp. 3–4).
- **The "unlearning" loop:** common sense (partial — both incomplete and biased) → critical self-reflexivity → sociological view (acknowledging multiple social locations). Useful for assertion-reason items that pair "unlearning" with the "partial" character of common sense.
- **The two-volume scheme:** Book 1 (this volume) — structure of Indian society; Book 2 — social change and development. Memorise for sequencing MCQs.

## 2.4 Common confusions / NTA trap points

- **C. Wright Mills' nationality** — he is an **American** sociologist, not British or Indian. NTA distractor sets often swap nationalities.
- **"Partial" — two senses, not one.** Students often remember only "biased". "Partial" here means BOTH **incomplete** AND **biased**.
- **Self-reflexivity vs. introspection.** Reflexivity in the textbook is specifically **critical** self-inspection (quick to criticise, slow to praise) — not mere self-praise or simple introspection.
- **Personal trouble vs. social issue** is a Mills distinction, NOT a Durkheim/Weber/Marx distinction; trap options will attribute it to other sociologists.
- **"Young people" share of population (~40%)** is a textbook-stated illustrative figure given in this very chapter — not from a Census table in Chapter 2.
- **Sequence of book chapters** is sometimes confused: Chapter 3 is **caste/tribe/family**, Chapter 4 is **market**, Chapter 5 is **inequality and exclusion**, Chapter 6 is **diversity** — NTA loves to swap Chapter 4 and Chapter 5.
- **"Common sense is not necessarily wrong"** — so options that claim common sense is "always wrong and must be discarded" are incorrect.
- **Sociology is not "easy because we already know society"** — prior knowledge is a disadvantage methodologically (it has to be unlearned). Trap options invert this.

- **Two engines of Indian economic change** — colonialism and developmental policies (not "globalisation and liberalisation", though those come later in Book 2).

## 2.5 Thinkers / theories table

Name	Concept	Key Idea	NCERT page
C. Wright Mills	Personal troubles vs. social issues	American sociologist; sociology maps individual worries onto large-group structures	3
Auguste Comte (cross-chapter)	Coined the term "sociology"	Background to "discipline of sociology" framing	2
Karl Marx (cross-chapter)	Class, mode of production	Background to economic-class identity on the social map	2–3
Emile Durkheim (cross-chapter)	Social facts	Background to the idea that group-level patterns are sociological	3
Max Weber (cross-chapter)	Verstehen, social action	Background to "sociological point of view"	3
G.S. Ghurye (cross-chapter)	Caste	Background to caste as a "unique feature of the Indian subcontinent" — Chapter 3	3–4
M.N. Srinivas (cross-chapter)	Village, Sanskritisation	Background to Indian-society agenda — Chapter 3	4
A.R. Desai (cross-chapter)	Marxist analysis of Indian society	Background to colonialism/development theme — Chapter 4	4
B.R. Ambedkar (cross-chapter)	Caste annihilation, inequality	Background to Chapter 5 on inequality and exclusion	4
Jawaharlal Nehru (background)	"Unity in diversity"	Background to Chapter 6 on diversity	4
Indian Census (institutional)	Demographic data	Background to Chapter 2 on demographic structure	3
Mahatma Gandhi (background)	Reform of caste, swaraj	Background to unjust institutions discussed in Ch. 5	4

## Practice MCQs

## PYQ Alignment

Chapter 1 is a short, conceptual opener and CUET typically draws 1–2 direct questions from it each year, focused on definitional/attribution items — the C. Wright Mills "personal troubles vs. social issues" distinction, the meaning of self-reflexivity, the two senses of "partial", and the idea that Sociology begins with "unlearning" common sense. Statement-based and assertion–reason items on Chapter 1 are common, and matching the chapter-wise themes of the rest of the book (caste/family in Ch. 3, market in Ch. 4, inequality in Ch. 5) is a recurring NTA pattern.

### **CUET 2024 — Actual PYQs from this chapter**

**Q.3 (CUET 2024)** Which of the following statements is true about Colonialism in India?

- A) Parochialism gave birth to Colonialism in India. B) Colonialism gave birth to Nationalism in India. C) Urban poor were the main carriers of Nationalism in Colonial India. D) Capitalist economic changes in India were not related to Colonialism. **Tests:** Colonialism as the formative context that produced Indian nationalism. **Answer:** Not in extracted key

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