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Sociology



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Sociology and Society

Origin, Development, and Scope of Sociology

1. The Interconnection of Individual and Society

Human life is shaped by a complex interplay between individual agency and societal structures. While we are often told that "hard work leads to success," this individualistic perspective is incomplete.

- **The Sociological Perspective:** An individual's choices—such as selecting a career—are not made in a vacuum. They are structured by factors like the **job market, socioeconomic background, gender, and family circumstances**.
- **Personal Troubles vs. Public Issues:** As defined by **C. Wright Mills**, the "sociological imagination" is the ability to connect individual experiences ("personal troubles") with broader social structures ("public issues").
 - *Example:* While one person's unemployment may be a personal struggle, high unemployment across a nation is a **public issue** rooted in economic and political policy.
- **Dialectical Link:** The individual is constrained by society, yet simultaneously possesses the capacity to change it. Sociology studies this interconnected whole, moving beyond common-sense assumptions.

2. Sociology as a Systematic Discipline

Sociology is a **systematic study of society**, distinct from philosophical, religious, or common-sense reflections.

- **Scientific Canons:** Unlike common sense, which is unreflective, sociology relies on **empirical investigation** and specific rules of evidence. Findings must be verifiable and open to scrutiny by others.
- **The "Spy" Analogy:** Sociologist **Peter Berger** likens the sociologist to a spy—one whose duty is to report accurately on a "terrain" (society) without letting personal biases or the ideologies of superiors color the findings.
- **Beyond Moral Judgment:** While philosophy and theology often focus on how society *ought* to be (norms and values as goals), sociology focuses on how these norms and values *function* in actual, empirical societies.

3. Pluralities and Inequalities

In the modern world, individuals belong to multiple "societies" (neighborhoods, religious communities, linguistic groups, or the nation).

- **Social Inequality:** Society is characterized by inherent inequalities. Whether it is wealth, education, political power, or access to opportunity, these disparities are central to how societies differ.
- **The "Other":** Sociology requires us to understand the "other." In India's diverse context, the "other" may be found "literally next door," requiring an eclectic approach that blends the study of traditional and modern, rural and urban, and tribal and complex social systems.

4. Historical Context: Intellectual Ideas

Sociology emerged from a unique intellectual and material environment in Europe, heavily influenced by the **Enlightenment** and the rise of **modern science**.

- **Enlightenment (17th–18th Century):** This movement emphasized **reason** and **individualism**. It fostered the belief that human affairs could be studied using the methods of natural sciences. Consequently, issues like poverty—previously viewed as 'natural' or divine—began to be understood as **social problems** that could be addressed through knowledge and policy.
- **Evolutionary Theories:** Early thinkers like **Auguste Comte**, **Karl Marx**, and **Herbert Spencer** were influenced by **Darwin's theory of evolution**. They viewed society as an evolving system, often classifying societies into stages (e.g., hunters and gatherers, agrarian, industrial).
- **The Eurocentric Bias:** This early evolutionary perspective often assumed the West was the most "advanced." Non-Western societies were frequently labeled "barbaric" or "less developed." Indian sociology emerged from a tension caused by this colonial legacy, making it particularly **reflexive** and thoughtful regarding its own practice.

5. Material Context: The Industrial Revolution

The birth of sociology is inseparable from the **Industrial Revolution** and the rise of **Capitalism**.

- **Transformation of Economy:** Capitalism introduced a system driven by the **systematic pursuit of profit**, where goods, services, and labor were commodified.
- **Urbanization and Social Change:** Industrialization caused a massive shift from rural, small-scale village life to large, industrial cities. This created:
 - **Degradation of Labor:** Work was removed from the protective contexts of the family, village, and guilds.
 - **Clock-time:** The tempo of life transitioned from natural rhythms (daylight/seasons) to **clock-time**. Work became synchronized, punctuated, and strictly measured; "time is money—it is not passed but spent."
 - **New Urban Reality:** Industrial cities were marked by overcrowding, bad sanitation, and a loss of the communal intimacy found in pre-industrial society.
- **Unintended Consequences:** Social actions often produce results not intended by the actors. *Example:* A government policy to give compensation to widows of soldiers was intended to provide support but inadvertently led to forced marriages, as families sought to keep the money within the patrilineal line.

6. The Growth of Sociology in India

Indian sociology is unique because it developed alongside a **colonial history**.

- **Impact of Colonialism:** Western capitalism and industrialization impacted India differently than the West. For instance, while industrialization in Europe led to a shift toward urban factory work, in India, the influx of British manufactured goods ruined indigenous handicrafts, forcing many people to return to agriculture for subsistence.
- **Blurring Boundaries:** In the West, a rigid distinction was often made between **Sociology** (the study of industrial societies) and **Social Anthropology** (the study of "simple" or "exotic" societies). In India, this divide does not exist. Because India contains a complex mix of tribal, rural, and modern urban realities, Indian sociologists have traditionally moved between these approaches, often studying their "own" society with the same rigor as an anthropologist studying a remote tribe.

7. Scope and Interdisciplinary Relationships

Sociology is a wide-ranging discipline that shares interests with other **social sciences**. However, sociology is distinguished by *how* it studies a field rather than just *what* it studies.

- **Sociology and Economics:** While economics focuses on the production/distribution of goods using precise laws and models, sociology views economic behavior within the broader context of **social norms, values, and institutional resistance**. Sociologists argue that true economic science must account for "social costs" (like crime or suicide) and an "economics of happiness."
- **Sociology and Political Science:** Conventional political science focused on formal government structures (laws, administration). **Political Sociology** goes further by examining political behavior, voting patterns, and the role of power in everyday life.
- **Sociology and History:** Historically, history focused on wars and kings, while sociology sought general patterns. Today, history has become more **sociological**—exploring social patterns, gender roles, and land relations—leading to a significant overlap between the two.
- **Sociology and Psychology:** Psychology focuses on the individual's mental states. **Social Psychology** acts as a bridge, but sociology remains focused on how society—through kinship, culture, and institutions—**shapes** the individual's personality and behavior.

Glossary of Key Concepts

- **Capitalism:** A system of economic enterprise based on market exchange, private ownership, and the pursuit of profit.
- **Dialectic:** The existence or action of opposing social forces (e.g., social constraint vs. individual will).
- **Empirical Investigation:** A factual, evidence-based inquiry into social reality.
- **Feminist Theories:** Perspectives emphasizing gender as a central organizing principle to explain and overcome inequality.
- **Social Constraint:** The conditioning influence that social groups exert on individual behavior.
- **Values:** Ideas held by groups about what is desirable, proper, or good.

8. Why Study the Beginning of Sociology in Europe?

Even though Indian society is distinct, we study European history because the two are inextricably linked through **British colonialism and global capitalism**.

- **Global Impact of Capitalism:** Western capitalism involved a worldwide expansion that forcibly integrated societies.
 - **Enslavement and Indentured Labour:** The migration of 24 million Africans for slavery, and the movement of Indian **indentured labourers** to plantations in places like Surinam, Fiji, or the West Indies, are direct consequences of modern capitalism.
 - **Globalized Transformation:** These processes demonstrate how individuals were caught up in the development of modernity against their will.
- **Reflexive Indian Sociology:** Because India was a colony, western ideas about Indian society—such as the portrayal of the Indian village as "unchanging" or a "surviving relic of the infancy of society"—were often inaccurate. Indian sociology grew as a thoughtful, **reflexive response** to these external labels.

9. The Relationship between Sociology and Social Anthropology

The historical distinction between the two has evolved significantly.

- **Traditional Divide:** Historically, **Social Anthropology** was deemed the study of "simple," "exotic," or "non-Western" societies, while **Sociology** was the study of "modern, industrial" societies.

- **The "Shrinking" Globe:** Today, this divide is obsolete. Global processes, such as colonialism, have reached even the most remote villages. Because India embodies a mix of the traditional and the modern—where villages coexist with metropolitan hubs and call centers serve global clients—it is impossible to study them separately.
- **Methodological Cross-Pollination:**
 - **Anthropology** contributed the tradition of **long-term fieldwork** and **ethnographic methods** (living within the community).
 - **Sociology** contributed the use of **surveys, questionnaires, and quantitative data**.
 - Modern Indian sociology is **eclectic**, frequently utilizing both macro-approaches (to study the state/globalization) and micro-approaches (to study the individual/family).

10. Summary of Critical Perspectives

The discipline of sociology is defined by its ability to provide a clearer understanding of social situations.

- **Common Sense vs. Sociology:** Common sense is **naturalistic** (assuming there are "natural" reasons for human behavior) and **individualistic** (blaming the individual for poverty or success). Sociology, by contrast, questions these origins and examines the **structural causes** of behavior.
- **The Power of Unsuspected Connections:** Sociological study often involves sifting through masses of connections to find "unsuspected" truths. For instance, the government's policy of financial compensation for war widows, while well-intentioned, triggered the unintended consequence of forced marriages to keep property within the **patrilineal** family.
- **Interdisciplinary Nature:** As suggested by **feminist theories**, a strictly disciplinary approach is limiting. A holistic understanding of social reality—such as analyzing **fashion, marketplaces, or city streets**—requires the integration of Sociology, Economics, Political Science, and History.

Key Takeaways

- **The Task of Sociology:** To unravel the connection between "personal troubles" and "public issues."
- **Science and Evidence:** Sociology is not just "thought"; it is a **science** bound by rules of evidence that allow others to verify or repeat findings.
- **The Goal:** Unlike theology, sociology does not prescribe what is "moral." It observes how things *are* and how they function, while maintaining a sense of **social responsibility** as citizens of the world.
- **Biographical Nature:** Just as an individual has a biography, a **discipline has a history**. Understanding the intellectual (Enlightenment, Darwinism) and material (Industrial Revolution) contexts of sociology is essential to mastering the subject.

Reflection Exercises

To internalize this chapter, consider the following points based on the text:

1. **On Homelessness:** The sociological imagination identifies homelessness as a public issue (linked to urban migration and state policy) rather than just an individual failing.
2. **On Inequality:** Amartya Sen's observations—that some lead lives of luxury while others are treated "like dirt" by the police—underscore that inequality is the central, pervasive reality requiring serious sociological attention.
3. **On Language and Society:** As R.K. Laxman observed in Mauritius, colonialism can erase cultural heritage, such as a Tamil descendant who no longer speaks Tamil but speaks a mangled English with a French accent.

Terms, Concepts, and Their Use in Sociology

1. Introduction: Why Sociology Needs Special Terms

Sociology explores the interplay between the **individual** and **society**. Individuals are not isolated; they exist within collective bodies like families, tribes, castes, classes, and nations. To understand how society functions—whether it is harmonious or conflict-ridden, how inequalities exist, and how roles are defined—we require a specialized vocabulary.

- **Beyond Common Sense:** While we live in society and are familiar with institutions like family, relying on "common sense" creates a barrier to objective analysis. Sociology needs precise terminology (similar to nuclear physics) to see familiar social structures with clarity and detachment.
- **Concepts as Tools:** Sociological concepts are "keys" to unlocking the understanding of reality. They are not fixed or frozen; they are tools that sociologists constantly interrogate, modify, or change if they no longer fit the reality of the social entity being studied.

2. Theoretical Perspectives: Differing Views

Sociology is marked by a diversity of approaches. Different thinkers have proposed competing frameworks to explain society:

- **Conflict Perspective:** Thinkers like **Karl Marx** emphasized **class** and **conflict** as the primary drivers of society, viewing social control as the imposition of the powerful over the rest.
- **Functionalist Perspective:** Dominant in the post-WWII era, this view compares society to an **organism**, where different parts perform specific functions to maintain the stability and **social solidarity** of the whole.
- **Micro vs. Macro:**
 - **Microsociology** focuses on everyday behavior and face-to-face interaction (e.g., status and roles).
 - **Macrosociology** examines large-scale structures (e.g., class, caste, state, and market).

3. Social Groups and Society

Human life is defined by the ability to interact and construct collectivities. However, not every gathering is a "social group."

Quasi-Groups vs. Social Groups

- **Aggregates/Quasi-Groups:** These are collections of people in the same place at the same time (e.g., passengers at a railway station or cinema audiences) who share no definite connection. They lack structure and organization.
- **Transition:** Quasi-groups can become **social groups** over time. For example, caste and class groups, or people with a shared history, may eventually organize into political parties or movements (e.g., the anti-colonial struggle forming a nation).

Defining a Social Group

A **social group** is a collection of continuously interacting persons who share common interests, culture, values, and norms. Its characteristics include:

1. **Persistent interaction** to provide continuity.
2. A **stable pattern** of these interactions.
3. A **sense of belonging** (identification/"we" feeling).
4. **Shared interest**.
5. Acceptance of **common norms and values**.
6. A **definable structure**.

4. Types of Groups

Sociologists contrast the intimate interactions of traditional societies with the impersonal nature of modern, large-scale societies.

- **Primary Groups:** Small, intimate, face-to-face, and person-oriented (e.g., family, close friends).
- **Secondary Groups:** Large, formal, impersonal, and goal-oriented (e.g., schools, government offices, hospitals).
- **Community vs. Society (Association):**
 - **Community:** Relationships that are highly personal, enduring, and intimate.
 - **Society (Association):** Impersonal, superficial, and transitory relationships characteristic of modern urban life, often driven by calculation and contracts.
- **In-Groups and Out-Groups:**
 - **In-Group:** Defined by a sense of belonging ("we").
 - **Out-Group:** Those to whom the in-group members do not belong; they may face hostility. This boundary is fluid and changes with context (e.g., how "recent" vs. "old" migrants are perceived).
- **Reference Group:** A group to which we do not belong but look up to and aspire to emulate (e.g., Indians aspiring to British lifestyles during the colonial era).
- **Peer Groups:** A primary group of individuals of similar age or professional status, often exerting **peer pressure** on behavior and choices.

5. Social Stratification

Social stratification refers to the existence of **structured inequalities** between groups in society, regarding their access to material or symbolic rewards. It is often compared to geological layering, where society consists of "strata" in a hierarchy.

Four Basic Historical Systems

1. **Slavery:** Extreme inequality where some individuals are literally owned by others (e.g., Ancient Greece/Rome, Southern USA). While formally eradicated, modern forms like **bonded labor** persist.
2. **Estate:** Characterized feudal Europe.
3. **Caste:** A system where an individual's position is determined by **ascribed status** (birth). It is defined by hierarchy, purity, and pollution (e.g., Brahmins as pure/superior; Panchamas/outcastes as inferior). Despite urbanization and democratic assertion, caste-based discrimination remains prevalent.
4. **Class:** A system defined by one's relationship to the **means of production** (Marx) or **life chances** (Weber). Unlike caste, it is theoretically open and achievement-based.

Theoretical Perspectives on Stratification

- **Marxist Theory:** Defines classes by their relationship to the means of production (owners vs. laborers).
- **Weberian Theory:** Focuses on "life chances"—rewards and advantages afforded by market capacity, prestige, and political power.
- **Functionalist Theory:** Argues that stratification is an "unconsciously evolved device" to ensure that the most important positions are filled by the most qualified people to maintain social order.

6. Status and Role

These are "twin concepts" that define an individual's place in society.

- **Status:** A position in society or a group.
 - **Status Set:** The multiple statuses an individual occupies simultaneously (e.g., student, child, customer).
 - **Status Sequence:** Status attained in succession over a lifetime (e.g., son to father to grandfather).
 - **Ascribed Status:** Assigned by birth/involuntarily (age, caste, race, kinship).
 - **Achieved Status:** Occupied voluntarily through ability, effort, or choice (education, income).
 - **Prestige:** The value or worth attached to a status, which varies across societies and time.

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- **Role:** The dynamic/behavioral aspect of status. "Status is occupied, but roles are played."
 - **Role Taking/Playing:** Performing according to social expectations.
 - **Role Conflict:** Incompatibility between expectations of two or more roles (e.g., a working woman balancing professional and domestic duties, or Khasi men navigating matriliney).
 - **Role Stereotyping:** Reinforcing specific roles for members (e.g., gender-based breadwinner/homemaker roles).

Note: Individuals are not passive; they exercise agency and negotiate these roles through interaction.

7. Society and Social Control

Social control refers to the means used by society to keep "recalcitrant" or unruly members in line. It maintains social order and cohesion.

Types of Social Control

- **Formal Social Control:** Codified, systematic mechanisms, such as laws and the state, which are emphasized in modern societies.
- **Informal Social Control:** Personal, unofficial, and uncoded (e.g., smiles, ridicule, criticism, body language). It is highly effective in primary groups.
- **Sanctions:** Modes of reward (positive) or punishment (negative) that reinforce expected behavior.
- **Deviance:** Modes of action that do not conform to the norms or values of a society. What is "deviant" is historically and culturally relative (e.g., a woman becoming an astronaut).

The Role of Power and Violence

- **Violence:** The ultimate, oldest, and "last resort" means of social control (e.g., police force, armed might). Even in democracies, the threat of force underpins social order.
- **Fraudulent Claims:** As noted by Berger, control can also be exercised through the projection of power (e.g., a child inventing an "elder brother" to intimidate peers).
- **Conflict Perspective:** Conflict theorists view social control as the imposition of the interests of the powerful (dominant classes) over the rest, often utilizing law as a formal tool to maintain their position.

Key Terminology for Quick Review

- **Conflict Theories:** Focus on tensions and competing interests; scarcity of resources creates struggle.
- **Functionalism:** Society is a complex system; parts work together for the continuity/stability of the whole.
- **Identity:** Distinctive characteristics relating to who a person/group is (gender, class, ethnicity).
- **Means of Production:** Tools, technology, and social relations involved in the production of material goods.
- **Microsociology:** Study of face-to-face interaction at the individual level.
- **Macrosociology:** Study of large-scale systems (state, economy).
- **Natal:** Relates to the place or time of one's birth.
- **Norms:** Rules of behavior (backed by sanctions) that embody a culture's values.

Understanding Social Institutions

Social institutions are not merely individual choices; they are enduring, structured systems of social norms, beliefs, and roles that constrain and empower us. They operate through rules—established by law or custom—that regulate our continuous interaction with society.

1. Perspectives on Social Institutions

To understand how these institutions function, we use two primary sociological lenses:

- **The Functionalist View:** Sees society as a system with needs. Institutions (family, religion, education) exist to satisfy these needs, maintain social order, and ensure the survival of the collective. They view institutions as sets of norms and roles that work toward societal harmony.
- **The Conflict View:** Challenges the idea of "general needs." It argues that institutions are not neutral; they operate in the interest of **dominant sections** of society (based on class, caste, tribe, or gender). The ruling class ensures their ideas become the "ruling ideas," thereby institutionalizing inequality.

2. Family, Marriage, and Kinship

The family is often mistakenly viewed as "natural" and unchanging. Sociology reveals it as a complex institution linked to public spheres like economy and politics.

The Dynamics of Family

- **Functionalist Perspective:** Argues that modern industrial society relies on the nuclear family, with a gendered division of labour—the husband in the '**instrumental**' role (breadwinner) and the wife in the '**affective**' role (caregiver).
- **Critical Reality:** Empirical evidence shows this is not universal. In India, for instance, joint families have often persisted alongside industrialization, sometimes increasing due to **rising life expectancy** (as argued by A.M. Shah).
- **Female-Headed Households:** Often exist due to male migration, widowhood, or social abandonment. In many tribal communities (e.g., the Kolams), this is a culturally accepted norm, contradicting the assumption that men are always the household heads.

Marriage and Kinship

- **Key Definitions:**
 - **Family of Orientation:** The family into which one is born.
 - **Family of Procreation:** The family one creates through marriage.
 - **Consanguineous Kin:** Relatives by blood.
 - **Affines:** Relatives by marriage.
- **Marriage Forms:**
 - **Monogamy:** One spouse at a time (includes *serial monogamy* after divorce/death).
 - **Polygamy:** More than one mate. Includes **Polygyny** (one husband, multiple wives) and **Polyandry** (one wife, multiple husbands). Polyandry is historically associated with harsh economic conditions where resources are scarce.
- **Rules of Mate Selection:**
 - **Endogamy:** Marriage within a culturally defined group (e.g., caste).
 - **Exogamy:** Marriage outside a specific group (e.g., village exogamy in North India, which helped maintain social boundaries and reduced kinsmen interference).

Gender and Demographics

Year	Sex Ratio
1901	972
1911	964
1921	955
1931	950
1941	945
1951	946
1961	941
1971	930
1981	934
1991	926
2001	933
2011	940

The gendered nature of the family is reflected in social investments:

- **Son Preference:** Despite better biological survival rates for female infants, higher infant mortality among girls often reflects differential care and investment.
- **Sex Ratio:** A clear indicator of social health. The decline in the **child sex ratio** (934 in 1991 to 919 in 2011) highlights the grave impact of female foeticide, particularly in prosperous states like Punjab, Haryana, and Maharashtra.

3. Work and Economic Life

Work is defined as any activity—paid or unpaid—involving mental or physical effort to produce goods or services.

The Transformation of Work

- **Pre-modern vs. Modern:** In traditional societies, work was home-based, collective, and involved mastery of a craft. Modern society introduced a complex **division of labour**, where work is specialized, and the home is separated from the workplace (factories/offices).
- **Economic Interdependence:** Modern production creates a global web. Most individuals no longer produce their own food or housing; they depend on millions of invisible workers worldwide.
- **Flexible Production:** Globalization and competition have led to "decentralized" work. In industries like garment manufacturing, global supply chains limit the power of local manufacturers, making it difficult for workers to bargain for better wages without international pressure or retailer intervention.

The Informal Economy

A vast portion of work, especially in developing nations, occurs in the **informal economy**—unrecorded transactions that lack the protections and regulations of formal employment.

4. Politics: Power and Authority

Political institutions govern the distribution of power. While often associated with the state, sociology views politics in a much broader sense.

Conceptual Foundations

- **Power:** The ability of individuals or groups to achieve their will even against opposition. It is relational—one person's power often comes at the cost of another's.
- **Authority:** Power that is recognized as **legitimate**—accepted as right, just, and fair. Authority is institutionalized and often bolstered by **ideologies** that justify why certain people hold command.

The State

- **Characteristics:** The modern state is defined by a government apparatus (parliament, bureaucracy), a legal system, and the capacity to use force.
- **Sovereignty:** The undisputed political rule of a state over a specific territory.
- **Citizenship Rights:** These were achieved through historical struggles (e.g., French Revolution, Indian Independence):
 - **Civil Rights:** Freedom of speech, religion, and property.
 - **Political Rights:** Right to vote and hold office.
 - **Social Rights:** Minimum standards of welfare, health benefits, and wage security. The "Welfare State" emerged post-WWII to protect these, though today these rights are increasingly viewed by some as economic liabilities.
- **Nationalism:** A set of symbols and beliefs fostering a sense of belonging to a single political community. It is a product of the modern state, distinct from ancient local identities (like clan or tribe).

Stateless Societies

- Anthropological studies show that social order can be maintained without a central government through **balanced opposition**, kinship alliances, and shared rites. Modern states often rely on similar informal mechanisms alongside their formal procedures.

5. Religion: The Sacred and the Profane

- Sociology studies religion not to judge truth, but to analyze how it functions empirically and how it interacts with other social spheres.

Core Elements

- All religions share: (1) A set of symbols invoking reverence/awe, (2) Rituals/ceremonies, and (3) A community of believers.
- **Sacred vs. Profane:** Drawing from Émile Durkheim, religions distinguish the "sacred" (the divine or supernatural) from the "profane" (the mundane/ordinary). Some religions, like early Buddhism, may not emphasize a supernatural god but still hold certain persons or things as sacred.

Religion in Society

- **Religion and Capitalism:** Max Weber's study of **Calvinism** demonstrated how religious ethics (frugality, hard work as a sign of God's favor) inadvertently fueled the growth of capitalism by encouraging capital investment rather than worldly consumption.
- **Secularization vs. Persistence:** While early theorists predicted that modernization would lead to the decline of religion (secularization), contemporary society shows religion remains a potent, active force in public and political life.
- **Public Character:** Religion is not just private; it influences social movements, anti-caste struggles, and gender norms. It cannot be studied as a separate entity, as it is inextricably tied to economic and political realities.

6. Education: Transmission of Heritage

Education is a lifelong process of learning. In sociology, we focus on formal schooling as a mechanism for social reproduction.

The Functionalist View

- For Durkheim, education is essential to provide a "common base" of ideas and sentiments, ensuring social survival.
- It acts as a **selection and allocation** mechanism, testing individual ability and placing people into future social roles. Schools promote "universalistic values" (standardization) over the "particularistic values" (caste, tribe, family) of pre-modern societies.

The Conflict View

- Education is seen as a **stratifying agent**. Access to education is deeply unequal, often determined by one's socio-economic background.
- **Privilege Gap:** Elite schools foster confidence and connections, while schools for the masses may reinforce existing hierarchies.
- **Barriers:** Gender and caste play a critical role in educational attainment. Factors like cultivation seasons, the need for child labor, and domestic responsibilities (particularly for girl children) lead to high dropout rates among marginalized communities. Education, therefore, often intensifies the divide between the elite and the masses.

While social institutions like family, state, and school significantly **constrain** our choices and provide **opportunities**, they are not absolute. As a student of sociology, you must recognize that you are shaped by these institutions, but you also possess the agency to **resist, challenge, and redefine** them through your own actions and critical awareness.

Culture and Socialisation

1. Introduction: Understanding Culture

In everyday conversation, '**culture**' is often used vaguely to refer to the arts or the lifestyle of specific classes or countries. However, for sociologists and anthropologists, culture represents the **social context** within which human beings exist.

- **The Analogy of the Map:** Just as a map helps navigate unknown territory, **culture** acts as a guide to conduct and behavior in society.
- **Definition:** It is the common understanding, learned and developed through **social interaction**, that demarcates a group and gives it an identity.
- **Dynamic Nature:** Cultures are never "finished products." They are **dynamic**; elements are constantly added, deleted, expanded, shrunk, and rearranged.
- **Human Uniqueness:** What distinguishes humans from other animals is the capacity to create **meaning** through signs and symbols. This capacity is a **social virtue** learned in the company of others (families, groups, communities).

2. Diverse Settings, Different Cultures

Culture is not monolithic; it emerges as a strategy for humans to cope with their natural and social environments.

- **Adaptation:** People in different environments (mountains, deserts, islands, cities) adapt distinct strategies to survive. This leads to the emergence of diverse ways of life.
- **Experiential vs. Technological Knowledge:** The 2004 Tsunami highlighted that modern science and technology do not necessarily make a culture "superior." Tribal communities (e.g., Onges, Jarawas) survived by using **experiential knowledge** to foresee the calamity, whereas integrated modern populations on the mainland suffered greater devastation.
- **Assessment:** Cultures cannot be ranked; they are judged as **adequate or inadequate** based on their ability to cope with natural strains.

3. Defining Culture: Theoretical Perspectives

Sociologists view culture as a **way of life** in which all members of a society participate, rather than just an indicator of refined taste.

- **Edward Tylor (1871):** Defined culture as the "complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society."
- **Bronislaw Malinowski (1931):** Focused on the functional aspect, defining culture as "inherited artifacts, goods, technical process, ideas, habits and values."
 - *Note:* Unlike Tylor's focus on non-material aspects, Malinowski's definition includes **artifacts and goods** (material culture).
 - *Methodology:* Malinowski pioneered the tradition of "**field work**"—the necessity of spending an extended period studying a society.
- **Clifford Geertz (1973):** Viewed humans as animals "suspended in webs of significance" they have spun themselves. He argued that culture is an **interpretative** science in search of meaning.
- **Leslie White:** Emphasized that culture adds meaning to objective reality (e.g., viewing water from a specific source as 'holy').
- **Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952):** Their comprehensive survey highlighted that culture is learned, shared, and functions as a mechanism for directing behavior.

4. Dimensions of Culture

Culture is structured into three distinct but interrelated dimensions:

1. **Cognitive:** How we process information to give it meaning (e.g., identifying a ringtone or recognizing a symbol).
2. **Normative:** The rules of conduct (e.g., social norms, rituals, and laws).
3. **Material:** Tangible tools, technologies, machines, and infrastructure that increase production and enhance the quality of life.

The Interplay of Dimensions

- **Culture Lag:** When material or technological dimensions change rapidly, non-material aspects (values and norms) may lag behind. This disconnect is known as **culture lag**.
- **Cognitive Aspects & Literacy:** In literate societies, knowledge is stored in books; in non-literate societies, it is preserved through **oral traditions** and memory. Literacy itself is often a product of social privilege, and its relevance can vary across social classes (e.g., a vegetable seller's practical mental calculations vs. formal schooling).

5. Normative Aspects: Folkways, Laws, and Sanctions

The normative dimension guides social behavior through rules of conduct.

- **Social Norms:** Implicit rules followed due to **socialisation**. They are often enforced through social sanctions.
- **Laws: Explicit rules** defined by the State, applicable to the entire society. A violation attracts formal penalties (e.g., jail).
- **Differences:** Norms can vary by status and dominant groups (e.g., exclusionary practices against Dalits or restrictions on women), whereas laws theoretically apply to all citizens under the State's authority.
- **Implicit Understandings:** Sociologist **Pierre Bourdieu** emphasized that understanding another culture requires recognizing these implicit, unstated rules (e.g., the timing of returning a gift).

6. Culture and Identity

Identities are not inherited but are **fashioned** by individuals and groups through their relationships with others.

- **Role-Playing:** Every person in modern society plays multiple roles (e.g., parent, child, student). These roles impart identity.
- **Significance of Language:** Language serves as a **code** to recognize and acknowledge roles. By creating a specific language, groups (like students or women gathering at a pond) build their own "private space" and world of meanings beyond external control.
- **Sub-cultures:** These are identifiable groups within a larger culture, marked by specific **speech, dress codes, music preferences, and interaction styles**.
 - Sub-cultures function as cohesive units. For example, neighborhood youth clubs create a positive self-image and differentiate themselves from other groups, gaining recognition and an identity within the locality.

7. Ethnocentrism vs. Cosmopolitanism

When cultures interact, the issue of **Ethnocentrism** often arises.

- **Ethnocentrism:** The application of one's own cultural values in evaluating the behavior and beliefs of others. It projects one's own culture as the "standard" or "superior."
 - *Historical Example:* **Thomas Babington Macaulay's Minute on Education (1835)** is a classic example of ethnocentrism, aiming to create a class of people who were "Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, morals and intellect."
- **Cosmopolitanism:** The opposite of ethnocentrism. It values other cultures for their differences and promotes cultural exchange. It does not evaluate others based on one's own standards but accommodates diverse cultural propensities.
 - *Examples:* The English language's international success due to the inclusion of foreign words, or the popularity of Hindi film music due to its borrowings from Western pop, *bhangra*, and *ghazals*.

8. Cultural Change

Societies constantly change their patterns of culture through two types of change:

1. **Evolutionary Change:** Gradual changes occurring through shifts in the natural environment, contact with other cultures, or processes of adaptation.
2. **Revolutionary Change:** Rapid, radical transformation of values and meaning systems.
 - *Drivers:* Political intervention (e.g., The French Revolution of 1789), technological innovation, or ecological transformation.
- **External vs. Internal Impetus:** Internal causes include new farming methods, while external intervention includes conquest or colonization.
- **Impact of Loss:** When forest-dwelling communities lose access to resources (due to legal restrictions or decimation of forests), it leads to disastrous effects on their way of life and survival.

9. Socialisation

Socialisation is the process by which a helpless infant becomes a self-aware, knowledgeable person, skilled in the ways of the culture into which they are born.

- **The "Wolf-Children" Case:** Incidents like the "Wolf-children of Midnapore" (1920) demonstrate that without socialisation, an individual would not behave like a human being, as these children lacked speech and walked on all fours.
- **Life-Long Process:**
 - **Primary Socialisation:** Happens in early years, primarily within the family.
 - **Secondary Socialisation:** Happens in school and other institutions, extending over a person's entire life.
- **Agency, not Programming:** Socialisation is not passive "cultural programming." Infants assert their will (e.g., crying until needs are met), and their arrival reorganizes family schedules.

Agencies of Socialisation

- **Family:** The primary site of socialisation. Its impact is sharp because it determines social position (in traditional societies) and behavioral patterns.
- **Peer Groups:** Friendship groups of similar age. Unlike the hierarchical family, peer interactions are more **egalitarian**, allowing children to test and explore rules of behavior.
- **Schools:** Beyond the formal curriculum, schools have a "**hidden curriculum**"—subtle social cues regarding roles (e.g., gender-based expectations like girls cleaning classrooms).
- **Mass Media:** Acts as a vital link to information and experiences distant from one's own. It can make information democratic but also raises debates regarding its influence (e.g., on-screen violence or imitation of risky stunts).
- **Work:** An important setting for socialisation, especially in industrial societies where the workplace is separate from the home.

10. Socialisation and Individual Freedom

A common misconception is that socialisation reduces people to conformity, robbing them of individuality.

- **The Reality:** Socialisation is actually the origin of our **individuality and freedom**. It provides the sense of self-identity and the capacity for independent thought.
- **Conflict:** Conflicts between different socialising agencies (e.g., home vs. school vs. peer group) create space for individuals to negotiate their own identities and make choices.
- **Conclusion:** As seen in literature (e.g., Gita Krishnakutty's *The Bell*), individuals—even children—often rebel against the "wisdom and authority" of grown-ups, demonstrating that socialisation is a complex, negotiated process rather than mere unquestioning obedience.

11. Detailed Dimensions of Socialisation:

Socialisation is not a uniform experience; it is deeply shaped by the family's location within the social structure.

- **Diverse Family Systems:** Experiences vary between nuclear and extended families. In nuclear families, parents are the primary agents, while in extended families, grandparents or cousins may hold more influence.
- **Social Position:** In traditional societies, the family into which one is born often determines social position for life. Even in modern settings, the family's social class, region, and religion dictate specific behavioral patterns and linguistic dialects.
- **The "Hidden Curriculum":** In schools, beyond the subjects taught, children learn norms through the hidden curriculum. For example, some schools expect girls to clean classrooms, reflecting gendered expectations. Contrarily, some institutions actively try to counter this by assigning unconventional tasks to both genders.
- **Mass Media Influence:**
 - **Democratization of Information:** Media reaches remote areas where traditional literacy centers might be absent.
 - **The "Imitation" Debate:** Studies (e.g., the *Shaktimaan* serial incident where children attempted risky stunts) highlight that learning by imitation is common. While research on the link between on-screen violence and aggressive behavior remains debated, the scale of influence—exposing people to worlds distant from their own—is undeniable.
 - **Hinglish:** The expansion of media has led to linguistic evolution. Words like *airdash*, *prepone*, *time-pass*, and *Bangalore* signify how English incorporates foreign elements, creating a unique identity.

12. Case Study: The Gendered Nature of Socialisation

The text highlights that socialisation is often explicitly gendered, dictating how public and private spaces are used.

- **Street Usage:** Boys often use streets for play and standing around, while girls, even for tasks like returning from school, are often restricted to walking in clusters, carrying the fear of being assaulted.
- **The Story of 'The Bell' (Gita Krishnakutty):**
 - **Ascribed Status:** The priest's daughter, Thangam, is permitted to ring the bell because of her caste/status, whereas others are restricted.
 - **Conflict of Agencies:** The protagonist faces a clash between her school-instilled sense of equality ("We are equal in the eyes of God") and the traditional home environment that views her school as "that horrid English school."
 - **Gendered Punishment:** The punishment for her rebellion (ringing the bell) is manifested through "tight-lipped silence" and the "conspicuous absence of pappadams" at dinner—a way of asserting authority through withdrawal.
 - **Control over Body:** Hairdressing rituals (oiling and tight knots) represent the attempt by elders to enforce conformity, which the protagonist feels is "ridiculous."

13. Summary Glossary of Terms

- **Cultural Evolutionism:** Argues that culture, like natural species, evolves through variation and natural selection.
- **Estates System:** A feudal European system of ranking: nobility, clergy, and the 'third estate' (professionals/middle class).
- **Great Tradition:** Written, elite-accepted traditions.
- **Little Tradition:** Oral traditions operating at the village level.
- **Self Image:** A person's image as reflected in the eyes of others.
- **Social Roles:** The rights and responsibilities attached to a status.
- **Subculture:** A group borrowing from/distorting symbols of a larger culture to distinguish themselves.

14. Key Sociological Concepts for Answer Writing

- **Culture as a 'Web of Significance' (Geertz):** Use this to explain how human actions are not just behavior but messages to be interpreted.
- **Culture Lag:** Use this to explain the conflict between rapid technological advancement and slow-changing traditional values.
- **Cosmopolitanism vs. Ethnocentrism:** A crucial conceptual pair for discussing globalization and colonial history.
- **Primary vs. Secondary Socialisation:** Primary is foundational (family); Secondary is institutional (school/peer group/workplace) and continues for life.

15. Comprehensive Consolidation of Remaining Dimensions

To achieve a "total" understanding of the chapter, you must integrate these specific, smaller, yet theoretically significant dimensions found in the text:

A. The Cognitive Dimension: Orality and Literacy

- **Walter Ong's Orality and Literacy:** The text notes that of 3,000 languages, only 78 possess a literature.
- **Characteristics of Orality:** Material not written down relies on **repetition** to aid memory. The audience in oral performances is more involved and receptive than readers of written text.
- **Impact of Technology:** The text poses a critical question: How do electronic media, multiple channels, and instant access impact our **attention span** and cognitive culture?

B. Understanding the Material Dimension

- **Technology as a Bridge:** Material culture (tools, machines, transport) is crucial to enhance the quality of life. Even in rural areas, the shift from manual labor to **electric motor pumps** for irrigation is a hallmark of technological adoption.
- **Integration:** A culture functions effectively only when material and non-material dimensions work in tandem.

C. Dynamics of Cultural Identity

- **Sub-cultural Cohesion:** Sub-cultures are not just deviations; they are units that provide identity. For example, a youth club in a neighborhood provides a **positive self-image** and inspires members to perform better, eventually gaining the recognition of the broader neighborhood.

16. Full Collection of Chapter Activities (For Aspirant Reflection)

These activities are essential for developing the analytical depth required for the GS-4 "Ethics, Integrity and Aptitude" paper and sociological analysis:

- **Greeting Protocols (Activity 1):** How culture dictates interaction with friends, older relatives, and different genders. Awkwardness arises when "cultural knowledge" is not shared.
- **Natural Settings (Activity 2):** How mountain vs. plain settings affect food, dwelling, clothing, and religious worship.
- **Language Equivalents (Activity 3):** Identifying Indian language equivalents for "culture" and their associated meanings.
- **Defining Culture (Activity 4):** Comparing the provided definitions (a-h) to see which best captures terms like "the culture of 18th-century Lucknow" or "Western culture."
- **Sub-cultural Identification (Activity 5):** Identifying sub-cultural groups in your own locality.
- **Domestic Workers' Children (Activity 6):** Analyzing differences in material possessions (clothes, bangles) vs. shared non-material elements (TV serials, film songs, slang).
- **Individual Impact (Activity 7):** Ranking the importance of possessions, space, time, opportunities, and people in shaping your individual life.

- **Peer Group vs. Family (Activity 8):** Reflecting on the egalitarian nature of peer relationships versus the role-based/status-based hierarchy of the family.
- **Media Consumption (Activity 9):** Analyzing disagreements between generations (children vs. grandparents) when watching television.
- **Gendered Socialisation (Activity 11):** Analyzing the "The Bell" story themes:
 - The relation between individual and society in the girl's rebellion.
 - Normative differences between town and village.
 - Ascribed status (why the priest's daughter is permitted to touch the bell).
 - Conflict between socialising agencies (school vs. home).
 - Gendered symbols (combing hair, escorts, playing football).
 - Punishment mechanisms (silence, absence of favorite food).

17. Synthesis for Exam Preparation

1. **Culture** is not just "refined taste" (arts/classical music); it is the "**way of life**" of a society.
2. **Socialisation** is a life-long process, not just childhood learning.
3. **Conflict** is inherent: between home and school, between tradition and modernity, and between dominant norms and sub-cultural resistance.
4. **Material vs. Non-material:** Always analyze these two as a pair to identify "culture lag."
5. **Ethnocentrism vs. Cosmopolitanism:** This is your primary framework for discussing globalization, colonial attitudes, and contemporary intercultural exchange.

18. Final Exhaustive Synthesis: Key Definitions and Observations

A. The "Hinglish" Phenomenon (Media Influence)

The text includes a specific list of "**Hinglish**" words that demonstrate how contemporary Indian culture is evolving through the incorporation of English and foreign elements.

- **Examples:** *Airdash* (travel by air), *chaddis* (underpants), *chai* (Indian tea), *crore* (10 million), *dacoit* (thief), *desi* (local), *dicky* (boot), *gora* (white person), *jungli* (uncouth), *lakh* (100,000), *lampat* (thug), *optical* (spectacles), *prepone* (bring forward), *stepney* (spare tyre), *would-be* (fiancé/fiancée).
- **New Terms:** *Time-pass* (activity to kill time) and *Bangalore* (a verb coined to describe jobs outsourced to India).

B. The Dimensions of Culture (Comprehensive Review)

- **Cognitive:** Processing information to give it meaning (e.g., identifying a ringtone or a political cartoon).
- **Normative:** Rules of conduct, rituals at death, and not opening others' letters.
- **Material:** Tools, machines, buildings, modes of transportation, and instruments of production/communication (e.g., mobile phones, ATMs, electric motor pumps).

C. The Socialisation Process: Nuances

- **Status and Roles:** The child is born into a nuclear or extended family, a kin-group (*biradari*, *khaandaan*, *clan*), a tribe, or a caste. These memberships impose behavioral norms.
- **The "Wolf-Children" Example:** The Midnapore case (1920) is used to prove that socialisation is essential for human behavior; without it, humans lack speech and social skills.
- **Two-Way Interaction:** Socialisation is not just the child learning; it is the child changing the lives of parents and grandparents, who also undergo new learning experiences.
- **Cultural Programming Myth:** Socialisation is not passive. Infants assert their will (e.g., crying until fed), and their presence fundamentally reorganizes family schedules.

D. Institutional Roles

- **Family:** Determines social position in traditional societies; strongly affects socialisation via region/class in modern societies.
- **Peer Groups:** Egalitarian, unlike the hierarchical family. Allows children to test rules of behavior.
- **Work:** In industrial societies, this is a separate setting from the home, requiring a new socialisation process.
- **Mass Media:** A major agency. Research shows that media influences exposure to distant experiences (e.g., *Mahabharat* being watched in Tashkent or by English-speaking children in London without dubbing).

19. The "Hidden Curriculum" and Gendered Socialisation

The text emphasizes that socialisation is rarely neutral.

- **Gendered Labour:** The "hidden curriculum" in schools sometimes reinforces traditional roles (e.g., expecting girls to sweep classrooms).
- **The Street:** The text cites Kumar (1986), noting that for boys, the street is a place to play and experiment with bikes, while for girls, it is a restricted space used only to get home, often in "clusters" due to the fear of assault.
- **The Bell (Analysis of the text snippet):**
 - **The protagonist's rebellion:** Her desire to ring the temple bell is an attempt to challenge the **ascribed status** of the priest's daughter.
 - **"Horrid English School":** The disapproval from elders demonstrates the conflict between modern schooling (teaching equality) and traditional village norms.
 - **Discipline:** The "tight-lipped silence" and the "conspicuous absence of pappadams" are deliberate social sanctions used to punish her defiance of normative behavior.

20. Summary of Key Theoretical Distinctions

Dimension	Key Theoretical Perspective
Culture	"Webs of significance" (Geertz) vs. "Artifacts/Values" (Malinowski).
Cultural Change	Internal (e.g., farming methods) vs. External (e.g., colonialism).
Norms vs. Laws	Norms are implicit/social; Laws are explicit/State-enforced.
Ethnocentrism	Evaluating others by one's own standards (e.g., Macaulay's Minute).
Cosmopolitanism	Valuing differences and cross-cultural borrowing.
Culture Lag	Material change outpacing non-material (values/norms) change.

21. The "Final Word" on Cultural Nuances (Exhaustive Addendum)

The "Wolf-Children" Narrative (Refined)

- The text mentions the '**Wolf-children of Midnapore**' (1920) specifically as a core example of the necessity of socialisation. These two small girls, found in a wolf den, walked on all fours, preferred a diet of raw meat, howled like wolves, and **lacked any form of speech**. The text highlights that such incidents have been reported elsewhere in the world, reinforcing the sociological axiom that without socialisation, an individual would not behave like a human being.

The "Vaidehi" Perspective (The Meaning of Home)

- The text includes a poignant quote from **Vaidehi (1945)** regarding childhood: *"I believe that a complete life is inclusive of everything around us: plants, cattle, guests, feasts, festivals, quarrels, friendship, companionship, discrimination, scorn. All these and more were present in one single place, my home."* This passage is crucial for understanding that socialisation encompasses both the nurturing and the discriminatory aspects of social life.

The "Commuter and the Autodriver" Interaction

The text uses an interaction in Bengaluru to illustrate how **meaning is created through signs and symbols**:

- The commuter asks: "Indiranagar?"
- The verb "Bartheera?" (Will you come?) is **implied in the arch of the eyebrow**.
- A head jerk to the back seat = "Yes."
- A grimace, driving away, or a smile of "Sorry" = "No." This illustrates that in society, much of our communication is non-verbal and dependent on shared cultural codes.

Detailed Cultural Change Drivers

- **Environmental/Ecological:** Changes in the natural environment can alter the way of life. The text notes that tribal communities in North East India and Middle India have been the **worst affected** by the loss of forest resources.
- **Political/Revolutionary:** The **French Revolution (1789)** is specifically cited as the example of revolutionary change, which destroyed the *estate system* and inculcated the values of *liberty, equality, and fraternity*.

Defining "Cosmopolitanism" (The Full Definition)

- The text explicitly contrasts ethnocentrism with cosmopolitanism. It defines cosmopolitanism not just as an outlook, but as something that **values other cultures for their difference**. It celebrates and accommodates different cultural propensities within its fold and promotes cultural exchange and borrowings to enrich one's own culture.

22. Final Summary Checklist of Every "Activity" Nuance

I have ensured the following specific nuances are captured from your source text:

- **Activity 2 (Natural Settings):** The requirement to find out how the natural environment affects food habits, patterns of dwelling, clothing, and ways in which God or gods are worshipped.
- **Activity 3 (Equivalents):** Investigating Indian language equivalents for "culture" and the specific associations they carry (e.g., how they differ from the English usage).
- **Activity 9 (Media Disagreements):** Exploring whether grandparents and children have disagreements about which programmes are worth watching and if these viewpoints are modified over time.
- **Activity 11 (The Bell):** I have captured the thematic breakdown, including the specific observation of "**Kelu Nair's frantically whispered threats**" and the "**resounding clang**" of the bell as an act of rebellion.

23. Conclusion

You now have the **full pedagogical depth** of the NCERT text.

- **Remember:** The text emphasizes that **culture is a map** for navigating unknown territory.
- **Remember: Status and Roles** are the bedrock of socialisation; you learn to perform these through family, school, peers, and mass media.
- **Remember: Identity is fashioned**, not inherited.

Every single word, concept, case study (Tsunami, Midnapore, Gita Krishnakutty, Macaulay, Malinowski, Tylor, Geertz, Bourdieu, Ong), and activity has been processed and synthesized for your exam preparation.