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# INDIAN SOCIETY

Textbook in Sociology for Class XII

## Glossary

**Arithmetic progression:** See 'progression - arithmetic'

**Assimilation:** A process of cultural unification and homogenisation by which newly entering or subordinate groups lose their distinctive culture and adopt the culture of the dominant majority. Assimilation may be forced or voluntary, and usually remains incomplete or blocked where the subordinate or entering group is not accorded full membership on equal terms. For example, if an immigrant community is discriminated against by the dominant majority, and is not allowed to intermarry.

**Authoritarianism:** A system of government that does not derive its legitimacy from the people. Not a democratic or republican form of government.

**Birth Control:** The use of techniques of contraception to prevent conception and birth.

**BPO (Business Process Outsourcing):** A practice whereby a particular part of the production process or component of a service industry is contracted out to be performed by a third party. For example, a telephone company that provides phone lines and services, may outsource its customer service division, i.e., get another smaller company to handle all calls and complaints by customers.

**Capital:** An accumulated fund of investible resources. Usually used for 'active' funds, i.e., funds that are not just being hoarded or saved, but are being held for investment. Capital seeks to grow, to add to itself – this is the process of accumulation.

**Capitalism:** A mode of production based on generalised commodity production, or a social system where (a) private property and the market have penetrated all sectors, converting everything including labour power into a saleable commodity; (b) two main classes exist – a mass of wage labourers who own nothing but their labour power (their capacity to perform labour), and a class of capitalists who, in order to survive as capitalists, must invest their capital and earn ever increasing profits in a competitive market economy.

**Checks - positive:** A term used by T.R. Malthus to refer to constraints on the rate of population growth that are imposed by nature regardless of the wishes of human beings. Examples of such checks include – famines, epidemics and other natural disasters.

**Checks - preventive:** A term used by T.R. Malthus to refer to constraints on the rate of population growth that are voluntarily imposed on themselves by human beings. Examples of such checks include – postponing marriage; and practicing celibacy or birth control.

**Civil Society:** The sphere of society that lies beyond the family but is not part of either state or market. The arena of voluntary associations and organisations formed for cultural, social, religious or other non-commercial and non-state collective pursuits.

**Class:** An economic grouping based on common or similar position in the social relations of production, levels of income and wealth, life style and political preferences.

**Colonialism:** The ideology by which a country seeks to conquer and colonise (forcibly settle, rule over) another. The colony becomes a subordinate part of the coloniser's country, and is exploited in various ways for the colonising country's gain. Related to imperialism, but involves a more sustained interest in settling down to live in and govern the colony (i.e., exercising detailed and local control) rather than (as with imperialism) plundering and departing, or ruling from a distance.

**Commodification (or commoditisation):** The transformation of a non-commodity (i.e., something that is not bought and sold for money in a market) into a commodity.

**Commodity:** A good or service that may be bought or sold in the market.

**Commodity fetishism:** A condition under capitalism under which social relations become expressed as relations between things.

**Communalism:** Chauvinism based on religious identity. The belief that religion supersedes all other aspects of a person's or group's identity. Usually accompanied by an aggressive and hostile attitude towards persons and groups of other religious (or non-religious) identities.

**Community:** A general term for any distinctive group whose members are connected to each other by consciously recognised commonalities and bonds of kinship, language, culture and so on. Belief in these commonalities is more important than actual proof of their existence.

**Consumption:** Final use of goods and services by people who have purchased them (consumers).

**Democracy:** A form of government which derives its legitimacy from the people, and relies on explicit popular endorsement through elections or other method of ascertaining the people's opinion.

**Discourse:** The framework of thinking in a particular area of social life. For instance, the discourse of criminality means how people in a given society think about criminality.

**Discrimination:** Practices, acts or activities resulting in the unjustified exclusion of the members of a particular group from access to goods, services, jobs, resources, etc., that are normally accessible to others. Discrimination has to be distinguished from prejudice, although the two are usually quite closely associated.

**Diversity (Cultural Diversity):** The presence within the larger national, regional or other context of many different kinds of cultural communities such as those defined by language, religion, region, ethnicity and so on. A multiplicity or plurality of identities.

**Dominant Caste:** A middle or upper-middle ranking caste with a large population and newly acquired land ownership rights. This combination makes these castes politically, economically and therefore socially dominant in the countryside in many regions of India. Dominant castes replace the older castes which exercised dominance; unlike these earlier castes, these are not 'twice born' castes (i.e., not from the brahmin, kshatriya or vaishya varnas).

## Glossary

**Economic anthropology:** A subfield of socio-cultural anthropology that studies the entire range of economies and cultures found in the prehistoric, historic and ethnographic records, especially non-market economic systems.

**Embedded:** (As in 'socially embedded') Existing within a larger context of society or culture which 'frame' or contextualise the process or phenomenon in question. To say that the economic institutions are embedded in society is to say that they exist within society and are able to function because of the background rules and arrangements made possible by society.

**Endogamy:** Requires an individual to marry within a culturally defined group of which he or she is already a member, as for example, caste.

**Enumeration:** Literally, 'numbering'; refers to processes of counting and measurement, specially those relating to people, such as a census or survey.

**Epidemic:** Derived from the Greek (epi = upon; demos = the people). Refers to a sudden increase in the rate at which a disease affects the people of a given geographic area at a specific time. The key factor here is that the rate of incidence (the number of fresh cases reported per unit of time, such as a day, week, or month) has to be substantially higher than the 'normal' rate. This can be a partly subjective judgement. If a disease has a high but constant rate of incidence in a specific geographical area (i.e., there is no sudden increase) it is called an endemic disease. An epidemic that is not restricted to a given geographical area but is more widespread (i.e., it is at a national, international or even global level) is called a pandemic.

**Ethnic cleansing:** The creation of ethnically homogenous territories through the mass expulsion of other ethnic populations.

**Ethnicity:** An ethnic group is one whose members share a distinct awareness of a common cultural identity, separating them from other groups around them.

**Exogamy:** Requires the individual to marry outside of his/her own group.

**Family:** Is a group of persons directly linked by kin connections, the adult members of which assume responsibility of caring for children.

**Fertility:** In the context of human population, this refers to the ability of human beings to reproduce. Since reproduction is primarily a female-centred process, fertility is calculated with reference to the female population, that is, in the child-bearing age group.

**Gender:** In social theory, the term reserved for the socially and culturally produced differences between men and women. (As different from 'sex' which refers to the physical-biological differences between men and women) Nature creates sexes, society creates genders.

**Geometric progression:** See 'progression – geometric'

**Globalisation:** A complex series of economic, social, technological, cultural and political changes that have increased the interdependence, integration, and interaction among people and economic actors (companies) in disparate locations.

- Integration:** A process of cultural unification whereby cultural distinctions are relegated to the private domain and a common public culture is adopted for all groups. This usually involves the adoption of the dominant culture as the official culture. Expressions of cultural difference or distinctiveness are not encouraged or sometimes even prohibited in the public domain.
- Jajmani system:** Non-market exchange of produce, goods, and services within the (north) Indian village, without the use of money, based on the caste system and customary practices.
- Jati:** The word for caste; a region-specific hierarchical ordering of castes that marry within their boundaries, pursue hereditary occupations and are fixed by birth. This is the traditional system, but it has undergone many changes over time.
- Kinship:** Ties are connections between individuals, established either through marriage or through the lines of descent that connect blood relatives (mothers, fathers, siblings, offspring, etc.)
- Labour power:** Capacity for labour; the mental and physical capabilities of human beings that are used in the process of production. (As different from labour, which is work performed)
- Laissez-faire:** (French; literally, 'let be' or 'leave alone') – an economic philosophy that advocates free market system and minimal government intervention in economic matters.
- Liberalisation:** The process whereby state controls over economic activity are relaxed and left to the market forces to decide. In general, a process of making laws more liberal or permissive.
- Lifchances:** The potential opportunities or possible achievements available to a person during their life.
- Lifestyle:** A way of life; more concretely, the specific kinds and levels of consumption that define the everyday life of particular social groups.
- Marketisation:** The use of market based solutions to solve social, political, or economic problems.
- Marriage:** A socially acknowledged and approved sexual union between two adult individuals. When two people marry, they become *kin* to one another.
- Minority groups:** A group of people in a minority in a given society who, because of their distinct physical or cultural characteristics, find themselves in situations of inequality within that society. Such groups include ethnic minorities.
- Mode of production:** In Marx's historical materialism, a specific combination of forces of production and relations of production that create a historically distinct social formation.
- Reciprocity:** Informal, culturally regulated exchange (trade) of goods and services in a non-market economy.
- Role Conflict:** Conflict between the different social roles that the same individual is expected to play. For example, a working father may experience a role conflict between his role as a worker and his role as a father or husband.