

CBSE Class-12 Sociology Test Paper-03
Social inequality and exclusion

General Instruction:

- Question 1-5 carries two marks each.
 - Question 6-8 carries four marks each.
 - Question 9-10 carries six marks each.
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1. Define 'untouchability'.
2. What do you mean by 'distance pollution'?
3. Define the term 'dalit'.
4. Why did the term 'Dalit' received wide currency?
5. Why is legislation alone unable to transform society or produce lasting social change?
6. Explain how caste discrimination continues to affect the life chances of Indians in the twenty first century.
7. Explain 'untouchability' as an extreme aspect of the caste discrimination.
8. What was the most important state initiative as an attempt to compensate for past and present caste discrimination?
9. Show a cross-cultural comparison between race and caste.
10. Describe the numerous laws that have been passed to end, prohibit and punish caste discrimination, especially untouchability.

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1. Untouchability' is an extreme and particularly vicious aspect of the caste system that prescribes stringent social sanctions against members of castes located at the bottom of the purity-pollution scale. Strictly speaking, the 'untouchable' castes are outside the caste hierarchy.
2. The notions of 'distance pollution' existed in many regions of India (particularly in the south). It means that even the mere presence or the shadow of an 'untouchable' person is considered polluting, bringing terrible punishment for the former and forcing the latter to perform elaborate purification rituals.
3. The term 'Dalit' was coined by the ex-untouchable communities and their leaders and it literally means 'downtrodden' and conveys the sense of an oppressed people. It is now the generally accepted term for referring to these groups. Though it was neither coined by Dr. Ambedkar nor frequently used by him, the term certainly resonates with his philosophy and the movement for empowerment that he led.
4. The term 'Dalit' received wide currency during the caste riots in Mumbai in the early 1970s. The Dalit Panthers, a radical group that emerged in western India during that time, used the term to assert their identity as part of their struggle for rights and dignity.
5. India like most societies has been marked by acute practices of social discrimination and exclusion. At different periods of history protest movements arose against caste, gender and religious discrimination. Yet prejudices remain and often, new ones emerge. Thus legislation alone is unable to transform society or produce lasting social change. A constant social campaign to change awareness and sensitivity is required to break them.
6. Although things have certainly changed, they have not changed much at the macro level.
 - i. It is still true that the privileged (and high economic status) sections of society tend to be overwhelmingly 'upper' caste while the disadvantaged (and low economic status) sections are dominated by the so called 'lower' castes.
 - ii. The caste-class correlation is still remarkably stable at the macro level.
 - iii. Moreover, the proportion of population that lives in poverty or affluence differs greatly across caste groups.
 - iv. Even though there have been major changes and concerted attempts by the state to suppress its public role in independent India, caste continues to affect the life chances

of Indians in the twenty-first century.

7. 'Untouchability' is an extreme and particularly vicious aspect of the caste system that prescribes stringent social sanctions against members of castes located at the bottom of the purity-pollution scale.

Strictly speaking, the 'untouchable' castes are outside the caste hierarchy and they are considered to be so 'impure' that their mere touch severely pollutes members of all other castes, bringing terrible punishment for the former and forcing the latter to perform elaborate purification rituals.

In fact, notions of 'distance pollution' existed in many regions of India (particularly in the south) such that even the mere presence or the shadow of an 'untouchable' person is considered polluting.

Despite the limited literal meaning of the word, the institution of 'untouchability' refers not just to the avoidance or prohibition of physical contact but to a much broader set of social sanctions.

8. The most important state initiative attempting to compensate for past and present caste discrimination is the one popularly known as 'reservations'. This involves the setting aside of some places or 'seats' for members of the Scheduled Castes and Tribes in different spheres of public life.

These include reservation of seats in the State and Central legislatures (i.e., state assemblies, Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha); reservation of jobs in government service across all departments and public sector companies; and reservation of seats in educational institutions.

The proportion of reserved seats is equal to the percentage share of the Scheduled Castes and Tribes in the total population. But for the OBCs this proportion is decided differently. The same principle is extended to other developmental programmes of the government, some of which are exclusively for the Scheduled Castes or Tribes, while others give them preference.

9. Just like caste in India, race in South Africa stratifies society into a hierarchy.
 - i. South Africa's White minority holds the dominant share of power and wealth.
 - ii. To ensure their political control, the White European minority developed the policy of apartheid, or separation of the races.
 - iii. An informal practice for many years, apartheid became law in 1948 and was used to deny the Black majority South African citizenship, ownership of land, and a formal

voice in government.

- iv. Every individual was classified by race and mixed marriages were prohibited.
- v. As a racial caste, Blacks held low-paying jobs; on average, they earned only one-fourth what whites did.
- vi. The prosperous White minority defended its privileges by viewing Blacks as social inferiors.

However, they also relied on a powerful system of military repression to maintain their power. Black protestors were routinely jailed, tortured and killed.

10. There have been a number of laws passed to end, prohibit and punish caste discrimination, especially untouchability.

One of the earliest such laws was the Caste Disabilities Removal Act of 1850, which disallowed the curtailment of rights of citizens due solely to change of religion or caste. The most recent such law was the Constitution Amendment (Ninety Third Amendment) Act of 2005, which became law on 23rd January 2006. Coincidentally, both the 1850 law and the 2006 amendment related to education.

The 93rd Amendment is for introducing reservation for the Other Backward Classes in institutions of higher education, while the 1850 Act was used to allow entry of Dalits to government schools.

In between, there have been numerous laws, of which the important ones are, of course, the Constitution of India itself, passed in 1950; and the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act of 1989.

The Constitution abolished untouchability (Article 17) and introduced the reservation provisions mentioned above.

The 1989 Prevention of Atrocities Act revised and strengthened the legal provisions punishing acts of violence or humiliation against Dalits and Adivasi.