

**CBSE Class-12 Sociology Test Paper-02**  
**Social Inequality and Exclusion**

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**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 'social stratification'.
2. What does 'discrimination' refers to?
3. What are 'stereotypes'?
4. What are the various areas in society apart from differential economic resources where people face discrimination?
5. Define 'social exclusion'.
6. For most of us in India, social inequality and exclusion are facts of life. Use examples to explain this statement.
7. A South American proverb says – “If hard labour were really such a good thing, the rich would keep it all for themselves!”. Explain this with regard to social inequality and exclusion.
8. “Social exclusion is involuntary.” Despite of that it is practiced. Use example to explain this statement.
9. Explain how caste system enforces practices of discrimination.
10. What are the main dimensions of untouchability?

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1. Sociologists use the term social stratification to refer to a system by which categories of people in a society are ranked in a hierarchy. This hierarchy then shapes people's identity and experiences, their relations with others, as well as their access to resources and opportunities.
2. Discrimination refers to actual behaviour towards another group or individual. Discrimination can be seen in practices that disqualify members of one group from opportunities open to others, as when a person is refused a job because of their gender or religion. Discrimination can be very hard to prove because it may not be open or explicitly stated.
3. Stereotypes are fixed and inflexible characterisations of a group of people. Stereotypes are often applied to ethnic and racial groups and to women. Stereotypes fix whole groups into single, homogenous categories and they refuse to recognise the variation across individuals and across contexts or across time. They treat an entire community as though it were a single person with a single all-encompassing trait or characteristic.
4. Apart from differential economic resources, people often face discrimination and exclusion because of their gender, religion, ethnicity, language, caste and disability. Thus, women from a privileged background may face sexual harassment in public places. A middle class professional from a minority religious or ethnic group may find it difficult to get accommodation in a middle class colony even in a metropolitan city.
5. Social exclusion refers to ways in which individuals may become cut off from full involvement in the wider society. It focuses attention on a broad range of factors that prevent individuals or groups from having opportunities open to the majority of the population. Social exclusion is not accidental but systematic. It is the result of structural features of society.
6. For most of us in India, social inequality and exclusion are facts of life. This can be explained using the following examples:
  - i. We see beggars in the streets and on railway platforms. We see young children labouring as domestic workers, construction helpers, cleaners and helpers in streetside restaurants (dhabas) and tea-shops.
  - ii. We "are not surprised at the sight of small children, who work as domestic workers in

middle class urban homes, carrying the school bags of older children to school.

- iii. It does not immediately strike us as unjust that some children are denied schooling. Some of us read about caste discrimination against children in schools; some of us face it.
  - iv. Likewise, news reports about violence against women and prejudice against minority groups and the differently abled are part of our everyday lives.
7. All over the world, back-breaking work like stone breaking, digging, carrying heavy weights, pulling rickshaws or carts is invariably done by the poor. And yet they rarely improve their life chances.
- How often do we come across a poor construction worker who rises to become even a petty construction contractor? It is only in films that a street child may become an industrialist, but even in films it is often shown that such a dramatic rise requires illegal or unscrupulous methods.
- It is true that hard work matters, and so does individual ability. If all other things were equal, then personal effort, talent and luck would surely account for all the differences between individuals.
- But, as is almost always the case, all other things are not equal. It is these non-individual or group differences that explain social inequality and exclusion.
8. Social exclusion is involuntary. It means exclusion is practiced regardless of the wishes of those who are excluded. The below examples can explain this statement:
- i. For example, rich people are never found sleeping on the pavements or under bridges like thousands of homeless poor people in cities and towns.
  - ii. This does not mean that the rich are being 'excluded' from access to pavements and park benches, because they could certainly gain access if they wanted to, but they choose not to.
  - iii. Social exclusion is sometimes wrongly justified by the same logic – it is said that the excluded group itself does not wish to participate.
  - iv. The truth of such an argument is not obvious when exclusion is preventing access to something desirable (as different from something clearly undesirable, like sleeping on the pavement).
9. The caste system is a distinct Indian social institution that legitimises and enforces practices of discrimination against people born into particular castes. These practices of discrimination are humiliating, exclusionary and exploitative.

Historically, the caste system classified people by their occupation and status. Every caste was associated with an occupation, which meant that persons born into a particular caste were also 'born into' the occupation associated with their caste – they had no choice. Moreover, and perhaps more importantly, each caste also had a specific place in the hierarchy of social status, so that, roughly speaking, not only were occupational categories ranked by social status, but there could be a further ranking within each broad occupational category.

In strict scriptural terms, social and economic status was supposed to be sharply separated. For example, the ritually highest castes – the Brahmins – were not supposed to amass wealth, and were subordinated to the secular power of kings and rulers belonging to the Kshatriya castes.

On the other hand, despite having the highest secular status and power, the king was subordinated to the Brahmin in the ritual-religious sphere.

10. The three main dimensions of 'untouchability' are exclusion, humiliation-subordination and exploitation.

Dalits experience forms of exclusion that are unique and not practised against other groups – for instance, being prohibited from sharing drinking water sources or participating in collective religious worship, social ceremonies and festivals.

At the same time, untouchability may also involve forced inclusion in a subordinated role, such as being compelled to play the drums at a religious event. The performance of publicly visible acts of (self-) humiliation and subordination is an important part of the practice of untouchability.

Common instances include the imposition of gestures of deference (such as taking off headgear, carrying footwear in the hand, standing with bowed head, not wearing clean or 'bright' clothes, and so on) as well as routinised abuse and humiliation.

Moreover, untouchability is almost always associated with economic exploitation of various kinds, most commonly through the imposition of forced, unpaid (or under-paid) labour, or the confiscation of property.

Finally, untouchability is a pan-Indian phenomenon, although its specific forms and intensity vary considerably across regions and socio-historical contexts.