

CHAPTER 1

Introducing Indian Society

Problems in Society and Perceptions

The knowledge about society is acquired without explicit teaching as it is such an integral part of the process of growing up, knowledge about society seems to be acquired "naturally" or "automatically". Our social context shapes our opinions, beliefs and expectations about society and social relations. These beliefs are not necessarily wrong, though they can be. The problem is that they are 'partial' which has meaning in two different ways - incomplete (the opposite of whole), and biased (the opposite of impartial). So our 'unlearnt' knowledge or common sense usually allows us to see only a part of social reality. However, sociology does not offer a solution to this problem in the form of a perspective.

What Sociology Provides?

- Understanding Indian society and its structure provides a sort of social map on which you could locate yourself.
- 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.
- C.Wright Mills, a well-known American sociologist has written, sociology can help you to map the links and connections between "personal troubles" and "social issues". By personal troubles Mills means the kinds of individual worries, problems or concerns that everyone has.

Societal Issues

- The "generation gap" or friction between older and younger generations is a social phenomenon which is common to many societies and many time periods.
- Unemployment or the effects of a changing occupational structure is also a societal issue, that concerns millions of different kinds of people. It includes the sudden increase in job prospects for information technology related professions, as well as the declining demand for agricultural labour.
- Issues of communalism or the animosity of one religious community towards another, or casteism,

which is the exclusion or oppression of some castes by others, are again society-wide problems.

- Gender inequality, as both male and female being distinct social groups are affected by this but in a different way.

Colonialism and Indian Society

- Indian consciousness took shape during colonial period.
- Colonial rule unified all of India for the first time, and brought in the forces of modernisation and capitalist economic change.
- The economic, political and administrative unification of India under colonial rule was achieved at great expense.
- Colonial exploitation and domination scarred Indian society in many ways.
- Colonialism also gave birth to its own enemy - nationalism. Indian nationalism took shape during British colonialism.
- The shared experience of colonial domination helped unify and energise different sections of the community.
- The emerging middle classes began, with the aid of western style education, to challenge colonialism on its own ground.
- Ironically, colonialism and western education also gave the impetus for the rediscovery of tradition. This led to the developments on the cultural and social front which solidified emergent forms of community at the national and regional levels.
- Colonialism created new classes and communities which came to play significant roles in subsequent history.
- The urban middle classes were the main carriers of nationalism and they led the campaign for freedom.
- Colonial interventions also crystallised religious and caste based communities. These too became major players.

Exercise

1. In the context of sociology, the term reflexivity is -
 - (a) Making perceptions about others
 - (b) Resolving social problems on the basis of evidences
 - (c) Self-inspection about social problems
 - (d) All of the above
2. Which of the following states have smaller area than Arunachal Pradesh?
 - (a) Manipur (b) Telangana
 - (c) Andhra Pradesh (d) Rajasthan
3. What does sociologist believe regarding problems in society?
 - (a) There is a rational view about the society.
 - (b) No ideal vantage point exists.
 - (c) Problems can be solved through common sense.
 - (d) Unlearnt knowledge can be used to solve problems.
4. Sociology can help you to map the links and connections between "personal troubles" and "social issues". Which of the following personality has stated the mentioned statement?
 - (a) Mahatma Gandhi (b) James Mills
 - (c) C. Wright Mills (d) Emanuel Kant
5. In Sociology, the "generation gap" or friction between older and younger generations, is which of the following type of problem?
 - (a) Social issues (b) Personal problem
 - (c) Both (a) and (b) (d) Neither (a) nor (b)
6. Unemployment is which of the following type of issue in Sociology?
 - (a) Economic issue (b) Personal issue
 - (c) Lack of qualification (d) Social issue
7. Which of the following issues lead to unemployment?
 1. Sudden increase in job prospects for information technology related profession
 2. Declining demand for agricultural labour
 3. Lack of skills as per the marketSelect the correct answer using the code given below:
 - (a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only
 - (c) 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3
8. Which of the following were the results of colonization in India?
 1. Political and economic unification of India
 2. Administrative unification of India
 3. Modernization
 4. NationalismSelect the correct answer using the code given below:
 - (a) 1, 2 and 3 only (b) 2, 3 and 4 only
 - (c) 3 and 4 only (d) All of the above
9. Through which of the following ways, Indian nationalism took shape under British colonialism?
 1. Shared experience of colonial domination
 2. Emerging middle classes with the aid of traditional Indian and western education
 3. Rediscovery of Indian traditionSelect the correct answer using the code given below:
 - (a) 1 and 3 only (b) 2 and 3 only
 - (c) 3 only (d) All of the above
10. Which of the following section of society were the main carriers of nationalism in India?
 - (a) Sepoys (b) Urban middle class
 - (c) Workers (d) Revolutionaries

Answer Keys

1. (c) 2. (a) 3. (b) 4. (c) 5. (a) 6. (d) 7. (d) 8. (d) 9. (a) 10. (b)