

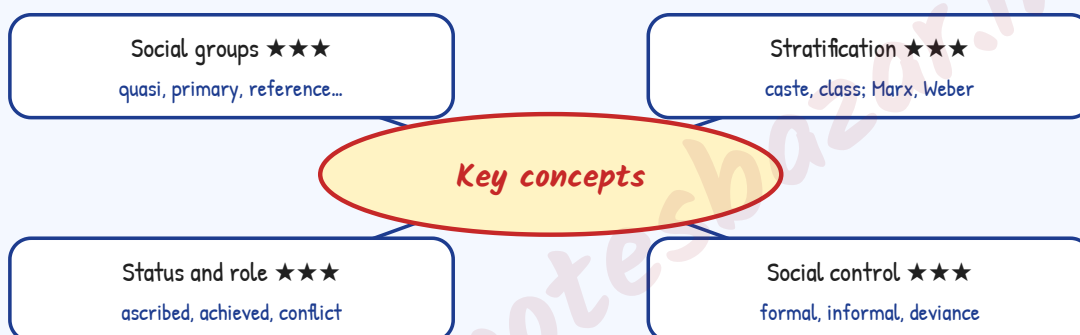
Class 11 · Sociology (039) · Book 1: Introducing Sociology · Chapter 2 · CBSE 2026-27

Chapter 2

Terms, Concepts and their Use in Sociology

Why sociology needs concepts · contesting views: functionalism and conflict, micro and macro · social groups: aggregates, quasi groups, characteristics · types: primary and secondary, community and society/association, in-group and out-group, reference group, peer group · social stratification: slavery, caste, estate, class (Marx, Weber, functionalism) · status and role: status set, sequence, ascribed and achieved, prestige, role conflict, role stereotyping · social control: formal and informal, sanctions, deviance

Chapter map (★ = most important for exams)



Syllabus and weightage

Concept-heavy chapter — many 2- and 4-mark definitions and comparisons. Favourites: why concepts, quasi group vs social group, primary vs secondary, in-group vs out-group, reference group, caste vs class, ascribed vs achieved status, role conflict, functionalist vs conflict view of social control.

★ **Exam tip:** Concepts are **keys to open locks** — entry points to understanding society, not final answers; if a key rusts or does not fit, we modify it. Sociology both **uses** and constantly **questions** its concepts.

2.1 Why special terms? ★★★

- Nuclear physics obviously needs terms; for sociology terms are **even more important** because its subject is **familiar** and words already exist – we are so used to institutions that we cannot see them clearly (**Berger**). Living in families does not mean knowing about families (conflating common sense with sociology).
- Concepts have a **history**: many reflect the shift from pre-modern to modern – close face-to-face vs formal interaction → **primary/secondary, community/society**; concern with structured inequality → **stratification**.
- Contesting views**: Marx – class and conflict; Durkheim – social solidarity, collective conscience; post-WWII **structural functionalists** – society harmonious like an organism; **conflict theorists** (Marxist) – society conflict-ridden.
- Micro** (from individual interaction – status, role) vs **macro** (from structures like class, caste, market, state – social control, stratification). Multiplicity of approaches is acute because society itself is diverse.

2.2 Social groups ★★★

- Humans interact and form collectivities in **every** society, but the **types** differ across societies.
- Aggregates**: people in the same place at the same time with no definite connection – passengers at a station, cinema audience; often called **quasi groups**.
- Quasi group**: aggregate lacking structure or organisation, whose members may be unaware of the grouping – social classes, status groups, age and gender groups, crowds. May become social groups – class and caste gave rise to **political parties**; communities developed a national identity in the anti-colonial struggle; the **women's movement** created women's organisations.

Characteristics of a social group: (i) **persistent interaction** for continuity; (ii) a **stable pattern** of interactions; (iii) a **sense of belonging** – conscious of the group, its rules, rituals, symbols; (iv) **shared interest**; (v) acceptance of **common norms and values**; (vi) a definable **structure** (regular, repetitive patterns of interaction).

A social group = continuously interacting persons sharing interest, culture, values and norms in a society.

Primary group	Secondary group
Small; intimate, face-to-face association and co-operation; sense of belonging	Relatively large ; formal, impersonal relationships
Person-oriented – family, village, friends	Goal-oriented – schools, government offices, hospitals, students' associations

Community	Society / association
Highly personal, intimate, enduring relations; involvement considerable or total – family, real friends, close-knit groups	Impersonal, superficial, transitory relations of modern urban life; commerce needs calculating, rational, self-interested dealings – contracts rather than knowing each other
Parallel to primary group	Parallel to secondary group

A complete contrast is not accurate – formal groups may over time become "just like family" (Residents' Welfare Association, Mahila Samiti) – concepts are not frozen.

Group	Meaning and example
In-group	Marked by a sense of belonging – "us/we" vs "them/they" (pupils of one school)

Out-group	Group to which in-group members do not belong; may face hostility — migrants. Membership changes over time: M.N. Srinivas in Rampura (1948) heard recent migrants called <i>nenne monne bandavaru</i> ("came yesterday or the day before") and old ones <i>arsheyinda bandavaru</i> ("came long ago") or <i>khadeem kulagalu</i> ("old lineages")
Reference group	Groups whose lifestyles are emulated ; we do not belong to them but identify with them; sources of culture, lifestyle, aspirations. Colonial middle-class Indians aspired to behave like the English — gendered : men dressed and dined like Englishmen but wanted women to stay "Indian"
Peer group	A primary group of similar age or common profession; peer pressure = social pressure from peers on what one ought to do (dress, music, films)

2.3 Social stratification ★★★

- Existence of **structured inequalities** between groups in access to material or symbolic rewards; like **geological layering** of rock — favoured at the top, less privileged at the bottom.
- Central to sociology: health, longevity, security, education, work, political influence are all **unequally distributed** in systematic ways.
- Four historical systems: **slavery** (people owned by others — ancient Greece and Rome, Southern USA 18th–19th c.; formally ended, but **bonded labour**, even of children, persists), **caste**, **estate** (feudal Europe), **class**.

Caste ★★★

- Position depends wholly on status **ascribed by birth**, not achieved (class societies too have ascriptive constraints like race and gender, but less completely).
- Hierarchy of precedence by **purity and pollution**: Brahmins most pure, **Panchamas** ("outcastes") lowest; conceptualised as four **varnas** (Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, Shudra); in reality innumerable occupation-based **jatis**.
- Endogamy** and ritual avoidance maintained purity. Urbanisation challenged this — **A.R. Desai**: hotels, trams, buses, railways mixed castes, yet caste had not vanished. Dalit narrative (Parmar): no open discrimination in the mill, but "they will not drink water from our hands... no matter how well we dress".
- Democracy: castes became **interest groups**; discriminated castes assert democratic rights.

Class ★★★

Theory	View of class
Marx	Defined by relation to the means of production — owners of land/factories vs owners of only their labour
Weber	Life-chances — rewards and advantages from market capacity; inequality based on economic relations, prestige or political power
Functionalism	No society is classless; stratification is an unconsciously evolved device to place and motivate individuals so the most important positions are filled by the most qualified (is this true?)

Caste: **fixed, rigid, hereditary**. Class: **open, achievement-based** (President **K.R. Narayanan**'s rise). But class structure persists; mobility is far from perfect; those at the bottom are socially and economically disadvantaged.

2.4 Status and role ★★★

- Status**: a position in society or a group with defined **rights and duties** (mother — norms, responsibilities, prerogatives). **Role**: the dynamic, **behavioural aspect** of status — status is **occupied**, role is **played**; status = an institutionalised role.

- **Status set:** multiple statuses held at once (student, customer, passenger, sibling, patient) — more in complex societies.
- **Status sequence:** statuses attained in succession over life (son → father → grandfather → great-grandfather).
- **Ascribed status:** by birth or involuntarily — age, caste, race, kinship; marks simple traditional societies. **Achieved status:** by ability, achievement, choice — education, income, expertise; marks modern societies ("you have to prove yourself"); ascription still matters.
- **Prestige:** value attached to a **status/office**, not the person; a doctor's prestige may exceed a shopkeeper's though he earns less; varies across societies and periods.
- **Role taking and playing:** performing roles as per social expectations.

Term	Meaning and example
Role conflict	Incompatible expectations from two or more roles — middle-class working woman (mother, wife, professional); Khasi matriliney (Nongbri): men torn between natal house and wife and children, lack authority over children and cannot pass on self-acquired property; women unsure whether husbands prefer their sisters' homes
Role stereotyping	Reinforcing specific roles — men as breadwinners, women as homemakers

Roles are **not fixed**: socialisation allows **agency** — people negotiate roles and fight discrimination (caste, race, gender), while others resist such change; violations are punished → social control.

2.5 Social control ★★★

The means a society uses to bring **recalcitrant or unruly** members back into line — processes, techniques and strategies regulating behaviour of individuals or groups; both **force** and the enforcing of **values and patterns**.

Functionalist view	Conflict view
Force and values to restrain deviance and mitigate tensions, maintaining order and cohesion ; control is necessary for stability	Mechanism by which dominant classes impose control; stability = writ of one section; law = formal writ of the powerful

Berger: the oldest, ultimate means is **physical violence** — no state without police; used sparingly, the threat suffices. In primary groups subtle, potent controls work. Control can rest on **fraudulent claims** — a boy threatening with an (invented) big brother.

Formal	Informal
Codified, systematic — law, the state; emphasised in modern societies	Personal, unofficial, uncoded — smiles, frowns, body language, criticism, ridicule, laughter; agencies: family, religion, kinship; effective day to day, but sometimes inadequate (and may be brutal — " honour killing " for marrying outside caste)

- **Sanction:** reward or punishment reinforcing expected behaviour — **positive** (rewards) or **negative** (punishment to restrain deviance).
- **Deviance:** actions not conforming to the norms or values held by most of a group; what is deviant varies across cultures and changes over time (a woman astronaut — deviant once, applauded later).

NCERT exercises, solved ★★★

1. Why do we need special terms and concepts in sociology?

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Ans. Sociology's subject — family, caste, status — is familiar and already named in everyday speech, so we take institutions for granted and confuse common sense with sociological knowledge (Berger). Precise concepts help us see society clearly, distinguish phenomena (quasi vs social group, ascribed vs achieved status) and compare societies. Concepts also carry history — primary/secondary, community/society reflect the shift to modernity; stratification reflects concern with inequality. They are keys or entry points to understanding, constantly questioned and modified, and reflect contesting perspectives (functionalist vs conflict, micro vs macro).

2. The groups you interact with, seen sociologically.

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Ans. My **family** and close friends are **primary groups** — small, intimate, face-to-face, person-oriented — and form a **community**-like bond. My **school** and coaching class are **secondary groups** — larger, formal, goal-oriented, with rules. My classmates of the same age are a **peer group** exerting **peer pressure** on dress, music and films. My school forms an **in-group** against a rival school (**out-group**) in matches. Film stars or toppers of IITs may be my **reference group** whose lifestyle I emulate. Teenagers as an age category are a **quasi group**, which marketing helps shape into a self-aware group. These groups are not fixed — formal groups may become friendly, out-groups may become in-groups.

3. Stratification in your society; how it affects lives.

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Ans. My society shows **class** divisions (wealthy business families, salaried middle class, daily-wage workers), **caste** hierarchy (still visible in marriage, some rituals and occasional discrimination despite urban mixing), and **gender** inequality. Stratification decides access to good schools, coaching and English education, health care and longevity, housing, jobs and social networks, and political influence — opportunities are unequally distributed in systematic ways. Caste ascribes status by birth and is rigid; class is more open (K.R. Narayanan's rise), yet mobility is limited. Those at the bottom are disadvantaged socially and economically; democracy has helped discriminated groups assert their rights.

4. What is social control? Are modes different in different spheres?

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Ans. Social control is the set of processes, techniques and strategies — force and the enforcement of values — by which society regulates behaviour and brings deviants back into line. Functionalists see it as maintaining order; conflict theorists as the dominance of powerful classes. Modes differ by sphere: in the **family and peer groups** informal controls — love, praise, frowns, ridicule, gossip, threat of exclusion; in **religion and kinship** beliefs, rituals, fear of sin, caste panchayats (even honour killings); in **school** rules, marks, rewards and detentions; at **work** contracts, appraisals, promotions, dismissal; in the **state** formal controls — laws, police, courts, punishment. Sanctions may be positive or negative.

5. Your roles and statuses; do they change?

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Ans. My status set: student, son/daughter, sibling, friend, team member, customer, passenger, patient. Some are ascribed (gender, age, being a son/daughter), others achieved (class monitor, team captain). They change through a **status sequence** — student → graduate → employee → spouse → parent; roles change with new expectations (more responsibility as an elder sibling or earner). They also change with

social change — women now take professional roles, men share housework; people negotiate roles and fight discrimination, though role conflict (study vs sports) may arise.

Glossary: **Conflict theories** — tensions and competing interests over scarce resources (Marx). **Functionalism** — events explained by functions they perform for society's continuity. **Identity** — distinctive characteristics of a person/group (gender, nationality, class). **Means of production** — technology plus social relations of producers. **Micro/macrosociology** — face-to-face interaction vs large systems. **Norms** — rules of behaviour backed by sanctions. **Sanctions** — rewards/punishments reinforcing expected behaviour.

Practice: 1. What is an aggregate? 2. Six characteristics of a social group? 3. What are jatis? 4. Weber's term for market-based rewards? 5. What is a status sequence? 6. What is prestige attached to? 7. What is role stereotyping? 8. Give two informal social controls. **Answers:** 1. People in the same place at the same time without definite connection. 2. Persistent interaction, stable pattern, belonging, shared interest, common norms, structure. 3. Occupation-based caste groups. 4. Life-chances. 5. Statuses attained in succession through life. 6. The status/office, not the person. 7. Reinforcing specific roles for certain members (breadwinner/homemaker). 8. Ridicule, frowns (also praise, gossip).

Multiple choice: 20 MCQs

1. Passengers waiting at a bus stop form an:
 - (a) community (b) primary group (c) aggregate
 - (d) reference group
2. Social classes and age groups are examples of:
 - (a) quasi groups (b) primary groups (c) secondary groups (d) peer groups
3. Family and village are:
 - (a) secondary groups (b) out-groups (c) associations (d) primary groups
4. Secondary groups are mainly:
 - (a) person-oriented (b) goal-oriented (c) small (d) intimate
5. Impersonal, contract-based relations characterise:
 - (a) community (b) society/association (c) family (d) primary group
6. "Us vs them" feeling marks an:
 - (a) aggregate (b) estate (c) quasi group (d) in-group
7. Groups whose lifestyles we emulate without belonging are:
 - (a) reference groups (b) in-groups (c) peer groups (d) out-groups
8. The Rampura study of migrants was by:
 - (a) A.R. Desai (b) Nongbri (c) M.N. Srinivas (d) Berger
9. Structured inequality between groups is:
 - (a) role conflict (b) socialisation (c) social control (d) social stratification
10. Estates characterised:
 - (a) ancient Rome (b) feudal Europe (c) USA (d) modern India
11. Caste hierarchy rests on ideas of:
 - (a) wealth (b) market (c) purity and pollution (d) merit
12. Class defined by relation to means of production is the view of:
 - (a) Marx (b) Durkheim (c) functionalists (d) Weber
13. "Life-chances" is a concept of:
 - (a) Marx (b) Weber (c) Srinivas (d) Comte
14. Stratification fills important positions with the most qualified — according to:
 - (a) conflict theory (b) Marxism (c) functionalism (d) feminism
15. Status that is "played" is a:
 - (a) prestige (b) sanction (c) norm (d) role

16. Son → father → grandfather is a:
(a) status sequence (b) role conflict (c) ascribed set (d) status set
17. A status based on educational qualification is:
(a) achieved (b) ascribed (c) quasi (d) primary
18. Khasi men torn between natal house and family experience:
(a) role stereotyping (b) deviance (c) prestige (d) role conflict
19. Law and the state are agencies of:
(a) informal control (b) formal social control (c) peer pressure (d) stratification
20. Action not conforming to group norms is:
(a) sanction (b) status (c) deviance (d) prestige
- 1 (c) · 2 (a) · 3 (d) · 4 (b) · 5 (b) · 6 (d) · 7 (a) · 8 (c) · 9 (d) · 10 (b) · 11 (c) · 12 (a) · 13 (b) · 14 (c) · 15 (d) · 16 (a) · 17 (a) · 18 (d) · 19 (b) · 20 (c)

Assertion-Reason (6)

(a) Both A and R true, R explains A. (b) Both true, R does not explain A. (c) A true, R false. (d) A false, R true.

1. A: Quasi groups may become social groups. R: Caste and class have given rise to political parties.
2. A: Prestige is attached to a status. R: Peer pressure comes from one's age-mates.
3. A: Caste is an open, achievement-based system. R: In caste, position is ascribed by birth.
4. A: Men never face role conflict. R: Khasi matriliney creates intense role conflict for men.
5. A: Conflict theorists see law as the writ of the powerful. R: They view social control as imposed by dominant classes.
6. A: What is deviant changes over time. R: Norms and values vary across cultures and periods.

Key: 1 (a) · 2 (b) · 3 (d) · 4 (d) · 5 (a) · 6 (a)

- **Last-night summary:** Concepts needed because the subject is familiar (Berger); concepts have histories; contesting views — Marx/Durkheim, functionalist/conflict, micro/macro; concepts = keys. Aggregates, quasi groups (may become groups); 6 traits of social groups. Primary vs secondary; community vs society/association; in/out-group (Srinivas, Rampura); reference group (colonial, gendered); peer group, peer pressure.
- Stratification — structured inequality, rock layers; slavery, caste, estate, class. Caste — ascription, purity-pollution, varna/jati, endogamy; Desai on urban change; persisting discrimination; castes as interest groups. Class — Marx (means of production), Weber (life-chances, prestige, power), functionalism (positions filled by qualified). Caste rigid, class open (Narayanan).
- Status (position) vs role (behaviour); status set, sequence; ascribed vs achieved; prestige; role conflict (working woman, Khasi men), role stereotyping; agency. Social control — functionalist vs conflict; Berger (violence, invented brother); formal vs informal; sanctions positive/negative; deviance relative (woman astronaut).