

Collegedunia NCERT Notes

NCERT Revision Notes

Chapter 6: Social Structure, Stratification and Social Processes in Society

Social Structure, Stratification and Social Processes in Society class 11 sociology notes explain how patterned relations, unequal access, and everyday interaction shape individual choice.

These notes cover structure, stratification, life chances, status, power, cooperation, competition, conflict, functionalist views, conflict views, and exam-ready comparisons.

Also see for this chapter: [NCERT Book PDF](#)

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1 Chapter Map and Core Question

The chapter asks one central question: how free is the individual inside society? Sociology answers this by studying patterns that already exist before a person acts, and by studying how people still reproduce or change those patterns.

1.1 Why this chapter matters

The chapter joins three ideas. Social structure shows patterned relationships. Social stratification shows patterned inequality. Social processes show

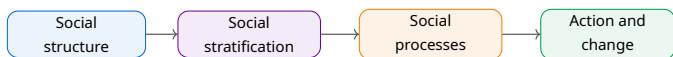
how people cooperate, compete, and come into conflict within those patterns.

- **Structure:** repeated arrangements in relationships and institutions.
- **Stratification:** ranked inequality between groups.
- **Process:** regular forms of interaction such as cooperation, competition, and conflict.
- **Agency:** the capacity of people to act, resist, adjust, and create change.

Core Idea

Society is not a random collection of actions. It has patterns that shape action, but those patterns are also made and remade by human beings.

Chapter logic



Exam Tip

Begin long answers with the link between individual action and society. Then define the concept asked in the question.

1.2 Individual and society

The chapter develops the sociological imagination introduced earlier. A student's school, language, family, neighbourhood, gender, caste, class, region, and religion all help locate that student in a wider structure.

- Personal choices are real, but they are made in a social setting.
- Access to school, health, leisure, food, and clothing is not equal for all.
- A person's location affects chances, confidence, opportunities, and risks.
- Sociological analysis studies both constraint and change.

Everyday Link

Two students may work equally hard, but one may have a library, internet, quiet study space, and coaching. The other may not. The difference is not only personal effort. It is also social location.

1.3 Key terms at a glance

Term	Meaning	Use in answer
Social structure	Patterned arrangement of relationships and institutions	Use for family, school, caste, class, market, and state
Social stratification	Structured inequality between groups	Use for caste, class, gender, tribe, and region
Social process	Regular form of interaction	Use for cooperation, competition, and conflict
Agency	Human capacity to act and change	Use when showing that structure is not fixed forever

2 Social Structure

Social structure refers to the underlying regularities in social life. These regularities are not always visible at first, but they shape how people relate, behave, expect, obey, resist, and organise their lives.

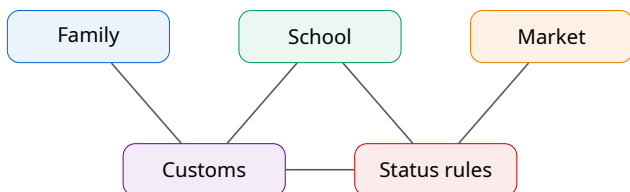
2.1 Meaning of social structure

The textbook compares social structure to a building. A building has walls, doors, floors, and routes. These arrangements make some actions easy and some actions difficult. Social structure works in a similar way.

Definition

Social structure is the patterned arrangement of social relationships and institutions that gives social life a regular form.

Structure as pattern



Common Mistake

Do not write that structure means only buildings. The building example is a metaphor. Social structure is made of human actions and relationships.

2.2 Repetition and social reproduction

Social structure continues because actions are repeated. Admission rules, school assemblies,

family duties, marriage customs, gender expectations, and class habits are repeated by new members.

- Older members leave and new members enter.
- Rules, customs, and expectations still continue.
- Small changes happen, but the broad pattern may remain.
- This continuing pattern is called social reproduction.

Revision Formula

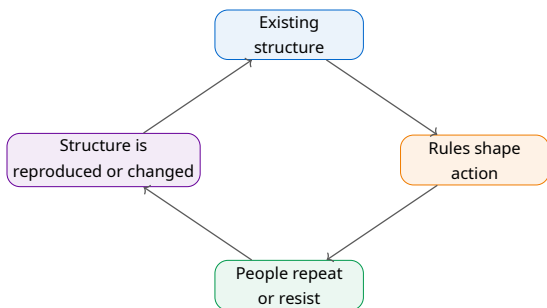
Social structure = repeated relationships + stable expectations + institutional rules + reproduction over time.

2.3 Constraint and agency

Durkheim stressed that society is external to the individual and constrains action. Marx also recognised constraint, but he stressed that people make history within given conditions.

Thinker	Focus	Exam line
Emile Durkheim	Social facts and constraint	Society has force beyond individual wishes
Karl Marx	Structure and human action	People act within historical conditions
Sociology chapter view	Dialectic of constraint and change	Structure shapes action, action remakes structure

Constraint and agency cycle



Answer Frame

For social structure, use three words: pattern, constraint, reproduction. Add agency to show the chapter's full argument.

3 Social Stratification

Social stratification is the structured inequality between groups. It is not a random difference between individuals. It is a patterned and repeated ranking that affects access to resources, respect, and power.

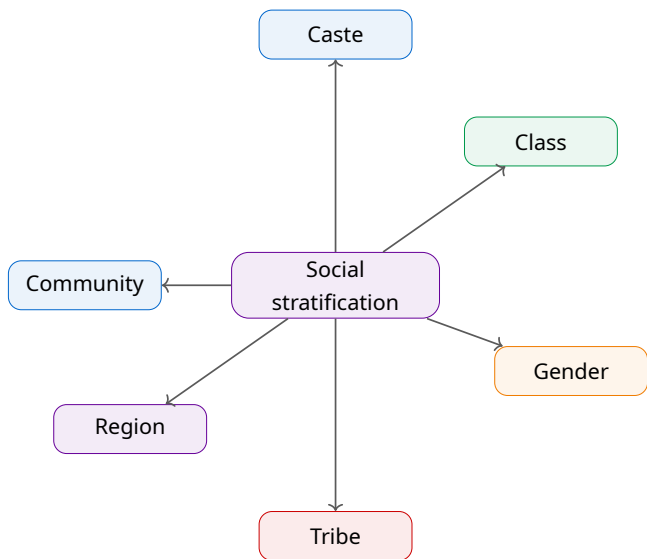
3.1 Meaning of stratification

The chapter reminds students that stratification was discussed earlier. Here it is linked with structure and social processes. Stratification works through caste, class, gender, tribe, region, community, race, and other group locations.

Definition

Social stratification refers to structured inequalities between social groups in access to material and symbolic rewards.

Bases of stratification



Everyday Link

A student may experience stratification through school fees, neighbourhood, language confidence, access to tuition, caste treatment, gender rules, or family property.

3.2 Life chances, status, and political influence

The chapter gives three basic advantages enjoyed by privileged groups. These advantages matter because they decide quality of life and group power.

Advantage	Meaning	Example
Life chances	Material advantages that improve quality of life	Health care, income, recreation, job security
Social status	Prestige or high standing in society	Being treated with respect in public spaces
Political influence	Ability to affect decisions and dominate others	Access to leaders, policy, or local authority

Memory Aid

Use **L-S-P** for stratification advantages: *Life chances, Status, Political influence.*

3.3 Persistence across generations

Stratification usually persists because advantaged groups pass privilege to the next generation. This can happen through property, networks, education, status, language, and social confidence.

- Inequality becomes durable when it is linked to group membership.
- Privilege is often reproduced through family and institution.

- Lower access in one area can reduce access in another area.
- Students should connect this point to education, health, and work.

How privilege gets reproduced



Common Mistake

*Do not reduce stratification to income only.
NCERT also stresses status, power, caste,
gender, tribe, region, and community.*

4 Two Sociological Views of Social Processes

The chapter explains that sociology does not accept simple claims like people compete because it is human nature. It asks how cooperation, competition, and conflict are shaped by society.

4.1 Why common sense is not enough

Common sense often treats cooperation, competition, and conflict as natural. Sociology asks what structure creates them, who benefits, who loses, and how meanings are taught.

- Cooperation may be voluntary or enforced.
- Competition may look open but start from unequal positions.
- Conflict may be visible or hidden under polite behaviour.
- Social norms may make inequality seem normal.

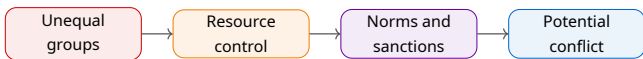
Sociological Lens

The sociological perspective questions taken-for-granted explanations. It studies social causes, group locations, and institutional rules.

4.2 Conflict perspective

The conflict perspective studies inequality and power. It asks how dominant groups control resources, norms, and sometimes coercion. Marx is usually linked with this view.

Conflict perspective flow



Factory Example

A factory owner and a worker cooperate in production. Yet the owner wants profit and the worker wants fair wages. Their cooperation can hide conflict of interest.

4.3 Functionalist perspective

The functionalist perspective studies the needs of the social system. It asks how different parts of society help the whole continue. Durkheim is usually linked with this view.

System requirement	Meaning	Example
Socialisation	New members learn norms and roles	Children learn school and family rules
Communication	Members share meanings and signs	Language, symbols, rules, records
Role assignment	People are placed in social tasks	Student, teacher, worker, official

Comparison Tip

Write conflict view for inequality and power.

Write functionalist view for system needs and social order.

5 Cooperation

Cooperation means people working together or adjusting their actions for shared tasks. NCERT asks students to notice that cooperation can be voluntary, but it can also be shaped by pressure and inequality.

5.1 Meaning and examples

Cooperation happens in family work, school routines, markets, festivals, offices, factories, farms, and neighbourhood life. It is needed because people cannot meet every need alone.

Levels of cooperation



Answer Formula

Cooperation = shared activity + coordination + norms + interdependence. Add whether it is voluntary or enforced.

5.2 Voluntary and enforced cooperation

The chapter warns that cooperation can hide unequal power. Some people cooperate because they freely agree. Others cooperate because norms, fear, dependence, or lack of alternatives push them.

Type	Meaning	Example
Voluntary cooperation	People agree and benefit through shared effort	Students forming a study group
Enforced cooperation	People comply because power or norm pushes them	A worker accepting unfair terms due to need
Hidden conflict	Conflict exists but is not openly expressed	Women giving up property claims to keep family ties

Common Mistake

Do not write cooperation as always peaceful and equal. NCERT shows that cooperation can conceal conflict.

5.3 Women and property example

The textbook uses women's right to natal property to show how cooperation can be shaped by norms. Women may avoid conflict because they fear losing affection or support from brothers and family.

- Legal rights may exist, but social pressure can reduce their use.
- Affection and fear may appear together in

family property matters.

- Norms can make unequal arrangements look natural.
- This example links gender stratification with social process.

Memory Aid

Use **V-E-H** for cooperation: *Voluntary, Enforced, Hidden conflict.*

6 Cooperation and Division of Labour

NCERT gives a deeper account of cooperation through division of labour. Cooperation is not only people being helpful. It is also the way tasks are divided, coordinated, and controlled in society.

6.1 Durkheim on division of labour

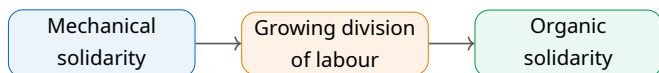
Durkheim argued that division of labour is both a fact of social life and a moral rule. As society becomes more complex, people depend on specialised work done by others.

Solidarity	Meaning	Exam use
Mechanical solidarity	People are tied by similarity and shared beliefs	Use for simpler societies with low division of labour
Organic solidarity	People are tied by interdependence and specialised work	Use for modern societies with complex division of labour
Division of labour	Specialisation of tasks in production and social life	Link it with cooperation and interdependence

Durkheim Link

For Durkheim, modern cooperation grows because specialised people need one another. A teacher, farmer, driver, doctor, shopkeeper, and official all depend on work they do not perform themselves.

From similarity to interdependence



6.2 Marx on cooperation and alienation

Marx also studied cooperation, but he asked who controls labour and who receives the surplus. Human beings cooperate consciously, unlike animals that act mainly by instinct. In capitalism, workers cooperate in production but may lose control over the task and the product.

Term	Meaning	Use in answer
Surplus	Extra product or value beyond immediate need	Link with class relations
Alienation	Loss of control over labour and its product	Use with factory worker example
Cooperation in production	Workers and owners coordinate production	Add conflict of interest over wages and profit

Common Mistake

Do not present cooperation as only harmony. Marx helps us see cooperation inside unequal control over labour.

6.3 Non-voluntary cooperation

NCERT uses the idea of enforced cooperation to show how norms, dependence, and fear can make people cooperate without real equality.

- A household may appear cooperative while authority is unequal.
- Women may avoid property conflict to preserve family ties.
- Workers may cooperate because refusing work threatens income.
- Social pressure can make unequal cooperation look natural.

Revision Formula

Division of labour creates interdependence.

Interdependence creates cooperation.

Inequality can turn cooperation into enforced cooperation.

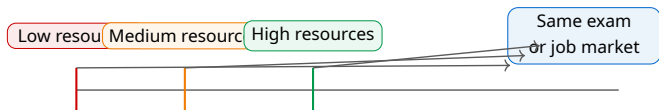
7 Competition

Competition means a struggle between individuals or groups for scarce resources, rewards, status, or opportunities. NCERT shows that competition is shaped by the starting position of different groups.

7.1 Meaning of competition

Competition is common in education, jobs, politics, markets, sports, and status claims. It is often presented as open, but sociology asks whether competitors begin with equal resources.

Unequal starting line



Exam Tip

*For competition, always add the phrase **unequal starting conditions**. It brings stratification into the answer.*

7.2 Competition and modern society

Modern societies often claim that achievement depends on merit. Sociology accepts the importance of effort, but it also asks how class, caste, gender, language, school quality, and networks affect merit.

Arena	Competition	Structural factor
Education	Marks, entrance tests, scholarships	School quality, home support, language
Employment	Jobs, promotion, wages	Networks, degree, caste, gender, region
Politics	Votes, leadership, representation	Money, status, mobilisation, identity
Market	Customers, profit, contracts	Capital, credit, location, regulation

Merit and Structure

Merit is never studied in isolation. Sociology asks how the social structure helps some people develop and display merit more easily.

7.3 Capitalism and the ideology of competition

NCERT explains that competition becomes especially important in modern capitalist society. Capitalism expands trade, division of labour, specialisation, and productivity. It also spreads the idea that open competition is fair for all.

Capitalist assumption	Meaning	Sociological question
Open market	People are free to compete	Do all groups have equal entry?
Merit reward	Talent and effort bring success	Who gets training and resources?
Specialisation	Work is divided into skilled tasks	Who controls the best skills?
Productivity	More output is valued	Who receives the surplus?

Exam Tip

When a question asks about competition, write that sociology studies unequal conditions behind the appearance of equal opportunity.

7.4 Reservation and unequal schooling context

The chapter's competition discussion helps explain debates around access. If schooling, language, money, caste location, and networks are unequal, then a single examination cannot be treated as a perfectly equal contest.

- Some groups face poor school quality and early drop-out pressure.

- Some groups receive better language training, coaching, and confidence.
- Reservation debates must be understood through historical disadvantage.
- The sociological issue is not effort alone, but unequal starting conditions.

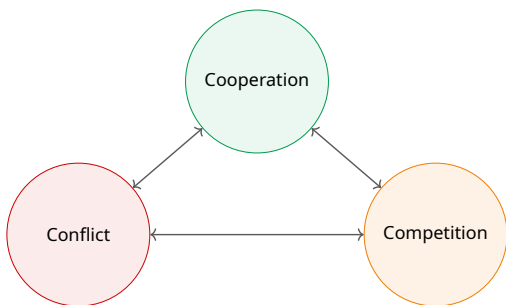
NCERT Point

Competition is a social arrangement, not a natural law. Its fairness depends on the structure in which competitors are placed.

7.5 Competition and cooperation together

Competition does not remove cooperation. Students compete for marks but cooperate in classroom routines. Businesses compete for markets but cooperate through contracts, transport, and law.

- Social processes are connected, not isolated boxes.
- Competition may need rules, referees, and shared norms.
- Competition may produce conflict when rules look unfair.
- Cooperation may continue even when interests clash.



8 Conflict and Social Change

Conflict means opposition between individuals or groups over interests, values, resources, status, or power. The chapter does not treat conflict as only negative. Conflict can expose inequality and push change.

8.1 Meaning of conflict

Conflict may be open, like strikes and protests. It may be quiet, like resentment, refusal, avoidance, or silent resistance. It often becomes visible when people question inequality.

Conflict form	Meaning	Example
Open conflict	Direct disagreement or protest	Strike, campaign, public demand
Hidden conflict	Tension below the surface	Resentment in family property matters
Institutional conflict	Dispute shaped by rules and offices	Labour negotiation or court case
Cultural conflict	Disagreement over norms and values	Debate over gender roles or caste practice

Common Mistake

Do not write conflict only as violence. Conflict can be debate, protest, negotiation, silent resistance, or a legal claim.

8.2 Conflict perspective and inequality

Conflict theorists argue that dominant groups maintain privilege through norms, rules, and sometimes force. Disadvantaged groups may resist when they recognise inequality.

Conflict and change

Inequality

Awareness

Mobilisation

Possible
change

Civic Link

Movements against untouchability, gender discrimination, unfair wages, and environmental harm show that conflict can demand a more equal social order.

8.3 Household conflict and covert resistance

NCERT shows that conflict may be hidden. A household can look cooperative from outside, while women, children, younger members, or dependent workers quietly resist unequal authority.

- Covert conflict may appear as avoidance, silence, delay, or selective refusal.
- Enforced cooperation may continue because open conflict is risky.
- Sen's idea of cooperative conflict helps explain household bargaining.
- A fair answer must notice both affection and power inside family life.

Answer Check

Do not assume that absence of open protest means absence of conflict. NCERT repeatedly asks students to look for hidden conflict.

8.4 Land conflict and Bhoodan-Gramdan example

The chapter points students to land conflict and rural power. Movements around land, including Bhoodan and Gramdan contexts, show that conflict is shaped by access to land, caste power, class location, and local authority.

Rural factor	How it shapes conflict	Answer use
Land ownership	Gives economic and social power	Link with class and caste
Local authority	Controls decisions and sanctions	Link with political influence
Dependence	Makes open conflict costly	Link with enforced cooperation
Collective action	Allows weaker groups to bargain	Link with social change

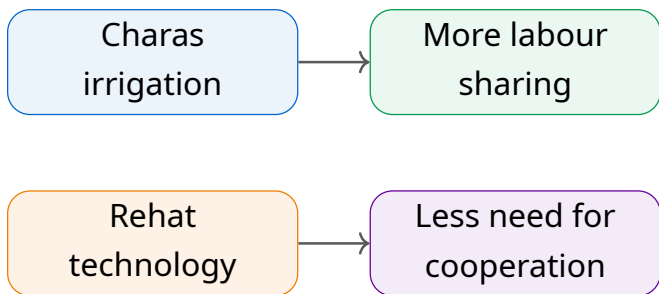
NCERT Case Layer

Land struggles show why conflict is not only an argument between individuals. It is rooted in resources, power and the structure of rural society.

8.5 Technology and cooperation: Charas and Rehat

NCERT also gives an irrigation example. A Charas may need several households to pool bullocks and labour. A Rehat, or Persian wheel, can reduce that need because one pair of bullocks and one operator may be enough.

Technology changes cooperation



Case Tip

Use the Charas and Rehat example to show that technology and capital can change the level of cooperation needed in a social system.

8.6 Conflict, cooperation, and resolution

The functionalist view often asks how conflict gets resolved and how the social system continues. The conflict view asks whose interests are protected during the resolution.

- Rules can manage conflict, but rules may also favour powerful groups.
- Negotiation may reduce tension when both sides can speak.
- Conflict can reveal hidden inequality.
- Resolution is fair only when it addresses the cause, not only the noise.

Answer Frame

When writing on conflict, add one sentence on power. Then add one sentence on possible social change.

9 Quick Revision Tables

This section converts the chapter into answer-ready tables. Use it after reading the full notes once. It is also useful for one-mark, three-mark, and five-mark school questions.

9.1 Structure, stratification, and process compared

Concept	Main idea	Best example
Social structure	Regular pattern in social relationships	Family roles, school rules, caste relations
Social stratification	Ranked inequality between groups	Unequal life chances by class, caste, gender
Cooperation	Coordinated action between people	Household work, factory production, classroom routine
Competition	Struggle for scarce rewards	Exams, jobs, markets, political office
Conflict	Opposition over interests or values	Strike, protest, property dispute, rights claim

9.2 Functionalist and conflict views compared

Point	Functionalist view	Conflict view
Main concern	Social order and system needs	Inequality, domination, and power
Cooperation	Needed for social continuity	May hide unequal relations
Competition	Can allocate roles and rewards	Often begins from unequal resources
Conflict	Usually managed by institutions	Can expose exploitation and drive change
Thinker link	Durkheim	Marx

Five-Mark Answer Plan

Define the concept. Give two textbook points. Add one example. Link it to stratification. End with cooperation, competition, or conflict if the question asks for process.

9.3 High-yield exam prompts

1. Explain social structure with the building metaphor and its limits.
2. Distinguish social structure and social stratification.
3. Explain life chances, social status, and political influence.

4. Compare functionalist and conflict perspectives on social processes.
5. Show how cooperation may conceal conflict.
6. Explain how competition is shaped by unequal starting positions.
7. Discuss conflict as a source of social change.

Last Revision

The safest chapter summary is this: structure gives pattern, stratification gives unequal location, and social processes show how people interact from those locations.

10 Common Mistakes and Answer Practice

This section adds the final revision layer. It is written for school answers where students must define a term, explain it through NCERT language, and then connect it to an example.

10.1 Mistakes students make in this chapter

Mistake	Why it weakens the answer	Better approach
Calling structure a building	It treats a metaphor as the definition	Write repeated social relations and institutions
Writing stratification as rich and poor only	It misses status, power, caste, gender and tribe	Use life chances, status and political influence
Separating the three processes fully	NCERT says they overlap in practice	Show cooperation can hide conflict
Ignoring social location	The chapter is about unequal positions	Add caste, class, gender or resource access

Writing Tip

*In a three-mark answer, define the term, add one textbook point, and add one example.
In a five-mark answer, add a comparison or perspective.*

10.2 Answer starters for school tests

1. Social structure refers to the patterned arrangement of relationships and institutions in society.
2. Social stratification refers to structured inequality between groups in access to material and symbolic rewards.
3. Cooperation is not always equal because it may be shaped by norms, dependence and power.
4. Competition must be studied with starting positions because groups do not enter competition with the same resources.
5. Conflict may be a source of social change when it exposes hidden inequality and demands new rules.

Exam Connector

Most questions from this chapter can be answered by linking a concept to a social location. Ask: who has more access, who has less access, and how does that shape action?

10.3 Mini practice table

Prompt	Core concept	Example to add
Explain why social structure constrains action	Structure and constraint	Room with doors, school rules, family roles
How does stratification affect life chances?	Group inequality	Health, education, job security, leisure
Why is competition unequal?	Starting position	School quality, language, coaching access
How can cooperation hide conflict?	Enforced cooperation	Women's property rights, workplace wages
Compare conflict and functionalist views	Perspective	Marx and Durkheim links

[Download the Full NCERT Book PDF](#)

11 One-Page Quick Reference

Use this final page as a fast recall sheet before a class test. It keeps the chapter in three columns: concept, trigger word, and answer use.

11.1 Definitions to memorise

Definition	Trigger words	Add this example
Social structure	Pattern, institution, repetition	School assembly or family roles
Social reproduction	Continuity, new members, old pattern	Rules continue after people leave
Stratification	Ranked inequality, group location	Caste, class, gender or tribe
Life chances	Quality of life, material access	Health, job security, education
Social status	Prestige, standing, respect	High or low standing in a community
Political influence	Decision-making, domination	Voice in local or institutional decisions

11.2 Three process summary

- **Cooperation:** people work together, but the cooperation may be voluntary or enforced.
- **Competition:** people struggle for scarce rewards, but the starting line may be unequal.
- **Conflict:** people oppose one another over interests or values, and this can create change.
- **Overlap:** the same relationship may include all three processes at different moments.

Final Memory Formula

Structure shapes location. Location shapes access. Access shapes cooperation, competition and conflict. Human action can then reproduce or change structure.

Related Collegedunia Resources

Same chapter, other resources:

- [NCERT Book PDF](#)

Continue learning:

- [Ch 5: Doing Sociology Research Methods](#)
- [Class 11 Sociology - All Chapters](#)