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Acknowledgement

The SAMAJ Magazine, a publication by Sociologus, is the result of the collective efforts, ideas, time, and encouragement of many people. We would like to express our sincere gratitude to everyone who has contributed to making this issue possible.

First and foremost, we extend our heartfelt thanks to all the writers and contributors who shared their knowledge, perspectives, research, experiences, and ideas with SAMAJ. Your willingness to contribute has enriched this magazine and helped us create a space for meaningful sociological discussion.

We are especially grateful to our editorial team and the entire Sociologus team for their dedication in conceptualising, editing, reviewing, designing, and preparing this issue. Their continuous efforts behind the scenes have played an important role in bringing SAMAJ to our readers.

We also thank our readers, students, educators, researchers, and sociology enthusiasts whose interest and encouragement inspire us to continue building a platform for learning, discussion, and exchange of ideas.

Our sincere appreciation goes to everyone who supported the magazine directly or indirectly—through suggestions, feedback, sharing resources, reviewing content, or simply encouraging the initiative.

SAMAJ is envisioned not merely as a magazine, but as a space for sociological thinking, dialogue, and reflection. We hope every article, idea, and perspective presented in this issue encourages readers to look at society with greater curiosity, critical thinking, and empathy.

Finally, we thank everyone who believes in the vision of Sociologus: making sociology accessible, relevant, and connected to contemporary society.

With gratitude,

Team Sociologus
Publisher & Editorial Team — SAMAJ Magazine
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Preface

SAMAJ is a monthly magazine by Sociologus, created with the aim of bringing sociology closer to contemporary society. It is an attempt to connect sociological concepts, thinkers, current affairs, social issues, and everyday experiences in a way that is useful, accessible, and intellectually engaging.

The magazine is primarily designed for UPSC Sociology Optional aspirants, students of sociology, researchers, educators, and all those who simply have a curiosity and love for understanding society. We hope that SAMAJ becomes a useful companion for those preparing for examinations while also serving as a platform for wider sociological reflection.

The content of SAMAJ draws from a range of sources, including newspapers, current affairs, academic writings, sociological literature, previous issues and publications, reports, and publicly available information. We also greatly value the knowledge, perspectives, and contributions shared by our writers and contributors. Their support helps us bring diverse viewpoints and contemporary examples into the magazine.

At SAMAJ, we believe that sociology should not remain confined to textbooks. Events happening around us—from changes in family and work to youth movements, technology, politics, inequality, culture, migration, and social change—can all be understood through a sociological lens. The magazine therefore attempts to make these connections meaningful and relevant, particularly for UPSC preparation.

At the same time, SAMAJ is a growing initiative. Despite our efforts to verify, edit, and present information carefully, there may occasionally be errors, omissions, factual inaccuracies, typographical mistakes, or differences in interpretation. We sincerely acknowledge this possibility. Readers are encouraged to independently verify important facts and refer to original sources, especially for academic and examination purposes.

We welcome constructive criticism, corrections, suggestions, and contributions from our readers and writers. Such feedback will help us improve every future issue.

We hope you enjoy reading this issue as much as we enjoyed putting it together.

— Team Sociologus
For UPSC aspirants, sociology students, and everyone who loves understanding society.

Editorial Note

Dear Aspirants,

Every UPSC journey is more than completing a syllabus. It is a journey of learning to **think sociologically, connect theory with reality, and transform complex social issues into clear and meaningful answers**.

With this first edition of **SAMAJ**, we bring you an attempt to make Sociology more connected to the society we live in. This magazine is designed primarily for **UPSC Sociology Optional aspirants**, but also for sociology students, teachers, researchers, and everyone who finds society worth questioning and understanding.

At SAMAJ, we believe that **Sociology does not exist only inside textbooks**. Durkheim, Weber, Marx, M.N. Srinivas, G.S. Ghurye, Andre Beteille and other thinkers become more meaningful when their ideas are connected with contemporary issues—changing families, youth movements, gender relations, caste, technology, migration, inequality, religion, work, politics and social change.

In our **Sociological Perspectives**, we revisit important concepts, thinkers and debates in a way that helps strengthen your conceptual foundation. The objective is not simply to tell you *what a thinker said*, but to encourage you to ask **how and where those ideas can be applied to understand contemporary society**.

Our **Current Sociology** section attempts to connect newspapers and contemporary developments with sociological concepts and theories. We have tried to bring examples, cases, reports and developments that can help you enrich your UPSC answers with relevant and contemporary illustrations.

Our content has been developed with the help of **newspapers, academic literature, sociological writings, reports, previous publications, publicly available sources, and most importantly, the valuable contributions and support of our writers and contributors**. We remain grateful to everyone who has helped shape this issue.

At the same time, SAMAJ is a **learning initiative**. We are human, and despite our efforts to verify and edit our material carefully, there may be occasional **errors, omissions,**

typographical mistakes, factual inaccuracies, or differences in interpretation. We sincerely acknowledge this possibility. Readers are encouraged to verify important information from original and authoritative sources, particularly when using material in examination answers or academic work.

We also welcome **corrections, suggestions, criticism and contributions**. A magazine grows stronger when its readers become active participants in it.

Ultimately, SAMAJ is our small attempt to create a space where **Sociology meets current affairs, theory meets reality, and preparation meets curiosity**.

That is the spirit we hope you carry into every page of SAMAJ—and eventually into every answer you write.

Read beyond the syllabus.
Think beyond the obvious.
Write beyond the conventional.

— Editorial Team
SAMAJ Magazine
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Feedback

We would love to hear from you.
Your feedback, suggestions, corrections, and ideas help us improve **SAMA**J and make every issue more useful for our readers. If you have suggestions for future topics, notice an error, or would like to contribute to the magazine, please reach out to us.

Write to us: info@sociologus.com

— Team SAMAJ | Sociologus

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1. Ghost Villages of Uttarakhand: When Migration Empties the Mountains

“It is painful to see my village like this. Govts kept promising roads, doctors, schools -- none of it reached us. Eventually, we all left,” said Banshidhar Joshi, a retired principal and Chauni’s first graduate.



The image of a village with locked houses, abandoned agricultural fields and only a few elderly residents captures a deeper transformation taking place in the Himalayan region. Uttarakhand has become one of the most visible examples of **rural depopulation in India**, where sustained out-migration has transformed once-active settlements into what are popularly called “**ghost villages”**. The phenomenon is not merely about people moving from one place to another; it represents a transformation of the **economic, demographic, cultural and social structure of rural society**.

The recent case of **Chauni village in Bageshwar district** illustrates the problem sharply. According to a November 2025 report, the village, located about 23 km from Bageshwar town, became a “ghost village” after its last resident left. Once home to dozens of families, its houses are now locked and around 550 naali of land remains vacant. The report attributes the continuing out-migration to limited employment opportunities, inadequate public services,

declining agricultural security, climate instability and weak connectivity, including deficiencies in roads, healthcare and education. The Uttarakhand Rural Development and Migration Commission has reported that more than 1,700 of the state's 16,793 villages are now uninhabited.



The phenomenon, however, is not new. Earlier data based on the 2011 Census recorded **1,048 villages with zero population**, while another 44 villages had fewer than ***ten*** residents. Pauri Garhwal and Almora were among the districts with particularly large numbers of such villages. Earlier research also reported that more than 3.83 lakh people had left their homes in the state between 2007 and 2017, with young people forming a substantial share of migrants. Thus, ghost villages should be understood as the cumulative outcome of a long-term migration process rather than a sudden demographic event.

Why are villages becoming empty?

The first major factor is **lack of livelihood opportunities**. Mountain agriculture is constrained by small and fragmented landholdings, difficult terrain, inadequate irrigation and limited market access. Agriculture that once provided subsistence may no longer provide sufficient monetary income to younger generations. Consequently, migration becomes a household strategy for accessing employment and education.

This can be understood through **Everett Lee's push-pull theory of migration**. Conditions such as unemployment, poor healthcare, limited educational opportunities, agricultural

insecurity and weak infrastructure act as **push factors**, while better employment, education, healthcare and urban lifestyles in Dehradun, Haldwani, Delhi and other cities act as **pull factors**.



The second factor is **climate and environmental insecurity**. Changes in rainfall, drying water sources, **landslides**, floods and changing agricultural conditions have increased livelihood uncertainty in parts of the Himalayas. **The Good Story** Project, drawing upon the **PIK-TERI** study, highlighted how changing temperatures, rainfall patterns, glacier-related risks and water stress could increasingly affect agriculture and migration in Uttarakhand. The 2021 Chamoli disaster also demonstrated the vulnerability of Himalayan settlements to extreme environmental events.

The third factor is **social reproduction**. Families migrate not only for employment but also because they want their children to access better schools, universities and professional opportunities. Migration therefore becomes intergenerational. Once younger members leave, villages lose their economically active population, agricultural labour and local entrepreneurship. The declining population then makes schools, shops, transport and other services less viable, creating a **self-reinforcing cycle of depopulation**.

A sociological problem, not merely a demographic one



The phenomenon can be understood through **Emile Durkheim's concept of social solidarity**. Traditional rural communities are sustained through repeated social interaction, kinship, collective rituals and shared economic activities. When population declines sharply, these networks weaken. The village does not merely lose inhabitants; it loses the social relationships that reproduce community life.

M.N. Srinivas's understanding of Indian social change is also useful. Rural India is not static; education, occupational mobility, urbanisation and modernisation continuously reshape traditional institutions. In Uttarakhand, migration represents a particularly intense form of this transition, as younger generations increasingly orient themselves towards urban occupations and lifestyles.

From a **Marxian perspective**, migration can also be viewed through changing relations of production. When subsistence agriculture cannot provide adequate economic returns while urban labour markets offer cash income, labour becomes increasingly mobile. Rural areas may lose productive labour while cities absorb it. Thus, economic inequalities between regions contribute to spatial mobility.



The problem can also be interpreted through **Amartya Sen's capability approach**. People do not migrate simply because they "dislike" village life; they often migrate because their ability to access education, healthcare, employment and social mobility is constrained. Migration may therefore represent an attempt to expand capabilities rather than merely an economic decision.

Social consequences of depopulation

Ghost villages create a number of interconnected problems. **Population ageing** becomes pronounced because young adults leave while elderly parents remain behind. Agricultural land becomes fallow, traditional knowledge declines and local markets disappear. The weakening of community institutions can also affect festivals, customary practices and collective management of forests and water resources.

There are also gendered consequences. Male out-migration can increase the responsibilities borne by women who remain in the villages, producing what is often described as the **feminisation of rural responsibilities**. Women may become central to agriculture, household management and care work without receiving equivalent economic recognition.

Depopulation can also produce a vicious cycle:



The result is what sociologists may describe as a process of **cumulative social disorganisation**, where the weakening of one institution accelerates the weakening of others.

India and the wider world

Uttarakhand is not an isolated case. In **Kuttanad, Kerala**, climate-related waterlogging and livelihood pressures have contributed to the abandonment of homes and agricultural properties; reporting in 2021 cited a state estimate that more than 6,000 families had abandoned houses and properties over the preceding two years.

Similar processes are visible globally. Rural depopulation has affected parts of **Spain, Italy, Greece and Portugal**, where ageing populations, rural-urban migration and economic marginalisation have produced partially or completely abandoned settlements. Italy's “inner areas” have become an important policy focus because of the abandonment of peripheral rural settlements. In **Japan**, post-war rural-urban migration and demographic transition produced severe depopulation in mountain communities; one studied settlement in Hyōgo Prefecture lost more than 80% of its population after 1955.

Spain provides another interesting example. Some rural municipalities have attempted to attract migrants to compensate for population decline, demonstrating that **migration itself can sometimes become a mechanism for rural revitalisation**.

Way Forward

The solution cannot be limited to asking people to "return" to villages. Rural revitalisation requires the creation of conditions under which remaining and returning populations can build sustainable livelihoods. **Local employment, better roads and digital connectivity, healthcare, quality education, irrigation, climate-resilient agriculture, agro-processing, eco-tourism and decentralised services** can reduce the structural push factors behind migration.

The emphasis should also move from simply counting migrants to understanding **who migrates, who remains and why**. Recent research from parts of Himachal Pradesh shows that migration need not always result in permanent abandonment; circular and return migration can maintain strong social, economic and cultural links with villages. This suggests that rural policy should recognise migrants not as people permanently lost to the village, but potentially as a **diaspora resource** through remittances, investment, skills and social networks.

Ultimately, Uttarakhand's ghost villages represent more than empty houses. They reveal the consequences of **unequal regional development, changing aspirations, environmental vulnerability and the transformation of rural society**. The challenge is therefore not to stop mobility, but to ensure that mobility remains a choice rather than a compulsion. A sustainable Himalayan future will depend on creating rural communities where young people can access livelihoods, education and dignity without having to abandon their ancestral landscapes.

UPSC CONNECT

Q : **"Rural out-migration can transform demographic decline into social and economic decline."** Discuss with reference to the emergence of ghost villages in Uttarakhand. 150 Words.

Q : **"The emergence of ghost villages in Uttarakhand is not merely a consequence of migration, but a manifestation of wider transformations in rural social structure."** Examine the statement using relevant sociological perspectives and examples from India and the world. 250 Words.

2. Rape in India: A Sociological Understanding of Sexual Violence



Rape is often treated primarily as a criminal and legal issue, but sociology reveals that sexual violence is also connected with **gender inequality, patriarchy, power, caste, class, socialisation and institutional structures**. Understanding rape therefore requires examining

not only the individual offender but also the social environment in which gendered violence occurs.

According to NCRB data, **29,670 rape cases were registered in India in 2023**, compared with 31,516 in 2022 and 31,677 in 2021. In the same year, **4,48,211 crimes against women** were registered. These figures represent reported cases and should not automatically be treated as the actual incidence of sexual violence because under-reporting remains an important limitation. An earlier report cited by Partners for Law in Development noted that around 34,000 rapes were reported in 2018, **roughly one every 15 minutes**. It also highlighted the role of stigma, fear and institutional barriers in preventing women from reporting sexual violence.

Rape as a Question of Power



From a sociological perspective, rape can be understood within wider relations of **gender and power**. Feminist sociologist **Sylvia Walby** describes patriarchy as a system of social structures through which men dominate and oppress women. Similarly, **Kate Millett's concept of sexual politics** highlights how power operates within apparently private relationships between men and women.

This perspective does not mean that every case of rape has the same motive. Rather, it shows that individual acts of violence can occur within broader structures where women's sexuality, mobility and behaviour are subject to greater social regulation.

R.W. Connell's concept of hegemonic masculinity is also relevant. Certain forms of masculinity may associate manhood with dominance, aggression, control and sexual assertiveness. When such expectations interact with gender inequality and notions of entitlement, they can contribute to conditions in which coercive behaviour becomes normalised.

Therefore, the problem cannot be addressed only by teaching women how to protect themselves. It also requires examining **how boys and men are socialised**, how consent is understood and how gender relations are produced within families, schools, peer groups and workplaces.

Caste, Class and Intersectionality

Women do not experience sexual violence in identical ways. **Kimberle Crenshaw's concept of intersectionality** explains how gender interacts with caste, class, ethnicity, disability, age and other forms of inequality.

In India, this is particularly significant because caste and gender hierarchies intersect. **Sharmila Rege's Dalit feminist perspective** emphasised that the experiences of Dalit women cannot be understood through gender alone. Similarly, **B.R. Ambedkar's analysis of caste and graded inequality** helps explain how social hierarchy affects power, dignity and access to justice.

Thus, a poor rural woman, a Dalit agricultural worker, a migrant worker and an urban professional may encounter very different social and institutional barriers after experiencing sexual violence.

Socialisation and Victim-Blaming

The family and educational institutions play an important role in the reproduction of gender norms. While **Talcott Parsons** viewed socialisation as an important function of the family, feminist sociology has highlighted how families can also reproduce unequal gender expectations.

Victim-blaming illustrates this process. Questions about a woman's clothes, mobility, relationships or decision to be outside at night shift attention from the perpetrator towards the survivor. Such attitudes function as a form of **informal social control**, regulating women's behaviour and mobility.

A sociological response must therefore move from asking *"Why was she there?"* towards asking ***"Why was violence committed, and how did social and institutional conditions respond to it?" – The recent Bihar's case Sep 2026.***

Institutions and the Question of Justice

Law is essential, but the existence of legal provisions does not automatically produce social equality. **Max Weber's concept of legal-rational authority** is useful here because modern

states depend upon formal rules, procedures and specialised institutions. However, implementation depends upon police, forensic systems, courts and other institutions.

The PLD material highlights concerns regarding police sensitivity, forensic capacity and delays in the justice process. This demonstrates the gap that can exist between **formal legal equality and substantive equality**.

India's response has also evolved through legal reforms and institutional measures. The **Mathura rape case**, the **Bhanwari Devi case** and the **2012 Delhi gang rape** became important turning points in public debates about sexual violence, women's rights and institutional accountability.

Women's Movements and New Forms of Resistance

Sexual violence has repeatedly generated women's movements in India. The Mathura case contributed to mobilisation by women's organisations and subsequent changes in rape law. The 2012 Nirbhaya protests brought millions into public spaces and generated demands for stronger laws and institutional reforms.

More recently, **#MeToo India** used digital platforms to make experiences of sexual harassment and abuse publicly visible. **Manuel Castells' concept of the network society** helps explain how digital networks allow dispersed individuals to communicate, form collective identities and transform individual experiences into collective claims.

Another important development has been the **Dignity March/Garima Yatra**, which created spaces for survivors, particularly from marginalized communities, to speak publicly and organise collectively. Such movements demonstrate a shift from **silence and victimhood towards voice, solidarity and collective action**.

Globally, movements such as **#MeToo** and **Ni Una Menos** in Latin America similarly demonstrate how sexual violence has become an important issue of transnational feminist mobilisation.

Way Forward

The response to sexual violence requires more than harsher punishment. First, **gender socialisation must change** through education on consent, bodily autonomy, equality and

respectful relationships. Second, police, hospitals, forensic institutions and courts require adequate infrastructure and trained personnel. Third, policies must adopt an **intersectional approach** recognising the specific vulnerabilities created by caste, class, disability, age and geographical location.

Community organisations, educational institutions and civil society must also participate in prevention. Most importantly, women's safety should not be equated with restricting women's mobility. The objective should be to create **safe public and private spaces while expanding women's freedom and agency**.

Conclusion

Rape in India is simultaneously a **criminal offence, a manifestation of gendered power, an institutional challenge and a reflection of wider social inequalities**. From Mathura and Bhanwari Devi to Nirbhaya, #MeToo and Dignity March, women's movements have transformed individual experiences of violence into collective demands for justice.

The sociological challenge is therefore not simply to punish offenders but to transform the structures that reproduce gender inequality. As **Simone de Beauvoir's analysis of the social construction of gender** reminds us, gender relations are produced through social processes. Combating sexual violence consequently requires change in **law, institutions, socialisation, cultural norms and everyday gender relations**.

UPSC CONNECT:

Q : **"Sexual violence is not merely an individual act but is also embedded in structures of gender and power."** Discuss with reference to Indian society. 10 Marks | 150 Words

Q : **"The persistence of sexual violence in India reflects the interaction of patriarchy, socialisation, caste, class and institutional structures."** Examine the statement with suitable sociological perspectives and contemporary examples. 20 Marks | 250 Words

3. Punjab's Drug Crisis: Beyond Law and Order

Punjab's drug crisis is often presented through the language of **smuggling, policing and individual choice**. Sociology, however, asks a broader question: *what social conditions make substance dependence more likely, and why does recovery remain difficult?* The issue intersects with agrarian change, youth aspirations, unemployment, peer culture, masculinity, family relations, stigma and unequal access to treatment. Addiction is therefore both an individual experience and a **socially embedded problem**.



Available evidence shows the seriousness of the issue, while also cautioning against simplistic claims about a uniform "drug epidemic". A representative Punjab household survey published in 2018 found current dependence on any substance at **14.7%**, with alcohol dependence at 10.9%, tobacco at 8.1% and opioid dependence at 0.8%. The researchers estimated around **170,000 people with current opioid dependence**. Importantly, only about **one in six people with substance dependence had sought professional help**.

A separate Punjab study focusing on hard-to-reach substance-dependent populations estimated **270,000 opioid-dependent people**, including nearly 78,000 injecting opioid users. Only **14% of the study's respondents** had ever visited a de-addiction centre and just **2.8%** had been admitted during the preceding year. These figures come from different methodologies and populations, so they should not be directly combined, but together they demonstrate the importance of treatment access.

Agrarian Change, Youth and Strain

Punjab's experience has to be located within the transformation of its agrarian society. The **Green Revolution** brought major agricultural productivity gains, but subsequent problems such as rising input costs, fragmented holdings, mechanisation, ecological stress and dependence on agricultural income have created new pressures for sections of rural society.

Robert K. Merton's strain theory provides a useful framework. Modern societies encourage culturally valued goals such as economic success, status and consumption, but access to legitimate means is unequal. When aspirations rise while opportunities remain constrained, individuals can experience strain.

Merton's concept of **retreatism** is relevant to understanding why some individuals may withdraw from conventional goals and means through substance use. It should not be used to label every drug-dependent person as a "retreatist"; rather, it helps connect individual behaviour with **structural inequalities and blocked opportunities**.



This can also be interpreted through **C. Wright Mills' sociological imagination**. What appears to be a private trouble , one young person's addiction can sometimes reflect wider public issues of unemployment, rural transformation, inequality and uncertain pathways to adulthood.

Durkheim and Social Disintegration

Emile Durkheim's concept of anomie is particularly relevant to rapidly changing societies. When established norms and institutions lose their regulatory influence while new aspirations emerge, individuals may experience uncertainty about appropriate goals and behaviour.

Punjab has witnessed substantial changes in family structures, occupational aspirations, migration and rural life. Traditional expectations of agricultural livelihoods coexist with aspirations for professional employment, urban lifestyles and overseas migration.

Drug dependence cannot simply be attributed to this transition. However, Durkheim's framework helps explain why **weakening social integration and normative uncertainty** may increase vulnerability among some sections of society.

Masculinity and Peer Culture

Substance use also has a gendered dimension. **R.W. Connell's concept of hegemonic masculinity** draws attention to social expectations surrounding toughness, risk-taking, independence and dominance. In some peer cultures, drinking or drug use may acquire meanings associated with masculinity, status or group belonging.

A Punjab study of 966 patients admitted to a de-addiction centre between 2015 and 2019 found that all recorded patients were men, 47.2% were self-employed and 26.5% were unemployed. The study also identified peer pressure, easy availability and difficult family circumstances among factors associated with vulnerability. Because this was a treatment-centre sample, it cannot represent all people who use drugs in Punjab, but it illustrates the importance of **gender, employment and social environment**.

The overwhelming visibility of men also raises an important sociological question: **Are women less affected, or less visible?** Stigma, family surveillance and fear of social consequences may discourage women from seeking treatment, making gender-sensitive research and services essential.

Labelling, Stigma and the Cycle of Relapse

Howard Becker's labelling theory shifts attention from deviance itself to society's reaction to it. Once an individual is labelled an **"addict"**, the label can affect employment, marriage, family relationships and social acceptance.

Erving Goffman's concept of stigma is equally relevant. Addiction can become a *"spoiled identity"*, where the person is defined primarily through the condition rather than their other social identities.

Consequently, rehabilitation must involve more than detoxification. It requires **family counselling, employment, psychological support and social reintegration**.

Indian Sociological Perspective: Caste, Community and Social Capital

Indian sociology adds another dimension. **M.N. Srinivas's concepts of social change and dominant caste** remind us that rural social structures influence access to resources and local power. **A.R. Desai's Marxist sociology** encourages examination of the relationship between economic transformation, class relations and rural distress.

B.R. Ambedkar's analysis of social inequality is also relevant because access to dignity, employment and institutional resources is not distributed equally. Drug dependence and rehabilitation therefore need to be studied through **class, caste, gender and rural-urban inequalities**, rather than treating Punjab's population as socially homogeneous.



The concept of **social capital**, associated particularly with **Pierre Bourdieu and Robert Putnam**, also helps explain recovery. Strong family, community and institutional networks can provide information, support and opportunities; their absence can make recovery more difficult.

From Criminalisation to Public Health

A conflict perspective also asks who benefits from the illicit drug economy and who bears its costs. The **drug market involves unequal relationships between trafficking networks, consumers, intermediaries and communities**. Therefore, action against organised trafficking remains important, but dependent users cannot be treated only as criminals.

The international evidence increasingly supports combining enforcement with treatment and harm reduction. WHO estimates that around **64 million people globally live with drug-use disorders**, while fewer than **10%** have access to treatment. WHO recommends opioid agonist maintenance treatment using medicines such as methadone and buprenorphine alongside psychosocial support; it identifies such treatment as having strong evidence for reducing non-medical opioid use and improving health and treatment retention.

Countries such as **Portugal, Switzerland, the Netherlands and Australia** have incorporated different forms of harm-reduction approaches alongside prevention and treatment. Their models differ considerably and cannot simply be transplanted into Punjab, but they demonstrate the value of treating drug dependence partly as a **public-health and social-integration problem** rather than exclusively as a law-and-order issue.

Way Forward

Punjab needs a **multi-level strategy**:

- ➔ **Prevention through socialisation:** Schools and colleges should address substance use, mental health, peer pressure and healthy coping mechanisms rather than relying only on moral condemnation.
- ➔ **Employment and youth opportunities:** Skill development, diversified rural employment and entrepreneurship can address some of the structural conditions associated with blocked aspirations.
- ➔ **Accessible treatment:** De-addiction services should be available closer to rural communities, with continuity of care rather than short-term detoxification alone.
- ➔ **Family and community rehabilitation:** Recovery should involve counselling, social support and opportunities for reintegration.
- ➔ **Gender-sensitive services:** Women affected by substance dependence need confidential treatment without the additional burden of family and community stigma.
- ➔ **Evidence-based harm reduction:** Naloxone availability, opioid agonist treatment and psychosocial support can reduce health risks. WHO specifically recommends making naloxone available to people likely to witness opioid overdose.
- ➔ **Targeted enforcement:** Law-enforcement resources should focus strongly on trafficking networks while ensuring that dependent persons can access healthcare and rehabilitation.

Conclusion

Punjab's drug crisis demonstrates the value of the **sociological imagination**. Addiction is not reducible to individual weakness, just as it cannot be explained entirely by unemployment, agrarian distress or peer pressure. It emerges from an interaction between **individual agency and social structure**.

Durkheim's anomie, Merton's strain, Becker's labelling theory, Goffman's stigma, Connell's hegemonic masculinity, Bourdieu's social capital and Mills' sociological imagination together reveal different dimensions of the problem.

The long-term response therefore requires more than controlling supply. Punjab needs to strengthen social integration, employment opportunities, treatment systems, family support and social acceptance of recovery. The central shift should be from asking only *"How do we stop drugs?"* to also asking *"How do we create social conditions in which dependence is prevented, treatment is accessible and recovery becomes socially sustainable?"*

Punjab's drug crisis is therefore not merely a law & order problem, it is a question of social change, inequality, youth aspirations, public health and social integration.

UPSC CONNECT:

Q : "Sexual violence is not merely an individual act but is embedded in structures of gender and power." Discuss with reference to Indian society. 10 Marks
Q : "The persistence of sexual violence in India reflects the interaction of patriarchy, socialisation, caste, class and institutional structures." Examine with suitable sociological perspectives and contemporary examples. 20 Marks

4. Same-Sex Marriage in India: Marriage, Family and the Changing Social Order

Same-sex marriage is not merely a legal question about who can marry whom. Sociologically, it raises deeper questions about **family, kinship, sexuality, gender roles, reproduction, social norms and the relationship between individual choice and social institutions**. The debate in India therefore represents a wider tension between a historically heterosexual model of family and the growing recognition of diverse forms of intimacy and identity.



The issue became especially significant after the Supreme Court's **2023 judgment in *Supriyo @ Supriya Chakraborty v. Union of India***. The Court recognised important constitutional protections for queer persons but, by majority, declined to judicially recognise same-sex marriage or create a civil-union regime, holding that doing so would require legislative action. The judgment also held that the Constitution does not expressly establish a fundamental right to marry. At the same time, the Court recognised the freedom of queer persons to enter

relationships and directed the State to protect them from violence, coercion and discrimination.

Marriage as a Social Institution

Emile Durkheim understood institutions as mechanisms through which society creates social regulation and solidarity. Marriage historically performs functions of companionship, social recognition, inheritance, kinship formation and, in many societies, reproduction.

Talcott Parsons regarded the modern nuclear family as an important institution for socialisation and the regulation of adult personalities. However, the traditional sociological model of the family has increasingly been challenged by divorce, single-parent households, live-in relationships, child-free couples and same-sex partnerships.

Thus, same-sex marriage raises an important sociological question:

> **Is marriage fundamentally an institution of reproduction, or an institution of companionship, care, rights and social recognition?**

The Supreme Court itself noted that marriage has changed socially, culturally and legally over time and rejected the argument that procreation alone defines marriage. The judgment observed that heterosexual couples may also be unable or unwilling to have children, and that companionship and emotional union are important dimensions of marriage.

Traditional Indian Society and Heteronormative Family

Traditional Indian society has generally attached considerable importance to **marriage, family, reproduction and kinship continuity**. Marriage is frequently connected with inheritance, caste, family honour, religious practices and the continuation of lineage.

M.N. Srinivas's work on caste and social structure helps explain why marriage is particularly important in India. **Endogamy**—marriage within one's social group—has historically helped reproduce caste boundaries. **B.R. Ambedkar**, in his analysis of caste, famously connected caste reproduction with the regulation of marriage and endogamy.

Consequently, marriage in India is not simply an individual relationship. It is embedded in **kinship networks and collective identities**.

Same-sex relationships challenge the assumption that a family necessarily consists of a husband, wife and their biological children. However, Indian society should not be treated as culturally uniform. Urbanisation, education, migration, digital communication and changing family structures have produced significant differences between generations, regions, classes and communities.

Is Queerness "Western"?

The idea that same-sex relationships are entirely a Western import is sociologically difficult to sustain. Historical scholarship documents diverse forms of sexuality and gender expression in South Asia, although these were interpreted differently across periods and communities. Research on traditional South Asian systems of thought identifies both strong reproductive and heteronormative ideals and diverse traditions concerning eroticism, gender and sexuality.

Scholars have also examined the impact of **colonialism** on the regulation of sexuality. Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, introduced under British colonial rule, criminalised "carnal intercourse against the order of nature." Its history demonstrates how law can institutionalise particular ideas of morality.

This does not mean that pre-colonial Indian society was uniformly accepting of homosexuality. Historical societies contained both acceptance and regulation. The sociological point is that **sexual norms change across time and social contexts**.

Foucault: Sexuality and Social Control

Michel Foucault provides one of the most useful perspectives for understanding the issue. He argued that modern societies do not simply repress sexuality; they also **classify, regulate, discuss and produce knowledge about sexuality**.

From this perspective, categories such as "normal" and "deviant" are socially constructed through institutions such as medicine, law, religion and education.

The history of Section 377 illustrates this process. In ***Navtej Singh Johar v. Union of India (2018)***, the Supreme Court held that consensual sexual relations between adults in private could not be criminalised under Section 377. The Court linked sexual orientation with dignity, privacy and equality and recognised the wider social stigma produced by criminalisation.



Thus:

Decriminalisation interrupted part of this cycle, but it did not automatically transform social attitudes.

Goffman, Stigma and the “Closet”

Erving Goffman's theory of stigma is particularly relevant. A queer individual may possess a socially discredited identity because heterosexuality is often treated as the assumed norm.

This can produce a distinction between:

Public identity ↔ private identity

The “closet” can therefore be understood sociologically as a consequence of stigma and social expectations rather than simply an individual decision.

Marriage recognition can have significance because marriage provides **social legitimacy, legal recognition and institutional visibility**. At the same time, marriage is not the only possible form of queer family or intimacy.

Scholarship on "queering" Indian family law has argued for recognising diverse forms of family beyond conventional marriage, including non-normative care networks.

Gender as a Social Construction

Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity challenges the assumption that gender roles naturally follow biological sex. The conventional marital model—husband as male, wife as female—also reproduces particular expectations about masculinity, femininity and household roles.

West and Zimmerman's concept of "doing gender" similarly suggests that gender is continuously produced through everyday social interaction.

Same-sex couples therefore challenge the assumption that every family must contain complementary "male" and "female" roles. They raise questions about how domestic labour, caregiving, parenting and economic responsibilities are actually organised.

Important Indian Case Laws

The evolution of Indian law can be understood as a gradual expansion of recognition of **identity, dignity, privacy and choice**:

- **NALSA v. Union of India (2014):** recognised transgender persons' right to self-identify their gender and affirmed constitutional protections.
- **K.S. Puttaswamy v. Union of India (2017):** recognised privacy as a fundamental right, providing an important constitutional foundation for autonomy and intimate choices.
- **Navtej Singh Johar v. Union of India (2018):** decriminalised consensual same-sex relations between adults.
- **Shafin Jahan v. Asokan K.M. (2018):** strengthened the constitutional principle of individual choice in matters of intimate relationships and marriage.
- **Supriyo v. Union of India (2023):** protected queer persons' right to choose partners and cohabit, but the majority declined to recognise same-sex marriage through judicial interpretation.

The 2023 judgment also led to a government committee examining the entitlements of queer couples. Subsequent government measures have included advisories concerning **ration cards,**

joint bank accounts, healthcare, prison visitation and protection from violence or coercion.

Adoption and the Family Question

One major issue concerns children. In *Supriyo*, the majority held that unmarried queer couples could not jointly adopt under the existing legal framework, while the minority opinions differed on this issue.

Sociologically, this debate reflects a larger question:

> **Is parenthood fundamentally dependent on heterosexual marriage, or can parenting be understood primarily through care, responsibility and socialisation?**

This is where **Irawati Karve's work on kinship** becomes useful. Kinship is not merely biological, it is also organised through culturally recognised relationships, obligations and practices. Changes in family forms therefore require sociology to reconsider how kinship itself is constituted.

Global Perspective

The international experience demonstrates that legal approaches vary considerably. As of 2026, **37 UN member states plus Taiwan recognise marriage equality**, according to ILGA World, while 65 UN member states continue to criminalise consensual same-sex sexual acts.

The **Netherlands** became the first country to legally recognise same-sex marriage in 2001, while Taiwan became the first jurisdiction in Asia to do so in 2019. These cases illustrate how legal recognition can accompany broader transformations in family and citizenship, although the social acceptance of queer relationships varies considerably within countries.

Conclusion

The same-sex marriage debate in India represents a broader transformation in the sociology of **family, kinship and sexuality**. Traditional marriage has historically been connected with reproduction, inheritance, caste, lineage and social continuity. Modern social change has

increasingly emphasised **individual autonomy, companionship, equality and diverse family forms**.

Durkheim helps us understand marriage as a social institution; **Parsons** explains its institutional functions; **Ambedkar and Srinivas** illuminate the relationship between marriage and Indian social structure; **Foucault** reveals the regulation of sexuality; **Goffman** explains stigma; **Butler** questions fixed gender roles; and **Karve** helps us rethink kinship beyond purely biological relationships.

The sociological significance of same-sex marriage therefore extends beyond the question of marriage itself. It asks a fundamental question about social change:

> **When intimate relationships change, how far should the institutions of family, kinship and law change with them?**

That question places same-sex marriage at the intersection of **individual agency, social structure, cultural norms, constitutional rights and the transformation of Indian society**.

UPSC CONNECT:

Q : “Marriage in India is not merely a relationship between individuals but an institution embedded in kinship, caste, family and social reproduction.” Examine how the recognition of same-sex relationships challenges and transforms these traditional structures. 20 Marks
Q : “The debate on same-sex marriage in India reflects a conflict between changing notions of individual rights and traditional social institutions.” Discuss from a sociological perspective. 10 Marks

5. THE GIG ECONOMY IN INDIA: NEW WORK, OLD INEQUALITIES

The rise of the **gig economy** represents one of the most visible transformations in the contemporary world of work. Food delivery, ride-hailing, online tutoring, freelance designing, home services and digital logistics have created employment outside the traditional factory, office and permanent employer–employee relationship. In India, the expansion of smartphones, digital payments, urbanisation and platform-based businesses has accelerated this transformation.



NITI Aayog estimated that India's gig workforce could grow from around **1 crore workers in 2024–25 to 2.35 crore by 2029–30**. The Economic Survey 2025–26 also noted a **55% rise in the number of gig workers between FY2021 and FY2025**. Yet, the expansion of gig work raises a fundamental sociological question: **does the gig economy create freedom and opportunity, or does it represent a new form of labour insecurity?**

From Factory Labour to Platform Labour



Classical sociology understood modern work primarily through the factory and formal organisation. **Karl Marx** viewed labour under capitalism through the relationship between workers and owners of the means of production. In the gig economy, the physical factory may disappear, but economic dependence does not necessarily disappear. The worker owns some of the immediate means of work—a motorcycle, smartphone or laptop while the platform controls access to customers, information, pricing mechanisms and visibility.

Thus, platform capitalism can be understood as a transformation rather than an end of capitalist control. The delivery worker may appear to be an independent partner, but algorithms can determine orders, ratings, incentives and access to work.

This creates a paradox: **the worker is formally independent but economically dependent.**

Marx, Alienation and the New Labour Process

Marx's concept of **alienation** remains relevant to understanding platform work. Workers may have limited control over what they produce, how they work and the conditions under which they work. A delivery worker, for example, may be constantly guided by an application that allocates orders, calculates routes and evaluates performance.

The contemporary worker therefore encounters a new form of **algorithmic management**. Instead of a factory supervisor physically monitoring workers, the platform can use ratings, performance scores, incentives and automated systems.

This does not mean that every gig worker experiences exploitation in the same manner. Some workers value flexibility, autonomy and the ability to combine multiple sources of income. The sociological issue is therefore not simply whether gig work is "good" or "bad", but **who benefits from flexibility and who bears its risks**.

Durkheim and the Changing Division of Labour

Emile Durkheim's theory of division of labour helps explain another dimension of platform work. Modern societies increasingly depend upon specialised occupational roles and interdependence. Gig workers have become essential to urban consumption: restaurants, consumers, e-commerce companies and households depend on their labour.

However, Durkheim also emphasised the importance of regulation and social integration. Where economic relationships lack adequate norms and institutional regulation, conditions of **anomie** can emerge.

The gig worker's income may fluctuate according to demand, incentives, weather, location and platform policies. The absence of predictable employment can therefore produce insecurity and weaken the institutional stability traditionally associated with employment.

Guy Standing and the Precariat

The concept of the **precariat**, associated with **Guy Standing**, is particularly useful. The precariat consists of workers whose employment is characterised by insecurity, uncertain income, weak occupational identity and limited social protection.

Indian gig workers can display several characteristics of this condition. Many have no conventional permanent employer, and their access to work may depend upon platform demand. ILO research has also found that platform work in India is often not merely a part-time activity; for many workers it constitutes their principal livelihood.

Therefore, the gig economy should also be examined within India's broader history of **informalisation of labour**.

Caste, Class and Gender in the Gig Economy

The gig economy does not operate outside existing social inequalities. **A.R. Desai's** analysis of capitalism and class transformation in India reminds us that economic structures interact with wider social relations.

A worker's access to a vehicle, smartphone, education, English-language skills, digital literacy and urban networks can influence the type of gig work available to them. Thus, **digital labour does not automatically produce social equality**.

Gender provides another important dimension. Platform work can offer women greater flexibility, particularly when conventional workplaces impose rigid timings. However, mobility restrictions, safety concerns, unpaid care work, digital exclusion and patriarchal norms can limit women's participation. A 2026 ILO–NCAER policy brief highlighted these barriers and noted that women remain significantly under-represented in India's platform economy.

This demonstrates that technological change operates within existing structures of **patriarchy, class and social inequality**.

Bourdieu: Capital Beyond Money



Pierre Bourdieu's concept of different forms of capital provides another useful lens. Economic capital enables a person to purchase a vehicle or smartphone; cultural capital can facilitate digital and professional work; while social capital can provide networks and information about opportunities.

Consequently, two individuals entering the gig economy may possess very different capacities to benefit from it. The platform may appear technologically neutral, but the workers entering it are socially unequal.

Indian State and Social Security

India has increasingly attempted to institutionalise social protection for gig and platform workers. The **Code on Social Security, 2020** formally defines gig and platform workers and provides a framework for social-security measures. The Code came into force on **21 November 2025**, according to the Ministry of Labour and Employment.

The framework includes provisions concerning life and disability cover, accident insurance, health and maternity benefits and old-age protection, along with a Social Security Fund.

The **e-Shram portal** has also been expanded to include gig and platform workers. By January 2026, the government reported that 12 major aggregators had been onboarded, including Zomato, Swiggy, Uber, Ola, Urban Company, Rapido and others.

These measures represent an important shift from viewing gig workers merely as "independent contractors" towards recognising them as a distinct category requiring social protection.

Way Forward

The future of gig work should not be framed as a choice between technological innovation and workers' rights. A sociologically sustainable platform economy requires **portable social security, transparent algorithms, accident and health protection, grievance-redress mechanisms, fair remuneration, collective representation and protection against discriminatory rating or deactivation systems**.

Platforms should retain the flexibility that attracts workers while transferring an appropriate share of economic risk away from individual workers. Greater recognition of worker associations and social dialogue can also reduce the power imbalance between individual workers and large platforms.

Conclusion

The gig economy represents a fundamental transformation in the organisation of work, but it does not necessarily represent the disappearance of old inequalities. **Marx helps us understand power and economic dependence; Durkheim highlights regulation and social**

integration; Weber directs attention towards rationalisation; Bourdieu reveals unequal access to different forms of capital; and Guy Standing highlights precarity.

The central sociological paradox is therefore clear: **the gig economy promises flexibility, but flexibility without security can become precarious.** India's challenge is to ensure that digital transformation produces not merely new forms of employment, but **decent, secure and socially inclusive work**.

UPSC CONNECT:

Q : "The gig economy represents a transformation of the traditional employer–employee relationship rather than the disappearance of labour inequalities." Discuss. 10 Marks

Q : "Platform capitalism has transformed the organisation of work, but has not eliminated the fundamental contradictions of labour under capitalism." Examine with reference to Marx, Durkheim, Weber and contemporary gig work in India. 20 Marks.



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