

ROLL NO. _____

**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY
UNIVERSITY OF DELHI**

**M.A. SOCIOLOGY
ADMISSION TEST 2013-14
Sunday, 17th February 2013**

Time: 3 Hours (10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.)

Maximum Marks: 100

Please read the following instructions carefully:

1. *Write your Roll No. (Form No. is the Roll No. of the candidate) on the Answer Book and on the top right hand corner of this Question Paper immediately on receipt of the same.*
2. *Do not write your name anywhere on the Answer Book.*
3. *All rough work should be done in the Answer Book.*
4. *All questions are compulsory.*
5. *All questions carry equal marks (20 marks each).*
6. *Please specify the question number against each answer.*
7. *All answers should be written in English.*

QUESTIONS:

1. (a) How does the concept of 'power' help us in the study of human society?

OR

(b) "The concept of class is irrelevant for understanding Indian society. Only caste matters." Discuss.

2. (a) How have mobile phones affected social relationships in contemporary India?

OR

(b) Why in your view should social scientists study Bollywood cinema?

3. (a) "For democracy to work, freedom of speech has to be curbed." Give reasons for and against this proposition.

OR

(b) "The French state bans girls from wearing a headscarf in school while some colleges in India do not allow girls to wear jeans." How are these prohibitions both similar and different?

4. Read the passage below and answer the questions which follow.

The social sciences in America, and particularly sociology, anthropology, and psychology, have gone through a conspicuous development, increasingly giving the preponderance to environment instead of to heredity. The biological sciences and medicine, firmly entrenched much earlier in American universities, had not, and have not yet, the same close ideological ties to the American Creed. They have been associated in America, as in the rest of the world, with conservative and even reactionary ideologies. Under their long hegemony, there has been a tendency to assume biological causation without question, and to accept social explanations only under the duress of a siege of irresistible evidence.

In political questions, this tendency favored a do-nothing policy. This tendency also, in the main, for a century and more, determined people's attitudes towards the racial traits of the Negro. In the years around the First World War, it exploded in a cascade of scientific and popular writings with a strong racialistic bias, rationalizing the growing feeling in America against the "new" immigrants pouring into the country whose last frontier was now occupied and congregating in the big cities where they competed with American labor. In addition to the social friction they created, the idea that these newcomers represented an inferior stock provided much of the popular theory for the restrictive immigration legislation. The wave of racialism for a time swayed not only public opinion but also some psychologists who were measuring psychic traits, especially intelligence, and perhaps also some few representatives of related social sciences.

But the social sciences had now developed strength and were well on the way toward freeing themselves entirely from the old biologicistic tendency. The social sciences received an impetus to their modern development by reacting against this biologicistic onslaught. They fought for the theory of environmental causation. Their primary object of suspicion became more and more the old static entity, "human nature," and the belief that fundamental differences between economic, social, or racial groups were due to "nature." From the vantage point of their present research front, the situation looks somewhat like this: a handful of social and biological scientists over the last fifty years have gradually forced informed people to give up some of the more blatant of our biological errors.

But there must be still other countless errors of the same sort that no living man can yet detect, because of the fog within which our type of Western culture envelops us. Cultural influences have set up the assumptions about the mind, the body, and the universe with which we begin; pose the question we ask; influence the facts we seek; determine the interpretation we give these facts; and direct our reaction to these interpretations and conclusions. Social research has thus become militantly critical. It goes from discovery to discovery by challenging this basic assumption in various areas of life. It is constantly disproving inherent difference and explaining apparent ones in cultural and social terms. By inventing and applying ingenious specialized research methods, the popular race dogma is being victoriously pursued into every corner and effectively exposed as fallacious or at least unsubstantiated. So this research becomes truly revolutionary in the spirit of the cherished American tradition.

A contrast is apparent not only in comparison with earlier strands of American social science but also with contemporary scientific trends in other countries. The democratic ones have, on the whole, followed a similar course, but America has been leading. It is interesting to observe how on this point the radical tendency in American social research of today dominates even the work and writings of scientists who feel and

pronounce their own political inclination to be conservative. What has happened is in line with the great traditions of the American Creed, the principles of which are themselves, actually, piecemeal becoming substantiated by research and elaborated into scientific theory.

QUESTIONS (5 MARKS EACH):

- (a) **What were the consequences of the conservatism of the biological sciences in America?**
- (b) **According to the author, how does culture influence research?**
- (c) **What are the characteristics of the American Creed?**
- (d) **How does social science research contribute to the understanding of race?**

5. Read the passages below and answer the questions which follow.

Author – I

The general association between caste and occupation is now more flexible than it was in the traditional economy. Nobody can deny that there has been a steady erosion of ritual rules governing food transactions as well. Yet, those who try to keep up with discussions on current affairs in the newspapers and on television may be forgiven if they conclude that caste is India's destiny. If there is one thing the experts in the media who comment on political matters have in common, it is their preoccupation with caste and the part it plays in electoral politics.

Universal adult franchise opened up new possibilities for mobilising electoral support on the basis of caste and thus prevented the consciousness of caste from dying down. Democracy was expected to efface the distinctions of caste, but its consequences have been very different from what was expected. If caste is maintaining or even strengthening its hold over the public consciousness, there has to be a reason for it. That reason is to be found in the domain of organised politics. Caste had entered the political arena even before independence. But the adoption of universal adult franchise after independence altered the character and scope of the involvement of caste in the political process. The consciousness of caste is brought to the fore at the time of elections. Elections to the Lok Sabha and the Vidhan Sabhas are now held all the year round. For logistical and other reasons, elections to even the Vidhan Sabhas may be stretched out over several weeks.

Private television channels have created a whole world in which their anchors and the experts who are regularly at their disposal vie with each other to bring out the significance of the "caste factor," meaning the rivalries and alliances among castes, sub-castes and groups of castes by commentators who, for the most part, have little understanding of, or interest in, long-term trends of change in the country. These discussions create the illusion that caste is an unalterable feature of Indian society. It will be a pity if we allow what goes on in the media to reinforce the consciousness of caste and to persuade us that caste is India's destiny.

Author – II

The article above points out that the hold of caste in social life is subsiding in many ways. For instance, the association between caste and occupation is becoming less rigid. Similarly, the rules of purity and pollution are a little more relaxed today than they used to be. Following on this, the author argues that “organised politics” is the reason why “in spite of all this, caste is maintaining its hold over the public consciousness”. I submit, however, that there are simpler reasons for the survival of caste consciousness.

The real issue, actually, is not so much caste consciousness as the role of castes as an instrument of power. But the two are linked. To convey the point, some of us collected information on the share of the upper castes in positions of power and influence (POPIs) in Allahabad. The share of the upper castes in this sample turns out to be over 75%, compared with around 20% in the population of Uttar Pradesh as a whole. Brahmins and Kayasthas alone have cornered about half of the POPIs – more than four times their share in the population. The pattern is clear: upper castes continue to have overwhelming control over public institutions. An attempt was also made to identify Dalits in the sample. There was no evidence of any significant presence of Dalits in the sample institutions, except a few – such as the university faculty – where mandatory quotas apply.

The dominance of the upper castes seems to be, if anything, even stronger in institutions of “civil society” than in state institutions. For instance, in Allahabad the share of the upper castes is around 80% among NGO and trade union leaders, close to 90% in the executive committee of the bar association, and a full 100% among office-bearers of the press club.

Even trade unions of manual workers are often under the control of upper-caste leaders. There is some food for thought here about the grip of the caste hierarchy on social institutions, including some that are otherwise anti-establishment.

It is not clear why “caste consciousness” would die in such circumstances. The dying of caste consciousness, in this situation, would sound like a good deal for the upper castes, since the system of domination would continue without much notice being taken of it. Dalits, for their part, have absolutely no reason to be unconscious of the dominance of the upper castes.

QUESTIONS (5 MARKS EACH):

- (a) Why does the first author think that caste continues to survive in modern India?**
- (b) How does the second author substantiate the view that caste can work as an instrument of power?**
- (c) How do these two authors differ in their understanding of the 'consciousness of caste'?**
- (d) Mention any one important dimension that is missing from this debate.**