Describe the impact of capitalist mode of production on society.



SOCIOLOGY SCHOOL 2026 · PAPER I · QUESTION 2(A) · STUDENT EDITION

How Capitalist Production Reshapes Society

THE QUESTION, AS SET IN UPSC CSE MAINS 2026

Describe the impact of capitalist mode of production on society.

Directive: Describe | 20 marks | Practice target: 250 words

Sociological thinkers: modes of production and social change

1 **PYQ Deep Decode** p. 3
Demand, hidden demand, structure, form

2 **PYQ Intelligence** p. 6
2013 to 2026: capitalism, class and work

3 **Additional information** p. 10
Sociological lens, perspectives, concepts and Indian evidence

4 **Pitfalls and variations** p. 20
Six corrections, inaccurate claims and changed directives

5 **The model answer** p. 23
Class, institutions and contradictory consequences

6 **Other ways to write it** p. 24
Thinker-led, institution-led and evidence-led outlines

7 **Quick recall** p. 25
Sixteen facts, thinkers, concepts and studies

8 **Write it yourself** p. 26
A seven-point sociological self-check

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Describe the impact of capitalist mode of production on society.

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Start here: the basics in plain words

New to Sociology? Read this page first. It explains the key ideas in the question in everyday language, so the rest of the document makes sense.

The question in simple words

Capitalism is an economic system in which productive resources are largely privately owned and production is organised mainly for market exchange and profit, with wage labour playing a central role. The question asks you to **describe how this way of producing things changes society**: work, classes, family, values and daily life.

Word	What it means, in plain words	An everyday picture
Capitalism	An economic system where the means of production are privately owned and goods are made for sale and profit in a market.	A company owner employs workers in a factory to make shoes that are sold for profit.
Mode of production	In Marx's analysis, the combination of productive forces (labour, tools and technology) and relations of production (such as ownership and control over work).	Farming with ploughs under landlords is one mode; factory work for wages is another.
Means of production	Resources and equipment used in production, such as land, factories, machinery and raw materials, excluding the labour power contributed by workers.	A tailoring unit's sewing machines and premises.
Wage labour	Work performed in return for wages or a salary. In Marx's analysis, workers depend mainly on selling their capacity to work because they lack sufficient productive assets.	A factory worker receiving wages for work performed under an employer.
Describe	Give a clear, organised account of the main features and effects, with examples.	Painting a picture of what capitalism has done to social life.

One picture to remember. Capitalist production can expand wealth, markets and technological change while reshaping employment, class relations, family life and social values. Its benefits and costs are distributed unequally.

What the examiner wants, in one line. Describe the main effects of capitalist production on class, work, family, culture and inequality, with examples, including both its achievements and its costs.

You now have the foundations. Section 1 examines the question carefully, while the later sections introduce the thinkers, Indian evidence and model answer needed to build a well-supported sociological argument.

Describe the impact of capitalist mode of production on society.

1 PYQ Deep Decode

Understand what the question demands, identify the sociological dimensions it expects, and organise the answer so that every social consequence is traced back to the capitalist mode of production.

1.1 The demand

The question asks for a **description of the impact of the capitalist mode of production on society**. The directive **"Describe"** requires tracing how **private ownership of productive resources, wage labour and production for profit** reshape different spheres of social life. The answer must therefore move beyond economic outcomes to explain changes in **class relations, work, social institutions, interpersonal relationships and everyday life**. The essential requirement is to **connect each major social impact to the organisation of capitalist production**, rather than merely listing changes associated with modern society.

Words in the question	What they ask you to do	What goes wrong if you miss them
Describe	Give an organised, explanatory account of the major consequences. Establish how each consequence emerges, rather than simply naming it.	Writing unsupported assertions or turning a descriptive question into a purely ideological evaluation.
capitalist	Identify the distinctive relations of production: private control of productive assets, wage labour, market exchange and profit-oriented accumulation.	Equating capitalism with money, trade, industry or technology alone.
mode of production	Treat it as a sociological concept involving productive forces and relations of production, not merely an economic policy or market system.	Discussing liberalisation or privatisation without explaining the underlying social relations.
impact	Show causal connections between the organisation of production and transformations in work, institutions, relationships and opportunities.	Listing urbanisation, inequality and consumerism without explaining why they are linked to capitalist production.
on society	Cover social classes and occupations, family and community, urban life, culture, power and collective organisation.	Restricting the answer to profits, investment, economic growth and employment figures.

THE DEMAND IN ONE LINE

Describe how private ownership, wage labour and production for profit restructure class and work, transform social institutions and everyday relationships, and generate uneven opportunities and contradictions.

Describe the impact of capitalist mode of production on society.

1.2 The hidden demand

Are the social consequences of capitalism exclusively disruptive, or does the same mode of production generate new productive capacities and opportunities alongside inequalities and contradictions?
The question does not contain the words "critically examine", but a sociologically complete description should not portray capitalism as producing only exploitation or only progress. Marx analysed both the enormous development of productive powers under capitalism and its antagonistic class relations. Weber explained the organisational capacities of rational capitalist enterprise alongside the constraints of rationalisation. Durkheim identified the integrative possibilities of occupational specialisation while recognising its abnormal forms. Polanyi examined the social dislocation associated with market expansion and the protective responses it provoked.
These perspectives point to the same analytical discipline: **describe the transformations first; recognise their contradictory and uneven consequences in a smaller final part**. The final part should acknowledge increased productivity, occupational diversification and possible mobility without treating them as universally shared outcomes.

WEAK
Capitalism creates exploitation, unemployment, poverty, inequality and alienation. It destroys traditional society and benefits only capitalists.

STRONG
Capitalist accumulation expands productive capacity and creates new occupations, but private control over production also concentrates economic power. Its social effects depend on class position, existing inequalities and institutions of collective protection.

The distinction: A balanced answer does not cancel Marxian conflict with a token sentence about economic growth. It explains why productive expansion and unequal social consequences can emerge from the same mode of production.

1.3 The structure

The question has **one explicit demand**, describing the impact on society. Organise that description from the foundational relations of production to wider social institutions, and finish with the contradictory consequences. The shares below refer to the body between the introduction and conclusion. They are a guide to emphasis, not an examination rule.

Introduction	1. Class and work about three-tenths	2. Institutions and social life about one-half	3. Uneven consequences about one-fifth	Conclusion

Part 1 **Impact on class relations and the organisation of work** **about three-tenths**

Ownership and class	Marx, *Capital, Volume I* (1867): private ownership of the means of production, bourgeoisie and proletariat.
Exploitation	Wage labour and the production and appropriation of surplus value; the structural basis of class conflict.
Experience of work	Alienation, specialised tasks, factory discipline and subordination to managerial control.
Labour insecurity	Industrial labour, competition for employment and Marx's relative surplus population or industrial reserve army.

Describe the impact of capitalist mode of production on society.

Part 2 **Impact on social institutions, relationships and everyday life** about one-half

Population and space	Industrialisation, urbanisation, migration and new forms of community.
Household and family	Changing arrangements of paid work, care, residence and intergenerational dependence.
Market and culture	Commodification, commodity fetishism, consumer culture and market-mediated relationships.
Stratification	Unequal life chances through property, income, education, housing and access to services.
Collective response	Trade unions, labour organisation, political mobilisation and Polanyi's market expansion and social protection.

Part 3 **Contradictory and uneven consequences for society** about one-fifth

Expanded capacities	Higher productivity, technological development, new occupations and possible mobility.
Persistent contradictions	Unequal ownership, labour insecurity, gendered burdens and class-based disparities.
Uneven social outcomes	Different effects across caste, class, gender and location; the importance of regulation and collective protection.

1.4 How to present it

The strongest form is **three numbered parts with short explanatory points**. Begin with the capitalist relation of production, then show the resulting social transformation. A compact causal flow can make the connection visible, but must not replace sociological explanation. Use thinkers as analytical tools, not as decorative names.

Element	Where to use it	How to use it effectively
Marx	Part 1	Explain ownership, surplus value, class antagonism and alienation as consequences of capitalist relations of production.
Weber and Durkheim	Parts 1 and 2	Weber explains rational organisation and market-based life chances; Durkheim shows the integrative and potentially anomic consequences of specialised labour.
Polanyi	Part 2, with Part 3 implications	Connect labour's treatment as a market commodity with demands for social protection and collective safeguards.
Marxian perspective	Part 1	Make the structural conflict between capital and labour explicit, rather than simply using the word "inequality".
Feminist and Indian perspectives	Parts 2 and 3	Show how market production depends on unpaid care and interacts with existing caste and gender hierarchies.
Small causal diagram	At the transition between Parts 1 and 2, if space permits	Connect ownership and profit-oriented production to wage labour, work organisation and wider institutional change.

Describe the impact of capitalist mode of production on society.

Element	Where to use it	How to use it effectively
Indian empirical evidence	Part 2 or Part 3	Use one precise example, such as Jan Breman's South Gujarat labour research or an accurately labelled PLFS estimate.
Balanced concluding view	Part 3 and conclusion	Recognise productive expansion while retaining attention to ownership, inequality and collective protection.

The best writing pattern Feature of production → mechanism → social consequence. For example, profit-oriented production encourages concentration of enterprise and specialised wage labour; these reorganise work discipline and create new occupational relations. This is stronger than writing "capitalism causes division of labour" without a mechanism.

1.5 The introduction and the conclusion

The introduction serves the whole question. Locate capitalism as a historically specific organisation of production and immediately indicate its reach beyond the economy: work, class, institutions and everyday life. Do not open with a dictionary-style definition or a history of industrialisation.

The conclusion completes the description. Bring together the expansion of productive capacities and the uneven distribution of its social consequences. Acknowledge how institutions, existing inequalities and collective action mediate the outcome. Avoid a generic call for "inclusive development".

2 PYQ Intelligence 2013 to 2026

See how a classical question about capitalist production connects with India's changing labour structure, the regulation of markets, and recurring questions in both Sociology papers.

2.1 Why the theme mattered in 2026

Capitalism is a foundational topic in sociological theory, but its social effects remain visible in contemporary India through changing employment relations, platform work, unpaid care, consumption and labour regulation. Several developments before the August 2026 Mains examination made these connections especially concrete. **They are context for understanding the question, not evidence of why UPSC selected it.**

When	Development and verified evidence	Sociological connection
January 2025	MoSPI published the findings of the **Household Consumption Expenditure Survey 2023-24**, conducted from August 2023 to July 2024. Estimated average monthly per capita consumption expenditure, excluding the imputed value of free welfare items, was **Rs 4,122 in rural India** and **Rs 6,996 in urban India**.	Consumption is a major sphere of market-mediated social life. The figures show rural-urban differences in average spending, not the causal effect of capitalism or the full distribution of class inequality.
1 February 2025	The **Union Budget 2025-26** announced identity cards, e-Shram registration and healthcare support under PM-JAY for online platform workers. The announcement referred to assisting nearly one crore gig workers; this was a proposed coverage scale, not a measured count of beneficiaries.	Platform-based labour makes control, economic dependence and access to social protection visible beyond the conventional factory.

Describe the impact of capitalist mode of production on society.

When	Development and verified evidence	Sociological connection
25 February 2025	MoSPI released the **Time Use Survey 2024**. Among people aged six and above who participated in unpaid domestic services for household members, female participants spent an estimated **289 minutes daily**, compared with **88 minutes for male participants**. Female participation in these activities was 81.5%, compared with 27.1% for males.	Paid production coexists with unequally distributed unpaid household work. The survey demonstrates a gendered division of unpaid labour, not that capitalism alone created it.
11 to 12 September 2025	The **Karnataka Platform Based Gig Workers (Social Security and Welfare) Act, 2025** received gubernatorial assent on 11 September and appeared in the Gazette on 12 September. It addresses welfare, occupational safety, registration, dispute resolution and transparency in automated decision-making. The Act specifies commencement with effect from 30 May 2025.	The relationship between platform-managed work and collective protection illustrates Polanyi's concern with the societal response to market exposure. Enactment does not establish the effectiveness of implementation.
21 November 2025	The Union government brought the **four Labour Codes** into effect: the Code on Wages, 2019; Industrial Relations Code, 2020; Code on Social Security, 2020; and Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2020.	The state regulates the employment relationship and social risks associated with labour markets. Legal commencement must be distinguished from actual coverage and outcomes.
27 March 2026	MoSPI released the **PLFS Annual Report 2025**, covering January to December 2025. Among workers in usual status (principal and subsidiary), the all-India estimates were **56.2% self-employed, 23.6% regular wage or salaried, and 20.2% casual labour**.	Capitalist transformation must be examined within India's diverse employment structure, not through the assumption that all workers are factory employees.

Sources: NSO/MoSPI, HCES 2023-24 (January 2025) and PIB reply of 10 March 2025; Union Budget 2025-26, 1 February 2025; NSO, Time Use Survey 2024, 25 February 2025; Karnataka Act No. 72 of 2025, Gazette of 12 September 2025; Ministry of Labour and Employment, 21 November 2025; NSO, PLFS Annual Report 2025 press note, 27 March 2026. The PLFS employment shares refer to workers under the survey's usual-status classification. Self-employment includes own-account workers, employers and contributing helpers in household enterprises. Working at home describes a place of work, not a separate employment-status category. PLFS methodology was revised from January 2025; comparisons with earlier annual survey series require care.

What the labour figures establish. The 2025 PLFS estimates show substantial self-employment and casual labour alongside salaried employment. They do **not** identify every person's relationship to capital, establish how many workers are exploited, or show that all self-employed people own substantial productive assets.

Why the survey on care matters. Capitalist firms purchase labour power, but workers' daily lives also involve cooking, cleaning, caregiving and household maintenance. Feminist sociology examines how this **social reproduction** supports the continuing availability of labour and how its burdens are distributed.

2.2 The skill UPSC keeps testing

Across Sociology Paper I and Paper II, UPSC has repeatedly returned to **modes of production, work organisation, exploitation, class formation and their consequences for social life**. The analytical emphasis varies: a concept in one year, a thinker comparison in another, and an application to Indian society in a third. The questions below are reproduced verbatim from UPSC Sociology papers.

Describe the impact of capitalist mode of production on society.

Year and paper	The question as UPSC set it	What it asked of you	What changed in 2026
2013 Paper I Q6(b)	Examine the social impact of globalisation on labour and society.	Trace the social effects of global economic integration on workers and institutions.	The 2026 question moves towards the underlying **capitalist mode of production**, not only global integration.
2014 Paper I Q7(c)	According to Marx, capitalism transforms even the personal relationships between men and women. Critically examine with illustrations from the contemporary Indian context.	Apply Marx's analysis to intimate relationships and the social organisation of gender.	Personal relationships become one dimension of a wider question about society, alongside work, class and institutions.
2016 Paper I Q1(d)	Evaluate Marx's ideas on mode of production.	Explain and assess Marx's foundational concept.	The concept is now the starting point for describing its **social consequences**.
2022 Paper I Q4(a)	What characterizes degradation of work in capitalist society according to Marx?	Examine how capitalist labour processes affect the worker.	Work remains essential, but the answer must extend beyond the workplace.
2024 Paper I Q5(c)	Describe the differing principles of work organization in feudal and capitalist societies.	Identify the distinguishing principles of labour organisation.	Those principles now serve as mechanisms explaining effects on multiple social institutions, without requiring comparison with feudalism.
2025 Paper II Q3(c)	Describe the main features of Indian new middle class. How is it different from the old middle class?	Analyse class formation, occupations and consumption in India.	The emergence of new occupational and consumer groups can be linked to capitalist social transformation.
2026 Paper I Q6(b)	Critically analyse the mode of production debate from different perspectives.	Compare theoretical explanations and objections concerning modes of production.	The same examination distinguishes a **theoretical debate** from this question's descriptive account of social impacts.
2026 Paper II Q2(c)	How does A. R. Desai argue that Indian social classes must be studied through the colonial mode of production? Elucidate.	Apply a Marxian historical approach to Indian class formation.	A direct Paper I to Paper II connection: **relations of production help explain historical class structure in India**.

Also related, verbatim: 2019, Sociology Paper I, Q4(b): "Compare and contrast the contributions of Marx and Weber on social stratification in capitalist society." 2021, Sociology Paper I, Q3(b): "Critically examine the dialectics involved in each mode of production as propounded by Karl Marx." 2024, Sociology Paper I, Q3(c): "Critically explain the salient features of 'alienation' as propounded by Karl Marx."

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CARRY THIS METHOD TO ANY "IMPACT OF A MODE OF PRODUCTION" QUESTION

1. **Identify** the ownership and control of the means of production and the prevailing labour relations.
2. **Derive** the immediate class and workplace consequences from those relations.
3. **Extend** the explanation to family, community, stratification, culture and collective organisation.
4. **Interpret** the consequences through relevant sociological perspectives.
5. **Ground** at least one mechanism in appropriately qualified Indian evidence.
6. **Conclude** with the productive capacities and contradictions generated together, recognising uneven social outcomes.

2.3 What to prepare next

PAPER I: SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY AND CONCEPTS

Marx: historical materialism	Forces and relations of production, economic structure, class antagonism and social change.
Marx: stratification	Property relations, surplus value, exploitation, alienation and class conflict.
Weber: social stratification	Class situation, status groups, party, market opportunities and life chances.
Durkheim: division of labour	Organic solidarity, moral regulation and the abnormal or anomic division of labour.
Systems of work	Industrial and post-industrial work, the formal and informal organisation of labour, technology and control.
Social change and institutions	Modernisation, urbanisation, family transformation, migration and collective movements.

PAPER II: APPLICATION TO INDIAN SOCIETY

A. R. Desai	Colonial economic restructuring, class formation and the material conditions of Indian nationalism.
Rural class structure	Landholding, agricultural labour, agrarian capitalism and changes in relations of production.
Caste and class	How caste, ownership, labour markets and opportunity interact rather than simply replace one another.
Industrialisation and urbanisation	Migration, industrial labour, informal employment and urban social inequality.
Family, kinship and gender	Paid employment, unpaid care, domestic production and changing household arrangements.
Social movements	Trade unionism, informal workers' mobilisation, citizenship claims and demands for welfare.

Describe the impact of capitalist mode of production on society.

3 Additional information

The sociological foundations, competing perspectives, key concepts and Indian evidence needed to understand how capitalist production transforms society. Tier 1 develops the essential analytical framework; Tier 2 examines the wider theoretical debates and contemporary transformations.

TIER 1 · ESSENTIAL: EXACTLY WHAT THE DEMAND NEEDS

The sociological lens: thinkers who explain the transformation

The foundational distinction is between **capitalism as an economic arrangement** and **capitalism as a historically specific organisation of social relations**. Sociologists examine not only what gets produced, but also who owns productive resources, who works, who controls the labour process, how rewards are distributed and how these arrangements shape institutions beyond the workplace.

Marx provides the central framework for this question. Weber, Durkheim and Simmel illuminate dimensions that a purely class-based account might understate. Polanyi explains the institutional response to expanding markets. Indian sociologists and feminist scholars show how these processes interact with historically existing structures of caste, gender, family and informal employment.

Thinker	Work and year	The core sociological idea	How to use it in this answer
Karl Marx	*Capital, Volume I* (1867); *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts* (written 1844, first published 1932)	**Relations of production** organise ownership and control. In capitalist production, labour power becomes a commodity and capital appropriates surplus value. Alienation concerns the worker's estrangement from the product, productive activity, human potential and other people. Capital accumulation also generates a relative surplus population.	**Central framework, Part 1.** Derive class formation, exploitation, alienation, factory discipline and labour insecurity from capitalist ownership and wage labour. Use commodity fetishism in Part 2.
Max Weber	*The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1904 to 1905); *Economy and Society* (1922, posthumous)	Modern capitalism depends upon **rational calculation, systematic enterprise and formally free labour**. Class situations reflect opportunities in markets, including property and skills. Rationalisation increases organisational predictability while potentially restricting individual autonomy.	**Parts 1 and 2.** Explain managerial calculation, bureaucratic organisation and unequal life chances. Show why ownership alone does not exhaust the dimensions of stratification.
Émile Durkheim	*The Division of Labour in Society* (1893)	Increasing specialisation can produce **organic solidarity** through functional interdependence. However, an **anomic division of labour** can occur where relationships between specialised functions lack adequate moral regulation. Durkheim also recognised forced divisions of labour.	**Parts 2 and 3.** Explain the potential for cooperation and integration in complex occupational systems, while identifying conditions under which specialisation produces disorganisation.

Describe the impact of capitalist mode of production on society.

Thinker	Work and year	The core sociological idea	How to use it in this answer
Georg Simmel	*The Metropolis and Mental Life* (1903)	The metropolitan **money economy** encourages calculability and impersonal relationships. Intense urban stimulation can encourage a blasé attitude, while urban life also creates opportunities for individuality and differentiated identities.	**Part 2.** Explain how markets and metropolitan life alter everyday interaction, social distance and individual experience.
Karl Polanyi	*The Great Transformation* (1944)	Labour, land and money are **fictitious commodities** because they were not originally produced for market sale. Attempts to organise society around self-regulating markets provoke demands for social protection, a dynamic Polanyi calls the **double movement**.	**Parts 2 and 3.** Connect market expansion to the social vulnerability of workers, then explain the emergence of protective regulation, welfare and collective mobilisation.
A. R. Desai	*Social Background of Indian Nationalism* (1948)	Desai's Marxian historical sociology examines how **colonial economic and institutional transformation** generated new social classes and material conditions within which Indian nationalism developed.	**Paper II bridge.** Show that capitalist class formation in India must be studied historically, through colonial relations of production and their institutional consequences.
André Béteille	*Caste, Class and Power: Changing Patterns of Stratification in a Tanjore Village* (1965)	His study of Sripuram, Tamil Nadu, examines the changing relationship between **caste hierarchy, economic class and political power**. Economic and political change weakened some older correspondences without making these three dimensions identical or eliminating caste.	**Part 3.** Demonstrate why changing economic relations do not automatically produce the disappearance of inherited social hierarchies.
Maria Mies	*The Lace Makers of Narsapur: Indian Housewives Produce for the World Market* (1982)	Her research in Andhra Pradesh shows how **home-based, gendered production** was connected to international commodity markets. She argues that treating women producers as housewives rather than workers helped sustain low remuneration and unequal power.	**Part 2.** Show that capitalist production can operate through households and subcontracting, rather than only through large factories.
Jan Breman	*Footloose Labour: Working in India's Informal Economy* (1996)	Research in **South Gujarat** examines mobile wage labour in the lower levels of the non-agrarian economy. It highlights insecure employment, labour mobility and the continuing relationship between rural livelihoods and non-farm work.	**Parts 1 and 2.** Give an Indian illustration of labour-market dependence and migration without assuming that industrialisation necessarily creates secure formal jobs.

Describe the impact of capitalist mode of production on society.

Thinker	Work and year	The core sociological idea	How to use it in this answer
Surinder S. Jodhka	*Caste in Contemporary India* (2015)	Jodhka's research examines the persistence and transformation of caste within modern economic life, including **business activity and corporate hiring**. Market institutions do not necessarily become socially neutral merely because they use formal economic criteria.	**Part 3.** Qualify the idea that market competition necessarily eliminates caste-related inequalities.
Rina Agarwala	*Informal Labor, Formal Politics, and Dignified Discontent in India* (2013)	Drawing on approximately **300 interviews**, Agarwala examines how informal workers organise politically. She finds movements that seek welfare through the state, mobilise in neighbourhoods and invoke **citizenship**, rather than relying exclusively on employer-directed industrial bargaining.	**Part 2.** Explain how capitalist labour relations can generate new forms of political participation and collective organisation outside the traditional factory union.

Theoretical and bibliographic foundations: Marx, *Capital* (1867); Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy on Weber; University of Chicago's Durkheim study resources; Simmel's 1903 essay in German History in Documents and Images; Polanyi, *The Great Transformation* (1944). Indian works verified through university-press catalogues, the International Labour Organization, the publisher's catalogue and scholarly publications. The empirical claims attributed to individual researchers describe the particular studies, not all of Indian society.

Perspectives: different explanations of the same transformation

A perspective identifies **what makes a social consequence sociologically significant**. The same industrial workplace or urban settlement looks different when viewed through class conflict, social integration, rationalisation, gender or everyday interaction.

Perspective	How it reads capitalist society	What it adds to this answer
Marxian / conflict	The decisive relationship is between those controlling productive resources and those compelled to sell labour power. The production of surplus value and its appropriation establish a structural conflict of interests.	Explains **class exploitation, control and alienation**. It establishes why changes in work cannot be treated as merely technical.
Functionalist Durkheim	Specialised occupations can increase mutual dependence and create social integration. Inadequate or unjust regulation can instead generate pathological forms of division of labour.	Explains **organic solidarity** and the conditions necessary for occupational cooperation, without assuming that all existing inequalities are functional.
Weberian	Economic power involves both property and opportunities to use skills or services in markets. Rational capitalist enterprise depends upon calculability, administration and formal rules.	Adds **life chances, bureaucracy and rationalisation**. Workers and owners do not exhaust every difference in market position.
Interactionist / cultural Simmel	Money exchange and metropolitan rhythms alter how people encounter strangers, calculate obligations and experience individuality.	Explains **impersonal interaction, social distance and urban identities** beyond formal class categories.
Feminist Mies and social reproduction approaches	Market production interacts with the gendered organisation of households. Unpaid care and domestic activity help sustain workers, while subcontracting may place paid production inside the home.	Shows how **gender, paid work and unpaid reproduction** intersect. It prevents the family from being treated as separate from the economy.

Describe the impact of capitalist mode of production on society.

Perspective	How it reads capitalist society	What it adds to this answer
Institutionalist Polanyi	Labour-market expansion can expose households and communities to economic insecurity, producing collective demands for protection.	Explains why **welfare, regulation and collective safeguards** are sociological consequences of market expansion.
Indian historical and stratification approaches Desai, Béteille, Jodhka	Capitalist relations develop within historically specific institutions. Colonialism, caste, landholding and political power mediate market opportunities.	Prevents the assumption that an abstract European model operates identically in every Indian setting.

Perspective choice for a 251-word answer. Use a **Marxian perspective as the explanatory centre**, Weber or Durkheim to deepen the institutional analysis, and Polanyi to explain social protection. Add a concise Indian or feminist illustration where it sharpens the argument. It is better to develop three thinkers accurately than to name eight without explanation.

Key concepts: precise meanings and distinctions

These are analytical concepts, not interchangeable expressions for exploitation, inequality or industrialisation.

Concept and theorist	Precise sociological meaning	Applied to the question
1. Mode of production Marx and historical materialism	A historically specific unity of **productive forces**, such as labour, technology and instruments, and **relations of production**, concerning ownership, control and the organisation of productive activity.	Capitalism is distinguished by historically specific relations of property, wage labour and accumulation, not by machines alone.
2. Surplus value Marx, *Capital* (1867)	The difference between the new value produced by labour and the value of labour power purchased by capital. Marx distinguishes necessary labour time from surplus labour time.	Explains the structural basis of capitalist profit and exploitation in Marx's analysis. **Exploitation is not synonymous with an illegally low wage.**
3. Alienation Marx, manuscripts of 1844	Estrangement of workers from the products of their activity, the labour process, their human potential and other people under conditions where productive activity is externally controlled.	Connects the social meaning of work with ownership and control. Alienation is broader than feeling bored or dissatisfied.
4. Industrial reserve army Marx, *Capital*, Chapter 25	The **relative surplus population** produced and reproduced through capitalist accumulation: labour available beyond capital's current employment requirements.	Explains how labour insecurity and competition can accompany accumulation. It is not identical to every unemployed person counted in an official survey.
5. Commodity fetishism Marx, *Capital*, Chapter 1	A social form in which relations among producers appear as relations among commodities and their values, obscuring the social labour underlying exchange.	Use to explain the appearance of goods as independently valued market objects, not simply a psychological desire to shop.
6. Rationalisation Weber	The increasing organisation of action through calculation, systematic rules, efficiency and predictable procedures. It operates in capitalist enterprise and other modern institutions.	Explains managerial authority and administrative organisation. Rationalisation is not unique to capitalism.

Describe the impact of capitalist mode of production on society.

Concept and theorist	Precise sociological meaning	Applied to the question
7. Fictitious commodities and double movement Polanyi (1944)	**Fictitious commodities:** labour, land and money are organised as commodities although they were not produced for sale in the usual sense. **Double movement:** market expansion generates countervailing efforts to protect society.	Connects labour-market dependence with demands for social security, labour regulation and institutional safeguards.
8. Social reproduction Developed in Marxist-feminist and social reproduction scholarship	The activities and institutional arrangements through which people and labour power are maintained and reproduced, including care, domestic work and intergenerational support.	Explains why understanding capitalist work requires attention to households and unequal unpaid labour. It is not attributable to one single originator.

How capitalist production reaches different social institutions

The connection between economic organisation and social change should be made explicit. Each row below begins with a characteristic of capitalist production, identifies a mechanism and shows its possible social effect.

Feature of production	Mechanism	Social consequence
Private ownership of productive resources	Control over productive assets is unequally distributed.	Class differentiation, unequal bargaining power and disparities in life chances.
Purchase of labour power	Workers sell labour capacity for wages under relations of employer control.	Wage dependence, workplace hierarchy, class antagonism and opportunities for worker organisation.
Accumulation and competitive pressure	Enterprises seek productivity gains, cost reductions and organisational expansion.	Specialisation, new occupations, changing skills, labour displacement and insecurity.
Concentration of production and investment	Employment and supporting activities cluster around industrial and commercial centres.	Migration, urbanisation, new settlements and altered community relationships. Other historical and political forces also contribute.
Expansion of commodity markets	More goods and services are produced, distributed or accessed through payment and exchange.	Consumer culture, changes in access to services and the market mediation of parts of everyday life.
Dependence on a reproducible labour force	Workers require daily care, subsistence, rest and intergenerational support.	Changing household arrangements and continuing reliance on paid and unpaid social reproduction.
Monetary calculation and administration	Enterprise becomes organised through accounts, contracts, targets and formal authority.	Rationalisation, bureaucratic work relations and changes in personal autonomy.
Conflict over wages, security and conditions	Workers and other social groups pursue collective claims.	Trade unions, political mobilisation, welfare demands and regulatory institutions.

These are analytical mechanisms, not claims that capitalism is the sole cause of every resulting social change. Urbanisation, family transformation and changes in social identity also reflect state policy, demography, technology, historical inequalities and cultural processes.

Describe the impact of capitalist mode of production on society.

Indian evidence: field studies and ethnographies

Indian evidence is particularly important because **capitalist production in India is not confined to factory wage employment**. Markets connect agriculture, small enterprises, subcontractors, informal workers, households and large corporations. Field studies reveal relationships that aggregate statistics alone cannot explain.

Study, place and year	What the researcher found or argued	What it establishes for this answer
André Béteille Sripuram, Thanjavur, Tamil Nadu Fieldwork 1961 to 1962; book 1965	Béteille examined changes in caste, economic class and political power in an agrarian village. He described the weakening of some older connections between caste position, landholding and authority, while showing that their relationships remained complex.	Market and political change can **reconfigure social stratification** without dissolving inherited hierarchies. The study should not be presented as an ethnography of a factory proletariat.
Maria Mies Narsapur, West Godavari, Andhra Pradesh Book 1982	Mies analysed women producing lace within their households for wider, including international, commodity markets. She argued that the designation of producers as housewives and the gendered organisation of work helped sustain exploitative production relationships.	Capitalist commodity production can operate through **home-based paid work and subcontracting**. Domestic location does not imply that productive work is outside market relations.
Jan Breman South Gujarat Research across several decades; book 1996	Breman studied workers moving between rural livelihoods and low-paid non-agrarian wage employment. His research documented labour mobility and insecurity within the region's diversified economy.	Capitalist labour demand can be met through **mobile and insecure wage labour**, not only settled industrial employment with stable contracts.
Rina Agarwala Multiple Indian research settings Book 2013	Using approximately 300 interviews, Agarwala found that informal-worker organisations could seek benefits from the state through electoral and citizenship-based mobilisation, frequently organised around neighbourhoods rather than only workplaces.	Labour-market vulnerability can produce **new political claims and forms of organisation**, not merely workplace conflict.
Surinder S. Jodhka Research across north India Book 2015	Jodhka investigated the persistence and changing expression of caste in contemporary economic settings, including self-employment and corporate recruitment.	Modern markets do not necessarily operate independently of **caste-related social resources and exclusions**. The outcomes require empirical examination.
Sanjay Srivastava Delhi and Gurgaon *Entangled Urbanism*, 2015	Srivastava studied relationships between slum settlements, gated residential communities and shopping malls. His analysis links consumerism, middle-class identities, urban redevelopment and the exclusion of poorer residents.	Capitalist urban transformation reshapes **consumption, spatial inequality, citizenship and everyday interaction**, not just employment.

The strongest labour example. Breman's South Gujarat research is useful where the answer discusses migration and the insecurity of wage employment. It identifies the concrete organisation of labour rather than merely asserting that capitalism causes migration.

The strongest family and gender example. Mies's Narsapur lace-makers show how commercial production can extend into households. Her interpretation concerns those particular production relationships; it should not be generalised to all women or all home-based work.

Describe the impact of capitalist mode of production on society.

Indian evidence: official statistical sources

Statistical evidence provides scale and patterns, while field studies explain social mechanisms. The two types of evidence should support one another, not be treated as interchangeable.

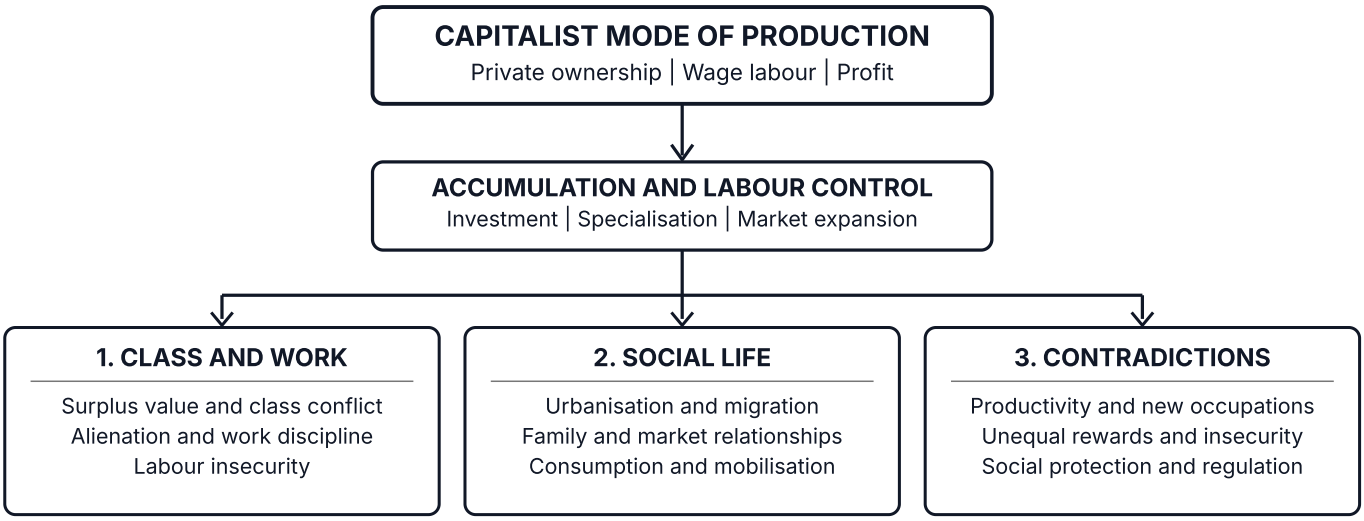
Source and coverage	Verified finding	Correct sociological interpretation
PLFS Annual Report 2025 NSO; January to December 2025; all-India workers in usual status (principal and subsidiary)	**56.2% self-employed; 23.6% regular wage or salaried; 20.2% casual labour.**	India contains diverse employment relationships. The shares cannot be converted directly into Marxian class categories because employment status does not by itself establish ownership or control of the means of production.
PLFS Annual Report 2025 Female workers in usual status, all India	**64.2% of female workers** were classified as self-employed; **18.2%** as regular wage or salaried, and **17.6%** as casual labour.	Employment status and gender intersect. Self-employment includes own-account activity, employers and contributing family helpers; the category does not necessarily indicate entrepreneurial independence or high earnings.
Time Use Survey 2024 NSO; participants aged six years and above, all India	Among participants in unpaid domestic services for household members, average daily time was **289 minutes for females** and **88 minutes for males**.	There is a pronounced gender difference in unpaid domestic work among participants. The statistic supports a discussion of social reproduction but does not establish that all this work is caused by capitalism.
HCES 2023-24 NSO; all-India rural and urban households	Estimated average monthly per capita consumption expenditure, excluding imputed free welfare items: **Rs 4,122 rural** and **Rs 6,996 urban**.	Consumption differs substantially between rural and urban populations. These are averages, not measures of within-group class inequality or a causal estimate of capitalism's effects.
NITI Aayog *India's Booming Gig and Platform Economy*, June 2022	Estimated **7.7 million gig workers** in 2020-21 and projected **23.5 million by 2029-30**.	Illustrates the estimated scale and anticipated expansion of gig work. The 2029-30 number is a projection, not an observed workforce count.

The PLFS annual 2025 estimate uses its usual-status employment classification and represents the 2025 survey period. The Time Use Survey minutes refer to people who participated in the specified activities, not an average across all people. NITI Aayog's future gig-work figure is explicitly a projection. None of these estimates directly measures Marxian surplus value or alienation.

Describe the impact of capitalist mode of production on society.

One diagram: from capitalist production to social transformation

This causal map can be reproduced in the examination in under a dozen short phrases. It makes the relationship between a mode of production and different spheres of society visible.



Historical institutions, caste, gender and state policy mediate the effects.

A conceptual teaching diagram, not a claim of automatic or uniform social change.

Examination shortcut: Private ownership and wage labour → accumulation and labour control → (1) class and work, (2) institutions and everyday life, (3) contradictory consequences. Use the full version for revision; in the answer, draw only the parts that add explanatory value.

The Paper I and Paper II bridge

The theoretical question is about capitalist society generally, but Indian sociology makes the argument historically and empirically specific. The central task is to **apply concepts without assuming identical historical outcomes**.

Paper I: theoretical proposition	Paper II: Indian application
Marx: class relations emerge from control over the means of production.	**A. R. Desai:** colonial economic restructuring and changing relations of production help explain the formation of modern social classes in India.
Marx: capital depends on the purchase and control of labour power.	**Jan Breman:** South Gujarat research demonstrates mobile wage labour and insecure non-agrarian employment within a diversified regional economy.
Market opportunities shape social stratification.	**Béteille and Jodhka:** caste, property, power, skills and social resources interact in changing economic settings.
Capitalist commodity production reorganises labour and household activity.	**Maria Mies:** Narsapur lace production illustrates how gendered household arrangements can support wider commodity markets.
Simmel and Weber: monetary and rationalised relations reshape modern social life.	**Sanjay Srivastava:** Delhi and Gurgaon show connections among consumption, urban redevelopment, class identity and spatial exclusion.
Polanyi: expanding markets provoke protective social responses.	**Rina Agarwala:** informal workers' mobilisation illustrates demands for state welfare and citizenship-based protection.

Describe the impact of capitalist mode of production on society.

Two disciplines to maintain. First, **class is not the same as caste**: one concerns economic and market position, while the other involves historically reproduced social identities and hierarchies, though they can intersect. Second, **informal employment is not the same as self-employment**: a worker may perform wage labour informally, while a self-employed worker may operate an enterprise with varying degrees of capital and independence.

TIER 2 · EXTENDED UNDERSTANDING: THE WHOLE TOPIC AROUND IT

Beyond classical industrial capitalism

Marx's analysis was developed through the history of capitalist commodity production and industrialisation, but the central questions of ownership, control and accumulation continue to arise in different organisational settings. The social forms change; the analytical questions remain useful.

Transformation	How the theme has evolved	Sociological caution
Factory discipline	E. P. Thompson's article *Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism* (1967) examined how labour discipline and time consciousness changed with industrialisation and the development of factory and workshop regimes.	Industrial time discipline developed historically; it should not be treated as an unchanged feature of every workplace.
Managerial control	Harry Braverman's *Labor and Monopoly Capital* (1974) examined the degradation of work and managerial separation of conception from execution under capitalist labour processes.	Deskilling is an important tendency in some settings, not a universal outcome for every occupation or worker.
Informal and subcontracted production	Supply chains can distribute production across firms, small workshops and households while coordinating output through contracts and markets.	Small-scale or home-based production need not fall outside capitalist relations; ownership and control must be investigated.
Platform-mediated work	Digital platforms coordinate services through applications, ratings, algorithmic allocation and other forms of organisational control.	The extent of control and legal employment status differ across arrangements. Platform work should not automatically be equated with factory wage labour.
Consumer-oriented urban change	Retail markets, shopping malls, real-estate development and differentiated residential spaces can reshape class identities and patterns of interaction.	Consumption is socially significant, but it does not replace analysis of the production and ownership relationships behind goods and services.
Social protection	Labour regulation and welfare measures respond to insecurity in changing employment relationships.	Protective legislation indicates an institutional response; actual coverage and effectiveness must be demonstrated separately.

Describe the impact of capitalist mode of production on society.

The productive achievements and social costs of capitalism

The social consequences are contradictory because the same arrangements that encourage expanded production can also create inequalities in control, security and rewards. This is a **structural tension**, not simply a contrast between good and bad outcomes.

Expanded productive and social capacities

1. **Productivity:** investment, cooperation, specialisation and technical change can expand the scale and variety of production.
2. **Occupational differentiation:** new industries and services create additional forms of skilled and specialised work.
3. **Social mobility:** new markets, education and occupations can create opportunities outside some inherited occupational restrictions, subject to unequal access.
4. **Wider connections:** markets and cities connect distant populations, workplaces and cultural experiences.
5. **Collective organisation:** shared workplace interests and labour-market vulnerabilities can encourage unions and political mobilisation.

Contradictory and unequal outcomes

1. **Concentration:** ownership and control over productive assets may remain highly unequal.
2. **Exploitation:** Marx's analysis identifies appropriation of surplus value as intrinsic to capitalist wage relations.
3. **Insecurity:** technological displacement, market fluctuations and weak bargaining power can expose workers to unstable livelihoods.
4. **Social reproduction:** unequal responsibilities for unpaid domestic and care work can constrain participation and opportunities.
5. **Stratification and ecological costs:** caste, gender and location shape who benefits from markets and who bears pollution, resource depletion and other externalised costs.

Limits of the major theoretical explanations

Theoretical emphasis	What it explains particularly well	What it cannot settle alone
Marx: class and exploitation	Why ownership, accumulation and labour control create structural inequalities and conflicts.	Differences in caste, gender, prestige and political power cannot always be inferred from ownership alone. Empirical analysis must distinguish different forms of work and property.
Weber: markets and rationalisation	How skills, property, administration and calculability influence opportunities and authority.	Rationalisation also occurs in non-capitalist organisations; its presence does not by itself demonstrate capitalist exploitation.
Durkheim: functional interdependence	How specialisation can generate cooperation and moral integration.	Integration cannot be assumed where unequal power, inadequate regulation or forced occupational allocation persists.
Polanyi: protective responses	Why market expansion can provoke demands for labour protection and welfare.	The double movement does not guarantee effective social protection or determine which social groups will benefit from it.
Feminist and Indian perspectives	How households, gender, caste and historically specific economic relations shape capitalist transformation.	No single ethnography represents all Indian regions, households, occupations or historical periods.

Describe the impact of capitalist mode of production on society.

Two debates worth knowing

Does capitalist development weaken caste or reproduce its inequalities?

One argument emphasises markets, education, migration and the possibility of occupational mobility beyond inherited restrictions. A competing argument emphasises unequal access to property, skills, networks, recruitment and social recognition. **Béteille** documented changing relationships between caste, class and power in Sripuram; **Jodhka** examined caste's persistence within contemporary economic settings. The balanced interpretation is that **markets can transform caste relations without necessarily making opportunities independent of caste**. The effect must be established empirically.

Does market expansion emancipate society or expose it to new insecurity?

In one reading, specialisation and market exchange expand production, choice and interdependence. Durkheim offers an account of potential occupational integration, while Weber explains the organisational efficiency of rational capitalism. Marx emphasises exploitation and class antagonism; Polanyi examines the exposure created by treating labour as a market commodity. The balanced interpretation is that **productive expansion and social vulnerability can coexist**; institutions, bargaining power and social protection help determine how their consequences are distributed.

The central sociological insight. Capitalism does not simply introduce markets into a previously market-free world. It reorganises productive relationships around private control, wage dependence and accumulation. Its effects on family, community, culture, politics and stratification are therefore historically mediated rather than mechanically identical everywhere.

4 Pitfalls and variations

Six recurring mistakes, the claims to avoid, and how to change the answer when the question tests a different aspect of capitalist society.

4.1 Six pitfalls, each with its correction

Only economic consequences

~~Capitalism increases production, investment, industrialisation and GDP.~~

Explain how ownership, wage labour and profit-oriented production change class relations, family, urban life, culture, stratification and political organisation.

Impacts without mechanisms

~~Capitalism leads to migration, inequality, consumerism and alienation.~~

Connect each effect to a production relationship: for example, geographically concentrated labour demand can encourage migration, while private control and wage dependence help explain workplace hierarchy.

Names without sociological explanation

~~According to Marx, Weber, Durkheim, Simmel and Polanyi, capitalism changes society.~~

Use each thinker for a distinct mechanism: Marx for surplus value, Weber for rationalisation, Durkheim for occupational interdependence and Polanyi for social protection.

Reducing capitalism to factory employment

~~Under capitalism, everybody becomes an industrial wage worker.~~

Recognise salaried, casual and diverse self-employed work, subcontracting and market-linked household production. Explain who owns and controls productive resources before assigning class positions.

Describe the impact of capitalist mode of production on society.

Assuming the disappearance of older institutions

~~Capitalism ends joint families, caste distinctions and traditional community ties.~~

Describe transformation rather than automatic disappearance. Family arrangements and caste relations can be adapted, challenged or reproduced within capitalist settings.

An exclusively negative or positive verdict

~~Capitalism is responsible for every social problem; alternatively, capitalism necessarily benefits everyone through economic growth.~~

Recognise technological and occupational expansion alongside exploitation, unequal rewards and insecurity. Explain why outcomes are uneven and shaped by institutions.

4.2 Never write these

- "Capitalism is simply an economy in which goods are bought and sold."
  Trade and markets have existed under different social arrangements. The capitalist mode of production is distinguished by its historically specific relations of ownership, wage labour and accumulation.
- "Alienation means that workers dislike their jobs."
  Marx's concept identifies estrangement arising from social relationships of production and control; subjective dissatisfaction alone is insufficient.
- "Weber explained capitalism entirely through religion."
  His Protestant ethic thesis is one part of a wider analysis involving rational enterprise, administration, authority, markets and class situations.
- "Polanyi argued that labour is a fictitious commodity because workers do not really produce anything."
  His point is that labour is human activity inseparable from human life and is not originally produced as an ordinary commodity for sale.
- "PLFS proves that 43.8% of India's workers are an industrial proletariat."
  The combined regular-wage and casual-labour shares do not identify a homogeneous industrial class. Sector, employment relationship, ownership and labour control require separate examination.
- "Capitalism always destroys caste and joint families."
  Empirical Indian sociology shows complex patterns of transformation, persistence and adaptation; no universal disappearance follows automatically from market expansion.
- "Marx's surplus value means the employer does not pay workers the legally required wage."
  Surplus value concerns the difference between value produced and the value of labour power within Marx's theory. It is not defined as a violation of wage legislation.
- "Commodity fetishism means excessive shopping or obsession with brands."
  For Marx, it concerns the appearance of social relations among producers as relations between commodities and their values.
- "Durkheim said the division of labour always creates harmony."
  He identified abnormal forms, including anomic and forced divisions of labour, and treated adequate moral regulation as necessary for solidarity.
- "PLFS shows that 56.2% of Indian workers are capitalists because they are self-employed."
  Self-employment covers different categories, including own-account workers, employers and contributing family helpers. Employment status cannot be equated directly with ownership class.
- "The Time Use Survey proves capitalism causes women to do more unpaid work."
  The survey estimates participation and time allocation. It does not establish capitalism as the sole or direct cause of gendered unpaid work.
- "The four Labour Codes guarantee that every worker receives complete social security."
  The Codes came into effect on 21 November 2025, but legal provisions, scheme design, eligibility, implementation and realised coverage are separate matters.

Describe the impact of capitalist mode of production on society.

4.3 If the question changes

If UPSC asks	The structure becomes	What must change
Evaluate Marx's idea of the mode of production	Productive forces and relations; historical transformations; contradictions; strengths and criticisms.	Make historical materialism and the explanatory adequacy of Marx's framework central. Social effects become supporting evidence.
Compare Marx and Weber on capitalism	Marx's ownership, accumulation and class antagonism; Weber's rational enterprise, markets, authority and status; areas of agreement and difference.	A genuine comparison is necessary. Do not merely describe capitalism's social effects.
Explain degradation of work in capitalism	Control over labour; specialisation and machinery; alienation; deskilling and managerial authority; qualifications and examples.	Concentrate on labour processes. Marx and Braverman become more important than family and consumer culture.
Discuss capitalism and changing family relationships	Household production and reproduction; paid work; care; consumption; migration and residence; uneven outcomes.	Place feminist scholarship and empirical family change at the centre. Avoid universal claims about nuclearisation.
Explain capitalist class formation in India	Colonial transformation; land and production relations; industrial and agrarian classes; caste and class; contemporary diversification.	Use Desai's historical approach, then relevant Indian studies. The focus shifts from capitalism in general to historically specific Indian class relations.
Examine capitalism's effect on caste and stratification	Market opportunities; property and occupation; changing caste-class relations; persistence of exclusion; mobility and contradictions.	Use Béteille and Jodhka, while distinguishing caste hierarchy from economic class.
Critically analyse the mode of production debate	Competing conceptualisations; theoretical arguments; empirical application; limitations and synthesis.	Present the positions being debated and assess them, rather than writing a descriptive list of social consequences.
Assess the contemporary platform economy	Organisation and control of platform work; classifications of labour; algorithmic management; insecurity; collective organisation and regulation.	Use current evidence and precise employment classifications. Classical concepts should illuminate contemporary arrangements without erasing their differences.

THE ONE DISTINCTION TO PROTECT THROUGHOUT

Capitalism is a mode of organising production; its sociological significance lies in how those production relations reshape work, institutions, relationships, opportunities and collective life, with consequences that are both contradictory and historically uneven.

Describe the impact of capitalist mode of production on society.

5

The model answer

One model answer in the 250 to 253-word range for this 20-mark question, including headings and labels. The answer begins with the organisation of capitalist production, moves through its consequences for class and work to wider social institutions, and closes with its contradictory and uneven effects. A Marxian explanation provides the foundation, Weber and Polanyi deepen the analysis, and Indian empirical evidence qualifies the theoretical argument.

Model answer

Three-part sociological explanation with Indian evidence

251 words

Capitalist production organises social life around private ownership of productive resources, wage labour and accumulation for profit. Its consequences extend beyond employment to institutions, relationships, culture and politics.

1. Class relations and work

- **Class (Marxian conflict):** Marx's *Capital* (1867) locates class antagonism in capitalists' ownership of productive assets and appropriation of surplus value from wage labour.
- **Labour:** Capitalist control alienates workers from products and activity. Competition and mechanisation reorganise skills, strengthen managerial discipline and generate an industrial reserve army.
- **Authority:** Weber explains rationalised management; property and skills shape market situations and unequal life chances.

2. Social institutions, relationships and everyday life

- **Settlement and family:** Concentrated investment and employment encourage industrialisation, migration and urbanisation, altering community ties and household arrangements without necessarily dissolving extended families.
- **Markets and culture:** Commodification extends market exchange into everyday life. Marx's commodity fetishism obscures relations between producers; consumption shapes identities and interaction.
- **Inequality and gender:** Property, caste and education differentiate life chances. Mies's Narsapur study shows how subcontracted lace production depended on gendered household labour. Unpaid care reproduces labour power, with unequal burdens on women.
- **Collective action:** Workers organise politically. Polanyi's double movement connects market expansion with demands for social protection.

3. Contradictory and uneven consequences

Capitalism expands productive capacities and occupations, but inequality and insecurity persist. Breman's South Gujarat research documents mobile, insecure wage labour, rather than universal secure factory employment.

Thus capitalist production transforms society through both expanding opportunities and enduring contradictions. Its outcomes depend on property relations, existing hierarchies, bargaining power and protective institutions.

Describe the impact of capitalist mode of production on society.

DEMAND
Describe how capitalist ownership, wage labour and profit-oriented accumulation transform class, work, institutions, relationships and everyday life, linking every major social impact to the organisation of production

HIDDEN DEMAND
Capitalism expands productive capacities and creates new opportunities while simultaneously generating unequal rewards, insecurity and contradictions, with consequences mediated by existing inequalities and protective institutions

STRUCTURE
About three-tenths on class relations and work, one-half on institutions and everyday life, and one-fifth on contradictory and uneven social consequences

BALANCE
Introduction 28 words, conclusion 25 words; 251 words in all

Why it works: The introduction addresses the entire demand by connecting the organisation of capitalist production with social transformation. Part 1 uses **Marx's surplus value, alienation and industrial reserve army** to establish the structural relationship between capital and labour. Weber adds rationalisation and market-based life chances. Part 2, the largest section, explains how capitalist investment, employment and commodity exchange reshape migration, families, culture, stratification and collective action. **Maria Mies's Narsapur study** grounds gendered subcontracting and unequal social reproduction in Indian research. Polanyi explains the emergence of demands for protection. Part 3 recognises productive expansion alongside inequalities, while **Breman's South Gujarat study** illustrates mobile and insecure wage labour. The conclusion brings together the contradictory consequences and the institutions that mediate them. The answer describes social impacts rather than merely judging capitalism.

6

Other ways to write it

The model answer above remains the principal answer. These alternative outlines show how the same sociological demand can be satisfied through a different arrangement of theory, institutions and evidence. The essential condition is unchanged: **every major social transformation must be connected to the capitalist mode of production**.

Approach	How it is built	When it works
Thinker-led explanation	**Marx:** ownership, classes, surplus value and alienation. **Weber:** rationalisation, market situation and life chances. **Durkheim:** occupational interdependence and anomie. **Polanyi:** market expansion and social protection. Apply each to the appropriate social institution, then conclude with contradictory outcomes.	When classical sociological theory is your strongest area. Avoid writing separate miniature biographies of thinkers.
Institution-led explanation	**Work and class:** wage labour and exploitation. **Family and community:** employment, migration and care. **Culture:** commodities and consumption. **Politics:** labour organisation and welfare. **Contradictions:** productivity and inequality. Attach the relevant thinker to each institution.	Particularly well suited to the directive **"Describe the impact on society"**, because it provides comprehensive coverage without losing causal explanation.
Production-to-society causal sequence	Private ownership and wage labour → accumulation and specialisation → class conflict and labour control → urbanisation, family transformation and commodification → collective responses and uneven social outcomes.	When you want a clear diagram and a tightly connected argument. Each arrow must be explained rather than assumed.
Marxian perspective with Indian evidence	Begin with class and surplus value. Explain alienation and the organisation of work. Use **Breman** for mobile wage labour, **Mies** for household production and **Agarwala** for workers' mobilisation. Add Weber or Polanyi, then close with unequal opportunities.	When you have strong command of Indian sociological studies. Keep the theory central: the question is not exclusively about India.

Describe the impact of capitalist mode of production on society.

Approach	How it is built	When it works
Contradictions within each institution	**Work:** specialised occupations alongside insecurity. **Urban society:** new opportunities alongside residential inequalities. **Family:** altered economic roles alongside unequal care burdens. **Politics:** new collective organisations alongside unequal power. End with an integrated interpretation.	Useful for showing sociological nuance. It requires careful organisation so the final section does not merely repeat earlier contrasts.

The strongest alternative. An **institution-led answer** is especially appropriate because "society" is the object of the question. Each institution can be explained through a relevant production relationship and a sociological concept.

What remains essential in every approach. Preserve the three analytical movements: **class and work; wider institutions and everyday life; contradictory and uneven consequences**. Changing the presentation must not remove the hidden demand or turn the answer into a comparison with socialism.

7 Quick recall

Sixteen precise facts and concepts for revising capitalist production and its consequences for society. Remember the explanatory connection, not merely the thinker or date.

1. **Karl Marx, Capital, Volume I (1867):** capitalist production, labour power, surplus value, accumulation and the relative surplus population.
2. **Marx, 1844 manuscripts:** alienation from the product, productive activity, human potential and other people; first published in **1932**.
3. **Commodity fetishism:** Marx, *Capital*, Chapter 1; relations among producers appear as relations among commodities.
4. **Industrial reserve army:** Marx's relative surplus population, reproduced through capitalist accumulation; not identical to a survey's unemployment count.
5. **Max Weber, 1904 to 1905:** *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*; rational economic conduct and the development of modern capitalism.
6. **Émile Durkheim, 1893:** *The Division of Labour in Society*; organic solidarity and abnormal forms of occupational differentiation.
7. **Georg Simmel, 1903:** *The Metropolis and Mental Life*; money economy, calculability, social distance and metropolitan individuality.
8. **Karl Polanyi, 1944:** *The Great Transformation*; fictitious commodities and the double movement of market expansion and social protection.
9. **A. R. Desai, 1948:** *Social Background of Indian Nationalism*; colonial economic transformation and the emergence of modern Indian social classes.
10. **André Béteille, 1965:** *Caste, Class and Power*; Sripuram, Tamil Nadu; changing relationships among three dimensions of stratification.
11. **Maria Mies, 1982:** *The Lace Makers of Narsapur*; home-based lace production, gendered labour and commodity markets.
12. **Jan Breman, 1996:** *Footloose Labour*; mobile and insecure non-agrarian wage labour in South Gujarat.
13. **Rina Agarwala, 2013:** approximately **300 interviews**; informal-worker movements seeking state welfare and citizenship-based claims.
14. **Surinder S. Jodhka, 2015:** *Caste in Contemporary India*; caste's persistence and transformation within modern economic institutions.
15. **PLFS Annual Report 2025: 56.2%** of all-India workers in usual status (principal and subsidiary) estimated as self-employed, including own-account workers, employers and contributing household helpers.
16. **Time Use Survey 2024:** among participants aged six and above in unpaid domestic services, females spent an estimated **289 minutes** daily and males **88 minutes**.

Describe the impact of capitalist mode of production on society.

THE ONE SENTENCE TO CARRY OUT OF THIS DOCUMENT

Capitalism is not merely a system of producing commodities; it is a historically specific organisation of production that reshapes class, work, institutions and everyday life while generating both expanded productive capacities and unequal social consequences.

8 Write it yourself

Write a fresh answer to the 2026 question in approximately 250 words without looking back. Then evaluate it against these seven checks. The objective is not to reproduce particular sentences, but to construct an accurate sociological explanation.

	Check	Yes / No
1	Does the introduction address the **capitalist mode of production and its impact on society as a whole**, rather than merely defining capitalism or describing economic growth?	
2	Does Part 1 explain **private ownership, wage labour, surplus value, class conflict and alienation**, with clear connections to the organisation of work?	
3	Is **Part 2 the largest section**, covering institutions and everyday life through urbanisation, migration, family, commodification, consumer culture, inequality and collective organisation?	
4	Are thinkers **used to explain mechanisms**, rather than merely named? Is at least one sociological perspective made explicit?	
5	Is there at least **one precise Indian example or correctly attributed empirical finding**, with its scope and limitations respected?	
6	Does the smaller final part recognise **productive expansion alongside inequalities and contradictions**, and does the conclusion bring these consequences together?	
7	Is the answer **approximately 250 words**, with all headings and labels included, and free from sweeping claims about capitalism, caste, family, gender or employment?	

Sources

- **Karl Marx:** *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Volume I* (1867), especially Chapter 1 on commodities and commodity fetishism, the analysis of surplus value, and Chapter 25 on accumulation and the relative surplus population. Full text: Marxists Internet Archive, Capital Volume I, Chapter 1. Also *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, written 1844 and first published 1932, for alienation.
- **Max Weber:** *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1904 to 1905) and *Economy and Society* (1922, posthumous). Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Max Weber, particularly the discussion of rationalisation, calculability, modern capitalism and administration.
- **Émile Durkheim:** *De la division du travail social*, 1893, translated as *The Division of Labour in Society*; organic solidarity, anomic division of labour and forced division of labour. **Georg Simmel:** *Die Grossstädte und das Geistesleben*, 1903, commonly translated as *The Metropolis and Mental Life*.
- **Karl Polanyi:** *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time* (1944), particularly the treatment of labour, land and money as fictitious commodities and the double movement of market expansion and social protection.

Describe the impact of capitalist mode of production on society.

- **A. R. Desai:** *Social Background of Indian Nationalism* (1948; subsequent editions), on the historical transformation of Indian social classes under colonial rule. **André Béteille:** *Caste, Class and Power: Changing Patterns of Stratification in a Tanjore Village* (1965), University of California Press; fieldwork in Sripuram during 1961 to 1962. Publisher: University of California Press.
- **Maria Mies:** *The Lace Makers of Narsapur: Indian Housewives Produce for the World Market* (1982), Zed Press, on gendered household production and international commodity markets in Andhra Pradesh. Bibliographic entry: Google Books.
- **Jan Breman:** *Footloose Labour: Working in India's Informal Economy* (1996), Cambridge University Press; research on casual, mobile and non-agrarian wage labour in South Gujarat. Publisher's description: Cambridge University Press.
- **Rina Agarwala:** *Informal Labor, Formal Politics, and Dignified Discontent in India* (2013), Cambridge University Press, based on approximately 300 interviews with informal workers, government officials and union leaders. Publisher's description: Cambridge University Press.
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- **National Statistical Office, MoSPI:** *Periodic Labour Force Survey Annual Report 2025*, covering January to December 2025, published 27 March 2026. Table on employment-status distribution in usual status (principal and subsidiary): self-employed 56.2%, regular wage or salaried 23.6%, casual labour 20.2%, all-India workers. PIB press release, 27 March 2026. The published annual report provides the disaggregation of self-employment and the corresponding male and female estimates.
- **National Statistical Office, MoSPI:** *Time Use Survey 2024*, conducted January to December 2024 and released 25 February 2025. For unpaid domestic services among participants aged six years and above, estimated average time was 289 minutes for females and 88 minutes for males. PIB, Time Use Survey 2024.
- **National Statistical Office, MoSPI:** *Household Consumption Expenditure Survey 2023-24*, conducted August 2023 to July 2024, published in January 2025. Average monthly per capita consumption expenditure excluding the imputed value of free welfare items: Rs 4,122 rural and Rs 6,996 urban. Estimates relate to the survey period and coverage.
- **NITI Aayog:** *India's Booming Gig and Platform Economy: Perspectives and Recommendations on the Future of Work* (June 2022). Estimates 7.7 million gig workers in 2020-21 and projects 23.5 million by 2029-30, explicitly acknowledging data limitations. Official report.
- **Ministry of Labour and Employment:** Notification and announcement bringing the Code on Wages, 2019; Industrial Relations Code, 2020; Code on Social Security, 2020; and Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2020 into effect from 21 November 2025. PIB, Ministry Year End Review 2025. The legal provisions are distinguished from their implementation and realised coverage.
- **Government of Karnataka:** *Karnataka Platform Based Gig Workers (Social Security and Welfare) Act, 2025*, Karnataka Act No. 72 of 2025. Governor's assent on 11 September 2025; first Gazette publication 12 September 2025. India Code, text of the Act.
- **UPSC:** Civil Services (Main) Examination, Sociology Optional Papers I and II, previous-question-paper archive, upsc.gov.in/examinations/previous-question-papers. The questions in section 2.2 are reproduced with their year, paper and question number from UPSC Sociology papers.

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