

FREE SAMPLE SET | IGNOU GUESS PAPER | DECEMBER 2026 TEE

BSOG-171 Indian Society: Images and Realities

Two opening questions on images of India, then village, caste, tribe and city: three repeat themes solved in full

Course: BSOG-171 Indian Society: Images and Realities, 6 credits (Common Prospectus July 2026)

December 2026 paper: Wednesday 2 December 2026, 2 PM to 5 PM (IGNOU tentative date sheet dated 21 September 2026)

Programme: BAG, BA Honours programmes and others that prescribe it

Built from: IGNOU BSOG-171 papers of June 2022 and June 2024, read on IGNOU's servers, and a copy of December 2025 on another website, read on 29 September 2026

STUDY REFERENCE

WRITE IN YOUR OWN WORDS

NOT AN IGNOU PUBLICATION

How IGNOU sets the BSOG-171 paper

- **Time and marks.** 3 hours for 100 marks.
- **Choice.** The June 2024 paper asked for any five of eight questions, in about 400 words each, at 20 marks each.
- **Assignments.** IGNOU's BSOG-171 assignment booklet states that assignments carry 30 percent and the term-end examination 70 percent of the result.
- **Language.** The question paper file also carries the Hindi version.

Repeat map: what came back

The December 2025 column is from a copy on another website, not IGNOU's own file.

Theme	Jun 2022	Jun 2024	Dec 2025 (copy)
Images of India: cultural approach, colonial or Orientalist view, nationalist view, composite culture	Q1, Q2	Q1, Q2	Q1, Q2
The village as a social unit; village and the outside world	Q4	Q4	Q8
Caste: features, social mobility; class in rural India	Q7	Q7	Q6
Tribe: tribe and ethnicity, features, matrilineal groups	none seen	Q8	Q3, Q4
Urban India: urban problems, urbanisation before independence	none seen	Q5	Q7
State and nation: forms of state in ancient India, the nation-state, plurality in the Constitution	Q3	Q3, Q6	none seen
Family and kinship: change in the family system	none seen	none seen	Q5

What the map says. In all three papers the first two questions were about how India has been understood: culturally, by colonial writers and by nationalists. Village and caste also came back every time. These three themes are solved below.

Three repeat themes, solved

1. How has India been imagined? Discuss the colonial, nationalist and composite-culture views of Indian society.

Covers the first two questions of June 2022, June 2024 and the December 2025 copy, and IGNOU's assignment on the Orientalist view.

Introduction. "Images" of Indian society are the ways in which scholars, rulers and nationalists described what India is. Each image reflected the interests and assumptions of those who built it, which is why the course asks us to compare images with realities.

The Orientalist image. Scholars such as William Jones and later Max Müller studied Sanskrit texts and admired ancient Indian civilisation. Their India was ancient, spiritual and textual. The weakness is that it read the whole of society through Brahmanical texts. It treated India as timeless and unchanging, ignoring everyday life and diversity.

The colonial administrative image. Administrators and writers such as James Mill (*The History of British India*, 1817) portrayed India as backward, despotic and in need of British rule. Censuses and ethnographic surveys classified castes and tribes into fixed categories. This hardened identities that had been more fluid, and it served the needs of governance.

The nationalist image. In the anti-colonial struggle, nationalists answered these images.

- Gandhi (*Hind Swaraj*, 1909) praised India's village-based moral civilisation against modern industrial civilisation.
- Nehru (*The Discovery of India*, 1946) described India's unity in diversity, a civilisation that absorbed many influences over centuries.

Nationalism made India a political community of equal citizens.

India as a composite culture. India's culture is a synthesis:

- the Bhakti and Sufi movements;
- shared music, architecture and food;
- many languages and faiths living side by side.

Unity in diversity is not the absence of difference but a way of living with it, a view reflected in the Constitution's protection of plurality.

Conclusion. Each image captured part of India and missed part of it. The sociological task is to test images against realities: village, caste, tribe, city and family as people actually live them.

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2. Discuss the village as a social unit in India.

Covers June 2022 Q4, June 2024 Q4 and the December 2025 copy (Q8).

Introduction. The village has long been seen as the basic unit of Indian society. Whether it is a self-contained unit or part of a wider society has been debated.

The "little republic" view. Early colonial officials, notably Charles Metcalfe, described Indian villages as little republics: self-sufficient and unchanging, surviving the rise and fall of dynasties.

Sociological findings. Later field studies qualified this picture.

- *Economic links.* Villages were tied to towns and markets through trade, credit and migration. The jajmani system, studied by W. H. Wiser, linked caste groups in exchanges of services and grain.
- *Social links.* Caste and kinship networks, marriage alliances and pilgrimage connected villages across regions.
- *Political links.* Villages were integrated into revenue and administrative systems, and later into panchayats and elections.
- *The dominant caste.* M. N. Srinivas showed how a numerically and economically strong caste often controls land and village affairs.

Village as a unit and as a part. The village has a real identity for its residents: a shared name, territory, festivals and a sense of belonging. It is still not isolated. It is best seen as a unit within the wider society, shaped by the market, the state and the caste system beyond its boundary.

Change today. Land reforms, the Green Revolution, migration, education, reservations and media have reshaped village life, and the rural-urban divide is increasingly blurred.

Conclusion. The Indian village is both a community and a node in larger networks. The "little republic" is an image; the linked, changing village is the reality.

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3. Explain the features of the caste system and the ways social mobility has occurred within it.

Covers June 2024 Q7, the December 2025 copy (Q6), and IGNOU's assignment on caste and class.

Introduction. Caste is a system of hereditary, endogamous groups ranked in a hierarchy of status. It has shaped occupation, marriage and social relations in India for centuries.

Features. G. S. Ghurye (1932) listed six features:

1. Segmental division of society into groups based on birth.
2. Hierarchy, with the Brahmin at the top in the classical scheme.
3. Restrictions on eating and social interaction.
4. Civil and religious disabilities for some castes and privileges for others.
5. A lack of free choice of occupation.
6. Restrictions on marriage: endogamy within the caste.

Ideas of purity and pollution underlie the hierarchy.

Social mobility within caste.

- *Sanskritisation* (M. N. Srinivas): a lower caste adopts the customs, rituals and way of life of higher castes to claim higher status over time.
- *Westernisation*: education, new occupations and urban life create new routes to status.
- *Dominant castes* rise through land ownership and political power.
- *Caste associations and politics*: caste groups organise for rights, representation and benefits.
- *State policy*: constitutional equality, the abolition of untouchability (Article 17) and reservations in education, jobs and legislatures.

Caste and class. Caste is ascribed by birth, while class is based on wealth and occupation. The two often overlapped, since upper castes owned land. Today they increasingly cut across each other, with poor members of upper castes and prosperous members of lower castes.

Conclusion. Caste remains a real force, but it is changing, from a rigid ritual hierarchy towards a basis of identity, organisation and politics.

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Answer plans for the other repeat themes

Tribe and ethnicity (June 2024 Q8, December 2025 copy Q3 and Q4) - Scheduled Tribes under Article 342, and the features commonly used to identify tribes. - Ethnic identity and movements. - Matrilineal groups such as the Khasi and Garo of Meghalaya, and the Nair joint family (taravad) of Kerala.

Urban India (June 2024 Q5, December 2025 copy Q7) - Before independence: colonial port cities (Bombay, Calcutta, Madras), railway and cantonment towns, hill stations. - Urban problems today: housing and slums, transport, water and sanitation, pollution and unemployment.

Plurality and the Constitution (June 2024 Q6) - A secular state; freedom of religion (Articles 25 to 28) and minority rights (Articles 29 and 30). - Linguistic states and the Eighth Schedule. - The Fifth and Sixth Schedules for tribal areas. - Reservations.

Change in the family (December 2025 copy Q5) - From joint to nuclear households. - Industrialisation, urbanisation, education, women's employment and migration. - Laws such as the Hindu Marriage Act (1955) and the Hindu Succession Act (1956).

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Use this set in the last three weeks

- **Week 3:** write the three solved themes from memory, about 400 words each.
- **Week 2:** turn the four answer plans into full answers.

- **Final week:** write one full paper, five answers, in 3 hours.
- **Last two days:** read IGNOU's June 2026 paper for BSOG-171 on ignou.ac.in.

What this free set is, and is not

This set covers the BSOG-171 themes that repeated across the papers above. The complete BSOG-171 set, with every repeat theme solved in English or Hindi medium, costs ₹49 as a PDF or ₹100 as a printed copy, plus a one-time ₹100 courier charge per printed order. Order on WhatsApp +91 93546 37830.

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