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BA Sociology Honours | Semester V | Calicut University

Sociology of Food

Course Code: SOC5EJ306 • Module 3

Module 3: Food and Indian Society

Course: SOC5EJ306 – Sociology of Food • **University of Calicut (CUFYUGP 2024)**

1. Curricular Orientation & Advanced Theoretical Foundations

Module 3 ("Food and Indian Society") within *Sociology of Food* provides advanced fifth-semester undergraduate scholars with comprehensive theoretical literacy, analytical rigor, and specialized empirical insight. At this senior stage of the undergraduate honours curriculum under CUFYUGP 2024 regulations, sociology engages directly with complex macroscopic institutional formations, critical subaltern critiques, advanced quantitative-qualitative methodologies, and pressing contemporary policy dilemmas.

Sociological enquiry at the advanced level requires mastering the nuanced interplay between theoretical paradigms and lived empirical realities. By critically examining food and indian society, students develop the capacity to dissect structural power relations, evaluate state policies, interrogate ideological representations, and appreciate the unique historical dynamics governing social change in India and Keralam.

> **Core Epistemological Focus of Module 3**
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> **Advanced Analytical Questions:** What are the structural and institutional mechanisms through which food and indian society operates in modern societies? How do classical and contemporary theoretical paradigms account for contradictions, social inequalities, and transformative struggles within this arena? What distinctive insights emerge when examining these phenomena through the socio-historical and developmental lens of India and Keralam?

2. Comprehensive Analysis of Historical Evolution of Indian Culinary Traditions: Harappan, Vedic, Persian, Mughal, and Colonial Influences

The scholarly investigation of **Historical Evolution of Indian Culinary Traditions: Harappan, Vedic, Persian, Mughal, and Colonial Influences** represents a core analytical domain within this course. In advanced sociological scholarship, this theme embodies foundational conceptual debates, institutional structures, and empirical challenges that shape contemporary social reality. Scholars have examined this topic from competing theoretical traditions, ranging from classical structural formulations to critical neo-Marxist, feminist, subaltern, and post-modern paradigms.

Analyzing historical evolution of indian culinary traditions: harappan, vedic, persian, mughal, and colonial influences requires unbundling its complex internal components and historical trajectories. Sociologists demonstrate that institutional practices, social identities, and normative systems are never natural givens; they are socially produced, politically negotiated, and contested over time. The analyst must rigorously evaluate the reciprocal interactions between structural constraints and individual or group agency.

2.1. Theoretical Traditions and Scholarly Frameworks

The intellectual literature concerning historical evolution of indian culinary traditions: harappan, vedic, persian, mughal, and colonial influences features diverse theoretical arguments. Positivist and functionalist approaches analyze how social patterns contribute to systemic equilibrium, institutional continuity, and normative integration. In stark contrast, conflict, critical, and subaltern approaches demonstrate how institutional arrangements embody structural inequalities, class exploitation, caste hegemony, and patriarchal dominance.

Contemporary sociological theory moves beyond static structuralism by embracing dynamic models of practice, discourse, and performativity. Scholars utilize structuration theory, field-habitus models, and intersectional matrices to examine how individuals navigate institutional rules, mobilize cultural resources, and contest entrenched asymmetries in everyday life.

Theoretical Paradigm	Primary Analytical Focus	Epistemological Assumptions	Application to Historical Evolution of
Structural Functionalism	Systemic equilibrium, institutional roles, social integration	Institutions exist to fulfill vital functional needs of the social organism	Examines the functional contributions of historical evolution of indian culinary traditions: harappan, vedic, persian, mughal, and colonial influences to social order.
Conflict & Critical Perspective	Power monopolies, class hegemony, resource exploitation	Social patterns reflect material interests and dominance of ruling groups	Unmasks how historical evolution of indian culinary traditions: harappan, vedic, persian, mughal, and colonial influences reproduces structural oppression and privilege.
Interpretative & Post-Modern	Discursive formations, symbolic meaning, performativity	Reality is socially constructed through language, symbols, and gaze	Analyzes how actors construct, negotiate, and perform historical evolution of indian culinary traditions: harappan, vedic, persian, mughal, and colonial influences.
Subaltern & Post-Colonial	Subaltern standpoints, anti-caste critique, decolonization	Eurocentric models obscure subaltern lived realities and colonial violence	Reinterprets historical evolution of indian culinary traditions: harappan, vedic, persian, mughal, and colonial influences from the perspectives of Dalits, Adivasis, and women.

2.2. Institutional Operations and Empirical Manifestations

In lived empirical reality, historical evolution of indian culinary traditions: harappan, vedic, persian, mughal, and colonial influences functions across diverse institutional spheres—including family arrangements, state bureaucracies, corporate markets, community associations, and digital communication networks. These institutional sites reveal how abstract cultural ideologies and macroeconomic imperatives are translated into concrete social expectations and differential access to resources.

Within the Indian socio-cultural matrix, traditional structures frequently articulate with modern bureaucratic, market, and technological forces. Rather than experiencing simple unilinear modernization, Indian society exhibits complex configurations where traditional caste hierarchies, kinship networks, and religious identities fuse with modern democratic politics, neoliberal capitalism, and consumer culture.

Sociological Insight: Empirical Dimensions in India & Keralam

Within the empirical setting of Keralam and greater India, **Historical Evolution of Indian Culinary Traditions: Harappan, Vedic, Persian, Mughal, and Colonial Influences** manifests unique dynamics. The state's celebrated history of subaltern social reform (Kerala Navodhanam), radical land reforms dismantling the feudal Janmi system, universal public education, expansive welfare safety nets, and heavy reliance on transnational migration and Gulf remittances provides a distinctive sociological laboratory for observing social change, institutional democratization, and second-generation development challenges.

2.3. Critical Methodological and Epistemological Issues

Investigating historical evolution of indian culinary traditions: harappan, vedic, persian, mughal, and colonial influences requires methodological reflexivity. Sociologists must examine the epistemological assumptions underlying quantitative indicators, survey enumeration, and qualitative ethnographic observations.

Furthermore, an intersectional analytical framework is indispensable. The intersecting vectors of caste identity, socioeconomic class, gender roles, regional location, and generational status must be simultaneously evaluated to comprehend the diverse lived realities of social actors in contemporary society.

3. Comprehensive Analysis of Caste and Food: Concepts of Pakka vs. Kacca Food, Purity and Pollution, Commensal Restrictions

The scholarly investigation of **Caste and Food: Concepts of Pakka vs. Kacca Food, Purity and Pollution, Commensal Restrictions** represents a core analytical domain within this course. In advanced sociological scholarship, this theme embodies foundational conceptual debates, institutional structures, and empirical challenges that shape contemporary social reality. Scholars have examined this topic from competing theoretical traditions, ranging from classical structural formulations to critical neo-Marxist, feminist, subaltern, and post-modern paradigms.

Analyzing caste and food: concepts of pakka vs. kacca food, purity and pollution, commensal restrictions requires unbundling its complex internal components and historical trajectories. Sociologists demonstrate that institutional practices, social identities, and normative systems are never natural givens; they are socially produced, politically negotiated, and contested over time. The analyst must rigorously evaluate the reciprocal interactions between structural constraints and individual or group agency.

3.1. Theoretical Traditions and Scholarly Frameworks

The intellectual literature concerning caste and food: concepts of pakka vs. kacca food, purity and pollution, commensal restrictions features diverse theoretical arguments. Positivist and functionalist approaches analyze how social patterns contribute to systemic equilibrium, institutional continuity, and normative integration. In stark contrast, conflict, critical, and subaltern approaches demonstrate how institutional arrangements embody structural inequalities, class exploitation, caste hegemony, and patriarchal dominance.

Contemporary sociological theory moves beyond static structuralism by embracing dynamic models of practice, discourse, and performativity. Scholars utilize structuration theory, field-habitus models, and intersectional matrices to examine how individuals navigate institutional rules, mobilize cultural resources, and contest entrenched asymmetries in everyday life.

Theoretical Paradigm	Primary Analytical Focus	Epistemological Assumptions	Application to Caste and Food: Concepts
Structural Functionalism	Systemic equilibrium, institutional roles, social integration	Institutions exist to fulfill vital functional needs of the social organism	Examines the functional contributions of caste and food: concepts of pakka vs. kacca food, purity and pollution, commensal restrictions to social order.
Conflict & Critical Perspective	Power monopolies, class hegemony, resource exploitation	Social patterns reflect material interests and dominance of ruling groups	Unmasks how caste and food: concepts of pakka vs. kacca food, purity and pollution, commensal restrictions reproduces structural oppression and privilege.
Interpretative & Post-Modern	Discursive formations, symbolic meaning, performativity	Reality is socially constructed through language, symbols, and gaze	Analyzes how actors construct, negotiate, and perform caste and food: concepts of pakka vs. kacca food, purity and pollution, commensal restrictions.
Subaltern & Post-Colonial	Subaltern standpoints, anti-caste critique, decolonization	Eurocentric models obscure subaltern lived realities and colonial violence	Reinterprets caste and food: concepts of pakka vs. kacca food, purity and pollution, commensal restrictions from the perspectives of Dalits, Adivasis, and women.

3.2. Institutional Operations and Empirical Manifestations

In lived empirical reality, caste and food: concepts of pakka vs. kacca food, purity and pollution, commensal restrictions functions across diverse institutional spheres—including family arrangements, state bureaucracies, corporate markets, community associations, and digital communication networks. These institutional sites reveal how abstract cultural ideologies and macroeconomic imperatives are translated into concrete social expectations and differential access to resources.

Within the Indian socio-cultural matrix, traditional structures frequently articulate with modern bureaucratic, market, and technological forces. Rather than experiencing simple unilinear modernization, Indian society exhibits complex configurations where traditional caste hierarchies, kinship networks, and religious identities fuse with modern democratic politics, neoliberal capitalism, and consumer culture.

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Investigating caste and food: concepts of pakka vs. kacca food, purity and pollution, commensal restrictions requires methodological reflexivity. Sociologists must examine the epistemological assumptions underlying quantitative indicators, survey enumeration, and qualitative ethnographic observations.

Furthermore, an intersectional analytical framework is indispensable. The intersecting vectors of caste identity, socioeconomic class, gender roles, regional location, and generational status must be simultaneously evaluated to comprehend the diverse lived realities of social actors in contemporary society.

4. Comprehensive Analysis of Dalit Food Culture: Beef Politics, Gastronomic Resistance, and Food as a Subaltern Standpoint

The scholarly investigation of **Dalit Food Culture: Beef Politics, Gastronomic Resistance, and Food as a Subaltern Standpoint** represents a core analytical domain within this course. In advanced sociological scholarship, this theme embodies foundational conceptual debates, institutional structures, and empirical challenges that shape contemporary social reality. Scholars have examined this topic from competing theoretical traditions, ranging from classical structural formulations to critical neo-Marxist, feminist, subaltern, and post-modern paradigms.

Analyzing dalit food culture: beef politics, gastronomic resistance, and food as a subaltern standpoint requires unbundling its complex internal components and historical trajectories. Sociologists demonstrate that institutional practices, social identities, and normative systems are never natural givens; they are socially produced, politically negotiated, and contested over time. The analyst must rigorously evaluate the reciprocal interactions between structural constraints and individual or group agency.

4.1. Theoretical Traditions and Scholarly Frameworks

The intellectual literature concerning dalit food culture: beef politics, gastronomic resistance, and food as a subaltern standpoint features diverse theoretical arguments. Positivist and functionalist approaches analyze how social patterns contribute to systemic equilibrium, institutional continuity, and normative integration. In stark contrast, conflict, critical, and subaltern approaches demonstrate how institutional arrangements embody structural inequalities, class exploitation, caste hegemony, and patriarchal dominance.

Contemporary sociological theory moves beyond static structuralism by embracing dynamic models of practice, discourse, and performativity. Scholars utilize structuration theory, field-habitus models, and intersectional matrices to examine how individuals navigate institutional rules, mobilize cultural resources, and contest entrenched asymmetries in everyday life.

Theoretical Paradigm	Primary Analytical Focus	Epistemological Assumptions	Application to Dalit Food Culture: Beef
Structural Functionalism	Systemic equilibrium, institutional roles, social integration	Institutions exist to fulfill vital functional needs of the social organism	Examines the functional contributions of dalit food culture: beef politics, gastronomic resistance, and food as a subaltern standpoint to social order.

Theoretical Paradigm	Primary Analytical Focus	Epistemological Assumptions	Application to Dalit Food Culture: Beef
Conflict & Critical Perspective	Power monopolies, class hegemony, resource exploitation	Social patterns reflect material interests and dominance of ruling groups	Unmasks how dalit food culture: beef politics, gastronomic resistance, and food as a subaltern standpoint reproduces structural oppression and privilege.
Interpretative & Post-Modern	Discursive formations, symbolic meaning, performativity	Reality is socially constructed through language, symbols, and gaze	Analyzes how actors construct, negotiate, and perform dalit food culture: beef politics, gastronomic resistance, and food as a subaltern standpoint.
Subaltern & Post-Colonial	Subaltern standpoints, anti-caste critique, decolonization	Eurocentric models obscure subaltern lived realities and colonial violence	Reinterprets dalit food culture: beef politics, gastronomic resistance, and food as a subaltern standpoint from the perspectives of Dalits, Adivasis, and women.

4.2. Institutional Operations and Empirical Manifestations

In lived empirical reality, dalit food culture: beef politics, gastronomic resistance, and food as a subaltern standpoint functions across diverse institutional spheres—including family arrangements, state bureaucracies, corporate markets, community associations, and digital communication networks. These institutional sites reveal how abstract cultural ideologies and macroeconomic imperatives are translated into concrete social expectations and differential access to resources.

Within the Indian socio-cultural matrix, traditional structures frequently articulate with modern bureaucratic, market, and technological forces. Rather than experiencing simple unilinear modernization, Indian society exhibits complex configurations where traditional caste hierarchies, kinship networks, and religious identities fuse with modern democratic politics, neoliberal capitalism, and consumer culture.

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Furthermore, an intersectional analytical framework is indispensable. The intersecting vectors of caste identity, socioeconomic class, gender roles, regional location, and generational status must be simultaneously evaluated to comprehend the diverse lived realities of social actors in contemporary society.

5. Comprehensive Analysis of Food Insecurity in India: Hunger, Public Distribution System (PDS), Mid-Day Meal Scheme, Food Sovereignty

The scholarly investigation of **Food Insecurity in India: Hunger, Public Distribution System (PDS), Mid-Day Meal Scheme, Food Sovereignty** represents a core analytical domain within this course. In advanced sociological scholarship, this theme embodies foundational conceptual debates, institutional structures, and empirical challenges that shape contemporary social reality. Scholars have examined this topic from competing theoretical traditions, ranging from classical structural formulations to critical neo-Marxist, feminist, subaltern, and post-modern paradigms.

Analyzing food insecurity in india: hunger, public distribution system (pds), mid-day meal scheme, food sovereignty requires unbundling its complex internal components and historical trajectories. Sociologists demonstrate that institutional practices, social identities, and normative systems are never natural givens; they are socially produced, politically negotiated, and contested over time. The analyst must rigorously evaluate the reciprocal interactions between structural constraints and individual or group agency.

5.1. Theoretical Traditions and Scholarly Frameworks

The intellectual literature concerning food insecurity in india: hunger, public distribution system (pds), mid-day meal scheme, food sovereignty features diverse theoretical arguments. Positivist and functionalist approaches analyze how social patterns contribute to systemic equilibrium, institutional continuity, and normative integration. In stark contrast, conflict, critical, and subaltern approaches demonstrate how institutional arrangements embody structural inequalities, class exploitation, caste hegemony, and patriarchal dominance.

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Theoretical Paradigm	Primary Analytical Focus	Epistemological Assumptions	Application to Food Insecurity in India
Structural Functionalism	Systemic equilibrium, institutional roles, social integration	Institutions exist to fulfill vital functional needs of the social organism	Examines the functional contributions of food insecurity in india: hunger, public distribution system (pds), mid-day meal scheme, food sovereignty to social order.
Conflict & Critical Perspective	Power monopolies, class hegemony, resource exploitation	Social patterns reflect material interests and dominance of ruling groups	Unmasks how food insecurity in india: hunger, public distribution system (pds), mid-day meal scheme, food sovereignty reproduces structural oppression and privilege.
Interpretative & Post-Modern	Discursive formations, symbolic meaning, performativity	Reality is socially constructed through language, symbols, and gaze	Analyzes how actors construct, negotiate, and perform food insecurity in india: hunger, public distribution system (pds), mid-day meal scheme, food sovereignty.
Subaltern & Post-Colonial	Subaltern standpoints, anti-	Eurocentric models obscure subaltern lived	Reinterprets food insecurity in india: hunger, public distribution system

Theoretical Paradigm	Primary Analytical Focus	Epistemological Assumptions	Application to Food Insecurity in India
	caste critique, decolonization	realities and colonial violence	(pds), mid-day meal scheme, food sovereignty from the perspectives of Dalits, Adivasis, and women.

5.2. Institutional Operations and Empirical Manifestations

In lived empirical reality, food insecurity in india: hunger, public distribution system (pds), mid-day meal scheme, food sovereignty functions across diverse institutional spheres—including family arrangements, state bureaucracies, corporate markets, community associations, and digital communication networks. These institutional sites reveal how abstract cultural ideologies and macroeconomic imperatives are translated into concrete social expectations and differential access to resources.

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Investigating food insecurity in india: hunger, public distribution system (pds), mid-day meal scheme, food sovereignty requires methodological reflexivity. Sociologists must examine the epistemological assumptions underlying quantitative indicators, survey enumeration, and qualitative ethnographic observations.

Furthermore, an intersectional analytical framework is indispensable. The intersecting vectors of caste identity, socioeconomic class, gender roles, regional location, and generational status must be simultaneously evaluated to comprehend the diverse lived realities of social actors in contemporary society.

6. Comparative Analytical Matrix & Applied Case Analysis

To achieve comprehensive academic synthesis of Module 3, the multidimensional elements of this subject matter are systematically contrasted across distinct socio-historical paradigms in the comparative matrix below:

Comparative Parameter	Traditional / Pre-Modern Context	Modern Industrial & Colonial Period	Contemporary Globalized & Digital Era
Organizing Principle	Ascriptive status, ritual hierarchy, localized agrarian subsistence	Rational-legal bureaucracy, capital accumulation, urbanization	Networked information flows, flexible labor, global consumerism

Comparative Parameter	Traditional / Pre-Modern Context	Modern Industrial & Colonial Period	Contemporary Globalized & Digital Era
Power & Hegemony	Feudal landlords, religious orthodoxy, traditional monarchies	Colonial administrative apparatus, modern state institutions, industrial elites	Transnational corporations, technocratic governance, algorithmic platforms
Subjectivity & Agency	Collective corporate identity rooted in lineage, caste, or village	Civic citizen identity, trade union solidarity, anti-colonial nationalism	Individualized, fluid, and reflexive identities shaped by media and consumption
Modes of Resistance	Peasant revolts, religious millenarianism, everyday non-compliance	Socio-religious reform movements, organized labor strikes, electoral politics	Decentralized digital networks, identity-based movements, environmental activism

Applied Sociological Case Study: Socio-Historical Transformations in Keralam

Empirical Context: Kerala's historical trajectory offers a celebrated case study for examining institutional transformation. From a rigid 19th-century caste feudal structure characterized by severe untouchability and unapproachability, the region transformed into one of the most egalitarian and politically conscious states in South Asia.

Analytical Evaluation: Applying the concepts of Module 3, students analyze how the confluence of subaltern reform mobilizations (Sree Narayana Guru, Ayyankali), missionary and state education, radical political unionism, the 1969 Land Reforms Act, and mass migration to the Persian Gulf fundamentally restructured traditional social hierarchies. However, contemporary sociologists also examine emerging contradictions: persistent gender asymmetries in the formal workforce, high elderly dependency ratios, youth out-migration, and ecological vulnerabilities.

7. Applied Policy Dimensions & Social Interventions

Sociological analysis provides vital diagnostics for informing progressive social policy, grassroots development programs, and community welfare initiatives. The theoretical principles analyzed in this module yield actionable insights across multiple applied arenas:

- **Evidence-Based Social Policy:** Formulating governmental welfare interventions that address the structural root causes of poverty, marginalization, and educational disparity rather than treating superficial symptoms.
- **Community-Driven Development:** Implementing participatory rural appraisal (PRA), social mapping, and stakeholder consultation to ensure grassroots decentralization and authentic democratic empowerment (as exemplified by Kerala's People's Plan Campaign).
- **Human Rights & Social Justice Advocacy:** Utilizing empirical sociological data to expose systemic discrimination, gender-based violence, caste atrocities, and environmental injustice before judicial bodies, legislative committees, and international human rights forums.
- **Organizational Development & Conflict Resolution:** Enhancing diversity management, ethical communication, and collaborative team functioning in public institutions, non-profit organizations, and social enterprises.

8. Pedagogical Synthesis & Examination Preparation

In concluding Module 3 ("Food and Indian Society"), students should consolidate their command of the central theoretical paradigms, comparative taxonomies, and empirical debates examined. Mastering sociology requires developing the capacity to critically interrogate social structures, challenge commonsense assumptions, and evaluate institutional dynamics with analytical rigor.

Key Concept / Theorist	Foundational Sociological Definition	Analytical & Curricular Significance
Structural Inequality	Systematically unequal distribution of resources, power, and opportunities built into social institutions.	Demonstrates that disparities are structured outcomes of institutional arrangements rather than individual deficiencies.
Social Hegemony (Antonio Gramsci)	Dominance maintained through cultural leadership and moral consensus rather than physical force.	Explains how ruling groups win the spontaneous consent of subordinate classes through ideological institutions.
Cultural Capital (Pierre Bourdieu)	Accumulated cultural knowledge, linguistic skills, credentials, and dispositions conferring social power.	Illuminates how educational institutions reproduce class hierarchies under the guise of meritocracy.
Epistemological Reflexivity	The systematic practice of scrutinizing the researcher's own positionality, assumptions, and power relations.	Guarantees methodological integrity and ethical rigor in qualitative and quantitative social research.

Self-Assessment & Critical Examination Questions

1. Critically evaluate the theoretical debates and foundational concepts articulated in food and indian society, contrasting functionalist and conflict approaches.
2. Examine how historical transformations, state interventions, and social movements in India and Keralam have reshaped institutional structures and power dynamics.
3. Discuss the methodological challenges and ethical responsibilities involved in empirical sociological inquiry into contemporary social problems.
4. Analyze the practical relevance of sociological insights in designing inclusive development policies and empowering marginalized communities.

Advanced Academic Seminar: Epistemological Controversies & Methodological Debates

To foster advanced scholarship in *Food and Indian Society*, undergraduate students must engage deeply with the epistemological tensions and theoretical innovations that characterize contemporary sociological discourse. This seminar section provides an exhaustive, multi-perspectival examination of contested paradigms and empirical methodologies.

1. Paradigm Shifts: From Positivism to Post-Colonial and Subaltern Epistemologies

The historical development of sociological theory reflects continuous paradigm shifts. Early nineteenth-century sociology was dominated by positivist epistemology, which asserted that the social world could be investigated using the exact same empirical and deductive methods as the natural sciences. Auguste Comte

and early positivists championed the discovery of invariant social laws, asserting that social phenomena could be objectively measured, quantified, and predicted.

However, the hermeneutic and interpretative revolt initiated by Wilhelm Dilthey and Max Weber fundamentally challenged this positivist orthodoxy. Weber demonstrated that human action is infused with subjective meaning, intentionality, and cultural values that cannot be reduced to mechanistic natural laws. The task of sociology, therefore, is *Verstehen*—the interpretive understanding of subjective social action within its specific historical and cultural matrix.

In contemporary twentieth- and twenty-first-century scholarship, this interpretative critique has been dramatically radicalized by subaltern studies and post-colonial theory. Scholars such as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Edward Said, and Dipesh Chakrabarty argue that Euro-Western sociology historically universalized the parochial historical experiences of Western Europe, positioning the Western nation-state, capitalist economy, and nuclear family as the normative teleology of human progress. Subaltern sociology insists on de-centering Western canons, retrieving the suppressed histories and conceptual categories of colonized peoples, and recognizing subaltern agency in resisting systemic oppression.

Epistemological Paradigm	Core Methodological Assumption	View of Social Reality (Ontology)	Scholarly Representation
Positivism	Empirical observation, quantitative measurement, universal causal laws	Objective, external social facts operating independently of actor consciousness	Auguste Comte, early Emile Durkheim
Hermeneutics & Interpretivism	Qualitative understanding, *Verstehen*, thick ethnographic description	Intersubjectively created meanings, cultural symbols, and purposeful action	Max Weber, Alfred Schutz, Clifford Geertz
Critical & Neo-Marxian	Critique of ideology, historical materialism, dialectical inquiry	Structural contradictions, economic exploitation, class and cultural hegemony	Karl Marx, Frankfurt School, Antonio Gramsci
Post-Colonial & Subaltern	Decolonization of knowledge, standpoints of the marginalized	Plural, contested realities shaped by coloniality, caste, and imperial legacies	B.R. Ambedkar, Ranajit Guha, Gayatri Spivak

2. Intersectionality and the Complexity of Power Relations

A major theoretical breakthrough in contemporary sociology is the framework of intersectionality, originally articulated by Kimberlé Crenshaw and expanded by Patricia Hill Collins and bell hooks. Intersectionality contends that distinct modalities of social categorization—such as caste, class, gender, race, sexuality, religion, and physical ability—do not operate as independent, additive variables; rather, they form an interconnected, mutually reinforcing matrix of domination.

In the Indian sociological context, Dalit feminist scholars (such as Sharmila Rege and Gopal Guru) demonstrated that mainstream Indian sociology and upper-caste feminist movements long ignored the distinct structural oppression experienced by Dalit women. A Dalit woman does not experience gender discrimination and caste oppression as separate burdens; she encounters a unique, indivisible form of structural violence at the intersection of caste patriarchy, economic landlessness, and untouchability. Applying intersectional analysis to food and indian society enables researchers to expose hidden dimensions of privilege and marginalization that unidimensional frameworks inevitably miss.

> **Theoretical Formulation: Intersectional Matrix of Domination**
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> *"The matrix of domination refers to the overall organization of hierarchical power in which any particular society is embedded... Intersecting oppressions of race, class, gender, and nation cannot be understood without analyzing how institutional, symbolic, and individual dimensions of power interlock."* – Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*.

3. Methodological Reflexivity and Applied Social Ethics

Modern social research rejects the naive fiction of the completely detached, value-free researcher. Every investigator operates from a specific social location, gender identity, caste status, and cultural background that inevitably shapes the selection of research problems, the formulation of theoretical categories, and the interpretation of empirical findings.

Epistemological reflexivity requires researchers to make their positionality explicit and to continuously interrogate their own power relations with research participants. In studying subaltern and vulnerable communities, sociologists must adhere to rigorous ethical protocols: securing genuine informed consent, preserving informant confidentiality, avoiding voyeuristic representations of suffering, and ensuring that the knowledge produced contributes directly to the emancipation and empowerment of the communities studied.

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