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Social Stratification

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SOCIOLOGY

BLOCK: 2

KRISHNA KANTA HANDIQUI STATE OPEN UNIVERSITY

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BLOCK INTRODUCTION

This is the second block of the paper titled 'Social Stratification' of M.A Sociology 2nd Semester programme of Krishna Kanta Handiqui State Open University. This block mostly intends to provide the learners a basic understanding regarding the various bases or forms of Social Stratification. After reading this block, the learners will be able to understand the different forms of stratification that exists and operates in our society. However, Unit 8 of this block shall discuss Caste as a form of social stratification where discriminations based on caste hierarchy is dealt with. Further, the changing nature of caste in the contemporary society has also been discussed. Unit 9 of this block discusses Class system and how it stratifies society. Perspectives of both Western and Indian thinkers on Class system have been explained. Further, an attempt has been made to explain to the learners about social mobility in class structure. Unit 10 discusses Race and Ethnicity and how natural differences can lead to social inequality. Unit 11 focuses on gender as a basis of social stratification. After reading this unit, the learners will be able to understand what patriarchy is and how it dominates women in society. Unit 12 discusses how Tribe, Religion, Region and Language can be the bases of social stratification. The unit also deals with Race and Ethnicity as well. The unit shall make the learners understand how Tribe, race, Religion so on and so forth can be the basis of perpetuation of social inequality in society. Unit 13 discusses the role of deviance in stratification, the impact of disability and stratification and the relationship between sexuality and inequality.

While going through the units of the block, you will find that unit is further divided into certain sections and sub-sections, wherever necessary, for your better understanding. Again, the units carry certain *activities* after a particular section where needed. These "ACTIVITIES" will provide you the opportunity to practically apply your own thoughts based on the knowledge gained from reading the text in a particular section. Besides, in order to give you additional information on certain relevant topics, you will find a category called "LET US KNOW" after the sections in each unit. Another category that has been included at the end of each section of a particular unit is "CHECK YOUR PROGRESS". The purpose of this category is to help you to asses for yourself as to how thoroughly you have understood a particular section. You may then match your answers with "ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS" given at the end of each unit. The section "FURTHER READING" in each unit contains the names of a few books which you might want to consult if you are intereted in learning more elaborately about the concepts discussed in a particular unit. Furthermore, the category called "POSSIBLE QUESTIONS" is intended to give you a hint of the type of questions you are likely to get in the examination.

UNIT 8: CASTE SYSTEM AND STRATIFICATION

UNIT STRUCTURE

8.1 Learning Objectives

8.2 Introduction

8.3 Caste System as a Form of Social Stratification

8.4 Caste Hierarchy and Discrimination

8.5 Changing Nature of Caste in Contemporary Society

8.5.1 Caste, Class and Power

8.6 Let Us Sum Up

8.7 Further Reading

8.8 Answers to Check Your Progress

8.9 Model Questions

8.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to-

- understand caste system as a form of Social Stratification
- understand the nature of Caste Hierarchy
- describe the discriminations associated with Caste system
- explain the changes undergone by the caste system over the period of time
- discuss the nexus between caste, class and power in the contemporary society.

8.2 INTRODUCTION

Indian Society is known to be perhaps one of the most stratified society amongst all other human societies in history and the Caste System of India is one of the oldest forms of social stratification in existence. No understanding of Indian Society is complete without an engagement with its caste system, which shapes social relationships in India. In the previous units and especially in unit 2, we have got an idea about the concept of Caste. This unit will be an elaboration of what we have already learned in

the previous units but here the focus will be more on how caste stratifies the Indian Society, how this system is a privilege for a few and a disadvantage for others and the changes that have taken place in the Indian Caste system in the contemporary society. We shall also try to understand the nexus between caste, class and power in the modern day Indian Society.

8.3 CASTE SYSTEM AS A FORM OF SOCIAL STRATIFICATION

The word caste isderived from the Portuguese word casta, meaning breed, race, or kind. We now already know that caste is a 'closed rank status group' where a person's status is fixed at the time of his/her birth. Caste status is therefore known as an 'Ascribed Status' because a person does not or cannot achieve it but rather automatically becomes a member of his/her parental caste from the time birth. A person is born with a caste and continues to be a member of the same till the end of his/her life. Membership of a Caste is therefore not voluntary; it is not determined by selection, but by birth. Bougle (1985) therefore describes caste as 'hereditarily specialized and hierarchically arranged group'. The caste system is one of the oldest forms of social stratification. Even though there are legal prohibitions toward caste practices such as Untouchability, Caste still continues to divide and discriminate people.

Traditionally one's occupation too was fixed on the basis of his/her caste. Each caste has its own occupation which has to be taken up by its members. Further a person's marital relation, social interaction so on and so forth is also is also determined by Caste. However with the advent of modern education and economy, these has changed to a great extent which we shall elaborately discuss in the latter section where changes in the caste system shall be dealt with. Despite the changes, caste status still plays a significant role in one's life even today. Understanding the Caste system is therefore very vital while studying about social stratification in the context of Indian Society.

Now the question is how the Caste system stratifies Indian Society. While discussing about the Caste system in Unit 2, we have learned that Caste is a hierarchical system which accords different positions to different caste group's i.e placing one group on top or below the other. The groups are hierarchically placed either in a super ordinate or a subordinate position in relation to the others. And since this system is associated with privileges as well as disabilities, there is a sense of superiority and inferiority attached with the system. Those groups placed at the top are considered to be superior to those placed at the bottom. The one's on top enjoys the privileges bestowed upon by the system, while those below suffers from disadvantages and discriminations. The ranking of the groups in the caste hierarchy is based on the notion of 'Purity and Pollution'. Only those groups which are considered to be ritually pure are placed at the top of the Caste hierarchy and those groups considered impure or polluted are placed at the bottom. Now, this purity and pollution also has to do with the nature of job one is engaged in. For example the Brahmins are a priestly caste and hence accorded the topmost position but the groups associated with cleaning, sweeping so on and so forth are considered to be polluted and thereby positioned at the bottom.

Caste system was thought to be functional in the sense that each Caste had its own functions which its members performed for the smooth running of the society. Further the four Varnas were believed to be born out of created from the different body parts of Brahma and functions were allotted to them based on the body part they were created from. Brahmins were believed to be born from the mouth of Brahma and therefore had to perform priestly functions, Kshatriyas believed to be born from the arms got the task of protecting others i.e they had to function as warriors and rulers. The Vaishyas believed to be born from the thighs had to work for agriculture and commerce and finally the Shudras believed to have born from the feet of Brahma served as artisans and servants. From these four Varnas sprang several occupational caste groups or jati. The fifth category was of the 'untouchables' who were considered to fall outside the Varna Scheme and

had to perform menial works which was deemed as polluting. Mahatma Gandhi called them 'Harijans' or 'Children of God'. Since 1935 they came to be known as Scheduled Caste as per Government of India regulation. Government of India also abolished the practice of Untouchability. The Castes group's falling in the top three ranked varnas are referred to as the "twice-born," caste as the male members of these groups undergo the initiation ceremony and wear the sacred thread as an indicator of ritual rebirth.

From the above discussion we have learned that the Caste system hierarchically arranges different groups into superior and inferior positions in a society. Apart from the ranking of different groups, caste system also defines and governs social interactions and social relationships. For example, a person can only marry from his/her own caste. Inter-caste marriages are strictly prohibited in order to maintain caste purity. The restriction is even more severe in the case of marriage between an Upper caste Women and a Lower Caste men. The various incidences of Honour-Killing reflects how Caste status and Caste rules are so important even today and how violation of such can even take one's life. Apart from marriage and sexual intercourse, Caste system restricts social interactions or social intercourse too. There are clearly defined rules regarding acceptance of food and water. For example a person will not eat Kaccha food i.e food prepared using water from members of other caste. He/She will accept Kaccha foor only from his fellow-caste men. In places like Gujrat or South India, an upper caste man especially a Brahmin will not even drink water from a lower caste man. The notion of purity and pollution is so intense that even the shadow of an untouchable caste was considered to be polluting. The Upper caste therefore ensured that the social distance between them and the lower castes was always maintained to retain their purity. In the next section, when we discuss about Caste Discriminations we will get to learn about these issues in greater details.

From what we have learned above, the Caste system stratifies the society into different castes and sub castes where a person born to a particular stratum cannot change it. Given this rigidity in terms of a person's caste status, Caste system is therefore referred to as a Closed System of Stratification. The system of Stratification, as we already know, may be closed or open depending upon the scope of mobility among the different strata's. Since the Caste system is characterized by fixed status of its members, it denies the scope of mobility to its members and therefore is a closed system of stratification.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: From which Portugese word is the English word 'Caste' derived?

.....

Q 2: Is Caste membership voluntary?

.....

Q 3: Name the four varnas?

.....

8.4 CASTE HIERARCHY AND DISCRIMINATION

In the above discussion, a brief mention has already been made on the social restrictions imposed by the Caste system of social interactions and social relationships. Let us now discuss it in details and try to understand how the restrictions imposed by Caste system discriminates the lower caste people.

The lower castes especially those who were referred to as untouchables and deemed to fall outside the four Varna scheme were the worst sufferers of caste-based discriminations. They were made to suffer several socio-religious disabilities. The members of the upper caste maintained social distance from them as they were considered to be the 'polluted' caste.

Social intercourse with them was completely restricted. It was believed that the touch of lower caste man would pollute or defile a man of higher caste. In highly rigid societies, if an upper caste man, especially belonging to the top three Varnas and considered 'Twice born' comes in physical contact with a man belonging to the untouchable caste, he/she has to purify himself/herself through some rituals. Even the shadow of a lower caste was considered enough to pollute a higher caste man. They were made to live in the outskirts of the village and were not allowed to draw water from the public wells. Some even had to live in the most unhygienic places with lack of public health and sanitation facilities.Their entry to public places wasrestricted. Their entry to temples and other places of religious importance were forbidden. In most cases they were not even allowed entry to the higher caste homes, and in cases where they were allowed to visit houses of upper castes, they were made to eat and drink from separate utensils. Same was followed in the public places as well.The higher-caste people do not accept food or water from the untouchable because it would transmit the pollution permanent and inherent in the person of the untouchable.They were denied educational facilities, legal rights and political representation for a very long time. In some societies this extent of harassment was even more. The people from the untouchable caste were required to carry a broom hanging from his waist so that it could sweep the path he was walking through. Again in some cases they were asked to carry an earthen pot hung around their neck and spit only in that pot anywhere else because his spit, if fallen elsewhere could pollute it. Thus the lower caste people especially those considered as untouchable had to suffer from enormous discrimination and distress.

The members of the upper caste especially the Brahmins on the other hand led a very prestigious life with all the privileges bestowed upon them by the Caste system. They enjoyed the sense of superiority accorded to them by the caste system. If the lower castes had to suffer from several disabilities, higher castes like the Brahmins enjoy many privileges like conducting prayers in the temples etc.They commanded respect and

reverence from the lower caste people. They were considered to be very enlightened and thereby played a key role in the decision making process in the village. Their caste status thus enabled them to exert dominance in every aspect of the village life.

8.5 CHANGING NATURE OF CASTE IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

In the present era, Indian society has been experiencing tremendous changes in its different facets. Caste System too, despite its rigidity, has undergone enormous changes. It has, to certain extent, adapted to the changing social system and its survival till date may be because of its adaptability to the new social system. The erstwhile existing inflexible, rigid distinctions of the caste system have been gradually on the wane, even though the process is slow. The restrictions in food habits and occupation are declining and in urban areas we hardly find a trace of it. Today we find Brahmins eating non-vegetarian food, consuming liquor etc. which was earlier considered almost a taboo Again we can often witness people belonging to different castes dining together. Thus noteworthy changes have taken place regarding the ideas of Purity and Pollution. The notion of purity and pollution which was earlier very intense, especially in the context inter-caste relations; accepting cooked food, drinking water etc have lost its significance particularly among the educated and urban people. Apart from that, it is no longer possible for one to identify a person's caste by looking at his occupation. Even the practice of Untouchability has almost disappeared with the Constitutional provisions. Further, we observe a decline in the Supremacy of Brahmins. Brahmins, once considered as the representatives of supreme power, were accorded the topmost position in the caste hierarchy and were given extreme importance in the society. But now, with the emergence of modern capitalist system and with class status gaining increasing importance, the supremacy of the Brahmins have declined. It is the dominant caste, which is now gaining power and supremacy, even if the dominant caste is from a lower caste group. Thus

the Brahmins have lost its earlier power to the Dominant Caste to a great extent. Another significant change is the declining importance of Caste Status. Today educational and economic advancements, which are achieved statuses, are of more importance than caste status in society. A person may belong to a lower caste but with his/her educational and economic advancements; he/she commands greater respect in society than those having merely the caste identity as their sole identity marker or status symbol. People are no more identified and acknowledged according to their caste identity or ascriptive status; rather they are identified, acknowledged and accredited according to their achieved status. Educational qualification, occupational position, income etc. have therefore assumed greater importance than caste position in the contemporary society.

Along with this, the individual mobility, which was earlier restricted due to the fixed nature of occupation in the traditional caste system, has also changed to a large extent. Now, one can choose to work in his/her field of interest according to his/her abilities and skills and can achieve a higher position and a higher status. Thus, there is a greater chance of individual social mobility with the increasing importance of achieved status, which was not the case earlier. Lastly one can observe major change in the socio-economic conditions of the lower caste people. With various polices and provisions of the Indian Constitution for the socio-economic advancement of the people belonging to the lower caste, they have been able to uplift their conditions.

Thus, Caste system has been subjected to several changes, even if its nature and extent varies from region to region. While discussing about the modern trends or the changes in the caste system, it is undeniable that a distinction still prevails in this regard, when we compare rural India with urban India. In Rural India, caste still prevails even though it has become weaker. But in Urban India Caste system is rapidly changing; its rigidity is declining. Changes initiated by the British rule brought, Modern education, Industrialisation, Urbanisation, Provisions laid down by the Indian

Constitution so on and so forth has resulted in the changes or the undermining of the caste system in India. We shall now discuss the factors behind these changes in details:

- **MODERN EDUCATION:** It was the spread of Modern Western Education, initiated by the British, which played a fundamental role in the decline of the importance of caste in Indian society. Modern education, based on the principles of democracy, equality, liberty and fraternity, nibbled the roots of the caste system and rendered it weaker. It made people more rational and critical and hence developed within them an urge to question the validity of the prevailing norms and rules of the caste system and, with this there began a gradual downfall of the system. Further, as modern education encouraged co-educational institutions, it facilitated inter-caste interactions and interrelationships. Modern Education also became a powerful force behind the ousting or removal of untouchability.

- **SOCIAL REFORM MOVEMENTS:** The Social Reform Movements also played a significant role in the elimination of caste distinctions from the Indian Society. The Brahmo Samaj movement led by Raja Ram Mohan Roy, stood against the barriers of caste divisions and strived for Universal brotherhood. Similarly, the Prarthana Samaj bring introduced important social reforms like inter-caste marriages, inter-dining, widow remarriage so on and so forth.

Again the Arya Samaj movement founded by Swami Dayananda Saraswati and Ramakrishna Mission movement voiced against the caste system, discrimination based on birth and worked for its abolition. Thus, in this way the various social reform movements could succeed in thrashing the structural features of the caste system.

- **INFLUENCE OF INDIAN CONSTITUTION:** Indian Constitution declares all its citizens, irrespective of Caste, Creed, and Religion etc to be equal. It confers equal fundamental rights and opportunities on the citizens irrespective of caste, creed, colour or sex. It offers equal opportunities to

all. It bans practice of untouchability and it has also laid several provisions for the socio-economic upliftment of people belonging to the lower castes and tribes. This clearly is a strike on inherited inequality of the caste system and has resulted in the withering away of the caste system gradually.

- **INDUSTRIALIZATION:** Caste system has been affected to a notable extent due to the process of industrialization. Industrialisation brought in a new system of production; provided new sources of livelihood and occupational avenues to people and made occupational mobility possible. Thus people could secure jobs in Factories, mills, offices so on and so forth. They no longer had to depend upon their traditional caste based occupations. It also developed a new work culture where people belonging to different caste groups work together, under one roof thereby making caste divisions and caste segregations redundant.

- **URBANIZATION:** Industrialization has paved the way to urbanization and with the growth of urbanization; people from the rural areas have been migrating to towns and cities in search of better employment and livelihood opportunities. The new towns and cities, with their cosmopolitan nature, accommodate everyone irrespective of caste and creed. And it being a open, secular space, makes it difficult for one to maintain their caste restrictions and taboos. The educational institutions, hotels, restaurants, theatres, clubs, which are all free from the caste bindings, gives little scope to an individual to continue or uphold caste distinctions and demarcations. The growth of city life, the exigencies of office work, railway travelling etc also have made people to overlook caste-restrictions. Thus it promotes a Caste-free environment facilitates inter-caste interactions. Kingsley Davis therefore rightly observes that the anonymity, congestion, mobility, secularism and changeability of the city make the operation of the caste virtually impossible.

- **MODERN MEANS OF TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATION:** Modern means of transport and communication are fundamental in the sinking of the caste system. It has helped or facilitated spatial mobility of the people,

thereby rupturing the prevailing caste restrictions. The different means of public transport, be it, bus, train, tram, airplane etc. cannot provide for distinctions between castes or reserve seats on the basis of caste and this has created or generated a sense of equality in society.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 4: Who led the Brahmo Samaj Movement?

.....

Q 5: What according to Kingsley Davis makes the operation of caste virtually impossible?

.....

8.5.1 Caste, Class and Power

Despite the inescapable changes that we have discussed in the preceding section, certain characteristics of Caste system have endured and hold strong ground even today. One such and very important characteristic of caste system which has persisted, especially in the rural areas, is Endogamy. Though Indian society has become tolerant in case if inter-caste marriages and the number of inter-caste marriages are increasing but it has remained confined mostly to a handful urbanised and educated people. In most of the cases one's Caste status is given preference or become the most important criteria rather than his/her educational achievements and economic affluence even today. An Indian, however, highly placed and advanced in education still prefers a bride from his own caste. However this is again truer in the case of rural areas in particular. Further again especially, in agrarian societies, one can witness the interximing or nexus between Caste and Class. It is the people from the upper caste who usually constitute of the upper class. The Upper Caste own huge plots of land and are economically affluent. The lower caste people at times work as wage labourers for the Upper Caste people. We

shall learn about this in greater details in the next unit where we are going to discuss agrarian classes in India.

Another striking feature of the contemporary times is the intermixing of Caste and Politics which have also stimulated the endurance of the caste system in India. Caste has been politicized and elections are contested with caste as an important issue. Caste loyalties play a major role in Indian Polity. Thus elections in India provoke casteism. The vote bank policy has dragged caste into politics and hence caste system has gained strength.

Further, the reservation policy has also contributed to the sustenance of the caste system. The special rights provided to the people on the basis of caste have not only encouraged the continuance of the caste system but have perpetuated the nexus between Caste, Class and Power in India.

To conclude, one can say with certainty that the restrictions laid down by the caste system on diet, occupation, life style, behaviour, etc are breaking down. It has undeniably been affected to some extent by the influences of western education and western culture, and, its form has undergone immense transformations. One can envisage that this form of the Caste System may further change in the future with the influence of development, industrial growth and by new political and economic movements. But as illustrated above, Caste System is being fuelled and encouraged by casteism and caste practices in election, which on the other hand again provides a strong ground for caste system to endure and reinforce itself instead of dying down.



8.6 LET US SUM UP

- Caste System of India is one of the oldest forms of social stratification in existence. No understanding of Indian Society is complete without an engagement with its caste system, which shapes social relationships in India

- Caste is a hierarchical system which accords different positions to different caste group's i.e placing one group on top or below the other.
- This system is associated with privileges as well as disabilities and there is a sense of superiority and inferiority attached with the system. Those groups placed at the top are considered to be superior to those placed at the bottom.
- The ranking of the groups in the caste hierarchy is based on the notion of 'Purity and Pollution'.
- Caste system stratifies the society into different castes and sub castes where a person born to a particular stratum cannot change it.
- Since the Caste system is characterized by fixed status of its members, it denies the scope of mobility to its members and therefore is a closed system of stratification
- Caste system also leads to several discriminations. The lower castes especially those who were referred to as untouchables and deemed to fall outside the four Varna scheme were the worst sufferers of caste-based discriminations. They were made to suffer several socio-religious disabilities.
- In the present era, Indian society has been experiencing tremendous changes in its different facets. Caste System too, despite its rigidity, has undergone enormous changes, even if its nature and extent varies from region to region.
- Even though there has been changes in the caste system yet we witness newer ways in which it is gaining strength. Its nexus with class and power has enabled its influence to continue. Caste System is being fuelled and encouraged by casteism and caste practices in election, which on the other hand again provides a strong ground for caste system to endure and reinforce itself instead of dying down.

8.7 FURTHER READING

1) Gupta, Dipankar. 2010. *Social Stratification.* New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

2) Ghurye, G.S. 2004. *Caste and Race in India.* Bombay: Popular Prakashan

8.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: The word caste isderived from the Portuguese word casta.

Ans to Q No 2: No Caste membership is not voluntary but is fixed as it is determined by birth.

Ans to Q No 3: Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, Shudra are the four varnas.

Ans to Q No 4: Raja Ram Mohan Roy led the Brahmo Samaj Movement.

Ans to Q No 5: According to Kingsley Davis the anonymity, congestion, mobility, secularism and changeability of the city make the operation of the caste virtually impossible.

8.9 MODEL QUESTIONS

Short Questions (Answer each question in about 150 words)

Q 1: Explain the functional notion of Caste.

Q 2: Explain the nexus between caste, class and power in the contemporary Indian society.

Long Questions (Answer each question in about 300-500 words)

Q 1: Discuss how caste system stratifies Indian society.

Q 2: Critically discuss the caste based discriminations in Indian society.

Q 3: Explain the factors that have led to changes in the Caste system.

** ** **

UNIT 9: CLASS AND SOCIAL STRATIFICATION

UNIT STRUCTURE

9.1 Learning Objectives

9.2 Introduction

9.3 Concept of Class

9.3.1 Characteristics of Class System

9.4 Sociological Perspectives on Class as a Basis of Stratification

9.5 Social Mobility and Class Structure

9.6 Let Us Sum Up

9.7 Further Reading

9.8 Answers to Check Your Progress

9.9 Model Questions

9.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to-

- know about the concept of class
- understand the characteristics of class system
- explain the perspectives of various thinkers on class system as a basis of social stratification

9.2 INTRODUCTION

Social Stratification, as we know by now, is a common phenomenon in all societies- Modern or Ancient. Stratification, mostly in the contemporary modern societies, is manifested in the division of society into innumerable classes. Societies comprise of various hierarchically arranged classes, with each class being assigned a particular status. Class because of its universal and pervasive nature; and because of its influence or rather its centrality in social relationships, has been one of the vital topics of discussion and deliberation in Sociology. In the previous unit, we have discussed caste as a basis of stratification. In this unit, we shall discuss how class stratifies different groups in a society. We shall first try to understand the concept of

class and characteristics of class system. We shall also try to understand the perspectives of different thinkers on the class system as a basis of social stratification.Let us first begin with the concept of class in the next section.

9.3 CONCEPT OF CLASS

Sociologists have given varied definitions and perspectives on the concept of Class and the Class System. According to MacIver and Page a Social Class is any portion of the community marked off from the rest by Social Status. P. Gisbert opines that "A social class is a category or group of persons having a definite status in society which permanently determines their relation to other group - feeling of superiority & inferiorities. The relative position of the class in the social scale arises from the degree of prestige attached to the status".Again according to Ongburn&Nimkoff, "A social class is the aggregate of persons having essentially the same social status in a given society." i.e. a class consciousness.According to Giddens (2000), "a class is a large-scale grouping of people who share common economic resources, which strongly influence the type of lifestyle they are able to lead". Horton and Hunt (1968) writes: "A social class is defined as a stratum of people of similar position in the social status continuum."

From the above definitions, we can state that,

- Society is divided into numerous classes
- Class refers to a group of persons with similar status in a society
- Class status is determined by one's economic position
- There is a feeling of superiority and inferiority attached with the class status.

Now, when it comes to class, the most important aspect that one needs to know about it is that Class is an economic category. One's class status in society is determined by his/her economic condition. Therefore, people

having similar economic condition are clubbed together into one class. So members of a particular class has possess similar economic resources and share same status in society.

Now coming to Class system and Social Stratification, Class system is a Universal System of Stratification present in almost every society. The Primitive Tribal Societies, which were erstwhile egalitarian or at least considered so, have also now developed Classes within them. Thus Class has been the most widespread and mounting or growing system (in terms of its relevance) of Stratification which has gradually even engulfed the primitive egalitarian societies. Being an economic category, Class in an open system of stratification, unlike castes, because class is an achieved status. One's class depends upon his/her achievements. One may be born in a poor family, but by dint of hard work, merit, and talent one may achieve a higher position in Society. Class Status is Open for all. With ones endeavour one can climb up the ladder and attain a higher status. Thus unlike caste, the status of Class is not fixed and restricted. Having said so, one cannot however deny the influence of family background in determining ones class status. One who is born to a family belonging to higher class would definitely have an upper hand in terms of facilities, exposure and life chances than the one who has to struggle to achieve a higher position. Class though is considered to be an open system has its own set of restrictions as well. The Concept of class will perhaps be clearer when we discuss its characteristics in the next sub-section.

9.3.1 Characteristics of Class System

- Class system is a hierarchical arrangement of group, with each group being assigned a particular status, prestige and role in society. Further there are Sub-classes within each class too. For example, within the Middle Class itself, which comprises the largest class group in India, there are upper middle class and lower middle class.

- Class hierarchy is based on the economic condition of people.

- Classes are de facto groups. This means that they are neither religiously nor legally sanctioned.

- As class system, similar to that of caste, is marked by unequal distribution of status and power, there is a feeling of superiority & inferiority amongst the different classes. The differences between classes, due of their respective position in the class structure of the society, creates this sense of superiority and inferiority. Since the members of the upper class are accorded higher position and endowed with higher status and greater power, they consider themselves as superior to the others in the society who are deprived of this position, power and privilege.

- Each class has a feeling of class consciousness and solidarity. Further, each class has a culture of its own as well. The life style; the values, behaviour and actions of people are all determined by their class status. Members of a particular class are bound by the in-group feeling.

- Class is not hereditary. One's class status is not determined by or fixed by birth as in the case of caste.It is a systemin which status is achieved by one's own efforts rather than ascribed, assigned or inherited. Thus,birth is not the determining factor of a person's class status in this context.

- Following from the above point, Class system is an open system. The boundaries of the Class system are rather fluid than rigid or fixed. Since class status is achieved and not ascribed, it gives scope or allows individuals to move up and at times even down the class ladder. The Class system allows one to change his/her position. With talent, skill and hard work one can change his/her class status. Here we can take APJ Abdul Kalam as an example.

- Even though class system is open and its boundaries are fluid, there's social restriction in class system as well. In general, class too is endogamous to a great extent, though it is implicit in nature. Especially

in case of the upper class members who consciously maintain their status & position, may mix with members of lower class but hardly prefer to let their family members to marry someone below the rank of theirs. In case of social interaction as well, they mostly prefer to interact with people from the same class. Thus, their social circle is determined to a large extent by their class status. However, this rigidity especially in case of marriage and social intercourse is not as much as that of the Caste system.

From the above discussions we have not only been able to understand the characteristics of class but havealso understood that though Caste and Class are both systems of stratification how class is different from caste.

Thus Class, in simple words, refers to a group of persons sharing a similar status in society. The basis of class is economy and hence it is an economic group. People having similar economic conditions are considered to be the members of the same class group. Therefore, when we talk of class in Sociology, we mostly refer to a group of people occupying similar position in the economic system of production and having similar economic resources which distinguishes them from other groups in society.Each Social Class has its own lifestyle. Further Class, being neither religiously nor legally sanctioned like the Caste or the Estate, are referred to as de facto group.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q1: Why is Class called an universal system of Stratification?

.....

Q2: Is Class an ascribed status?

.....

Q3: Why is Class known as an Open system of Stratification?

.....

9.4 SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES ON CLASS AS A BASIS OF STRATIFICATION

Sociological Perspective on class is mostly based on the conceptualisation of Class by Karl Marx and Max Weber. The study of Class is traditionally associated with Karl Marx and his theory of Class is of great significance to the modern social thought. We have already understood the Marxian perspective on social stratification in unit 5, and we have an idea about Marx's view on the class system. Let us discuss it in details now. Karl Marx defines Class in the context of the Mode of production. According to him, the three big classes in society based on the capitalist mode of production comprises of - the owners merely of labour power whose income is wage, owners of capital whose source of income is profit, and landowners whose source of income is ground-rent. Marx in his distinction between the Bourgeoisie and the Proletariat shows how two classes have always existed in the society based on its mode of production.

Marx was of the opinion that we can break up history into a number of epochs or periods, for example, ancient civilisation, feudalism, and capitalism. Each of these have had a class structure comprising of two classes i.e the ruling class and the oppressed class. The class structure of a particular period emerges from and is based on the Mode of production of that period. A social class, in this sense, would refer to a group of persons performing the same function in the production process and thereby occupying the same position in the class structure. Hence according to Marx, the position which the individual occupies in the social organization of production that indicates to which social class he belongs. He stressed on the organization of the production as the sole determinant of Class because he was of the view that income, consumption patterns, educational attainment, or occupation and other parameters, which too determine the prestige and privilege one would be accorded, are actually based on the social organization of production. Therefore even if occupation, income, educational achievement might play an important role in deciding the way

of life of an individual, but these parameters are themselves the consequence of the organization of production; and not identical with it. Income or Occupation thus, according to Marx, is not a determinant of the class position of an individual. For example, if two men are carpenters, they belong to the same occupation, but one may run a small shop of his own, while another works in a plant manufacturing pre-fabricated housing; the two men belong to the same occupation, but to different social classes.

Further according to Marx, a man's position in the production process not only determines his class but also shapes, in due course of time, his beliefs and actions. The class position of a man in the production process makes him confront varied experiences which in turn influences his beliefs and determines his future actions. The experiences and challenges that a man encounters while earning his living is akin to his fellow members, who too share the same class position in the economic structure, and this facilitates or paves the way for the development of common beliefs and ideas among them. This development of common beliefs and ideas creates and sense of solidarity among them. The members of the working class or the have-nots, who are the victims of the exploitative and oppressive production system, thus tend to unite and develop a common class consciousness. As Bendix and Lispset has stated, Marx pointed to following aspects which triggers the growth of common beliefs and ideas and finally culminates in the development of class consciousness among the members of a class:

- Conflicts over the distribution of economic rewards between the classes;
- Easy communication between the individuals in the same class position so that ideas and action-programs are readily disseminated;
- Growth of class-consciousness in the sense that the members of the class have a feeling of solidarity and understanding of their historic role.;

- Profound dissatisfaction of the lower class over its inability to control the economic structure of which it feels itself to be the exploited victim

- Establishment of a political organization resulting from the economic structure, the historical situations and maturation of class-consciousness.

From the above discussion it is clear that the exploitation involved with the Organization of production leads to the development of class consciousness and this according to Marx is the basis of a class. Class exist only if there is class consciousness. Class consciousness is the prerequisite for class formation and in Marxian sense, individuals having similar position the class structure, remaining isolated and detached from each other cannot lead to the formation of a class. In case of isolated individuals, there is no room for the development of common beliefs and ideas and thereby class consciousness even if their economic position and condition is same and hence formation of class won't take place in such a situation. Thus though according to Marx, Class is the outcome of social organization of production, yet there has to be class consciousness in order for class to form and exist. He again asserted that class consciousness is utmost necessary to the formation of class but only when the members of a "potential" class enter into an association for the organized pursuit of their common aims, does a class in Marx's sense exist. Thus only having class consciousness would be futile until and unless the members organize themselves to fight against their oppression and exploitation. Class therefore exists when the individuals having class consciousness, arising out of their similar oppressive working conditions, come together; unite to fight against the oppressive production system and the ruling class. A common class enemy is hence also essential to this formation of class.

From the above discussion, we can conclude that for Marx, Class was merely not a group of people sharing similar position in the production process or economic structure. It was the organization of these individuals for a greater economic and political struggle, a struggle against the

oppressive and exploitative economic structure and production system, which was fuelled by a common class-consciousness, actually lead to the emergence of a class. Marx was optimistic about a class struggle and its culmination into a classless society. Marx asserted that the industrial working class in the capitalist system would realise about their exploitation and thereby unite to fight against it. This would subsequently lead to a revolution and finally abolition of all the classes and form a class less society. He identified each historical epoch as consisting of two classes in which the owners of the means of production oppresses the workers and this leads to antagonism and class conflict. He therefore said history of hitherto existing societies in the history of class struggle and every society sows the seeds of its own destruction.

Thus, in nutshell we may say that Marxian understanding of class and how it stratifies a particular society was based on the organization of production. In Marxian terminology, the mode of production creates class-based stratification in a society. It is the mode of production, which divides the society into two groups of people i.e the owners and the workers. Marx throws light upon how the oppressions in the production process gradually leads to the development of class-consciousness and how solidarity arising from it results in class formation.

Max Weber another intellectual doyen in sociology conceptualised class as a group of individuals who share a similar position in market economy and by virtue of that fact receive similar economic rewards. While conceptualising class, Max Weber gave importance to Market situation and according to him, a person's class position is actually his position in the Market. Weber further opined that people having similar class status also have similar life-chances. It is a person's economic position that will determine his/her chances of acquiring those things that are considered as desirable in a society.

We may speak of class when: 1) A number of people have in common a specific causal component of their life chances , in so far as 2) this

component is represented under the conditions of commodity or labor markets.

Ferdinand Toennies while discussing about class explained the distinction between Class and Estate, which are otherwise commonly thought of and understood as synonymous. He argued that though often there is an interchangeable use of the terms Class and Estate, yet they refer to two different systems. He conceptualised estates as communal and classes as societal collectives. Classes are more fluid and flexible in nature in contrast to the extreme rigidity of the estates. Classes are changeable and there is a greater chance of mobility in the class system unlike that of the estates, which are closed in nature and where mobility is restricted. While distinguishing Class from Estate Toennies further argued that the relationship between Classes is contractual and antagonistic in nature. Though classes are interdependent, but they confront each other as opponents. The relationship between them turns hostile the moment one class becomes dissatisfied with another class. But estates according to him are related to one another like the different parts of a body. However estates may also, as explained by Toennies, turn into classes when one estate becomes hostile to another. He argues that once the estates becomes hostile and engage in conflict and rivalries they take the form of class and the struggles between them should be understood as class struggles rather than struggle between estates. Furthermore, estates become similar or identical to class when the mobility among its members takes place with the changing socio-political and economic scenario. Increasing mobility among its members results in the disintegration of the estates and finally leads to its transformation into more of a class like structure.

Class system, although predominant in the industrial western societies, has also sown its seeds in the Indian society, which is already stratified on the basis of caste. Indian society is often understood as being caste ridden, but stratifications on the basis of class too undeniably coexist in it. Though India society, especially its rural areas is predominantly agrarian, but it too

has a class character, and several thinkers and scholars have analysed and classified it into number of agrarian classes, each distinct from one another. Thus in the Indian context as well, different scholars have discussed about class system and how it stratifies the Indian society. Let us, in the subsequent discussions, understand the different perspectives on nature and categories of classes that exist in Indian Society.

Daniel Thorner was of the view that to understand the types and the nature of classes that exist in the agrarian society of India, one must have the answers to the following questions-

- What is the nature or the form of income from the soil- Is it rent; Is it fruit of cultivation or Is it payment for labour
- What type of rights does an individual enjoy over a particular plot of land and How much land is held under these rights
- To what extent does the individual actually perform the required fieldwork or does he hire others to do it for him

On the basis of these, though there are several regional variations, Thorner argued that we can identify three classes common to every Indian agrarian society. They are- Big Proprietors, Working peasants, and labourers or whom Thorner named Malik, Kisan and Mazdur. By Malik, Thorner referred to that class of people who derives their main income from their property rights in the soil. Maliks have a high property rights on land, has considerably high land holdings and major part of his family income comes from the land. Though the Maliks may have several other source of income but majority of their income is derived from the share of produce from the lands belonging to the family. This income comes mostly in the form of rent. This rent is again mostly in the form of money and sometimes in the form of crop if the land is let out in crop sharing basis. Maliks may even, instead of letting out lands to tenants, hire labourers to cultivate for him in his field. He may appoint a manager to supervise these labourers or might perform the supervision work himself. Further he may also work along with

the hired labourers in his field, but Thorner still calls Malik, if the agricultural income he receives from working in a part of his field himself is less than the income he earns from the remaining part of his land which he lets out on rent.

Within the class of Maliks, Thorner identifies two subgroups- Large Absentee Landlords and Smaller Proprietors. Thorner describes large absentee landlords as those who typically have holdings in more than one village. Further smaller proprietors identified by him are those who reside personally in the village in which they own land, and exercise some degree of management and control over its cultivation.

Kisans or the working peasants, the second category of class identified by Thorner are those who also have property rights on land but their land holdings are much less when compared to the Maliks. They are those categories of people who work on their own plot of land, seldom hiring labours and that too only in the peak harvesting seasons. They earn by working in their own field. They don't earn rent unlike the Maliks. Thorner further stated that the income received from agricultural holdings by the Kisans may not be sufficient in comparison to his family expenses and therefore he shall need to work for others as well. But the income he receives from his own agricultural holdings is more than the income he earns from other sources like working in others fields as labourers so on and so forth and that differentiates him from a Mazdur..

Thorner defines the Labourers or Mazdurs as that class of people who gain their livelihood primarily from working on other peoples land. This group of people may have land holdings of their own, but their size of land holdings is very meagre and income received from cultivating their own plot of land by themselves or by letting it out is lesser than the income or wages that Mazdurs earn from working for others.

Thus based on the amount of actual labour contributed to the production process and the share in the product, Thorner made distinction between

the three different agrarian classes. Apart from the economic differentiation, Thorner also points to the social differences between these three classes of people and while doing so, Thorner made an attempt to delineate the relationship between caste and class in Indian agrarian society. According to Thorner, Maliks who are at the apex of the agrarian class structure comprise of a small group of people usually belonging to the Brahmans and other higher castes. Their higher class status can be discerned from their lifestyle itself- the kind of houses they live in, the kind of clothes they wear and the diet they follow. They may send their children to higher schools, subscribe to newspapers, listen to battery radios, or own bicycles- all luxuries usually quite beyond the compass of the debt-ridden Kisans, to say nothing of the landless Mazdur-log. Unlike the Maliks, Kisans belong to the cultivating and the artisan castes and Mazdurs mostly belong to the Scheduled castes.

Thus in Daniel Thorner's analysis of the agrarian class structure we see an interplay between the caste and class in agrarian societies. Members of the upper caste are also the members of the upper class and they enjoy the fruits of others labour. Lower class, on the other hand, being born to lower caste as well, are doomed to survive solely through their toil.

D.N Dhanagare in his essay on 'The Model of Agrarian Classes' in India talks about the complexity of class structure in Indian Society. According to him since agrarian social structure is not homogenous across all societies and further class composition and social relations among classes are also varied and diverse in India, it is difficult to have one general class structure incorporating all the diverse classes' that exist in Indian Society. He spoke about the nexus that operates between caste and class in Indian Society and how upper class mostly comprised of people belonging to the upper castes. He cited examples of the Brahmins, Takurs or Banias of Northern India, the Kammas, Reddis and Raos of Andhra Pradesh so on and so forth who are also the members of upper class owing to the huge tracts of land that they own. Similarly he also cited examples of Landless labourers and Agricultural workers belonging to the lowest caste group in

Uttar Pradesh. Thus he attempted to reveal the how ones caste position influenced or rather determined to a great extent ones class position as well. However he also talked about exceptions to this schema that too exist in Indian society and which should also be taken into consideration. According to him, though members of the Upper Caste also often belong to the upper class yet this is not true in all cases. Not all members of the upper caste belong to upper class. There is a vertical spread in terms of classes within every caste. While some members of an upper caste may be economically affluent owning huge amount of land, some others of the same caste may farm labourers. This vertical spread though present among lower caste is however mostly found in case of upper caste.

Thus in Dhanagares illustration on Agrarian Classes we find similarity with Daniel Thorner on the point of how caste exists within class and how both caste and class co-exist in Indian social structure.

From the above discussion we can say that there are different perspectives on class and pertinent to understanding of class as a basis of social stratification is its economic nature, the social relationships which emerge from it and are shaped by it, how it determines our life-style and antagonisms and conflict between classes, and class mobility. Further, we have also learned about how there is caste-class nexus operating in Indian society.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 4: What according to Marx determines an individual's class?

.....

Q5: Is Class and Estate same?

.....

Q6: What are the three agrarian classes identified by Daniel Thorner?

.....

9.5 SOCIAL MOBILITY AND CLASS STRUCTURE

By reading the previous units, we have already learned about the meaning of social mobility. We have also learned that Social Stratification accords different position to groups and individuals in a society and therefore we have different social strata's in a society. When an individual or a group move from one social strata to another, it is termed as social mobility. Now, social mobility is not permitted in all systems of stratification. Therefore, we have closed and open systems of mobility. As we know, in the case of caste, which is highly rigid in nature, there is hardly any scope of social mobility. Here a person's status is fixed at the time of birth and this remains unchanged till the end of his life. Mobility is therefore closed in the case of caste. Class however is an example of open system of mobility. We have already discussed in the first section of this unit that an individual's class status in not determined by birth or fixed at the time of birth. Class status is therefore not ascribed but rather achieved in nature. A person born to a particular class need not necessarily die with the same class status. He/ She shall have the scope to change his/her class status during his lifetime. Since class status can be achieved, an individual with his/her hard work and talent may elevate his/her class status. For example an individual may be born to a lower class but can die as a member of upper class if he/she is able to change his/her class position through hard work and professional achievements. For example the present Prime-Minister of India Narendra Modi came from a lower class background but with his talent, and hard work he could change his class position and become the Prime Minister. Similarly APJ Abdul Kalam too was born to a lower class family but with his efforts he could change his class status. Thus Class is not a closed system of stratification and it allows social mobility among the different strata's unlike caste. Class is also therefore not very rigidly hierarchized and as it allows individuals to change their position. Both upward and downward mobility takes place in the case of class. In the previous examples of Narendra Modi and APJ Abdul Kalam, we have understood how upward mobility takes place in a class. But an individual can also experience

downward social mobility in the case of class status. A very affluent man may also lose his class position and thereby become member of lower class. Thus as moving upward in the class position is possible, similarly falling down from one's class position too is possible.



9.6 LET US SUM UP

- Class is an economic category. One's class status in society is determined by his/her economic condition.
- Members of a particular class possess similar economic resources and share same status in society.
- Class system is a Universal System of Stratification present in almost every society.
- Class in an open system of stratification, unlike castes, because class is an achieved status
- Karl Marx defines Class in the context of the Mode of production
- Marx was of the opinion that we can break up history into a number of epochs or periods, for example, ancient civilisation, feudalism, and capitalism. Each of these have had a class structure comprising of two classes i.e the ruling class and the oppressed class
- The class structure of a particular period emerges from and is based on the Mode of production of that period. A social class, in this sense, would refer to a group of persons performing the same function in the production process and thereby occupying the same position in the class structure.
- According to Marx, the position which the individual occupies in the social organization of production that indicates to which social class he belongs. Further according to him, a man's position in the production process not only determines his class but also shapes, in due course of time, his beliefs and actions.

- Class exist only if there is class-consciousness. Class consciousness is the prerequisite for class formation and in Marxian sense, individuals having similar position the class structure, remaining isolated and detached from each other cannot lead to the formation of a class.

- He identified each historical epoch as consisting of two classes in which the owners of the means of production oppresses the workers and this leads to antagonism and class conflict.

- While conceptualising class, Max Weber gave importance to Market situation and according to him, a person's class position is actually his position in the Market.

- Ferdinand Toennies conceptualised estates as communal and classes as societal collectives

- Class system, although predominant in the industrial western societies, has also sown its seeds in the Indian society, which is already stratified on the basis of caste. Indian society is

- Daniel Thorner while discussing about agrarian classes in India argued that we could identify three classes common to every Indian agrarian society. They are- Big Proprietors, Working peasants, and labourers or whom Thorner named Malik, Kisan and Mazdur.

- Daniel Thorner's analysis of the agrarian class structure shows how there is an interplay between the caste and class in agrarian societies. Members of the upper caste are also the members of the upper class and they enjoy the fruits of others labour

- D.N Dhanagare too spoke about the nexus that operates between caste and class in Indian Society and how upper class mostly comprised of people belonging to the upper castes.



9.7 FURTHER READING

1) Gupta, Dipankar. 2010. *Social Stratification*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press



9.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: Class is an Universal System of Stratification because it is present in every society.

Ans to Q No 2: No Class is not an ascribed status. It is an achieved status.

Ans to Q No 3: Class is known as an open system of stratification because it allows social mobility among the different strata's.

Ans to Q No 4: According to Marx, a man's position in the organization of production determines his class position.

Ans to Q No 5: No class and estate is not the same.

Ans to Q No 6: Malik, Kisan and Mazdur are the three agrarian classes identified by Daniel Thorner.



9.9 MODEL QUESTIONS

Short Questions (Answer each question in about 150 words)

Q 1: Mention the Characteristics of Class.

Q 2: Explain Weber's conceptualisation of Class

Long Questions (Answer each question in about 300-500 words)

Q 1: Explain Social Mobility in the context of Class system

Q 2: Discuss Marx's analysis of Class

Q 3: Explain Class structure in Indian Agrarian society.

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UNIT 10 : RACE & ETHNICITY

UNIT STRUCTURE

10.1 Learning Objectives

10.2 Introduction

10.3 Natural Differences and Social Inequality

10.3.1 Theoretical Positions on Race and Ethnicity

10.3.2 Race and Ethnicity: Are they the same?

10.4 Identities, Nationalities, and Social Inequality

10.5 Let Us Sum up

10.6 Further Reading

10.7 Answers to Check your Progress

10.8 Model Questions

10.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to-

- understand the concept of Race and Ethnicity, and how both are similar or different.
- explain whether race and caste are similar.
- discuss difference between natural difference and socially constructed differences that largely contribute to the creation of inequalities.
- discuss the idea of ethnicity, nationalism and how identities are created.

10.2 INTRODUCTION

Attack against students from northeast India in Delhi; Bangalore or other metropolitan cities; attack against Indian nationals in Australia and the States; Nigerian students in India being attacked in the heart of Delhi, cricketers of certain nationalities being called names on the cricket ground because of their physical appearance etc are almost a regular news item. Often we associate the term 'racism' with almost all the above examples. Historically, the concept of race has changed across cultures.It has eventually become

less connected with ancestral and familial ties, and more concerned with superficial physical characteristics. In the past, theorists have posited categories of race based on various geographic regions, ethnicities, skin colors, and more. Their labels for racial groups have connoted regions (Mongolia and the Caucus Mountains, for instance) or denoted skin tones (black, white, yellow, and red, for example). However, this typology of race developed during early racial science has fallen into disuse, and the social construction of raceis a far more common way of understanding racial categories.

According to the social construction school of thought, race is not biologically identifiable. When considering skin color, for example,the social construction of race perspective recognizes that the relative darkness or fairness of skin is anevolutionary adaptation to the available sunlight in different regions of the world. Contemporary conceptions of race, therefore, which tend to be based on socio economic assumptions, illuminate how far removed modern understanding of race is from biological attributes or features. The social construction of race is also reflected in the way that names for racial categories change with changing times. It is worth noting that race, in this sense, is also a system of labeling that is a source of identity. Specific labels fall in and out of favor during different social eras. For example, thecategory "negroid," popular in the 19th century, evolved into the term "negro" by the 1960s, and thenthis term fell into discuss and was replaced with "African American." This latter term although was intended tocelebrate the multiple identities that a black person might hold, has been critiqued for other reasons.

It often happens that the terms race and ethnicity, or even a minority groups are sometimes used interchangeably although there lies a huge difference between these concepts. An ethnic group consists of people who share a common orientation towards the world, who develop a sense of people-hood, and who are perceived by others as having distinctive cultural elements such as religion, language, traditions, and heritage. This

might include shared language, religion, and traditions, among other commonalities. The ongoing struggle of the Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar and the extreme xenophobia are examples of ethnic communities and the debates around the same.

Minority groups on the other hand are subordinate groups that are dominated or suppressed by the majority. Sociologist Louis Wirth defined a minority groupas "any group of people who, because oftheir physical or cultural characteristics, are singled out from the others in the society in which they livefor differential and unequal treatment, and who therefore regard themselves as objects of collective discrimination." The term minority connotes discrimination, and in its sociological use, the termsubordinatecan be used interchangeably with the term minority, while the term dominantis often substituted for the group that's in the majority. These definitions correlate to the concept that thedominant group is that which holds the most power in a given society, while subordinate groups arethose who lack power compared to the dominant group. It is important to note here that being a numerical minority not necessarily always would amount to a subordinate position. Even numerical minority groups can be dominant groups in some societies. In the previous unit we have discussed about class as a basis of social stratification. In this unit, we shall learn about race, ethnicity and how they stratify societies.

10.3 NATURAL DIFFERENCES AND SOCIAL INEQUALITY

The first racial classification of humans can be found in the Nouvelle division de la terre par les différent sespècesou races qui l'habitent (New division of land by the different species or races which inhabit it) by Francois Bernier, published in 1684. In 1790, the first North American census classified the population as composed of free whitemen, free white women and other people (Native Americans and slaves). The 1890 census, inturn, classified the population using terms suchas white, black, Chinese, Japanese and Indians. Carolus Linnaeus (1758), founder of

moderntaxonomy and the term Homo sapiens, recognized four varieties of humans:

- American
- European
- Asian
- African

Linnaeus also recognized a fifth race without geographical definition, the Monster (Homo Sapiens monstrosus), comprising of various real types and other types contrived by the imagination that did not fit into the four 'normal' categories. Linnaeus' biased classification assigned to each race specificphysical and moral characteristics.In 1775, Linnaeus' successor, J. F. Blumenbach,recognized "four varieties of mankind":

- European, East Asian, and part of NorthAmerica.
- Australian.
- African.
- The rest of the New World.

The outward signs on which most definitions of race are based-such as skin color and hair texture-are dictated by a handful of genes. But the other genes of two people of the same "race" can be very different. Conversely, two people of different "races" can share more genetic similarity than two individuals of the same race. By far the significance of race and biology is social, meaning that we are culturally socialized to define race in biological terms. In fact, throughout the history of the world, most cultures define race in cultural rather than biological terms.

The terms stereotype, prejudice, discrimination are used interchangeably when discussing race. But discussing these terms from a sociological perspective, it is important to define them: stereotypes are

oversimplified ideas about groups of people; prejudice refers to thoughts andfeelings about those groups, while discrimination refers to actions toward them. Racismis a type ofprejudice that involves set beliefs about a specific racial group. In the last century in South Africa, Blacks were by far the most numerous, yet Whites ruled cruelly with racial supremacist ideologies that led to international outcry and eventual collapse of Apartheid rule there. Apartheid happened when South Africa formalized seperation between Blacks and Whites, mandating White supremacy and privileged treatment between 1948 and 1990. Apartheid was abolished by the combined international efforts of other countries that put economic and political pressure on the South African Government.

Stereotypes

Stereotypes can be based on race, ethnicity, age, gender, sexual orientation-almost any characteristic. They may be positive but are often negative. In either case, the stereotype is a generalization that doesn't take individual differences into account. Stereotypes therefore are beliefs that all members of specific social groups share certain common characterstics; stereotypes are cognitive frameworks that strongly influence the processing of incoming social information.

Prejudice

Prejudice refers to beliefs, thoughts, feelings, and attitudes that someone holds about a group. A prejudice is not based on experience; instead, it is a prejudgment, originating outside of actual experience. In a very precise manner, it can be referred to as an attitude (usually negative) towards the members of same group, based solely on their membership in that group. Racism is a type of prejudice that is used to justify the belief that one racial category is somehow superior or inferior to others.

Discrimination

While prejudice refers to biased thinking, discrimination consists of actions against a group of people. So it can be said as negative behaviour directed towards people who are the object of prejudice. Discrimination can be based on age, religion, health, and other indicators; race-based discrimination and antidiscrimination laws strive to address this set of social problems. Discrimination based on race or ethnicity can take many forms, from unfair housing practices tobiased hiring systems. Overt discrimination has long been part of U.S. history.

However, discrimination cannot be erased from our culture just by enacting laws to abolish it.Sociologist Émile Durkheim calls racism a social fact, meaning that it does not require the action of individuals to continue. The reasons for this are complex and relate to the educational,criminal, economic, and political systems that exist.

Genocide is another term that can be closely related to discussions around race and ethnicity. The deliberate annihilation of a targeted (usually subordinate) group with an absolute aim to completely wash it away, is referred to as genocide. Historically, we can see that genocide has included both the intent to exterminate a group and the function of exterminating a group, intentional or not. The genocide in Rwanda against the Tutsis by the Hutus is a classic example of genocide.

10.3.1 Theoritical Positions On Race And Ethnicity

Issues of race and ethnicity can be observed through three major sociological perspectives: functionalism, conflict theory, and symbolic interactionism.

- **Functionalist Perspective:** In the view of functionalism, racial and ethnic inequalities must have served an important function in order to exist for as long as they have. This concept, of course, is problematic. Sociologists who adhere to the functionalist view argue that racism and

discrimination do contribute positively, but only to the dominant group. Historically, it has indeed served dominant groups well to discriminate against subordinate groups. Slavery, of course,was beneficial to slaveholders. Holding racist views can benefit those who want to deny rights and privileges to people they view as inferior to them, but over time, racism harms society. Outcomes ofrace-based disenfranchisement-such as poverty levels, crime rates, and discrepancies in employment and education opportunities-illustrate the long-term (and clearly negative) results of slavery and racism in American society.

- **Conflict Theory:** Conflict theories are often applied to inequalities of gender, social class, education, race, and ethnicity.In the late 19th century, the rising power of black Americans after the Civil War resulted in draconian Jim Crow laws that severely limited black political and social power. The years since then have showed a pattern of attempted disenfranchisement, with gerrymandering and voter suppression efforts aimed at predominantly minority neighborhoods.

Feminist sociologist Patricia Hill Collins developed intersection theory, which suggests that we cannot separate the effects of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and other attributes. When we examine race and how it can bring us both advantages and disadvantages, it is important toacknowledge that the way we experience race is shaped, for example, by our gender and class. Multiple layers of disadvantage intersect to create the way we experience race. For example, if we want to understand prejudice, we must understand that the prejudice focused on a white woman because of her gender is very different from the layered prejudice focused on a poor Asian woman, who is affected by stereotypes related to being poor, being a woman, and her ethnic status.

- **Interactionism:** For symbolic interactionists, race and ethnicity provide strong symbols as sources of identity. In fact,some interactionists propose that the symbols of race, not race itself, are what lead to racism.

Interactionist Herbert Blumer suggested that racial prejudice is formed through interactions between members of the dominant group: Without these interactions, individuals in the dominant group would not hold racist views. These interactions contribute to an abstract picture of the subordinate group that allows the dominant group to support its view of the subordinate group, thus maintaining the status quo.

10.3.2 Race and Ethnicity: Are they the same?

The term race has a wide array of definitions commonly used to describe a group of people who share certain morphological characteristics. Most authors have learned that race is an unscientific term, which can only have a biological meaning when the human being is fully homogeneous or 'thoroughbred', as in some animal species. These conditions, however, are never found in humans. Historically on the other hand, the word ethnicity stems from the Greek adjective Ethnikos and means "heathen." The adjective is derived from the noun ethnos, which means foreign people or nation.It is a multifaceted concept, which builds the identity of an individual through: kinship, religion,language, shared territory and nationality, and physical appearance. Ethnicity lies within the cultural realm. An ethnic community is determined by linguistic and cultural affinities and genetic similarities. These communities often claim to have a distinct social and political structure, and a territory.

Race refers to biological distinctions,phenotypes and/or cultural characteristics that are believed to be the basis for the creation of racial groups. What this suggests is a reality created out of a belief system, and reinforced institutionally, that humanity is the result of racial groups. Every racial or ethnic group also has differences within it. The members of these groups even differ on what to refer to themselves and who should and shouldn't be included. Race justifies social inequalities as natural.Ethnicity connotes shared cultural traits and shared group history. It is defined in terms of shared genealogy, whether actual or presumed. Typically, if people believe they descend from a particular group, and they want to be associated

with that group, then they are in fact members of that group. The Tamil-Sinhala conflict in Sri Lanka is an example of ethnic conflict. In the northeastern part of India, the diverse heterogenous demography of the region has also resulted in endemic ethnic struggles, like that of the Kuki-Naga conflict etc.

10.4 IDENTITIES, NATIONALITIES, AND SOCIAL INEQUALITY

This discussion on race and ethnicity is very closely related to debates on identity, nation making and struggles of various kinds. One's socialization, social orientation and the struggles and the oppressions one largely go into the making of one's identity. Identity is thus very much embedded within the micro and macro processes of our being and our belongingness to the contexts that we are part of. It is a result of social relationships and the everydayness. Both race and ethnicity are important elements in the shaping of identities that are both individual and collective. This identity also narrates a particular history of struggle, oppression, dominance, power or resistance. It is a part of a larger framework of shaping us and the who's and the how that shape the same. Looking at the minority group in countries like the United States, ethical and racial identities are demonstrated in extremely cognizant ways. This demonstration is mostly generated with two contradictory cultural and social influences.

In the recent Rohingya Muslim crisis in Myanmar, UN human rights officials had termed the mass exodus as a perfect "textbook example" of ethnic cleansing. The Rohingyas are a Muslim minority in Buddhist dominated Myanmar and More than 310,000 people have fled to Bangladesh, with others trapped on the border, amid burning of villages and extrajudicial killings. The extended problem of this crisis is the conflict in Bangladesh where Rohingyas are fleeing, and the problems faced by the indigenous minorities like the Chakmas in Bangladesh where they are dominated by the Muslim majority. This has further worsened the crisis and drawn attention from diverse quarters and international media. At the same time, the debate around nationality and ethnicity has always been jolted

amidst this crisis. While Ethnicity refers to the person's identity in relation to the social, cultural or religious group, Nationality connotes membership of a person in the country, describing his/her connection with the political state. Nationality means the identity of a large group of people having a legal connection and personal allegiance to a specific place, because of being born there. It indicates the country, where the individual is from and is the legal citizen. Ethnicity denotes the person's ethnic identity, on the basis of descent attributes and cultural inheritance. On the other hand, nationality is the person's membership in the nation, which reveals the individual's relationship with the nation. The ethnicity of a person can be determined by his/her dialect, culture, food habits, dressing style, race, physical appearance and so on. As against this, the nationality of a person can be determined by his/her country of origin.

Talking of race and inequality, there have been occasions when the concept of race and caste in India have been conflated. Many argued that both these processes of social stratification are more or less the same. While fundamentally both are determined by birth and modes of hierarchy, the nature and process in which they operate are different. Noted sociologist Andre Beteille argued that caste is specific to India and needs to be understood how it came to be embedded in Indian society which involves the study of its cultural implications if it is seen as a religious phenomenon or its materialistic roots if it is analysed as a form of economic exploitation. In this context, Beteille says that treating caste as a form of race is "politically mischievous and scientifically nonsensical". There, on the other hand, have been Dalit rights activists who have seen caste and race as same in the manner in which inequality is intergenerationally transmitted.

One of the solutions to the problem of institutionalized inequality is thus affirmative action.It refers to a general policy framework to redress injustices of a historical nature. Affirmative action is defined as a policy or program that seeks to rectify past discrimination by increasing opportunities for historically underrepresented groups. Race, ethnicity and similar processes of inequality thus operate within larger macro-politics of the society and need to be understood within its multiple nuances and subtleties of how they operate.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: What is race?

.....

Q 2: What is ethnicity?

.....

Q 3: Are race and ethnicity the same?

.....

Q 4: Are race and caste the same?

.....

Q 5: What is nationality?

.....



10.5 LET US SUM UP

- Race refers to biological distinctions, phenotypes and/or cultural characteristics that are believed to be the basis for the creation of racial groups justifying social inequalities as natural.

- An ethnic group consists of people who share a common orientation toward the world, who develop a sense of people-hood, and who are perceived by others as having distinctive cultural elements such as religion, language, traditions, and heritage.

- The term minority connotes discrimination, and in its sociological use, the term subordinate can be used interchangeably with the term minority, while the term dominant is often substituted for the group that's in the majority.

- Stereotypes are oversimplified ideas about groups of people,prejudice refers to thoughts and feelings about those groups, while discrimination refers to actions toward them.

- The deliberate annihilation of a targeted (usually subordinate) group with an absolute aim to completely wash it away, is referred to as genocide.

- Both race and ethnicity are important elements in the shaping of identities that are both individual and collective.

- While Ethnicity refers to the person's identity in relation to the social, cultural or religious group, Nationality connotes membership of a person, in the country, describing his/her connection with the political state.

- Although race and caste have been said to be the same, they are not the same in practice and operation.



10.6 FURTHER READING

1) Blumenbach, J. F. (2005). On the Natural Varieties of Mankind. Elibron Classics, Boston, MA: Adamant Media Corporation.

2) Collins, P. H. (2012). Toward a New Vision: Race, Class, and Gender as Categories of Analysis and Connection. In Race andEthnicity in Society: the Changing Landscape,edited by Elizabeth Higginbotham and Margaret L. Anderson, 216-222.Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.



10.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: Race refers to biological distinctions, phenotypes and/or cultural characteristics that are believed to be the basis for the creation of racial groups justifying social inequalities as natural.

Ans to Q No 2: Ethnicity refers to a group that consists of people who share a common orientation toward the world, who develop a sense of people-hood, and who are perceived by others as having distinctive cultural elements such as religion, language, traditions, and heritage.

Ans to Q No 3: Although, race and ethnicity are sometimes used interchangeably, they are not the same.

Ans to Q No 4: Race and Caste as concepts have similarities in certain ways, but its nature and process are very unique in their own ways and cannot be conflated.

Ans to Q No 5: Nationality means the identity of a large group of people having a legal connection and personal allegiance to a specific place, because of being born there. It indicates the country, where the individual is from and is the legal citizen.



10.8 MODEL QUESTIONS

Short Questions (Answer each question in about 150 words)

Q 1: How are the concepts of stereotype, prejudice and discrimination related?

Q 2: How is the functionalist perspective on race different from the conflict perspective?

Q 3: Discuss how race and ethnicity are similar or different.

Long Questions (Answer each question in about 300-500 words)

Q 1: Is the concept of identity related to debates of race and ethnicity? Discuss with an example.

Q 2: How has the debate between race and caste as similar or different been divided? Discuss.

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UNIT 11 : GENDER AND STRATIFICATION

UNIT STRUCTURE

11.1 Learning Objectives

11.2 Introduction

11.3 Gender and Stratification

- 11.3.1 Patriarchy and the Subordination of Women
- 11.3.2 Family as Site of Inequality
- 11.3.3 Gender, Work and Entitlements
- 11.3.4 The Community, The State and Patriarchy

11.4 Let Us Sum Up

11.5 Further Reading

11.6 Answers to Check your Progress

11.7 Model Questions

11.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to-

- know the relationship between gender and stratification
- understand the plight of women under patriarchal system

11.2 INTRODUCTION

The question of the impact of gender was not posed until very recently in not only Sociology, but in academia and politics in general. Since the 1960s there has been an increasing global focus on gender and its role in stratification of society and community. This has been possible because of the groundwork in political mobilisation and social awareness brought forth by the feminists of the 18th and 19th centuries. Until recently, the importance of gender as an analytical category and gender inequality as a lived reality was wholly unrecognized. The International Encyclopaedia of Social Science defines gender as "a set of socially constructed practices linked to biological sex that shape how individuals understand the categories

of woman and man. Gender as a process is historically and culturally specific; manifestations of women's subordination are highly varied yet intricately connected. Not only does the form and extent of women's oppression vary from country to country, but it is also always shaped by relations of power based on race, class, ability and sexual orientation".

Gender is a primary category in the ordering or structuring of sites of production and reproduction, such as economic life in the workplace and in the household. Thus, it is a central frame with which social life is to be understood and studied.For socio-biologists, the biological difference between men and women is argued to be the main reason for the existence of male control over women. Whereas from the social constructionist viewpoint, gender roles are actively created through action in the social and cultural setting that imbues a given structure with meanings.

There are socio-cultural beliefs about each gender's specialized traits and qualities which have been so ingrained in our socio-cultural psyche that they appear to be natural. These beliefs are translated into real consequences in the arena of work and labour and are the root cause of the existing gender inequality, an inequality which had been obfuscated for many centuries under the guise of sexual division of labour between genders. This sexual division of labour refers to the pervasive idea that men and women are capable of,and suitable for, doing different work due to the differential specialization in economic production or reproduction between men and women, with men historically being accorded the role of hunters or engaged with activities outside the household and women being accorded the role of gatherers and relegated to the tasks inside the house such as cooking, cleaning and care work.

The sexual division of labour has been criticised by feminists as it has been used in order to justify the exclusion of women from many arenas of society, polity and culture, and has led to the limitation of women's liberty and freedom. It is the argument of feminists that women and men are born

with equal potential to succeed in all arenas. They are born with equal potential to learn, to develop and to contribute as members of the society, state or community. But the social organization of gender and the structural barriers created by gender roles and gendering of work lead to gender inequality that keeps women from realizing their abilities fully. In the previous unit, we have discussed about race and ethnicity. In this unit, we shall discuss about Gender as a basis of social stratification.

11.3 GENDER AND STRATIFICATION

From the above discussion we have learned that gender also acts as a basis of social stratification. In the following subsections, we shall undertand how Gender inequality operates in our society.

11.3.1 Patriarchy and the Subordination of Women

Patriarchy is a central concept in the understanding of gender and stratification and an essential tool in analysing gender relationships. There have been varying strands of thinkers who have offered varying definitions and ideas about patriarchy which have evolved and changed over time. Classical thinkers such as FriedrichEngles and Max Weber have talked about patriarchy. In 'The Theory of Social and Economic Organisation' (1947), Weber talks about patriarchy as a system of domination where societies were ruled by men by dint of their position as head of household. In Weber's theorization, the domination of younger men by older heads of households was as important as the domination of women by men. This idea has been employed particularly by radical feminists, in order to sharpen the focus on the domination of women by men. Here, the dual systems theory becomes pertinent, where two dominant systems of inequality, patriarchy and capitalism are theorized as working closely, leading to even more fissured gender divisions and intensification of the subjugation and oppression of women.

There are thus many differing ideas about what patriarchy entails and how it came to be. In the essay Theorizing Patriarchy (1989), Sylvia Walby

defines "patriarchy as a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate oppress and exploit women. The use of the term social structure is important here since it clearly implies rejection of both biological determinism, and the notion that every individual man is in a dominant position and every individual woman in a subordinate one." Walby further contends that "…there are six main patriarchal structures which together constitute a system of patriarchy. These are: a patriarchal mode of production in which women's labour is expropriated by their husbands; patriarchal relations within waged labour; the patriarchal state; male violence; patriarchal relations in sexuality; and patriarchal culture." Each of these structures have their own sub-structures and practices.

Thus, patriarchy as a social structure consists of the central tenets of power: dominance, hierarchy and competition. Under patriarchy, the traits associated with 'male' and 'masculine' is upheld and rewarded, while the 'female' and 'feminine' are othered and marginalized. Patriarchy underlines and propagates the notion that men are strong and women are weak, that men are superior and women are inferior. Patriarchy underlies the base of economy, society and polity and even in intimate arenas of human lives.

11.3.2 Family as Site of Inequality

That the household is the primary unit of oppression and subjugation of women in patriarchy is a radical feminist notion. The household assumes centrality within this theoretical model since it is the primary site of production and reproduction. Engels saw both patriarchy and monogamy as processes that developed historically with the development of the concept of private property. Walby's characterization of the existence of public and private dimensions of patriarchy is crucial in understanding the family as a site of inequality. According to Walby, "Private patriarchy is based upon the relative exclusion of women from arenas of social life apart from the household, with a patriarch appropriating women's services individually and directly in the apparently private sphere of the home."

Much of what leads to creation of barriers in the path of women's equal participation in the workforce begins within the family and the household. The girl child remains one of the most vulnerable entities in the society. Along with threat of male violence, there is also unequal access to education, to food and nutrition, to capital and property, prevalence of early marriage and unsafe pregnancy and lack of awareness about their reproductive rights. In case of India, there have been numerous reports and literature, which have discussed issues such as son preference within families, which has led to reprehensible phenomena such as female foeticide. Today, the sex ratio in India has shown a declining trend and is one of the worst in the world. This is a serious indication of the severity of male-female inequality here. When we attempt to understand issues such as these, the deep entrenchment of these social phenomena in structural reasons becomes evident.

While India's fight against female infanticide has failed, maternal health and primary healthcare for women remains low on the priority of the state. When we start focusing on reproduction and the ability of women to exert agency on their bodies and reproductive health and reproductive decisions, it is clear that the patriarchal state and family structure exerts control even in these intimate dimensions of women's life and bodies.

Within the household or the family, the role of the stay-at-home wife and the nature of this labour have been theorized by several feminist scholars in sociology. The seminal book in this regard is Ann Oakley's The Sociology of Housework (1974). Here, Oakley wanted to find out about housework from the very people who did it, through in-depth interviews of London housewives. This book came at a time when sexism was not recognized as a rampant and persistent presence in social life, and labour such as housework was seen as nothing but a natural extension of women's roles in society as wives or mothers. Oakley's findings disturbed and destabilized the view of housework as natural for women and showed that housework and power are inter-related within the household, with real power

resting in the hands of male authority figures within the family, the females being able to exert some power only within the routines of their housework. Again, Oakley showed housework to be monotonous, frustrating and alienating and marital relationships to be unequal (for the women interviewed).

Marilyn Waring in Counting for Nothing: What Men Value and What Women are Worth (1999) makes the cogent and contentious point that indicators for development of the state such as GDP (Gross Domestic Product) or GNP (Gross National Product) do not take into account factors that lie outside what in common parlance is termed as 'economic activities', such as unpaid work done by women and care work done by women. Thus, there needs to be changes in the social policy at the level of the state to enable such an accounting.

The focus on women's roles as caregivers, nurturers and mothers, at the cost of her role as an individual and a member of the economy and society means that there is less attention that is paid to her well being as an individual. Divorce, infertility or childfree living still comes with very serious consequences for women, leading to a disruption in their position in the society that they live in.

11.3.3 Gender, Work and Entitlements

Before discussing gender inequality at work it has to be stated that in social science, work has largely been defined as an activity that is performed in economic or public sphere for wages, and that is done outside the home. The sexual division of labour in our society has been normalized in our society to the extent that it is taken as an occurrence that happens naturally and is organic to human beings. In this sort of division of labour, men happen to be at the top and women at the bottom. The work delegated to men, deemed skilled and requiring intelligence is worthy of more monetary compensation, in comparison to work deemed to be best performed by women, which are viewed as unimportant and monetarily unvalued or

undervalued. This comes under the realm of public patriarchy. Walbydefines it as, "Public patriarchy does not exclude women from certain sites, but rather subordinates women in all of them. In this form, the appropriation of women takes place more collectively than individually."

In a patriarchal system, there has already been a male-monopolisations of the best jobs. This leads to gender identification of jobs, the jobs; graded as 'women's jobs'; such as cooking, cleaning etc, are considered unimportant, lower in skill requirements and outside the sphere of what is considered as work in the economy. With the inherent biological argument in the sexual division of labour, women's housework comes to be deemed as a natural extension of her biological identity as women.

Today, in the modern globalized world, women ostensibly have the same opportunities for success and freedom to choose the kind of work that they want to do. But the reality of the situation is much more grim. While in the urban areas, women continue to join the labour force, they have been found to be consistently underpaid compared to men, less likely to be promoted, not be provided adequate maternity leaves or have their career negatively affected because of taking time off during pregnancy and childbirth, lack of support at home and in childrearing in case of working mothers, instances of sexual harassment at workplace as well as while commuting to and from work. Thus, the proverbial 'glass ceiling' that stops most women from accomplishing their potential at work is sustained by a host of structural and systemic forces working against women. Numerous surveys show how even with full-time jobs, women still bear full or majority of the burden of housework within a family, often receiving no help from their partner.

In India, the economic reforms of 1991opened up the predominantly agricultural economy to the forces of globalization and development, which led to ushering in fundamental changes in the structure of the economy with increasing role of privatization and liberalization that led to phenomena such as urbanization, rural-to-urban migration, the rise of nuclear family as well as an increasing participation of women in the labour force. But a

variety of factors stand in the way of women being unable to realize their full potential. The rate of dropout as well as illiteracy and malnutrition remains higher for women compared to men. Even among school-going children, the girl-child is expected to help in the housework along with schoolwork. Factors such as unsafe transportation or sexual harassment on the way to job or school also has been found to be a major deterrent for women. Along with this, very often, especially in tertiary sectors, women are relegated only to working on the factory floor or doing menial labour, and never get the chance to rise to managerial positions, which are filled by men even in those sectors where the gender balance favors women. Overall, women continue to be clustered into occupations seen as 'feminine' or in nurturing roles, such as teaching, nursing etc.

11.3.4 The Community, The State and Patriarchy

In the formal legal and political systems at the level of the state, there is a growing awareness of the existing gender inequalities and a lot of policies have been initiated in order to address these issues. However, there has been a very poor implementation of these enshrined legal and political codes. The extension of legal and political rights to women has not led to their increasing participation in these arenas. In fact, feminists contend and underline that at its core, the nature of the state itself is patriarchal. The patriarchal nature of the state is clearly reflected in the contentions created by the state's ruling on divorce and marriage, on women's fertility and reproductive health, legalization of abortion, wage discrimination, prostitution, pornography and male violence, with the lack of proper and accessible institutional measuresto address the persistent threat of rape or sexual and physical abuse in the hands of both people within the household and outside.

Gender inequality is perennially persistent in religious institutions across the world. Whether it is Hinduism, Christianity, Islam or Buddhism, women continue to be relegated to an inferior position to men, with leadership position within religious institutions being often forbidden for them. Along

with this, women's physical bodies very often become the site to exert religious control and express notions of purity and pollution held by the religious institutions. Indeed, the stress in Indian society on purity and honour rests on the assumption of servility and subjugation of women.

Women continue to be the marginalized section of the population, and even in backward communities, women bear the brunt of the negative socio-economic consequences of the community. Compared to men, they carry the double weight of being subjugated due to their community's position and due to their inferior position as women even within the community itself.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: What is gender?

.....

Q 2: What is patriarchy?

.....

Q 3: What is the sexual division of labour?

.....

Q 4: Does gender inequality exits in the household?

.....

Q 5: What argument does Ann Oakley make in The Sociology of Housework (1974)?

.....

Q 6: What are some of the factors that impede women's full participation in the labour force?

.....

Q 7: Is care-work done by women at home, considered as economic activity?

.....

Q 8: Do women have legal and political rights?

.....



11.4 LET US SUM UP

- Gender is a primary category in the ordering or structuring of sites of production and reproduction, such as economic life in the workplace and in the household, and thus, it is a central frame with which social life is to be understood and studied.

- For socio-biologists, the biological difference between men and women is argued to be the main reason for the existence of male control over women. While from the social constructionist viewpoint, gender roles are actively created through action in the social and cultural setting that imbues a given structure with meanings.

- Patriarchy is a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women. Patriarchy as a social structure consists of the central tenets of power, dominance, hierarchy and competition.

- Much of what leads to creation of barriers in the path of women's equal participation in the workforce begins within the family and the household. The focus on women's roles as caregivers, nurturers and mothers, at the cost of her role as an individual and a member of the economy and society means that there is less attention that is paid to her well being as an individual.

- Gender inequality at work is reflected in the gendered nature of work, existence of wage inequality between men and women for the same job and existence of the 'glass ceiling' for women in most jobs.

- In the formal legal and political systems at the level of the state, there is a growing awareness of the existing gender inequalities and a lot of policies have been initiated in order to address these issues. However, there has been a very poor implementation of these enshrined legal and political codes.

- Gender inequality is perennially persistent in religious institutions across the world.



11.5 FURTHER READING

1) Engels, Friedrich, 1820-1895. (1942). The origin of the family, private property and the state. New York :International Publishers

2) Guha, Martin (2008).International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences (2nd edition). Detroit: Thompson Gale

3) Oakley, Ann (1975). The Sociology of Housework. New York: Pantheon Books

4) Walby, Sylvia (1989). Theorizing Patriarchy. Sociology, Vol. 23, No. 2, pp. 213-234

5) Waring, Marilyn (1999). Counting for Nothing: What Men Value and What Women Are Worth. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

5) Weber, Max(1947). The Theory of Social and Economic Organization. New York: Free Press.



11.6 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: The International Encyclopaedia of Social Science defines gender as, "a set of socially constructed practices linked to biological sex that shape how individuals understand the categories of woman and man. Gender as a process is historically and culturally specific; manifestations of women's subordination are highly varied yet intricately connected. Not only does the form and extent of women's oppression vary from country to country, but it is also always shaped by relations of power based on race, class, ability and sexual orientation".

Ans to Q No 2: In the essay Theorizing Patriarchy (1989), Sylvia Walby defines "patriarchy as a system of social structures, and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women. The use of the term social

structure is important here since it clearly implies rejection of both biological determinism, and the notion that every individual man is in a dominant position and every individual woman in a subordinate one."

Ans to Q No 3: Sexual division of labour is the delegation of different work, between male and female according to the gender. This refers to the pervasive idea that men and women are capable of doing different work due to the differential specialization in economic production or reproduction between men and women, with men historically being accorded the role of hunters or engaged with activities outside the household, and women being accorded the role of gatherers and relegated to the tasks inside and related to the house such as cooking, cleaning and care work.

Ans to Q No 4: Yes, gender inequality exists in the household and it can be understood through the concept of 'private patriarchy' theorised by Walby.

Ans to Q No 5: Oakley's findings disturbed and destabilized the view of housework as natural for women and showed that housework and power are inter-related within the household, with real power resting in the hands of male authority figures within the family, the females being able to exert some power only within the routines of their housework. Again, Oakley showed housework to be monotonous, frustrating and alienating and marital relationships to be unequal (for the women interviewed.)

Ans to Q No 6: A variety of factors stand in the way of women being unable to realize their full potential. The rate of dropout as well as illiteracy and malnutrition remains higher for women compared to men. Even among school-going children, the girl-child is expected to help in the housework along with schoolwork. Factors such as unsafe transportation or sexual harassment on the way to job or school also has been found to be a major deterrent for women.

Ans to Q No 7: Indicators for development of the state such as GDP (Gross Domestic Product) or GNP (Gross National Product) do not take into account factors that lie outside what in common parlance is termed as 'economic

activities', such as unpaid work done by women and care work done by women. Therefore, care work is not considered as 'economic activity' which has been problematized by feminist scholars.

Ans to Q No 8: Women do have political and legal rights but the extension of legal and political rights to women has not led to their increasing participation in these arenas. Along with this, a lot more still remains to be done in terms of existing legal and political inequality globally.



11.7 MODEL QUESTIONS

Short Questions (Answer each question in about 150 words)

Q 1: What are some of the factors that impede the full participation of women in the work force?

Q 2: What is patriarchy?

Long Questions (Answer each question in about 300-500 words)

Q 1: How does family emerge as the site of inequality?

Q 2: Discuss why gender is a key concept in attempting to understand the stratification of social life?

Q 3: What is patriarchy and how does it manifest itself within the family?

** ** **

UNIT 12 : OTHER BASES OF SOCIAL STRATIFICATION

UNIT STRUCTURE

12.1 Learning Objectives

12.2 Introduction

12.3 Race

12.4 Ethnicity

12.5 Tribe

12.6 Religion

12.7 Region

12.8 Language

12.9 Let Us Sum Up

12.10 Further Reading

12.11 Answers to Check your Progress

12.12 Model Questions

12.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to-

- understand race as a basis of stratification
- understand how ethnicity can be a basis of stratification
- explain stratification in the context of tribe
- discuss religion, region and language as bases of stratification

12.2 INTRODUCTION

Stratification has been the hallmark of Indian societies. The term 'social stratification' has been borrowed from Geology to depict the various layers of society with regard to shared socio-economic conditions. In the previous units we have learned that Social Stratification refers to hierarchical ranking and ordering of social structures like race, ethnicity, tribe, religion, region, language and people into groups according to social values, prestige, power and privilege. Race, ethnicity, tribe, religion, region and language are the

defining features of social stratification, the primary determinant of persistent social inequality and advantages in society that shape lives of individuals in a significant way without their realization. Systems of social stratification are not static, but they change and are replaced by new norms and criteria of social ranking. In this unit we shall study the various aspects of social stratification like race, ethnicity, tribe, religion, region and language which would help in understanding the inequality prevalant in society and it also unfold ways for formation of an egalitarian society.

12.3 RACE

Race is one of the bases of stratification in society. The term 'race' refers to biological traits, phenotypes, ancestry and physical features which are considered socially significant and which are believed to the basis for creation of racial groups. Social Scientists have showed that race is not real, meaning that race is a social construct to differentiate or unite people based on certain biological and genetic traits for social or political interests. Wolf believed that race was constructed during European mercantile expansion to mark inequalities in terms of prestige, power and wealth. According to Sergio Romero, historical moorings show how the concept of race was formed during colonial rule to emphasize the superiority of the colonizers over the colonized people and to enslave labour on the basis of this superiority and how the stratified institutions laid the groundwork for it. As an aspect of stratification system, race provides resources, privileges and advantages to those who are at or near the top of the hierarchy whereas it disadvantages, discriminates against and deprives as one goes down the hierarchy. For example under the Apartheid laws the white government in South Africa in 1948 enacted and institutionalized differential privileges and restrictions based on racial and genealogical origins. The genealogy was traced up to 14 generations and individuals carried cards based on their ancestry and were treated differently. People from European descent, basically English and Dutch people received the highest privileges, resided in the best locations and had a good lifestyle. Coloureds (offspring born out

of intermixing of European people and other races) had a separate residential area and occupation marked differently from Bantu people (native African). Asians (mostly immigrants from India) received higher salaries than Bantu people but less than people of European descent. This system of preferential discrimination collapsed under international pressure and with the first president Nelson Mandela in 1994 but the remnants of racial discrimination would take generations to die out.

Race has been categorized into four types depending on the geographical place of origin, Mongolia, Caucus Mountains, East Asia, Africa into Mongolioids, Caucusoids, Australoids and Negroids or on the basis of skin colour like black, yellow, white, red and black. Risley in 'The Peoples of India' has classified the population of colonial India into seven types- Indo-Aryan type (includes Jats, Rajputs, Punjabis and Kashmiri Khatris), Turko-Iranian type (includes people from Baluchistan and North-West Frontier), Dravidian type (people from South India, southern Madhya Pradesh and Chottanagpur region), Aryo-Dravidian type (people from Central province- Uttar Pradesh and Bihar and from princely state of Rajasthan), Scytho-Dravidian type (includes people from Coorg province and Maratha Brahmins), Mongoloid type (includes people from North-East Frontier, Assam, Burma and Nepal) and Mongolo-Dravidian type (include Bengali Brahmins and Kayastha people). However, B.S. Guha based on his anthropometric surveys has classified people of India into five types- the Mongoloids, the Negrito, the Mediterranean, the Nordic, the Proto-Australoid and the Western Brachycephals. The study of genetics has proved that differentiation of people on the basis of skin colour, hair type, physique, size of skull or nose, height and so on are merely conjectural. This has led sociologists to understand that the categorization of race is ambiguous and empirical studies show that there are combinations of physical and genetic features in individuals and groups. When one racial group is favoured over another which has intentional or unintentional consequences on people belonging to the minority community, it is known as racism. Does racism exist in modern society? Yes, racism does exist in

modern society. It is much evident if the victim of racism is a celebrity who can reach out to masses easily. Be it Shah Rukh Khan over security check in United States or Shilpa Shetty as a contestant in the reality show Big Brother. These were examples of racism faced by individuals as they belong to a minority community in comparison to those who were discriminating against them on the basis of their belief in their racial superiority. Minority community consists of those people who lack power and are subordinated and dominated by majority group in society despite their skin colour or country of origin. However, less known form of racism is institutional discrimination which consists of practices through which majority group (the group that wields more power in comparison to minority group in a specified area) acquires benefits and privileges disproportionately in comparison to minority group. For example, the extermination of Jews during Hitler's regime as they were considered a defective race- source of illness and hereditary diseases- legitimized the atrocities and genocide committed by German soldiers. When hurricane Katrina hit Louisiana in August 2005 rescue services were directed towards the upscale neighbourhoods whereas the lower-income districts, where most of African Americans lived and, many did not have any means to leave, rescue services were not provided, which led to increased death toll in that area.

Studies have shown that there is a positive correlation between race and health disparities. Racial minorities in United States of America are more affected by stress, hypertension, high infant mortality, pregnancy related complications, HIV, diabetes, homicide, heart ailments and mental health than whites. Apart from health disparities, disparities are also seen in wage income and discrimination in employment.

12.4 ETHNICITY

Like race, ethnicity is also a way of stratifying social groups. Ethnicity and race are often used interchangeably. But the two concepts are not same. The difference between race and ethnicity is that while race is imposed, ethnicity can be imposed or chosen. Moreover, race is associated

with biological traits whereas ethnicity is learned cultural practices. But like race, ethnicity is also a social construct which shapes how people view themselves and how they view others.

Ethnicity refers to shared cultural perspectives, practices, values, beliefs, norms and distinctiveness which set one group apart from another. The most common characteristics of ethnic groups are shared cultural heritage, sense of history, language, region, religion, tradition, form of dress, food, shared group identity or we-feeling and sense of belonging to a particular territory/homeland. In large cities one would often find ethnic enclaves which are distinct by the street signs, ethnic restaurants, types of house or place of worship, dresses etc. The immigrants in an ethnic enclave has a strong we-feeling, act as a local community celebrating festivals which are part of their culture, forming and building social networks in the place of destination. For example, if one visits Kolkata there is an area known as Chinatown where immigrants from China have resided since generations and have carried their culture to Kolkata in the form of Chinese street food, sauces and style of cooking. Ethnic differences are not inherited but are learned through process of socialization. In the United States of America, people from Japan, China, Philippines, Korea and Malaysia are collectively known as Asian American. This process of merging various ethnicities into one is known as pan-ethnicities. When federal funds were made available for social services for Asian Americans or American Indians, these people from different countries began to think as a larger group for gaining political and social benefits like health care services, legal rights and so on. The belief that one culture is superior to that of another ethnic group is known as ethnocentrism. Ethnicity has become an important marker for a tribe when it comes to securing political rights and marking them as distinct from others especially dominant regional community.

12.5 TRIBE

Rural India comprises the largest number of tribes. Tribes refer to a group of people or community who are distinct from dominant regional

communities, depend on their land for their livelihood, whose culture, economy and way of life are usually primitive. However, their contact with larger society and the forces of globalization, industrialization, modernization, westernization and urbanization have introduced tremendous changes in tribal society. In India, scheduled tribes are those tribes who are historically disadvantaged and included in the schedule under article 342 of the Constitution of India. Scheduled tribes are notified in 30 states and union territories of India comprising of 705 tribal groups. The Census of 2011 enumerated that the tribal population constituted 8.6 per cent of the total population of India. According to A.R. Desai, purest tribe consists of following characteristics:

- Tribal people are early inhabitants of the soil, associated with a particular defined territory.
- They live in isolation in hills and forests away from larger society.
- They belong to one of the three stocks- Negritos, Austroloids or Mongoloids.
- They share common ancestry and historiography, whether genuine or fiction.
- They speak tribal dialect.
- They profess primitive religion known as Animism where spirits and objects with supernatural power are worshipped.
- They are involved in primitive occupation such as hunting and food gathering.

Studies conducted by K.L. Sharma, A.R. Desai, Ghanshyam Shah, R.K. Prasad, S.L. Doshi, and P.K. Bose show that some form of social differentiation and ranking in terms of age, sex, family and kinship existed among tribal people also. Tribes are in transition and they are being absorbed into the social order created by government of India, depending

upon their level of economic development, exposure to modern society, education, industrialization, growth of market economy and technological development in agriculture. Social Stratification existed among tribal people even prior to independence in the form of induction of group members to positions of societal importance, power, allocation of resources/cultivable land and distribution of produce. Tribal social stratification could be understood from the example of Meiteis of Manipur before their conversion to Hinduism. Meitei society was traditionally divided into seven clans- Ningthauja, Angom, Khuman, Moirang, Luwang, Khaba Nganba and Chonglei- which is called as Salai. Each of the Salai is further subdivided into sub-clans called Yumnak and Sagai. There were feuds between the clans for supremacy and Ningthauja clan dominated the other clans and established its rule as Meitei which is another name of Ningthauja clan. All the clans came under the rule of Meitei king. The Meitei society was stratified according to the degree of distance of kin ties with the king. People who had close kin ties with the king formed the nobility and were in-charge of administrative, judiciary and military services in the king's residence. The nobility owned good quality of land which enhanced not only their status but also their lifestyles. People who were distant kin of the king formed the commoners and owned low quality of lands and paid land tax in kind.

Similarly, stratification among the Chaudri tribe studied by Ghanshyam Shah shows the development of economic strata on the basis of land ownership and occupation. Shah has observed four kinds of strata among the Chaudri tribe- (a) Agricultural labourers and poor cultivators, (b) Middle Cultivators, (c) Rich Cultivators and (d) White Collar Employees. Shah found that agricultural labourers and poor cultivators occupied the lowest rung of the tribe-class hierarchy whereas the white collar employees comprised the top strata of the tribe-class hierarchy. He observed that the first three strata comprised of the 93 per cent of the total working population whereas the white collar employees constituted 7 per cent of the total working population.

12.6 RELIGION

Religion is another form of social stratification which has existed in all human societies and determines people's access to resources. Emile Durkheim defined religion as a unified system of beliefs, values and practices relative to sacred things which unites people into a single moral community called church. The practice of religion includes worship of God or gods, sacrifice, service, feasts, festivals, rituals, initiation ceremony, music and other aspects of culture. Although there are laws to provide equal protection to all religion, in reality religion helps in maintaining social inequality in society. Karl Marx said that religion is the opium for the masses which dulls their life experiences. He said that ruling class through their wealth and power can control the belief system and appropriate religious ideologies that legitimizes the current form of social inequality. Max Weber also believed that religion is appropriated by the dominant class to legitimize their good fortune and to make believe that they deserve their higher status in society whereas the subordinate class, doomed to misfortune, deserve their lower status in society. Weber in his 'The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism' observed that the Calvinist doctrine of predestination served to legitimize inequality existing in society, where success was seen as a divine reward and poverty was seen an indicator of moral failing. Similarly, Liston Pope's study 'Millhand and Preacher' shows how religion is appropriated to justify inequality existing in mill towns in North Carolina. He observes that the uptown churches justify the prevailing economic inequality existing in mill town whereas the mill churches act as recourse for the downtrodden/ workers to escape the miseries of life. Religion has been used to justify the 'divine right' of the oppressive monarchs and to perpetuate unequal social structures in society. Religion as a source of social stratification could be understood through the conversion of Meitei tribe to Hinduism. Conversion of Meitei tribe to Hinduism could be traced during the rule of Kyamba (1697-1709) and the migration of Brahmins to Manipur. The spread of Vaishnavism in 19th century Manipur also contributed to the conversion of Meiteis to Hinduism. As discussed in the previous section the Meiteis were composed

of seven clans and after conversion each clan was assigned different gotras. Gangmuimoi Kabui says Ningthauja were assigned Shandillya gotra, Angom were assigned Gautam gotra, Khuman were assigned Moudhgalya gotra, Moirang were assigned Atreyee Angiras, Luwang were assigned Kashyap gotra, Khaba Nganba were assigned Bharadvaj gotra and Chonglei were assigned Vasistha gotra. Most of the Brahmins who had migrated to Manipur have been assimilated with the clans and have the surnames of Sharma. The ruling class who were first to convert to Hinduism were given the surnames of 'Rajkumar' or Rajkumari'. The men wore dhoti, put sandalwood mark on their forehead, adorned the sacred thread which consisted of seven threads representing the seven clans and changed their food habits to that of upper caste Hindus. Those who had later converted to Hinduism from commoner were given the surname of 'Singh' who are considered as the purest among Meities, but lower than the 'Rajkumars'. Lois constitute of scheduled castes of Manipur who practice their traditional Meitei religion. They were traditionally blacksmiths and involved in cultivation, brewing of liquor, poultry and piggery. Unlike the traditional Hindu caste society, Lois are not suppressed by the upper castes and they are free to practice their tradition and customs without interference from upper castes. However, social distance is maintained between Lois and Brahmins. Earlier, Lois could come near a Brahmin but could not enter the house of the Brahmin. Moreover, like scheduled castes in rural India, they are located at the periphery from the settlement of upper castes. The restrictions regarding commensality and inter-caste marriage are also observed in Meitei society. If a Brahmin girl marries a kshatriya boy then after marriage she accepts the caste of kshatriya. Similarly, if a kshatriya girl marries a Brahmin boy after marriage she belongs to her husband's caste but she is not allowed to cook in the family kitchen for some time. The rigidity of Brahmins in their social behaviour found in rest of India is not present in Meitei society. Flexibility in social interaction between the castes is seen with some reservations on commensality and inter-caste marriage.

Religion can also be an important political symbol dividing people into different political blocs. Take the case of state politics in Uttar Pradesh where vote banks are segregated in terms of religion and caste. Religion can also be a source of conflict if people believe one's religion is superior to others or if people of majoritarian religion in India feel that they will be overpowered by the religion of the minority community it may result in conflict. Communal conflicts in India have been used as a tool to divide people of India which challenges India's nationhood.

12.7 REGION

Region is an important aspect of social stratification. People of India are stratified according to region as belonging to North India, South India, North-East and Deccan. Haddon had classified people of India into three geographical regions- the Himalayas, the Northern Plains and the Deccan corresponding to three different racial stocks. The Himalayas were inhabited by Indo-Aryan and Mongoloids, the Northern Plains by Jats and Rajputs and the Deccan by pre-Dravidian and Negritos. Within a region again people are differentiated on the basis of the sons of the soil and outsiders. The sons of the soil claim that they are the original inhabitant of a particular region and they should get priority in terms of access to resources and benefits than the outsiders/immigrants of that region. Article 19 of the Constitution of India states that every citizen of India has the right to move freely throughout the Indian territory and to live and settle in any part of the Indian territory as well as to practice any profession and carry on any occupation, trade or business But the violence exerted by the sons of the soil on the migrants, be in Maharashtra or Assam or Bangalore is an outright violation of the right of a citizen of India guaranteed by the Constitution of India. Reorganization of states in post-independent has been formed on the basis of access to resources and predominant language in a region.

12.8 LANGUAGE

Language in contemporary India has become the pronounced marker of social stratification which divides people into different levels of status according to sets of ranked categories. The constitution of India recognizes 22 languages as scheduled languages which include Assamese, Bengali, Bodo, Dogri, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Kashmiri, Konkani, Maithali, Malayam, Marathi, Meitei, Nepali, Odia, Punjabi, Sanskrit, Santhali, Sindhi, Tamil, Telegu and Urdu. People of India speak various languages like Maghi, Tulu, Pahari, Bhojpuri, Sylleti and so on which though not recognized as scheduled languages, are spoken by large number of people and have their own form of writing. India has no national language owing to the linguistic diversity in the country. However, Hindi in Devanagri script is the official language of India. Language is a means through which socialization takes place. It helps in communication and shapes our world-views. There has been a covert fear that the language of the minority may become more prevalent than the language of the majority in public sphere, which would lead to corruption of the language and culture of the majority. For example, take the case of language movement in Assam in 1960s where it was feared that Bengali which was the language of court and government schools, would overpower and corrupt Assamese language and culture. Moreover, the debate over Hindi or English being the official language of Independent India led to the rise of Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam as a political party of South India. Language can also stratify people as a marker of status and upward social mobility. For example, depicts the movie 'Hindi Medium' the struggle of parents to enrol their child in an English medium school because English language is seen as a vehicle for upward social mobility and enhancing one's status in society.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q1: Define the term 'race'.

.....

Q2: What is the difference between race and ethnicity?

.....

Q3: How many clans traditionally constituted Meitei tribe?

Q4: Who are Lois?

.....

Q5: How many scheduled languages are there in India?

.....



12.9 LET US SUM UP

- Race, ethnicity, tribe, religion, region and language are the defining features of social stratification, the primary determinant of persistent social inequality and advantages in society, shaping lives of individuals in a significant way without their realization.

- Race is one of the bases of stratification in society. The term 'race' refers to biological traits, phenotypes, ancestry and physical features considered socially significant which are believed to be the basis for creation of racial groups.

- Social Scientists have showed that race is not real, meaning that race is a social construct to differentiate or unite people based on certain biological and genetic traits for social or political interests.

- Like race, ethnicity is also a way of stratifying social groups. Ethnicity refers to shared cultural perspectives, practices, values, beliefs, norms and distinctiveness which set one group apart from another.

- Ethnicity has become an important marker for a tribe when it comes to securing political rights and marking them as distinct from others, especially the dominant regional community.

- Tribes refer to a group of people or community who are distinct from dominant regional communities and who are enumerated as scheduled tribes in the Constitution of India.

- Studies conducted by K.L. Sharma, A.R. Desai, Ghanshyam Shah, R.K. Prasad, S.L. Doshi, and P.K. Bose show that some form social differentiation and ranking in terms of age, sex, family and kinship existed among tribal people also.

- Religion is another form of social stratification which has existed in all human societies and which determines people's access to resources. Emile Durkheim defined religion as a unified system of beliefs, values and practices relative to sacred things which unites people into a single moral community called church. Although there are laws to provide equal protection to all religion, in reality religion helps in maintaining social inequality in society.

- Region is an important aspect of social stratification. People of India are stratified according to region as belonging to North India, South India, North-East and Deccan. Within a region again people are differentiated on the basis of the sons of the soil and outsiders.

- Language in contemporary India has become the pronounced marker of social stratification which divides people into different levels of status according to sets of ranked categories.

- Thus, in this unit we have discussed the various basis of social stratification like race, ethnicity, tribe, religion, region and language and how they can be basis of perpetuation of social inequality in society.



12.10 FURTHER READING

1) Sharma, K.L. (1974). The Changing Rural Stratification System. New Delhi: Orient Longman.

12.11 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans. to Q No 1: The term 'race' refers to biological traits, phenotypes, ancestry and physical features considered socially significant which are believed to the basis for creation of racial groups.

Ans. to Q No 2: The difference between race and ethnicity is race is imposed whereas ethnicity can be imposed or chosen.

Ans. to Q No 3: Traditionally Meitei tribe was constituted of seven clans.

Ans. to Q No 4: Lois constitute of scheduled castes of Manipur who practice their traditional Meitei religion.

Ans. to Q No 5: There are 22 Scheduled Languages in India.

12.12 MODEL QUESTIONS

Short Questions (Answer each question in about 150 words)

Q 1: Does racism exist in contemporary society? Support your answer with examples.

Q 2: Can language be a basis of social stratification? Discuss.

Long Questions (Answer each question in about 300-500 words)

Q 1: Discuss the role of religion in social stratification of Meitei society.

Q 2: Are tribal societies egalitarian? Support your answer with examples.

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UNIT 13 : CONTEMPORARY DEBATES IN STRATIFICATION

UNIT STRUCTURE

13.1 Learning Objectives

13.2 Introduction

13.3 Contemporary Debates in Stratification

13.3.1 Deviance and Stratification

13.3.2 Disabilityand Stratification

13.3.3 Sexualityand Stratification

13.4 Let Us Sum Up

13.5 Further Reading

13.6 Answers to Check Your Progress

13.7 Model Questions

13.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you would be able to

- Know more about causes of stratification other than factors such as gender, class and ethnicity.
- Be familiar with concept of deviance and its role in stratification and inequality.
- Be familiar with various aspects of stratification due to disability.
- Be familiar with the contemporary sociological debates regarding sexuality and inequality.

13.2 INTRODUCTION

Due to the intellectual history of Sociology and the ways in which the discipline has developed and spread across the world, the primary preoccupations of this discipline are those areas that are related towhat the classical thinkers Durkheim, Weber and Marx have also engaged with, particularly the industrial society in Europe. However, with time, these debates have been broadened and the scope of Sociology extended to include diverse issues of contemporary and global interest. Thus, even in

the case of stratification study, we need to take into account the changes brought about in contemporary society either through social movements, or changing awareness and perception, or by scholars identifying problems of social importance and studying them sociologically.

In the previous units we have discussed about the various bases of social stratification. This chapter seeks to consider stratification beyond issues of class, caste, gender and ethnicity, by delving into the role of deviance in stratification. We would discuss the impact of disability in stratification as well as sexuality and inequality. However, even though we would not discuss the other factors of stratification, it has to be borne in mind that these different aspects causing stratification do not operate in isolation and are often bundled together and intersect each other in an individual's life. This is also called theory of intersectionality, in which social categorizations such as gender, caste and class overlap and connect to each other creating interconnected systems of disadvantage or discrimination. For example, the nature of disadvantage experienced by a woman with disability might be much more severe than that of a man with disability, with the marginalization from disability in case of a woman being exacerbated and multiplied due to the marginalized gender identity and the disadvantages that it brings.

13.3 CONTEMPORARY DEBATES IN STRATIFICATION

In the subsections below we shall discuss about some of emerging debates in social stratification such as Deviance, Disability and Sexuality. In discussing these we shall understand how they bring different set of experiences for different groups of people.

13.3.1 Deviance and Stratification

The study of deviance and deviants has a long and complicated history within Sociology. There has been a tremendous evolution in the ways in which deviance was theorized and understood by scholars, which reflects the ways in which there have been overarching changes in the cultural,

political and social contexts in which different categories operate in contemporary times. Theoretical approach to deviance often operates with the underlying notion that each member of a given society learns and abides by the conventional norms of behaviour, ways of thinking and follows the informally and formally enacted rules in that society. Thus, any action or behaviour that violates this conventionally established norms and rules are termed as deviant. Thus, deviance or deviant behaviour is relative to the society or culture within the context of which it occurs. This means that what is considered acceptable in one culture might be considered deviant in another. Though deviance has a negative connotation, it does not always imply a negative act but merely as defiance of established conventions and patterns.

According to Durkheim, deviance is integral to a society since "Deviance affirms cultural values and norms. Any definition of virtue rests on an opposing idea of vice: There can be no good without evil and no justice without crime". Thus, deviance can affirm boundaries between what is morally acceptable in a society and what is not. The existence of deviance also leads individuals in society to come together and react in unison against what that society perceives as deviant behaviour, thereby increasing social solidarity. On the other hand, deviance from established norms itself is essential for a society to be introduced to change and new ways of thinking, which uplifts a society from stagnation and propels it towards social change and progress.

George Simmel wrote on the essential nature of deviance for a society that, "An absolutely centripetal and harmonious group, a pure "unification," not only is empirically unreal, it could show no real life process . . .. Just as the universe needs "love and hate," that is attractive and repulsive forces, in order to have any form at all, so society, too, in order to attain a determinate shape, needs some quantitative ratio of harmony and disharmony, of association and competition, of favourable and unfavourable tendencies.

Society, as we know it, is the result of both categories of interaction, which thus both manifest themselves wholly positive."

Other important sociological thinkers whose work on deviance still deeply impact deviance studies are:

Robert Merton, who devised his Strain Theory of Deviance in the 1940s, which was contextualised within the then-prevalent idea of the 'American Dream', which for a lot of people led toa widening gap between goals and inability to attain those goals through conventional means. This led to strain and frustration among people provoking certain reactions. These are categorised into conformity, innovation, ritualism, retreatism, and rebellion.

Howard Becker presented his Labeling Theory in his 1963 book The Outsiders, which challenged a lot of established notions about deviance and normality in society. According to Becker, "...social groups create deviance by making rules whose infraction creates deviance, and by applying those rules to particular people and labeling them as outsiders. From this point of view, deviance is not a quality of the act the person commits, but rather a consequence of the application, by others of rules and sanctions to an 'offender.' The deviant is one to whom that label has been successfully applied; deviant behaviour is behaviour that people so label." Thus, Becker brings to the fore the complicity of social groups in categorizing 'deviance' and then operationalizing these categories.

Erving Goffman too is instrumental in deviance studies for his contribution in presenting a theoretical frame to study stigma, which today deeply informs deviance studies. In his words, "While a stranger is present before us, evidence can arise of his possessing an attribute that makes him different from others in the category of persons available for him to be, and of a less desirable kind--in the extreme, a person who is quite thoroughly bad, or dangerous, or weak. He is thus reduced in our minds from a whole and usual person to a tainted, discounted one. Such an attribute is a stigma…"

Thus, it is clear from the above discussion that deviance can lead to people being discriminated against and thus give rise of inequality and a stratified society. Deviance constitutes a wide variety of identities within itself, and thus the extent of disadvantage or discrimination would differ according to the nature of deviance or deviant behaviour. The discussion around what should be considered deviant behaviour and what deviant behaviours should be criminalized or decriminalized, is one that is on-going and unlikely to end since social change and progress itself can lead to new forms of deviance.

13.3.2 Disability and Stratification

For a long time, like other areas of social life that deviated from the norm, disability studies was also not given its due place in Sociology. But over the course of the last few decades, there have been some progress made in this aspect. There have been numerous studies that have shown how disability has a strong relationship to class. Richard Jenkins argues in his paper 'Disability and Social Stratification' (1991) that "disability must be considered as a factor contributing to the production and reproduction of stratification in its own right, independently of class relations". Even in case of disabled people who have participated in the economy and are active in the labor market, disability forms an impediment making them poorly paid,rendering their employed statuses precarious and placing their economic locations outside the mainstream employment possibilities. In case of disabled people who are economically inactive, their non-participation in labor market and economic activity itself can be a measure of the extent of their global marginalization.

There have been several models of disability that have been offered by theorists over the years. These different models are important because they not only serve as lenses to regard the social attitude and cultural understanding of disability in a given society but also help in understanding the formation of disability policies and legislations politically. The most dominant model of disability is the individual model of disability. The

underlying assumption of this model is that the difficulties or impediments that disabled people face in various facets of their life are the direct result of the particular disability that they suffer from. Thus, the problem arising for the disabled rests within the disabled person. This model is of course hugely problematic since it shifts all responsibility to the disabled person themselves and can lead to the construction of social, political and economic issues faced by the disabled as something which happens simply because of disability, without taking into account the social and political conditions which make such discriminations possible. This is the most pervasive and commonplace model of disability that occurs in society as well as in academic writing. However, this model has come under critical scrutiny as disability study expands and now have been largely questioned and refuted but it still informs a lot of lay understanding of disability and stratification.

The second most prevalent model of perceiving disability is the medical model. In this model, disability comes to be constructed as an individual experience that is the by-product of the process of disease, biological abnormality or individual tragedy which befell someone. Thus, this medical model can also be viewed as a sub-category of the individual model, where disability as well as stratification due to disability is due to the circumstances in the individual's life, and extending this view further, the individual then is responsible for overcoming the limitations they face due to their disability.

The problem with the above two models of disability is that the focus is exclusively on the deviance of disabled bodies and disabled persons from what is considered 'normal' in the society. Thus, these views do not pay attention to the social, cultural, economic and political factors that can constrain disabled individuals from being able to live to their true potential. These models when operationalized in society, thus leaves disabled individuals at a disadvantaged position without any possibility of upliftment or empowerment.

The most important model of disability for us is the social model. The distinctions between this and the earlier models is that here disability is

perceived not in terms of the disabled person's impairment but in viewed in a larger context that takes into account structural, environmental and attitudinal barriers which stand as barriers in the inclusion of disabled people in areas of employment, education, social life and that keeps them from fully enjoying their rights and capacities. Thus, this social model for disability is also called 'barriers approach'. According to Barton (1960)

"Disability is a significant means of social differentiation. To be disabled means to be discriminated against and involves experiencing varying degrees of stereotyping, social isolation and restriction ... This perspective is a key aspect of a social model of disability, one which seeks to identify the ways in which society disables people. The task then is to remove those disabling material, economic, ideological, attitudinal barriers that cumulatively prevent disabled people from experiencing the entitlements of citizenship. This includes challenging the mythology of the rhetoric of democracy in the light ofthe position and experiences of marginalized and oppressed groups".

It has to be noted that these three models are not exhaustive and there are many more categories and sub-categories of models employed to view and study disability. The given models are merely the most dominant frames available today.

As per the Census 2011, there are about 26.8 million differently abled people in India. The Constitution of India lays down equal rights and freedom for all Indian citizens, including for people with disability. But disability rights have not been promoted in India to the extent that it should have been. Participation of disabled individuals in primary and higher education is still very low due to schools and educational institutions still not being made inclusive enough to be able to equally accommodate people with physical or learning disabilities. However, there have been some progress made by the government in recent times to include technologies in educational institutions that could aid individuals as well as designing infrastructures

that are accessible to people with disabilities that impede mobility. In fact, a separate Department for Empowerment of Persons with Disability was carved out under the aegis of Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment in 2012.

According to Person with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995, disability broadly includes blindness, low vision, leprosy-cured people, people with hearing impairment, locomotor disability, mental Retardation and mental illness. Even with these legislations mandated by the state, a lot more still needs to be done legally as well as in terms of changing people's attitudes to disability and the disabled. Discrimination against the disabled is very common and in the workplace, it can lead to severe marginalization of the disabled, irrespective of their employment status. So in order to address these shortcomings, the Indian government replaced this act with the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 according to the principles enshrined in United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Here, the definition of disability was broadened, along with framing policies for equal opportunities, in the forms of rules that apply to both public and private sectors. These rules have to do with equal opportunities policy to recruit and retain people with disabilities, provides for adequate facilities and benefits to the employees with disabilities, prohibits any kind of workplace discrimination or harassment, as well as creating a system of grievance redressal and complaints in case of any non-compliance with the Act.

13.3.3 Sexuality and Stratification

According to a World Health Organization report from 2006,

"Sexuality is a central aspect of being human throughout life and encompasses sex, gender identities and roles, sexual orientation, eroticism, pleasure, intimacy and reproduction. Sexuality is experienced and expressed in thoughts, fantasies, desires, beliefs, attitudes, values, behaviours, practices, roles and relationships. While sexuality can include

all of these dimensions, not all of them are always experienced or expressed. Sexuality is influenced by the interaction of biological, psychological, social, economic, political, cultural, legal, historical, religious and spiritual factors."

The construction of sexuality and gender are thus, very close to each other and the debate around each inform and constrain each other. Inequalities related to sexuality and sexual orientation happen due to the ways in which gender and sexuality are understood and judged. While a person's gender can be understood as an interplay of femininities and masculinities, influenced by a set of cultural, political and social processes, distinct from the biological sex of the person, socio-cultural norms about the distinctions between gender according to one's sex weighs heavily on individuals, especially in conservative and traditional societies. Thus, a person who is biologically born a male would be expected to perform masculine roles assigned to men and is also expected by societal norms to be in a heterosexual relationship with a woman. However, with sociological studies in sexuality and gender, we now know that these norms and categories are not as simple as they appear to be and a lot of times, they are very damaging to individuals who do not adhere to these normalized patterns of behaviour.

Sexuality or sexual orientation beyond established hetero-normativity or the existence and acceptance of many different kinds of sexualities as an issue, has received widespread attention politically and academically only in the recent times. Sexual orientation is defined as an individual's preference for or attraction to a particular sex. This can be typically divided into four categories: homosexuality, in which a person has a preference for the same sex as themselves; heterosexuality, in which a person is attracted to the opposite sex, bisexuality, when there is attraction to either sexes and asexuality, when a person is attracted to neither sex. Alfred Kinsey, the pioneer of sex research, was the first person to argue that sexuality is not fixed and unchanging but it actually exists in the form of a continuum and this understanding has been accepted by much of progressive culture and

academia. Queer theory and queer politics, by extension, is an offshoot of this line of thinking which rejects the dichotomization of sexual orientations into two mutually exclusive categories, homosexual or heterosexual, and challenges the ways in which socialization, legislation and religious dogma play a role in oppressing people of alternate sexuality and sexual orientation.

For a long time, anything deviating from conventional heterosexuality and hetero-normativity was categorized as 'deviant behaviour', even within sociology itself. Today, the study of sexuality has moved far beyond homosexuality and has been broadened to include transgender, bisexuality and queerness. The most important factor which has brought sexuality study to the fore not only in academics but also politically around the world have been the LGBTQ movement (Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals, Transgendered, Queer) which now has a global presence and which has effectively led to governments in various countries overturning legislations which until recently criminalised such behaviour and led to countries enacting legislations to provide protection against discrimination to people with such alternate sexuality, where once discrimination was considered justified. Even more important has been the attitudinal shift and awareness of alternate sexuality that has been brought about culturally and socially among people. However, a lot more still needs to be done.

LGBTQ youths have been shown by studies to be vulnerable to violence, abuse and bullying, even in an educational setting. Along with this, the rates of addiction and suicide are also inordinately high among this group due to the social and psychological pressure associated with deviating from hetero-normative expectations of their family or society. Marriage equality and rights against discrimination for LGBTQ individuals have now been enacted in many developed countries such as Germany, Spain, the Netherlands, Sweden and in many states of the United States of America. But in developing and under-developed countries, issues related to alternate sexuality still remain unaddressed and highly contested, with some countries having very high criminal penalties for any display or proof of such behaviour still deemed 'deviant' in those countries. In India, this movement is still in

its infancy and India still falls in the category of countries where such behaviour is often socio-culturally equated with mental illness and sexual and psychological dysfunction.

In a very welcome move, the Indian Psychiatric Society (IPS) issued a statement in 2014, stating that, "Based on existing scientific evidence and good practice guidelines from the field of psychiatry, the Indian Psychiatric Society would like to state that there is no evidence to substantiate the belief that homosexuality is a mental illness or a disease." In case of legislations, these have been slow to change compared to the changes in orientation to LGBT issues in academic and intellectual circles. In a historic decision in 2009, the High Court of Delhi decriminalized homosexuality, stating, "We declare section 377 of Indian Penal Code in so far as it criminalizes consensual sexual acts of adults in private is violative of Articles 21,14,and 15 of the Constitution". The demand to eliminate Article 377 has been a rallying cry uniting human rights activists as well as gay rights activists. This Article itself originated under the British colonial rulers and criminalizes any "unnatural acts against the order of nature". This implies that any sexual act other than penile-vaginal intercourse stands as illegal. This Article is not only a relic of a past legal- political system that does reflect the contemporary realities and scientific facts, but also has been used to systematically harass and abuse numerous people by those in power.

However, following the strong backlash and legal appeals from both the central government of the time and conservative opposition forces, the Supreme Court of India quashed the High Court dictate of 2009. Till recently, this case was still pending with the Supreme Court of India upholding that citizens do have the right to privacy and "sexual orientation is an essential attribute of privacy", the court would from a bench to hear the numerous petition filed by individuals and NGOs who have filed cases to decriminalize homosexuality. But in a recent verdict of the Supreme Court of India,

Homosexuality has been decriminalised. It shall, according to the verdict, no longer be considered as an ooffence in India.

With regards to transgendered rights, Rights of Transgender Persons Bill, 2014 was passed by the Rajya Sabha in 2015 which seeks to provide protection against discrimination, reservation in jobs as well as guaranteeing legal rights and benefits to all transgendered people in India. This bill is still remains pending in Lok Sabha. Again, the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Bill, 2016 was also introduced in the Parliament and still remains pending. A lot of policy changes thus remains to be implemented, including rights of individuals to marry same-sex partners, rights to adoption as well as freedom to live a life where they can express their full capabilities and potential as human beings, without being victimized due to their sexuality and sexual orientation.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: What is Merton's Strain theory?

.....

Q 2: Why is Goffman important in the study of deviance in Sociology?

.....

Q 3: Mention some models of disability.

.....



13.4 LET US SUM UP

- The theory of intersectionality stresses that social categorizations such as gender, caste and class all overlap and connect to each other creating interconnected systems of disadvantage or discrimination

- Each member of a given society are assumed and expected to learn and abide by the conventional norms of behaviour, ways of thinking and follow the informally and formally enacted rules in that society. Thus,

any action or behaviour that violates this conventionally established norms and rules are termed as deviant.

- According to Durkheim, deviance is integral to a society.
- Deviance from established norms and social expectations can lead to people being discriminated against and thus, give rise of inequality and a stratified society
- While in case of disabled people who have participated in the economy and are active in the labour market, disability forms an impediment making them poorly paid, their employed statuses precarious and their economic locations placed outside the mainstream employment possibilities. In case of disabled people who are economically inactive, their non-participation in labour market and economic activity itself can be a measure of the extent of their global marginalization.
- The construction of sexuality and gender are very close to each other and the debate around each, inform and constrain each other. Inequalities related to sexuality and sexual orientation happen due to the ways in which gender and sexuality are understood and judged.
- For a long time, anything deviating from conventional heterosexuality and hetero-normativity was categorized as 'deviant behaviour', even within sociology itself. However, today this is changing and even in legislations, new policies are being introduced to curb discrimination and violence against LGBT. However, a lot still remains to be done to introduce legal implementation of rights and freedoms, as well as to change societal attitude to these issues.



13.5 FURTHER READING

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13.6 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: Merton's Strain theory alludes to the gap between goals and inability to attain those goals through conventional means. This inability leads to strain and frustration among people provoking certain reactions. These are categorised into conformity, innovation, ritualism, retreatism, and rebellion.

Ans to Q No 2: Erving Goffman is instrumental in deviance studies for his contribution in presenting a theoretical frame to study stigma, which today deeply informs deviance studies.

Ans to Q No 3: The three most important models of disability are: individual model, medical model and social model.

13.7 MODEL QUESTIONS

Short Questions (Answer each question in about 150 words)

Q 1: What does Durkheim theorise about 'deviance'?

Q 2: Discuss the LGBTQ movement in a few sentences.

Long Questions (Answer each question in about 300-500 words)

Q 1: What are the three dominant models of Disability?

Q 2: How is disability related to inequality?

Q 3: How does sexuality relate to stratification?

Q 4: What is the present scenario of LGBT movement in India?

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