Centre for Distance and Online Education
Punjabi University, Patiala

Class : B.A. II

Semester : 3

Paper : Social Structure of Indian Society   **Unit : I**

Medium : English

Lesson No.

1.1 : SOCIAL STRATIFICATION: BASIS AND FORMS

1.2 : SOCIAL DIFFERENTIATION

1.3 : THEORIES OF SOCIAL STRATIFICATION(MAX WEBER, DAVIS & MOORE, KARL MARX)

1.4 : CASTE IN INDIA: DEFINITIONS AND FEATURES

1.5 : CHANGING PATTERNS IN CASTE SYSTEM

1.6 : CLASS IN INDIA: DEFINITION, BASES AND DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CASTE AND CLASS

Department website : www.pbidde.org

SYLLABUS

Sociology B.A. Part II (THIRD SEMESTER)
SESSION **2019-2020 & 2020-2021**
FOR REGULAR/ DISTANCE EDUCATION /PRIVATE STUDENT

For Regular Students: Each paper will carry 70 marks and 30 marks ofInternal Assessment.

The Break-up of 30 Marks for Internal Assessment (Theory Papers) is asbelow:

1. Test   12 Marks
2. Class Attendance   06 Marks
3. Field Work / Project Work/Assignment/
   Response Sheet/Seminar etc.   12 Marks

                TOTAL MARKS   30 Marks

Paper-I   Social Structure of Indian Society

FOR DISTANCE EDUCATION AND PRIVATE STUDENT EACH PAPERWILL CARRY 100 MARKS AND THERE WILL BE NO INTERNAL ASSESSMENT.

FOR REGULAR STUDENTS
MAXIMUM MARKS: 100   TIME ALLOWED: 3HRS
INTERNAL ASSESSMENT: 30
EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT: 70
FOR DISTANCE EDUCATION AND PRIVATE STUDENTS
MAXIMUM MARKS: 100

INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE PAPER-SETTER

For **Regular Students**, the question paper will consist of three sections A, B and C. Sections A and B will have four questions from the respective sections of the syllabus and will carry 10½ marks each. Section C will consist of 14 short-answer type questions, which will cover the entire

syllabus uniformly and will carry 28 marks in all. Each short-answer type question will carry two marks each. Thirty (30) marks will comprise of internal assessment.

For Distance Education and **Private Students**: The question paper will consist of three section: A, B and C. Sections A and B will have four questions from the respective sections of the syllabus and will carry 14½ marks each. Section C will consist of 14 short-answer type questions, which will cover the entire syllabus uniformly and will carry 42marks in all. Eachv,short-answer type question will carry 3marks each .

INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE CANDIDATES

Candidates are required to attempt two questions each from sections A and B. Section C is compulsory.

SECTION A

i) Social Stratification: bases and forms; social differentiation.
ii) Theories of Social Stratification : (Max Weber, Davis and Moore,Karl Marx)
i) Caste in India: Definition, features and changing patterns.
ii) Class in India: Definition and bases; caste and class.

SECTION B

i) Marriage and Family in India: Types and changing patterns.

ii) Gender discrimination; Changing Sex Ratio: Causes and consequences

iii) Features of Societal Organisation in India: Tribal, Rural

iv) Urban Organization in India and Rural-Urban Migration.

BOOKS RECOMMENDED

1. Bhatnagar, G.S. and Baldev Singh Rehal 1997. *Bharati Samaj*, Patiala:Punjabi University.

2. Bottomore, T.B. 1972. *Sociology: A Guide to Problems and Literature*,Bombay: George Allen and Unwin.

3. Chaudhary, R.K. 1986. *Caste and Power Structure in Village India*, NewDelhi: Inter India Publishers.

4. Desai, A.R. 1990. *Rural Sociology in India*, Bombay: Popular Prakashan.

5. Dube, S.C. 1990. *Indian Society*, New Delhi: National Book Trust. (Punjabi Translation also available. Translated by G. S. Arshi and published by NBT)

6. Johnson, Harry M. 1996. *Sociology: A Systematic Introduction*, Delhi:

Allied Publishers. (Hindi translation also available. Translated by Yogesh Atal and published by Kalyani Publishers, Ludhiana)

7. Kapadia, K.M. 1972. *Marriage and Family in India*, London: Oxford University Press.

8. Kaur, Savinderjit 1987. *Samaj Vigyan De Mool Sankalp*, Patiala: Punjabi University Press.

9. Kuppuswamy, B. 1982. *Social Change in India*, New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House.

10. Majumdar, and T.N. Madan 1997. *An Introduction to Social Anthropology*, NOIDA: Mayur Paperbacks

11. Sharma, K.L. 1997. *Social Stratification in India: Issues and Themes*, New Delhi: Sage Publishers.

12. Srinivas, M.N. 1995. *Social Change in Modern India*, New Delhi: Orient Longman.

13. Kaur, Savinderjit. *Samaj Vigyan naal jaan pehchan part-ii, New Acedemic Compney, Maai Hira Gate. Jallandhar.*

Lesson No. : 1.1   Author: Dr. Gurmeet Singh Sidhu

SOCIAL STRATIFICATION: BASIS AND FORMS

Structure of Lessons

1.0   Objectives
1.1   Introduction
1.2   Concept of Social Stratification
1.3   Components of Stratification
1.4   Basis of Social Stratification
       1.4.1 Biological basis
             1.4.1.1   Sex
             1.4.1.2   Age
             1.4.1.3   Race/Caste
       1.4.2   Socio-cultural basis
             1.4.2.1   Economic
             1.4.2.2   Political
             1.4.2.3   Educational
             1.4.2.4   Religious
1.5   Forms of Social Stratification
       1.5.1   Slavery
       1.5.2   Estates
       1.5.3   Caste
       1.5.4   Class
1.6   Summary
1.7   Key Concepts
1.8   Model solved questions
1.9   Important Questions
1.10   References and suggested books

1.0   Objectives:

    *   Main objective of this lesson is to explain the concept of social stratification, its bases and forms. This lesson has two parts.

*   First part focuses on why social stratification arises in society? and what way social life is affected by it? In this part, the biological/natural, and socio-economic basis of social stratification has been discussed.

*   The second part describes the main four, forms of social stratification: slavery, estates, caste and class.

1.1   Introduction:

Sociologists deal with the homogeneous as well as heterogeneous aspects of social life. Society is not a homogeneous in its nature. Social, economic and biological differences give heterogeneous shape to society. To understand the heterogeneous aspects of society, the concept of social stratification is applied in sociological studies. Social stratification is division of society into different social strata. People of different social strata divide into higher and lower, rich and poor, superior and inferior. Inequality in social life is a fundamental feature of social stratification. We can find out the inequality in higher and lower social status group in human society. In every society, some groups or individuals of particular social strata enjoy more privileges and power. The unequal privileges and power make social stratification. To understand the social reality, social stratification is becoming important in social sciences, especially in the field of sociology.

1.2   Concept of Social Stratification

Social differences or social inequality is not explained as social stratification. "Often we think of stratification in terms of assets or property, but it can also occur on the basis of other attributes, such as gender, age, religious affiliation or military rank" (Giddens: 2001; 282). No doubt inequality is a basic feature of social stratification. Thus, it includes different norms, life-styles, social groups based on unequal distribution of power and prestige that divide the society into hierarchical social strata. "Social differences become social stratification when people are ranked hierarchically along some dimension of inequality, whether this be income, wealth, power, prestige, ethnicity, or some other characteristic. Members of various strata which constitute each level of the stratification hierarchy tend to have common life-chances and life styles may display an awareness of communal identity and these characteristics further" distinguish them from other strata (The Penguin Dictionary of Sociology: 1988; 243)."

Michael Haralambos distinguishes social stratification from social inequality. According to him, the term 'social inequality' refers to the existence of socially created inequalities. Social stratification is a particular form of social inequality. It refers to the presence of social groups which are ranked one above the other, usually in terms of the amount of power, prestige and wealth their members possess. Those who belong to a particular group or stratum

will have some awareness of common interests and a common identity. They will share similar life style, which to some degree will distinguish them from members of other social strata. The Indian caste system provides an example of a social stratification system (Haralermbos and Robin Heald: 1980; 24-25).

1.3   Components of Social Stratification

On the bases of above mentioned discussion, we can say that social stratification has the following components:

(i)   Inequality is a basic feature of social stratification. It includes different norms, life styles social groups based on an unequal distribution of resources, power, prestige and rewards.

(ii)   People or groups are ranked hierarchically. Members of various   strata which constitute each level of the stratification hierarchy tend to have common life chances and may display an awareness of communal identity and these characteristics further distinguish them from other strata.

(iii)   In every society, some groups or individuals enjoy more privileges and power. Division between superior and inferior, higher and lower, rich and poor is found in the forms of social interaction between these groups.

(iv)   Social stratification exists in all societies. In traditional society, stratification was closed and based on biological or social division but in modern society, economic basis of stratification are affecting all aspects of social life.

(v)   Bases of social stratification are changing according to the nature of society. In modern world, economic division is becoming more important than biological division. In these days biological division is determined by the economic division.

1.4   Basis of Social Stratification

Human beings, groups, nations differ from each other on the basis of their social, cultural, economic and political interests. Even the biological division in society, based on sex, age and personal characteristics has divided the society into different social strata. Social discrimination and unequal distribution of social rewards, status and prestige based on biological division constitutes social stratification. The basis of social stratification may be divided into two categories.

(1)   Biological basis; and
(2)   Socio-cultural basis.

1.4.1 Biological basis of Social Stratification

1.4.1.1   Sex :- Human Society has fundamental division into two sexes- male and female. This is a biological division but it becomes social when one dominates other. In every society, male and female have no equal social

status. Human beings from both sexes think differently and have different interests. In social sciences, the difference between male and female discussed under gender question. We have seen that gender is a socially created concept which attributes different social roles and identities to men and women. Yet gender differences are rarely natural in almost in all societies gender is a significant of social stratification. Gender, a critical factor in structuring the types of opportunities and life chances, individuals and groups face and strongly influences the role they play within social institutions from the household to the state (Giddens; 112). General assumption is that man is the dominant sex and the women is the weaker or second sex. This assumption is not biologically proved, but with social constraints, the biological division on the basis of sex or gender erects with social beliefs.

1.4.1.2   Age :- Division in society based on age is also a fundamental feature of human society. Individuals' status and role in society are changed by the age. Age as a biological factor contributes to the social stratification. Human society, has divided into age groups like childhood, adolescence, adulthood and old-age. Society gives different roles for different age groups which determines the social status. Individual occupies certain status at specific age and the different duties, rights and responsibilities are also related with age groups. In India age for voter is 18 years and according to Hindu Marriage Act, age for male is 21 years and 18 years for female is fixed.

1.4.1.3   Birth :- Human beings are not biologically equal by birth. There are many races in world. Some races have their dominant position and are enjoying higher status, but lowers are discriminated by the upper. Particularly in India, caste system is a permanent division of society into different fixed caste groups. Caste of individual is determined by birth. One should not have right to change his/her caste. Every caste has different status in society according to his/her caste. Ascribed statues provided by caste which are not changeable. Economically, rich individual belongs to a lower caste group have socially lower status. Caste is a social construction.

It ties with birth become this system more rigid and cruel. The caste system fixes an individual to socially fragmented set up. Same is in the context in race. Individual cannot change his/her physical character according to his/her desire. On the basis of birth, social rewards, privileges and power is divided by the society.

1.4.2 Socio-Cultural basis

Socio-cultural bases of stratification are more important than biological bases. In socio-cultural bases of stratification, we can include economic, social, political, and religious basis.

1.4.2.1   Economic Basis : Economy is a notable base of inequality in contemporary society. Human beings are divided into upper, middle and lower classes. On the basis of economic interest society is divided into different

classes even now each class has a further division into interest groups. Sociologists would like to agree to consider the existence of an upper class (owner of property or the major parts of economic resources of a society), a working or labour class (mainly depends on wages or daily earning) and a middle class (professionals have high salary or high level earnings).

The concept of class mainly used by Karl Marx and Marx Weber both have different even opposite approaches to understand the economic system. But they have in common a view of classes as hierarchically arranged economic division in an overall system. Both Marx and Weber explained class as being related to the economic conditions/activities. Class is a general division of society, associated with achieved status and a dynamic system of social stratification which divides the society into economic classification.

1.4.2.2   Political Basis : Society has different political groups and every group has its interest. In every society, some people are enjoying more political power and privileges but others have not. The unequal distribution of power divides the society into different power groups/classes. For example, ruling class or elite class is politically more powerful than the masses. Ruling class achieves a higher status and finds pleasure to enforce the authority on others. Even in family, chief or head of the family likes more power than other members of family. President or Prime-Minister of the country has more legal power which differentiates him/her from the masses. Ruling party of the country enjoys more power and privileges than other groups or parties. Ideology or policies of different political parties or groups divide the society into different political classification/ categories.

1.4.2.3   Education Basis : In these days an education is also dividing the society into different strata. Sociologist considers an education as a base of social stratification. Education, divides the society into literate and illiterate, skilled and unskilled, trained and untrained people. Educated person achieves a higher status in society as compared to less educated or illiterate person. Even educated people further divide into different strata, on the basis of their knowledge, skill and training. Educated professional and technical professional have different status and rewards in society. For example, a doctor and a police officer achieves different social status or rewards in society. We can say that education system creates different layers of educated people.

1.4.2.4   Religious Basis : Society is not religiously homogenous by its nature. Every society has different faiths, beliefs and rituals that divide the society into different religious communities. A community belongs to same faith has a division on the basis of its religious practice. For example, in India people belong to Hindu religion are performing different rituals and practices. Hindu society has different caste groups that are not religiously

homogenous. Brahmin enjoyed more power and prestige than sudra. Hindu religious beliefs and practices delivered more power to Brahmin caste. Not only Hindu but every religion gives more respect and regards to its priest class. We live in contemporary pluralist world but a person belongs to his own religion gives more weightage to its own religion and thinks his own religion superior than the others.

Check your knowledge

*   What is social stratification?

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*   What is caste?

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*   What is the main difference between caste and class?

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1.5   Forms of Social Stratification

Social stratification is dynamic in its nature. Different types of societies have different forms of social stratification. According to T.B. Bottomore, "Sociologists have community distinguished four main types of social stratification: slavery, estates, caste and social class." But he gave more importance to caste and class. We are discussing these four forms of social stratification.

1.5.1 Slavery :-   In social sciences slavery is considered as an elementary form of social inequality. We can perceive this as a significant form of social stratification. Slavery divides the human society into two different sections between masters and slaves. The masters had their control on property. In

slavery system, slaves were treated as a property by the masters. Secondly, slaves had in lower condition as compared with freemen. Slave had no political rights he does not choose his government, he does not attend the public councils. Socially, he is despised (T.B. Bottomore: 1986; 86). In this stage, only master had unlimited power, slaves lived their life on the compassion of masters. Slaves were saled and purchased by the one master to another in the markets of Greece and Rome. Masters and slaves both lived different standards of life. Slavery has existed in various societies in different stages. Slavery mainly existed in Greece and Rome.

In slavery, the social and economic conditions for slaves were very laborious, cruel and unyielding. On the contrary, masters were owner of everything even they held on slaves. The life of masters was rich, luxurious, comfortable and restful. Human beings were divided into two different poles by the slavery system.

1.5.2 Estates :- European society was divided into different estates in medieval period. Estate system of social stratification is a next to slavery system. Every estate have its own community and collectively organised for a specific purpose. Politically, estate had its own code of conduct those determined the rights and duties. In economic life division of labour was shaped by the estate. Socially, individuals' behaviour were determined by the estate system on the basis of social stratification. T.B. Bottomore notes three important characteristics of the feudal estates. First, each estate has a status in the precise sense of a legal complex of rights and duties of privileges and obligations. Secondly, the estates represented a broad division of labour. Thirdly, feudal estates were political groups (T.B. Bottomore: 1986; 187).

Social stratification on the basis of estates was a combination of social, economic and political division. The normal divisions were threefold: clergy, nobility and the commons, though sometimes fourfold when the commons were separated into city dwellers and peasants (The Penguin Dictionary of Sociology: 1988; 90).

1.5.3 Caste :- Caste is a hierarchical division of society which is very rigid. In this system, social status of individual and his occupation is determined by birth. Caste is not a changeable. One should live and die in his/her caste. Caste is a most significant form of social stratification because people belong to different caste groups distinguish themselves from other caste groups. Every caste group is divided into upper and lower status.

The word 'caste' originated from the Spanish word 'casta' which means 'breed, race, or a complex of system hereditary. The Portuguese = means breed or race. The Portuguese applied this term to the 'classes of people' but in India, caste is known by the name of *Jati*. Caste groups (*Jati*s) derived from four varnas - Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaisyas and Sudras. Brahmins stand at the upper status and contrast to the high position enjoyed by brahmins, The

Sudras were employed to lower position/ status in society. According to their social status each caste group is engaged in its own occupation. The brahmins are required to mediate with sacred 'texts. His function is to teach, accept alms and performs priestly duties. The Kshatriyas hold the status below than brahmins, they had responsibility of administration, defense. Vaishyas were to look after agriculture and commerce. Sudras performed unclean occupation and are segregated by other population on the basis of food and touchability. India is land of caste groups. More than 3,000 castes and sub-castes are found in this country. Caste is closely attached with religion, tradition, occupations, social status food and dress habits, marriage and family.

1.5.4 Class :- Sociologists consider class as an important form of social stratification. The term 'class' is employed to differentiate the population on economic basis. In contrast to caste, class is an open form of social stratification. Class division of society is dynamic in its nature and provides achieved status. Class is a fundamental nature of contemporary capitalist industrial system. Society is divided into different classes on the basis of wealth, and power. "Marx used the term 'class' to refer to the main strata in all stratification systems, though most modern sociologists would reserve the term for social strata in capitalist society. From a Marxian view, a class is a social group whose member share the same relationship to the forces of production (Haralambos: 1990; 39). For Marx in capitalist society, there are two classes the *bourgeoise* or those who control the production forces, (means of production) and the proletarian, who are the non-owner of means of production. Max Weber had seen a further development of capitalist society, he describes three main features of class (a) a number of people have in common a specific causal component of their life chances in so far as (b) This component is represented exclusively by economic interests in the possession of goods and opportunities for income and (c) is represented under the conditions of one commodity or labour markets. No doubt, Weber also used the term 'class' to refer to a category of people with similar economic position but he gives more attention to power. Both Marx and Weber identified, class as a form of inequality (related to owner or non-ownership of economic and power resources.

1.6   Summary

According to P.S. Gisbert Social Stratification is of two types i.e. open stratification and closed stratification.

The concept of social stratification is applied in sociological studies to understand the heterogeneous aspects of society. Social stratification means a division of society into different social strata. People from different social strata have higher and lower position in society, inequality in social, economic, political and cultural life is a fundamental feature of social stratification. It

includes different norms, life-styles, social groups based on unequal distribution of power and prestige that divide the society into hierarchical social strata.

Bases of social stratification are changing according to the nature of society in modem world economic division is becoming more important than biological division. The basis of social stratification may be divided into two categories -- biological and socio-cultural.

We can observe the social stratification in various forms. But there are four main forms: slavery, estates, caste and social class. Sociologists consider caste and class as significant forms of social stratification. In contrast to caste, class is an open form of social stratification.

1.7   Key Concepts

Strata   -   means one of several parallel layer

Caste   -   In India caste is used for *Jati*

Class   -   Economic division of society on the basis of property

Gender   -   Denotes division between male and female

Status   -   Social position of an individual in society

1.8   Model Answers

A.   Social Stratification

Ans. Social stratification refers to a particular for social inequality. Social inequality becomes social stratification when people from different strata ranked hierarchically along some divisions, whether this be income, wealth, power, prestige, etc. People belong to one strata have common life-style and chances which distinguish them from other strata.

B.   Caste

Ans: Caste is a hierarchical division of society into various caste groups. Social status of individual and his occupation is determined by birth. It is an endogenous group. Every caste has its own name and life style. Caste is known by the name of *Jati* in India .

C.   Class?

Ans: The term 'class' is employed to differentiate the population on economic basis. Class means a social group whose members share the same economic relationships and a class has a common standard of life. In contrast to caste, class in an open form of social stratification, class is related to owner or non-ownership of economic and power resources.

1.9   Important questions

A.   Short questions

*   What are the main components of social stratification?
*   What are the main differences between biological and socio-cultural basis?
*   Is class a form of social stratification?
*   How economy divides the society into social strata?

B.   Long Questions

*   What do you know about social stratification? Explain its basis.
*   What is social stratification? Describe its different forms.

1.10   References and suggested books

1.   Bottomore, T.B. (1986) *Sociology: A Guide to Problems and Literature,* Blackil & Son (India) LTD., Bombay

2.   Coser, Lewis A. and Bernard Rosenberg (1982) *Sociological Theory: A Book of Readings,* Macmillan Publishing Co. Inc, New York.

3.   Crompton, Rosemary (1998), *Class and Stratification: An Introduction to Current Debates*, Polity Press, Cambridge, U.K.

4.   Giddens, Anthony (2001) *Sociology*, Fourth edition, Polity, Cambridge, U.K.

5.   Haralambos, Michael (1980): *Sociology Themes and Perspectives*, Oxford University Press, Delhi.

6.   Nicholas Abercrombie, Stephen Hill and Bryan S. Turner (1988) *The Penguin Dictionary of Sociology*, Penguin books, England.

7.   http://en.wikipedia.org. (Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia).

Lesson No. : 1.2   Author: Manish Jha

SOCIAL DIFFERENTIATION

Structure:

2.1   OBJECTIVES:

After going through the lesson you will be able to :

*   understand the meaning of social differentiation
*   discuss how it is different from biological differentiation
*   explain how it is related with inequality, hierarchy and stratification.

2.2   INTRODUCTION:

We always dream of an egalitarian society, a society where all members are equal. A society where no one would be ranked in terms of money, status and power. But obviously, such a society remains a distant dream as of now. The fact remains that in no society people are equal in all the aspects. Differentiation is the key feature of human society. The basis of this differentiation can differ from society to society. Age, sex, personal characteristics, income, occupation, residence, mobility or a combination of

all these and more. In other words, when differences based on race or sex get associated with other social indices as well then we can talk of social differentiation. When biological factors become socially relevant and get socially demonstrated, they become bases for social differentiation.

The key word in social differentiation is 'social'. That is to say those differences which are socially visible and socially demonstrated. This differentiation could be in terms of rituals, dress-style, marriage practices and most of other phenomena which help in socially separating one form of population from other. To explain it by an example, black men and white men remains a biological differentiation on the basis of race, it is only when we talk about different dress-style of white people than black or different marriage practices among them, and then it becomes social differentiation.

2.3   BIOLOGICAL DIFFERENCES AND SOCIAL DIFFERENTIATION :

First of all, we must be clear that biological differentiation is different from social differentiation. In case of biological differentiation the bases for differentiation are biological factors - age, sex and race. So, when we differentiate human population between men-women, old-young, white-black - this is biological differentiation marked on the basis of sex, age and race. Now, it is possible, as eminent sociologist Dipankar Gupta says, that these biological differences are socially amplified with respect to dress, food, residence, occupation, residence, mobility or a combination of all these and more. In other words, when differences based on race or sex get associated with other social indices as well when we can talk of social differentiation. When biological factors become socially relevant and get socially demonstrated, they become bases for social differentiation.

The key word in social differentiation is 'social'. That is to say those difference which are socially visible and socially demonstrated. This differentiation could be in terms of rituals, dress-style, marriage practices and host of other phenomena which help in socially separating one form of population from other. To explain it by an example, black men and white men remains a biological differentiation on the basis of race, it is only when we talk about different dress-style of white people than black or different marriage practices among them, and then it becomes social differentiation.

2.4   BASES OF DIFFERENTIATION :

2.4.1 Sex: .

Differentiation based on sex is the most fundamental differentiation that exists in our society. The existence of two sexes - male and female - a biological differentiation also gives rise to most important kinds of social differentiation. In every society these two sexes are differentiated in terms of dress-pattern, roles, status, norms and various other social aspects. Men and women are never alike in any society, neither in terms of their

orientation towards societal values and norms, nor in terms of the way they are treated by society at large.

However, this differentiation based on sex is not only looked in biology, rather it is rooted in culture as well. Male is not a dominant sex by nature or biologically, nor is it a universal fact. There are societies and communities where female are the dominant sex. Margret Mead, a famous anthropologist in her book, "Sex and Temperament in three Primitive Societies" has shown that among Tchambuli tribes. Male and female roles are defined in quite a different way from the way we perceive. Here women are more dominant then men. Men gossip, wear curls and are emotionally dependent upon and less responsible than women. Also, in "Mundugumor" tribes of New Guinea both men and women act in ways which we normally associate with masculine traits.

These examples make it clear that differences of traits related to sex are not inborn. Rather, they are socially and culturally constructed. Behavioural traits of male and female are defined by societal norms and values. So we see that natural differences between sexes are amplified by society and culture.

2.4.2 Age:

All societies differentiate their members on the basis of age as well. Norms governing the behaviour of young, adult and old members are different in every society. Status, privileges, responsibilities, rights and duties are differentially distributed among various age-grades in all the societies.

1. Infancy, 2. Childhood, 3. Adolescence, 4. Adulthood, 5. Old Age - these are the various age grades recognized in nearly all the societies. Our status, our rights and duties, our roles keep on changing according to the age-grade in which we find ourselves. There are certain norms and behavioural expectation attached to various age grades. We expect people to conform to the norms attached to their age-statuses. A child behaving like a mature adult or an old man behaving like a Kid surprises us, at the same time they are likely to be ridiculed or rebuked by society for not conforming to the social expectations associated with their age. A certain kind of association between age and status is always there in all kind of societies. Seniority is a factor in all kinds of groups - be it a community or an association. As Robert Bierstadt puts it very aptly "Like sex differentiation, age differentiation is one of the ties that bind people together as well as one of the barriers that keep them apart."

2.4.3 Occupational Differentiation:

In every society there is some degree of social differentiation based on role and function. In modern industrial society, this takes the shape of occupational differentiation. Our occupational roles are more often than not, most important

roles in modern industrial society. We are known by the occupation in which we are. Occupation in our society is an index and symbol of life-style and the level of prestige that is accorded to them by others. In a class-based society, occupation is the most important measure used for social differentiation.

Various occupational statuses command varying degrees of prestige and economic reward. In advanced industrial societies, some occupations like doctors, lawyers, engineers command higher prestige and economic reward than other occupations like clerk or foremen in an industrial unit.

Two factors account for greater prestige and economic reward attached to some of the occupations.

      i)   Functional importance of an occupation to the social system

      ii)   Scarcity of personnel for the occupation relative to demand.

Thus it would be argued that the occupation of Doctors is more prestigious and has greater economic reward because it is functionally more important then say a nurse since his position carries with it many of the skills necessary to perform a nurses role but not vice-versa. In other words, a doctor can perform the role of a nurse but a nurse can't perform the role of a doctor. Moreover, demand for doctors are more than supply, which might not be the case with nurses.

Income is another factor associated with occupational prestige. Those occupations which have greater income or economic rewards attached to them are regarded a more valuable then others.

Occupational Differentiation Symbolized by costumes:

Occupational statuses are often symbolized by various kinds of costumes. Policemen, priest, doctor, lawyer-all the occupations have distinct kind of costumes or dresses attached to them which makes them easily distinguishable. These costumes and dresses become status symbols for people engaged in these occupations.

Check your knowledge

(i)   Define sex as a bases of Differentiation.

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(ii)   How we can differentiate people on the bases of Age?

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(iii)   What is occupational Differentiation?

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2.5   SOCIAL DIFFERENTIATION AND INEQUALITY:

While talking about differentiation, it becomes pertinent to differentiate between differentiation and inequality. Many people argue that blacks are treated as inferior because whites are biologically superior then black. This biological superiority is the basis of their dominance over black. French philosopher - Rousseau refers to biologically based inequality as natural, as it is established by nature, and consists in a difference of age, health, strength, qualities of mind or the soul. He believed that biological inequalities between men were relatively less important then socially created inequalities which consist of different privileges which some men enjoy over others.

However, Andre Beteille argues that biological differences become biological inequalities when men define them as such. He says, "Even natural inequality is based on differences in quality and qualities are not just there in nature, they are as human beings have defined them, in different societies, in different epochs."

To put it differently, men and women, white and black they are biologically based differentiation. It is only when we assign value that man is superior then woman, white race or colour is more desirable than black - that inequality between sexes and races come into being. This identification and gradation of qualities or values is a cultural process rather than natural one. Therefore, we can say that differences or differentiation can have a biological basis but inequality invariably has a social basis.

2.6   DIFFERENTIATION AND STRATIFICATION

Differentiation is always on the basis of some criterion or a set of criteria i.e. sex, age, occupation. When on the basis of such differentiation, groups

are hierarchically arranged. We call it stratification. Stratification signifies a multilayered phenomenon, much like earths crust. Sorokin has defined social stratification as, "Differentiation of a given population into hierarchically super-posed classes. It is manifested in upper and lower layers. Its essence consists in an unequal distribution of rights and privileges among the members of a society."

To put it in other words, social stratification is the ordering of social differences with the help of a set of criteria or just a single criterion, thus tying the differentiated strata into a system.

Here it is important to note that stratification doesn't .always entail inequality. There can be separate classes of stratification without there necessarily being any inequality (in terms of wealth, power or prestige) between them. While normally we find that there is a tendency to hierarchize differences, there can be a possibility where differences don't imply inequality and are not arranged hierarchically. Language, religion, race, sex - these differences don't contain in themselves property of inequality. So, it is important to bear in mind that in social stratification strata can exist without implying inequality.

2.7   DIFFERENTIATION AND HIERARCHY:

When social differences grouped along a common axis or criteria (income, occupation etc.) are arranged vertically so that this vertical arrangement can be measured along a continuous scale we call it hierarchy. Hierarchy of income or occupation would imply that different income groups or occupational groups can be placed along a continuous scale. Here, the crucial factor is that differences are quantifiable on the basis of a fixed criterion or criteria so that they can definitely be placed vertically on a continuous scale. Height, weight, income, power can be arranged in a hierarchy.

Caste in India is one of the prime examples of hierarchy where different caste groups are vertically arranged with Brahmins occupying the top position and Shudras occupy the lowest rung in the hierarchy.

2.8   CONCLUSION:

In this lesson we learnt that differentiation is a key feature of human society. Differentiation based on sex, age and occupations are there in every known human society. When biological differences are socially visible and demonstrated they become social differentiation. When social differences are evaluated in terms of good or bad; high or low, then we call it inequality. Inequality arranged in a rank-order on a continuous scale, refers to hierarchy. Despite being co-related social differentiation and social stratification differ in a subtle way. When social differences are ordered with the help of a criterion or a set of criteria into a system, we talk about social stratification. Thus there are subtle differences between social differentiation, inequality, hierarchy and social stratification which students of sociology must bear in mind.

2.9   KEY WORDS

Social Differentiation : Socially visible and demonstrated differences based on education, income, occupation etc. refers to social differentiation.

Inequality: when differences are evaluated in terms of good or bad, high or low, they take the form of inequality.

Hierarchy: Vertical order of a phenomenon on a continuous scale on the basis of some criterion is called hierarchy.

Social Stratification: Hierarchical arrangement of population into various classes or groups on the basis of a select criterion refers to social-stratification.

2.10   EXERCISE QUESTIONS:

1.   What is the difference between social differentiation and equality?

2.   What are the bases of social differentiation?

3.   How would you differentiate between social differentiation and social stratification?

Short Questions (Define) :

(a)   Social   Stratification   (b)   Social   Differentiation

(c)   Hierarchy   (d)   Inequality

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THEORIES OF SOCIAL STRATIFICATION
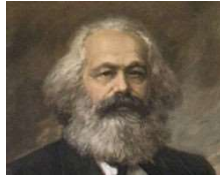
KARL HEINRICH MARX (1818-83)

Structure

3.0   Objectives :

After going through this lesson you will be able to understand :

-        Marx's perspective on the emergence of classes in society

-        Marx's perspective on the basis of class formation

-        Marx's perspective on social stratification

-        The role of social classes in social stratification

3.1   Introduction :

Karl Heinrich Marx (1818-1883) is regarded as one of the greatest thinkers of his times. His views have influenced people, classes and nations. The sociological importance of Marx lies in the fact that his ideas have contributed development of a new approach for the study of social phenomena. Some of his thoughts acquired the character of an ideology which is generally known as 'Marxism'. In Sociology too, there is a distinct school of Marxist ideology, known as Marxism. Marx was the 2nd child and eldest son of Heinrich and Henrietta Marx. He was born on the 5th May, 1818, in Trier, in the German Rhineland, where his father Heinrich Marx practised law. His parents were Jews who had converted to Protestantism.

He grew up and matured in times of profound change and turmoil in Europe. Europe of that period was, above all else, the product of two great historical transformations. First, the explosive growth of modern factory and industry and the associated expansion of the world market, and the second, the French Revolution of 1789 followed by Napoleonic wars, which effectively dealt the death-blow to absolute monarchies and the remnants of feudal power. To the men and women of Europe, who lived in 19th century, the world had undergone, in two generations, a series of transformations so profound, that it was almost impossible to grasp them. Great cities had sprung up and were expanding at break-neck speed. The steam engine had made possible the location of factories in these centres.

The increasing stream of newly invented machines eliminated many thousands of independent craftsmen and small workshops. At the same time, hundreds and thousands of small family farms were ruined by the enclosures of the 18th century. The new factory towns were, therefore, soon flooded with destitute small farmers and their families. Here was the mass of the cheap labour which the new factory owners needed. In cities, the individuals lived a life unlike that of any earlier historic period; the old community of the village, the solidarity of the craft guild in the traditional towns, the old ties of the ownership group and the extended family had all gone, and the individual was cast adrift into the mass. His life and social relations at work in the factory, or in commerce, were

separated off from experience of home and neighbourhood. Traditional loyalties, mutual obligations and the solidarity of community and kin were everywhere replaced by the isolation and individuality of the citizen.

Thus a new industrial class of wage earners, with no attachments to the land, and free to sell their labour for wages, was coming into existence everywhere, much more quickly in some countries than in others. At the same time, the brilliance of the scientific and technical achievements stimulated a widespread optimism and a belief in unlimited progress among the middle classes, despite the mass poverty, starvation and appalling conditions of life in the cities.

Marx was also a witness to this era. From his self-assumed position of a *marginal man*, he wrote about the crushing out of individuality by the exploitation and operation of the masses in the new factory system. The individualism of capitalist era, meant for a vast majority, only isolation and alienation from their fellow men. At the same time, Marx himself being a product of 19th century Europe shared the optimism that emergence of a just and humane 'Communist Society' was inevitable. In fact, he even believed that such a society was round the corner.

His main contribution to understanding society and social processes was through his theory of '*Historical Materialism*'. He presented a radical alternative to the traditional views held by the functionalists and other theorists on the nature and patterns of social life. Marx tried to understand social development in terms of class conflict. Social stratification was central in his analysis. He saw stratification as a divisive rather than an integrative process, and at the same time also pronounced it as inevitable for social development.

He is one of the most important and most controversial of the sociological thinkers, who has been often misunderstood. He himself was partly responsible for the controversy and misunderstanding that surrounds his works. His writings were too voluminous, lacked precision and were not written 'with the objective' of building a new science of society, rather they were dedicated to the revolutionary cause of building a humane and just society.

3.2   Marx on Stratification :

Marxian theory offers a radical alternative to functionalism. It became increasingly influential during the 1970s, partly due to the decline of functionalism, partly to its promise to provide answers which functionalism

failed to provide and partly because it was more in keeping with the tenor and mood of the times.

Marxian perspectives provide a radical alternative to the functionalist views of the nature of social stratification. They regard stratification as a divisive rather than an integrative structure. They see it as a mechanism whereby some exploit others rather than a means of furthering collective goals. They focus on social strata rather than social inequality in general.

According to the Marxian view, in all stratified societies, there are two major social groups: a ruling class and a subject class. The power of the ruling class derives from its ownership and control over the forces of production. The ruling class exploits and oppresses the subject class. As a result, there is a basic conflict of interest between the two classes. The various institutions of the society such as the legal and the political systems are instruments of the ruling class domination and serve to further its interests. Only when the forces of production are communally owned will the classes disappear, thereby bringing an end to the exploitation and oppression of some by others.

Marx used his theory of '*Historical Materialism*' to understand social change. For him the first premise of history was the existence of living beings. Marxian theory begins with the simple observation that in order to survive, man must produce food and material objects. In doing so he enters into social relationships with other men. The physical organisation of human society and the relations human beings have with nature are important indications of development. Although living beings depend upon nature for their survival, the basic difference between human beings and other living creatures is that the former can transform nature to suit their survival needs whereas the latter adapt to nature. A cow eats grass but it cannot grow grass. Human beings can not only exploit nature but also possess the ability to transform it. This implies that human beings have the ability to produce their own means of subsistence. Marx noted in his work, *German Ideology* that "Men can be distinguished from animals by consciousness, by religion, or by anything one likes. They themselves begin to distinguish themselves from animals as soon as they begin to produce their means of subsistence, a step which is determined by their physical condition. In producing their actual means of subsistence men indirectly produce their actual material life."

It was through the act of production that human societies developed. Primitive human beings were totally dependent upon nature as their survival was largely dependent upon hunting and food gathering. As human beings gradually started

transforming the nature, society was able to produce more for the existence of its people.

Through technological innovations and the advent of iron tools humans were able to make improvements in agriculture and consequently form settled communities. As agriculture developed and production grew, the community was able to produce more than its requirements. Thus there was surplus. It now became possible to support the food requirements of even those who did not primarily engage themselves in the production of food. Hence the efforts of a few could meet the survival needs of the larger lot. During the primitive times all the people were engaged in similar activities needed for their survival, primarily in the production of food, clothing and shelter. But with the availability of surplus, it became possible for the larger population to diversify their activities. Hence some produced food, which was sufficient enough to feed all, while others engaged in activities other than producing food. The division of labour became more complex.

This resulted in some people gaining control over the means of production at the cost of others. Thus, the property which was hitherto commonly held by all the members of the society largely came to be concentrated under the control of a few, giving rise to the notion of private property. There came a shift from the subsistence pattern and collective ownership of the 'Primitive Communism' towards a society oriented towards private property. Now the interests of all the people were no longer common and there cropped up differences in interests. The interests of the individual became different from the interests of the community. Marx stated that division of labour and private property are identical expressions. It implied the contradictions between individual and communal interests.

These contradictions which appear in the human society are due to the existence of private property, and this leads to the formation of classes which form the basis of social stratification. According to Marx, in all stratified societies there are two major groups: a ruling class and the subject class. The ruling class exploits the subject class and gains at the expense of it. As a result there is a basic conflict of interest between the two classes. Marx further stated in his work, contributions to the Critique of Political Economy, that the various institutions of the society such as legal and political systems, religion etc., which he calls as the superstructure, are the instruments of ruling class domination and serve to further its interests. In his famous phrase Marx says that infrastructure shapes the Superstructure. This position of Marx will now be discussed in detail.

3.3   Class :

The concept of class is one of the central concepts in Karl Marx's theory of social stratification as well as that of social change. It has been used as one of the basic tools for analysing inter-group dynamics and changes in the society. However, Marx never developed a systematic analysis of class. In the sociological sense he viewed class as a group of people sharing the same relations to the 'forces of production'. Viewed in this sense, all societies except the most primitive have had two main classes; namely, that consisting of the owners of the 'forces of production', and that consisting of non-owners. These class divisions result as a consequence of the development of the institution of private property. It is this view of class which was crucial to Marx's theory of social stratification and also that of social change. However in some of his writings, Marx has used the term class in a purely descriptive sense too. Here, it serves simply as a classificatory device, i.e. he classified people in the society into various categories according to some relevant criteria. Thus in 'Revolution and Counter Revolution in Germany' Marx distinguishes seven classes - the feudal landlords, the bourgeoisie, the petty bourgeoisie, the rich and middle peasants, the poor peasants, the *proletariat*, and the *lumpen proletariat*.

Marx used the term class to refer to the two main strata in all stratification systems. According to the Marxian view, in all stratified societies, there are two major social groups: a ruling class and a subject class. The power of the ruling class derives from its ownership and control over the forces of production. It is thus able to appropriate the labour of the subject class. The ruling class exploits and oppresses the subject class. As a result, there is a basic conflict of interests between the two classes. The various institutions of the society such as the legal and the political systems are instruments of the ruling class domination and serve to further its interests. Only when the forces of production are communally owned will the classes disappear, thereby bringing an end to the exploitation and oppression of some by others.

From a Marxian perspective, the systems of stratification derive from the relationships of social groups to the forces of production. Marx used the term class to refer to the main strata in all stratification systems, though most modern sociologists would reserve the term for strata in a capitalist society. From a Marxian view, class is a social group whose members share the same relationship to the forces of production. Class comprises of two major groups, one of which controls the means of production and hence is able to appropriate the labour of the other class due to the specific position it holds in the social economy. The aspect of ownership and non-ownership of forces of production is the defining feature which distinguishes one class from the other, i.e. a class of

the owners and a class of the non-owners. During the feudal epoch there are two main classes distinguished by their relationship to land, the major force of production. They are the feudal nobility who own the land and the landless serfs who work on the land. Similarly, in the capitalist era, there are two main classes, the bourgeoisie or the capitalist class which owns the forces of production and the proletariat or the working class whose members own only their labour which they hire to the bourgeoisie in return for wages.

Another aspect of class, which is seen from Marx's description, is that the relationship between the major social classes is one of mutual dependence and conflict. In capitalist society the bourgeoisie and proletariat are dependent upon each other. The wage labourer must sell his labour power in order to survive since he does not own a part of the forces of production and lacks the means to produce goods independently. He is therefore dependent for his livelihood on the capitalists and the wages they offer. The capitalists, as non- producers, are dependent on the labour power of wage labourers, since without it, there would be no production. However, the mutual dependency of the two classes is not a relationship of equal or symmetrical reciprocity. Instead, it is a relationship of exploiter and exploited, oppressor and oppressed. In particular, the ruling class gains at the expense of the subject class and there is therefore a conflict of interest between them. Hence there exists, at the same time, a relation of dependence and opposition between the classes. The dialectics of class is therefore a result of this combination of dependence and opposition. The relationship between the classes is a dynamic relationship which results in social change. This is why classes are central to Marx's approach to social transformation.

He found that the class that owns the 'means of production' would have a vested interest in preserving the existing social relations and institutions, so as to perpetuate its dominance, while those who are deprived of the right of ownership of 'means of production' would be interested in transforming the existing social relations. And it is the conflict between these two interests that will manifest itself as class conflict and would act as the mid-wife of change. Thus it is the sociological meaning of class in Marx's writings which is crucial for understanding the theory of class and class conflict.

3.4   Forces of Production :

The forces of production express the degree to which human beings control nature. The more advanced the productive forces, the greater is their control over the nature and vice-versa. The forces of production are the ways in which material goods are produced. They include the technological know-how, the types

of equipment in use, tools, machinery, labour and the levels of technology. The forces of production, according to Marx, include the means of production and labour power.

3.5   Relations of Production :

The major contradictions in society are between the forces and relations of production. The forces of productions include land, raw materials, tools and machinery, the technical and scientific knowledge used in production, the technical organization of the production process and the labour power of the workers. The relations of production are the social relationships which men enter into in order to produce goods. These relations are the relations of ownership and non ownership. Thus in feudal society they include the relationship between the lord and vassal and the set of rights, duties and obligations which make up that relationship. In capitalist industrial society they include the relationship between employer and employee and the various rights of the two parties. The relations of production involve the relationship of social groups to the forces of production. Thus in feudal society, land, the major force of production, is owned by the lord whereas the serf has the right to use land in return for services or payment to the lord. In Western industrial society, the forces of production are owned by the capitalist whereas the worker owns only his labour which he hires to the employer wages.

3.6   Historical Epochs and Modes of Production :

Besides the forces and relations of production Marx has spoken about the modes of production. Accordingly, he has described stages of human history in terms of the four modes of production, namely, the Primitive Communism, Ancient, Feudal and Capitalist. The history of the West according to him, tells us about the ancient, feudal and capitalist (bourgeois) modes of production. The ancient mode of production is characterised by slavery, the feudal mode of production by serfdom, and the capitalist mode of production by wage earning. They constitute three distinct modes of exploitation of human labour in Western societies.

Marx believed that the Western society had developed through four main epochs:

> **a.   Primitive Communism**
>
> **b.   Ancient Society**
>
> **c.   Feudal Society**
>
> **d.   Capitalist Society**

Primitive Communism is represented by the societies of pre history and provides the only example of a classless society. From then on, all societies are divided into two major classes: masters and slaves in the *ancient society*, lords and serfs in the *feudal society*, and capitalists and wage labourers in the *capitalist society*. During each historical epoch, the labour power required for production was supplied by the subject class, that is, by slaves, serfs, and wage labourers, respectively. The subject class is made up of the majority of the population whereas the ruling or the dominant class forms the minority. The relationship between the two major classes has already been discussed.

Classes did not exist during the era of Primitive Communism when societies were based on a socialist mode of production. In hunting and gathering band, the earliest form of human society, the land and its products were communally owned. The men hunted and the women gathered plant food, and the produce was shared by the members of the band. Classes did not exist since all members of the society shared the same relationship to the forces of production. Every member was both producer and owner; all provided labour power and shared the products of their labour. Hunting and gathering is a subsistence economy which means that production only meets the basic survival needs. Classes emerge when the productive capacity of the society expands beyond the level required for subsistence. This occurs when agriculture becomes the dominant mode of production.

In an agricultural economy, only a section of society is needed to produce the food requirements of the whole society. Thus many individuals are freed from food production and are able to specialize in other tasks. This rudimentary division of the labour of the hunting and gathering band was replaced by an increasingly more complex and specialized division of labour. For example in the early agricultural villages, some individuals became full time producers of

pottery, clothing and agricultural implements. As agriculture developed, surplus wealth, that is goods above the basic subsistence needs of the community, was produced. This led to an exchange of goods and trading developed rapidly both within and between communities. This was accompanied by the development a system of private property. Goods were increasingly seen as commodities or articles of trade to which the individual rather than the community had the right of ownership. Private property and the accumulation of surplus wealth form the basis of the development of class societies. In particular, they provide the preconditions for the emergence of a class of producers and a class of non producers. Some are able to acquire the forces of production and others are therefore obliged to work for them. The result is a class of non producers, which owns the forces of production and a class of producers which owns only its labour power.

Marx conceived of four major successive modes of production in the history of humankind. Each of them came into existence through contradictions and antagonisms that had developed in the previous order. "*No social order ever disappears before all the productive forces for which there is room in it have been developed; and new higher relations of production never appear before the material conditions of their existence have matured in the womb of the old social order.*" A new historical epoch is created by the development of superior forces of production by a new social group. These developments take place within the framework of the previous era. For example, the merchants and industrialists who spearheaded the rise of capitalism emerged during the feudal era. They accumulated capital, laid the foundations for industrial manufacture, factory production and the system of wage labour, all of which were essential components of capitalism. Change in the means of production due to improvement in technology leads to an imbalance between the forces of production and the relations of production. The class whose interests are advanced by this new technology is able to play the decisive role in bringing revolutionary changes in the society. The superiority of the capitalist mode of production led to a rapid transformation of the structure of the society. The capitalist class became dominant, and although the feudal aristocracy maintained aspects of its power well into the nineteenth century, it was fighting a losing battle. A revolutionary class will be successful if it is able to link its interests with the requirements of the society as a whole.

Class antagonisms specific to each particular mode of production led to the emergence of classes whose interests could no longer be asserted within the framework of the older mode of production. At the same time, the growth of productive forces reached the limits imposed by the previous productive

relations. When this happened, the new emerging class which represents the novel forces of production broke down the older order, and the new productive forces which were developed within the matrix of the old order, created the conditions for further advance.

Primitive Communism – Classless society

Ancient Society – Masters v/s Serfs

Feudal Society – Lords v/s Serfs

Capitalist Society – Bourgeoisie v/s Proletariat

Classes during the historical epochs of societies

Revolutionary change requires that the forces of production on which the new order will be based have developed in the old society. Therefore the new higher relations of production never appear before the material conditions of their existence have matured in the womb of the old society. This process may be illustrated by the transition from feudal to capitalist society. Industrial capitalism gradually developed within the framework of feudal society. In order to develop fully, it required, 'the free wage labourer who sells his labour-power to capital'. This provides a mobile labour force which can be hired and fired at will and so efficiently utilized as a commodity in the service of the capital. However, the feudal relations of production, which involved 'landed property with serf labour chained to it', tended to prevent the development of wage labourers. Eventually the forces of production of capitalism gained sufficient strength and impetus to lead to the destruction of the feudal system. At this point the rising class, the bourgeoisie, became a class for itself and its members united to overthrow the feudal relations of production. When they succeeded, the contradiction between the new forces of production and the old relations of production was resolved.

Once a new economic order is established, the superstructure of the previous era is rapidly transformed. The contradiction between the new infrastructure and the old superstructure is now ended. Thus the political dominance of the feudal

aristocracy was replaced by the power of the newly enfranchised bourgeoisie. The dominant concepts of feudalism such as loyalty and honour were replaced by the new concepts of freedom and equality. In terms of the new ideology the wage labourer of capitalist society is free to sell his labour power to the highest bidder. The relationship between employer and employee is defined as a relationship between equals, the exchange of labour for wages as an exchange of equivalents. But the resolution of old contradictions does not necessarily mean an end to contradictions in society. As in previous eras, the transition from feudalism to capitalism merely results in the replacement of an old set of contradictions by a new.

3.7   Class and Class Conflict :

According to Marx, classes are determined on the basis of individual's relation to the means of production. These relations are independent of individual's will. Class is determined not on the basis of the occupations of an individual, but on the basis of his position relative to the means of production.

Social classes arise out of the relations of production, that is, the way, the production is organised in society. This in turn depends upon the level of development of the 'means of production'. In '*primitive communism*', the 'means of production' are communally owned, and hence there are no class divisions because all members share same relations to the '*means of production*'.

However, with the development of agriculture, surplus becomes available and the institution of private property or private ownership of the '*means of production*' comes into existence. As a result of this, some people come to own and control the '*means of production*' to the exclusion of others, thus class divisions emerge. Hereafter, all stages of social development are characterised by a two-fold class division. For example, there are 'masters' and 'slaves' in "Ancient society", 'feudal lords' and 'serfs' in the 'feudal society'. The relations between these two classes are antagonistic and exploitative.

3.7.1 Class Conflict :

From a Marxian perspective political power derives from economic power. The power of the ruling class therefore stems from its ownership and control of the forces of production. Since the *superstructure* of society – the major institutions, values and belief systems – is seen to be largely shaped by the economic *infrastructure,* the relations of production   will   be   reproduced   in   the superstructure. Thus the dominance of the ruling class in   the   relations   of production will be reflected in the structure. In particular, the political and legal systems will reflect class interests since, in Marx's words, "The existing relations

of production between individuals must necessarily express themselves also as political and legal relations". For example, the various ownership rights of the capitalist class will be enshrined in and protected by the laws of the land. Thus the various parts of the superstructure can be seen as instruments of ruling class domination and as mechanisms for the oppression of the subject class. In the same way, the position of the dominant class is supported by beliefs and values which are systematically generated by the infrastructure. In a capitalist society, the means of production and distribution of goods are concentrated in the hands of a few. These few privileged that control economic power also control the political machinery including the courts, the police, and the military. The class which is economically dominant also dominates the intellectual sphere.

Marx refers to the dominant concepts of class societies as *ruling class ideology* since they justify and legitimate ruling class domination and project a distorted picture of reality. For example, the emphasis on freedom in capitalist society, illustrated by phrases such as 'the free market', 'free democratic societies' and 'the free world', is an illusion which disguises the wage slavery of the proletariat. Ruling class ideology produces '*false class consciousness*', a false picture of the nature of the relationship between social classes. Members of both classes tend to accept the status quo as normal and natural and are largely unaware of the true nature of exploitation and oppression. In this way the conflict of interest between the classes is disguised and a degree of social stability produced but the basic contradictions and conflicts of class societies remain unresolved.

The antagonism between these classes is not confined to their economic interest alone, but also manifests itself in social and political relations, because according to Karl Marx, the class which dominates the economic substructure by virtue of the ownership of the '*means of production*' also dominates the political institutions and becomes the *ruling class*. Other social institutions, too, sub-serve the interest of this ruling class and help in perpetuating its domination over the non-ownership class. While the superstructure may stabilize society and contain its contradictions over long periods of time, this situation cannot be permanent. The fundamental contradictions of class societies will eventually find expression and will finally be resolved by the dialectic of historical change. A radical change in the structure of society occurs when a class is transformed from a 'class in itself to a 'class for itself.

With the continuous growth of the '*means of production*' the deprived class gradually acquired an awareness of its class interest and resort's to political action to achieve those interests. Such an active group was termed by Marx as '*class for itself*' (Class without the awareness of its interest was termed *class in itself*).

Marx distinguished between a '*class in itself*' and a '*class for itself*'. A class in itself is simply a social group whose members share the same relationship to the forces of production. It refers to members of society who share the same objective relationships to the forces of production. Thus, as wage labourers, members of the proletariat form a class in itself. However, a class only becomes a class for itself when its members are fully conscious of the true nature of their situation, when they are fully aware of their common interests and common enemy, when they realize that only by concerted action can they overthrow their oppressors, and when they unite and take positive, practical steps to do so. Marx argues that a social group only fully becomes a class when it becomes a class for itself. At this stage its members have *class consciousness* and *class solidarity*. Class consciousness means that false class consciousness has been replaced by a full awareness of the true situation, by a realization of the nature of exploitation. Members of a class develop a common identity, recognize their shared interests and unite, so producing class solidarity. The final stage of class consciousness and class solidarity is reached when the members realize that only by *collective action* can they overthrow the ruling class, and when they take positive steps to do so. When a class becomes a class for itself, the contradiction between the consciousness of its members and the reality of their situation is ended. A class becomes a class for itself when the forces of production have developed to the point where they cannot be contained within the existing relations of production. In Marx's words, 'For an oppressed class to be able to emancipate itself, it is essential that the existing forces of production and the existing social relations should be incapable of standing side by side'.

Thus, an overt conflict erupts between the deprived class which becomes progressive and demands change, on one hand, and the dominant class which tends to be reactionary and wants to preserve the existing social order, on the other. This conflict may often become violent leading to profound changes in society. Thus, according to Marx, class conflict is the primary vehicle for social change. This is evident from the opening sentence of the 'Manifesto of the Communist Party':

"*The history of all hitherto existing societies is the*

history of class struggles"

Capitalist system by its very nature is an exploitative system where the majority of people, namely, the *proletariat* are exploited by a few capitalists. In their incessant drive for greater and greater profits the capitalists – tends to drive wages down to a minimum level - the bare level required for a workers existence. *Further* the capitalist society is by its very nature unstable and is based on

contradictions and antagonisms which can only be resolved by its transformation. In particular, the conflict of interest between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat cannot be resolved within the framework of a capitalist economy. The basic conflict of interest involves the exploitation of workers by the capitalists. This contradiction would be high lighted by a second, the contradiction between social production and individual ownership. Social production juxtaposed with individual ownership illuminates the exploitation of the proletariat. Social production also makes it easier for workers to organize themselves against the capitalists. It facilitates communication and encourages recognition of common circumstances and interests.

Marx believed that the contradictions of capitalism were sufficient to transform the proletariat into a class for itself and bring about the downfall of the bourgeoisie. He saw the magnitude of these contradictions and the intensity of class conflict steadily increasing as capitalism developed.

Apart from the basic contradictions of capitalist society, Marx believed that certain factors in the natural development of a capitalist economy will hasten its downfall. *Firstly,* the increasing use of machinery will result in a *homogeneous working class*. Since machinery *obliterates* the differences in labour, members of the proletariat will become increasingly similar. The differences between skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled workers will tend to disappear as machines remove the skill required in the production of commodities. The labourers become more homogeneous in terms of their new skills dictated by the rapidly changing machinery in the factories. *Secondly*, the difference in wealth between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat will increase as the accumulation of capital proceeds. Even though the real wages and living standards of the proletariat may rise, its members will become poorer in relation to the bourgeoisie. This process is known as *pauperization*. *Thirdly*, the competitive nature of capitalism means that only the largest and most wealthy companies will survive and prosper. Competition will depress the intermediate strata, those groups lying between the two main classes, into the proletariat. Thus the '*petty bourgeoisie*', the owners of small businesses, will 'sink into the proletariat'. At the same time the surviving companies will grow larger and capital will be concentrated into fewer hands.

These three processes — the obliteration of the differences in labour, the pauperization of the working class and the depression of the intermediate strata into the proletariat - will result in the *polarization* of the two major classes. The growth of capitalism leads to polarisation of society into two hostile camps, one consisting of a few monopoly capitalists and the other consisting of the exploited *proletariat*.

The increasing pauperisation, homogenisation and the consequent polarization of capitalist society may contribute to the development of *class consciousness* among the workers and they become the new progressive class, who will find it necessary to wrest the control of the state form the capitalists in order to bring capitalism to an end, which they do by resorting to a violent revolution. Capitalism will be replaced by *Socialism*. This socialism is transitory in nature, in which the remnants of Capitalism will be done away with and its purpose is to create *communism*, the last stage of evolution where there will not exist any private property, no classes, therefore no state. The production will be for the needs of the people and not for the market. The *proletariat* will be the only class and the class divisions will come to an end. In the absence of class conflict, politics and the state will become redundant and a social order will arise in which production will be carried out without coercion, for the good of all.

Such a society was termed by Marx as a '*Communist Society*'.

TEST YOUR PROGRESS

1.   Define Class.

   _____

   _____

   _____

2.   What do you mean by 'Relations of Production'?

   _____

   _____

   _____

3.   What do you mean by 'false class consciousness'?

   _____

   _____

   _____

4.   What do you mean by 'class in itself'?

        _____

        _____

        _____

5.   What are the different stages through which society progresses, according
        to Marx?

        _____

        _____

        _____

3.8   Conclusion :

Class conflict or class struggle is the central theme of the writings of Marx. He wrote, "*The history of all hitherto existing societies is the history of Class Struggle.*" According to Marx, the act of producing the essentials of life engages people into social relationships that may be independent of their will. In most of human history, according to Marx, these relationships are class relationships that create class struggle.

He was of the view that the human society passed through different stages of development. Each of these stages of development is defined by the mode of production. For Marx land, labour, capital and enterprise are the major factors of production. A sum total of these constitute the 'forces of production'. The oppressors have control over the forces of production and the oppressed are deprived of it. Therefore another phrase, 'haves and have nots' is used to characterise these classes.

According to Marx, each stage of development contains the seeds of its own downfall and destruction. The conflict, whether it is between the masters and the slaves, the land lords and the serfs, the bourgeoisie and the *proletariat* characterised all the stages of societal development. Only the contenders differed in each stage. Thus, class struggle takes place at every stage. In the capitalist stage of development, the bourgeoisie and the *proletariat* become polarised and conflict occurs between them.

It is the Capitalistic mode of production when the *proletariat* become conscious of their class position. At this stage the *proletariat* acquire a revolutionary character by overthrowing their oppressors, the bourgeoisie. Marx explained class struggle with the help of 'dialectical materialism'.

Marx believed that except in communist societies, class conflict is inherent in the economic organizations of all societies. According to him societies are stratified into two hostile groups: the owners and the non-owners. There is a tendency of radical polarisation of classes. The economic crisis sharpens the contradiction between the bourgeoisie and the *proletariat* in the capitalist mode of production. Thus there is a steady polarization of the two major classes as the intermediate strata are submerged into the proletariat. As capital accumulates, it is concentrated more and more into fewer hands, a process accompanied by the relative pauperization of the proletariat. Production assumes an increasingly social and cooperative character as larger and larger groups of workers are concentrated in factories. At the same time the wealth produced by labour is appropriated by fewer and fewer individuals as greater competition drives all but the larger companies out of business. Such processes magnify and illuminate the contradictions of capitalism and increase the intensity of conflict. This leads to the intensification of struggle. Gradually, the conflict may turn into a violent revolution resulting in the destruction of the structure of the capitalist society. Ultimately a classless society is likely to be created with the social dictatorship of the *proletariat*. Classes would thus come to an end, and hence a classless society would emerge.
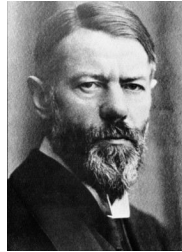
MAX WEBER (1864-1920)

Max Weber, the renowned German Sociologist, is often regarded as one of the founders of modern Sociology; mainly because he developed a coherent philosophy of social science, which recognised the essential problems of explanation of social behaviour. He conceived of Sociology as a Comprehensive science of Social Action. He also focused attention on the basic characteristics of the emergent modern industrial civilization.

Maximilian Carl Emil "Max" Weber was born on April 21, 1864, in Erfurt in East Germany. He was the eldest of seven children of Max Weber Senior, a wealthy and prominent politician in the national Liberation Party (Germany) and Helene Fallenstein, a Protestant and a Calvinist, with strong moral absolutist ideas.

Max Weber was an intellectual par excellence. He possessed systematic and thorough knowledge with varied details and historical depth. He was an erudite scholar with a clear, lucid, and an uncomplicated style of expression.

Sociology has made rapid strides in Germany after World War II. However, so far nobody has contributed as much for the subject as has Max Weber. In order to understand contemporary Sociology, one has to acquaint himself with Weber's contributions. He has left an indelible impression on the discipline of Sociology by interpreting the methodology to be adopted in carrying our social research. He is rightly called, along with Emile Durkheim, as the founding father of modern Sociology.

Like Marx, Weber recognised the economic aspect of stratification but he differed with Marx on several of his basic propositions. While Marx focussed his attention on the toiling classes and looked at social development from their point of view, Weber stressed on the role of the propertied classes in social development. Thus Weber is often referred as the Bourgeois Marx.

All communities are arranged in a manner where goods, tangible and intangible, symbolic and material are distributed. Such a distribution is always unequal. All human societies from the simplest to the most complex have some form of social inequality. In particular power, wealth and prestige are unequally distributed between individual and social groups. Power refers to the degree to which individuals or groups can impose their will on others, with or without the consent of those others. Prestige relates to the amount of esteem or honour associated with social positions, qualities of individual and styles of life. Wealth refers to material possessions defined as valuable in particular societies. It may include land, livestock, buildings, money and many other forms of assets owned by individuals or social groups. Classes, status groups and parties are phenomena of the distribution of power within a community. Status groups makes up the social order, classes the economic order, and parties the legal/political order. Each order affects and is affected by the other.

From childhood, Weber had been exposed to class consciousness and the daily exercise of status and power. As a scientist, he was never far from these three dimensions in his study of human behaviour; stratification, organization, and politics consumed his interests. In the formation of relationships, says Weber, men tend to be attracted to and enter into social relationships with others who share common positions and interests in the areas of economics, politics, and culture. Such clusterings or self selecting collectivities tend also to exclude those who differ in any of the key fields of interests. Weber's conception of stratification is essentially a theory of group formation, a set of hypotheses about the conditions that bring men together in solidarity groups. These conditions are found in the way men relate to the institutional orders that link groups together in to a society. Weber's approach to the concept of class, status and power is a three dimensional approach to Social Stratification. It is the application of his methodology of Causal pluralism as he defines Social Stratification as a phenomenon caused due to plurality of factors, and not relegated to a single cause, namely economic.

The Concept of Power :

Power is the chance of a man or a number of men to realize their own will in a social action even against the resistance of others who are participating in the action. Power may rest of a variety of bases, and can be of differing types. For example economic power is not identical with power. The emergence of economic power may be the consequence of power existing on other grounds. Man does not strive for power only to enrich himself economically. Power, including economic power, may be valued for its own sake. Very frequently the striving for power is conditioned by the social honor it entails. Not all power entails honor.

Class :

Like Marx, Weber sees class in economic terms. He also believed that class was a basic form of stratification in the society. He argues that classes develop in market economies in which the individuals compete for economic gains. He defines a class as a group of individuals who share a similar position in a market economy and by the virtue of that fact receive similar economic rewards. Thus in Weber's terminology, a person's 'class situation' is basically his 'market situation'. Those who share a similar class situation also share similar life chances. Their economic position will directly affect their chances of obtaining those things defined as desirable in their society, for example access to higher education and good quality housing.

He defined the term class according to the Marxist criterion, namely in relation to the ownership of property. Property and the lack of property, according to him, were the basic categories of all class situations. He went on to distinguish two types of property- ownership and non-ownership of goods and services. Those who owned property offered goods while those who did not own property had only their labour power or skills to offer.

Like Marx, Weber argues that the major class division is between those who own the forces of production and those who do not. Thus those who have substantial property holdings will receive the highest economic rewards and enjoy superior life chances. Life chances refer to the series of opportunities that an individual gets during the various stages of his life. An individual born in a worker's family receives education of a particular standard, which in turn equips him for performing specific jobs only. The employment opportunities of such individual would widely vary with that of an individual born in an upper class family, who by the virtue of obtaining intensive and expensive education will land up in a better employment arena. The same patterns of life chances can be witnessed in the realms of social interaction and marriage. The interaction of a factory worker will largely be confined to other members of his class, whereas a person from the upper or middle class will have acquaintances mainly from his class. Thus according to Weber, life chances are an important aspect of class formation. Weber pointed out that the life chances of the members of a class are similar. In other words those who share a similar class situation also share similar life chances. The life chances of an individual are largely determined by his market situation.

While discussing life chances Weber's emphasis was on the group or the community and not the individual. He insisted that while determining class, we have to look at the life chances of the collectivity and not of individuals within

the collectivity. This is a very important aspect of class as a collective entity. It is possible that the life chances of an individual may be different. For e.g. the child of a rickshaw puller may be able to surpass his or her class barrier, and may be able to achieve an executive employment (becoming an IAS or a teacher) that is different from the opportunities available for his or her peers. Similarly, the son of an industrialist may become a worker because of his abilities or other circumstances. But these, Weber pointed out, were exceptions and not a rule. He pointed out that what was more important was the fact that the life-chances of the members of a class were similar. Therefore the definition of life-chances, according to Weber, is sharing of economic and cultural goods which are available differently to different groups.

The life-chances of an individual are largely determined by his/her market situation. The son of a worker becomes a worker because this was the best occupation available to him given his background. The market situation becomes more important for the property-less as they have to depend mainly on the production of services, as they possess only their skills. They   cannot   market anything else for their existence. The property owners on the other   hand   can depend on the income they get from their productive property.

Hence for Weber, class has two basic aspects. Firstly, it can be viewed as an objective category. It is determined by the control or lack of control over productive property. Secondly, all members of a particular class have similar life chances which in turn distinguish these members from others. The life chances of individuals depended on their market situation. However, Weber sees important differences in the market situation of the property-less groups in the society. In particular the various skills and services offered by different occupations have differing market values. For example, in a capitalist society, managers, administrators and professionals receive relatively high salaries because of the demand for their services.

Based on his definition, Weber identified four class groupings existing in the capitalist society:

a.   *The Propertied Upper Class* – that comprised those owning or controlling productive private property. This class was similar to the Bourgeoisie (capitalist class) in Marxist analysis.

b.   *The Property-Less White Collar Workers* - this class includes all those engaged in mental labour-managers, administrators, professionals, etc.

c.   *The Petty Bourgeoisie* - these are the self employed and include doctors, lawyers, shopkeepers, etc.

d.   *The Manual Working Class* - the members of this class sell their physical labour in return for wages. The working class is included in this class.

As is indicated from the above mentioned stand point, Weber divided the society into four classes as opposed to Marx's two class model. Hence, though Weber found the basis of class formation similar to that of Marx, yet he differed with Marx on the types of classes in society.

Class is defined in terms of market situation. A class exists when a number of people have in common a specific casual component of their life chances in the following sense: this component is represented exclusively by economic interests in the possession of goods and opportunities for income under conditions of the commodity or labor markets. When market conditions prevail (e.g., capitalism), property and lack of property are the basic categories of all class situations.

In his analysis of class, Weber has parted company with Marx on a number of important issues. Firstly, factors other than the ownership or non ownership of property are significant in the formation of classes. In particular, the market value of the skills of the property less varies and the resulting differences in economic return are sufficient to produce different social classes. Secondly, Weber sees no evidence to support the Marxian idea of class polarisation. Although, he sees some decline in the number of the petty bourgeoisie, the small property owners, due to competition from large companies, he argues that they enter the white-collar class or skilled manual trades rather than being depressed into the ranks of the unskilled manual workers. More importantly, Weber argues that the white collar 'middle class' expands rather than contracts as capitalism develops. He maintains that capitalist enterprises and the modern nation-state require a 'rational' bureaucratic administration which involves large numbers of administrators and clerical staff. Thus Weber sees a diversification of classes and an expansion of the white-collar middle class rather than class polarisation.

Thirdly, Weber rejects the view, held by some Marxists, of the inevitability of the proletarian revolution. He sees no reason why those sharing a similar class situation should necessarily develop a common identity, recognise shared interests and take collective action to further those interests. For example Weber suggests that the individual manual worker who is dissatisfied with his class situation may respond in a variety of ways. He may, grumble, work to rule, sabotage industrial machinery, go on strike, or he may attempt to organise other members of his class in an effort to over throw capitalism. Thus proletarian

revolution is only one of the possibilities, in fact a rare possibility, Increasing social mobility and rise of the welfare state in modern industrial societies have dampened the revolutionary fervour of the industrial workers and therefore Weber's views have been vindicated.

Finally, Weber rejects the Marxian view that political power necessarily derives from economic power. He argues that class forms only one possible basis for power and that the distribution of power in the society is not necessarily linked to the distribution of class inequalities.

Status :

While class forms one possible basis for group formation, collective action and the acquisition of political power, Weber argues that there are other bases for these activities. In particular, groups form because their members share a similar 'status situation'. Whereas class refers to the unequal distribution of economic rewards, status refers to the unequal distribution of 'social honour'. Status refers to positive or negative evaluation of social prestige enjoyed by an individual. Occupations, ethnic and religious groups and most importantly styles of life are accorded different degrees of prestige or esteem by the members of the society. A status group is made up of individuals who are awarded a similar amount of social honour and therefore share the same status situation. Unlike classes, members of status groups are almost always aware of their common status situation. They share a similar life style, identify with and feel they belong to their status group and often place restrictions on the ways in which outsiders may interact with them. Weber argues that status groups reach their most developed form in the caste system of traditional Hindu society in India. Caste and sub caste are formed and distinguished largely in terms of social honour. Lifestyles are sharply differentiated and accorded varying degrees of prestige. Barriers are set up to social intercourse between status groups, such as the ban on inter-caste marriage.

Unlike classes, status groups do have a quality of groups. They are determined by the distribution of social honour. A specific style of life is shared by a status group, and the group itself is defined by those with whom one has social intercourse. Economic elements can be a sort of honour; however, similar class position does not necessitate similar status groups. People from different economic classes may be members of the same status group, if they share the same specific style of life.

The way in which social honour is distributed in the community is called the status order. Criteria for entry into a status group may take forms such as the sharing of kinship groups or certain levels of education. The most extreme of a

status system with a high level of closure (that is, strong restriction of mobility between statuses) is a caste system. There, status distinctions are guaranteed not only by law and convention, but also by religious sanctions. Weber   sees status distinction as the basis of group formation in caste societies.

In many societies' class and status situations are closely linked. However, those who share the same class situation will not necessarily belong to the same status group. For example, the nouveaux riches (the newly rich) are sometimes excluded from the status groups of the privileged because their tastes, manners and dress are defined as vulgar. *Status groups may create divisions within classes.*

Interestingly and conversely, status groups can also cut across class divisions. In the USA, Blacks, no matter what their class situation belong to the same status group. Similarly in India, the Dalits, no matter what their class situation belong to the same status group. This can form the basis for collective political action. For example, in 1960s and 1970s many middle and working class blacks united in various organizations under the banner of the Black Power Movement.

Weber's observations on status groups are important, since they suggest that in certain situations status rather than class provides the basis for the formation of social groups whose members perceive common interests and group identity. In addition, the presence of different social groups within a single class and of status groups which cut across class divisions can weaken class solidarity and reduce the potential for class consciousness. These points are illustrated by Weber's analysis of 'parties'.

Relationship Between Class and Status :

Class situation can take precedence over status situation. ''When the bases of the acquisition and distribution of goods are relatively stable, stratification by status is favoured. Technological and economic changes threaten stratification by status, and push class situation to the foreground....Every slowing down of the change in economic stratification leads, in due course, to the growth or status structures and makes for a resuscitation of the important role of social honor''.

Like Marx, Weber also distinguished between class and class consciousness. For Marx, class-consciousness was an important aspect of class. A class could articulate its interests only if it was conscious of its existence as a distinctive group. Weber too talked of class consciousness but he did not think this consciousness as a necessary pre-requisite for the existence of a class. Instead he looked for an alternative to class-consciousness and he found the same in status. Weber noted that whereas an individual's class situation may not lead to his becoming class conscious, he is always conscious of his status. According to

Weber, classes were formed on the basis of economic relations. Status groups, he noted, were normally 'communities'. He defined status as a position in the society that is determined by the social estimation of honour. There were links between class and status but in many cases they were in stark opposition to each other. Class is associated with the production of goods and services or in the acquisition of the same whereas status is determined by consumption. Thus status sis associated with the life-style where there were restrictions on social intercourse. Weber noted that the most rigid and well defined status boundaries could be found in India's caste system. A Brahmin may belong to the working class because it may the means of his livelihood; however he would always consider himself superior to a person from a lower caste even though the class situation of both may be the same. Even in the modernised era inter caste marriage is not tolerated even when both families hail from the same class but they occupy different statuses in the caste hierarchy.

Thus in a stratified society, Weber found that property differences generate classes whereas prestige differences generate status groupings. Both of them form an integral basis of social stratification.

Party :

Weber defines 'parties' as groups which are specifically concerned with influencing policies and making decisions in the interest of their membership. In Weber's words parties are concerned with 'the acquisition of social "power" '. Parties include a variety of associations from the mass political parties of the Western democracy to the whole range of pressure or interest groups which include professional associations, trade unions, the automobile associations etc. Parties often represent the interests of classes or status groups, but not necessarily. In Weber's words, 'parties may represent interests determined through "class situation" or "status situation"…In most cases they are partly class parties and partly status parties, but sometimes they are neither'. The combination of class and status interests can be seen in various Black power organizations in USA. They represent a status group but they also represent class interests. The majority of Blacks are working class and many Black organizations are directly concerned with improving their class situation. Weber's view of parties suggests that the relationship between political groups and class and status groups is far from clear cut. Just as status groups can both divide classes and cut across class boundaries, so parties can divide and cut across both classes and status groups.

Parties reside in the sphere of power. Parties are only possible within groups that have an associational character, that is, some rational order and a staff of

persons. Parties aim for social power, the ability to influence the actions of others, and thus may exist in a social club, the state, or a cohort of graduate students at the University.

Parties may represent class or status interests, or neither. They usually represent a mix.

'The structure of parties differs in a basic way according to the kind of social action which they struggle to influence. They differ according to whether or not the community is stratified by class or status. Above all else, they vary according to the structure of domination'.

TEST YOUR PROGRESS

1.   Define Class.

        _____

        _____

        _____

2.   What is power?

        _____

        _____

        _____

3.   Status represents?

        _____

        _____

        _____

4.   What is a party, according to Weber?

        _____

        _____

        _____

5.   Elaborate the views of Weber on the inevitability of Proletarian revolution.

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_____

WEBER - 3 MAIN ORDERS IN SOCIETY

a. **Social**   →   corresponds to **Status**

b. **Economic**   →   corresponds to **Class**

c. **Political**   →   corresponds to **Party**

Conclusion :

Weber's analysis of classes, status groups and parties suggests that no single theory can pin-point and explain their relationship. The interplay of class, status and party in the formation of social groups is complex and variable and must be examined in particular societies during particular time-periods. Marx attempted to reduce all forms of inequality to social class and argued that classes formed the only significant social groups in the society. Weber argues that the evidence provides a more complex and diversified picture of social stratification in that social stratification exists at multiple levels of wealth, prestige and power and manifests, respectively, as class, status and party.

Weber analytically distinguished three orders within society- economic, social and political – and corresponding to these, identified three dimensions of stratification : class, status and power. On the fundamentals, there was little difference between Weber and Marx in defining class. The crucial characteristics of class are :

1.   Individuals share a particular causal facet of their lives.

2.   These facets are represented exclusively by economic drive in the possession of goods and opportunities from property accrual.

3.   Class situation is essentially a market situation.

Classes are not communities; they merely represent possible bases for communal action. However, status groups are usually communities. Status situation is determined by a specific, positive or negative, social estimation of honour; it is not necessarily linked with class situation. The highest prestige in a particular social group does not always belong to the richest. Status symbols, special attire, exclusive clubs and unique lifestyles distinguish the status groups.

Parties exist in a social club as well as state, they seek to influence communal action and acquire power. Classes are stratified according to their relations to the production and acquisition of goods whereas status groups are stratified according to the principles of their consumption of goods as represented by special styles of life. The genuine place of classes is within the economic order; the place of status groups is within the social order. But parties live in a house of power.

Denying that a unified theory of social stratification was ever possible, Weber went beyond a critical rejection of Marx's simplistic uni-linear theory of class. In contrast to the whole naturalistic psychological tradition in which theorists such as Saint Simon, Comte, Spencer, Sumner, and others had tried to explain stratification by direct reference to human qualities, Weber sought to understand the more fundamental complexes of social stratification as they might manifest themselves in forms of legitimate authority and then particularly in bureaucratic organization. The movement in Weber's thought from class to authority to bureaucracy is explainable in view of his infatuation with the nature and function of power. Weber was convinced that a striking quality of modern society was its channelling of its legitimate authority through the bureaucratic coordination of activities for bureaucracies are intentionally organized upon rational principles.

Weber's contribution to modern sociology is multi dimensional so much so that he can be legitimately' considered as one of the founding fathers of modern sociology. He contributed a new perspective on the nature of subject matter of sociology and laid down the foundations of *interpretative sociology*. In addition, he carried out penetrating analysis of some of the crucial features of western society like social stratification, bureaucracy, rationality, and growth of capitalism. Also he devoted his efforts to building up typologies especially in the studies of political sociology.

Kingsley Davis

Social stratification refers to a system of ranked statuses by which the members of a society are placed higher and lower positions. Variables such as occupation, income, education, ethnicity or caste provide a basis for social ranking. Social stratification denotes groupings of people into superior or inferior positions with differential access to power and privilege.

The functionalist theories of stratification must be seen in the   context   of functionalist theories of society. When functionalists   attempt   to   explain   the systems of social stratification, they set their explanations in the   framework   of larger theories which seek to explain the operation of the society as a whole. They assume that there   are   certain   basic   needs   or functional pre-requisites which must be met if society is to survive. They therefore look to social stratification to see how far it meets these functional pre-requisites. They assume that the parts of the society form an integrated whole and thus examine the ways in which the social   stratification   system   is   integrated   with   other   parts   of   the   society. Functionalists maintain that a certain degree of order and stability are essential for the operation of social systems. They, therefore, consider how stratification systems help to maintain order and stability in society. The functionalists are primarily   concerned   with   the   function   of   social   stratification,   with   its contribution to the maintenance and well being of society.

Theory of Social Stratification - Kingsley Davis and Wilbert E. Moore :

The most famous functionalist theory of social stratification was first presented in 1945, in an article by the American Sociologists Kingsley Davis and Wilbert E. Moore entitled, *Some Principles of Stratification*. Davis and Moore, both students of Talcott Parsons, have further developed his functionalist theory of stratification. Parsons had emphasised upon the need of stratification in the society. He argued that stratification draws itself from value consensus and is a universal process that is inevitable in every society. Davis and Moore elaborated the argument of Parsons to examine how the systems of stratification become effective and functional in maintaining social stability and equilibrium.

Davis and Moore begin with the observation that stratification exists in every known human society. They attempt to explain the universal necessity of stratification in functional terms. Davis and Moore believed that stratification serves an important function in society. In any society, a number of tasks must be accomplished. Some tasks are simple. Other tasks are relatively complicated and require more intelligence and training than the simple tasks. Those who perform the difficult tasks are therefore entitled to more power, prestige, and money. Davis and Moore believed that an unequal distribution of society's rewards is necessary to encourage people to take on the more complicated and important work that required many years of training. They believed that the rewards attached to a particular job reflect its importance to society.

They argue that all social systems share certain functional prerequisites which help them survive and operate efficiently. These functional prerequisites must be met if the system is to survive and operate efficiently. One such functional pre-requisite is effective role allocation and performance. This implies that:

1. All roles must be filled. All societies have different types of occupations that are necessary for their existence. Hence it is necessary that these occupations are filled.

2. These roles must be filled by those best able to perform them. Mere filling up of occupations is not enough. If people without requisite skills and abilities are selected to perform these roles it would lead to instability in the society. Most competent people must fill in these positions of importance.

3. The necessary training for the performance of these roles must be undertaken. In order to select the best talent for performing their roles, it is necessary to train them. Training is therefore the most effective means to ensure that the best people are selected and trained to perform their roles efficiently.

4. These roles must be performed conscientiously. The most important factor in ensuring effective role performance is that these roles must be performed conscientiously. If a person possesses the best talents and is well trained does not perform his role conscientiously with dedication the system will suffer. Hence, one of the major functional prerequisites, along with others, is effective role performance.

Davis & Moore argue that all societies need some mechanism for ensuring effective role allocation and performance. This mechanism is social stratification which they see as a system which attaches unequal rewards and privileges to the different positions in society.

If the people and positions which make up society did not differ in important respects, there would be no need for stratification. However people differ in terms of their innate ability and talent. Positions differ in terms of their importance for the survival and maintenance of society. Certain positions are more functionally important than others. They require the acquisition of special skills for their performance. There are a limited number of individuals with the necessary ability to acquire such skills. A major function of stratification is to match the most able people with the functionally most important positions. It does this by attaching high rewards to those positions. The desire for such rewards motivates people to compete for these positions. When positions carry higher rewards, people put in greater efforts to become qualified and eligible for those positions.

Such positions usually require long periods of training that involve certain sacrifices such as loss of income and intensive investment of time, energy and efforts. The promise of high rewards built into these positions is necessary enough to encourage people to undergo this training and also to compensate them for the sacrifices involved.

It is essential for the well being of the society that those who hold the functionally most important positions perform their roles diligently and conscientiously. The system of unequal rewards built into these positions provides the necessary inducement and generate the required motivation for such performance. Since the rewards attached to these positions differ, people aspire for high rewards. In other words, higher rewards attached to higher positions continuously inspire and motivate people to put in more hard work and efforts to improve their performance and thus attain higher positions. Thus, the system of unequal rewards and privileges not only motivates people to compete for the most important positions, but also offers necessary inducement for improving their performance, thus ensuring effective role performance. In this manner, the system of stratification, based on unequal rewards and privileges, is beneficial for meeting the functional prerequisites necessary for the maintenance of the society. Davis & Moore conclude that social stratification is a device by which societies ensure that the most important positions are filled by the most qualified and talented persons.

Davis and Moore realise that one difficulty with their theory is to show clearly which positions are functionally most important. The fact that a position is highly rewarded does not necessarily mean that it is functionally important. They suggest that the importance of a position can be measured in two ways. Firstly, by the degree to which a position is functionally unique, there being no other positions that can perform the same functions satisfactorily. A doctor-nurse positional relation can be cited as an example. A doctor is functionally more

important than a nurse since the doctor possesses the skills of a nurse in addition to his own skills, but not vice-versa. Hence, though a doctor can perform the role of the nurse but the same cannot be held true for a nurse. Similarly, an engineer commands more respect, power and economic rewards vis-a-vis a factory worker, since the engineer possesses the requisite skills of the worker in addition to his own, and hence can perform all the tasks performed by the worker, thereby making his position functionally unique and more important. Thus, the functional uniqueness of a position is directly proportional to the degree of importance and the consequent rewards and privileges attached to it. In other words, the degree of functional uniqueness of a position determines the importance the society places upon it and also the rewards it attaches to those positions.

The second measure of importance is the degree dependence, i.e. the degree to which other positions are dependent on the one in question. It can thus be argued that the doctor is more important than the nurse staff since the latter are dependent on the directions and organisation from the former. An engineer's position carries more importance than the factory workers since the latter are dependent upon the directions of the engineer.

To summarise, Davis and Moore regard social stratification as a functional necessity for all societies. They see it as a solution to a problem faced by all social systems, that of placing and motivating individuals in the social structure. They offer no other means of solving and imply that social inequality is an inevitable feature of human society. They conclude that differential rewards are functional for the society, in that they contribute to the maintenance and well being of the social systems. They argued that a system of stratification based on unequal rewards and privileges is necessary for the maintenance of stability and order in the society, ensuring its progress.

Criticism by Melvin M. Tumin :

Davis and Moore's theory appears realistic as it offers an explanation for the existing inequalities in the societies. But at the same time it has provoked a long debate. Their views have found the support of the functionalists but have also attracted criticism from many quarters. Melvin M. Tumin, their most famous critic has produced a comprehensive criticism of their theory. Tumin begins his criticism by questioning the adequacy of their measurement of the functional importance of the positions. Davis and Moore have tended to assume that the most highly rewarded positions are indeed the most important ones. However, many occupations which afford little prestige or economic rewards can be seen as vital to the society. While it is a fact that rewards are unequal, as some receive

more rewards and prestige than others, it could not be categorically stated that these positions are functionally more important. It is possible that some labour force of unskilled workmen is as important and as indispensible to the factory as some labour force of engineers, though the engineers are better rewarded. In such cases if the workers are removed, production will be hampered but if some engineers are removed it may be still possible to maintain production. According to Melvin Tumin the relative importance of a particular job cannot be measured by ascertaining or counting the rewards attached to these jobs. All the positions are functionally important for the maintenance of the society. Davis and Moore fail to provide the means of measuring the functional importance of these positions. In fact many have argued that there is no objective way of measuring the functional importance of positions and is simply a matter of opinion.

Tumin argues that Davis and Moore have ignored the influence of power on the unequal distribution of rewards. Unequal rewards may not necessarily stem from the functional importance of the positions. The role of power in determining the importance of positions, and thereby appropriating higher rewards, is also an important determinant. Thus differences in pay and prestige between occupational groups may be due to differences in their bargaining power rather than their functional importance. For e.g. the workers in the organised sector are better paid and get more social security compared to the workers in the unorganised sector, though the work done by workers in both sectors may be similar. Thus, power can play a more important role in determining higher rewards than the functional importance of positions.

Davis and Moore assume that only a limited number of individuals have the talent to acquire the skills necessary for the functionally most important positions. Tumin regards this as a very questionable assumption. Firstly, an effective method of measuring talent and ability has yet to be devised. Secondly, there is no proof that exceptional talents are required for those positions which Davis and Moore consider more important. Thirdly, the pool of talent in the society may be considerably larger that what Davis and Moore assume. As a result, unequal rewards may not be necessary to harness it.

Tumin also questions the view that the training required for important positions should be regarded as a sacrifice and therefore in need of some compensation. He argues that training does not necessarily mean sacrifice as the individuals also learn new skills, gain knowledge and thereby benefit from it. He points to the rewards of being a student: leisure, freedom and the opportunity for self development. Moreover the rewards for such cases are disproportionate to the sacrifices made during training. He notes that any loss of earnings can be

usually be made up during the first ten years of work. Differential rewards during this period may be justified. However, Tumin sees no reason for continuing this compensation for the rest of an individual's working life.

If society worked the way Davis and Moore had envisioned, Tumin argued, all societies would be meritocracies, systems of stratification in which positions are given according to individual merit. Ability would determine who goes to college and what jobs someone holds. Instead, Tumin found that gender and the income of an individual's family were more important predictors than ability or what type of work an individual would do. Men are typically placed in a higher social stratification than women, regardless of ability. A family with more money can afford to send its children to college. As college graduates, these children are more likely to assume high-paying, prestigious jobs. Conversely, people born into poverty are more likely to drop out of school and work low-paying jobs in order to survive, thereby shutting them off from the kinds of positions that are associated with wealth, power, and prestige.

According to Davis and Moore, the major function of unequal rewards is to motivate talented individuals and allocate them to the functionally most important positions. Tumin rejects this view. He argues that social stratification can, and often does, act as a barrier to the motivation and recruitment of talent. The system of stratification does not allow the talented people to have equal access to better opportunities. Social discrimination, present in every society, acts as a barrier. This is readily apparent in closed systems such as caste and racial stratification. Thus the ascribed status of untouchables prevented even the most talented ones from becoming Brahmins. It is impossible for the child of a poor person to get better education in order to improve his position. Thus, closed stratification systems operate exactly in the opposite way to Davis and Moore's theory.

Tumin suggests, however, that even relatively open systems of stratification erect barriers to the motivation and recruitment of talent. There is considerable evidence to indicate that the class system in the western industrial society limits the possibility of the discovery and utilisation of talent. In general, an individual's class position determines the level and standard of education that he or she will attain, and also the level of positions he or she may aspire for. The motivation to succeed is unequally distributed throughout the society. As a result, social class can act as an obstacle to the motivation of talent.

Further Tumin argues that there is every possibility that in a system of unequal rewards, those who receive higher rewards will block avenues for others to attain the same awards. Those who occupy highly rewarded positions will erect barriers

to prevent others from getting into the same positions of rewards. Occupational groups often use their power to restrict access to their positions, so as to create a scarcity of the services made available by them and thereby creating a high demand for the same and increasing the rewards they receive. In this way the self interested use of power can restrict the recruitment of talented individuals to highly rewarded positions.

Tumin concludes that stratification, by its very nature, can never adequately perform the functions which Davis and Moore assign to it. The fact is that those at the bottom of the social hierarchy can never have the same access to the opportunities for improving their knowledge and skills which will make them competent enough to get better position in the   society.   Tumin   notes   that motivation through unequal rewards can only   be   possible   in a system "where there is a genuinely equal access to recruitment and training for all potentially talented persons that differential rewards can   conceivably   be   justified   as functional. And stratification systems are apparently inherently antagonistic to the development of such full equality of opportunity."

Finally, Tumin questions the view that social stratification functions to integrate the social system. He argues that differential rewards can "encourage hostility, suspicion and distrust among the various segments of the society." From this viewpoint, stratification is a divisive rather than an integrating force. Stratification can also weaken social integration by giving the members of the lower strata a feeling of being excluded from participation in the larger society. This is particularly apparent in the systems of racial stratification. By tending to exclude certain groups from full participation in society, stratification "serves to distribute loyalty unequally in the population" and therefore reduces the potential for social solidarity. Tumin concludes that in their enthusiastic search for the positive functions of stratification, the functionalists have tended   to ignore or play down its many dysfunctions.

TEST YOUR PROGRESS

1.   Outline the functionalist theory on stratification.

   _____

   _____

   _____

2.   What is the name of the article in which the theory of Davis and Moore found a mention?

    _____

    _____

    _____

3.   What do you understand by the term functional prerequisites?

    _____

    _____

    _____

4.   List down the functional prerequisites given by Davis and Moore.

    _____

    _____

    _____

5.   List five main points of criticism of the functionalist theory as given by Tumin.

    _____

    _____

    _____

Conclusion :

Social stratification is a universal phenomenon. Every society has its hierarchy in which different individuals are placed. The functionalists are primarily concerned with the function of social stratification, with its contribution to the maintenance and well being of society. They concluded that stratification was not only inevitable in all societies but it was also very necessary for them as it promoted stability and order.

Davis and Moore extended Parson's argument and tried to examine why certain positions carry different degrees of prestige. They asserted that there are certain functional prerequisites which must be met in order for the society to survive. One such functional prerequisite is effective role allocation and performance. Social stratification is the mechanism through which the societies achieve this important functional prerequisite. Social stratification is a system that attaches unequal rewards and privileges to different positions in the society and matches

the most talented persons to the most important positions. The system of unequal rewards and privileges induces motivation to compete for these jobs. At the same time these rewards and privileges attached to these positions also ensure effective role performance. They found that positions which are functionally unique are more important for society and carry higher rewards and greater prestige. They found social stratification as a functional phenomenon that is found in every society. According to them stratification plays an essential role in maintaining order and stability within the society.

The propositions of Davis and Moore were put to comprehensive criticism by Melvin M. Tumin. The critique put forth by Melvin Tumin shows that the functional importance is not the only criteria for deciding on which positions carry higher rewards. There are other factors such as power and status. According to him Davis and Moore have ignored the influence of power on unequal distribution of rewards and privileges. He also questions the assumption held by Davis and Moore that the pool of talent in the society is limited and only a few individuals possess the necessary skills and ability to compete for the highly rewarding positions. He further questions that why training should be regarded as a sacrifice, as postulated by Davis and Moore. He maintains that that social stratification acts as a barrier to recruitment and motivation of talent and that self interested use of power and influence can restrict the recruitment of even the talented to the highly rewarded positions. He challenges all the major propositions in the theory and postulates that stratification can become antagonistic to the development of equality of opportunity, can generate hostility and suspicion and weaken social solidarity, contrary to the claims of the functionalists.

Both the views discussed in the chapter carry equal academic importance and have since then, stayed as a part of academic discussions on social stratification. Their importance cannot be negated whenever a functionalist interpretation of social stratification is made.

3.9   Important Terms :

Alienation	It is the condition of self estrangement, consequently the worker is detached from the work. Alienation occurs in broken relationship between the workers and their work.
Ancient mode of	It refers to a situation of enslavement of labour. Two classes
production	that exist in this stage are called masters and slaves.

Bourgeoisie	Those few who own the means of production in a capitalist society. They enjoy both economic and political power.
Capitalism	An economic system based upon the accumulation and investment of capital by private individuals who then become the owners of means of production and distribution of goods and services.
Class Consciousness	Class consciousness means that false class consciousness has been replaced by a full awareness of the true situation, by a realization of the nature of exploitation.
Class Solidarity	Members of a class develop a common identity, recognize their shared interests and unite, so producing class solidarity. Class solidarity develops a feeling of unity in a class and urges it to take collective action to realize commonly shared goals.
Class for Itself	It is a class whose members are fully conscious of the true nature of their situation, when they are fully aware of their common interests and common enemy, when they realize that only by concerted action can they over-throw their oppressors, and when they unite and take positive, practical steps to do so. Marx argues that a social group only fully becomes a class when it becomes a class for itself. At this stage its members have *class consciousness* and *class solidarity*.
Class Struggle	An inevitable struggle between social classes resulting from their conflicting interests. Marx believed that the class struggle was the driving force of social change.
Dialectical Materialism	It refers to a situation of conflict in the process of production.
Exploitation	It refers to the appropriation of the worker's wages, i.e. the surplus, by depriving them of their due share.
False Class	It represents a false picture of the nature of the relationship

Consciousness   between social classes. Members of both classes tend to accept the status quo as normal and natural and are largely unaware of the true nature of exploitation and oppression.

Forces of Production The forces of production, according to Marx, include the means of production and labour power. The forces of productions include land, raw materials, tools and machinery, the technical and scientific knowledge used in production, the technical organization of the production process and the labour power of the workers.

Historical Materialism It refers to the developmental outcome of the material activity of man over nature, which in turn determines other social institutions of man.

Infrastructure   Base or infrastructure consists of the total productive organization or the sphere of economic activity. The economic base of a society forms its infrastructure. Forces and relations of production come in the category of infrastructure.

Primitive Communism A historical epoch in the scheme of social evolution of Karl Marx, in which the 'means of production' are communally owned, and hence there are no class divisions because all members share same relations to the '*means of production*'.

Proletariat   The working class people who sell their labour.

Relations of Production   The relations of production are the social relationships which men enter into in order to produce goods. The relations of production involve the relationship of social groups to the forces of production. The major contradictions in society are between the forces and relations of production.

Ruling Class Ideology Marx refers to the dominant concepts of class societies as ruling class ideology since they justify and legitimate ruling class domination and project a distorted picture of reality. Ruling class ideology produces 'false class consciousness'.

Superstructure The major institutions, values and belief systems of the society. It includes ideological elements of a society and legal, educational and political institutions as well as values, cultural ways of thinking, religion, ideologies and philosophies. *Infrastructure* shapes superstructure.

3.10   Model Questions :

1.   Discuss in detail the functionalist theory of Social Stratification.
2.   Write a detailed note on the functionalist theory of Stratification given by Davis and Moore.
3.   Explain Melvin Tumin's critique related to theory of Social Stratification.
4.   What explanation would you prefer for the universal existence of Social Stratification in the human society?
5.   Analyze critically the Functional Theory of Stratification.
6.   'Social Inequality is the device by which societies ensure that the most important positions are filled by the most qualified persons.' Explain this viewpoint and state the grounds on which it is refuted.

7.   Explain Karl Marx's conception of Class Antagonism. How have the functionalists reacted to his views?

8.   "Subjective Perception & Awareness of the Objective Reality prepares the context for the articulation of Class Antagonism." Evaluate this statement with reference to Karl Marx's contribution.

9.   'The history of the hitherto existing societies is the history of Class struggle.' Comment.

10.   Discuss Marx's concept of Class. Is class struggle inevitable for the elimination of inequalities and exploitation in the third world societies?

11.   Explain Karl Marx's theory of Social Stratification. On what grounds do the functionalists refute it?

12.   Critically bring out the differences in the approaches of Karl Marx and Max Weber to the study of Class structure in Industrial Capitalist society.

13.   Discuss the Marxian theory of Class as criticized by Weber.

14.   Discuss the concept of social stratification as put forth by Max Weber.

15.   Max Weber redefined the outlook of the academic circles towards social stratification. Comment.

16.   Elaborate the theory of class, status and party given by Max Weber.

3.11 Suggested Readings :

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Lesson No. : 1.4   Author: Dr. Deepak Kumar

CASTE IN INDIA: DEFINITION AND FEATURES

Structure :

4.0   Objectives

The main objectives of this unit are that after it is thoroughly read, the student shall be able to :

    *   define the concept of caste

    *   identify its salient features

    *   understand the origin of the institution of caste in India

    *   distinguish the elements of caste system that set it apart from other systems of stratification

    *   understand why this institution has drawn so much attention of social thinkers and the sociologists.

4.1   Introduction

All known societies have been found to have some form of social stratification or the other. Stratification, as we know, is the hierarchical division of society into various segments. The form of social stratification that is prevalent in Indian society is called caste system, which forms the bedrock of its social structure. The unique features of caste system set it apart from other forms of social stratification. Hence, caste system is not merely a system of social stratification but is also a distinguishing feature of Indian society per se.

4.2   Definition of Caste

The term 'caste' derives from the· Portuguese word *casta*, which means species, lineage, race, or clan. The term was used by the Portuguese to describe the people they met on the west coast of India when they first arrived here in the 16th and 17th centuries. Another non-English term helpful in understanding caste is '*Varna*', which is a Hindi term with one of its meanings being 'colour'. The next section will show the organic link between '*Varna*' and 'caste' but for now it is important to understand that caste is a term used in English to account for a peculiar social grouping in India referred to as *Varna*.

In Sociology, the term is used to describe a social category to which one belongs to by virtue of being born into it. Moreover, castes are arranged in a strict hierarchy where castes assumed to be ritually purer are assigned a higher status and better privileges' in society. The membership of such a group is automatically acquired by one at one's birth itself depending on the caste of one's parents. Once acquired, one's caste remains unalterable all through one's life. Caste is a closed social group that does not allow anybody to acquire its membership except by being born into it. Since one cannot change one's caste throughout one's life, the only option left is to ensure one's birth into a higher caste in one's next birth. This belief in rebirth is called 'reincarnation' and the idea forms one of the vital elements of Hindu philosophy. The Hindu philosophy also believes in the twin concepts of 'Karma' and 'Dharma' which help members of a caste to accept their caste status by rationalizing it as a natural outcome of the deeds of their past births. Caste is thus believed to be both natural and preordained. It believes that all men are neither born equal nor do they all have equal capacity to perform duties towards the Lord. It is for this reason that some are bestowed with higher social and ritual recognition in society than the others.

Though caste is a corrupted form of *Varna*, the term is coterminus with the Hindi term *Jati*. *Jati* literally means breed, species, clan etc. While castes are only four, *Jati*s are thousands in numbers. *Varna*s are the larger social categories of the social system within which there are hundreds of castes and sub-castes referred to as *Jati*s. These *Jati*s are the practical manifestations

of caste and it's working in society. These *Jati*s are governed by a highly elaborate set of codes regulating their social intercourse with other *Jati*s and castes in a set pattern.

Caste system is thus a rigid system of social stratification that separates various members of society into different endogamous closed hierarchical categories on the basis of their birth and assigns them specific roles in society according to their status. This system of social stratification is peculiar to Indian society and has its origin in Hinduism which is the dominant religion of India. Caste system is basically a feature of Hindu social order. Though it has roots in Hindu religion it has such deep roots in our culture that the practice has been variably observed in other religious communities in India too, though with considerable variation.

4.3   Origin

The origin of the caste system is not very clear but there is a general agreement that it emerged in the Vedic Age. However, there are two dominant accounts for the origin of caste system in India, the racial and the mythological.

According to the racial origin theory, after the decline of Indus valley civilization, the Indo Aryans (the Nordics) started settling in the plains of Indus and in the process they displaced and subjugated the original inhabitants of the land (Proto-Austroloids and Palaeo-Mediterraneans). As these pastoral communities started settling in the area, they started staying together with the local inhabitants in the village settlements. However, owing to their racial differences visible by their colour of the skins, the Indo-Aryans were able to distinguish themselves as a racially superior and separate group. Gradually, the rising division of labour in society led to the need for a more organized social set up with clear demarcation of work for everyone. The Indo-Aryans, in order to consolidate their superiority created a four fold division of society that came to be known as *Chatur Vamaya* (*Varna* system). Under this scheme, the Aryans placed themselves at the top among the ranks of *Brahmins* and *Kshatriyas*. The tribals and other original inhabitants of the Indus valley were relegate to the other two remaining ranks of *Vaishyas* and *Shudras* which were considered inferior to *Brahmins* and *Kshatriyas*. Hence, Indo-Aryans emerged as custodians of knowledge, by virtue of being *Brahmins*, and defenders of territory, by virtue of being *Kshatriyas*. The *Vaishyas* and *Shudras* on the other hand were assigned mundane jobs. These included cultivation of fields, manufacture of artisan goods exchange of goods. The *Shudras* forming the bottom of this scheme of division were supposed to perform the most unclean of the jobs and were considered the lowliest.

The mythological origin of the caste ordains that it is divine in origin and therefore natural and unalterable. It is in one of the most sacred books of

Hindus, Vedas, that this division of society is referred to. It is in the Hymn, (Purushasukta, of Rigveda that a reference has been made to four orders of society as emanating from the sacrifice of the Primeval Being). The names of those four orders are given as *Brahmin, Rajanya (Kshatriya), Vaishya*, and *Sudra*. *Brahmins* are said to have born out of the mouth of the Primeval Being and is therefore assigned the task of knowledge collection and dissemination in society. *Kshatriyas* are warriors by occupation as they are born out of arms of the primeval being. *Vaishyas*, born out of thighs are ordained to be occupied in production and business. *Sudras* are the one born out of the feet of Primeval Being and are therefore born to serve the rest of the castes which all are higher to it. In order of hierarchy, therefore, the castes are arranged with *Brahmins* at the top followed by *Kshatriyas* and *Vaishyas* respectively. At the bottom of the hierarchy lie the *Sudras*. This hierarchy of castes reflects not only their social position in society but also their religious purity.

Another theory of origin relates to the *Varna* Dharma scheme that was supposed to be a religious ideology and ideal of Hinduism. Though there is no historical record documenting the existence of such an order in society at any time in India it does form the basis of an ideal Hindu social order of the past where every person in society was assigned social status in society according to the performance of that person. Hence this was an ideal situation where one's status was determined by one's occupation and actions. However, soon after the Vedic period this social order, referred to as *Varna* system, got corrupted into caste system with a rigid set of rules governing one's status in society by birth and not by one's actions. In the process the choice of occupations got restricted leading to degeneration and stagnation in the system.

4.4   Salient Features

There are some features of caste that have been generally accepted by various sociologists. Prof G.S. Ghurye has documented the following six features as these main features of caste.

4.4.1 Segmental Division of Society

Caste system divides people of society into different and exclusive segments. These segments signify not only the socio-political but also the sacred status of its members. What makes these segments special is that one becomes its member by accident of being born into it rather than by exercise of their choice. Hence, membership of these segments is reserved exclusively for those who are born into it. This, in fact, is one of the fundamental features of caste system. It means that one is born into a caste. Hence, once born into a particular caste, one cannot ever change one's caste for the rest of his life. Secondly, these segments are exclusive social groups with each segment

having its own set of rules and regulations defining the unique character of each segment. Each caste was a small cultural unit in itself guided by its own set of rules and cultural values. Wherever there arose any conflict between the demands or morals of larger society on one hand and that of one's caste on the other, it was the caste rules that one adhered to. The members of a caste group first belong to their caste rather than to the community a whole. This led to different set of laws for different castes leading to differences in their moral standards. This led to a widening cultural gap between the castes.

Hence the castes are the small and complete social worlds in themselves, marked off definitely from one another, though subsisting within the larger society.

4.4.2 Hierarchy

The principle of hierarchy is very vital to the whole edifice of caste system. In caste system each caste has a caste above it and a caste below it. As mentioned in the previous point, all castes have an elaborate and unique set of rules and regulations setting it apart from others. Rules that govern the interaction among different caste members depend not only upon the fact whether a particular person belongs to a higher caste or lower caste but also upon the level of closeness and distance between the castes. It is therefore very important for members to determine the social position of the other before interacting in order to avoid breaking caste rules.

There is no confusion with regard to this hierarchy when we look at the larger division of Hindu social order into four broad *Varna*s or castes with *Brahmins* place at the higher end of the spectrum and *Sudras* at the lower end. The untouchables were even below *Sudras* in their social ranking. However, in practice, the operative categories of *Jati* show signs of confusion with regard to their comparative status within the larger *Varna* category. It becomes slightly difficult at times to ascertain caste ranking between two sub-castes within a larger caste. It is with reference to the larger *Varna* system, which acts as a standard scale to measure one's position in hierarchy, that most of the castes and sub-castes are able to determine their mutual status.

4.4.3 Commensal and Social Restrictions

Eating together has always been considered one of the strongest sources of togetherness. With severe caste restrictions in place, dining with people other than one's own caste was considered wrong. In fact, there were various rules governing interdining and social intercourse. There even used to be rules for the kind of food that is to be accepted or not from a particular caste. All food is divided into two types, *Kachcha* and *Pakka*. The former being any food in the cooking of which water has been used and the latter being any

food cooked in ghee in the cooking of which water has not been used. As a rule, a man will never eat *Kachcha* food unless cooked by his fellow caste men. As for the *Pakka* food, it can be taken not only from one's own caste fellows but also from the members of a higher caste.

There are also strong restrictions against social intercourse between various caste groups. It is especially so in the case of caste groups which are separated by a larger distance on the scale of hierarchy. Generally speaking, three broad categories were there. The twice-born castes, the *Sudras*, and the untouchables. The twice born castes could interact more with each other than with *Sudras* and untouchables. The *Sudras* were marginalized and subjugated castes working as slaves and servants for the upper castes. There were strict sanctions against anyone who broke caste rules of social intercourse and interacted freely outside one's caste. The restrictions and sanctions were even more severe in case of social intercourse with untouchables.

4.4.4 Civil and Religious Disabilities and Privileges of the Different Sections

Different caste groups enjoyed different levels of privileges and were constrained by different set of restrictions. Segregation of individual castes or of caste groups in a village is the most obvious sign of civil privileges and disabilities and is largely observed all over India. Villages across India would show clustering of settlements along caste lines. Moreover, in many villages the untouchables are still not allowed to construct houses inside the village. They reside on the outskirts of the village and the interiors of the village are inaccessible to them.

Besides, there were strong restrictions against certain castes to enter religious places inside the village. The members of the depressed castes would often suffice by paying obeisance to the deities from outside the temple. *Sudras* and untouchables could not hire a high caste priest to perform rituals and offer prayers for them as no high caste would offer his services to a low caste person.

Certain community places within the village were out of bounds for the depressed castes. Especially movement of untouchables was severely restricted as their touch and shadow in itself was supposed to pollute. Early mornings and late evenings when the shadows were longer, they were not allowed to venture outside.

In many parts of India, *Sudras* and untouchables were not allowed to wear the kind of dresses and headgears as adorned by the high castes. Even the ceremonies conducted by the lower castes had to be much more humble than those of the higher caste groups.

Schools in villages were also not open to members of lowest castes. Children from these castes were not only considered to cause a polluting effect in the classroom but they were also considered undeserving for any education. Education was believed to be a privilege only of the twice born.

Through such selective privileges conferred on some and restrictions posed on others certain capacity building opportunities were available to a selected few while the others suffered from the disabilities imposed by denial of such privileges.

4.4.5 Restrictions on Occupation

The idea of hereditary occupation was the hallmark of caste system. To opt for any other occupation that was not the 'hereditary occupation of a particular caste was considered sinful. The hereditary occupation of *Brahmins* was priesthood, teaching etc. of *Kshatriya* was military service, and warrior, of *Vaishya* was trading, business and that of *Sudras* was to serve rest of the castes and provide miscellaneous services to them. Untouchables were the scavengers and performed other impure tasks. To stick to one's calling was considered the obvious and correct thing and any deviation was seen with contempt. Since all occupations require some degree of training and there were no schools that provided freely allowed anyone to develop skills in any field, the training of new members in any field was imparted through personal guidance which could be offered only to members of one's own caste. Many communities had their trade secrets which they never shared with anyone outside their own community. There was no choice with regard to the occupation that one may lie to.

4.4.6 Restrictions on Marriage

Sanction against marrying outside one's own caste is an important pillar of caste system. Caste endogamy has been identified as one of the strongest features of the caste system. It is through the practice of caste endogamy that the idea of purity of blood is perpetuated and strengthened. Marrying outside one's caste group is again not allowed in caste system. One has to marry outside one's got or *gotra* but not outside one's caste. However, in one type of case such a marriage is allowed. That is marrying outside one's caste is allowed if it is hypergamy or *anuloma* i.e., when a girl from lower caste marries a boy from the upper caste. Another type of marriage outside caste group, called hypogamy or pratiloma, in which a girl from higher caste is· married to a boy from the lower caste, is considered bad and is not allowed at all.

All the features mentioned above highlight one central aspect of caste system that it is a highly structured system of rules and regulations that prohibit any kind of shift of any person from one caste group to another. The system of social stratification thus developed has come to be identified for its rigidity.

There are strong sanctions against any vertical mobility (upward) within the system. There are two most crucial events in one's life in Indian society which have the capacity that have the capacity to change one's course of life and life chances in general. These are getting an occupation and getting married. Not surprisingly therefore, the caste norms become more rigid and severe in these two areas. The elaborate set of norms and values governing various caste groups have helped the caste system successfully survive and thrive through the ages. As a system of stratification based on ascription the caste system has become an anachronism in modem times. One wonders why the caste system despite all its drawbacks and weaknesses has survived till date. The reasons are many. The first and foremost being the rationalization of such a system of stratification provided through religious beliefs thus making the whole system look preordained and natural. Second being that it has existed for such a long period in India and developed such deep social and cultural roots in our society that even legal sanction against its various practices would take some time to change the system. Moreover, it takes time to change the beliefs, attitudes and practices of people. Thirdly, our society is still marred with large scale illiteracy and ignorance. Our society is still traditional in many ways and is in the process of adopting a more rational lifestyle.

Check Your Knowledge

a)   What is Caste?

_____
_____
_____

b)   What is the difference between Caste and *Varna*?

_____
_____
_____

c)   Describe briefly the main features of caste system?

_____
_____
_____

d)   What do you understand by hierarchy?

_____
_____
_____

4.5   Practice of Untouchability

Though originally there were only four *Varna*s, there emerged a fifth category of people in Hindu society who were referred to as 'panchams' and were casteless Hindus. The rest of the society shunned these people, as nothing was considered worse than to lose one's caste. When, under rarest of the rare circumstances, one would lose one's caste one would not remain in any caste at all. Such people were thrown out of the mainstream society and were forced to live at the precincts of the village. They were considered ritually most polluted and were considered as untouchables by the society. Being untouchables their services were not welcome and they were given the most unpleasant and unclean of the jobs. Their occupation was restricted to jobs like carrying night soil and scavenging dead animals. They were not allowed to interact with other members of society. Any kind of intercourse with these communities evoked strong social sanctions against the violators.

It was this creation of the caste system that drew considerable attention of social reformers world wide and attracted lot of criticism from various quarters. Practice of untouchability revealed the most heinous and inhuman face of caste system. Though the position of untouchables did not change much for centuries, there were some considerable steps being taken towards change of attitude towards these communities during independence movement. Gandhi ji tried to change people's attitude towards these communities by coining a new term for them, 'Harijan'. However, owing to strong social and cultural baggage weighing heavily against these communities and deeply rooted caste psyche of average Indian, hardly anything worthwhile was achieved.

It was only after independence of India that a law was passed to make practice of untouchability a punishable offence. These communities, which suffered multiple disabilities owing to untouchability, were listed under a schedule and were referred to as Scheduled Castes since then. To ensure their social upliftment Indian constitution provided for special measures to ensure their participation in the mainstream society.

While ex-untouchable castes are referred to as Scheduled Castes in government records, the *Sudras* are referred to as OBCs.

4.6   Summary

Caste system has been prevalent in India since ages and has been a distinguishing feature of Indian society. It is a kind of social stratification that is ascriptive in nature and provides little mobility to its members. The system is believed to have originated about 3000 years back during the Vedic period but there is no confirmed evidence to account for its origin. Of all the descriptions, mythological and racial descriptions have found maximum takers so far. Caste is mainly characterized by its endogamous nature, highly

stratified and hierarchized structure and its preference for hereditary occupations. It is supported by an elaborate set of norms and values guiding the conduct of its members in all walks of life. Various social, cultural, and religious privileges offered and disabilities imposed on its members come together to ensure compliance to the system. Owing to the restrictive and highly rigid nature of caste system, and its abominable feature of untouchability, it has drawn wide criticism as a valid and legitimate system of scarification for the modem age in which all members of society are treated as equals and have equal rights. However, with its deep-rooted cultural and social moorings, caste remains an extant reality in the modem times. But now it is getting severely challenged by the Indian society propelled forward by modem rational men and women who find it not only outdated system but also exploitative and non-egalitarian.

4.7   Key Words/Concepts

Caste: Caste is a form of social stratification that consists of hierarchically arranged closed endogamous groups the membership of which is ascribed and social mobility in which is extremely low.

Varna :   *Varna* in Sanskrit literally means genera or colour. *Varna*s are the four categories into which all human beings have been divided. These being *Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya,* and *Sudra*.

Brahmin: The upper most caste in the caste hierarchy. Their hereditary occupation being priesthood; education and teaching. They form a minuscule population of Indian society but they enjoy high social and ritual ranking.

Kshatriya: The second highest caste in the traditional caste hierarchy. Their hereditary occupation being warrior and military service. They do not enjoy as high a ritual status as *Brahmins* but they have mainly been the rulers in various parts of India. Their loss in ritual status is well compensated with gain in political status.

Vaishya: The third highest caste in the traditional caste hierarchy. Their hereditary occupation being agriculture, production and trade. They do not enjoy the high ritual status of *Brahmins* or the high political status of the *Kshatriyas* but they enjoy a very high economic status in society.

Shudra: The fourth and the lowest caste in the traditional caste hierarchy. Their hereditary occupation being servicing the higher castes. The upper three castes are referred to as twice born (duija) while the *Sudras* are not. They have been the socially, economically and politically deprived community compared to the upper three castes. Numerically they form the largest caste groups in India. Due to their numerical strength at some places they have managed to prevail as dominant castes but in general they are educationally and socially marginalised. In modern parlance they are referred to as Other Backward Castes.

Untouchables: These were the people who were considered unclean, polluted and lowliest in Hindu society. They do not form part of the traditional caste hierarchy. Since they formed a fifth group in addition to' the traditional four caste groups, they were referred to as 'Panchams'. Like *Sudras* they were also suppressed by higher castes but their condition was worse since they were not allowed to venture freely in society. Their houses used to be on the outskirts of villages and were traditionally forced to do scavenging and other unhygienic jobs. Their touch and even their shadow were believed to cause pollution to others. After independence such castes were enumerated under a schedule and they were referred to as Scheduled Castes.

Endogamy: It is a prescribed practice of marriage in which a person marries within his or her own social group. In case 0 caste, caste endogamy is practiced i.e., a person belonging to a particular caste marries within his caste group.

Rig Veda : One of the oldest sacred scriptures of the Hindus. It contains a popular hymn Purushasukta that happens to be the oldest reference to the origin of caste system.

Hierarchy: Hierarchy is a basic principle of social division in society by which society is differentiated into different segments and then placed in order of superiority and inferiority. It is a vertical division of society into different segments.

Commeusal Restrictions: Restrictions posed on member of a caste group with regard to their food sharing with other members of society.

4.8   Exercise   Questions:

Short Type Questions:

      a)   Define Caste.

      b)   What do you mean by Anuloma?

      c)   Which religious scripture is the first one to refer to *Varna* system?

      d)   Who are Scheduled castes?

      e)   What is Hypergamy.

      f)   What do you understand by Commercial relations?

Long Type Questions:

1.   Define Caste and discuss its features.

2.   What do you mean by caste? What kind of restrictions were posed on different caste people.

4.9   Suggested Readings

Mann, Michael (ed) *Macmillan Student Encyclopedia of Sociology*, Macmillan Press: London, 1994

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Stern, Robert W. *Changing India: Bourgeois Revolution on the Subcontinent*, New Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 1993

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CHANGING PATTERNS IN CASTE SYSTEM

Structure :

5.8   Exercise Questions

5.9   Key Words/Concepts

5.10   Suggested Readings

5.0   Objectives

The main objectives of this lesson are that after it is thoroughly read, the student shall be able to :

* *   define the caste system.
* *   identify its primary features
* *   understand the patterns of continuity and change in the system over the different historical periods.
* *   discuss the significant factors and forces that brought about such changes.
* *   explain the changing patterns in modern Indian society.

5.1   Introduction

Caste system is a form of social stratification that is peculiar to India. It also happens to be one of the oldest systems of stratification in the world that still continues to exist. The system is notorious for its rigid   structure   and severe disparities that it upholds as justified for the sake of maintaining social order in society. Looking at it one wonders how such a non-egalitarian system could continue to operate over such a large span of history without much change. But a second look at the caste system would help reveal the picture. In fact, if we try to see the trajectory of development of caste system as the dominant form of social stratification in India, we come across various changes that the system has witnessed with the passage of time. Though the system has largely remained unaltered for long, at the same time it does not have the same type of features that it once had. This chapter tries   to develop a brief understanding of the caste system in India before looking into various changes that has affected it over the years. A peep into the history and a glance around our present society helps us to delineate some of the significant patterns of change in caste.

5.2   What is caste system?

As we have already discussed this concept in the last   chapter   that   Caste system is a rigid system of social stratification which separates various members of society into different closed hierarchical social groups kept insulated from each other through practice of endogamy and providing membership on the basis of one's birth. The system is especially known for the absence of sufficient channels for social mobility. This system of social stratification is peculiar to Indian society and has its origin in Hinduism which is the dominant religion of India. Caste system is basically a feature

of Hindu social order. The caste system enjoys legitimacy through the sacred texts of Hindus, Rigveda, where the four different segments of society-*Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya* and *Shudras* - are referred to have originated out of the sacrifice of the Primeval Being. This mythological anecdote provides caste system the strength by appearing pre-ordained and natural, hence unquestionable. It also formed the basis for justifying traditional distribution of work among different castes that was hereditary in nature. However, this rigid and obstinate system has also shown trends and patterns of change but before that we shall have a brief review of the features of caste system.

5.3   Continuing Patterns in Caste System

Some of the features of caste system have remained recalcitrant and shown resistance to any kind of change. In fact some of the basic features still remain as rigid as always. Criterion for *membership* of a particular caste remains the same. One still cannot chose to belong to a different caste group than to the one which he belongs to. Changing one's caste is still not feasible during one's lifetime.

Hierarchical Order remains the same. The traditional ranking of caste groups remains the same. *Brahmins* still enjoy highest social and ritual status and *Shudras* and untouchables still remain at the bottom with many people still looking down upon them.

Caste as an *Identity Caste* system still remains an important   category   for identifying social and political status of a person, especially in rural areas.

Caste endogamy When it comes to marriage, caste system shows its effectiveness still. Any matrimonial advertisement in newspapers would reflect the strong bias that still prevails in our society with regard to one's caste especially when it comes to marriage.

5.4   Changes in Caste

While the caste continues its age-old tradition in modem age too let us now look at some of the changes and the patterns, as they existed in   different periods of history. A study spread over a wider span would help us understand the trends better.

5.4.1 Caste in Ancient Indian Society

Caste system took its birth about 3000 years back during the Vedic period. It was during this period that the foundation for such a system of social stratification was first laid. Though there is no conclusive evidence available to ascertain its origin, there is a general agreement at the establishment of caste system during this period only. In fact, there are references that initially the system was much more flexible and based not on ascription but on achievement. At that stage it was referred to as *Varna* system in which one's *Varna* (or social category) was decided on the basis of one's occupation and

hence provided considerable choice to the members of society to change their *Varna* or their social or ritual status by adopting a more respected occupation. But soon the *Varna* system got corrupted into caste system in which it was the birth that determined one's occupation and hence the status in society. Once again there is no historical record as such to prove the existence of idealistic *Varna* system where social mobility was based on achievement and not on one's birth as it has come to be now but it is generally believed that what turned out into a vicious caste system was originally planned as a rational mechanism for division of labour.

It was only in the late vedic period that those belonging to the higher *Varna* order started consolidating their gains and making their position more secure by devising new methods. Since they were the sole interpreters of sacred texts, *Brahmins* in that era interpreted sacred Hindu texts to give them a permanently higher status. They started laying down new occupational norms for different segments of society. Their desire to centralize power also led to growth of rituals in this age. There were special injunctions issued prohibiting lower castes of the society to own property, read scriptures, acquire education or use public places freely. In nutshell, this phase was the phase of consolidation and establishment of Brahminic model of caste system which was basically a corrupted form of *Varna* system. Since at this stage society was highly religious, nobody dared to question the veracity of the claims made by the elderly priests whom people believed thoroughly. With the growth or dominance of Hindus with the passage of time, the caste model of society flourished till the golden age of Hindus, the Gupta Period.

5.4.2 Caste in Medieval Indian Society

After the decline of Gupta Empire, Hindus lost their vital political patronage which they always required to settle caste related disputes and enforce caste norms. The position of Hindus got further diminished with the advent of foreign rule. During Mughal period, caste rules were followed less strictly as the. Muslim rulers had other priorities than promoting the religious interests of the Hindus. This period also witnessed some conversions, voluntary and forced, to the new religion. Besides those who were forced, there were others who volunteered owing to their dissatisfaction with their parent religion. A major section of converts to Islam in this phase consisted of the low caste or marginalized caste groups.

Rise of Bhakti movement in various parts of India in the mid 14th and 15th century contributed in bringing some further changes in the caste system. In case of Punjab the Bhakti leaders, minimized the role of mediator between God and humans and freed many of the low caste' people from the elaborate rituals and dependence on the Hindu priests.

So during this phase enforcement of caste principles in society was weak.

5.4.3 Caste in Modern Indian Society

The modem history of India starts roughly from the beginning of British rule. Britishers took over the reigns of India from the Mughals. Once again the rulers were the foreigners who brought with them a new religion, Christianity. British invaders were initially accompanied by Christian missionaries from their country when they visited any new land. They too found the low caste Hindus more amenable to conversion as their satisfaction levels within Hinduism were abysmally low. However, Britishers, unlike their predecessors Mughals, were comparatively secular. They were more interested in using Indian resources for maximizing their profits rather than in religious conversions.

In the mean time Indian freedom fighters started realizing that to build a potent mass movement against the British Raj they would require a concerted effort on the part of its people and owing to sharp caste differences, such an event was difficult to organize. In addition, the rising conversion rate among low caste Hindus to other religions drew their attention to the problem of untouchability which was effectively hampering a large section of society from participating in the movement.

In the process many reform movements like Brahmo Samaj, Arya Samaj etc. were started in this phase to address the problem of caste as well. Along with the reformist efforts being made by the Indian freedom fighters, British Govt. came up with some reformatory legislations that were helpful in weakening the caste divisions in society. The Castes-Disability-Removal Act 1850 was one of the first such Acts though its focus was to allow easy conversion from one caste or religion to another.

Special legislative measures were also taken after independence to ameliorate the condition of the low castes and to weaken the hold of caste system in modern India. The first step towards egalitarianism was the grant of equal voting rights to all the citizens. Then there were other measures also taken by the govt. in order to develop a more equitable society. The law made it legal to marry outside one's caste, practice of untouchability has been proclaimed as a punishable practice, and reservations were offered to people belonging to lower castes.

To top it all, the long stay of Britishers brought many western ideas and influences into our culture. Britishers brought with them modern telecommunication technologies and transportation that helped in the growth of industrialization in India. Westernization, Secularization and Modernization set into motion new forces of social change and these processes together weakened the hold of caste system in India. The role of urbanization, globalization and rationalization has also grown since independence and has resulted in many qualitative social and cultural changes in Indian society.

5.5   Factors of Change in Caste:

As we glance through broad historical developments in India since Vedic period, we find various factors that contributed towards bringing some changes in the caste system. Some of these have been enumerated below:

5.5.1 Decline in Political Patronage:

Caste system, as we know, finds its origin in Hinduism. It formed the basic fabric of Hindu society. A good Hindu was always supposed to live according the norms laid out in the caste system. Any infringement of caste laws was met with great resistance and condemnation, followed often by punishment. During the reign of Hindu kinks, caste laws were strongly adhered to and the political leadership considered it their duty to uphold the caste system. This provided caste system wider legitimacy and being backed by the law of the land it had a firm ground to stand on. However, with the Muslim invaders becoming the new rulers, the political support enjoyed by the caste system received a set back and non-conformity to caste norms was handled more at community level than at the level of state. Same was true when the Muslim rulers were replaced by the Britishers in the mid 18th century. In fact, Britishers found the system to be highly exploitative and openly condemned it.

5.5.2 Religious Reform Movements and Social Reform Movements

Citadel of caste faced its first serious and effective challenge on religious and spiritual grounds by Buddhism and Jainism. Later on the Bhakti movement that swept across many parts of India during 15 and 16th century revived attack against the caste system. The movement strongly condemned the caste system and professed all men to be born as equals and capable of achieving salvation. Some notable Bhakti saints who shook the foundation of caste system are Kabir, Nanak, Chaitanya, Ramanuja and others. Though Bhakti movement was basically a religious movement, there were some semi-religious reform movements also initiated during the struggle for independence that contributed in weakening the caste system. Some of the notable reform movements were the Arya Samaj Movement, Brahmo Samaj Movement, Prarthana Samaj, Satya Sodhak Samaj, etc. These movements aimed at achieving individual liberty and social equality.

5.5.3 Political Movements

Another important but lasting contribution was made by some political movements like freedom struggle movement and anti-caste movement in the last two hundred years. Growth of nationalism during the freedom struggle precipitated the efforts towards developing a more cohesive society established on principles of equality, fraternity and liberty. Some of the notable leaders who were on the forefront in such were political movements were Gandhi, Babasaheb Ambedkar, Jyotiba Phule, Narayan Guru, Periyar and others.

5.5.4 Westernization :

British Raj not only changed the political scene in India but also brought. about drastic social changes during its 200 years of rule in India. Besides bringing along new ideas of secularization and rationality, they also influenced the life style of Indian people. The Britishers emerged as the new elite and western way of life as the symbol of success and power. Emulation of western rulers brought some Indians closer to their culture too, especially among the urban elites. In their urge to get westernized many people chose to adopt the dressing style, beliefs, attitudes of their colonial rulers even if such were against the edicts of their caste.

5.5.5 Rise of Rationalism

Along with popularization of western way of life, especially among the urban elites, came the idea of rationality. Modem rationalism with its strong faith in man as a rational being and his ability to work towards the betterment of society with the application of reason in day to day's life became a new tool of empowerment for man. Rise in empiricism in the western thought gave birth to new type of skepticism towards inherited knowledge. Traditions and customs were thus exposed to the test of reason leading to further erosion of the caste system.

5.5.6 Secularization

With the growth of rationalism was associated the rise of secularization where in the light of reason, religious and political domains were separated as two distinct spheres of life having entirely different sets of assumptions and practices to work with.

The long history of wars in the name of religion taught the West to dissociate religious sphere from other spheres of life. This meant following opting for those means and practices which· were logically and empirically more viable and appropriate. With secularization, the role of religion in day to day life was reduced drastically and emphasis was on the use of means-end rationality than on religious injunctions.

5.5.7 Industrialization

Industrial revolution that started in Western Europe was brought to Indian shores by the Britishers. As colonial rulers, Britishers interlinked different markets in India and exported raw material from India to support the Industry in UK. After gaining independence, India adopted the Nehruvian model of development which gave precedence to heavy industry. The whole process of Industrialization is based on economic rationality where factories are set up on the basis of profitability and employment granted on the basis of skill and availability of labour. Factory set up involves working together with fellow workers under similar conditions and common workplace. Many people in these factories were dawn from different caste groups and they learnt to

shed their caste identity at least till they are in the factory. Not only did industrialization free many from their traditional occupations, it also made people from different caste groups tolerate each other more and interact too.

5.5.8 Urbanization

Industrialisation gave rise to urbanization which led to increased flow of population from rural to urban areas. Many lower caste people who were entirely dependent on the high castes in the village for their survival found new avenues in the city. Rural community network which was effective in enforcing caste norms was found to be absent in the urban areas. Moreover, anonymity provided by the urban places allowed many low caste people to claim themselves to be from a higher caste.

5.5.9 Modernization

Modernization is a· process of social and cultural changes associated with a particular model of development propagated by the west in· which the traditional societies try to become modem. The process involves adoption of institutions and means that are governed by the rational; faculty of mankind rather than conventions, beliefs, customs, faith and   traditions. Traditional caste system therefore proved quite ineffective in dealing with modem conditions thrown up by new development.

5.5.10 Modern Means of Communication and Transportation

During British Raj, railways and road networks were established connecting various significant ports and cities. In order to link up market with rural areas from where raw material was picked for use in industry, road links were also extended to many villages making transportation easier and economical. This linkage though intended primarily to raise profitability, also led to greater urbanization of rural areas and migration of people from rural to urban areas. After independence road and rail networks were extended further eroding the isolation of rural areas and thus rural society. Mass transportation also made it increasingly difficult to observe caste restrictions effectively.

5.5.11 Modern Education

Education was traditionally considered to be the domain of high castes only and its reach was restricted to the privileged castes. However, Britishers established system of mass education in India. English bred educated Indians studied English democratic literature and imbibed its democratic principles. After independence, education system developed by India focused on extending the benefits of education to the hitherto uneducated masses too. Moreover, India chose to emphasize growth of scientific temper and rationality by focusing on secular modern education. This greatly weakened the traditional caste structure and the legitimacy that it enjoyed.

5.5.12 Legislative Measures

Various legislative measures since British Raj have worked further to weaken the caste system. During British rule, certain legislations like The Caste Disabilities Removal Act of 1850, the Special Marriage Act of 1872 and Special Marriage Amendment Act of 1923 directly addressed some of the basic problems caused by the caste system. After independence, People of India envisaged a new society free from inequalities and discrimination emerging out of caste system. The principles of liberty, fraternity, equality and justice are enshrined in the Constitution of India. Article 15, 16 and 17 squarely deal with the problem of caste and prohibit any kind of discrimination perpetuated on account of caste. Article 17 makes practice of untouchability a punishable offence. Extension of reservation benefits to the marginalized castes has also altered the socio-economic and political condition of the hitherto marginalized castes. Establishment of democracy with adult franchise extending equal political rights to all was an exceptional means to equality.

5.5.13 Economic factors

Changing economic relation in the modern industrialized economy changed the social configurations too. British conquest finished the village autarchy by linking it up with aggressive markets in the region. This development provided new opportunities of employment to many villagers and the growing industrialization sucked in labourers from the rural areas. This led not only to growth of nontraditional occupations but also allowed many to free themselves from dependence on higher castes in-built in the Jajmani system prevalent in Indian villages. In urban areas too, sometimes out of necessity and at times out of profitability, people chose their occupations that were different from the ones recommended by their caste norms. In modem India, the jobs are increasingly linked with one's educational status achieved over the years passing through an education system that is accessible to all and common to all.

5.6   Changing Patterns:

In context of the historical background we find that caste system flourished the most during ancient times when people were more religious and when traditions and customs were central to their existence. Rest of the times it has always faced challenges. The authority enjoyed by caste system started diminishing once other religions started finding a niche for themselves in the subcontinent. With the advent of Mughal rule in India, Islam started making in roads into Indian society and with the Britishers establishing their supremacy in 1750s onwards, Christianity also found a niche for itself. But the primary difference between the two rulers was that the Mughals came to rule and later settled down in India whereas Britishers were very

clear from the beginning itself that they wanted to rule to earn. They never developed organic links with Indian society which they ruled with a modern rational bureaucratic administration. While the caste system did not get the kind of patronage that it used to enjoy before the advent of Mughals, it survived mainly in the villages of India where there was no direct intervention by the political rulers at the centre and which were self-dependent community structures in themselves. We may therefore say that before Mughals, caste system was constantly supported and endorsed by the ruling class as a result of which, all legislations were framed keeping in mind the laws related to practice of caste obligations. But as the patronage from political elite stopped flowing in its favour, the caste system grew independently in rural areas with its own set of variations across the country. In the last 1000 years therefore the caste system that was prevalent was the practiced caste system. The changes, therefore, first developed in terms of inter regional variations. But the main challenge posed to caste for the first time was with the establishment of railways, roads, growth of urbanization, secularization, and linking up of villages with bigger markets which disturbed the insulated character of Indian villages. Hence, most of the changes are of very recent origin and still developing. Following are the trends and patterns which have been mainly observed in the caste system in India.

5.6.1 Caste is becoming class like: The first and foremost trend is towards openness in caste categories. The changed reality has made people aware of the main weaknesses of the caste system and they realize that in order to make it work in the modern times, there has to be more openness in the structure providing some avenues of mobility within the system. Already one of the hallmarks of caste system, hereditary occupation, has lost its significance, especially in the urban areas. Modem market: structure has produced new kind of jobs and made some of the older occupations redundant. In such a scenario it makes no sense to· press for hereditary occupations. Also in many parts of the country, more than the privileges and disabilities flowing out of higher or lower ritual status enjoyed by the castes, it is their level of income which is becoming more crucial in determining their life chances. However, the conferment of a caste membership is still dependent on the accident of one's birth.

5.6.2 Politicization of Caste: Caste has also emerged as a rallying point for political mobilization in various ways. There are political movements, like dalit movements, which are now asserting for their political and social rights through democratic methods. There are political parties too which make use of caste identity to garner votes during elections. Whether political leaders do it out of genuine desire or mere formality, one thing is clear, that the logic of caste is used frequently and many a times successfully by them to shape the political outcome. There are both positive and negative

repercussions of such a trend. On the negative side, this implies that like religion now caste too can be used by the leaders for divisive politics. On the positive side though it is believed that democracy has spread awareness among the lower castes regarding their rights and they are increasingly demanding social, economic and political- equality through available democratic means. Their political socialization in democratic system and increasing participation in the system is considered to be a positive outcome. It is something very novel since in the caste system, there is no idea of democracy, no idea of the masses making choice with regard to who rules the Society. Caste system does not recognize all members of society as equals when it comes to their political, social or other rights, something that is contrary to the spirit of democracy. The politicization of caste is an emerging phenomenon and it is yet to be seen how the political system and the caste system come to terms with each other.

Caste groups are also emerging as pressure groups as we now have All India Brahmin Mahasabha, All India Kshatriya Mahasabha etc, which provide a platform to these caste groups to consolidate" their gains and claims in Indian society. Indian democracy is being tested for its ability to accommodate and resolve pressures being generated out of such caste groupings.

5.6.3 Traditional caste model losing relevance it the modern context.
Many norms related to caste system are difficult to practice because of their sheer impracticality. The norms governing caste system were formulated in an era dominated by religious values, single dominating religion, and pre modern times. Now with India developing into a multicultural society where members of each religion stay with number of people practicing other religions it is next to impossible to observe injunctions of caste system in totality. Moreover, with growing secularization, people depend more on their sense of reason than mythological anecdotes to manage their life. Modem times have produced modern technologies that make many traditional occupations redundant. Some occupations which were earlier considered lowly and were therefore managed only by the low castes have been taken up by many high castes people also where they find it lucrative, for example working in leather industry. Modern means of transportation and communication also make it difficult to avoid contact with men from different caste groups. Traveling by public transport like train or bus one rubs shoulders with people of different caste and creed daily, something that the caste system does not allow.

5.6.4 Caste emerging more as marks of identity than symbol of status
in society : Another pattern observed is the increasing use of caste as a mark of identification. The traditional notions of purity and pollution are given lesser significance these days. With urbanization and modem education providing wider possibilities to break the stereotype images, the caste titles

carry lesser significance as symbols of ritual or social status. As people travel to distant places and interact with wider global community in a rapidly globalizing world, their search for identity and roots is growing sharply. Caste, though primordial, emerges as an enduring identity.

5.6.5 Exclusiveness of caste breaking down: With increasing exposure to mass media, the cultural barriers that separated different caste groups have become weak. Now one doesn't need to be a member of a particular caste group or community to know the culture and tradition of that group. Television, radio and newspapers etc have blurred such cultural distinctions to quite an extent through circulation of such images across wider sections of society. With larger cultural contact now made easier, Sanskritization is an easier option with many lower castes since imitating higher castes has become much more easier now with no restrictions on anyone from adorning any kind of dress code in independent India.

Self Check Questions

a)   What is caste system?

_____
_____
_____

b)   What is caste endogamy?

_____
_____
_____

c)   What do you mean by hereditary occupation?

_____
_____
_____

d)   Mention any two main factors responsible for effecting change in caste system in modern times.

_____
_____
_____

5.7   Summary

Caste system has been one of the oldest systems of social stratification and was a distinct feature of Indian society, especially Hindu society. However, with changing times, though the caste system has not yet been done away with, many factors have contributed in changing the way it functions now. With withdrawal of political patronage to the caste system after the decline

of Hindu kingdoms it was mainly in rural interiors that the system survived and lived. With the forces of modernization and urbanization destroying the insulated and self-sufficient character of Indian villages, caste system faced its toughest challenge. Last two hundred year have been compelled lot of new trends to emerge in the practice of caste system. Though there are definite patterns of change, it would be too early and premature to announce its end. The patterns of change are also matched with patterns of resurgence which have not been discussed here as it was out our preview in this chapter. Indian society is undergoing a process of churning and the end product is yet to be seen. What is important, however, is that the society is trying to engage with some basic issues out of which it has to search answers for itself.

5.8   Key Words/Concepts

Caste: This system of social stratification is peculiar to Indian Society

System and has its origin in Hinduism. Caste   System seperates various members of society into different closed hierarchial social groups kept insulated from each other through practice of endogamy and providing membership on the basis of birth.

Caste: Caste is a form of social stratification that consists of hierarchically arranged closed endogamous groups the membership of which is ascribed and social mobility in which is extremely low.

Varna: *Varna* in Sanskrit literally means genera or colour. *Varna*s are the four categories into which all human beings have   been divided. These being Brahmin Kshatriya, Vaishya, and Sudra.

Brahmin: The upper most caste in the caste hierarchy. Their hereditary occupation being priesthood, education and teaching. They fonn a miniscule population of Indian society but they enjoy high social and ritual ranking.

Kshatriya: The second highest caste in the traditional caste hierarchy. Their hereditary occupation being warrior and military service. They do not enjoy as high a ritual status as *Brahmins* but they have mainly been the rulers in various parts of India. Their loss in ritual status is well compensated with gain in political status.

Vaishya: The third highest caste in the traditional caste hierarchy. Their hereditary occupation being agriculture, production and trade. They do not enjoy the high ritual status of *Brahmins* or the high political status of the *Kshatriyas* but they enjoy a very high economic status in society.

Shudra: The fourth and the lowest caste in the traditional caste hierarchy. Their hereditary occupation being servicing the higher castes.

The upper three castes are referred to as twice born (dvija) while the *Sudras* are not. They have been the socially, economically and politically deprived community compared to the upper three castes. Numerically they form the largest caste groups in India. Due to their numerical strength at some places they have managed to prevail as dominant castes but in general they are educationally and socially marginalised. In modem parlance they are referred to as Other Backward Castes.

Untouchables: These were the people who were considered unclean, polluted and lowliest in Hindu society. They do not form part of the traditional caste hierarchy. Since they formed a fifth group in addition to the traditional four caste groups, they were referred to as 'Panchams'. Like *Sudras* they were also suppressed by higher castes but their condition was worse since they were not allowed to venture freely in society. Their houses used to be on the outskirts of villages and were traditionally forced to do scavenging and other unhygienic jobs. Their touch and even their shadow were believed to cause pollution to others. After independence such castes were enumerated under a schedule and they were referred to as Scheduled Castes.

Endogamy : It is a prescribed practice of marriage in which a person marries within his or her own social group. In case of caste, caste endogamy is, practiced i.e., a person belonging to a particular caste marries within his caste group.

Hierarchy: Hierarchy is a basic principle of social division in society by which society is differentiated into different segments and then placed in order of superiority and inferiority. It is a vertical division of society into different segments.

Commensal Restrictions: Restrictions posed on members of a caste group With regard to their food sharing with other members of society.

Sanskritization : Sanskritization is a term coined by M.N. Srinivas to describe the process by which the lower castes change their customs, rituals, ideology and way of life in the· direction of higher castes in order to claim a higher position in the caste hierarchy.

Westernization: Westernization is a process of social change that results from the influence of western societies. In context of India, it is specifically referred to those socio-cultural changes that have been brought about by the Britishers through their long association with Indian society during the British Raj.

Modernisation: Modernization is a broad term used widely with different

connotations. It is primarily used as a model of development characterised by a break with the traditional beliefs, ideas and practices.

Urbanization: Urbanization refers to a process of increasing proportion of population getting concentrated into towns or cities and to the socio-cultural changes ushered thereby.

Rationalization: Rationalization is a process of social change brought about by a growing faith in the rationality of mankind and its increasing application into different spheres of life.

5.9   Exercise Questions

Short Questions (define) :

a)   Caste System

b)   Hierarchy

c)   Sansktritization

d)   Modernization

Long Questions:

1.   Define Caste and discuss its features.

2.   What are the emerging trends in caste system.

3.   Which change in caste system do you think is the most important of all? Why?

5.10   Suggested Readings

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CLASS IN INDIA: DEFINITION, BASES AND DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CASTE AND CLASS

Structure:

6.0   Objectives

6.1   Introduction

6.2   Meaning of class

6.3   Definitions of class

6.4   Characteristics of class

6.5   Bases of class

    6.5.1   Birth

    6.5.2   Economic

    6.5.3   Occupational

    6.5.4   Life Chance

    6.5.5   Educational

    6.5.6   Political

    6.5.7   Status

6.6   Difference between caste and class

6.7   Summary

6.8   Short Notes

6.9   Glossary

6.10   Exercise Question

6.11   Suggested Readings

6.0   Objectives

After going through this lesson you will be able to

    *   know that class is an important system of social stratification.

    *   explain on what bases society is divided into different classes.

    *   discuss the difference between caste and class.

6.1   Introduction

The concept of social class is more prevalent in modern and developed societies, people lay stress on the class rather than to what caste he belongs to. It is a type of social stratification. People classify one another into categories and rank themselves in higher or lower classes.

6.2   Meaning of Class

Class is a category in which people are arranged in to different levels according to their status in the society. Class is a social group within the collectivity. Classes are neither defined by law nor sanctioned by any religion. Social class is defined as a people occupying similar social position in wealth, income, occupation etc. Class is a system of stratification in which a person's social status depends on one's own capabilities and achievement.

Every society is divided into different classes. In a social class there is a feeling of relation to members of one's own class. Individuals belonging to the same social class are expected to maintain similar stands of life and to choose their occupations within a limited area. There is a feeling of inferiority in relation to those who stand above in the social scale and a feeling of superiority over those below in the hierarchy.

Social class permits the individual to change ones status. It encourages individuals to select their occupations. Membership of class is not inherited but it is achieved. Social mobility movement upward and downward within hierarchy or stratification is much more common in the class system. A social class is also a cultural group sharing a particular way of life. It is related to the life chances available for the group. Social class consists of number of individuals who share similar status often ascribed at birth but capable of being altered. Movement of groups and individuals to other strata is possible.

6.3   Definitions

According to Morris Ginsberg, "A social class is one of two or more broad groups of individuals who are ranked by the members of community in socially superior and inferior positions."

Max Weber writes, "Classes are aggregates of individuals who have the same opportunities of acquiring goods, the same exhibited standard of living."

P Gisbert defines, "Class is a category or group of persons having a definite status in society which permanently determines their relation to other groups."

According to Ogburn and Nimkoff, "A social class is the aggregate of persons having essentially the same social status in a given society."

6.4   Characteristics of Class : Following are the main characteristics of class.

6.4.1 STATUS GROUP: A social class is a status group. Different statuses arises in society as people are engaged in different activities and do different things. Social status separates the individuals. The classes in every society are placed in hierarchical order. The higher ranked classes are at the top and lower classes are at the bottom.

6.4.2 ACHIEVED STATUS: The another characteristic of class system is achieved status. In class system status is achieved by persons with ones own capabilities and achievements. Class system provides an individual the scope for changing or improving one's status.

6.4.3 CLASS SYSTEM IS UNIVERSAL: Class is a universal phenomenon. Class system exists in almost all the societies of the world. Societies of any size have a class structure present in them.

6.4.4 MEMBERSHIP IS OPEN: In class system the membership is open as there is no emphasis is laid on birth. Any person with his own capabilities, efforts, talent, can achieve and enjoy the membership of any other class.

6.4.5 ELEMENT OF PRESTIGE: Each social class has its own social status in the society. The position in the society is associated with prestige. The prestige which a class enjoys and the status is depended on certain qualities which are considered to be more or less important in the society.

The status enjoyed by the ruling class in the society is superior to that of other classes.

6.4.6 CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS: Class consciousness is a realisation of a similarity of attitude and behaviour with members of other classes. It is the inner feeling which unites those who feel distinct from others. This determines their role in the society and their interaction with other members of the society. When the people posses common traditions and common experiences they develop consciousness.

6.4.7 LIFE CHANCES: A social class is distinguished from other social class by the mode of living of the people. Life chances are referred to the life styles of a particular class. This reflects the specialty in preferences, tastes, and value of class. These include as what kind of dress they wear, the kind of house they live in, the means of recreation they posses, the mode of conveyance they have.

6.4.8 CLASSIFICATION OF SOCIAL CLASS: Society is divided in to three main classes on the basis of wealth (i) Upper Class (ii) Middle Class (iii) Lower Class. On the basis of education it is divided into two classes (i) Literate (ii) illiterate. On the basis of political power it is divided into two

classes (i) the ruling class and (ii) the ruled class.

6.4.9 RESTRICTED SOCIAL RELATIONS: Among different social classes similar type of social relations does not exist. The relation between the members of the same class are more intimate and distance is maintained from the members belonging to the other classes.

6.4.10 CLASS IS EXOGAMOUS UNIT: There are no formal restrictions on inter-marriage between people from different classes the members are free to choose their life partner from any class. There is no restriction and rigidity regarding marriage as in the caste system.

6.4.11 FELLING OF SUPERIORITY AND INFERIORITY: The another characteristic of class system is the feeling of superiority among the members of different classes. Rich people consider themselves as superior to poor or the members belonging to lower classes.

6.5 BASES OF SOCIAL CLASS

There are different basis for the determination of class. One or two basis may be dominant at the same time. Every society is divided in to two or more classes on the basis of different bases prevailing in the society. Some of the bases are discussed below :-

6.5.1 BIRTH: In earlier stages of life the determination of class was based and fixed on the birth of the person in which family he takes. This made class system more rigid as there was no possibility of changing the class because it was determined on the family he belongs to.

6.5.2 ECONOMIC BASIS: Economic basis is important in the class system. The status of the person is defined on the basis of wealth he has. Wealth determines the social status of the individual in the industrial societies. Classes are divided into three main classes -Rich, Middle, and Poor. According to Marx classes are divided into two classes - The Bourgeoisie which is capitalist or the ruling class and The Proletariat which is labor class or the ruled class.

5.5.3 OCCUPATIONAL BASIS: Occupation is the another basis for the determination of class in the modern societies. There is similarity of interests, standard of living due to same occupation they form a separate class. They rank themselves according to· their position and different occupations they belong to. The persons involved in superior occupation are considered as superior and on the other hand persons belonging to inferior occupations are considered as inferior.

6.5.4 LIFE CHANCES BASIS: The another basis in class system is life chances. The individuals who enjoy similar opportunities provided to them according to their job position. They are ranked higher or lower and the members of the same class enjoy the same life chances and get same

opportunities provided by the society. The life chances vary according to the class an individual belongs to whether rich or poor.

6.5.5 EDUCATIONAL BASIS: The another basis which determines the class of the individual is the education. Education plays an important role in determining ones class. Higher education helps a person in getting higher ranked jobs in the society as on the other hand low education does not provide an individual a better job. This affects the status of the individual in the society.

6.5.6 POLITICAL BASIS: The another basis of class system is the political basis. The class of the person is determined the political power a person enjoys. The ministers are ranked higher as on the other hand the voters are ranked lower.

6.5.7 STATUS AS A BASIS: The another basis of class system is status. It varies from society to society. Status is determined by a combination of two or more factors present in the society. Status may be based on wealth, occupation, political power etc. When the attitudes of the members of a community are attached to speciflc they become the part of communities social class.

Check Your Knowledge

Q.   Define Class.

_____

_____

_____

Q.   Define Exogamy.

_____

_____

_____

Q.   How you will do the classification of classes?

_____

_____

_____

Q.   What is Ascribed status?

_____

_____

6.6   DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CASTE AND CLASS

Caste and Class can be differentiated on the basis of :

6.6.1 Status: In caste system status is ascribed which means a persons status is· decided by his birth. In caste system birth is the main basis for deciding status of a person. In caste system status can neither be changed nor altered. Caste remains the same in which he is born. On the other hand in class system status is achieved by the individuals himself. Individual can change his class by his own achievements. So there is scope of changing or altering ones class.

6.6.2 Social mobility: Caste system is a closed system of organization. A person cannot change his caste as it is hereditary. There is restriction on social mobility in caste system it does not allows a person to change his status. On the other side class is an open group. The membership in class system is acquired by the individual himself. Class system is not hereditary. It provides social mobility, people can move from one class to another.

6.6.3 Relations: In caste system the relations are of purity and pollution. Some of the castes are considered pure while some of them are considered impure and are called untouchables. On the other hand in class system there is feeling of disparity within the members. There is no concept of purity and pollution in class system.

6.6.4 Restrictions regarding marriage: Caste is an endogamous group. There are restrictions on marriage. The choice of marriage partner is restricted in caste system. The members of the caste cannot marry outside their caste they have to marry within their caste. On the other side class system is an exogamous unit. People can marry outside the class, they are free to select his or her life partner from any class they want. There is no such restriction regarding marriage.

6.6.5 Social distance: In caste system there is greater amount of social distance kept between the different castes. As on the other hand in class system there is less social distance between different classes.

6.6.6 Origin: Caste system has divine origin. Caste system is related with Hindu tradition and is derived from *Varna* system. So caste system is religious and divine in origin. On the other hand class system is secular in nature. Class system has nothing to do with religion. The division of society is done

on the basis of classes which is secular in nature.

6.6.7 Occupation: Caste system does not provides opportunity to choose ones profession or occupation of its own. There is restriction imposed on choosing occupation of own choice. On the other hand in class system there is no such restriction imposed on choosing occupation or profession of ones choice. Members are free to choose their profession according to their own wish. All the professions and occupations are open to all class members.

6.6.8 Regulation of relations: In caste system the activities are controlled and regulated to a great extent. There are certain caste codes which one has to follow and which govern the behaviour of the individual. On the other side in class system the relations of the person get limited. There are no rigid class codes they are more free than the members of the caste.

6.6.9 Restrictions on food habit: Caste system imposes restrictions on the food habits of the members. Restrictions may differ from caste to caste. In caste system restrictions are imposed on what type of food one has to accept and from whom it is all decided by the caste group. But on the other hand in class system no restrictions are imposed on food habits.

6.6.10 Legislation: Caste system have caste panchayats to solve the disputes and pronounce judgments of the caste members. In class system disputes are solved in civil and criminal courts according to the nature of the disputes.

6.7 Summary

A social class is a category of persons which enjoy some status in the society. They are arranged according to their position in the society into higher or lower class groups. It consists of persons whose status is ascribed and can be changed according to their own abilities and their economic condition. Each social class has its own particular behaviour and mode of living. Social class encourages individuals to select their occupation. The membership in class system is not inherited but it is achieved by the person.

6.8 Model Answers (Define)

Q. Class.

Social class is defined as a people occupying similar social position in wealth, income, occupation etc. Class is a system of stratification in which a person's social status depends on one's own capabilities and achievement. Social class consists of number of individuals who share similar status often ascribed at birth but capable of being altered.

Q. Class Consciousness.

Class consciousness is a realisation of a similarity of attitude and behaviour with members of other classes. It is the inner feeling which unites those who feel distinct from others. This determines their role in the society and their interaction with other members of the society. When the people posses common traditions and common experiences they develop consciousness.

Q.   Achieved Status.

In class system status is achieved it is not inherited. In class system status is achieved by persons ones own capabilities and achievements. Class system provides an individual the scope for changing or improving one's status.

Q.   Exogamy.

Class is an exogamous group. There are no formal restrictions on inter-marriage between people from different classes the members are free to choose their life partner from any class. There is no restriction and· rigidity regarding marriage as in the caste system as it is imposed in caste system.

Q.   Endogamy.

Endogamy is the basic feature of the caste system. In this no inter caste marriage is allowed. There are restrictions imposed on selection of the life partner. Restrictions are imposed on mate selection members are given no choice to select their partners. They are binded in the social customs and have to follow them. The caste system is rigid and no member is owed to change it.

Q.   Caste.

Caste is an important part of Hindu society. The word caste has derived from Portuguese word '*Casta*' which means race or lineage. Caste is the most rigid type of social stratification. Caste is a membership group in which membership is based on ascribed status. There are restrictions imposed on food habits, marriage relations. This system is defined by religion and customs of Hindu Society.

6.9   Keywords

Endogamy: Marriage within the caste.

Exogamy: Marriage outside the caste.

Ascribed status: Status given by birth.

Achieved status: Status achieved by his own capabilities and talent.

Stratification: Society dived in layers.

Proletariat :   Ruled class.

Untouchability: Practice in Hindu society mean members of the low caste.

6.10   Exercise Questions (Define) :

Short Question

(a)   Class (b)   Endogamy   (c)   Exogamy

(d)   Stratification   (e) Caste

Long Questions

(1)   What is Class? What are the bases of Class?

(2)   Define Class and discuss its characteristics.

(3)   Explain the difference between caste and class.

6.11 Suggested Readings

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