

UNIVERSITY OF LADAKH
Department of Sociology

Semester-VI
DSE (Option - I)

UNIVERSITY OF LADKH
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY

STUDY MATERIAL IN SOCIOLOGY

Semester – VI DSE (Option - I)

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Semester-VI
DSE (Option - I)

Social Stratification

SYLLABUS
Semester VI
DISCIPLINE SPECIFIC ELECTIVE (DSE)
OPTION- I
(CBCS) SOCIOLOGY
SOCIOLOGY: SOCIAL STRATIFICATION

Objectives: To acquaint the student with the concept and nature of social stratification and social mobility in Indian society.

Unit-I: Social Stratification: Concept and Systems

- a. Concept and Features of Social Stratification
- b. Class and Caste

Unit-II: Perspectives on Social Stratification

- a. Functional Perspective
- b. Conflict Perspective
- c. Weberian Perspective

Unit-III: Stratification and Society

- a. Stratification in Traditional Society
- b. Stratification in Capitalist Society

Unit-IV: Social Mobility in Indian Society

- a. Concept and Types of Social Mobility
- b. Mobility in Indian Society: Sanskritization

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Note: List of readings provided is not absolute and addition may be made to it.

Unit-I: Social Stratification: Concept and Systems

- a. Concept and Features of Social Stratification
- b. Class and Caste

Introduction

Let's begin by saying that no society is completely homogeneous. An egalitarian society is always been dreamed by human kind. Clearly the egalitarian society remains a dream. It will be considered an ideal society where all members are equal. Division of labour is universally found in human societies. All human societies from the simplest to the most complex have some form of social inequality. Even during the ancient times, which lack specialisation, societies do have jobs allocated to people on the basis of age, race, and gender and so on. Every society has a system of rating and ranking its members based on a number of criteria. Income, occupation, education, and hereditary status are some of the most common criteria used to rank people in a social hierarchy. This unit will explain the inequality in society among human beings, the unequal distribution of power, prestige and wealth in society.

Social Stratification

The term 'stratification' has been borrowed by sociologists from the science of geology. There it refers to the successive layers or strata of rock and other materials which have been laid down over the millennia to form the earth's crust. Translated into the very different science of sociology, the concept of stratification has been adapted to refer to the different 'layers' or strata of social groups which are thought to be arranged, one on top of the other, in various human societies. Thus, just as the geologist who drives a bore-hole into the earth may discover a layer of sandstone on top of a layer of granite, so too the sociologist who digs deep down into the social structure may discover layer upon layer of different kinds of social groupings for example, upper classes upon middle classes upon lower classes, and so forth.

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Moreover, social stratification is an inherent character of all societies. It is historical as we find it in all societies, ancient and modern; and it is universal as it exists in simple to complex societies. The social differentiation on the basis of high and low is the historical heritage of all societies. These social strata and layers, divisions and subdivisions have over the time been accepted on the basis of sex and age, status and role, qualification and inefficiency, life chances and economic cum political ascription and monopolization, ritual and ceremony and on numerous other basis. It is of varied nature. It is no less based on the considerations of superiority and inferiority, authority and subordination, profession and vocation. Social stratification has remained despite the revolutionary ideas and radicalism, equality and democracy, socialism and communism. Classless society is just an ideal society.

Furthermore, social stratification may be defined as the division of society into strata. In human society there is an unequal distribution of privileges across the strata. The layers of society are ranked. Social stratification is a system of structured inequality which rates and ranks members of a society based on select criteria and limited access to wealth, power, privileges and opportunities. Those occupying higher positions are more privileged than those who occupy lower positions. Social stratification is not a haphazard arrangement; it is a system of structured inequality based on definite criteria. Further, it is not a classification of individuals based on their attributes but an established system of classifying groups. 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 a similar life style which to some degree will distinguish them from members of other social strata. Caste and class are good examples which we will explain later.

Difference and Inequality

The idea of difference is completely different from the idea of inequality. Difference simply means diversity. By difference we mean existence of certain dissimilarities between the units under consideration. Whereas, inequality implied the distribution of privileges and resources as a

consequence of which some are more privileged or better placed than others which results in the ranking of people and their groups. There are different types of inequalities, the first type of inequalities are known as physical inequalities which means differences of age, health, bodily strength, and the qualities of the mind. Sociologists are concerned with the study of social inequalities. Social inequalities are founded on principles that are different from those involved in physical inequalities. Sociologists say that both difference and inequality are universal. Inequality is found in all societies irrespective of time or place. Personal characteristics such as beauty, skill, physical strength and personality may all play a role in the perpetuation of inequality. However, there are also patterns of inequality associated with the social positions people occupy.

Features of Social Stratification

- 1. Social:** Stratification is social in the sense that it does not represent inequalities which are biologically based. It is true that factors such as strength, intelligence, age, sex can often serve as the basis on which status are distinguished. But such differences by themselves are not sufficient to explain why some statuses receive more power, property and prestige than others. Biological traits do not determine social superiority and inferiority until they are socially recognised. For example, manager of an industry attains a dominant position not by physical strength, nor by his age, but by having socially defined traits. His education, training skills, experience, personality, character etc. are found to be more important than his biological qualities.
- 2. Ancient:** The stratification system is very old. Stratification was present even in the most primitive societies. Age and sex were the main criteria of stratification. Difference between the rich and poor, powerful and humble, freemen and slaves was there in almost all the ancient civilisation. Ever since the time of Plato and Kautilya, social philosophers have been deeply concerned with economic, social, and political inequalities.

3. **Universal:** Social stratification is universal. Difference between rich and poor, the 'haves' or 'have notes' is evident everywhere. Even in the non-literate societies stratification is very much present.
4. **Diverse Forms:** Social stratification has never been uniform in all societies. The ancient Roman society was stratified into two strata: the Patricians and the Plebians. The Aryan society was divided into four Varnas: the Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and the Sudras, the ancient Greek society into freemen and slaves, the ancient Chinese society into mandarins, merchants, farmer and soldiers. Class and estate seem to be the general forms of stratification found in the modern world.
5. **Consequential:** The stratification system has its own consequences. The most important, most desired and often the scarcest things in human life are distributed unequally because of stratification. The system leads to two kinds of consequences: (i) Life chances and (ii) Life style. Life chances refer to such things as infant mortality, longevity, physical and mental illness, marital conflict, separation and divorce. Life styles include the mode of housing, residential area, education, means of recreation, relation between parent and children, modes of conveyance and so on.

Social versus natural inequalities

Many stratification systems are accompanied by beliefs which state that social inequalities are biologically based. However, it could be argued that biological inequalities provide the foundation upon which structures of social inequality are built. This position is difficult to defend in the case of certain forms of stratification. For example, stratification in the feudal system was based on landholding. The more land an individual controlled, the greater his wealth, power and prestige. The position of the dominant feudal nobility was based on large grants of land from the king. Their status was hereditary, land and titles being passed on from father to son. It is difficult to sustain the argument that feudal lords ultimately owed their position to

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biological superiority when a son irrespective of his biological make-up inherited the status of his father.

The defence of biological argument has been provided for racial and caste stratification in the USA and India respectively. In the USA Black Americans make up 12 percent of the population and in India the lower caste “untouchables” make up to 15 percent of the population, both have traditionally formed a distinct social stratum at the base of the stratification system. The majority of Blacks and lower castes occupied the most menial and subservient occupational statuses, being employed as agricultural labourers and as unskilled and semiskilled manual workers in industry. The system of racial stratification in the USA has been explained in terms of the supposed genetically based inferiority of Blacks. It has been argued that Blacks are innately inferior to Whites in terms of intelligence. Likewise, in the caste system in India an individual’s status is fixed by birth. A person belongs to his parents jati into which he was born. Thus no matter what the biologically based aptitudes and capacities of an untouchable there is no way he can become a Brahmin.

Most sociologists would argue that systems of racial stratification have a social rather than a biological basis. Andre Beteille states that ‘Natural inequality is based on differences in quality, and qualities are not just there, so to say, in nature; they are as human beings have defined them, in different societies, in different historical epochs’.

In other words, social inequality simply refers to the existence of socially created inequalities. Social stratification is a particular form of social inequality. Economic inequalities mean that different sections of the population enjoy different life chances. Obviously, different groups can afford different amounts and qualities of the goods and services which are available in the market. People with more money can afford better housing, they can choose to run a car rather than rely on public transport, they can take themselves off on more exotic holidays, and so on. But economic inequalities do not end there, for it is also often the case that higher social class groups enjoy other advantages even when these do not depend on the direct purchase of goods and services.

Power, Wealth and Prestige

Power refers to the degree to which individuals or groups can impose their will on others and seek obedience from them even in the absence from their consent. When the exercise of power is legitimate it is called authority. Wealth refers to material possessions like property, livestock, land, building, money, jewellery, and many other forms of property that are regarded as valuable in most societies. Prestige refers to honour and respect that is associated with social positions that individuals occupy. It is also associated with the qualities of individuals and their styles of life. Certain qualities and lifestyles are regarded as more prestigious than others. Social stratification deals with the inequalities of power, wealth and prestige.

Structure and Stratification

The term social structure points to the fact that society is organised or arranged in particular ways. The social environments in which we exist do not just consist of random events or actions. There are underlying regularities, or patterns, in how people behave and in the relationships they have with one another. Social structures are made up of human actions and relationships. What gives these their patterning is their repetition across periods of time and distances of space. Thus, the ideas of social reproduction and social structure are very closely related to one another in sociological analysis. For example, consider a school and a family structure. In a school certain ways of behaving are repeated over the years and become institutions. For instance admission procedures, codes of conduct, annual functions, daily assemblies and in some cases even school anthems. Likewise in families certain ways of behaving, marriage practices, notions of relationships, duties and expectations are set. Even as old members of the family or school may pass away and new members enter, the institution goes on. Yet we also know that changes do take place within the family and in schools. Human beings in schools or families do bring changes to reproduce the structure even while introducing changes. They cooperate at various levels in their everyday lives towards this reproduction. No less true is the fact that they also compete with each other, often viciously and ruthlessly. The fact remains that along with cooperative behaviour we also witness serious conflict.

However, social stratification refers to the existence of structured inequalities between groups in society, in terms of their access to material or symbolic rewards. While all societies involve some forms of social stratification, modern societies are often marked by wide differences in wealth and power. While the most evident forms of stratification in modern societies involve class divisions, others like race and caste, region and community, tribe and gender also continue to matter as bases of social stratification. Social structure implied a certain patterning of social behaviour. Social stratification as part of the broader social structure is likewise characterised by a certain pattern of inequality. Inequality is not something which is randomly distributed between individuals in society. It is systematically linked to membership in different kinds of social groups. Members of a given group will have features in common, and if they are in a superior position they will usually see to it that their privileged position is passed on to their children.

The concept of stratification, then, refers to the idea that society is divided into a patterned structure of unequal groups, and usually implies that this structure tends to persist across generations.

It is necessary to distinguish between different advantages which can be distributed unequally. There are three basic forms of advantage which privileged groups may enjoy:

(i) Life Chances: All those material advantages which improve the quality of life of the recipient which may include not only economic advantages of wealth and income, but also benefits such as health, job security and recreation.

(ii) Social Status: Prestige or high standing in the eyes of other members of the society.

(iii) Political Influence: The ability of one group to dominate others, or to have preponderant influence over decision-making, or to benefit advantageously from decisions.

The above discussion on the three social processes will repeatedly draw attention to the manner that different bases of social stratification like gender or class constrain social processes. The opportunities and resources available to individuals and groups to engage in competition,

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cooperation or conflict are shaped by social structure and social stratification. At the same time, humans do act to modify the structure and system of stratification that exists.

Race, Gender and Stratification

Both race and gender have traditionally been determinants of inequality and differential access to rewards, privileges and opportunities. About race, social scientists now agree that there are no clear cut biological traits that establish different races but only a range of physical variations in human groups. Race is a social construct and is sociologically significant as long as it has meaning for people within a society and social relationships are patterned accordingly. Now no one accepts the so-called race science anymore.

Like race, gender is another social construct which has been the basis of stratification through the ages and in almost all the societies. Gender is a determining factor in structuring roles, rewards and opportunities. Traditionally, men have served as 'breadwinners' and women have assumed primary responsibility for child care and domestic work. In some subcultures, women were not encouraged to pursue higher education or work outside the home. They were expected to marry early, produce children, and take care of the family. Traditionally agrarian societies fostered a typical patriarchy in which men exercised control over women.

R. W. Connell points out that everyday interactions and practices in society gave rise to an 'organised field of human practices and social relations' which subordinate women to men. Gender relations are structured into patterned social arrangements over time, establishing the dominant – subordinate relationship between men and women. Yet, Connell argues that gender relations are not fixed or static; they are subject to change just like any other social construct'.

b. Class and Caste

The Class System

A class system is based on both social factors and individual achievement. A class consists of a set of people who share similar status with regard to factors like wealth, income, education, and occupation. Unlike caste systems, class systems are open. People are free to gain a different level of education or employment than their parents. They can also socialize with and marry members of other classes, which allows people to move from one class to another.

While class system is non-hereditary in nature and allows both exogamy and endogamy. Thus class is primarily based on socio-economic criteria. There are three major classes found: Upper, middle and lower. Each class is divided into two sub-divisions. They are upper-upper, lower upper, upper middle, lower middle, upper lower and lower-lower class groups. A class is more open than the caste in the sense that mobility is allowed in the class system. Sociologists rely on a number of criteria to determine classes. Income and wealth are the most commonly used. Whereas income refers to an individual's earnings, wealth is the sum total of all assets including inheritance, real estate, jewellery, gold and precious stones, and stocks and bonds. Level of education, type of occupation material possession, house type, and lifestyle are used to classify people into classes..

In a class system, occupation is not fixed at birth. Though family and other societal models help guide a person toward a career, personal choice plays a role. In class systems, people have the option to form exogamous marriages, unions of spouses from different social categories. Marriage in these circumstances is based on values such as love and compatibility rather than on social standing or economics. Though social conformities still exist that encourage people to choose partners within their own class, people are not as pressured to choose marriage partners based solely on those elements. Marriage to a partner from the same social background is an endogamous union. Class is a principal basis of social stratification found especially in the modern civilized countries. In societies where everyone is free before the law, stratification may be based upon accepted and self estimation of superiority or inferiority.

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Social classes are described by sociologists as:

‘portions of the community, or collection of individuals, standing to each other in the relation of quality and marked off from other persons by accepted standards of superiority and inferiority’ says **Ginsberg**.

“A social class is any portion of a community forked off from the rest by social status” says **Maclver and Page**.

A structure of social class involves:

- (1) a hierarchy status groups, (2) the recognition of the superior – inferior positions and (3) some degree of permanency of the structure. Where a society is composed of social classes, the social structure looks like a truncated pyramid.

Now the shape and character of class system has changed considerably. The upper class based on aristocracy of birth and wealth is under decline. In India too the old upper class based on zamindari system of inherited wealth has shrunk. The new upper class consists of self made men and women, captains of industry and business whose wealth and power is derived from profit-making in global markets.

The Caste System

The term “caste” is not of Indian origin, though it has for long been viewed as a distinctive feature of the Indian society. Its origin has been located in the Portuguese word ‘casta’, which means ‘race’ or ‘pure stock’. Caste has often been seen to represent the core of India. It has been viewed both as an institution as well as an ideology. It fixed individuals into the structure of social hierarchy on the basis of their birth. Caste has been seen as an extreme form of social stratification.

M.N Srinivas defines caste ‘as a hereditary endogamous, usually localized group, having traditional association with an occupation, and a particular position in the local hierarchy of

castes. Relations between castes are governed, among other things, by the concept of purity and pollution, and generally maximum commensality occurs within the caste’.

The very famous sociologist named G.S.Ghurye identified six different features of the Hindu caste system in India.

1. Segmental division of society: the membership of the groups was determined by birth and not by choice. The status of a person depended not on the amount of wealth he possessed but on the rank that his caste enjoyed in the Hindu society.

2. Hierarchy: There was definite scheme of social precedence amongst caste. Each group was given a specific status in the overall framework of hierarchy.

3. Restrictions on feeding and social intercourse: There were minute rules as to what sort of food or drink could be accepted by a person and from what caste.

4. Civil and religious disabilities and privileges of different sections: Segregation of individual castes or groups of castes in the village was the most obvious mark of civil privileges and disabilities. Certain sacraments could be performed only by the Brahmins. Similarly, shudras and other lower castes were not allowed to read or learn the sacred scriptures.

5. Lack of unrestricted choice of occupation: Generally each caste considered a particular occupation as its legitimate calling. To abandon the hereditary occupation in pursuit of another was not considered right.

6. Restrictions on Marriage: Caste groups observed strict endogamy. Members of a caste group married only within their castes, with few exceptions.

While social stratification is also based on caste. In open society individuals can move from one class or status level to another, that is to say equality of opportunity exists. The class structure is ‘closed’ when such opportunity is virtually absent. The Indian caste system provides a classic

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example, A 'caste' system is one in which an individual's rank and its accompanying rights and obligations are ascribed on the basis of birth into a particular group. Hindu society in traditional India was divided into five main strata: four Varnas or caste and a fifth group, the out caste, whose members were known as untouchables. Each class is subdivided into sub castes, which in total number many thousands. The Brahmins or priests, members of the highest caste, personify purity, sanctity and holiness. They are the sources of learning, wisdom and truth. At the other extreme, untouchables are defined as unclean and impure, a status which affects all other social relationships. They must be segregated from members of other castes and live on the outskirts of the villages, In general the hierarchy of prestige based on notions of ritual purity is mirrored by the hierarchy of power. The Brahmins were custodian of law and the legal system which they administered was based largely on their pronouncements. Inequalities of wealth were usually linked to those of prestige and power.

In the Hindu caste tradition, people were expected to work in the occupation of their caste and to enter into marriage according to their caste. Accepting this social standing was considered a moral duty. Cultural values reinforced the system. Caste systems promote beliefs in fate, destiny, and the will of a higher power, rather than promoting individual freedom as a value. A person who lived in a caste society was socialized to accept his or her social standing.

Although the caste system in India has been officially dismantled, its residual presence in Indian society is deeply embedded. In rural areas, aspects of the tradition are more likely to remain, while urban centers show less evidence of this past. In India's larger cities, people now have more opportunities to choose their own career paths and marriage partners. As a global center of employment, corporations have introduced merit-based hiring and employment to the nation.

Social Mobility

Social mobility is the upward or downward movement of a person from one social class or status level to another. It results in gain or loss of wealth, power and prestige for the individual. Based

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on the ease or difficulty of upward movement, stratification systems are classified into open and closed societies. There is very little social mobility in rigid systems of stratification such as estate and caste because status is hereditary. On the other hand, the class system is supposed to be an open society because it permits movement of people from one class to another. It must be noted that no society is absolutely closed or open systems, but compared to caste and estate, the class system is a relatively open society.

Sociologists have identified four major types of mobility:

1. **Intergenerational mobility:** This involves the comparison of a parent's and a child's social class positions. We want to know whether a child's class position is higher or lower than that of his father. If the son of the blacksmith has attained professional education and become an engineer this is a case of upward intergenerational mobility.
2. **Intragenerational mobility:** This is the study of an individual's occupational changes in the course of a lifetime. Let us say that an individual began his career as a manager in a company but he bought the company and became a successful businessman. In rural India we also observe cases where a barber or carpenter continues to perform the same occupation throughout his life without any change in his social status.
3. **Vertical mobility:** This means movement up or down the social ladder and necessarily involves change in social status. A man marrying into a lower social class or a lower division clerk getting promoted as an upper division clerk and a receptionist losing her job and becoming a waitress are some examples.
4. **Horizontal mobility:** This is movement of people between groups or positions of more or less equal social status. For example, a man changes his religion, an engineer becomes an information technology specialist, and bureaucrats change departments. These changes may not involve any re-evaluation of social status.

Unit-II: Perspectives on Social Stratification

- a. Functional Perspective
- b. Conflict Perspective

c. Weberian Perspective

Introduction

There are many theoretical approaches to understand social stratification. Three of the prominent theories of social stratification are discussed below.

Functionalist Theory

Functionalists assure that there are certain basic needs or functional prerequisites which must be met for the survival of the society. They look at social stratification to see how far it meets these functional prerequisites. They assure that the parts of society form an integrated whole and examine the ways in which the social stratification system is integrated with other parts of the society. Functionalists maintain that certain degree of order and stability are essential for the operation of social system. Therefore, they want to consider how stratification systems help to maintain order and stability of society.

Functionalists are primarily concerned with the function of social stratification, with its contribution to the maintenance of society. Talcott Parsons, Kingsley Davis, Wilbert Moore are some of the prominent American sociologists who have developed functional theory of social stratification. It has been argued by them that social stratification inevitably occurs in any complex society, particularly in an industrial society and it serves some 'Vital functions' in such societies. Social stratification is indispensable to any complex society. This view is known as functionalist theory of social stratification.

Talcott Parsons

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Talcott Parsons argue that stratification system derive from common values. In Parsons' words, "Stratification, in its valuational aspect, is the ranking of units in a social system, in accordance with common value system". Thus, those who perform successfully in terms of society's values will be ranked highly and they will be likely to receive a variety of rewards. They will be accorded high prestige. It follows from Parson's argument that there is a general belief that stratification systems are just, right and proper, since they are basically an expression of shared values. Thus, the American business executive is seen to deserve his rewards because members of society place a high value on his skills and achievements.

According to functionalists, the relationship between social groups in society is one of cooperation and interdependence. As no one group is self-sufficient it cannot meet the needs of its members. It must therefore, exchange goods and services with other groups. So the relationship between social groups is one of reciprocity. This relationship extends to the strata in a stratification system. In societies with a highly specialised division of labour, some members will specialise in organisation and planning, others will follow their directives. Talcott Parsons argues that this inevitably leads to inequality in terms of power and prestige. Thus, those with the power to organise and coordinate the activities of others will have higher social status. Parsons sees social stratification as both inevitable and functional for society. Power and Prestige inequalities are essential for the coordination and integration of a specialised division of labour. Without social inequalities, Parsons find it difficult to see how members of society could effectively cooperate and work together.

Kingsley Davis and Wilbert E. Moore

The most famous functionalist theory of stratification was first presented by the two American sociologists Kingsley Davis and Wilbert E. Moore in 1945 in an article entitled "Some Principles of Stratification". According to them stratification exists in every known human society. They argue that all social systems share certain functional prerequisite which must be met for survival and effective operation of the system. One such functional prerequisite is effective role allocation and performance. Davis and Moore argue that all societies need some mechanism for ensuring

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effective role allocation and performance. This mechanism is social stratification. They see stratification as a system which attaches unequal rewards and privileges to different positions in society. People differ in terms of their innate ability and talent. Positions differ in terms of the importance for the survival and maintenance of the society. Certain positions are more 'functionally important' than others. There are some tasks which require training or skills and there are limited numbers of individuals with ability to acquire such skill.

Positions usually require long period of training which involves certain sacrifices such as loss of income. Therefore high reward is necessary to provide incentive to encourage people to undergo training for a position to compensate them for the sacrifice involved. It is necessary for those who hold most important positions to play their roles must efficiently. The high rewards attached to these positions provide required motivation for such performances. These rewards, usually economic, prestige and leisure, are attached to or built in to the social position. Thus, Davis and Moore conclude that social stratification is a device by which societies ensure that the most important positions are filled by qualified persons and roles performed adequately. They say, there is the necessity to distribute prestige according to the importance to society of a social position. Prestige and reward involve the exercise of greater power. The possession of greater wealth, prestige and power marks off a section of society as a class.

In response to the question, which positions are functionally most 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 position that can perform the same function satisfactorily. It could be argued that a doctor is functionally more important than a nurse because his position carries with it many of the skills necessary to perform role of a doctor. But not vice-versa. The second measure of importance is the degree to which other positions are dependent on the one in question. It may be argued that managers are more important than routine office staff since the staffs are dependent on direction and organisation from management.

Conclusion

The crux of the argument is that in every society there are some positions that are of the greatest importance for society and that require the greatest amount of training and talent. There must be unequal distribution of social rewards in order to ensure that these important positions are filled. The position of a janitor can be easily filled. But the position of a surgeon requires not only talent but years of training and experience. Therefore different positions must be rewarded with different ranks, salaries and privileges. Thus, in functional perspective, society works better if most qualified people fill the most important positions and are rewarded accordingly. To sum up, Davis and Moore regard social stratification as a functional necessity.

Criticism:

Melvin Tumin, Walter Buckley, Michael Young and others have criticised functional theory of stratification. Their arguments run as follows.

1. Stratification may actually hinder the efficient working of a social system. Because it may prevent those with superior abilities from performing certain tasks which are preserve of a privileged class.
2. They cannot agree with the functionalist view that some tasks are more important to a society than others, for one cannot operate than other.
3. M. Tumin questions the view that social stratification functions to integrate social system. He argues that differential rewards can encourage hostility, and distrust among various segments of society.
4. Tumin has rejected the view of Davis and Moore that the function of unequal rewards is to motivate talented individuals and allocate them to functionally most important positions. He argues that social stratification acts as a barrier to the motivation and recruitment of talents. This is readily apparent in closed systems such as caste and racial stratification. For example, untouchables, even most talented, are prevented from

becoming Brahmins. Thus, closed stratification system operates in exactly the opposite way to Davis and Moore's theory.

These criticisms are true but they cannot be regarded as complete refutation of the functionalist theory of stratification.

Conflict Theory:

A different view of society is taken by the conflict theorists, which see stratification as the result of the differential distribution of power in which coercion, domination, exploitation are viewed as key processes. The assumptions of the conflict theorists basically are:

1. Social change is ubiquitous: every society is at every point subject to processes of change.
2. Social conflict is ubiquitous: every society displays at every point dissensions and conflict.
3. Every element in a society renders a contribution to its integration and change.
4. Every society is based on the coercion of some of its members by others.

Conflict theorists view stratification in terms of individuals and subgroups within a society. This theory argues that inequality exists in society because there is always a shortage of available valued goods and services and therefore there is always a struggle over who shall get what. Inequality results because desirable social positions are attained not by talent or ability, but by force, by birth, by dominance, by exploitation or by coercion.

Karl Marx

Karl Marx never gave theory of stratification; he gave a theory of social class on the basis of which we derive stratification or inequality in society. In the view of Marx, the concept of class is fundamental. For Marx, stratification divides the society into two mutually opposed or contrary social categories where one exploits the other. In his view, there are two main social

groups in society. First, there are those who own and control resources, technology, and valued goods. These things are collectively called means of production. The second group is of those who do not have any ownership or control over these things. They work for the members of the first category, who own and control resources and thus survive on the wages they receive from the employers for rendering their labour. For both the social categories, Marx used the word 'class', which is defined in terms of the ownership and non-ownership of the means of production. Thus, class is a social group whose members share similar relationship to the means of production. Classes according to Marx, are large groups of people who differ from each other by the place they occupy in a historically determined system of production, by their relation to the means of production, and by their role in the social organisation of labour, and consequently the methods by which they receive their share of social wealth and the amount of this wealth they possess.

Further, according to Marx, class is a historical category. Classes arise for reasons of historical necessity connected with appearance of exploitative modes of production. The first exploitative mode of production was slavery, in which the principal classes were slaves and slave-owners. Slavery was followed by feudalism under which the landowners and the serfs constituted two principal classes. Feudalism was replaced by capitalism under which capitalists and the proletariat are two main contending classes. Besides these classes of an exploitative society, Marx recognised that social differentiation produced many other groups with conflicting interests. He also recognised the existence of the middle classes (petty bourgeoisie). These classes own the means of production but also contribute their labour power, like the proletariat.

The transition from feudalism to capitalism was produced by struggle between landed aristocracy and a rising capitalist class. The rising capitalist class overthrew the feudal aristocracy and will be similarly displaced by the working class. Marx's basic thought was that the proletariat which sets all the means of production in motion yet never owns them is the 'last class'. The proletariat comes in to conflict with the bourgeoisie, and in the course of the struggle, becomes of its position as a "class-for-itself" in economic and political competition with the capitalist class. The

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outcome of their struggle, other things being equal, is the overthrow of the capitalist class and the capitalist relation of production. The proletariat cannot emancipate itself as a class without abolishing the capitalist system of production, where it is the exploited and oppressed class. To liberate itself, therefore, the proletariat must abolish itself as a class, thus abolishing all classes and class rule as such.

In capitalist society, the owners of capital have a vested interest in maximizing profit and seek to keep the profit for themselves which has been created by the workers. Thus, class conflict, according to Marx, takes place between capitalist and the proletariat under capitalism. The development of society is determined by the outcome of this class conflict. Marx and Engels in the Communist Manifesto wrote, "The history of all hitherto existing society is a history of class struggle." Marx said that class conflict is resolved by revolutionary abolition of the old production relation and old classes and their replacement by new ones. He showed that in capitalist society the class struggle inevitably leads to the abolition of classes and the establishment of classless society, which is socialism.

The transition to socialism does not take place automatically. It is the historic role of the working class to bring about this transition which is opposed by the capitalist class. The question of the form in which the revolutionary process was to occur by peaceful or violence means. The transfer of state power from the capitalist class is the basic question of the socialist revolution. It can only be effected through a sharp class struggle, the highest form of which is revolution.

Criticism:

Sorokin has criticised Marx's theory on three grounds. First he says, it is old. Marx himself referred to Augustine Theory as the "father of class struggle in French historical writings". Secondly Sorokin says the acceptance of class struggle as the motive force of the development of society leads to the denial 'of cooperation of social classes which has been the basis of the

progress of mankind'. Thirdly, Marx's class theory is wrong because it does not recognise the importance of other antagonism such as the struggle of racial, national and religious groups.

Raymond Aron and Lipset have tried to argue against Marx's theory of class. They argued that with the advancement of economy, there is minimum opposition or hostility among classes. The ruling class engages in welfare activities like making charitable schools, hospitals etc. But antagonism would not disappear, class antagonism would disappear in a Marxist Utopia, but surely other types of antagonism would arise.

T.B. Bottomore is another thoughtful critic of Marxism. According to Bottomore, Marx assigned too much significance to social class and class conflict. He has ignored other important social relationships. Bottomore claims that gulf between the two major classes has not widened because there has been a general rise in everyone's standard of living. Bottomore criticized Marx's argument that middle class would disappear because its members would join one or the other two great classes. Instead there has been tremendous growth in the middle class.

Dahrendorf argued that Marxist analysis is not applicable to post capitalist society. Internal contradictions which Marx thinks will arise, does not arise easily. Dahrendorf says as Marx himself talked of Division of Labour, we can see that economic factors are not the important factors.

Max Weber treats Marx's concept of class as an ideal type, a logical construct based on observed tendencies. He gives more importance to Status, Prestige and Power. He says that class is not something to be perceived in terms of means of production.

Weberian Theory

Max Weber has profoundly influenced modern sociological writing about social stratification. Weber felt that there were at least three independent orders or hierarchies in any society. His framework to explain and analyse the system of social stratification is based on three dimensions of 'class', 'status' and 'power'. According to him all or nearly by all the members of the society

are collectively ranked above or below one another in terms of class status and power which we will discuss separately now.

i) Class

Max Weber agreed with the fundamental tenants of Marx that control over property was a basic fact in the determination of the life-chances of an individual or a class. That is to say, class is determined by a person's market situation, which depends largely on whether or not he owns property. Market situation determines income, and the life chances which depend on this. Hence, Weber's definition of class is broadly similar to that of Marx.

To the economic dimension (class) of stratification Weber added two other dimensions, 'Prestige and Power'. According to Weber, Property, Prestige and power constitute three separate though interacting, bases on which hierarchies are created in a society. **Prestige** means the extent to which a person is looked up or looked down or regarded as the sort of person to be admired or emulated or, on the other hand treated with contempt. **Power** refers to the extent to which a person can influence or command the action of others, make his will effective and make decisions. Differences in property create classes, differences in social prestige and honour generate states groups and strata and differences in power generate political parties.

ii) Status

The term status implies 'social position'. Each individual occupies a social position in a situation of interaction. For instance, right now, you are occupying the position of a reader, while I am occupying the position of a lesson writer. You occupy the position of a son/daughter, granddaughter/grandson, student, player, friend and several others depending upon the social situation in which you are placed. With respect to each social position, you play a role that means you carry out the type of action expected from you in a given social position. So if status refers to a 'position', role refers to the 'behaviour' expected from that position.

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Weber says that status groups are formed on the basis of common amount of socially ascribed prestige or honour. He admits that differences in property can constitute the basis for differences in honour or prestige, but he insists that other factors are just as important if not more so. Status, he says, stands in sharp opposition to the pretension of property. Status groups are stratified according to the principles of their 'consumption' of goods as represented by special 'style of life'. Therefore, acquisition of wealth is not by itself sufficient basis for entry into a high status group, such as aristocracy. Both the property owners and the property less can and frequently do, belong to the same status group.

Difference in property results in 'life chances', while status differences lead to difference in 'life styles'. Such differences in 'life style' form an important element in distinguishing one status group which stabilise their position by securing different amounts of economic power they tend to enjoy privileges, which differ from one status group to another.

Thus, like Marx, Weber recognised the essential significance of property differences in the formation of status groups and in sharpening the lines of the distinction and privilege among them. But he differed from Marx in two respects. First he gave more importance to status groups than Marx did. Secondly, he held that economic classes do not normally constitute communities, but status groups do.

iii) Power

Differences in power generate political parties. Weber says that economic classes, status groups and political parties are all phenomena of distribution of power within a community, but parties differ from classes and status in several ways. While the central significance of classes is economic, and that of status group is prestige, parties live in a house of power. Weber argues that parties can develop in societies that have some rational order and staff of persons who are ready to enforce it. However, Weber did not deny that there exist groups and parties.

Conclusion

Weber conceives of society stratified into three kinds of social segregation. These segregation differ in degree of self-conscious unity and community purpose. They also differ in particular aspect of social reward or resource with which they are primarily concerned, Thus, classes have economic basis, status groups have the honour basis and parties are centered on power. Weber's analysis of classes, status groups and power (parties) suggests that no single theory can pinpoint and explain their relationships. The interplay of class, status and power in the formation of social group is complex 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 group in society. Weber argues that the evidence provides a more complex and diversified picture of social stratification.

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