



Contemporary Social Stratification in Indian Society

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Abstract

The social stratification includes various aspects such as Castes, Class, Age, and Gender have a long history of being discriminated against, exploited, and placed at the bottom of caste society. Social stratification and inequality have been widely debated issue since long time. Earlier sociologists like Spencer believed that society developed through an evolutionary process and those who profited from natural selection-“survival of the fittest”-came out on top. The same rule applied between the people living in the societies in respect of caste, class, age and gender. Therefore, there is however, strong resistance among the higher castes just above that of the Scheduled Castes in Indian societies. This paper is based on the secondary data collected from the books, newspaper and journals to study social stratification related to caste, class, age and gender.

Keywords: Stratification; Human Society; Caste Stratification

Abbreviations: REDS: Rural Environment Development Society; WVS: World Values Survey; WEFGGI: World Economic Forum’s Global Gender Gap Index.

Introduction

Differentiation is the law of nature. It is true in the case of human society. Human society is not homogeneous but heterogeneous. Men differ from one another in many respects. Human beings are equal as far as their bodily structure is concerned. But the physical appearance of individuals, their intellectual, moral, philosophical, mental, economic, political and other aspects are different. No two individuals are exactly alike. Diversity and inequality are inherent in society. Social inequality is

a universal phenomenon. It can exist either in the form of a hierarchy of groups or individual or without the creation of a hierarchy. When social inequalities do not create hierarchy it is called social differentiation. But when social inequality manifests itself in the form of hierarchy or gradation of groups that is called social stratification. Social stratification is a process of hierarchical arrangement of social strata in a society. Ascription and achievement are two normative principles of determining such arrangements in all societies. According to Gisbert, “Social stratification is the division of society into permanent groups of categories linked with each other by the relationship of superiority and subordination” [1,2].

All societies arrange their members in terms of superiority, inferiority and equality. The vertical scale of

evaluation, this placing of people in layers is called stratification. Those in the top stratum have more power, privilege and prestige than those below. Stratification is simply a process of interaction of differentiation whereby some people come to rank higher than others are. Thus, Stratification is a hierarchy of positions with regard to economic production which influences the social rewards to those in the positions. In sociology, social stratification is a concept involving the "classification of people into groups based on shared socio-economic conditions a relational set of inequalities with economic, social, political and ideological dimensions."

When differences lead to greater status, power or privilege for some groups over the other it is called Social Stratification. It is a system by which society ranks categories of people in a hierarchy Social stratification is based on four basic principles: (1) Social stratification is a trait of society, not simply a reflection of individual differences; (2) Social stratification carries over from generation to generation; (3) Social stratification is universal but variable; (4) Social stratification involves not just inequality but beliefs as well. While analyzing social stratification in pre-industrial societies, M.G. Smith writes "Stratification never consists in the mere existence or occupancy of differential positions, but in the principles by which the distribution of access and opportunities is regulated." According to Smith, age-sets and sex are the main considerations for having access and opportunities to resources in pre-industrial societies. Age and sex are not simply biological criteria. These are social and cultural phenomena in pre-industrial societies [3-5].

In modern Western societies, stratification is broadly organized into three main layers: upper class, middle class, and lower class. Each of these classes can be further subdivided into smaller classes (e.g. occupational). These categories are particular to state-based societies as distinguished from feudal societies composed of nobility-to-peasant relations. Stratification may also be defined by kinship ties or castes. For Max Weber, social class pertaining broadly to material wealth is distinguished from status class which is based on such variables as honor, prestige and religious affiliation. Talcott Parsons argued that the forces of societal differentiation and the following pattern of institutionalized individualization would strongly diminish the role of class (as a major stratification factor) as social evolution went along. It is debatable whether the earliest hunter gatherer groups may be defined as 'stratified', or if such differentials began with agriculture and broad acts of exchange between groups. One of the ongoing issues in determining social stratification arises from the point that status inequalities

between individuals are common, so it becomes a quantitative issue to determine how much inequality qualifies as stratification [6].

Theories

Social stratification and inequality have been widely debated. Earlier sociologists like Spencer believed that society developed through an evolutionary process and those who profited from natural selection-"survival of the fittest"-came out on top. Accordingly, superior people (fittest) would have more wealth, power, education, and become leaders in the society, whereas inferior people would remain in the bottom rank of society.

This view was challenged by later sociologists. Modern sociology has developed two main approaches to the study of social stratification-structural-functionalist and conflict perspectives [7]. Conflict Theory Conflict theorists are deeply critical of social stratification, asserting that it benefits only some people, not all of society. For instance, to a conflict theorist, it seems wrong that a basketball player is paid millions for an annual contract while a public school teacher earns less in a year. They believe, perpetuates inequality and they try to bring awareness to inequalities, such as how a rich society can have so many poor members. Many conflict theorists draw on the work of Karl Marx. During the nineteenth-century era of industrialization, Marx believed social stratification resulted from people's relationship to production.

People were divided by a single line: they either owned factories or worked in them. In Marx's time, bourgeois capitalists owned high-producing businesses, factories, and land, as they still do today. Proletariats were the workers who performed the manual labor to produce goods. Upper-class capitalists raked in profits and got rich, while working-class proletariats earned skimpy wages and struggled to survive. With such opposing interests, the two groups were divided by differences of wealth and power. Marx saw workers experience deep alienation, isolation and misery resulting from powerless status levels (Marx, 1848). Marx argued that proletariats were oppressed by the money-hungry bourgeois. Today, while working conditions have improved, conflict theorists believe that the strained working relationship between employers and employees still exists. As the result, stratification creates class conflict. If he were alive in today's economy, as it recovers from a prolonged recession, Marx would likely have argued that the recession resulted from the greed of capitalists, satisfied at the expense of working people [8-10].

Marxian Perspective

The whole Marxian perspective about social stratification revolves round the concept of social classes. No theorist stressed the significance of class for society and for social change more strongly than Karl Marx. Marx viewed class differentiation as the crucial determinant of social, economic and political inequality. According to Marx, there is always a dominant and a subordinate class—a ruling class and a subject class. The former (ruling class) is the class which owns the means of production (e.g., land and machinery). The ruling class survives its power from the ownership and control of the forces of production while the latter (subject class) sells its labour to survive. The relationship between these classes has always been exploitative in all phases of history with an exception of a simple primitive society.

Marx believed that primitive societies were non-class societies. In such societies, there was simple equality and as such there was no stratification based on class. In Marxian view, the ruling class exploits and oppresses the subordinate class. As a result, there is a basic conflict of interest between the two classes. This conflict between social classes has been continuous since the dawn of history. We find echo of these views in these lines:—“The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles.” Marx viewed history as an outgrowth of class struggle. Though Marx analyzed stratification in all types of human societies, but his main focus was on the societies of 19th century Europe. During this period, Europe was under the spell of modern industrial capitalistic mode of production. The society was divided into two main classes—industrialists or capitalists—those who own the means of production (factories and machinery etc) and working class—those who earn their living by selling their labour to them.

For these two classes, Marx used the terms bourgeoisie (capitalist class) and proletariat (working class). Marx argued that capital, as such, produces nothing. Thus, in the capitalist society, the relationship between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat is one of mutual dependence and conflict. It is a relationship of exploiter and exploited, oppressor and oppressed. According to Marx, the oppression and exploitation of the proletariat will inevitably lead to the destruction of the capitalist system. But, for this, the working class must first develop class consciousness—a subjective awareness held by members of a class regarding their common vested interests and the need for collective political action to bring about social change. Marx differentiated between class consciousness and false consciousness. For Marx,

false consciousness is a belief that the upper class is superior and has the right to rule. It gives a false picture of the nature of the relationship between social classes [11-15].

Criticism

Commenting on the theory of Marx, T.B. Bottomore (Classes in Modern Society, 1965) has observed: “For the past eighty years Marx’s theory has been the object of unrelenting criticism and tenacious defence.” This observation remains true even today. Marx’s analysis of class is seen as too simplistic. Critics argue that even in Marx’s own time the class structure of capitalist societies was becoming more complex rather than a bio-polar system as envisaged by Marx. Marx is also criticised for exaggerating the importance of class and particularly class conflict. His prediction about future classless society seems too many unlikely and unachievable. In modern societies, the consciousness and behaviour of the working class has proved much more ‘moderate’ and open to compromise than Marx hoped. Marx’s class analysis is sometimes seen as loaded with political and ideological bias. It is also said that his analysis is quasi-religious wishful thinking in the garb of scientific analysis. Today, Marxism is seen as “the God that failed” later. Current scientific interest in class has shifted from Marxian theory of class warfare to the struggle for individual mobility. Current technological, economic and governmental changes have changed the face of the so-called capitalist society and we are advancing toward a middle class society [16,17].

Max Weber, the great German sociologist, though developed his analysis of stratification around the views of Marx, but insisted that no single characteristic (such as class) totally defines a person’s position within the stratification system. Weber argues that the evidence provides a more complex and diversified picture of social stratification. He argued that social stratification is a reflection of unequal distribution of power. Since power can be derived from different kinds of resources—a system of social stratification presents more than one dimension according to which a man has a standing. Like Marx, Weber also sees class in economic terms, yet Weber argues that the actions of individuals and groups could not be understood solely in economic terms.

He identified three analytically distinct components of stratification: class, status and party. Thus, in Weber’s opinion, these three criteria are to be used to differentiate people in modern society: class power (economic) based on relationship to the means of production, status (social)

differences, founded on esteem (social honour) given to individuals or groups by others, and party power (political), derived from one's dominance over a political, legal or administrative system. Weber did not accept this Marx's view that party and status are merely functions of class. Although Weber accepts Marx's view that class is founded on objectively given economic conditions, he differed from Marx on the precise definition of class and the role of economic factors in class formation. Weber's most detailed discussion of class is found in *Wirtschaft and Gesellschaft* (1921-22) but he did not give any 'definitive statement' about classes anywhere.

For Weber, classes as a group of individuals who share a similar position in a market economy and by virtue of that fact receive similar economic rewards. At other place, he defined, "a class is a property class where its members' 'class situation' is primarily determined by property differences". He used property or the lack of property as the basic distinction in all 'class situations'. He made distinction between economic class and social class. According to Weber, economic class is a person's situation in the economic market-both the commodity market (buying/selling) and the employment market. This situation gives rise to different life chances. Qualifications or credentials, experience, skills largely determine the types of jobs people are able to obtain. The better qualified and experienced can usually command greater rewards. Social class includes economic class. Members of the same social class share similar chances of social mobility [18,19].

Thus, a man from a low social background would tend to have poor chances of social mobility. Members of a given social class, therefore, share a common socio-economic situation. This difference in the definition of class led to a fundamental disagreement between Weber and Marx about the class structure of capitalist society. Weber differed with Marx not only about the definition of class but about the member of classes also.

He indicated four main classes:

- I. Upper,
- II. Petty bourgeoisie (small businessmen and professionals),
- III. Middle (property less white-class workers) and,
- IV. Manual working class against Marx's two social classes:

Status refers to the unequal distribution of social honor or prestige they are accorded by others. According to Weber, any factor might be the basis of shared honour or status-religion, caste, ethnic group membership, taste or whatever. The main expression of status group membership is style of life of lifestyle. Membership of a status group gives exclusive right to certain

opportunities and privileges as we find in the estate or caste system (Weber has regarded caste system as status groups). While distinguishing between ascribed and achieved status, Weber states that ascribed status has rapidly declined as a means of access to economic and political power in modern societies. He regards economic and career opportunities as increasingly open to competition in modern society [20].

Party (Power)

For Weber, party is a further and distinct political dimension of stratification. Weber defines 'parties' as groups which are specifically concerned with influencing policies and making decisions in the interests of their membership. Parties are concerned with the acquisition of social 'power'. He did not regard political power as a function of economic factors as Marx did. In modern societies, according to Weber, parties live in a house of power. In other words, they are an important source of power. They can influence stratification independently of class and status. Marx tended to explain both status differences and party organization in terms of class. In contrast to Marx, Weber argued that party and status identities could cut across class lines. Weber insisted that, although economic factors could certainly affect political ones, the reverse was also true. In Weber's view, then, each of us has not one rank but three.

A person's position in a stratification system reflects some combination of his or her class, status and power. Weber's analysis of classes, status groups and parties suggest that no single theory can pinpoint and explain their relationship. The interplay of class, status and party in the formation of social groups is complex and variable. In conclusion, it can be said that in rejecting Marx's polarized analysis of the class structure (Marx attempted to reduce all forms of inequality to social class) and replacing it with a finely graded version, Weber attempted to reformulate Marx's theory of stratification. Yet, the basis of Weber's perspective is power conflict. On this fundamental point, Weber and Marx were in agreement [21].

Various Categories in Social Stratification:

1. Caste
2. Class
3. Gender
4. Age

Though there are various other categories of social stratification as well, but in this paper we have only taken into account the above four categories.

Caste Stratification

Caste is a closed social stratification system in which membership is determined by birth and remains fixed for life. Caste is also endogamous wherein marriage is prescribed outside one's caste and their off springs are automatically member of their caste. The Castes is considered to be hereditary endogamous group with fixed traditional occupations, observing commensal prohibition and social restrictions on interaction. It is believed that there are about 3,000 castes in the country. The caste is linked with the four varnas (Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaisya, and Sudra) for determining the status in ritual hierarchy. These castes are grouped as upper castes (like Brahmins, Rajputs, Baniyas, Kayasthas, etc.), intermediate castes (like Ahir, Sunar, Kurmi, etc.) and lower caste (like Dhobi, Nai, etc.).

The Indian caste system describes the system of social stratification and social restrictions in the Indian subcontinent in which social classes are defined by thousands of endogamous hereditary groups, often termed jāti or castes. Within a jāti, there exist exogamous groups known as gotras, the lineage or clan of an individual. In a handful of sub-castes such as Shakadvipi, endogamy within a gotra is permitted and alternative mechanisms of restricting endogamy are used (e.g. banning endogamy within a surname) [22]. Dumont, argues that caste stands for inequality both in theory and practice should not be interpreted opposite to inequality, rather it should be treated as special a type of inequality which should be studied by sociologists. Influenced by the French and German sociological tradition, Dumont stresses on the role of Ideology in moulding human behaviour and therefore, to seek to bring together, sociology in Indology.

Bogle's at the beginning of this century had defend the caste system as consisting of hierarchically arranged hereditary groups separated from each other in certain respects i.e. caste endogamy, restrictions on eating together and physical contact e.i. inter-independent in other (traditional of Labour). Dumont stresses the importance of recognizing these three characteristic or "Principles", as mutually entailed, resting on 'one fundamental conception'. For the atomization into simple elements is the students is need and not a characteristic of system itself. What we need in order to transcend the distinctions we make is "a single true principle". Such principle, Dumont maintains, is the opposition of the pure and impure. "This opposition underline hierarchy, which is the superiority of the pure and impure, must be compare separate underline of the division of labor

because pure and impure occupation must likewise be separate [23].

Munshi and Rosenzweig (2015) use data from the 2006 REDS (Rural environment development society) and the World Values Survey (WVS) to describe the spatial distribution of castes within villages, as well as social and economic interactions in the village. Focusing on the 91% of REDS villages for which information on local government (panchayat) wards is available, each caste makes up on average 6% of the population of a village. Within the ward, which is a smaller spatial unit, the average caste's share increases to 14%, indicative of the spatial clustering along caste lines that characterizes the Indian village. The caste system as a concept stemmed out of Hinduism where in each member of society was divided into four categories namely Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras. Each caste held a position or status according to the role it played for the overall benefit of society. The Brahmins were the teachers. They were the keepers of knowledge and wisdom. They were peace loving and righteous. They held the highest status in society. The Kshatriyas were the protectors of society. It was their duty to protect people and fight with courage for their country. They were noble and heroic and were second in terms of status in society.

Next came the Vaishyas who engaged in trade, agriculture and rearing of cattle. The lowest in the caste in the society was that of the Shudras whose work was that of service and entertainment to society. Now in the original caste system (before it got distorted) it did not matter which caste one was born in. A Shudra could become a Brahmin if he/she obtained knowledge and wisdom and vice versa. So it was the skills, knowledge and the benefits that an individual gave to society that decided his caste. Prof. Jodhka says, as a matter of religion and historical disadvantage, caste falls outside the purview of economic planning and is treated as an internal cultural matter excluded from international frameworks applied to other forms of discrimination such as gender or race [24]. Gupta 2005; Jodhka & Manor (2017) says caste categories of entitlement was a particular moment in the mutual adaptation of caste and politics: caste being how democratic politics takes shape in India; and electoral politics being how caste is re-energized with emergent higher-order clusters, new mythologies and leaders articulating perceived interests through caste identity. Natrajan, 2012, says the view that what today remains of caste is benign or beneficial.

Caste is community or cultural identity, part of the vitality of Indian democracy; caste provides networks of trust for business. Caste is anyway a private and domestic matter.

The caste-based violence that reaches TV screens and newspapers represents an “abnormality” of normally benign caste [25,26]. Towards the end of 1950s structuralism and Marxism made their entry, the former lead by Louis Dumont and D.F. Pocock and latter by A.R. Desai, Daniel Thorner and Charles Dettellheim. The decades of 1960s and 70s saw a few studies in which differentiation, evolution, and change in caste and class over a period of time have been focused. Besides, sociologists and social Anthropologists, Historians, and Economists have taken up studies from structural-historical perspective particularly of Agrarian and industrial stratification, prominent among these are/were – E.R. Leach (1960), B. Ansari (1960), Louis Dumont (1961), S.H. Risley (1961), S.C Dube (1961), Zarin Ahmad (1962), Victor D’Souza (1962), Andre Beteille 1962, F.G. Bailey (1965), and Makim Marriot, (1968).

The contribution of Louis Dumont (1961) is clearly seen in his assertion/ theory of Homo-Hierarchies explain the whole structure of caste as arising from, certain ideological predilections, which are religious in nature. It is clearly seen in Dumont’s assertion, that it is hierarchy which is pervasive principle of Hindu society and the caste system is only one expression of it. According to him, caste is based on the principle of opposition between the pure and impure is a single true principle signifying hierarchy in terms of the superiority and inferiority of the pure over impure, and it is this principle of pure and impure that determines hierarchy. Another approach to the study of caste stratification in India was suggested by Makim Marriot. He argues that in order to gain fuller understanding of the stratification in India at various levels, the rural stratification must be seen as different from metropolitan system of ranking. According to him, the rural stratification is closed and urban stratification relatively open. However, he opined that if the industrialization process proceeded rapidly, the caste system will have essentially disorganization effect by the end of century. On the same lines, Kingsley Davis- (1951), A.R. Desai- 1969 M.N. Srinivas (1962) and Andre Beteille (1969) foresaw the possibility of transformation of caste into class through adaptive changes under the impact of industrialization.

Class Stratification

Class can be denoted as open system of stratification. In open of stratification mobility is an accepted property of the system. In this open system of stratification it is possible to move up by simply obeying the internal order of rank differentiation. Here the hierarchy may be fix and firm but individuals can go up or even down the

hierarchy. According to Marx a social class is any aggregate of person who performs the same function in the organization of the production. Historically speaking free man and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guild master and journey man or in a word oppressor and oppressed, constitute social classes. Marx considers class as a social reality and adjusting fact. A class is a real group with a developed consciousness of its existence, its position and goals. For Marx, class is a mirror for seeing the totality of relation in a given society. Weber also saw notions of status and power along similar line. A status was determined by the basis of the consumption and the power on the extent to which one could effectively exercise control over others. Further Weber insisted that axes of social stratification namely class, status and power be seen as independent of one another, even those they cannot always be separated in fact.

According to Weber we may speak a class when

1. 1 A number of people have in common a specific casual component of their life chances.
2. 2 In so far as this component is represented exclusively by economic interest in the possession of goods and opportunities for income.
3. 3 It is represented under the conditions of the commodity or labour market.

Thus the term class refers to any group of the people that is found in the same class.

According to Pierre Bourdieu, a given society can be seen by the distribution of different kinds of resource or capital. Three forms of capital are:

1. Economical capital (material wealth-money, stocks and shares, property etc.)
2. Cultural capitals (Knowledge, skills, cultural acquisition)
3. Symbolic capital (accumulated prestige and honour)

It is well known that the western concept of class is unable to understand the Indian society. Two questions arise as such:

1. How to analyse India’s class structure.
2. What is class-caste nexus, its ramification and interaction indifferent regions.

Thus according to Marxian approach structuring of social inequality is a continuous process. It is a life process of the placement of individuals, families and groups. Thus we can explain the Marxian perspective as follows:

1. Continuity of tradition and emergence of modernity side by side in the field of social stratification.
2. Determination of social relation by the direction of social change.
3. Coexistence of the structure and process of social stratification. The Marxist approach has often being applied in the agricultural and industrial domains with a view to know the class structure emanating from

them. Some important conclusions drawn from the studies of agrarian relations are:

1. Proletarianization of the poor peasantry with the increasing concentration of village resources in few hands.
2. The shift in the mode of production in agriculture from family based subsistence farming to market oriented hired worked based agriculture.
3. The increasing diversification of economic and social life in the village.

Urban industrial social stratification is characterized by the professional and the working classes to a large extent. A professional class reflects social and cultural differentiation or changes from tradition to modernity in the fields of occupation, industry and economy. Emergence of professional classes becomes a measure of social mobility. Urban industrial social stratification consists of the following classes:

- a. Upper class
 - b. Upper middle class
 - c. Lower middle class
 - d. Working class
- V. M. Dandekar recognizes four broad classes in India as follows:
- a. Agrarian classes
 - b. Industrial classes
 - c. Professional classes
 - d. Business and mercantile classes

Gender

In this Section, We Discuss Gender and Social Stratification in the Society

Gender- Personal traits and social position members of a society attach to being female and male. Refers to what we become as men and women, which occurs through socialization. Gender roles are activities that a culture links to each sex. The mass media especially television also serve this function. Gender stratification refers to the inequalities between women and men regarding wealth, power, and privilege and male-female biological difference. Gender is a socially structured principle and represents a hierarchical, asymmetrical, and unequal division between men and women. Traditionally men have been first in line when it comes to who gets what, when and how [1]. "Most wealth is in the hands of men, most big institution are run by men, most science and technology is controlled by men" [2]. For the majority of sociologist until that period gender or even women were completely invisible to the analysis of class stratification. Goldthorpe [4] was one of the strongest defenders of the argument that women should not be included separately in a class analysis as they take the class of their father first

and of their husband later. Thus, class attributed to families and research on class included the analysis of only made breadwinners or heads of households, with households considered as homogeneous units.

Gender roles probably represent the earliest division of labour among human. Huber [5] says, the emergence of the analysis of the division of household labour is the "most significant phenomenon in gender stratification after 1950." This change of perspective in sociology made possible the analysis of inequalities inside the family, including the sources of this inequality as well as analyses of the labor market from a gender perspective highlighting the sex segregation of the labour market, the gender pay gap, inequalities regarding access to top positions, and so on. Gender inequalities Such as domestic labor and sexual violence made visible through such analyses were previously considered as personal, natural or unworthy of being analyzed, example- domestic violence was only considered an issue of male pathology, with no analysis of the structural and relational conditions. Emerging research in the 1970 showed that domestic violence could occur in all types of family and reflected hierarchical power. Feminist define pornography as a form of sexual violence against women, arguing that it demeans women and promotes rape.

Gender as a principle of structuring the unequal power relations both within and outside the household. Structural -functional analysis suggests that traditional sex role emerged in hunting and gathering societies where they promoted the efficient functioning of the family. Thus, inequalities within the household made very problematic the analysis of class based on the family as the unit of analysis. Such analysis could not reflect the social division of labour and the attendant inequalities within household.eg. women spend more hours on housework than men have less access to household good, have less money for leisure have less decision making power etc. Housewives and breadwinning husbands constitute two separate classes. They have a relation of economic difference and of social inequality, where the housewives are the producing class engaged in domestic labour and husband are the nonproducing class expropriating the labour of their wives. This theory has been criticized for going too far in the application of Marxist concept of class and mode of production and for not acknowledging the many differences between women eg. Not all women are housewives.

Sex is mere differentiation. Inequalities between women and men are produced by their position regarding reproduction pregnancy, childbirth, and breastfeeding, childcare and so on. So, sex is biologically determined

characteristic, while gender is a socially constructed characteristic. Chefetz suggests eleven dimensions that may be unequally distributed and clusters them into four groups. The first group includes the dimensions defining the particular society such as the different expectations for gender roles. The second – related the organization of work and control over the means and products of production. The third group includes dimensions related to family structure and division of labour within the household and fourth group – independent dimensions such as demography level of technology and so on. All the four group are interrelated with each other and interact to place women and men in unequal position.

Sociological perspectives on gender stratification- the major Sociological perspectives offer interpretation of gender Stratification that resemble and parallel their positions on class and racial or ethnic stratification. Functionalists suggest that families are organized along instrumental-expressive lines, with men specializing in instrumental tasks and women in expressive tasks. Conflict theorists contend that a sexual division of labour is a social vehicle devised by men to ensure themselves of privilege, prestige and power in their relationship with women. Symbolic interactionists define men and women and their appropriate role in society. Language helps perpetuate inequality. Feminists argue that women are disadvantage because society is patriarchal. Prof. Renuka Singh delivered lecturer and discuss the above in “Feminist methodology”.

Gender inequalities regarding economic resources, political participation, education and household labour differ from country to country. So, in India the land ownership of women is extremely low compared to that of men. In Indian context, In its social, historical and cultural aspects, gender is a function of power relationship between men and women where men are considered superior to women. Gender Inequality is also reflected in India’s poor ranking in various global gender indices. UNDP’s Gender Inequality Index- 2014: India’s ranking is 127 out of 152 countries in the List. World Economic Forum’s Global Gender Gap Index- 2014: India’s ranks at 114 in the list of 142 countries of the world. In the last 30 years, women in India have come a long way. So much has changed-this is largely due to the actions of a few inspiring women, education and awareness etcprog.

Who didn’t let anything hold them back? Harshini Kanhekar-India’s first firefighter woman, PriyaJhingan-first woman in Indian Army, Surekha Yadav- Asia’s first female train driver, Chetna Sinha- founder first rural bank for women in India,Sania Mirza,Deepamalik, P.V.Sindhu, Mansi Joshi etc. Government of India launched the

‘BetiBachaoBetiPadhao’ campaign in January 2015, with the aim of creating awareness and to ensure survival, protection and empowerment of the girl child. So, while changes may be incremental, we are seeing movement toward a society in which women and men enjoy equal rights and opportunities. A common general definition of gender stratification refers to the unequal distribution of wealth, power, and privilege between the two sexes. Gender (in) equality can be analyzed on the bases of prestige, style of life, privileges, opportunities, association with social groups, Income, education, occupation, and power (Acker 1973).

Unequal distribution is illustrated by unequal agues regarding employment, participation in politics, education, land ownership, household works, and so on. “Most wealth is in the hands of men, most big institutions are run by men, most science and technology is controlled by men” (Connell 2002, 5). Some of the definitions of gender rely specially on the structuring power of gender as a hierarchical division between women and men embedded in both social institutions and social practices. Gender is produced, negotiated, and sustained at every level of everyday interaction, and cannot be abstracted from the wider social relations with which it is enmeshed. Further, gender intersects other social divisions and inequality- ties such as class, race, and sexuality (Jackson and Scott 2002). In short, gender is a socially constructed stratification system, embedded at the individual, interactional, and institutional dimensions of society (Risman 2004). Gender stratify cation was not among the preferred themes of analyses in social sciences until the 1970s. As Huber (1986, 476) says, “Interest in gender stratification before 1970 was little above zero.” Until the 1970s, the differences between men and women were

Age Stratification

Age plays a basic role in our social structuring and institutions. It is important to realize that age, while an ascribed status, is socially constructed and transforms across time and society. Our basic introduction into the roles and rules of status occur in our early socialization process. The foundations of how we interact across status groups-including age groups are located in those early life lessons. Age stratification clearly fits the broad stratification model I have sketched. First, age orders both people and roles. Not only is the population ranked according to age, but social roles, with their differing rewards, are defined in terms of age and age-related criteria. The result is the formation of age strata distinguished from one another because their members differ in age or life stage and in access to roles which are unequally rewarded by wealth, prestige, or power.

Second, the age strata cut across the whole society since all individuals are ranked by age and since all roles have built-in age definitions of role assignment and expectations and rewards for role performance.

Third, the system of age stratification is relatively enduring. While the particular members of an age stratum constantly change, the age-related criteria for role assignment and role performance tend to persist. The consequence is that the system of age-graded roles is comparatively stable-typically outlasting many cohorts of role incumbents. Despite the broad similarities among the many systems of social stratification, no two forms are exactly alike. As systems of stratification vary according to the criteria by which strata are delineated and strata members allocated to valued roles, the structure of stratification and processes of change within these various types of stratification are marked by particular features. In the case of age stratification, it is the dynamic aspects individual aging and the succession of one age cohort after another-which are important in distinguishing it from other types of social stratification and which have notable consequences for the relationship between age and society.

We tend to think of human aging in terms of the physiological and psychological changes occurring from birth to death. Yet the process takes on fresh clarity when viewed as a form of social mobility. Social mobility in general refers to the movement of individuals up or down a social hierarchy. As the individual ages, he too moves within a social hierarchy. He goes from one set of age-related social roles to another and at each level receives greater or lesser rewards than before. Age mobility is governed, of course, by chronological processes. Unlike other types of social mobility it is inevitable, universal, and unidirectional in that the individual can never grow younger. Some implications of these unique aspects of age mobility have already been touched on. Here I propose to explore how social aging may diverge from the chronological model.

It is true that social aging is inevitable and universal-and death is irreversible. But social aging (age mobility) need not be unidirectional. For each increment in years of life, there is no necessary increment in social rewards. Much depends on the special structure of age stratification in any given society. Recalling the shape of the age structure in our society what is evident is the greatest rewards accrue to those strata which are chronologically in the middle. This means that age mobility as a social phenomenon is curvilinear in modern society. People tend to be upwardly mobile in many respects (that is, move to positions with increasing social rewards) well through the

middle years; but thereafter they tend to become downwardly mobile, as social rewards are widely withdrawn or reduced. Such loss of rewards, typically involuntary, may engender in the old the same sense of despair found among other deprived groups who see no chance for improving their lot.

Conclusion- Critiquing Stratification System in India

Stratification in an Indian society is by and large based on ascription. It means it is a type of culture in which not on the basis of achievement but on the basis of "who a person is", stratification is done. It could involve inequality on the basis of gender, economical status and caste system or age. Thus here, in an Indian society, people are placed in the stratification system by their ascribed status and the conventional worldview is to follow the caste rules without questioning its credibility. Such a system is a classic example of closed Social Mobility. When caste system depicts Closed Social Mobility, the Class system reflects Open Social Mobility. In a class system, even blood relatives may have different social status where one can move up and around the hierarchy based on personal merit and achievements. When stratification is done on the basis of wealth or income, a lot of mobility and fluidity is observed.

No caste or class difference is observed. The major disadvantage of social stratification system is the conflict between various strata of the hierarchy. The reason being inaccessibility of various resources and lack of social mobility further intensifies this conflict. The wealth and luxury remains highly concentrated at the top of the hierarchy. And those occupying the topmost strata always try to restrict upward mobility by controlling law and authorities with their wealth and influence. The wards of high class professionals would grow up with the expectation of achieving a similar occupation as their parent, whereas a child of a lower status working class parents will often have much lower aspirations based upon what they see around them. For example, the ward of a doctor would be more expected to follow the same profession and a kin of a businessman is more likely to continue with his father's business.

In the context of contemporary neo-liberal policies in India, it is pertinent to mention that Joseph A. Schumpeter, Richard Swedberg in their book "Capitalism, Socialism and democracy", have explained the vision of Karl Marx for a stratification-free society where there would exist no inequality on the basis of richness and class. But the class conflict is getting so strong that it only resulted in the reconstruction of the society. The stratification hierarchy

keeps getting just re-structured but may never be abolished. The wealth still remained concentrated at the top of the hierarchy pyramid, white-collar jobs offer little to the workers and the poor still remained at the bottom of the structure. Marginalization, oppression, subjugation and exploitation continue to be interwoven with social stratification and social inequality in Indian society.

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