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SOCIAL STRATIFICATION

B.S.O.C.- 110

B.A. Sociology (Hons.) - 4th Semester

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Based on

C.B.C.S. (Choice Based Credit System) Syllabus of

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QUESTION PAPER

June – 2023

(Solved)

SOCIAL STRATIFICATION

B.S.O.C.-110

Time: 3 Hours]

[Maximum Marks: 100

Note: Answer any **five** of the following questions. All questions carry equal marks.

Q. 1. Discuss class as a form of social stratification.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-1, Page No. 2, 'Class System', Page No. 8, Q. No. 1 and Chapter-11, Page No. 17, Q. No. 2 and Q. No. 3.

Q. 2. Discuss Marxian theory of social stratification.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-3, Page No. 25, Marx on Stratification'

Q. 3. Critically analyse Davis-Moore's theory of social stratification.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-5, Page No. 51, 'Davis-Moore Theory'.

Q. 4. What do you understand by race? Write a brief note on racism.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-8, Page No. 85, 'Defining Race'.

Q. 5. How does socialization influence formation of gender identities? Explain with suitable examples.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-9, Page No. 96, 'Factors Leading to Gender Identities'.

Q. 6. Who do you mean by social mobility? Discuss the various forms of social mobility.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-10, Page No. 105, 'Introduction' and 'Types and Forms of Mobility'.

Q. 7. Explain the nexus between caste and class.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-7, Page No. 74, 'Caste-Class Nexus'.

Q. 8. Explain briefly the concept of cultural and social reproduction from the lens of Marxian tradition.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-12, Page No. 133, Q. No. 2 and Page No. 129, 'Cultural and Social Reproduction: The Marxist Tradition'.



QUESTION PAPER

December – 2022

(Solved)

SOCIAL STRATIFICATION

B.S.O.C.-110

Time: 3 Hours]

[Maximum Marks: 100

Note: Answer any **five** of the following questions. All questions carry equal marks.

Q. 1. What is Social Stratification? Explain its types.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-1, Page No. 1, 'Introduction' and Page No. 2, 'Types of Social Stratification'.

Q. 2. Discuss the functionalist theory of social stratification.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-5, Page No. 49, 'Introduction' and 'Functionalist Theory of Stratification'.

Q. 3. Discuss Marxian approach to the study of social stratification.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-3, Page No. 25, 'Marx on Stratification' and Page No. 9. Q. No. 14.

Q. 4. How are gender identities constructed? Explain.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-9, Page No. 96, 'Factors Leading to Gender Identities'.

Q. 5. Discuss interactional approach to the study of caste.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-6, Page No. 63, 'Interactional Theories to Caste'.

Q. 6. Discuss the types and forms of social mobility.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-10, Page No. 105, 'Types and Forms of Mobility'.

Q. 7. Explain power and status as organising principles of social stratification.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-2, Page No. 13, 'Introduction', 'Power', 'States' and Page No. 15, Q. No. 1.

Q. 8. Describe various types and forms of social mobility.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-10, Page No. 105, 'Types and Forms of Mobility'.



Sample Preview of The Chapter

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SOCIAL STRATIFICATION

BLOCK-I : INTRODUCING STRATIFICATION

Basic Concepts: Meaning and Approaches of Social Stratification



INTRODUCTION

Social stratification ranks various social groups and categories as higher or lower. The social groups are ranked in terms of their relative position on the scales of prestige, privileges, wealth and power. Social groups have ascribed or innate qualities as well as qualities gained through their own accomplishments. Thus, ascription and achievements are two scales which define the normative principles that determine social stratification. As a historical process, social stratification emerged as a social institution of societies at a certain level of social evolution and social development. For example, the hunting and food gathering societies had individual levels of social differentiation. A top hunter or *shaman* gained higher status because of his personal qualities or skills which society believed as mystical or divine in origin. Age and sex of the members also determined the ranking. Their social structure was simple because of the less developed production technologies and nomadic nature of these societies. They had elementary skills among people for communication, simple technologies, elementary forms of belief systems and rules of social control such societies.

CHAPTER AT A GLANCE

THE EVOLUTIONARY PROCESS

Social stratification evolved with changes in the basic technology of production. Innovation in agricultural and animal husbandry led to development of more complex technologies and settled forms of community life. Economies generated economic surpluses and accumulation of wealth. Exchange of commodities started to happen on a larger scale. Various tools of exchange were also invented. With the division

of labour, specialized groups emerged. The rural and urban centres also came into existence. The complexity of social structure led to more elaborate institutions of social control.

ORGANIZING PRINCIPLES

Three major organizing principles of social stratification are: Status, Wealth and Power.

Status

Status means ranking of groups based on their relative position in terms of honour or respect. Honour is a qualitative attribute which a group enjoys by birth. Attribute which is inherited by birth is ascribed and cannot be gained by effort. Thus, status principle of social stratification is also called as the principle of ascription. Caste in India is an example of status groups. These are mainly based on values and beliefs.

Wealth

Change from hunting and food garnering economy to settled agriculture. Agriculture based economy led to development of manufacturing and industry. Technological development led to higher productivity which lead to more profit and wealth. The groups which had acquired more wealth were ranked higher in society than groups which controlled less of it, or groups which had little or negligible access to wealth.

Power

Power empowers persons or groups to impose their will on other groups by legitimate use of coercive method. State is an example of an institution which has maximum power. It has sovereign authority to impose its will on citizens of the society. When power is institutionalized in society, it becomes authority. Power as a principle also enters into the notion of social stratification when its functions or its social ramifications start to be influenced by the political processes in society, and when state starts to take more

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active or direct role in influencing the social stratification principles.

TYPES OF SOCIAL STRATIFICATION

The types of social stratification are:

- (i) The age-set System
- (ii) Slave System
- (iii) Estate System
- (iv) Caste System
- (v) Class System, and
- (vi) Race and Ethnicity

Some of these systems have flexibility regarding social mobility from one stratum to another. Others have little or no mobility out of a stratum.

The Age-set System

In the age-set system, the ranks are determined on the basis of age. All the persons born within a range or number of years belong to one set. Each person belongs to an age set, to which he remains attached throughout his life. Along with other members, he moves to the next age-set. The age-sets in these societies determine their social organisation. This type of stratification is a characteristic of certain east African societies; most prominent among the Masai and Nandi in East Africa. In terms of a system of social stratification, the age-set system provides for an open society, in which no one is allocated a particular position for life.

Slave System

The slave system, abolished in 1833 by Britain and 1865 by USA, was characterised by a high degree of institutionalisation. Based on economic inequality, this system rendered certain groups of people without rights. In ancient slavery system, prevalent in ancient Rome and Greece, slaves were foreign prisoners of war. In New World slavery system, based on colonial expansion and racist ideology, the slave was the master's property and had no political and social rights. The slave was compelled to work. Continued opposition to the slave system by educated and enlightened public in general and the anti-slavery struggles organised by the slaves themselves led to decline of the system.

Estate System

The estate system ranked social groups in terms of ownership of land. It was also characterised by hereditary transmission of social position. This type of social stratification was there in feudal societies of medieval Europe. The hierarchy of social strata in this system is distinguished and rigidly set off from one another by law and custom. A royal family and a hereditary military aristocracy, who were the landholders, existed at the top of the system. The

priesthood or clergy allied with the nobility were at par with the nobility. The merchants and craftsmen came under them. The free peasants and the Serfs were at the bottom. The estates also represented political groups. In the 12th century, European feudalism had a third estate of the burghers. This system is best explained in terms of the nature of and relationship between property and political authority in medieval Europe.

Caste System

Indian caste system has closed social groups arranged in a fixed hierarchical order of superiority and inferiority. It represents the most rigid type of social stratification in terms of ascribed and socially accepted stratification. It is uniquely linked with the agrarian society and the urban communities of India. The caste system has the following attributes:

- (i) The membership is hereditary and fixed,
- (ii) Each caste is an endogamous group,
- (iii) Social distance is encouraged by the restrictions of contracts and commensality with members of other castes,
- (iv) Caste consciousness is stressed by caste names and by conformity to the particular customs of the particular caste, and
- (v) Occupational specialisation: Religious belief rationalises the caste system. Caste operates at two levels. Firstly, in terms of an abstract classification into four types of 'varna': brahmin (priests), kshatriya (luners), vaishya (merchants) and shudra (workers). Secondly, there is a division of local communities into groupings called jati at the operational village level. The system is unchangeable. Sanskritisation makes little marginal upward social mobility possible. In Sanskritisation process, a lower caste member adopts the manners and customs of a higher caste, and sever his/her ties with their original caste.

Class System

The class system is based primarily on differences in wealth and income. These social classes are neither legally defined nor religiously sanctioned groups. These are relatively open groups considered as the byproducts of the process of industrialisation and urbanisation throughout the world. These differences among the different classes are expressed in different life styles and thus different consumption patterns. Different manners in terms of speech and dress sometimes differentiate these social groups. Class systems are characterised by social mobility – upward and downward, both inter-generational and intra-generational. According to Max Weber, wealth, power

and lifestyle are crucial in determining the class. All industrial societies have the upper, middle and working classes. Similarly, in agrarian societies, according to Daniel Thorner, has 'malik, 'kisan' and 'mazdur'. They are the proprietors who owned land, the working peasants who owned small amount of land and the labour class or *mazdurs* who did not own any land but worked on other peoples' land. In industrial societies, social classes co-exist with status groups. Max Weber argued that social classes are ranked as per their relation to the ways of producing and acquiring goods. Status groups however are ranked as per the ways of consuming goods.

Race and Ethnicity

Race is a biological concept. It refers to a category of people who share certain inherited physical characteristics such as colour of skin, type of hair; facial features, size of head, etc. A race is perceived by a given society as biologically different from the others. Thus, people are assigned to one race or another by public opinion which is shaped by that society's dominant group instead of by any scientific basis. In racist societies, for example South Africa, physical attributes are believed as intrinsically related to moral, intellectual and other non-physical attributes and abilities.

Ethnicity is based on cultural traits. Ethnic group is a common group of peoples with a common cultural heritage which is learned, and not inherited. The group may have a common language, history, national origin, or lifestyle. The Chicago School of Sociologists found that over several generations, ethnic identities were lost and later revised. Sociologists also point out that disappearance of ethnic identities through the process of assimilation is often hampered when the dominant groups do not allow the flow of social benefits to certain groups, deemed to be powerless ethnic minorities. It results in ethnic conflicts.

SOME CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL ISSUES

The relationship between social stratification and social order gives rise to various issues. According to Max Weber, three orders of society are: the social, the economic and the political. The nature of the 'order' of the society, he believed, makes the social stratification complex. The 'social order' is based on 'honour' and its institutional structures are influenced by it. It is located in the 'status groups'. Examples included the institution of feudalism, aristocracy and the formation of different 'estates' in traditional European society. The caste social stratification in India has this principle.

The caste is based on the principle of purity and pollution, hereditary occupation and caste privileges or sanctioned forms of discrimination. The 'economic order' depends on the normative principle of rationality and market situation. It reflects in interest groups. Class, according to Max Weber, is a product of market situation; it is competitive and comprises social categories which do not constitute communities and one's social mobility in the class situation depends upon achieved skills or merits governed by the laws of supply and demand. Its manifestation as a institution could be seen in the rise of capitalism, which gives rise to the market situation. The 'political' order is based on the pursuit of 'power'. It makes institutional manifestation in the organised system of political parties and various associations which are orientated to its acquisition. The political order and its institutional processes extend to the social institutions of other orders.

Weber's Approach

Weber's theory of social stratification is based on comparative understanding of the typical manifestations of the principles of social stratification over a period of time. According to Weber, the 'ideal type' concepts can be used for theoretical advancement in sociology. These concepts are abstracted from the 'historical individual' or a configuration of historical events over a period of time from which the sociologists constructs concepts by interpretive understanding. These concepts are not based on empirical induction from observed reality. Thus, the ideal type concepts are not real types although they are derived from a certain understanding of reality. Weber believed that sociological theories do have explanatory significance but still they did not have law-like power of generalization.

The Dialectical Approach

Karl Marx's theory of 'dialectical and historical materialism' uses 'mode of production' and 'relations of production' for classification of the conceptual categories of social stratification. On the basis of the nature of labour power and means of technology for production of commodities, the modes of production are: primitive, feudal and capitalist. The primitive mode was characterized by communal or collective mode of labour with elementary tools as in the food gathering and hunting communities. At this stage, the institutions of social stratification could not have evolved. With the rise of feudalism, the institutional organs started developing. Accumulation of wealth and productive resources also developed. All these led to the stratification in society with feudal landlord or aristocrat

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at the top. The social strata also included the peasants, serfs and traders and artisans. Most these strata were attached to the estate of the feudal lord. Feudalism evolved its own typical political, economic, social and cultural institutions which were mostly based on the principle of hereditary privileges and patrimonial authority. The feudal lord had a control on the means of productions and this led to a form of relationship between him and other social strata.

Marx believes conflict and tension are endemic to the system. Those in possession of wealth and resources will protect and hoard those resources, while those without will do whatever they can to obtain them. It means there is a constant struggle between the rich and the poor.

The Rise of Capitalism

The rise of capitalism with the development of technologies and social institutions made feudalism obsolescent. The growth in the factors mode of production of commodities, large scale migration of peasants and workers from the rural areas to the urban centres and accumulation of capital by expanded use of the market changed the social stratification. The capitalist entrepreneurs and the working classes emerge. An antagonistic relationship rises between these two classes over working hours, wages and conditions of work. Such conflicts, according to Marx, should have culminated into the replacement of capitalism by a socialist system of society. In many countries, such as former USSR, China and Vietnam, socialist societies came into existence by revolution of the peasants and working classes. Marxist considers social order as a product of historical-materialistic conditions which are defined by the modes of production and relations of production. These conditions continually undergo change because of technological innovations and efforts in the society to resolve social conflicts. Thus, social order is based on the relationship among various groups which are inherently antagonistic, and cannot be resolved without basically changing the social order or system itself. The new social order or the socialist society which emerges through revolution does not have a place for strata based on inequalities but has social differentiation of work without class or social stratification. Such strata are called non-antagonistic.

Darhendorf and Coser

Other theorists like Ralph Daharendorf and Lewis Coser treat conflict as the universal feature in form of social gradations in society. However, these theorists

locate these conflicts in the institutional anomalies within the system rather than linking it with the theory of class struggle and revolution. These sociologists believe conflict arises out of antagonism of interests and exercise of power by one stratum over the other which seeks upward social mobility. Thus, it is the internal dynamics of the stratification system instead of a movement towards its total replacement or change of social order. Such theories of social stratification, known as conflict theories, do not accept the Marxist position of historical materialism which believes in invariable stages of social evolution through series of revolutionary movements. In the conflict theory, the notion of social order is closer to functional view-point rather than dialectical materialist interpretation.

The Functional Theory

The functional theory considered social order has inherent capacity of self-maintenance and self-regulation. It believes that society and its institutions, including social stratification, have the capacity to contain and resolve conflicts. Social order and organism have internal mechanisms for self-regulation and self-corrections. Social stratification is a dynamic system characterized by social mobility and continual restructuring of the rules of consensus building. It acknowledges the role of competition and conflict but also postulates the existence of institutional mechanism such as, processes of socialization, education, empowerment by democratic participation, etc. through which aspirations for social mobility are or can be realised and contradiction arising out of asymmetrical opportunities of various strata in society resolved with a meaningful degree of social consensus.

Indian sociologists have used all the theoretical approaches to social stratification. Most studies of class structure and peasantry in India have used Marxist theory and tried to adapt it to the Indian historical conditions. Indian sociologists have also used the Weberian perspective. Many studies have used caste, class and power as conceptual typologies to measure the changes in social stratification.

ACTIVITY

Q. Discuss 'status' 'wealth' and 'power' with other students. In which way are they related to one another?

Ans. Status, wealth and power are the major organizing principles of social stratification. Status is the ranking of groups based on their relative position