

**MASTER OF ARTS  
SOCIOLOGY  
CENTRE FOR OPEN AND  
DISTANCE LEARNING  
(CODL)**



**MSO 104: SOCIAL STRATIFICATION  
BLOCK II**

**CENTRE FOR OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING  
TEZPUR UNIVERSITY (A CENTRAL UNIVERSITY)  
TEZPUR, ASSAM - 784028  
INDIA**

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- **To undertake various research and academic activities for furtherance of distance education in the region.**
- **To contribute to conserve and promote cultural heritage, literature, traditional knowledge and environment conducting short programmes, workshops, seminars and research in interdisciplinary field.**

# **MSO 104: SOCIAL STRATIFICATION**



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**MSO-104: SOCIAL STRATIFICATION**  
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# BLOCK II

## MODULE III: AXES OF STRATIFICATION

UNIT 7: AXES OF STRATIFICATION: CASTE, CLASS AND GENDER

UNIT 8: AXES OF STRATIFICATION: TRIBE, RACE RELIGION

UNIT 9: AXES OF STRATIFICATION: LANGUAGE AND REGION

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### **BLOCK INTRODUCTION**

This Block comprises of Modules **III**, **IV** and **V** of MSO 104: Social Stratification. **Module III** is about the different axes of stratification like caste, class, etc. The module is divided into three units, each dealing with different axes of stratification. **Unit 7** deals with Caste, Class and Gender and shows the inter-relation among them. Tribe, Race and Religion are discussed in **Unit 8**. **Unit 9** discusses two other axes of stratification—Language and Region.

**Module IV** has three units, each dealing with an aspect of the contemporary debate in stratification. The concepts of Deviance, Disability and Sexuality are the three important aspects that are covered in **Unit 10**, **Unit 11** and **Unit 12** respectively

The last Module, that is **Module V** deals with the concept of stratification in contemporary society, focusing on the changes that have been observed in recent times. This Module consists of two units. **Unit 13** discusses Exclusion and its relationship with stratification. On the other hand, **Unit 14** is about the concept of Inclusion and the challenges to it in the contemporary society.

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## **MODULE III: AXES OF STRATIFICATION**

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## **UNIT 7: AXES OF STRATIFICATION: CASTE, CLASS AND GENDER**

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### **UNIT STRUCTURE**

- 7.1 Introduction
- 7.2 Objectives
- 7.3 Caste and Social Stratification
  - 7.3.1 Features of the Caste System
  - 7.3.2 Untouchability in India
- 7.4 Class and Social Stratification
  - 7.4.1 Agrarian Classes in India
  - 7.4.2 Class and Lifestyle
- 7.5 Gender and Social Stratification
  - 7.5.1 Gender Differences
  - 7.5.2 Gender Discrimination
- 7.6 Summing Up
- 7.7 Questions
- 7.8 Recommended Readings and References

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### **7.1 INTRODUCTION**

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People across the globe have always desired an egalitarian society. However, there are social inequalities and stratification in all human societies ranging from the simplest to the complex, industrial societies. This is because there are different factors of social stratification such as caste, class, gender, tribe, religion, language, etc. Stratification along with such factors leads to unequal distribution of power, wealth and prestige between individuals and social groups. This, in turn, leads to inequality and discrimination in society.

Stratification along the lines of caste is based on the notion of purity and pollution. The castes are arranged in a hierarchy and the castes at the topmost positions are considered to be ritually purer and superior to the

rest of the castes. Similarly, in class stratification, a society assigns different positions to different categories of people based on their level of income and wealth. Furthermore, a society is also divided on the basis of gender. Historically, in all societies, women have been subordinated, exploited and discriminated by men. Men are allotted more power as compared to women. The improvement in the position and status of women in society was possible through a range of struggles. But, this does not mean that gender inequality and discrimination has ended.

Therefore, a society where all members are equal has never existed to date. The different axes of stratification are hindrances to the formation of an egalitarian society.

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## **7.2 OBJECTIVES**

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By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- Describe caste, class and gender as axes of social stratification;
- Discuss the features of the caste system and the practice of untouchability;
- Analyse the relationship between class and lifestyle;
- Discuss the agrarian classes of India;
- Discuss and analyse how gender differences are perceived and used for gender discrimination.

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## **7.3 CASTE AND SOCIAL STRATIFICATION**

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In India, the most significant factor of social stratification is the caste system. The caste system divides the Hindu society into four varnas. They are- the Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, Shudras and the Untouchables or Outcaste constitutes a fifth group which is considered to be outside the caste system. The caste system ranks and hierarchizes Hindus. The basis of the ranking is ritual purity and pollution. The higher castes are considered to be purer than the lower castes. A distance was

maintained between the upper castes and the lower castes so that the upper castes do not get polluted by coming in contact with the lower castes. Thus, the lower castes were segregated and were made to live in the outskirts of villages.

The topmost castes in the hierarchy are accorded more power and high prestige. As a result, it led to extreme forms of inequality, exploitation and discrimination of the lower castes. Therefore, it can be said that different aspects of an individual's life are conditioned by the stratified patterns of the caste system.

**Stop and Read:**

The term caste was derived from the Portuguese word "casta" which means "race", "breed", or "lineage". Each caste is subdivided into numerous 'jatis' or sub-castes and there are almost 3,000 castes and 25,000 sub-castes in India.

### **7.3.1 Features of the Caste System**

G.S. Ghurye (1969) outlined the different features of the caste system in his book 'Caste and Race in India'. The features are discussed below-

- **Segmental division of society-** The membership in a caste is not determined by choice of individuals but by birth. The different caste groups have a well-developed life of their own. Most of the castes have councils that are responsible for taking decisions on any aspect of their life. The governing body of the caste is known as the caste panchayat. They deal with a wide range of issues concerning the particular caste or issues between different castes. Therefore, an individual owes moral obedience to the caste first rather than to the community as a whole. Moreover, each caste has its own culture. Many of the castes have their own deities and the customs about marriage and death vary among the different castes. For example, the brahmins did not allow remarriage of

widows but the same is not true of many lower castes. Thus, there is a segmental division of society as each caste can be said to be small and complete social worlds in themselves, which are distinctly separated from one another but living within the larger society.

- **Hierarchy**-All the castes are arranged in a social hierarchy with Brahmins at the top and the Shudras and Untouchables at the bottom of the hierarchy. The access to opportunities and privileges by different caste groups depends on their position in the hierarchy. Moreover, there is also a presence of hierarchy within the castes.
- **Restrictions on feeding and social intercourse**- There are rules governing sharing of food between different castes. The rules include the type of food that can be shared and between which castes. All food is divided into two categories- 'kachcha' and 'pakka'. Kachcha food refers to any food which is cooked by using water. Pakka food refers to the food cooked in 'ghee' without using water. Generally, a person will accept kachcha food only from the members of their own caste group. But, almost all the castes have no objection in accepting kachcha food from the Brahmins while the Brahmins cannot accept kachcha food from any other castes than their own. They can accept pakka food from some of the castes only. Added to this, it is also believed that the mere touch or presence of a lower caste can pollute the higher castes. Therefore, the lower castes were not allowed to live in the same neighbourhood as the upper castes. No upper caste member touched a person from lower castes.
- **Civil and Religious Disabilities and Privileges of the Different Sections**- The segregation of certain castes in a village imply the civil privileges and disabilities. Moreover, almost in all parts of India, the impure or lower castes are prohibited from using the village well as the higher caste members use the well.



Thus, the lower castes tend to build their own wells. There are numerous such examples and instances of discrimination and exploitation of the lower castes. Moreover, other castes need to salute a Brahmin while a Brahmin will not bow to anyone who is a non-Brahmin. Under the Hindu rulers, the Brahmins were given privileges that were denied to other castes. They were rewarded with large acres of land by the rulers, their goods were not taxed, exempted from capital punishment and when they were guilty of any offence and were confined in forts, they were treated liberally as compared to other castes.

- **Hereditary Occupations-** Since a person is born into a caste, it is considered that s/he is also born into an occupation. The Brahmins mostly took up the profession of priests. The Kshatriyas had to be Kings or Warriors, the Vaishyas were merchants and traders while the Shudras and Untouchables were supposed to take up the odd and degrading jobs such as cobblers, scavenging etc. Apart from the moral and social control, the restrictions put by other castes in not allowing members from other castes than their own to follow their occupations also prevented people from choosing one's occupation. For example, a non-Brahmin was not allowed to be a priest.
- **Restrictions on marriage-** All the castes and sub-castes prohibited its members from marrying outside their own caste. Thus, the castes are endogamous. The principle of endogamy is so significant in the caste society that it is considered as the essence of the caste system. Any member or family who violates this rule of marriage is punished, ex-communicated and outcasted from the caste group. Inter-caste marriage is not at all permissible.

Therefore, the features of the caste system give a clear picture of the pattern of caste stratification in a society. In the next section, we will discuss the practice of untouchability and how it acted as a hindrance for

the untouchables in access to social, economic and political opportunities.

### 7.3.2 Untouchability in India

D.N. Mazumdar (1958) defined the untouchable castes as those who suffer from various social and political disabilities many of which are traditionally prescribed and socially enforced by higher castes.

The term 'untouchable' is used to denote the despised and degraded section of the Hindu population. They are the people who belong to the fifth group that lies outside the caste system. According to the traditional Hindu terminology, the caste Hindus are called 'Savarnas' and the untouchables are called the 'Avarnas'. Later, the untouchables termed themselves as Dalits.

#### **Stop and Read:**

In the ancient Hindu literature, the untouchables are referred to by such terms like the 'Antyaja', the 'Panchamas', the 'Chandala', etc. Gandhi called them 'Harijans' which means 'The children of God'.

Untouchability is a practice where the lower castes are exploited, discriminated, denied of equality and are made to live at a distance from the other upper castes as they are considered to be impure, polluting and defiling. Their touch and even their voice and presence were deemed to be polluting by the upper caste Hindus. Therefore, they had to clear the road whenever an upper caste Hindu approaches.

G.S. Ghurye (1969) noted innumerable instances of untouchability. For example, in the Maratha kingdom, a Mahar, one of the untouchables, was not allowed to spit on the road as a pure caste Hindu would get polluted by touching it with the foot. Thus, the lower castes had to wear an earthen pot hung around its neck to spit. Again, in Gujarat, the untouchables used

to wear a horn as their distinguishing mark. Thus, the practice of untouchability discriminated people on the grounds of being born into a particular caste. Therefore, it can be argued that untouchability had its roots in the caste system.

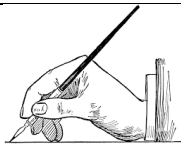
Untouchability created widespread inequality. The depressed castes were denied social, economic and political equality by the caste Hindus. They were debarred from entering the temples of the villages and all other public spaces because they might pollute the upper castes by their presence. Even the shadow of an untouchable was considered to be polluting. Added to this, they were not allowed to take up occupations other than the menial and odd jobs. The combination of these two inequalities led to political inequality as they did not have the required resources and power. The exclusion of the untouchables was justified on the basis that they are impure and harmful and their ostracism will lead to the overall benefit of the society.

B.R. Ambedkar extensively fought for the upliftment and rights of the untouchables. Since Ambedkar himself was born into a Dalit family, he could relate to the discrimination and exploitation of the Dalits by the upper castes. He argued that Hindu society was like a tower which had several storeys without a ladder or an entrance. Thus, one would die in the storeys in which one is born. With his support and intelligence, the Dalits began to fight for equality, upliftment and against injustice enforced by the upper caste Hindus. The movement of the Dalits can be categorized into stages. The first stage is marked by filing petitions and protests; the second stage involved open revolt in the form of direct action against the Hindu social order. The Dalits fought for entry into temples, using the same well or tube well as the other castes in a village, co-existence of all castes in the same neighbourhood etc.

With various struggles and efforts by Ambedkar and other Dalit leaders and organizations, they influenced the government that led to the

Constitution of India abolishing the practice of untouchability. Moreover, they were given reservations in the government educational institutions and jobs and in the political institutions as a step towards their upliftment.

### CHECK YOUR PROGRESS



1. Mention the features of the caste system.

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2. Who are the Untouchables?

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3. What are the different stages of the Dalit movement?

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### 7.4 CLASS AND SOCIAL STRATIFICATION

A class can be defined as a large-scale grouping of people who share common economic resources. This further influences their type of lifestyle. Classes can be differentiated from one another on the basis of ownership of wealth and occupation. This means that people belonging to different classes have different access to wealth and occupation. As a result, it leads to unequal distribution of resources with the upper class having most of the privileges that the middle or lower class do not have. A person's class determines other aspects of his/her life. For instance,

the kind of school s/he will attend, the treatment meted out to them by courts and police, the ability to access proper healthcare, political influence and power, etc. Thus, class stratifies a society, where the wealth and other privileges are concentrated in one group and the other groups are denied of it. This, in turn, leads to clashes and conflicts among the members from different classes.

#### **7.4.1 Agrarian Classes in India**

The agrarian class structure would be helpful not only in understanding the class stratification but also the power structure in Indian rural social structure. Rural India has mostly been studied through the lenses of caste stratification. Therefore, the class analysis of the Indian villages would present a different and better picture.

Daniel Thorner (1973) made a detailed study on the Indian villages and categorised the people of the villages into three classes. They were-

- **Proprietor or ‘malik’-** It refers to the families whose agricultural income is derived primarily from the property rights in the soil. This means that although the family might have other sources of income, the main agricultural income is derived from a share of the produce of lands that belongs to the family. This share will be realized in the form of rent. However, a proprietor may hire labourers to cultivate his lands instead of renting out. Usually, the proprietor enjoys the high type of property rights in the soil. However, within this class, there are two more subgroups. The first group consists of the large absentee landlords who have landholdings in more than one village. The second group consists of small proprietors who reside personally in the village in which they own land and exercises some degree of management and control over its cultivation.

**Stop and Read:**

The modern agrarian class structure in India evolved during the British colonial rule. It was the outcome of the land revenue system that was enforced by the British. The land revenue systems during the British rule were the Zamindari system and the Raiyatwari system.

- **Working Peasants or ‘kisans’**- They may be small owners or tenants, but they have a recognised property interest in the land. Mostly, their legal and customary rights are somewhat inferior to those of the ‘maliks’ in the same village. The amount of land held by a ‘kisan’ is such that it can support only a single family. They do not employ labour and do not commonly receive rent.
- **Labourers or ‘mazdur’**- This class consists of those villagers who earn their livelihood primarily by working on other people’s land. Families in this class may have tenancy rights in the soil and property rights but the holdings are so small that the income derived from cultivating them or renting them out is less than the earnings from fieldwork. They may receive their wages in money or in kind.

However, D.N. Dhanagare (1983) said that although the categories and subcategories postulated by Thorner are nearer to the realities of the Indian agrarian social structure, there is a need to readjust, regroup and re-designate his categories into a broader model by using concepts and criteria of the study of peasant societies.

For a better understanding of the stratification caused by class, the relationship between class and lifestyle needs to be examined. The same is discussed in the next section

#### **7.4.2 Class and Lifestyle**

Sociologists have mostly concentrated on the economic aspects while studying and analysing class stratification. However, sociologists like Pierre Bourdieu and others argued that instead of only focussing on the economic aspects in studying class stratification, the emphasis on cultural factors such as lifestyle, consumption patterns, etc. would be valuable. It may provide a deeper understanding of the patterns of class stratification.

Bourdieu (1986) identified four forms of capital that characterize class position. They are-

- **Economic capital-** It consists of the material goods such as wealth, land or property, income from employment and other sources etc. This capital can be easily passed through gifts or inheritance from parents to children.
- **Cultural capital-** It can take different forms. For example, it may include educational qualifications or a knowledge and understanding of creative arts such as music, drama, cinema, art, etc. Advertisers, marketers, fashion designers, therapists, interior designers and many others are all involved in influencing cultural tastes. They are also involved in promoting lifestyle choices among a large-scale community of consumers. Different classes distinguish themselves from one another through their differences in taste of food, dressing, cinema, etc. For example, higher classes mostly prefer food which is light or delicate.
- **Social capital-** Bourdieu (1992) defined it as the resources that an individual or groups gain by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual

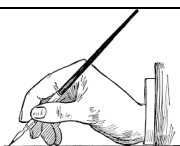
acquaintance and recognition. In simple words, it refers to the social connections of an individual or groups. This social connection can be used in getting jobs, admission to reputed educational institutions, etc.

- **Symbolic capital**- It includes the possession of a good reputation and honour. It is similar to the concept of social status.

Each type of capital is related to one another and the possession of one capital helps in acquiring others. For example, a businessman who has a large amount of money (economic capital) may not have great taste in the arts but can pay for his children's education in reputed institutions where these pursuits are encouraged. Thus, his children acquire cultural capital. Moreover, the businessman's money and status might lead him to make new contacts with influential people, thus he and his children gain social capital.

Therefore, classes can be distinguished on the basis of both the type and amount of capital possessed by them and their earlier generations. Thus, class position depends not only on the economic aspects.

### CHECK YOUR PROGRESS



1. What are the two subgroups of the 'proprietor' class?

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2. What are the different types of capital identified by Bourdieu?

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## **7.5 GENDER AND SOCIAL STRATIFICATION**

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There is a difference between sex and gender. Sex refers to the biological and physiological traits and characteristics of a person while gender refers to the roles that the society assigns based on one's sex. Therefore, gender is socially constructed.

Although the studies on gender stratification are quite broad covering aspects such as women subordination, inequality faced by transgenders and homosexuals, and each of them needs equal attention for upliftment; the present discussion will focus on the subordination and discrimination faced by women.

Men enjoy more wealth, status and influence in some aspects of social life or another, in almost all societies as compared to women. A society that is stratified along gender usually gives preferential treatment to the people belonging to the male gender. They are given preferences in all aspects such as economic, political, social, cultural, etc. which are denied to women or the third gender. This leads to gender inequality and discrimination in society.

The process of socialisation plays an important role in the continuity of stratification based on gender. This is because it is through socialisation that the girls and boys are taught the norms and values of the society. This reproduces the stratification pattern of the society based on gender. The origin of the gender stratification can be understood in terms of the understandings of gender differences. It is discussed in the next section.

### **7.5.1 Gender Differences**

It is widely believed that biological differences are responsible for the differences in both the behaviour of men and women and the roles that

they play in society. This can be further understood by examining the different views on gender differences. These are-

- **Hormones and the Brain-** It is believed that the differences in the behaviour and social roles of men and women are due to the hormones and brain differences. Since the various hormones are closely integrated with the activity of the nervous system, it is argued that hormones can influence behaviour, personality and emotional dispositions. Moreover, John Nicholson (1993) and many others argued that the left and right hemispheres of the brain specialise in different tasks and activities. He further argued that the left hemisphere is specialised in verbal and language skills while the right hemisphere specialises in the ability to locate objects in space. J.A. Gray and A.W.H Buffery (1971) related the different hemispheres to the different genders. They said that the left hemisphere is more dominant in girls after the age of 2 and the boys have greater abilities in the functions that the right hemisphere specialises in. However, Bob Connell (2002) argued that there is little evidence to prove that brain differences lead to differences in personality between males and females.
- **Socio-biology-** It is based on the Charles Darwin's theory of evolution. Moreover, they argue that it is not only the physical characteristics that evolve but also the behaviour. Their explanation of the differences in the behaviour of males and females is based on the claim that both of them employ different strategies to maximise their chances of passing on their genes. It is argued that the aggressiveness is advantageous to males since they produce millions of sperms during a lifetime and has an interest in impregnating as many women as possible. Whereas it is advantageous for females to be coy and shy because it helps them to identify the male with best possible genes.

- **Biology-** George Peter Murdock, an anthropologist, argued that biological differences between men and women were based on the sexual division of labour in society. He said that the greater physical strength of men and the biological feature of women of childbearing, lead to the gender roles. Moreover, it is also argued that women are confined to the home due to childbearing and because of their physique, women are restricted to less strenuous works.

Therefore, all the theories attempting to explain gender differences related the differences in the behaviour of women and men to biology. These views were criticised by many scholars and mostly by the feminists because these tend to justify the discrimination and subordination of women by arguing that it is natural. For example, making women believe that they are shy or delicate due to their biological attributes; thus restricting them from resorting to revolt or voice out. Such understanding of gender differences leads to gender discrimination. Thus, the feminists argue that gender differences are socially constructed.

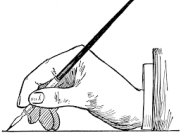
### **7.5.2 Gender Discrimination**

Gender discrimination refers to the unequal and unfair treatment of women and denying them opportunities that are open for men. It also involves a violation of the rights of women. Although the degree and intensity of gender discrimination have lessened at present times as compared to earlier times, it has not ended. Despite the various laws and court rulings against gender discrimination, women are still facing inequalities in all spheres of life all over the world. In many countries of the world, women are treated as second-class citizens. This means that they are not allowed to take up education, have no rights over property, are not considered worthy of better medical treatment; and although they might be having more talents and abilities than men, they are prohibited from utilising it.

Women are discriminated in all aspects of life. When it comes to education, a family tends to invest more in their son's education than their daughters. The reason behind such treatment is that since girls would be married off to a different household, spending on her education is of no value. However, in most families and societies, although the girls are educated, it is not for the benefit of the girls. It is seen as the mechanism to increase the chances of finding a better partner for the girls. Moreover, girls are seen as a burden for the family and thus they are married off as soon as possible. Women rarely report instances of wife-beating and domestic violence. Added to this, when it comes to decision-making in a family, usually, it is the males that decide and therefore has the power and dominance. When it comes to employment opportunities, men are mostly given preferences than women as they are considered to be more capable in spite of similar qualifications. Moreover, the notion that certain jobs are suitable for women than others is the proof of gender discrimination. In cases of sexual harassment and rape, the society mostly blames the women for her ordeal. Women are mostly considered to be inferior to men in all aspects.

Gender discrimination can result from various factors such as illiteracy, culture and tradition, and men not willing to give up their power and dominance, etc. Women are also partly responsible for their discrimination. This is because they do not take appropriate actions whenever something wrong is done to them. They seem to have accepted their discrimination as a norm of the society.

## CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

	<p>1. What is socio-biology?</p> <p>-----</p> <p>-----</p>
	<p>2. What is gender discrimination?</p> <p>-----</p> <p>-----</p>

### Intersectionality of class, caste and gender

According to Lesley McCall, intersectionality is the most important theoretical contribution that women's studies have made in relation with related fields. Apart from caste, class and gender being axes of stratification individually, their intersections are also responsible for social stratification and inequality in society. In most of the societies, all the three come together and stratify the society. For example, in Thorner's understanding of the class system in rural India, the upper class were mostly constituted by people from the upper caste; lower class were constituted by the lower castes and untouchables.

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### 7.6 SUMMING UP

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- The features of the caste system are a hierarchy, restrictions on marriage, civil and religious disabilities, hereditary occupations and segmental division of society.
- Class as a stratification system can be understood not only in economic terms but also in cultural terms.
- The different theories of gender differences cite biology as the basis for the difference of behaviour in males and females.

- Gender discrimination is still prevalent despite the constitutional laws against it.
- The intersections of caste, class and gender are also important in studying stratification

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## 7.7 QUESTIONS

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### Short Questions

1. How the caste system divides the society?
2. What is untouchability?
3. Explain the different views on gender differences.
4. Who are the untouchables?

### Essay type

1. Discuss the features of the caste system in details.
2. What are the agrarian classes in India? Elaborate.
3. How gender differences lead to gender discrimination?
4. Do you think the practice of Untouchability created inequalities? Discuss.
5. Explain the relationship between class and capitals.

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## **UNIT 8: AXES OF STRATIFICATION: TRIBE, RACE AND RELIGION**

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### **UNIT STRUCTURE**

- 8.1 Introduction
- 8.2 Objectives
- 8.3 Tribe and Social Stratification
  - 8.3.1 Nature of Tribal Social Stratification
  - 8.3.2 Tribe and Class
- 8.4 Race and Social Stratification
  - 8.4.1 Understanding Racism
  - 8.4.2 Racism in Modern Times
- 8.5 Religion and Social Stratification
  - 8.5.1 Religious Fundamentalism
  - 8.5.2 Religion and Feminism
- 8.6 Summing Up
- 8.7 Questions
- 8.8 Recommended Readings and References

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### **8.1 INTRODUCTION**

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Sociologists use the concept of social stratification to illustrate the inequalities that exist in a society. Mostly, social stratification is understood in terms of assets, property and prestige. But, it can also be based on other attributes such as race, tribe and religious affiliations. Individuals and groups have differential and unequal access to opportunities and rewards based on their tribal identity, racial identity and their religious affiliations, etc. Both inequality and stratification are social differences and are socially created. These are not natural differences between people. A social stratification is a particular form of social inequality.



The various layers of stratification do not imply unconditional or random differentiation. The differentiation is always based on a criterion or a set of criteria. Any discussion on social stratification includes a common theme that functions as a thread and links the differences together. Stratification, therefore, implies a common axis (or axes) that straddles the differences (Gupta, 1991). Thus, race, tribe, religion, region, language are examples of axes of social stratification.

Dipankar Gupta(1991) argues that not all systems of stratification are hierarchical. Some systems of stratification are based on differences. Examples of such a system can be seen in the case of language, religion or nationalities. In India, religions are not hierarchized or given unequal privileges by law; rather they exist separately and are aware of their differences.

The study of the axes of stratification will help to understand that there are different attributes on which a society is divided and each of these attributes determines the social position of an individual or group.

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## **8.2 OBJECTIVES**

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By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- Discuss and analyse tribe, race and religion as axes of social stratification;
- Understand social stratification in a tribal society with a special focus on class;
- Discuss racism and its presence in modern times;
- Analyse the relationship between religion and social stratification through the lens of religious fundamentalism and feminism.

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### 8.3 TRIBE AND SOCIAL STRATIFICATION

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Most of the classical studies on tribal society that were undertaken by historians and scholars all over the world had many misconceptions. These studies tend to interpret tribal societies as being egalitarian in nature, having a collective conscience and communal ownership of land. Differentiation and inequality were seen to be absent in tribal societies.

However, empirical studies conducted by scholars such K.L. Sharma (1974), R.K. Prasad (1975), Ghanshyam Shah (1976) and many others unfolded that tribes are not egalitarian and differentiation is indeed present in tribal societies. Differentiation and social ranking, in one way or another, have always existed in the tribal societies. For instance, differences based on age, sex, personal characteristics such as wisdom and bravery.

**Stop and Read:**

The position of tribal women in Jharkhand is better than the women of non-tribal communities. Though they do not possess any right to land, they can own movable property like money, goods and cattle etc.

In his study of the Trobriand Island (1922), Malinowski said that the principle for a man who owns a thing in primitive society is to share with others, to distribute it. The greater the ability to distribute, he says, the more is the power enjoyed by the man and the possession of more wealth. Moreover, tribal society was seen as being homogeneous. This is far from true as tribes are differentiated on the basis of many different criteria such as landholding, rural-urban background, occupation, income, political power and influence, education and so on. The same will be discussed in detail in the next section.

### 8.3.1 Nature of Tribal Social Stratification

K.L. Sharma (1974) argues that social stratification in a tribal society is different from that of advanced industrial societies. It is not unique as the bases of social stratification such as power, prestige, status and wealth are same everywhere. The difference lies in the application and functioning of these criteria in various tribal societies because of their different history, level of economic development, the impact of colonialism and exposure to forces of social transformation. For instance, the form of social stratification among tribes are different from stratification based on caste. In the caste stratification, the position of the group (jati) is examined and is ranked in relation to other groups in the caste system. Whereas, the position of the clan, families and individuals are considered in tribal social stratification and they are ranked in relation to others in the same tribal group. Thus, a tribal group does not relate with other tribal groups in a region in terms of a system. The social ranking is not applied across various autonomous tribal groups residing in different parts of a region.

Each tribal group functions through its own specific ways and therefore can be said to be a separate and an independent society in itself with its own specific cultural, political, social, economic, kinship and family systems. Moreover, the respective tribal group can be distinguished through its nature, custom, conduct, lifestyles and practices. For instance, the Indian Constitution defined all the tribal groups in the country as scheduled tribes. But, their singleness is only possible in theory because at the empirical level, each tribal community is a distinct social entity.

**Stop and Read:**

For several centuries, non-tribal Hindu and Muslim communities have been living in the midst of tribals. They perform certain essential services for the tribals and it was through these channels that the tribals were exposed to Hindu culture. They were also important in bringing new ideas, new customs and new concepts and acted as a model for the tribes.

The societies are also stratified based on tribe as an identity. For example, a person from a non-tribal society is accorded a higher status and rank than a person from a tribal community. This is because tribals are considered to be lower in the social hierarchy as compared to the people from non-tribal society.

Therefore, the nature and form of social stratification in tribal societies is very complex since each tribal community has its own distinct socio-economic, cultural and political systems different from other tribal communities. K.L. Sharma (1974) argued that some tribes adhere to 'tribalism' while some have rejected tribal pantheon and converted to Christianity and some others have taken up Hinduism by adopting Brahminic ideals and practices such as teetotalism, vegetarianism etc.

However, recent literature on various tribal communities suggests that the pattern of stratification in these communities have transformed over time. Several factors such as caste, class, status have surfaced that play a role in determining the pattern of social stratification in tribal society. Class as a factor of social stratification in tribal societies will be discussed in the next section.

### **8.3.2 Tribe and Class**

As discussed earlier, there have been many discussions and debates regarding the prevalence of social stratification in tribal societies. Similarly, there have been debates on the presence of class as the basis of stratification among tribals. In his study of the tribals of West Bengal and Bihar, K.S. Singh (1985) argued that tribal stratification developed due to colonial transformation because colonialism created a three-fold division of the society- Chiefs/Zamindars at the top, Headmen in the middle and the general masses at the bottom. Moreover, due to the anti-land alienation laws that restricted the transfer of land from tribals to non-

tribals, a class of professional tribal moneylenders emerged. A stratum of rich tribal buyers also grew.

Ghanshyam Shah (1986), in his study of schedule tribes, argued that each tribal group is segmented on the basis of interests. Moreover, tribal communities are divided into rich, middle and lower peasants on the basis of possession of land.

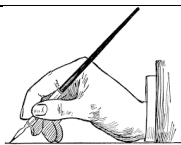
Furthermore, the tribal identity itself becomes a source of stratification and class allocation. There have been conflicts between the tribals and the non-tribals for centuries. Earlier the conflict was because of the exploitation and discrimination of tribals and their resources by the non-tribals. Now, the source of conflict is due to the development programmes initiated by the government towards the tribal communities. These government initiated programmes also generate conflicts among the tribals. Not all tribal communities are able to reap the benefits of the development programmes and those which did, were able to enhance their position in the social hierarchy. Moreover, not everyone in a tribal community availed the benefits. Only a few sections, such as the rich and the middle class obtained the advantages of the grants and assistance provided by the government. Those who obtained the advantages improved their economic, social and political position. Added to this, the non-tribals feel the advantages given to the tribals by the government, works as a barrier for them in getting jobs and seats in prestigious educational institutions. As a result, the tribals are able to improve their socio-economic position in comparison to the non-tribals. For example, the non-tribal high or middle castes in India dislike the fact that they have to share those jobs with the tribals, which they monopolized for years and years. Therefore, they tend to use resources at their disposal to create difficulties in the way of educated tribals.

Shah (1986) also says that the vocal sections of the tribals mobilize the poor tribals in the name of 'tribal development', 'tribal culture', 'injustice to tribals', etc. in order to sustain the competition with the non-tribals. They make demands and pressurize the government in the name of Adivasis, but in reality, their concern for an ordinary Adivasi is secondary and uses them to pursue the aims and goals of the vocal section of the tribals. This indicates the development of class in tribal society.

According to Sachchidananda (1990), tribal people can be classified into two classes- the upper class and the commoners. The upper class owned more land, monopolized leadership positions and therefore achieved higher status.

Thus, it is clear from the above discussion that class differentiation exists in the tribal society. Moreover, the emergence of elites among the tribals as a result of the government initiated programmes also contributed to the formation of the class in the tribal societies.

### CHECK YOUR PROGRESS



1. Is social stratification in tribal society unique?

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2. What were the misconceptions of most of the classical tribal society?

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3. What is the three-fold division of society according to K.S. Singh?

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## 8.4 RACE AND SOCIAL STRATIFICATION

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Since earlier times, distinctions were made between social groups on the basis of visible skin colour differences. Scientific theories of race developed in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and were used as a means to justify the then emerging social order as England and other European nations became imperial powers ruling over subject territories. For example, Queen Elizabeth I issued a proclamation which stated that ‘Negroes and blackamoors’ should be deported from England as they were considered ‘infidels’ and because they were contributing to social and economic problems such as poverty, famine, etc.

Count Joseph Arthur de Gobineau, also called the father of modern racism, classified race into three categories- White( Caucasian), Black (Negroid) and Yellow (Mongoloid). He argued that white race has superior intelligence, morality and willpower while the blacks have the least capability, animal nature, lack of morality and emotional instability. There is no denying that there are physical differences between human beings and some of them are inherited. But, the fact that some differences and not others are instrumental in matters of discrimination and prejudice has nothing to do with biology. For example, differences in skin colour is used as a basis of stratification whereas differences in hair colour are not. Thus, racial differences can be understood as physical differences which are singled out by the members of a community as socially significant.

**Stop and Read:**

Social scientists reject the biological basis of race. They argue that it is an ideological construct created by the society and is used to favour certain groups of people in comparison to others in terms of education, jobs, healthcare etc.

Racialization is a process through which understandings of race is used as a means to classify individuals or groups of people. Every aspect of individuals' daily lives such as personal relations, employment, healthcare, education, legal representation etc are shaped and controlled by their positions within that system and thus, giving rise to a stratified society. Racialization is grounded on two processes- Prejudice and Discrimination. Prejudice refers to the preconceived ideas and opinions that are held by members of one group towards another. For example, forming opinions about black people even before meeting them. Prejudices are based on stereotypes, which are rigid and inflexible characterisations of a person and are held to be true of the entire group to which the individual belongs. For example, tagging the entire black community as criminals just because a black person is convicted of a crime. Discrimination occurs when members of different groups are treated differently and are given unequal opportunities based on prejudice and stereotypes. For example, colleges denying admissions to black people but admitting whites. In the next section, we will deal with the concept of racism in depth.

**8.4.1 Understanding Racism**

Racism is a contested and controversial term. Robert Miles (1989, 1993) argued that initially racism was used to describe the claims of the nineteenth-century theories about the existence of distinct and biologically differentiated races. However, as this view was criticized by scientists, later on, the advocates of the view were termed as racists.



In simple words, racism is a form of extensive prejudice. It means those prejudices which are based on socially significant physical differences. A racist is a person who believes in the superiority or inferiority of some individuals as compared to others based on racialized differences. However, this idea of racial superiority was criticised by Richardson and Lambert (1985). They outlined three problems with the Doctrine of Racial Superiority:

- There is no clear connection between biological differences and cultural and behavioural differences.
- Society and culture are more influential in shaping human behaviour than biology. They argued that human beings are not rigidly bound by inbuilt instincts. The same race can be a part of a different culture in different regions.
- It is not possible to devise any objective criteria to measure the superiority or inferiority of human groups.

**Stop and Read:**

We cannot make clear-cut distinctions between races biologically. In biological terms, there are only a range of physical variations in human beings.

Therefore, there are certain concepts and ideas that the sociologists use in order to understand the phenomenon of racism. These are-

- **Ethnocentrism-** It is the tendency to evaluate the other's culture in terms of one's own culture. When it is combined with stereotypical thoughts, it leads to a stratified society. For example, outsiders being perceived as barbarians, morally or mentally inferior and thus leading to ethnic clashes.
- **Group Closure-** Ethnocentrism and group closure go hand in hand. The process by which groups separate themselves from one another and maintains a distance is called closure. The

distance is maintained through exclusion devices such as the prohibition of intermarriage between groups, restrictions on social contact and economic relationships, physical separation of groups, etc. Black Americans have faced all these exclusion devices.

- **Allocation of Resources-** The differential allocation of resources leads to inequalities in wealth, power, social status, etc. This means that a group enjoys more resources and power over another. This, when combined with group closure results in conflict and clashes between different groups. Since the resources are scarce, the privileged groups devise ways through which they can maintain their distinctive positions and can create difficulties for the underprivileged groups in availing the opportunities.
- **Scapegoating-** It is generally directed against distinct and powerless groups as they become easy targets. They are made the culprits for the happenings that they did not do. For example, in apartheid in South Africa, black males were perceived to be a sexual threat to the white women but in reality, most of the criminal sexual contact was made by white men against black women.

As compared to earlier times, it is assumed that racism does not prevail in the advanced industrial societies of the twenty-first century. However, this is not true. Racism is still significant. We will discuss this in the next section.

#### **8.4.2 Racism at Present Times**

The Coca-Cola company recently garnered attention when some of their African American and Latino employees filed a suit of racial discrimination in 2012 against the company. Added to this, there are innumerable instances of racial discrimination that came to light in

present times. Thus, the question remains that whether the societies have made progress in achieving racial equality. A number of examples are often cited to prove that racism has taken a backseat in present times. Among them is the election of a black President in America, ending legalized segregation in the USA, the collapse of Apartheid in South Africa, the representation of the previously disadvantaged racial groups in politics and international organisations and so on. However, social scientists point out that these do not imply that racism has disappeared from modern times.

Rather, racism got manifested in different forms such as new racism or cultural racism. Cultural racism excludes groups on the basis of cultural differences. The hierarchies of superiority and inferiority are determined by the values and ideas of the culture of the dominant group. Moreover, the groups that deny getting assimilated with the dominant group are marginalised. For example, the efforts of the American politicians to pass a bill where English would be the only official language.

**Stop and Read:**

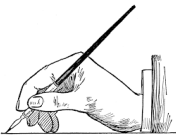
A recent report by the European Union Fundamental Rights Agency on racism and xenophobia (EUFRA 2007) listed innumerable instances of continuing discrimination in European societies such as poor housing conditions for ethnic minority, rising levels of racist violence etc.

Moreover, another factor that signifies the persistence of racism is the large-scale migration of ethnic minorities to the areas that were earlier dominated by white population such as Europe and North America. The native population tend to think that their jobs are taken away by the immigrants and claim the welfare that the native people are entitled to. Therefore, the immigrants are subjected to different racial discrimination such as racist verbal abuse, racially motivated attacks on property.

Reports on racial discrimination faced by the Indian students in Australia are examples of the persistence of racism in modern societies.

Thus, it can be said that racism is present in modern and industrialised societies. This is partly due to the fact that there are lots to be done in the policies of inclusion.

### CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

	<p>1. Define racialization.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>-----</p>
	<p>2. Mention the concepts used by sociologists to understand racism.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>-----</p> <p>-----</p>

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## 8.5 RELIGION AND SOCIAL STRATIFICATION

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In order to understand how religion functions as a factor of stratification, it is important to understand the concept of religion sociologically. Thus, a sociological study of religion involves four important points-

- Sociologists do not study religion as being commanded by God, rather they see it as a socially constructed by human beings.
- Sociologists are interested in the social organisation of religion and the functioning of different religious institutions and organisations. For example, in earlier times, religion was indistinguishable from the wider society as religion played an

important role in the daily lives of people. However, in modern societies, the influence of religion in the daily lives of people has declined and therefore the sociologists focus on the organisations through which religion functions to survive.

- Sociologists argue that since believers of a particular religion adhere to a common set of norms and values; it is a major source of social solidarity. However, if the members of a society adhere to different competing religions, it may lead to social conflicts due to religious differences.
- Sociologists explain religion not in terms of personal, spiritual or psychological factors but in terms of social forces. However, they do not question the religious beliefs of people that are based on personal experience. But they tend to look for earthly explanations and understandings.

Stratification based on religion exists when the members of some religious groups have more access to privilege, power, status, prestige and other resources compared to the members of other religious groups. Smith and Faris (2005) identified four conditions that are important for the development of religious stratification. They are-

- **Religious pluralism-** The presence and practice of many different religions in a society.
- **Religious prejudice-** Thinking one's own religion as the superior one compared to others and having goals that are mutually exclusive will lead to religious stratification.
- **Competition-** Competing with members of different religions for scarce resources.
- **Differential power-** The difference in power that is available to members of different religions is an important source of stratification since it can mould the way the society would function. For example, powerful religious organisations may try

to impose their worldview, customs, norms etc on other religious groups and when it gets ingrained, religious stratification occurs.

In the next section, we will discuss religious fundamentalism as a way of understanding religious social stratification.

### **8.5.1 Religious Fundamentalism**

According to Marx, Weber and Durkheim, a process of secularization would definitely occur in modern societies and science and technology would be used to explain the social world. This means that religion would lose its significance and influence as the societies modernize. However, this is not the case. There are numerous examples to prove that religious influence has not declined; rather it is thriving and reviving. Religious fundamentalism calls for an approach of interpretation of scriptures and texts by religious groups. They also believe that the doctrines emerging from such interpretations should be applied to social, political and economic life. Moreover, they believe that only one view of the world is possible and that their own view is the only correct one. Thus, there is no scope for multiple interpretations. This means that the fundamentalists consider their own religion to be the superior one and does not acknowledge other religions. This gives rise to stratification. Moreover, when the religious fundamentalists are in the position of power or have the backing of major political parties, they try to impose their norms, beliefs etc on the other religious groups; or give advantages to the people of their own religion in terms of jobs, education, healthcare and so on. This creates inequality and conflicts between different religious groupings. For example, a Hindu fundamentalist in power would try to give advantages to the Hindu community.

#### **Stop and Read:**

Islamic fundamentalism was subjected to more attention after the al-Qaeda's 9/11 attacks in USA in 2001. Thereafter, people

belonging to Islamic religion faced innumerable discrimination and tortures and are always seen with suspicion.

The religious fundamentalists use various means to assert their beliefs. For example, Christian fundamentalists used television for spreading their doctrines; Hindu fundamentalists used internet and e-mail to promote Hindu identity. Although fundamentalism has been often linked with terrorism and violence, it is not always the case.

### **8.5.2 Religion and Feminism**

Feminist theories of religion agree with Marxian theories and argue that religion can be an instrument of domination, oppression and stratification. However, they divert themselves from Marxism when they see religion to be the product of patriarchy rather than capitalism. Karen Armstrong (1993) argues that not one major religion has been good to women and that religion has mostly become affairs of males and women are subjected to a marginal position. `

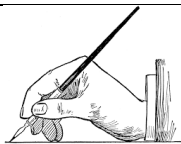
Fang-Long Shih (2010) identified two major feminist perspectives on religion- radical feminist perspective and liberal feminist perspective. Simone de Beauvoir (1949), a radical feminist, argues that men are the oppressors and use religion to control and restrict women which is the oppressed group. Moreover, she says that mostly, it is the men who exercise control and authority over religious beliefs. She cites the example of a man being the master by divine right and the fear of God to be the reason behind repression of revolt by the females among the Jews, Christians and Mohammedans.

However, de Beauvoir argues that the role and function of religion in modern societies is different as religion works more as an instrument of deception than constraint. This means that women are misled by religion

into thinking that they are equal to men in spite of the visible inequality. Moreover, religion gives women the false hope and belief that their sufferings on earth will be compensated by equality in heaven. Thus, religion helps to maintain a social order of stratification where women are unequal and marginalised.

Jean Holm (1994) identified the ways of women's subordination, exploitation and devaluation by different religious beliefs. She argues that although women play a role in many religions, it is in the realm of the private sphere and is always subordinate to the role of men. She supports her arguments by citing numerous examples such as, in Japanese folk religions, while women are given the responsibility to organise rituals, it is the men who can take part in the public performances. Similarly, in Buddhism, although both men and women can have a religious role as monks and nuns respectively, the monks are considered to be the senior of all the nuns. This second-class status of women is in correspondence with the female sexuality. Holm (1994) argues that in many traditions, women are not allowed to enter sacred places or touch sacred objects during menstruation or pregnancy. For example, when Hindu women are menstruating or are pregnant, they are prohibited from touching the family shrines; Muslim women are not allowed to go to the mosque or pray or touch the Qur'an during menstruation.

### CHECK YOUR PROGRESS



1. What is religious fundamentalism?

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2. What are the conditions for the development of religious stratification?



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## 8.6 SUMMING UP

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- There are different axes of social stratification such as tribe, race and religion. Each has its own way of functioning in stratification systems.
- It was assumed that social stratification does not prevail in tribal societies, but it turned out to be false.
- Formation of the class is seen among various tribal societies.
- Racism is a phenomenon that is socially constructed by marking out certain physical characteristics.
- Religious fundamentalism leads to conflict and tensions among different religious groupings.
- Feminist theories of religion give an account of how religion is used as a means by men to discriminate women.

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## 8.7 QUESTIONS

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### Short Questions

1. Explain the nature of tribal social stratification.
2. Define racialization.
3. Outline the problems with the Doctrine of Racial Superiority suggested by Richardson and Lambert.
4. Explain how sociologists study religion.

### Essay type

1. Is social stratification absent in tribal societies? Discuss.
2. Do you think racism is prevalent in modern times? Elaborate.

3. Explain the feminist perspective on religion with relevant examples.
4. Discuss how religious fundamentalism leads to stratification in society.

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## **UNIT 9: AXES OF STRATIFICATION: LANGUAGE AND REGION**

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### **UNIT STRUCTURE**

- 9.1 Introduction
- 9.2 Objectives
- 9.3 Language, Region and Society
  - 9.3.1 Importance of Language
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- 9.4 Language and Social Stratification
  - 9.4.1 Language Movements
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- 9.5 Region and Social Stratification
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  - 9.5.2 Regionalism
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### **9.1 INTRODUCTION**

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Social stratification is a phenomenon that has its bases on numerous factors such as caste, class, tribe, religion, race, etc. Added to these, social stratification is also based on language and region. This means that a society gets divided and forms a social hierarchy on the basis of languages spoken by different groups, and the region an individual or group belongs to. Stratification based on language is mostly because of the co-existence of different languages in an area or nation and giving preference to speakers of the certain language as compared to others. Regional stratification exists due to conflicts between regions on scarce resources such as river, land, forests, etc. ; biased treatment of different

regions by the government in terms of allocation of resources and representation of the problems and issues of different regions.

People's sense of identity is derived from a number of factors ranging from ethnicity, race, occupation, community, shared norms and beliefs, religious views, nationality, region, language and so on. They have a sense of belongingness to each of these markers of their identity. Thus, when there is a perceived threat to any of the identity markers, people fight for its protection and preservation. Moreover, assigning ranks to these identity markers in a hierarchy stimulates conflicts and tensions between groups in society. Therefore, there are histories of linguistic movements, ethnic conflicts, religious conflicts, regionalism, etc. in the society.

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## **9.2 OBJECTIVES**

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By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- Explain the significance of language and region in a society;
- Discuss and analyse language as an axis of social stratification with a special reference to linguistic movements and class;
- Discuss and analyse region as an axis of social stratification with a special focus on regionalism;
- Analyse the relationship between regional inequalities and regionalism.

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## **9.3 LANGUAGE, REGION AND SOCIETY**

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People are emotionally attached to their language and region. These are also the attributes that make one social group different from another. Moreover, each group of speakers of different languages try to prove that their language evokes national identity and is the standard language. For example, in India, speakers of Hindi language tend to see it as the marker of national identity and those who do not speak Hindi are considered to be outsiders by them. Sometimes, they are also supported by political

groups. Such an attempt by the groups stratifies the society. Moreover, the linguistic minorities sometimes feel that their language is less important since it is not used as a medium of instruction in educational institutions or in government offices. Added to these, the prejudice that people have of other's language worsens the relationship between different groups.

When a society develops a social hierarchy based on the regions that an individual or group belongs to, it leads to the unequal development of regions and differential allocation of resources results in inequalities among different regions. Due to this, people of some regions enjoy a better standard of living as compared to others. Stratification based on regions may mean two things- regions within a nation and different regions of the world such as Europe, Asia, Africa, etc.

Whenever a particular language or a region is given preference over another, it leads to clashes and conflicts between the different groups.

**Stop and Read:**

Malinowski argued that language is "the necessary means of communion; it is the one indispensable instrument for creating the ties of the moment without which unified social action is impossible." (Quoted in Diamond, 1959)

### **9.3.1 Importance of Language**

Languages play a crucial role in human lives. This is evident in the fact that ideas are formed, stored and exchanged through the use of language. It also acts as a medium through which misunderstandings are lessened as it is a mode of communication between people. Moreover, language is a medium through which people express, communicate and convey ideas. However, these could also be done through signs and gestures. For instance, shaking the head to convey the word 'yes' or 'no'. But,

language is different from signs and gestures as it uses sound and this gives meaning to the conversation between the users and the hearers.

Moreover, language is the key in forming and maintaining human relationships. Since conversation between people is made possible and meaningful through language, it enables them to express their emotions, feelings, desires, etc. It also helps in gaining information about the speaker.

The social structure has an important role in influencing the linguistic structure. For instance, the use of language by children among themselves is different from the language they use while conversing with adults. Added to this, the varieties of language which are spoken by people reflect their ethnicity, gender and regional and social origins. Moreover, the society determines definite ways of speaking and choice of words. Almost in every language, there are certain words which are considered as taboo by the society. Taboo words are the words which are not allowed to be used or spoken and if the rules regarding the usage of taboo words are not followed, it can result in punishments.

Languages are also influential in group identification and group solidarity. It transfers the culture, values and norms from one generation to another.

Thus, David Crystal argued, "Language is the repository of the history of a people. It is their identity. Oral testimony, in the form of sagas, folktales, songs, rituals, proverbs, and many other practices, provides us with a unique view of our world and a unique canon of literature." (Crystal, 2003).

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### **9.3.2 Significance of Region**

The regions of the world are contributors to the global economy while those within a nation are important contributors to the economy and development of the nation. Moreover, a nation becomes harmonious by bridging the gaps between the regions. When the resources such as power, wealth, honour, status, etc. are unequally distributed between different regions, the social solidarity is at stake and lessens the possibility of agreement over important issues such as uses of public funds and natural resources. Added to these, when people belonging to different regions have unequal opportunities in terms of purchasing basic life chances such as education, health, jobs, etc., it will lead to aggressive and violent conflicts between the regions. Moreover, the absence of equal opportunities leading to low income and honour will give rise to high rates of crime, physical and mental illness etc. If necessary actions are not taken by competent authorities to reduce regional inequalities, it would continue generations after generations and would harden the divisions between the regions. As a result, the unity and the law and order situation will get compromised. For example, unequal attention paid to different regions of India by the government led to the rise of regionalism and some states demanding autonomy from the Indian nation. It included violent struggles.

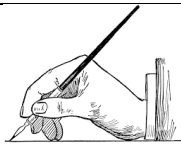
At the international level, countries of different regions are ranked on the basis of economic and political power. They are divided into three categories-

- The First World countries-They are considered as the developed nations;
- The Second World countries-They are considered as the developing nations and
- The Third World countries-They are considered as the underdeveloped nations.

When such divisions are made, people from one region tend to think themselves to be apart and different from the other regions. Moreover, people of the upper strata prejudices people from the other strata. This creates difficulties in maintaining international relations.

Thus, the significance of regions is enormous.

### CHECK YOUR PROGRESS



1. Fill up the blank:

Ideas are formed, stored and exchanged through the\_\_\_

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2. What are the two meanings of stratification based on region?

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3. How social structure influences the linguistic structure?

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## 9.4 LANGUAGE AND SOCIAL STRATIFICATION

As we have discussed earlier, language is an axis of social stratification because it is an identity marker for individuals and groups and any threat to the language is seen as a threat to one's identity. Stratification based on language is more prevalent in multilingual countries as speakers of different languages co-exist. Speakers of each language treat their own language with honour and prestige. Therefore, when the wider society



ranks them into a scale of superiority and inferiority, it creates conflicts and tensions between the speakers of different languages.

Moreover, members of different linguistic communities try to make their own language as the superior one as it would give them superior status in the society. As a result, they would be able to acquire privileges and better opportunities.

**Stop and Read:**

The power of language is such that it can be used to mobilize large groups of people for political action. It is evident in the India's nationalist struggle. Since the majority of the population did not know English, the English newspapers could not spread the news and ideologies of the freedom movement. It was through the

When a language is spoken by a majority of the population in the nation, the speakers of that language tends to equate their language with national identity. This creates a threat to other linguistic minorities and they find for ways to protect and preserve their language. The language movements in different parts of India and the world are examples. It will be discussed in details in the next section.

#### **9.4.1 Language Movements**

Language movements refer to the organised efforts and actions by a linguistic community to assert their linguistics identity. It can also result to establish one's own language at par with other languages in the social structure. For example, since Hindi (along with English) is the official language of India, the speakers of non-Hindi languages feel that more prestige and honour is conferred to Hindi speakers. As a result, they try to establish their own language at par with the Hindi language. Language movements develop as a result of the domination by a linguistic group over another and the government's attitude towards it.

When certain languages in a nation are given formal recognition and some are not, the speakers of the unrecognised languages feel oppressed. Moreover, recognising a language (or languages) as the official language of a nation over others creates tensions between speakers of the official language and the linguistic minorities. Thus, language movements also arise due to the formulation and implementation of the official language policy.

When one language is considered to be important than others and its speakers are given influential and powerful roles by the government in a multilingual country, it signals the outbreak of a language movement.

Some of the examples of socio-political movements by various linguistic communities across the world are-

- **Scotland-** There are two major languages that are spoken in Scotland- Scottish Gaelic and Scots. Scottish Gaelic is considered to be closely related to Irish and is spoken in a few areas. Scots is spoken by a majority of the population and based on this criterion, its speakers have asked for its state promotion.
- **Bangladesh-** After the partition of India and Pakistan, Urdu was adopted as the national language of Pakistan. Bengali was excluded despite the fact that it was the native language of the majority of the population in East Pakistan. This created discontent among the Bengalis and they presented a proposal in the Constituent Assembly to authorise Bengali as an official language, but the proposal was dismissed. This led to protests and agitations that were crushed down by military leading to the death of many protesters. However, in 1954, the Constituent Assembly agreed to adopt Bengali as an official language but it was nullified by the military regime in 1956. Thus, it led to a desire for autonomy and finally ended in the Bangladesh Liberation War in 1971.

**Stop and Read:**

Although different communities across the world are successful in asserting their linguistic identity or achieving statehood based on one's language, there are still various other groups residing in their own homelands such as the tribal communities, who are denied the right to nurture and promote their languages.

- **Sri Lanka-** The unification of the Tamil dominated North and East regions with the Sinhala dominated rest of the island of Sri Lanka during the British rule had monumental outcomes. After a few years, Sinhalese replaced English as the only official language, excluding Tamil. Even after independence, the linguistic, cultural, institutional and economic discrimination against the Tamil minority continued. This made the Tamil minority poor, unemployed and caused dissatisfaction with the regime and riots. Thus, it led to a civil war between the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and the Sri Lankan government. However, offences against the LTTE helped the Sri Lankan government in establishing victory over them in 2009. But, since then the government has followed a federal solution and devolution of powers to regional authorities.
- **India-** The reorganisation of the states on the basis of language, after independence, encouraged different communities to assert their linguistic identities. There are numerous examples of language movements in India and it is not possible to discuss all of them. One of such movement was the demand for a new state by the Telugu communities in the Madras Province. It led to the formation of the state of Andhra Pradesh in 1953. Moreover, at the national level, the attempt to introduce Hindi as the national language was met with massive protests by non-Hindi speaking

areas of India and thus prevented the attempt. In Bihar, there were movements for Bhojpuri and Awadhi speaking areas. Assamese was declared as the state language of Assam by the Assam state. This was resisted by all the tribal groups of the state as well as the Bengali speaking minority people of Assam.

Therefore, it is clear from the above discussion that any perceived threat to a group's linguistic identity does not go well with that group. They mobilize themselves and find ways to keep their languages alive.

#### **9.4.2 Language and Class**

All individuals learn their native language from the parents and the family and it becomes a part of their social, personal and cultural identity. A function of language is that it teaches individuals to speak in a socially desirable and accepted manner. But, this notion and understanding of social desirability vary from society to society such as variations among classes. People belonging to different classes are not only different in terms of wealth, status, power and educational qualifications but also in their ways of speaking and linguistic features. For instance, the way the Royal Families in England speak is different from the way of speaking of the general masses. Therefore, whenever a person encounters someone from the royal family in a different social setting, their style of speaking would make it evident that they belong to an upper class.

In every language, there is a standard form and a non-standard form. The standard form is considered to be the original variety of the language while the non-standard form is considered less prestigious, usually spoken in informal settings and is generally not accepted and used by the educated native speakers of the language. Moreover, since the standard form is considered prestigious, it is widely spoken by the people belonging to the upper class. But, there are few, who belong to the lower classes but prefer learning and speaking the standard form of the language, as they aspire to be like the upper classes.

**Stop and Read:**

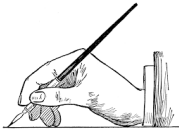
Although ethnic groups view language as an important marker of their identity, some groups learn the dominant language of the region and give up their own; or they combine the both. They tend to learn the dominant language

On one hand, there are some groups of people who give up their regional accents of the language as they are ashamed of it; on the other hand, there are groups who hold on to it as they think it to be important for preserving and protecting their regional identities. Those who give up their regional accents, begin to speak the standard language so that they are accepted in the upper-class societies.

Mostly, people belonging to the middle class consciously use the standard language in formal settings because the standard language speakers get the benefits such as prestigious and well-paid jobs. Therefore, people change the way they speak in order to move up in the social ladder.

Thus, people are taught to speak in particular ways in particular social settings through socialisation. But, this does not mean that they cannot be innovative in their use of language in relation to their class.

## CHECK YOUR PROGRESS



1. What are language movements?

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2. Mention few examples of language movements?

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### 9.5 REGION AND SOCIAL STRATIFICATION

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A region is not just a territory for the people where they live. People think of regions as more of a social and cultural category. It is also one of the identity markers of individuals and groups. Therefore, it can be argued that people are emotionally attached to their region as they are to their nations.

People from one region have prejudice and stereotypes for the people of other regions. Moreover, by acting on such prejudices and stereotypes, people tend to discriminate and humiliate each other. Added to these, when a particular region is given undue importance over others in terms of resource allocation, policy formation and decision-making, it leads to clashes between people of different regions. Thus, the society gets stratified into different layers.

Furthermore, if the ethnic, racial and social groups which were historically disadvantaged and exploited, gets concentrated in one region, their situation worsens. Moreover, if the government does not

take appropriate measures, it gets converted into regional inequalities; which further leads to conflicts between regions. For example, the tribal groups, mostly the 'Adivasis' in India were historically exploited and are now concentrated in poor regions.

Stratification based on a region within a nation threatens the unity and integrity of the nation. At the global level, it may lead to clashes between regions of the world and hamper cooperation in international relations.

### **9.5.1 Regions and Inequality**

There are economic and social inequalities across regions within a nation and between different regions in the world. The economic inequalities include differences in income, wealth, consumption etc. according to which regions are ranked in a hierarchy. This further determines the positions of individuals in the social hierarchy. For example, when a region would have income and wealth inequalities as compared to other regions, it would be ranked lower in the hierarchy and as a result, the positions of people of that region would be lower in a hierarchy.

The economic inequalities take the form of social inequality when they are justified on the grounds of social structure. For instance, in India, the caste system determined the occupation of the people. Therefore, people belonging to lower castes and tribes could rarely have a job of high prestige. And when such castes and tribes were concentrated in one region, the entire region was deprived of the opportunities that the other regions were entitled to.

Moreover, inequalities in opportunities are also prevalent across regions. The geographical location determines the opportunities that are available to the people. In some areas, people have better education facilities, better quality job markets, etc. as compared to other areas. For example, the people residing in the capital city of India, New Delhi would have

better opportunities in terms of education, health, jobs, etc. as compared to other regions such as the north-eastern states of India.

Due to historical reasons and the efforts by the government after independence, the states of Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai and Kolkata are more developed in comparison to other regions of India. This regional inequality contributes to the emergence of conflicts and clashes between the people of different regions.

Inequalities not only exist across regions within a nation but also between different nations. At the international level, developed countries have high-income levels and better opportunities than the developing and underdeveloped countries. Moreover, the levels of social and economic inequalities are lesser in the developed nations. When the developing nations try to improve their living standards, they face the problem of concentration of wealth among a few groups, lack of quality education and healthcare, etc.

Thus, policies should be formulated to address the problem of regional disparities and inequalities and to increase uniform development across regions. When such an attempt is not made, it leads to the tendencies of regionalism.

### **9.5.2 Regionalism**

Regionalism refers to the process whereby people belonging to different regions have a strong sense of loyalty to their own regions and they try to influence the decisions of the government in terms of allocation of resources, development, etc. Regionalism also entails anti-feeling of other regions. It is a phenomenon that takes the form of active and well-organised agitations and campaigns. Therefore, it is not merely a territorial unit but a combination of socio-economic and political factors.



As we have discussed earlier, regionalism can be both within regions in a country or between different regions of the world. We will discuss in details regionalism in the international arena and regionalism in India below.

**Regionalism in the International arena:** At the international level, regionalism has given strength and recognition to the regions that were earlier neglected such as Africa, South Asia, South East Asia, etc. These regions are coming together and are forming different organisations for regional security and development. Examples of such organisations are SAARC, BRICS, ASEAN and so on. Such organisations help its member nations in regard to social development, economic needs, technological needs, etc. As a result, the dependency of these regions on the World Bank and IMF for developmental projects has lessened due to the formation of the regional bodies. However, there are negative outcomes too. If a member nation is guilty of an offence such as the use of more chemicals that harms the environment; all the member countries are held responsible and answerable.

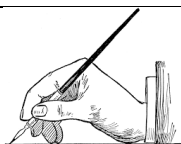
**Regionalism in India:** The tendencies of regionalism in India grew due to the combination of different factors. These are–

- Uneven economic and social development- After independence, India could not maintain a balanced economic growth of all the regions. Political leaders started to concentrate on the development of their own regions rather than the development of the country as a whole.
- Neglected in developmental projects- Added to the first one, there was increased awareness among the people of backward regions that they were being neglected in the developmental projects undertaken by the government such as building dams, roads, bridges and in the allocation of funds from the Centre for development in their regions.

- The third factor was the selfish and personal interests of the politicians rather than working for the general masses.
- The reorganisation of the country on the basis of language further strengthened the tendency of regionalism.

Regionalism in India has taken different forms. The first is the demand for separation from the Indian Union. For example, some regions in the northeast are demanding for separate states from the Indian Union on the basis that they want to preserve their own distinct cultures. Another reason for the demand is that they feel that the Indian government is giving them step-motherly treatment. Secondly, some regions have been demanding separate states but within the Indian Union, so that they can develop their own culture and will not be assimilated into the dominant culture of the region. For example, the formation of the states of Uttaranchal and Jharkhand. Yet another form of regionalism can be seen in the inter-state disputes over scarce natural resources. For example, dispute between Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh over sharing of river water.

### CHECK YOUR PROGRESS



1. When does economic inequality take the form of social inequality?

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2. Define regionalism.

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## 9.6 SUMMING UP

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- Since language and region are markers of the identity of people, social stratification on such basis is met with conflicts and tensions.
- Different groups have resorted to movements in order to preserve the dignity and prestige of their own languages.
- The style of speaking a particular language differs according to the class a person belongs to.
- There are regional inequalities in terms of income, wealth, power, opportunities, etc.
- When the regional inequalities get heightened, it paves the way for regionalism.
- Regionalism can be across regions within a nation and also between different regions of the world.

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## 9.7 QUESTIONS

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### Short Questions

1. Explain the importance of language.
2. What is the significance of regions?
3. Define language movements.
4. What is meant by regionalism in the international arena?

### Essay type

1. Discuss the relationship between language and class.
2. Discuss language movements with relevant examples.
3. Do you think regional inequalities lead to regionalism? Elaborate.
4. Explain the characteristics of regionalism in India.

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## 9.8 RECOMMENDED READINGS AND REFERENCES

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## **MODULE IV: CONTEMPORARY DEBATE IN STRATIFICATION**

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## **UNIT 10: CONTEMPORARY DEBATE IN STRATIFICATION: DEVIANCE**

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### **UNIT STRUCTURE**

10.1 Introduction

10.2 Objectives

10.3 Theories on Deviance

10.3.1 Functionalism and Deviance

10.3.2 Conflict Theory and Deviance

10.3.3 Symbolic Interactionism and Deviance

10.4 Social Stratification and Deviance in Contemporary Society

10.4.1 Deviance and Marginality

10.4.2 Deviance and Mobility

10.5 Summing Up

10.6 Questions

10.7 Recommended Readings and References

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### **10.1 INTRODUCTION**

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Deviance is behaviour that has been explained through different disciplines, such as sociology, psychology, criminology and also neurobiology. Each discipline has a different definition of deviance. However, in sociology, we focus on the study of the social factors of deviance and its social consequences. In sociology, deviance is termed as a behaviour that is contrary to or departs from the societal norms of a given society. Every society has its own accepted way of life. When a person does not follow these accepted patterns of behaviour, s/he is termed as a deviant. Not only individuals but certain groups of people in a society can also show deviation from the accepted norms. The causes of this deviation may be internal to the group or because of external

factors. They may be intentional or may be caused by factors that are not under the control of the individual or group.

**Stop and read:**

Social norms: Norms are commonly defined by reference to expected or desirable conduct. MacIver emphasizes control of the conduct of group members; while Linton emphasizes norms as guidance for training. Again, Hiller considers norms as Guidance for training.

The issue of deviance is related to yet another social phenomenon, i.e. social control. Deviance in society can lead to different kinds of social problems, particularly pertaining to the maintenance of law and order in society. Therefore, social control is a measure to ensure there are no social problems and disequilibrium in the society. Social control, therefore, promotes conformity to norms among members of the society.

There are different means of enforcing social control. For example, if an individual is socialised in a manner that s/he is taught to maintain self-control and adhere to the norms of the society or reform her/his deviant behaviour then it is termed as a form of internal social control. However, the most visible form of social control is external social control. External social control refers to the employment of social sanctions through agencies that are external to the individual, for example, the legal institution and agencies of a society. This form of social control of deviance is achieved through a system of punishments and rewards.

Punishments are given to deviants or the people who do not conform to the accepted social behaviour. On the other hand, rewards are bestowed upon people who conform to the norms and further participate in controlling social deviance. This system of rewards and punishments also has an impact on the social status of a person or group. Those who conform to social norms are given higher status and those who deviate

from norms are given lower status. Hence, deviance and conformity to social norms is an important basis on which people of a society can be stratified.

**Stop and read:**

**Social status:** social status means the position that a person occupies in the social structure, such as a teacher or priest. It is often combined with the notion of social role to produce the idea of status role. (Marshall, 1998)

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## **10.2 OBJECTIVES**

From the above introduction, we have come to know that social deviance and social stratification are interrelated. Let us further understanding how social stratification is done based on the different factors and types of social deviance as well as their consequences. By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- Explain the different theories on social deviance and its relation to social stratification;
- Analyse the relationship of social stratification to that of causes, types and factors of deviance;
- Discuss the critical approaches on social stratification and deviance in relation to stratification in contemporary society;
- Discuss the different kinds of deviance that are considered as bases of social stratification in contemporary societies.

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## **10.3 THEORIES ON DEVIANCE**

In order to understand how deviance is considered as a basis of social categorisation and stratification, we have to familiarise ourselves with the existing theories on deviance. These theoretical approaches include



functionalism, conflict theory and symbolic interactionalism. These theoretical approaches are again multidimensional. Let us now understand each theory on deviance in relation to its significance in determining social inequality and social stratification.

### **10.3.1 Functionalism and Deviance**

The basic premise of functionalism is that all aspects of a given society perform certain functions for the maintenance of that society (Jackson, 1968). Therefore, social norms, codes of conduct, laws are functional for the society. Deviation from these norms leads to dysfunctions, social disorder and social problems. However, different functionalists have discussed different functions of deviance. (Traub & Little, 1999) Deviance may negatively impact the society when it becomes the cause of loss of trust and normlessness or anomie in society. On the other hand, deviance may have a positive consequence for the society when it becomes instrumental in clarification of norms and social change after the period of temporary normlessness (Ziyanak & Williams, 2014).

In situations where the deviants are responsible for creating a situation of normlessness, they may be treated unequally in a society. They are given a lower status than that of the people who conform to the norms of the society. Thus, people who commit different crimes may have to suffer from different types of formal and informal types of punishments and thus may be given a lower status in society.

#### **Stop and Read:**

**Anomie** - A social situation in which social norms are weak, conflicting or absent is called anomie.

A variation of the functionalist theory on deviance is strain theory. This theory has been applied to the analysis of social inequality and stratification. Strain theory suggests that deviance occurs when people

do not have the ability to achieve socially accepted goals (Ziyanak & Williams, 2014). For example, when a person does not have money to avail material things that are viewed as necessary to be counted as a member of a particular class, that person may resort to illegal means of achieving these things. Thus, the person becomes deviant.

Hence, the functionalist perspective is one of the approaches to investigate the relationship between social stratification and social deviance.

### **10.3.2 Conflict Theory and Deviance**

Another theory of Deviance that is used to explain the relationship between social stratification and deviance is the conflict theory. Conflict perspective looks at deviance in terms of social inequality and power. The basic premise of this theory is that most powerful members of a society decide on and formulate the norms of the society. Therefore, whether a person or group is deviant is also decided by the most powerful of the society. Thus, social inequality on the basis of different forms of power is the basis of identification of deviant behaviour and deviant groups and hence, also social stratification.

In an industrial society, the norms will be in the favour of the elite class that holds both economic and political power. Therefore, a deviant in such a society often belongs to the lower class that does not participate in work or does not have the economic power. The lower classes who do not hold power may also be labelled as deviants if they protest the unequal distribution of income and wealth (Jacobs, 1979). People may also be identified as deviants if they do not have adequate political representation. Their behaviour may be termed as contrary to the prevalent social conduct and thus, they may be labelled as deviants.

#### **Stop and read:**

Conflict theory is the label generally attached to the sociological writings of opponents of the dominance of structural functionalism.

The proponents of conflict theory drew mostly from Marxism and to a certain extent from the work of Max Weber. (Marshall, 1998)

Conflict theory of deviance is very relevant to understanding social stratification in contemporary societies. The new global economy has created new classes. New forms of distribution of goods and resources have brought in new forms of socio-economic power structure. This gives rise to new forms of inequalities in societies. Therefore, we have new forms of inequalities and new definitions of norms in contemporary societies. Application of conflict theory helps in the analysis of these forms of social stratification as well as the normative order and classification of deviant behaviour.

### **10.3.3 Symbolic Interactionism and Deviance**

Another important theoretical vantage point of understanding the relationship between stratification and deviance is symbolic interactionism. This approach holds that socialisation is at the basis of the cause and perpetuation of deviant behaviour. Two variations in the symbolic interactionist approach with regard to deviance are Differential Association Theory and Labelling Theory.

#### **Stop and Read:**


**Symbolic Interactionism:** Symbolic Interactionism uses social psychological theory and focuses upon the premise that meanings (of social action) emerge through the interaction. The primary concern is to analyse the meanings of everyday life, via close observational work and intimate familiarity, and from these develop an understanding of the underlying forms of human interaction. (Marshall, 1998)

Originally propounded by Edwin Sutherland as per the differential association theory, deviant behaviour is learnt in a process of communication in intimate groups (Matsueda, 2000). Hence, the social group is the arena where techniques of deviant behaviour, its utility and attitudes are learnt. Therefore, it follows that if some of the members of a social group such as class, race, etc. demonstrate deviant behaviour, there is a high chance that other members of the group may be socialised in the same deviant behaviour. According to the differential association theory, certain social groups in the social hierarchy can, therefore, demonstrate a particular form of deviant behaviour. These groups can then be treated as deviant groups and given a separated position and role in the system of social stratification.

The second variant of the symbolic interactionist approach to deviance and social stratification is labelling theory. Similar to the conflict approach labelling theory proposes that the people who hold power in society label a particular individual or group as deviant. However, the labelling theory differs from conflict theories by stating that these labels act as “self-fulfilling prophecies and the people who are labelled take up the positions given to them. In terms of deviance too, people cannot rise above their labels as deviants” (Moncrieffe & Eyben, 2007). Thus, certain social groups are termed as deviants and they cannot break away from the image that is imposed upon them.

From the above discussion of the theories of deviance, we can gather that the relationship between social stratification and social deviance is multidimensional. These theories help to develop a holistic understanding of the relationship between deviance and social stratification by taking into consideration both empirical and normative stands on the topic. Further, two or more of the above theoretical perspectives can be combined to arrive at a comprehensive conclusion on the bases of social stratification as well as identification of social deviance in contemporary societies.

## CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

	1. Name the theories on deviance
<hr/>	
<hr/>	
2. What is anomie?	
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<hr/>	
3. What are two variations in the symbolic interactionist approach with regard to deviance?	
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### 10.4 SOCIAL STRATIFICATION AND DEVIANCE IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

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In all societies, people who have engaged in deviant behaviour are given a lower status in the social hierarchy. Thus, deviance has a direct relation to social stratification. However, the interrelationship between these two phenomena does not end here. As discussed in many of the above theories, it is seen that the social hierarchy itself can be a basis for identifying and categorising deviance. Analysis of stratification and deviance in contemporary societies illustrate this mutual determination of the two phenomena.

#### 10.4.1 Deviance and Marginality

As discussed in the above theories, deviance is considered as a phenomenon that happens in groups. Certain groups are considered as demonstrating more deviant behaviour than others. For example, people who are economically poor may engage in deviant behaviour out of

compulsion. However, random acts of deviance by the poor are not considered as individual phenomena but as a group phenomenon and therefore, the poor may be considered as a group that has more propensity in engaging in deviant behaviour. Oscar Lewis's concept of 'culture of poverty' is one example of how this association can be made (Pager, 2012). Therefore, deviance can become a characteristic of a class. Often marginalised classes are labelled as deviants. The new understanding of social deviance, however, looks at these assumptions critically.

**Stop and Read:**

Culture of Poverty: this thesis holds that the poor share distinctive patterns of values, beliefs and action, and exhibit a style of life which departs significantly from that of the core culture of a particular society. (Roach & Gursslin, 1967) The phrase culture of poverty is mostly associated with Oscar Lewis.

Similarly, other socially deprived may also be considered as deviants. In many countries, people that have a history of racial discrimination, people belonging to certain races are considered deviants (Pager, 2012). It is particularly true of the racial groups that have been given a low status and discriminated against throughout history such as slaves. Ethnic minorities can also be labelled as deviants. Tribes who have lived in isolation for a long period of times and have different customs and cultures have also been labelled as deviants. Since their cultural practices deviate from the mainstream, a certain behaviour may be categorized as criminal. Thus, an entire group is recognized legally as a criminal tribe. Even migrant communities are sometimes considered deviant. Instances of mob lynching, custodial death, vigilante attacks and violence against marginalised groups, such as migrant labourers and sexual minorities have been cited in India by researchers. (Kottai, 2018) In these instances,

the marginalised, the poor and the powerless are victims of prejudices and punishments. Therefore, these low-status groups are also considered deviant and are an easy target of negative sanctions. Thus, social stratification reinforces the low status of deviants in a society.

**Stop and Read:**

**Marginalisation:** A process by which a group or individual is denied access to important positions and symbols of economic, religious, or political power within any society. (Marshall, 1998)

This relationship between social stratification and identification of deviant behaviour becomes more evident when the factor of intersectionality operates. A social group that has the status of being a minority group, as well as an economically deprived class, may further be at a more disadvantageous position in terms of lower status. Thus, from the above examples, it can be noted that social stratification and deviance mutually determine each other in social processes.

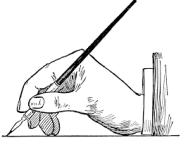
#### **10.4.2 Deviance and Mobility**

This method of identification and labelling of deviant groups poses serious hindrances in social integration in contemporary societies. Criminal record and association with deviant activities have consequences in social mobility and opportunity. A person who is identified as a deviant or criminal finds it difficult to adjust in the society. Lack of provision of rehabilitation may further make social accommodation difficult. Deviants do not get an equal share of resources and opportunities such as employment.

Social mobility of deviant groups is curtailed by social prejudice, social stigma. The judgment of crime or the punishment, therefore, may reinstate the social hierarchy by making mobility difficult for deviants. Thus, prejudice and lack of mobility leads to the social reproduction of

the deviant groups and maintains the system of social stratification. This lack of mobility is a contradiction in contemporary global societies.

### CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

	<p>1. What is marginalisation?</p> <p>-----</p> <p>-----</p>
	<p>2. What do you mean by 'culture of poverty'?</p> <p>-----</p> <p>-----</p>
	<p>3. How does deviance affect social mobility?</p> <p>-----</p> <p>-----</p>

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### 10.5 SUMMING UP

In this Unit, we have discussed how deviance can be one of the bases on which social stratification is done. The relationship between deviance and social stratification is multifaceted. The following conclusions have emerged from the discussion:

- Societies in present times are complex in terms of their structures and functions. They also differ from each other. Therefore, the identification of deviant behaviour will also differ from society to society in the present context.
- In order to identify deviants, it is essential to understand the norms of a particular society and who makes them. Social



categorisation, social stratification and hierarchy are all governed by these factors.

- A behaviour that is considered deviant in one society may not be considered as so in another society. A social group that has been labelled as deviants and have been given a low status in a particular society may not be considered in other society.
- Further continuous changes in the structure of social hierarchies have added to the complexity of contemporary societies. Therefore, new forms of inequalities and types of deviances have emerged.

Thus, we can conclude that deviance and stratification mutually determine each other in a society. This relationship varies from society to society.

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## **10.6 QUESTIONS**

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### **Short questions**

1. What is deviance?
2. Explain the meaning of social norms.
3. What is the labelling theory?
4. What is marginalisation?

### **Essay type**

1. Explain how deviance and social norms are related to each other in different societies.
2. Explain the relationship between deviance and social stratification with reference to the thesis on the culture of poverty.
3. Elaborately discuss how labelling theory determines the identification of deviants in society.
4. Describe how the identification of deviants formulates their marginal status in society.

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## **UNIT 11: CONTEMPORARY DEBATE IN STRATIFICATION: DISABILITY**

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### **UNIT STRUCTURE**

- 11.1 Introduction
- 11.2 Objectives
- 11.3 Defining Disability
  - 11.3.1 Disability and Society
  - 11.3.2 Conception of Disability in Earlier Societies
- 11.4 Disability and Social Stratification
  - 11.4.1 Disability and Class
  - 11.4.2 Intellectual Disabilities
- 11.5 Disability, Social Status and Citizenship
  - 11.5.1 Disability and Mobility
  - 11.5.2 Rights and Equality
- 11.6 Summing Up
- 11.7 Questions
- 11.8 Recommended Readings and References

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### **11.1 INTRODUCTION**

Sociology aims at a holistic understanding of society and society is divided into various categories. The study of social stratification further tries to explain the causes and bases of the division of these people and their hierarchy. There are minorities and majorities, marginalised and the mainstreamed, the privileged and the downtrodden. Similarly, there are people who are ranked higher in the social hierarchy for their abilities and talents and there are others who are ranked lower because of their inability to compete with the former type. Again, there are people who have certain kinds of physical and mental disabilities. These people are considered to be different from the 'normal' people. Often these people lie at the margins of the social hierarchy. Because of their marginality,

they are also excluded from social, economic, educational and political opportunities and facilities. Thus, disabilities have always been the basis of not only stratification but also discrimination. Therefore, it is essential to understand disability in contemporary societies, its forms and social consequences.

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## **11.2 OBJECTIVES**

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By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- Analyse the existing definitions of disabilities;
- Discuss the social issues related to disability with the special focus on social stratification;
- Discuss disability as a basis of social inequality and discrimination;
- Analyse the scope of the provision of equal opportunities and mobility to the people with disability.

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## **11.3 DEFINING DISABILITY**

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There are different approaches to defining disability. The United Nations Convention of Rights of Person with Disabilities (UNCRP) (2008) adopted that “A person with disability refers to a person with long term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairment which, in interaction with barriers, hinders his full and effective participation in society equally with others”

Considering the different approaches in defining disability, Jenkins (1991) has identified different ways in which disability has been defined. Disability can be defined as impairment, the absence of a limb, organ or bodily mechanism, disablement, loss or reduction of function or ability as a consequence of impairment, handicap, constrain or restriction in

activities. Hence, physical and mental inability in equal participation in society is the bases for defining disability.

**Stop and Read:**

The Cambridge English Dictionary defines impairment as the deterioration in the functioning of a body part, organ, or system that can be temporary or permanent and can result from injury or disease.

Another set of theories consider disability as a social construct. It is the lack of inclusiveness in the infrastructural and behavioural settings of social institutions and society that results in the inability of people to access certain facilities. Rather than making institutions and social structures more inclusive the problem is seen in terms of the people who cannot participate in social activities and processes. Hence, disability becomes a social construct. Sociological investigations focus on both the above-discussed aspects of disability, i.e. in terms of the participation and social status of people with disabilities and the social basis of the construction of disabilities. This idea is further elaborated in the discussion in the section on disability and social stratification.

### **11.3.1 Disability and Society**

One of the primary social consequences of disability is the low visibility of disabled people in the society. There are no institutional platforms where disabled people participate equally and are visible in a given society. For example, disabled people may not be visible in the educational institutions if these institutions do not have the infrastructural facilities that are suitable for disabled people. This lack of visibility further creates a vicious circle. When people with disabilities do not get the chance to participate in such institutions, the latter also do

not adapt themselves to the needs of the people with disability. Hence, the invisibility continues, and the disabled people are segregated from the mainstream social realm.

Disabled people are also often excluded from employment. In a society where active citizenship for those other than the very rich is associated with individualistic notions of earning one's keep, the perceived inability to do so poses a problem (Jenkins, 1991).

### **11.3.2 Conception of Disability in Earlier Societies**

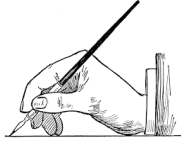
The association of disability with social stratification is a long one. In ancient societies, religion as well as social mores, codified disability. In many ancient cultures, disability was considered as a result of a person's sins (Karna, 1999). Disability was often considered to be a result of one's misdeeds in the past life. Disability was equated with disease and a disabled person was sometimes considered to be untouchable. It was believed to be a punishment for wrongdoings. Different forms of disabilities were considered to be the result of different forms of punishment for sins.

Because of these considerations, people with disabilities were not only considered to be different but were also regarded as unequal and hence, were given lower status in societies. They were often ostracised by others. Thus, such social attitude towards people with disabilities rather than natural differences was the contributing factor in discrimination and unequal treatment of people in societies of different periods in history. Many of the present discriminatory practices against disability are rooted in these practices that were found in early societies.

Further certain forms of disabilities have also been linked to ethnicity and race. Biological, genetic factors, as well as social perceptions, are responsible for such a conceptualization of people with disabilities. During wars and colonial expansion people belong to communities that suffered losses were considered to be lacking in certain capabilities of

the mind and the physique. Hence, certain forms of disabilities found among these groups were considered as a result of their 'inferior birth'. Thus, disability has always been judged and ranked lower in the social hierarchy.

### CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

	1. Write one definition of disability.
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<hr/>	
2. What does UNCRP stand for?	
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3. Fill up the blank:	
In many ancient cultures, disability was considered to be a result of a	
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### 11.4 DISABILITY AND SOCIAL STRATIFICATION

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In contemporary societies disability has been acknowledged as a fact. Although many of the conceptualization and understanding of disability have yet not been dismantled yet there is an attempt to see disability in a new perspective. With the gradual rise in visibility of people with disabilities, there is also a rise in the issues and problems associated with disability. Problems related to the inclusion of people with disability, hindrances and challenges in equal participation in society and the scope of change in social status are some of the issues that have to be analysed further through the prism of social stratification.

Disability combined with the other dimensions of inequality and stratification becomes a basis of social inequality. An example of this is

the relation of disability to class as axes of social stratification. Let us now explore these relationships in detail.

#### **11.4.1 Disability and Class**

One of the important axes of social stratification is class. This stems from the fact that disability has serious socio-economic consequences in terms of the participation of these people and accessibility to opportunity and resources. The low-class position of a person with a disability may have different consequences than that of a person who belongs to a higher class. Moreover, disability can be a result of the lack of accessibility to resources of certain classes. Jenkins states that disability is strongly related to occupational class (Jenkins, 1991). For example, it was found that manual workers are more likely than non-manual workers to suffer from some kind of disability. Again, semi-skilled and unskilled workers are more likely to suffer from disability than skilled workers. Disabled people with low-income status may be more susceptible to debt, poor housing conditions and less material possessions than that of the higher classes. Therefore, disability is reinstated by the class status.

#### **Stop and Read:**

Workers engaged in manual labour are often exposed to hazardous work such as in the chemical industries and coal industries. Therefore, they are also vulnerable to physical harm and diseases.

Even while participating in economic activities disabled people are marginalised in the labour market in various ways such as they are more vulnerable to unemployment and they are poorly paid as compared to other workers. The form of employment for disabled people is often outside the mainstream in sheltered employment and they stand at the bottom of the occupational ladder (Jenkins, 1991). Therefore, people



suffering from a disability are again compelled to live in poor housing conditions or deb. Thus, a vicious circle of poverty and disability is formed because of the above-discussed conditions.

On the other hand, the disabled people who do not participate in the labour market are further marginalised. For example, women, children, elderly (pensioners) live as dependents and as economically deprived. The existence of disabilities further contributes to their low status and dependency. These people are not only economically deprived but are also socially segregated. They are not accounted for and have to remain as dependents on their earning family members. Therefore, for Jenkins, being disabled is strongly associated with considerable economic handicaps which again determine their class structure. Lack of diversification of work that can include people with disability is one of the major reasons for this marginalisation and invisibility of disability. Thus class, poverty and disability are intrinsically linked with each other and reinstate the social hierarchy in societies.

#### **11.4.2 Intellectual Disabilities**

Intellectual disabilities may mean a range of things beginning with mental retardation, people having learning difficulties and persons having a below average intellectual functioning and behavioural problems or disorders. People with intellectual disabilities may not have a physical identification symptom. However, they have problems in adjusting to various social situations and activities. Since there may not be an obvious physical sign of intellectual disabilities, research illustrates that there may be some social and non-clinical factors of identification of the same (Jenkins, 1991).

People with intellectual disabilities are not only invisible in society but are feared. Foucault (2005) illustrates the social construction of madness as a disease. He traces the discursive trends of social exclusion and determination of intellectual disabilities. Intellectual disabilities have

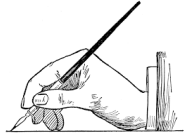
been treated as a singular category whereas there can be varieties of mental disorders, problems and issues. Not all of them may lead to impairments. Again, not all forms of mental issues necessarily result from a physiological problem. For example, people with autism and dyslexia may require special care but at the same time, they may be able to perform other kinds of functions, without much difficulty.

**Stop and read:**

Mental illness is a medical condition that disrupts a person's thinking, feeling, mood, ability to relate to others and daily functioning. On the other hand, intellectual disabilities are developmental disabilities that result in mental retardation and impairment of cognitive abilities. Mental illness may not directly impact cognitive abilities.

Nevertheless, all forms of mental illness and retardation are stigmatised in different societies. This lack of awareness regarding the forms and cures of mental diseases lead to the social exclusion and segregation of people who are identified with these problems. They are deprived of opportunities and equal treatment in both professional and private lives. Employment, as well as marriage, may be suspended if a person is identified as having an intellectual disability. Thus, these people are again marginalised in society.

## CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

	1. What do you mean by intellectual disabilities?
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2. How is disability related to class status?	
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### 11.5 DISABILITY, SOCIAL STATUS AND CITIZENSHIP

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In many nations equality of all people under the law has been recognized. All citizens are considered equal in terms of their rights and duties and are entitled to equal opportunity. Therefore, visibility of the marginal and socially excluded groups has become necessary. People with disabilities are thus entitled to equal citizenship rights and opportunities according to law. Nevertheless, social inequalities and social stratification are also an integral part of these societies. These come in direct conflict with the ideals of equality. Disability is one such dimension where the conflict between the ideals of equality and the social reality of inequality is visible. Let us discuss the dimensions of social mobility and rights in relation to mobility.

#### 11.5.1 Disability and Mobility

Disability has an obvious relation to physical mobility. People with disabilities have difficulties in physically moving around like other people. Even though different aids are provided, without the proper infrastructure these aids become useless. For example, a wheelchair cannot be used if there are no suitable ramps to carry that wheelchair.

The wheelchair then becomes nothing more than a regular chair and cannot be used for mobility. Therefore, more awareness and sensitivity is required in order to include people with disabilities in societies. Because of the impairment of mobility people with disabilities not only have to confine themselves in their day to day activities but they also become more vulnerable victims of crimes.

**Stop and read:**

Women with disabilities are particularly vulnerable to crimes against them. They are not able to defend themselves in case of crimes such as a sexual assault. They are not able to learn self-defence techniques. Because of these reasons women with disabilities may be excluded from participation in work and a holistic social life.

Disability has often been related to downward social mobility (Jenkins, 1991). Social mobility refers to the movement of individuals and groups between different positions within the system of social stratification. Early childhood disability has a serious impact on the life chances of a person. Different forms of life chances are constrained due to disability and hence social mobility is also restricted. Discrimination in educational institutions due to disability constrains the chances of future social mobility. Provision of special schools may not be adequate for children with disabilities. Moreover, the special schools and educational institutions may not actually help in mainstreaming people with disabilities and identifying their needs and skills. Even if children with disabilities are admitted there is absenteeism because of the lack of facilities to the specific and needs of the individual students (Eric, Madden, Robertson, Graham, Chris, & Llewellyn, 2009). Moreover, students with a disability may have to face constant discrimination in the form of bullying because of their condition. This leads to various mental and physical health traumas as well as an increase in the dropout rates of

students with a disability. All these factors, therefore, impeded social mobility for people with disabilities.

Another important factor of social mobility is social capital. Generation of social capital through social networking is very essential in boosting one's social status. Higher social capital ensures higher social mobility in terms of lifestyle and access to information. Because of their invisibility, people with disability are often deprived in terms of social capital. However, lack of economic capital along with the lack of social capital further decrease the chances of upward social mobility among people with disabilities. There are only a few examples of how people with disabilities have made themselves not only visible in society but have also been upwardly mobile. Notable among these are world personalities like Stephen Hawkins, John Nash and Nick Vujicic.

#### **11.5.2 Rights and Equality**

Opportunities for social mobility for people with disabilities have now been enhanced both by the nations as well as by international organizations. With the coming of the concept of human rights, there emerged the concept of equal treatment of all. Every human being, therefore, has the right to live with dignity. This ideal has become the basis for a separate United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities adopted on 13<sup>th</sup> December 2006. This convention not only aims at equal treatment of people with disabilities but also aims at changing the attitudes and approaches of society towards these people. This convention tries to change the perceptions regarding people with disabilities from that of “objects of charity, medical treatment and social protection” towards viewing persons with disabilities as “subjects with rights, who are capable of claiming those rights and making decisions” for their lives based on their free and informed consent as well as being active members of society.<sup>1</sup>

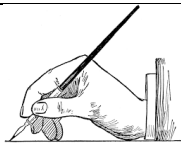
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<sup>1</sup> Retrieved from <https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities.html>

The convention and all nations which are signatories to it have to adopt legislative, administrative and other measures for the fulfilment of non-discrimination towards persons with disabilities, respect for dignity, equality of opportunity and accessibility, full and effective participation and inclusion in society, respect for difference and acceptance of persons with disabilities as part of human diversity and humanity, equality between men and women and respect for the evolving capacities of children with disabilities and respect for the rights of children with disabilities to prepare their identities. The UNCRPD has been ratified by India leading to the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016. This act is an attempt to uphold the UN convention as well as the preamble and fundamental rights enshrined in the Indian constitution.

Thus, disability is a very pertinent basis of social stratification and social inequality. Persons with disability are often marginalised. Because of their marginal status, they are subject to various forms of discrimination and violence. Both the society and law have to play a collaborative role in eradicating inequality based on disability as well as in changing the attitudes and perceptions towards people with disabilities.

### CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

	1. What is social mobility?
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<hr/>	
2. What is UNCRPD?	
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## 11.6 SUMMING UP

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- The idea of ‘normal’ leads to the marginalisation of people with disabilities.
- There are different forms of disabilities that include physical as well as mental impairments.
- Disability is an important basis of social inequality because people with disabilities are ranked lower in the social hierarchy
- Persons with disabilities have little opportunities in terms of social mobility and are often dependent on other people.
- Disability reasserts other forms of social inequalities like inequalities based on race, class and gender.
- The state and international organizations are the agencies through which persons with disabilities can have access to rights, resources and well as dignity.

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## 11.7 QUESTIONS

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### Short Questions

5. Define disability?
6. Why do persons with disabilities suffer from economic handicaps?
7. What is social capital for persons with disabilities?
8. What are the principles adopted by the UNCRPD?

### Essay type

6. Discuss how the idea of the ‘normal’ is related to the construction of social inequality on the basis of disability.
7. Explain how disability is an impediment to social mobility.

8. How is social inequality determined on the basis of intellectual disabilities?
9. Illustrate how disability reasserts inequalities based on gender and race.

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## 11.8 RECOMMENDED READINGS AND REFERENCES

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## **UNIT 12: CONTEMPORARY DEBATE IN STRATIFICATION: SEXUALITY**

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### **UNIT STRUCTURE**

- 12.1 Introduction
- 12.2 Objectives
- 12.3 Sexuality and Gender
  - 12.3.1 Meaning of Sexuality
  - 12.3.2 Patriarchy and Heteronormativity
  - 12.3.3 Women and Sexuality
- 12.4 Inequality and Sexuality
  - 12.4.1 Homosexuality
  - 12.4.2 Third Gender
- 12.5 Disability, Social Status and Citizenship
  - 12.5.1 Disability and Mobility
  - 12.5.2 Rights and Equality
- 12.6 Summing Up
- 12.7 Questions
- 12.8 Recommended Readings and References

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### **12.1 INTRODUCTION**

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Contemporary societies have emerged after a long history of the evolution of tradition and modernity. Often tradition and modernity are in conflict with each other. Tradition and conventions were the basis of the formulation of norms of a given society. These norms have been the basis of the construction of social interactions and social institutions like the systems of social stratification. Modernity, on the other hand, poses a challenge to many of these traditions and conventions. Hence, modernity poses a challenge to earlier forms of social systems. Therefore, there is a constant tussle between change and conservation,

between the radical and the conformist. One such arena of tussle and debate is the issue of gender and sexuality.

In all societies, people belonging to different sexes are given different roles. Based on these roles their statuses are also different. This arrangement makes gender and sexuality an important basis of social stratification. It affects all areas of the lives of the people of a given society. Norms, rules, morals and values are formed in accordance with the gendered form of social stratification. Sexual codes of conduct are formed, and social sanctions are attached to them. Thus, complete systems of social stratification develop on the basis of sexual differences.

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## **12.2 OBJECTIVES**

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By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- Explain the meaning of sexuality;
- Analyse the relationship between sexuality and stratification;
- Discuss the different dimensions of sexuality and inequality in contemporary society;
- Analyse the social consequences of stratification based on sexuality.

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## **12.3 SEXUALITY AND GENDER**

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Before understanding the dynamics between sexuality and social stratification we must understand the difference between the concepts of sex, gender and sexuality.

### **12.3.1 Meaning of Sexuality**

Sex is something biological. Different sexes are endowed with different biological characteristics and biological functions. Till recent times, these biological traits were immutable in nature. In comparison to the concept of sex, the term gender refers to the social meanings that are associated with a sex. Therefore, if biological traits and biological

functions are attributed to the concept of sex, the social functions and social identity are denoted by one's gender. For example, a male is often associated with the role of a bread earner in the family and the female is associated with the management of the household chores.

Sexuality, on the other hand, is that part of one's personality that is associated with one's behaviour with different sexes. A study of sexuality covers three dimensions: sexual desire or attraction; sexual activity or behaviour and sexual identity (Fletcher, 2015). These aspects are as much as social as biological. Sexual conduct and expressions are guided by the codes of conduct of society. There are rules and regulations regarding whom a person can or cannot marry in a society. For example, in the Indian form of caste system, there is endogamy of caste. This regulates the choice of marriage partners as well as sexual conduct outside marriage. Similarly, there are rules regarding other forms of sexual conduct. Therefore, in terms of sexuality too the biological urge of sexual desire and the socially approved expression of it may not overlap.

**Stop and read:**

Sexual identity refers to the way a person expresses who s/he is as a sexual person. It answers questions such as whether sexual expressions are important or not in a person's life, how people express their sexuality, whether they have any preference about the kind of sexual partner they choose (University of Surrey, 2018).

### **12.3.2 Patriarchy and Heteronormativity**

Let us now understand how sexuality becomes a basis of inequality and social stratification. As mentioned, there are certain socially approved codes of conduct regarding the expression of sexuality among the people of a given society. If an individual or a group fails to adhere to these

codes of the socially approved forms of sexuality, then they may be subject to certain social sanctions. This kind of discrimination leads to a categorisation of people on the basis of their sexuality leading to social stratification.

The dynamics of relationships among the genders is often considered as being governed by the norms of patriarchy. Patriarchy is a system that privileges the males over the other genders. Hence in a patriarchal society, the property is transferred from father to son, important social positions are given to males rather than other genders and institutions are also formed by males to privilege the males. The rules of marriage and sexual behaviour are also made in a manner that supports the patriarchal setup. For example, control of sexuality of a female is done through the institution of marriage so that she produces legitimate male heirs for the transfer of property.

**Stop and read:**

**Patriarchy:** According to Gerda Lerner, Lévi-Strauss and the Marxian approach, the dominance of patriarchal norms is intrinsically related to the arrangement of economic practices and dominance. (Lerner, 1986)

Heterosexual relations, i.e. the sexual relationship between a man and a woman is the only accepted form of sexual relationship in such a society. This is called heteronormativity in sexual relationships. Thus, any other form of sexual relationship jeopardises the continuance of the present system. Apart from the continuance of patriarchy, there are other gender-related issues that make heteronormativity immutable in societies. People who do not adhere to heteronormativity are thus considered of low status. They are subjected to various forms of discrimination and exploitation in society. Such discrimination was present in different ancient societies and are also visible in contemporary society.

### 12.3.3 Women and Sexuality

Control of sexuality through the institution of marriage for the reproduction of legitimate heirs has pervasive implication on the issue of sexuality of women. Since women are the bearers of children, they are the ones out of all sexes who have been subjected to strict rules regarding their sexual behaviour. Evolutionary theorists such as Lewis Henry Morgan as well as feminist writers have extensively dealt with this topic (Engels, 2010). Female sexuality is often curtailed and monitored more than that of the males to ensure the purity of blood in a specific community. Male choice in the selection of sexual partners is liberal whereas females are often not given the liberty to choose or enter multiple sexual relationships.

Caste-based endogamy for the maintenance of the purity of blood is one such example. The system of social hierarchy plays an important role in devising the sexual norms for women of different castes. (Banerji, 2008) The sexuality of women belonging to the twice-born castes is more guarded than that of the women of lower caste. Thus, hypogamy in which a higher caste woman marries a lower caste man is more strictly prohibited than that of hypergamy where a higher caste man marries a lower caste woman. These rules of caste are still seen to be followed in contemporary times in India. (Chanana, 2001)

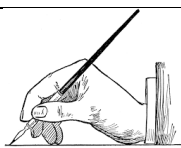
#### **Stop and read:**

Rita Banerjee (2008) traces the history of sexuality in India. She explains the different historical factors that led to the monitoring and curtailment of female sexuality. She gives a critical description of sexuality and sexual prohibitions in different historical periods in India.

Moreover, there are other examples from contemporary societies about how females have unequal rights and privileges than that of men in terms of sexuality. Unmarried mothers are stigmatised and even their children are also stigmatised whereas a man does not have to go through the same stigmatisation. Females who curtail their sexuality and are virgins, are considered to be virtuous and hence are more respectable. However, men are not judged on the basis of such criteria. Hence sex outside marriage and even unwanted sexual assaults, including rape, are an issue of the honour of the female body rather than that of the males. Rape victims often have to face social stigma and loss of family honour is associated with her. Thus, we can see that the expression of sexuality is not equal for every gender and is strictly guarded by heteronormativity in many societies.

**Stop and Read:**

Heteronormative: of, relating to or based on the attitude that heterosexuality is the only normal and natural expression of sexuality. (Merriam Webster Dictionary, 2018)

**CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

1. What is the difference between sex and gender?

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2. What is sexuality?

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3. What is meant by heteronormativity?

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## **12.4 INEQUALITY AND SEXUALITY**

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There are other groups of people and genders who have different sexual orientation. These people do not fall under the heterosexual paradigm. These people are often subject to discrimination in the mainstream society and are thus, given a lower status. The lower status of these groups may also deprive them of social opportunities and resources. It contributes to widening the gap between people who follow heteronormativity and the people who do not. Let us now understand the different alternative sexual identities and their relationship to social inequality and stratification.

### **12.4.1 Homosexuality**

People who prefer sexual partners belonging to the same sex as their own are called homosexuals. In common parlance, a female who is sexually attracted to another female is referred to as a lesbian and a male who is sexually attracted to a male is called a gay. However, the term 'gay' also commonly refers to both homosexual males and females; in other words, it is not a gender-specific term. A person who is sexually attracted to both females and males is called a bisexual. There are also other forms of sexual preferences among human beings. However, in contemporary societies, the issue of social inequality is basically concerned with the rights and privileges of lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgenders, commonly referred to as the LGBT community. Other terms like LGBTQ or LGBT+ are also used. The 'Q' in LGBTQ stands for 'queer' or 'questioning', referring to those individuals who are uncertain of their sexual orientation. On the other hand, LGBT+ refers to LGBT and related communities.

Homosexuality also implies sexual behaviour and acts that may be an alternative to those intercourses that take place between a male and a female. In many countries of the world, such homosexual orientation and the implied nature of sexual intercourse is considered to be 'unnatural'. (Gupta, 2006) Therefore, these sexual practices have been criminalized from time to time. It implies that homosexuality is considered a deviant practice. Homosexuals are subject to social stigma and are ostracised in many societies. This limits their access to rights and resources in a society. Therefore, many homosexuals cannot express their sexual identity in public and have to live dual private and public lives. Even if they do assert their identity as homosexuals they have to face social discrimination of all forms.

One of the challenges faced by homosexuals is the acceptance of their relationship with their partners. In many societies, there are no alternative provisions for same-sex marriages. On the other hand, marital status is very important for social identification and sharing of economic resources. Again, homosexuals also do not have the liberty to establish their own families as the institution of the family is also governed by heteronormativity in many societies. Therefore, homosexuals are deprived of many social and economic opportunities in societies that do not recognise homosexuality as an alternative form of sexual orientation.

**Stop and Read:**

There is a long history of the struggle of the LGBT community in India since the colonial times (Mukherjee, 2016). The landmark verdict of the Supreme Court of India on 6<sup>th</sup> September 2018, decriminalised part of Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code that criminalises consensual gay sex, calling it irrational and arbitrary. This is indeed a great step in acknowledging that the LGBT



community has the same rights as that of any other ordinary citizen in India.

#### **12.4.2 Third Gender**

As mentioned earlier, gender refers to the social meanings imposed upon a biological sex. Therefore, one's biological traits and gender may not always overlap. A person may have the biological traits of a male, but he may identify more with the roles and functions that have been designated to a female. Thus, the person may choose to perform the roles of another gender. Such a person is called a transgender. Some people also have a condition of intersex, i.e. having an ambiguous sexual anatomy. These people are called transsexual. Some people also change their sex in the course of their lifetime and adopt a new sexual identity. The concept of 'third gender' is used in order to denote the category of people who do not have a categorical and fixed gendered identity on the basis of their sex.

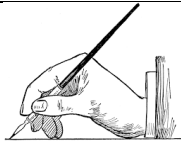
People belonging to any of these alternative sexual identities have different needs and do not function according to heteronormativity. In order to address their needs and rights, an alternative set of institutional rules are required. However, they are considered sexual minorities and have little social and political representation. Therefore, they may have lack of access to resources and rights that are available to people who have an accepted form of a gendered identity in a particular society.

People with alternative forms of sexual identities are often easy targets of prejudices and therefore, become easy victims of exploitation. Mobility is also limited for these groups. For example, they are not able to get education and employment opportunities available to other people of a society because of their different sexual identity. Many of these people are therefore forced into beggary and prostitution (Ganguly,

2015). It makes them not only a minority but also makes them a marginal group in the social hierarchy.

The low status of this group makes them easy targets of suspicion and discrimination. Dominant hegemonic masculinity dictates what is normal and what is normative in a society (Kottai, 2018). Those groups who claim an alternative form of sexuality are victimised. Hence, in a society, a particular form of sexuality can be considered as a norm and other expressions of sexuality may be given lower status and can also be rejected. Thus, social hierarchy and stratification can be based on the judgement of accepted and unaccepted forms of sexuality.

### **CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

	1. What is homosexuality?
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<hr/>	
<hr/>	
2. What is meant by the third gender?	
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## **12.5 SEXUALITY AND GENDERED ROLES**

Sexuality is not only about sexual acts with other partners but also about self-expression in terms of sexual behaviour. Sexuality is an important part of our individual personality. It is seen that often the self or a part of our personality are in conflict with the social expectations in contemporary societies. Such a conflict results in the discrimination of the people whose sexuality does not adhere to the conventional

expectations from their gendered personality. People who adhere to the accepted gendered role of the society in a given time have a better social status and people who cannot adapt to the changing roles of the society are given a lower status. There are constant changes that are happening in contemporary societies that have helped in the mobility in terms of sexual behaviour. Let us understand sexuality as an important aspect of personality and its relation to social stratification in contemporary societies.

#### **12.5.1 Women, Work and Control of Sexuality.**

As mentioned earlier, the sexuality of women has been controlled for the proper functioning of certain social institutions such as marriage and family in a patriarchal setup. However, in contemporary societies, there exist both conventions and scope of mobility in this regard. In contemporary societies, women are given equal rights to work as that of men. Gradually, more and more women are participating in different spheres of work outside the domestic realm. Therefore, a strict division of labour on the basis of one's sex is becoming more and more obsolete. These opportunities have given women the economic and social power to adopt certain practices that are contrary to conventions. In contemporary societies, sexual liberty has given the right to women to choose their own sexual partner. The provision of divorce and remarriage available in many of the contemporary societies has further added to this sexual liberation.

Another dimension of this sexual liberty in contemporary societies is the emergence of new reproductive technologies. Although these technologies can be used for both empowerment and exploitation and have been under constant debate, they do offer the freedom of choice to the individual. These technologies have helped in regulating sexual and reproductive behaviour, allowing women to participate in work and have more control over the operation of a family. Now, a woman can adopt birth control measures to limit the number of births that she wants to

give. She can also choose to reproduce without sexual intercourse and have a family of her own without a male partner. Thus, sexual liberty has brought about mobility in the gendered roles in contemporary societies.

**Stop and read:**

*Gendered: reflecting or involving gender differences or stereotypical gender roles. (Merriam Webster Dictionary, 2018)*

### **12.5.2 Metrosexuality and Masculinity**

Gendered roles have changed, leading to a change in the meaning of sexuality as well as the part of the personality that is related to sexuality. Conventional male sexual identities have changed due to many factors that have emerged in contemporary societies. Men and women both have to participate equally in private as well as public domain. Verbal and physical expressions of personality and sexuality have also changed. For example, beauty is no longer exclusively associated with women. Men too are equally concerned about their appearance and grooming. Interest in personal style and grooming was conventionally associated with feminine traits but growing interest in grooming and appearance among the heterosexual males have led to the emergence of a new term called ‘metrosexual—a heterosexual man concerned with appearance and grooming. Conventional roles for males have thus altered. Metrosexuality has emerged as a personality type that is conducive to adaptation to contemporary social needs (Khanna, 2004).

However, these emerging changes have also created many new challenges for women as well as other sexes. The presence of both conventions and scope of mobility in contemporary society has created major role conflicts for individuals. Moving away from the traditions and conventions with regard to sexual behaviour, expression of sexual identity and personality may not be accepted in a society that values the

former. These people will have a lower status in such a society or may even be considered as deviants. On the other hand, people following the traditional sexual code of conduct may not be accepted in contemporary societies that value mobility and change. Thus, people may again be ranked differently in different societies on the basis of their sexual identity and expression.

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## **12.6 SEXUALITY, DISCRIMINATION AND LIBERTY**

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Values and ideals in contemporary societies acknowledge and uphold equality and justice. Institutions have been made to work for the protection of human rights and individual liberty. After witnessing a long history of interpersonal conflicts and conflicts among communities, the current society has arrived at the realisation of the importance of harmony and peaceful coexistence. However, the prevalent inequalities and the resultant discrimination and exploitation have posed challenges to the promotion of egalitarianism.

Discrimination on the basis of sexuality is one such challenge. Therefore, it constitutes a very pertinent issue of debate on contemporary societies. On the one hand, there is the issue of individual liberty and equality, on the other hand, there is the issue of conventional practices and institutions with regard to sexuality. Conventional definitions of family and kinship will have to go through a radical change if liberty of sexual orientation and sexual identity is to be followed. Social hierarchies and systems of social stratification will have to be scrutinised in order to accommodate these contemporary issues on sexual liberty.

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## **12.7 SUMMING UP**

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From this unit, the following points can be highlighted regarding the role of sexuality in social stratification:

- Sexuality covers three dimensions: sexual desire or attraction; sexual activity or behaviour and sexual identity.

- The relationship between sexuality and social stratification is governed by the practice of heteronormativity.
- The groups affected by social stratification on the basis of sexuality are women, homosexuals and the third gender.
- Gender equality is associated with the establishment of equality in terms of sexuality.
- Hence, we can say that sexuality is associated with one's sexual identity and therefore it can become a basis for social discrimination, inequality and stratification.

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## 12.8 QUESTIONS

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### Short Questions

1. What is sexuality?
2. What is the meaning of the third gender?
3. What is heteronormativity?

### Essay type

1. Discuss how the concept of gender is associated with inequality in terms of sexuality.
2. Critically analyse the role of heteronormativity in creating inequality in terms of sexuality.
3. Explain how individual liberty and human rights are contradictory to the practice of social stratification in terms of sexuality.

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## **MODULE V: STRATIFICATION IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY**

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## **UNIT 13: SOCIAL STRATIFICATION AND EXCLUSION IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY**

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### **UNIT STRUCTURE**

- 13.1 Introduction
- 13.2 Objectives
- 13.3 Understanding Social Exclusion
  - 13.3.1 Social Exclusion in Sociological Theory
  - 13.3.2 New Definitions of Social Exclusion
- 13.4 Socially Excluded Groups
  - 13.4.1 Class and Labour
  - 13.4.2 Caste, Ethnic Groups and Minorities
  - 13.4.3 Gender
  - 13.4.4 Persons with Disabilities
  - 13.4.5 Diseases and Exclusion
- 13.5 Summing Up
- 13.6 Questions
- 13.7 Recommended Readings and References

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### **13.1 INTRODUCTION**

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One of the significant aspects of social stratification is the social hierarchy. People are ranked into various strata on the basis of inequality, and roles and statuses are distributed according to this hierarchy. Systems of social stratification in contemporary societies allow social mobility of different groups. The ideals of democracy, liberty and solidarity facilitate mobility of social groups based on achievement rather than ascription in many of the contemporary societies. However, there are certain social groups that are debarred from different opportunities of social mobility within the open system of social stratification. These social groups are perpetually put in the lowest ranks of the social hierarchy. They have the

least chance for social mobility. There are also social groups who are put at the margins of a social system. These groups lack social visibility and self-representation. Because of this lack of visibility, they are excluded from participation in different spheres of social life. Thus, social exclusion is one of the important dimensions of social stratification in the contemporary societies.

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### **13.2 OBJECTIVES**

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By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- Define social exclusion in the discipline of sociology;
- Discuss the multiplicity of definitions of social exclusion;
- Examine social exclusion in relation to social stratification;
- Discuss the excluded social groups found in different societies of the world;
- Analyse the social consequences of social exclusion.

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### **13.3 UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL EXCLUSION**

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Like many of the theoretical concepts social exclusion also has been defined in multiple ways. The theoretical definitions of social exclusion are again different from the empirical understanding of social exclusion. Further, the early understanding of social exclusion in sociology is again different from the analysis of social exclusion in contemporary societies. However, to have a holistic understanding of social exclusion as a part of social stratification all these meanings and definitions have to be taken into account.

#### **13.3.1. Social Exclusion in Sociological Theory**

One of the important sociological understandings of social exclusion stems from the definition of Social Closure as discussed by Max Weber. Exclusion is one of two reciprocal modes of what Weber calls social closure, which refers to the mobilisation of power in order to enhance or

define a group's share of rewards or resources. Exclusionary closure involves the exercise of power in a downward direction through a process of subordination in which one group secures its advantages by closing off the opportunities of another group beneath it that is defined as inferior and ineligible (Murphy, 1985).

The above definition clearly illustrates that social exclusion is a form of exercise of power. Further, the relationship between exclusion and social stratification is addressed here with the proposition that the exercise of power happens in a downward direction upon a group that occupies a lower position in the social hierarchy. Hence, social exclusion is an expression of power and dominance for Weber.

Social exclusion happens in different forms. For example, there is a restriction of access to all resources for the groups that are excluded. These resources include land, means of production, means of destruction (weapons, military, police), or means of knowledge. On different reasons and arguments, these resources are available to only a restricted circle of groups considered eligible. Such practices are conceived as founded on one and the same generic kind of process which constitutes exclusionary closure (Murphy, 1985). Therefore, social exclusion is not simply exploitation and abuse of a group. It is a systematic and strategic restriction of power and mobility as per the understanding of Weber. Thus, classical sociological traditions have defined social exclusion in a specific manner.

### **13.3.2 New Definitions of Social Exclusion**

The empirical understanding of social exclusion in contemporary societies has added to the classical understanding of social exclusion. Social exclusion as a term has been used to denote the following in contemporary societies:

- Problematic groups (e.g., beggars, rural landless or asset-poor, the long-term unemployed, retrenched women workers, ethnic

minorities). These groups are 'set apart' and 'locked out' of participation in social life.

- Problematic conditions (poverty, unemployment, ghettoization, family breakdown, isolation)
- Problematic processes (political, social and economic) which are responsible for the production of disadvantages through active dynamics of social interaction. (Kabeer, 2000)

The above three aspects of social exclusion should be viewed in relation to each other and not in isolation. For Naila Kabeer, disadvantage results in social exclusion when the various institutional mechanisms through which resources are allocated and the value assigned operate in such a way as to systematically deny particular groups of people the resources and recognition which would allow them to participate fully in the life of that society.

**Stop and read:**

The Oxford Dictionary of Sociology (2009) defines social exclusion as 'a process by which individuals or households experience deprivation. Either of resources (such as income) or of social links to the wider community or society'.

Naila Kabeer (2000) considers that it is essential to understand social exclusion in terms of social policy. Therefore, the manifestation of social exclusion is to be associated with social institutions also. Social exclusion comprises both economic injustice and cultural injustice. Economic injustice can be in the forms of exploitation or appropriation of fruits of others labour, marginalisation, exclusion from means of livelihood or confinement to poorly paid or undesirable forms of work, deprivation in the sense of being denied the adequate standard of living. On the other hand, cultural injustice may happen in terms of social patterns of representation, interpretation and communication.

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### **13.4 SOCIALLY EXCLUDED GROUPS**

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Societies are therefore divided into groups that have access to resources and opportunities both in the economic sense and in the cultural sense. Some groups occupy higher positions in the social hierarchy and also are privileged in terms of this access to resources and opportunities, while other groups are not. Let us know about the economic and cultural component of social exclusion while analysing the different social groups that are considered to be socially excluded.

#### **13.4.1 Class and Labour**

Class in the Marxian sense has always been divided into the 'haves' and 'have-nots'. Some are owners of means of production as well as labour, while others do not have a control over their own labour power. Moreover, the 'have' class or the capitalists in contemporary societies also appropriate the profit generated in the production process and the 'have-nots' or the labour class is exploited. This clearly is a hierarchical view of the class structure. However, the understanding of social exclusion helps to know the underlying causes of the persistence of this class structure and exploitation.


#### **Stop and Read:**

The 'have' class comprises of the owners of means of production and the 'have-not' class consists of workers who do not own any means of production. The 'have-not' class contribute their labour to the process of production. The 'have' classes in different modes of production are the masters, feudal lords, and the capitalist whereas the 'have- not' classes include the slaves, serfs and the labourers.

Weber views that the capitalist monopoly based on the power of property rule through the market and through the formulation of rational market prices, that is through 'an entirely rationally calculated mastery of market

conditions which may, however, remain formally as free as ever' (Murphy, 1985). This monopoly restricts the access of the labour class. Therefore, the free market and the invisible hand is almost a redundant concept in the empirical reality. The labour class is hence socially excluded from capital and profit that leads to their continuation of low status in the social hierarchy. The neo- Marxian approach to the study of reproduction of class further explores this argument. The restriction and lack of access to resources hence create a vicious circle of poverty, whereby the poor and the economically marginalised remain in the lower ranks of the society.

### CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

	<p>1. Who are the excluded class in the capitalist mode of production?</p> <p>-----</p>
	<p>2. What are the two aspects of social exclusion for Naila Kabeer?</p> <p>-----</p>
	<p>3. What is the basis of social exclusion according to Max Weber?</p> <p>-----</p>

#### 13.4.2 Caste, Ethnic Groups and Minorities

Exclusion in terms of caste is rooted in economic disadvantage, the religiously sanctioned segregation and ordering of occupations. In economic terms, lowest castes are associated with the most stigmatized occupations that have to be compulsorily practised by them as traditional occupations (Kabeer, 2000). These cases were also subjected to religious sanctions if they broke the norms of purity and pollution which is an exclusionary practice. The untouchable castes were excluded from physical contacts and access to public facilities. Thus, they were also excluded spatially and had to live in the margins of the villages. This is

an extreme form of exclusion that has been practised in India since ancient times. Although untouchability has been abolished still the residues of exclusion of these castes have been felt in different ways.

**Stop and read:**

Many sociologists attribute the foundation of caste hierarchy to the principle of purity and pollution. Some occupations are considered to be ritually pure whereas others are considered to be polluted. Those castes that engage in 'polluted' occupations and work are given a lower rank in the society. The upper castes are also known as the twice-born caste.

Similarly, the Scheduled Tribes in India have been socially as well as spatially excluded. These tribes have historically been considered as different from the civilisation. They were also geographically isolated. Some tribes are also termed as 'criminal tribes' because of their different lifestyle and social organization. Hence these tribes have been socially excluded for centuries. During the colonial times also, the administration followed a policy of exclusion and non-interference. (C.J., 2008) Therefore there were certain geographical areas that were considered to be excluded. Even after independence, the administrative policies deprived the tribal people of rightful access to land and forest. Therefore, the Scheduled Tribes have been subjected to different forms of social exclusion that have limited their access to cultural as well as economic participation in the larger society.

In many contemporary societies, the ideals of representative democratic participation of all sections of people are upheld. However, there arises a conflict between this ideal and the real when we discuss the status of the minorities. Even in societies that do not have democracy as a form of government, power is held by people who constitute the majority. Those who have power, therefore, have control and access to resources and



opportunities and are ranked higher in society. Minority communities lack numerical strength and hence have less control and power over resources and opportunities. Therefore, the minorities have less representation in various institutions and processes of these societies. Minorities lack representation and participation in administration as well as in decision making processes. They also lack the power to challenge the dominant groups and change the system of social stratification (DeCoito, 2008). Ethnic minorities and migrant communities are some of the groups that have to face social exclusion due to their status.

### **13.4.3 Gender**

Gender is one of the most pervasive yet less visible bases of social exclusion. Women, the third gender and the people of different sexualities have always been excluded from participation in social activities. They are often rendered invisible and subjected to various types of abuse and exploitation because of the exclusion. The prevalence of gender-based norms, a division of labour and systems of privileges such as patriarchy and heteronormativity are considered to be the major reasons behind the exclusion of those genders and gender relations that do not fall under the ambit of these norms.

Exclusion of women has socio-economic dimensions. Women are excluded from paid work, right to property and also equal opportunity to work. Such exclusion contributes to the continuation of the dominance of patriarchal norms whereby the control of the economic resources is only done through males. Further, such exclusion leads to a devaluation of a labour of women especially the labour that women perform in the domestic realm. This gender dynamics operate even in cases where the female performs roles that are important. For example, female-maintained households have historically been disadvantaged groups. Kabeer calls such households 'radically disadvantaged'. Usually, female-headed households are those where the female guardian is widowed, divorced or abandoned by husband and have no adult males to support

them. Thus, 'hardcore exclusion' might mean for a woman attempting to survive on her own in a society. (Kabeer, 2000)

Exclusion of people who identify and express themselves as the third gender is also very strong. The third gender has been invisible and stigmatized in all societies and in all historical periods. They are excluded from the mainstream in all forms—social, political, economic and cultural. Often the third gender is pushed into the margins. For example, they have to resort to begging and sex work to earn a living. A prominent form of exclusion of women and third gender is seen in terms of the lack of gender budgeting for both of these genders. Thus, women and people belonging to the category of the third gender comprise of a substantial part of the society that has been marginalised both in earlier as well as contemporary societies.

Apart from these gender identities, sexual identities have also been subjected to social exclusion. Frazer (1997) describes these as 'socially despised sexualities' (Kabeer, 2000). People with non-heteronormative sexualities are excluded in many ways from active participation in social life. For example, they face opposition in the choice of their marital partner and the establishment of a family. They are excluded from many resources and opportunities, such as the right to property and life insurance, which are granted on the heteronormative construction of marriage and family. They suffer from a lack of social mobility because of their identity. Further, social stigma is also attached to their identity. Hence, the type of exclusion they face is not only in terms of participation in material life but also in terms of values. Kabeer (2000) states that where disadvantage is largely valuational, mobilisation is more likely to be around the question of identity and demands to be formulated in terms of recognition. This particularly holds true in terms of the assertion of the identity of the third gender and people with different sexualities.

#### **13.4.4 Persons with Disabilities**

Another important section of the population that have been marginalised and excluded from societies of all times is the one that constitutes the persons with disabilities. Persons with disabilities suffer from exclusion and disadvantages that are both economic and valuational (Kabeer, 2000). At the valuational level, people with disabilities have always been invisible in societies. Different forms of impediments restricted them from being physically mobile. Along with this, disability was often considered as a result of some disease or the spiritual punishment of sins. Therefore, both physical mobility, as well as social ostracism, has rendered a person with disabilities as invisible. Further because of this invisibility, these persons are deprived of participation in economic activities to earn their livelihood. They are also excluded from education and training. This leads to the formation of a vicious circle of deprivation, poverty, dependency and lack of opportunities. Thus, disability is one of the prominent bases of social exclusion and hence social inequality.

#### **Stop and read:**

The United Nations Convention for Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) 2006, states that persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.

#### **13.4.5 Diseases and Exclusion**

People who suffer from certain diseases are also socially excluded. Frazer (1997) mentions the exclusion of people who suffer from stigmatised forms of illness such as leprosy, AIDS and so on. They are located at the cultural end of the forms of social exclusion and injustice.

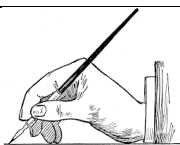
(Kabeer, 2000). Such kind of exclusion further restricts the accessibility to healthcare facilities and cure of the disease. Therefore, it leads to a further devaluation of human life.

Social exclusion of people with diseases is not limited to the access to healthcare only. The social ostracism faced by people is far more traumatic than that of lack of health care. For example, leprosy has near-mythical status as a synonym for extreme social exclusion. As a Ghanaian informant interviewed as part of the World Bank's consultations with the poor remarked: 'It is neither leprosy nor poverty that kills the leper but loneliness'. (Kabeer, 2000) Similarly, people with sexually transmitted diseases are also looked down upon by others.

People with mental disorders are also socially excluded. Often these people become vulnerable to violence and abuse because of their mental inabilities. People with mental disorders or diseases are also ostracised in the society. They are confined to mental health institutes because they are feared to be violent. Thus, they are rendered completely invisible and incapable of participating in the social activities and what is considered as a normal way of life.

Thus, all the above forms of social exclusion are very much a part of our contemporary societies and social structures. The intersecting nature of different forms of exclusion and inclusion results in the segmentation of society, and in clusters of advantaged and disadvantaged. (Kabeer, 2000) Thus, social exclusion reasserts the system of social stratification and inequalities in society.

## CHECK YOUR PROGRESS



1. What are the forms of social exclusion experienced by people with diseases?

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### 13.5 SUMMING UP

- Social exclusion has been defined in terms of deprivation, restriction in social participation and marginalisation
- Social exclusion can be both cultural and economic.
- Max Weber defines social exclusion in terms of the use of power and inequality of status.
- New definitions of social exclusion define social exclusion in terms of exclusion in social policies and institutionalised exclusion
- Social exclusion is a product of the existing social inequalities in societies
- Social exclusion also helps in the persistence of the system of social stratification in society.
- Socially deprived groups consist of classes, castes, tribes, ethnic minorities, gender, persons with disabilities and persons with disease

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## 13.6 QUESTIONS

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### Short Questions

1. Define social exclusion.
2. How does Max Weber define social exclusion?
3. What are the three meanings of the term social exclusion in contemporary societies?
4. Why are minorities subjected to social exclusion?

### Essay type

1. Discuss the different economic and cultural dimensions of social exclusion?
2. Explain the different social consequences of social exclusion.
3. Elaborately discuss how social exclusion is related to social stratification.
4. Explain how gender is a basis of social exclusion.

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## 13.7 RECOMMENDED READINGS AND REFERENCES

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## **UNIT 14: CHALLENGES OF INCLUSION IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY**

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### **UNIT STRUCTURE**

- 14.1 Introduction
- 14.2 Objectives
- 14.3 Understanding Social Inclusion
  - 14.3.1 Defining Social Inclusion
  - 14.3.2 Strategies for Social Exclusion
- 14.4 Challenges to Inclusion
  - 14.4.1 Traditional Hierarchies
  - 14.4.2 Lack of Economic Structures and Resources
  - 14.4.3 Challenges to Inclusion in Politics
  - 14.4.4 Participation in Education
- 14.5 Summing Up
- 14.6 Questions
- 14.7 Recommended Readings and References

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### **14.1 INTRODUCTION**

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Inequality and social exclusion mutually determine each other. Through exclusion, different forms of social inequalities persist. However, inequality and deprivation do not simply happen because of social exclusion but also due to the lack of active and effective ways of social inclusion. Social exclusion can only be countered by the introduction of effective methods and techniques of social inclusion. Therefore, the need for inclusion is a concern of the political community of all societies. Feminists, multiculturalists and other ‘theorists of difference’ demand recognition and hence inclusion for groups traditionally marginalized or excluded (Goodin, 1996). Without the conscious practice of social

inclusion, the existing inequalities and hierarchies will persist in given societies.

There are various ways in which social inclusion can be practised. Social groups, as well as social institutions and particularly the state, can help in activating social inclusion. Social policies relating to the provision of housing facilities, education, and employment and so on, are used by the state and other agencies as steps towards inclusion. Poverty alleviation is considered as an important means of increasing social inclusion of groups that are excluded by giving them economic capabilities. Strategies of social inclusion may vary as per the agencies that work for it.

Social inclusion is not only conducive for reducing social inequality but also helps in social integration. It helps in ‘mainstreaming’ previously marginalised individuals, families and communities. Social inclusion is essential to increase social interaction in society. It is also essential for increasing cooperation and thus contributes to the overall functioning of the society by reducing conflict among different groups. Let us now elaborately discuss social inclusion.

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## **14.2 OBJECTIVES**

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By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- Define social inclusion;
- Analyse the various approaches to the understanding of social inclusion;
- Examine the nature of practice of social inclusion;
- Examine the various challenges to the practice of social inclusion;
- Identify the ways to address the challenges to social inclusion.



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### **14.3 UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL INCLUSION**

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Social inclusion generally means the inclusion of social groups within what is considered to be the mainstream society. Therefore, the successful practice of social inclusion requires a growth in the knowledge and understanding of the broader community or society. Social inclusion is best designed as access for all, rather than access which is specific to the excluded categories. It implies that social inclusion is a continuous practice. The responsibility of this practice is not limited to certain institutions through which inclusive social policies are executed but involves the practices of the entire community.

There have been many theoretical vantage points that have defined the meaning and scope of social inclusion. Theories of social justice, for example, include virtue ethics of Buddha, Aristotle and Confucius, the Golden Rule (religion), Duty Ethics (Kant), Veil of Ignorance (Rawls), Utilitarianism (Bentham), Human Rights, Basic Needs, Capabilities (Sen). Let us now discuss a few of these approaches on social inclusion that are relevant for contemporary societies.

#### **14.3.1 Defining Social Inclusion**

On an international level inclusion is considered as essential for the protection of Human Rights. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) upholds the ideals of the right to live with dignity for all human beings of the world. The ideals of this declaration also promote the participation of all people in the society to have a complete life in terms of their social, political and economic rights. The UDHR entrusts the responsibility of protection of human rights of the people to that of the nation states. Thus, the responsibility to ensure equal opportunities for participation of all persons and hence social inclusion also lies in the hands of the states.

**Stop and Read:**

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) was adopted by the United Nations (UN) General Assembly on December 10, 1948, as the common standard of achievement for all peoples and nations. The UDHR comprises 30 articles that contain a comprehensive listing of key civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights.<sup>2</sup>

Hence for many social scientists, social inclusion is about inclusion in citizenship. The boundaries of citizenship are to be expanded in order to accommodate the people who have been socially excluded from different aspects of social life. It is about facilitating the excluded groups with opportunities to change their own social status for participation in social life. Therefore, Spinner (1994) calls it ‘boundaries of citizenship’ (Goodin, 1996). Inclusion is about stretching out the margins and bringing the marginalised and excluded within the margins (Goodin, 1996).

However, the question remains as to how do we actually expand these margins? The answer to this particular question comes from Amartya Sen’s work on social exclusion. Sen focuses on social exclusion in terms of poverty. The idea of inclusion can be achieved by understanding the meaning of poverty. Referring back to Aristotelian philosophy, Sen argues that poverty is not simply the shortage of income but is actually poor living. “We must look at impoverished lives, and not just at depleted wallets.” (Sen, 2000) An impoverished life is one without the freedom to undertake important activities that a person has reason to choose. It is a poverty of living. Thus, poverty for Sen is a capability deprivation, i.e. poverty is seen as a lack of the capability to live a minimally decent life.

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<sup>2</sup> Retrieved from <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Universal-Declaration-of-Human-Rights>

Social Exclusion, hence, is an exclusion from the development of capabilities. It is the lack of freedom to choose these opportunities.

Social exclusion, therefore, includes exclusion from social relations and 'living opportunities'. Social inclusion means the provision of scope for capability development to avail these opportunities. Social inclusion, therefore, is a much broader practice. Inclusion is about developing conducive social attitudes of the whole societies for the participation of all and prevention of social exclusion. It is not simply about allowing one section of the excluded groups to participate.

#### **14.3.2 Strategies for Social Inclusion**

There are different approaches to strategize policies for social inclusion. The idea of justice is central to the formulation of policies for social inclusion. Social justice is about being fair to all sections of the society in terms of providing rights and opportunities. One of the important social thinkers who has analysed social justice is John Rawls (1958; 1971). He defines 'Justice as fairness' (Goodin, 1996). Rawls argues for a distributive justice. This can be achieved through fair social institutions. Justice is needed in order to fulfil the cause of the common good and thus the principle of utilitarianism is the ultimate goal of establishing equality and justice through inclusion.

#### **Stop and Read:**

Utilitarianism, as coined by Jeremy Bentham, is 'the greatest happiness of the greatest number'. It is a political and moral philosophy that holds that the respective happiness of each individual is additive and the test of the rightness of an individual or social action is to maximize the sum of individual utility. (Compact Oxford Reference Dictionary, 2001)

In the contemporary discourse on social inclusion, the contribution of Amartya Sen highlights a different way of practising social inclusion. Sen (1981) advocates that in order to devise strategies for social inclusion, the idea of relative deprivation has to be investigated and addressed. Justice can only be achieved by taking into account the relative social positions of the excluded and marginalised groups and providing them with the requisite facilities to develop their capabilities. Therefore, for Sen, justice and inclusion does not simply mean equal treatment of all people but addressing the differential needs of different sections of people. For this purpose, Sen suggests that both economic, as well as political incentives, are needed to have an effective inclusion of people.


Thus, there are different ideological vantage points of interpreting the meaning and strategies of social inclusion. The neoliberal perspective focuses on access and economic factors, the social justice focuses on community participation and the human potential focuses on personal and collective empowerment stemming from positive psychology and critical/ transformative pedagogies. (Gidley, Hamson, Wheeler, & Beredede-Samiel, 2010)

Apart from the above-discussed strategies of social inclusion, different socio-political institutions have devised different strategies for promoting social inclusion. For example, the European Union's Recommendation 2008 for 'Active inclusion' comprises of the activities for the promotion of employment and social participation through adequate income support and access to quality services such as social assistance, employment and training services, housing support and social housing, childcare, long-term care services and health services. Social innovation is yet another strategy for inclusion. It can be defined as 'new ideas that work in meeting social goals. The EU framework programme of research and innovation commits to addressing societal challenges,

including making progress towards ‘inclusive, innovative, secure’ societies.

Hence, there are different ideological approaches to the understanding of strategies of social inclusion as well as there are institutions and organizations through which these strategies have been put into practice in contemporary societies.

### CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

	1. What do you mean by Social Inclusion?
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<hr/>	
2. What is UDHR?	
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<hr/>	
3. What is Social Justice?	
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#### 14.4 CHALLENGES TO INCLUSION

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The pursuit of the ideal and strategies for social inclusion, however, are challenged by many issues. Before executing the policies for social exclusion, the following questions may be asked: Does inclusion only mean bringing the marginalized or excluded within the margins and making them borderline? Or should it be about putting them at the centre? Or should it be about changing the societies and not having a concept of margins? (Goodin, 1996)

There may be lacunas in the framing and execution of the different policies for social inclusion due to which the ideal cannot be put into

practice. Inequality and deprivation not only happen because of exclusion but also because of ‘unfavourable policies of inclusion’ (Sen, 2000). Policies of inclusion may be biased. Some previously excluded groups can be included whereas others may not be included in these policies. Some people may also be forcefully included in social participation, thereby leading to unfavourable inclusion or “exclusion from equitable inclusion”. Therefore, it is very essential to review the nature of inclusion and the different challenges that act against the inclusion of all excluded groups in the society

#### **14.4.1 Traditional Hierarchies**

One of the major challenges in the practice of social inclusion is the existence of rigid traditional social structures and practices that are antithetical to that of social inclusion. Traditional hierarchies act against the adaptation to new social situations that demand social inclusion for social integration in contemporary societies.

Iswar Modi (2015) quotes Sukhadeo Thorat and Paul Attewell in this regard: “Current patterns of socio-economic inequality within nations are often intertwined with much older systems of stratification. In the United States, many descendants of enslaved Africans continue to face social and economic disadvantages. In Europe, the Roma and other semi-nomadic groups that predate modern Japan and in South Korea, the descendants of certain families who historically held ‘unclean’ occupations remain a stigmatized group. In India and neighbouring countries, ancient systems of caste inequality endure; their modern manifestations severely constrict the lives and opportunities of lower caste citizens.” (Modi, 2015)

The presence of these traditional hierarchies and practices do not allow the equal participation of all sections of people such as different genders and castes. They impede the inclusion of excluded groups in terms of

employment opportunities, education, ownership of resources and property and hence deprive them of the scope of social mobility.

#### **14.4.2 Lack of Economic Structures and Resources**

Lack of economic resources and poor economic development of different societies pose a serious challenge to social inclusion. Due to many politico-economic processes such as colonisation, industrialisation and also instability in political structures the resources needed to devise and execute policies for social exclusion are not adequate. Ex-colonies, the countries lacking control over global capital, countries with overpopulation have fewer resources and mechanism for the eradication of inequalities and social exclusion.

Many examples are found in the contemporary Indian context. A comprehensive overview of the public policies in India to tackle social exclusion has identified several barriers to their effective implementation. These include technical failings in the design of policies, bureaucratic requirements to access benefits, institutionalised discrimination and on-going social discrimination, apart from large-scale corruption and nepotism. Vested interests and political constraints are central and hardest to overcome, even as the political representation of excluded groups has increased manifold (Modi, 2015)

Structural inadequacies also lead to exclusion from equal participation in the market. There is also labour market exclusion and credit market exclusion. (Sen, 2000) These create a further impediment to social inclusion by shrinking the possibilities of social mobility by increasing economic gains. Thus, the economic structures and the loopholes present in them pose a major challenge to the process of social inclusion.

#### **Stop and Read:**

The labour market, also known as the job market, refers to the supply and demand for labour in which employees provide the supply

and employers, the demand. It is a major component of any economy and is intricately tied in with markets for capital, goods and services.<sup>3</sup>

#### **14.4.3 Challenges to Inclusion in Politics**

Politics is an arena where rights and duties are formulated, contested and claimed. For the practice of social inclusion, it is necessary that the political structures and institutions are accommodative of the necessary changes. Political processes that are sensitive to the issue of social inclusion are more necessary in the modern political communities since they operate on the basis of representation and mobilisation. It is the barriers to equal representation and mobilization of all communities that creates challenges to social inclusion.

Again, Amartya Sen's analysis is pertinent to highlight and address the challenges to inclusion that emerge in the realm of politics. Sen views that informed and unregimented formation of our values requires openness of communication and arguments and, political freedoms and civil rights can be central to this process. In order to express effectively what we value and to demand the attention be paid to it, we need free speech and democratic choice. Exclusion from the process of governance and political participation is indeed an impoverishment of human lives, no matter what our per capita income may be. (Sen, 2000)

Therefore, effective communication between the various groups participating in the political process is an important aspect of ensuring social inclusion. Similarly, disagreements and arguments are also important to address the differences between participants in inclusive politics. Thinkers like Sen and Habermas hence discuss the significance of communication and communicative action.

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<sup>3</sup> Retrieved from <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/l/labor-market.asp>



**Stop and Read:**

Communicative action: Habermas believes that competent communicative action is the key to constructing what is rational and creating a participatory democracy that can counter the administrative and coercive nature of formal systems, such as corporations and the welfare state.<sup>4</sup>

**14.4.4 Participation in Education**

Education is one of the key factors in the practice of social inclusion. Education provides the requisite skills to participate in the social process. It decreases the possibility of social exclusion. Further, education also brings an awareness of the redundant forms of division of labour and hence redundant social hierarchies. Thus, education can play a very important role in promoting social inclusion.

However, the lack of policies for universal education, especially at the elementary level acts as a barrier to the above processes of social mobility and social transformation (Modi, 2015). In contemporary societies, the lack of technical knowledge creates new forms of social exclusion such as the digital divide between people who have access to new information and communication technologies and those who do not. Lack of education is also responsible for the lack of development of social capital. Social capital plays a pivotal role in increasing social inclusiveness in social interactions by increasing membership in social networks rather than exclusive social groups.


There are also many challenges to the distribution of equal opportunity for education for all. Exclusion in education happens in terms of gender,

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<sup>4</sup> Retrieved from <https://www.enotes.com/research-starters/habermas-communicative-actions>

class, ethnicity and race. For example, Naila Kabeer (2005) discusses the various challenges and limits to the education for women. Both structural and ideological factors work together to limit the participation of different groups of people in education. Traditional forms of division of labour as well as skills among different genders and different communities, barriers in communication, unequal distribution of resources for education for all are a few of the dimensions of the challenge to inclusive education.

### CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

	<p>1. What are the challenges to inclusion?</p> <p>-----</p> <p>-----</p> <p>-----</p>
	<p>2. What do you mean by Digital Divide?</p> <p>-----</p> <p>-----</p>

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#### 14.5 SUMMING UP

- Social inclusion is necessary for the addressing different forms of social exclusion and social inequalities.
- Social inclusion is associated with the ideas of social justice, equality, fairness and citizenship.
- Different thinkers have given a different definition of social inclusion. John Rawls associates social inclusion to that of distributive justice whereas Amartya Sen associates it with that of relative deprivation.

- Social inclusion has also been defined and upheld by institutions and organizations that exist in the contemporary societies such as the United Nations and the European Union.
- Inclusive policies can be in the realm of economy, politics and culture.
- There are many challenges to social inclusion such as the existence of traditional structures of exclusion, lack of political and economic structures and processes of inclusion and lack of universal education.
- These challenges have to be addressed and overcome effectively for the full participation of all sections of people in the society.

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## **14.6 QUESTIONS**

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### **Short Questions**

1. What is social inclusion?
2. What is distributive justice?
3. What is relative deprivation?
4. What are the different challenges to social inclusion?

### **Essay type**

1. Elaborate on the association between social inequality and social inclusion.
2. Explain how Amartya Sen defines social inclusion in relation to the concept of relative deprivation.
3. Discuss the role of international and global organizations in devising strategies of social inclusion.
4. Explain how lack of adaptive economic and political structures pose a challenge to the process of social inclusion.

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