BLOCK 3
IDENTITIES AND INEQUALITIES

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UNIT 7 CASTE AND CLASS

Structure

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7.0 OBJECTIVES

In order to understand social stratification caste and class are both very important. After reading this unit you will be able to :

- understand the jati model and explain the role of class in social stratification;
- know the relationship between caste and class;
- understand the role of caste in mobility and elections;
- explain the various facets of caste in social strafication; and
- discuss caste hierarchy and class conflict.

7.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter attempts to handle the many difficulties which emerge in the analysis of caste. In fact, the literature on the subject has created more doubts than clarity. One finds a lack of distinction between varna and jati, while different perspectives develop one aspect of analysis at the cost of the other. Conjectural theories too have not been absent, particularly in the writings of the colonial ethnographers who continue to be used today to substantiate evidence. Several analysts popularized the view of Indian society as a "caste society" ignoring the dynamics of existing conditions. They perceived caste to be a logical opposite of the class system which was associated along with individualism, and particularly with the West.

7.2 BASIC FEATURES OF CASTE MODEL

Andre Beteille has outlined the basic features of this perspective o/the caste model of Indian society, while examining its usefulness as a scheme of analysis. The features of the 'caste model' are: '

i) It is based on the ideas held and expressed by certain sections of the people and not on observed behaviour, although secondary empirical materials have been used.

ii) It attaches kind of primary and universal significance to caste in India as this has been conceived in the classical texts.

iii) The entire system is viewed as being governed by certain more or less explicitly formulated principle or 'rules of the game'.

iv) The different castes which are the basic units in the system are conceived as fulfilling complementary functions, and their mutual relations are seen as being non-antagonistic.

Andre Beteille points out two dangers emanating from this model. Firstly, that it is so general a theory, that it can actually be applied to any society, and secondly, it fails to take into account the details of economic and political life.

Box 7.01

Beteille observes that the caste model, associated primarily with the work of Louis Dumont, has been found useful in the interpretation of beliefs relating to Hinduism. He considers the study of "interests" equally important in understanding of political and economic problems, and his analysis of caste in a Tanjore village is a good example of such a concern. Yogendra Singh's work has attempted to understand change, where class factors operate within the framework of caste categories with a new sense of identity. In such events, caste violations also occur, pointing to contradictions which were not so visible earlier.

M.N. Srinivas' concept of 'Sanskritization' is one such dominant process of change in the caste system. Sanskritization could be observed in terms of the specific contexts in which it occurs and secondly, as a historical process of change in the caste system as a whole.

Another process of cultural change described by Srinivas is called, 'westernization'. It brings about changes in values, norms and very the cultural roots of the people. Yogendra Singh sees these to have implications for 'structural changes' in the caste system in particular and in Indian society in general, epitomized as 'revolt' against hierarchy, or captured in the modernization process.

7.3 STRUCTURAL CHANGES

These structural changes appear as land reforms, the spread of education, social legislation, democratization, industrialization and urbanization. The effect of these on the caste system is that often, adaptive mechanisms such as caste associations appear as mechanism of social mobilisations. These organizations strive mainly for the fulfillment of materialistic and mundane goals for their members, thereby making them more aware of their deprivation and structural impediments. These

associations are often concerned with non-caste like- functions, but they are not classes, since members range across several class situations. Intra-caste contradictions are not allowed to c~ me up, and this may also create a notion of shared deprivations and class consciousness.

7.3.1 Economic Relations

The caste system has also been considered to be a system of economic relations. Joan Mencher writes that for those at the bottom, the caste system has worked as a very systematic tool of exploitation and oppression. One of the functions of the system has been to prevent the formation of classes with any commonality of interest of unity of purpose. Mencher has used "class" in the Marxian sense and adopted the Marxian model to analyze caste relations. As such, caste is a system of exploitation rather than a system of interdependence and reciprocity. Caste stratification has been a-deterrent to the development of "class conflict" or "proletarian consciousness". This is because "caste derives its validity from its partial masking of extreme socio-economic differences".

The most crucial point for consideration is that "classes" are not found as a system of stratification in the same way as castes are entrenched in Indian society. Further, that most of the "problems" created by the caste system are still of a class nature, related to economic domination and subjugation, privileges and deprivations, conspicuous waste and bare survival. These problems are essentially those of the privileged and the dis-privileged and one cannot locate these as concrete groupings in a strictly Marxian sense, as class antagonism, class consciousness and class unity are not present. Thus, India's situation is very different from other societies in the sense that the problems are of a "class" nature, but "classes" as divisions of society are not found as concrete socio-economic-units.

7.3.2 Power and Dominant Caste

Andre Beteille observes that power has shifted from one dominant caste to another and it is shifted from the caste structure itself, and come to be located in more differentiated structures such as panchayats and political parties. Yet Beteille does not reflect upon the consequences of this shift Can we study changes in caste structure without examining the consequent patterns of "distributive justice" or "equality/ inequality""? If we cannot analyse the flexibility inherent in the norms of the an egalitarian system, it would be difficult to interpret the emergence of formal institutions and structures as indicators of a "shift" from caste areas to "caste-free" structures. Even if a caste as a whole is not "dominant" and the "dominant group" comorises families of several caste, it does not mean that the magnitude of inequality has substantially reduced.

7.4 CASTE-CLASS NEXUS

My observation is that the change is from one kind of structure of inequality to another. Earlier also caste was characterized by inter-caste differentiation of roles as well as differentiation within particular castes. Thus, differentiation is not necessarily related to the reduction of caste inequalities. Differentiation of roles may bring about certain new inequalities which might strengthen the existing ones, and in such a situation, differentiation becomes a double -edged weapon

for the lowest groups in a caste system or for that matter in any type of system. We have a few "proletarian Zamindars" or landlords on the one hand, and also neo-rich "neo-influential" neo zamindars on the other, as a result of the emergence of new structures in the village community.

7.4.1 Synchronic Analysis

Studies on caste have paved the way to a certain fieldwork tradition, which produced 'synchronic' analysis. The emphasis had been on presenting caste as an equilibrating, harmonic, stable and consensual system. Change was often presented as a shifted in relations from organic to segmentary, closed to open, harmonic to disharmonic. Yet, empirical evidence seems to suggest that change in the caste system has been adaptive -evolutionary.

Activity 1

Discuss about Synchronic analysis with other students in the study centre. Pen down your findings in your notebook.

Changes in the caste system can be analysed from one structure of inequality and hierarchy to another structure of inequality. To understand this problem of change in the caste system, we should analyse the "composite status" of people of a given society, either taking 'family' or individual' as the unit of analysis of or both. Such an approach calls for the consideration of caste as a dynamic process, hence we need methodology for the understanding of the process of transformation. It is in this context that I will now discuss the caste-class nexus.

Both caste and class have been debated from narrow ideologia.1 standpoints. According to the 'caste model' perspective, caste is viewed as an overarching ideological system, encompassing all aspects of social life, of Hindus in particular and of other communities in general. One of the implications of such a view is that caste is basically a part of the infrastructure of Indian society. Thus occupation, division of labour, rules of marriage, interpersonal relations are elements of superstructure, expressing the reproduction of the ideology of caste.

7.4.2 Caste as a Normative System

Following from this we ask the question: In what way is caste a normative system? Why in certain spheres caste adheres to its normative sanctions whereas in other domains, caste groups and their members have taken up activities which depart from traditional sanctions of the caste system? I may be noted that members of a caste compete with each other, but they also co-operate with one another. Class-based distinctions within the caste have always been found in a pronounced form. Members of a caste in a given village can sometimes be representatives of Indian class divisions for while observing all the pertinent rules of marriage, they may actually define pertinent negotiations along the axes of class conditions.

Caste refers to inequality both in theory and practice. Dumont, in his classic works-Homo Hierarchicus considers inequality based on the caste system as a special type of inequality. For him The idea of the pure and the impure is basic to the understanding of caste; it is the very basic framework of hierarchy in India. He analysed the "ideal type" of the caste system based on ethnographic and ideological descriptions.

T.N. Madan upholds Dumont's view regarding hierarchy as a universal necessity. He points that society in India has remained largely static, change in society has taken place, but there has been no radical transformation.

7.4.3 Caste as an Emprical Reality

The basis of the understanding the caste system as an empirical reality is to locate caste groups such as jatis in a specific rural/urban context. It is a source of placement and of identity in society. At the latter level, identity is not a function necessarily of informal day to day relations. Caste, for instance, does not usually become a basis of marriage between a Tamil Brahmin and a Kanyakubja Brahmin of Uttar Pradesh. Yet, they may have a sense of belonging to what they perceive as the same stock, and may even co-operate in situations of crises and challenges. Therefore, one may ask: Is caste an interest group? Can common interests bring together more smoothly men of different castes from various regions than those of the same caste? Caste in certainly a resource, but the nature of this resource varies from caste to caste depending upon the status of a given caste in a given area. Caste identity /membership has become a liability for the members of the upper and middle castes because a certain percentage of jobs, seats in parliament and state legislatures, as well as admissions into institutions of higher learning have been reserved for the other backward castes, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes.

The view that caste and class are ideological opposites is not correct. The assumption that class can emerge as a social reality when caste has been destroyed in an erroneous conception of the relationship between the two. Both have been inseparable parts of India's social formation, and hence the study of their nexus, continuity and change.

Caste is a very complex system, for it is not simply a system of power relations and economic activities in a nominal sense. If it gets weakened in one aspect, it also gets strengthened in another, no doubt with certain alternations, additions and accretions. We need to seriously analyse the dynamics of the system. There is after all a class basis to rituals, pollution -purity and other non-material aspects of social life. For example, an organization like Jat Sabha is not a simple caste association, but in effect, it is an organization of peasants. Similarly, the Kisan Sabha is not a simple organization of peasants, it is very much an association of castes engaged in agriculture, particularly of Jats in northern Indian, and their counterparts in other states.

Further, to consider caste mainly as a rural phenomenon, and class as a reality belonging to the towns and cities is a myth. Let us look at look at caste elections in Jaipur city to substantiate our position.

Check Your Progress 1

1) Write a note on power and the dominant caste. Use about five lines for your answer.

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2) Discuss, caste as an empirical reality. Use about five lines for your answer.

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7.5 CASTE ELECTIONS

The annual elections of Khandelwal Vaishya Mahasabha were held in the heart of the city on Station Road about fifteen years ago. Hundreds of cars, jeeps auto rickshaws and two wheelers were deployed in the elections. About 60 stalls were installed for electioneering on both sides of the road. Traffic was diverted and police pickets were posted to control the situation. It was not only a show of casteism, but also of factionalism within the caste. What would those elected get out of all this by spending lakhs of rupees on the elections? One should seriously engage in empirical analysis to understand how caste and class interact to seek an answer to this question.

Box 7.02

There is no uniform pattern of caste structure in actual terms throughout India. There are thousands of castes in India with different names and nomenclatures, but there exist only five or six classes throughout the country. It is important to remember that these apparently distinct bases of social division in Indian society are not realistically very different from each other. There are numerous middle classes which are not directly related to production processes and they are an off-shoot of the modern Indian state apparatus.

In India, class-struggle is also in effect caste-struggle and vice-versa. Separation of the two seems to tie superfluous and mechanistic. A nomological plea that the two are distinct as they refer to different "social" and "economic" realities cannot be accepted because of the lack of ample substantive support and evidence about the two as separate entities.

This approach which focuses on the caste-class nexus for studying India's social formation would focus on the understanding and analysis of structure, culture, history and dialectics both from the upper levels of strata, as well as the marginalized communities.

Nexus does not imply a correspondence or symmetry between caste and class. Interdependence, contradictions, symmetry and hegemony of social relations are integral features o f this nexus. Andre Beteille notes that the hierarchies of caste and power in the village overlap to some extent, but also cut across.

Beteille also states that many areas of social life are now becoming to some extent "caste-free". Besides the Brahiminic tradition, the idea of the martial Rajput, the traditions of the Indian craftsman, the Indian merchant, and class and cultural traditions existed side by side in the Indian society.

We admit that due to the multi-dimensionality and complexity of the caste system, one encounters numerous difficulties in giving a precise definition of caste. The structural aspect of the caste is explained by describing it as a general principle of stratification. Caste as a cultural system in understood in terms of the prominence of ideas on pollution and purity and notions of hierarchy, segregation and corporateness.

F.G. Bailey views caste as a closed system of stratification, whereas Beteille considers aspects of the caste system as both 'closed' and 'open'. We have seen that Bailey finds that caste is becoming increasingly segmentary because of the emergence of differentiated structures in India. These analytic variations hinder a common definition of caste.

7.5.1 Caste and Mobility

Although caste is not really a very flexible system, yet a caste permits mobility in certain areas to its members. A given caste in guided by the norms of the caste system regarding inter-caste dependence. However, any given caste has also its autonomy with regard to the observance of its practices, rituals and rights in relation to other castes.

Srinivas notes that even today agricultural production requires co-operation of several castes. The use of the caste idiom is quite widespread (1966). Marx related the Asiatic mode of production to the stability of the caste system in India. Beteille blames Dumont in particular for encouraging a "caste-view" of Indian society. Such a 'caste model' according to Beteille does not provide an analysis of material interests along with the study of ideas and values. There is a dialectical relationship between the two, and Dumont and Pocock's notion of 'binary opposition' is far form the notion of 'dialectics' as given by Marx. Beteille also suggests that economic and political conflicts occur with a certain degree of autonomy of their own, hence they could be studied independent of caste and religious beliefs and ideas. The caste model would not permit such a path of understanding. Edmund Leach's understanding that co-operation refers to caste, and competition refers to class is naive and unconvincing. Not only families of dominant castes compete with each other to extend patronage to the lower castes for maintaining their dominance, but the lower caste families too compete to seek favours from the families of the dominant castes. Such competition is really not a new phenomenon. Even feuds due to conflicting claims on territory were quite common among the Kshatriyas and Brahmins for seeking power in ancient and medieval India. Leach's view that caste was merely caste' and a class-like situation' emerged only when the patrons started competing with each other (I960:1-10) ignores the fact that inter-caste conflicts and revolts by lower castes against the upper castes have been a historical fact.

7.6 EXPLAINING CLASS

Marxist notions of class and class-conflict have become hallmarks of the studies of India's agricultural and urban-industrial structures. Marx himself discussed caste and the traditional ethos of village community in his two articles on India. Initially Marx characterised the Asiatic mode of the production as an absence of private property in land and the static nature of economy (1947) due to a certain tie-up between caste, agriculture and village handicrafts. However, C.T. Kurian

observes that that the analysis of the Asiatic mode does not deny the role of class contradictions and class structures. India's pre-capitalist economic formation was based on both caste and class side by side.

Two questions are relevant for a discussion on class: (i) what method can we use for analysing the class structure in Indian society? And (ii) what is the class-caste nexus, and its ramifications and inter-relations in each region? The purpose of discussing these questions in not to accept or reject the Marxian approach but to see what useful insights it provides us.

Ashok Rudra, while analyzing the class composition of the Indian agricultural population, observes that there are only two classes in Indian agriculture — the big landlords, and the agricultural labourers. These two classes are in antagonistic relationship with each other, and this constitutes the principal contradiction in Indian rural society (1978: 916-23). Similar to Rudra's view is that held by A.R. Desai (1975).

Box 7.03

Rudra emphatically argues that Indian agriculture has capitalist relations and capitalist development. Hence, there are two classes — 'haves' and 'have-nots'. The State in India has assumed the norms of capitalist society as **the** axis **of its developmental strategy. One-of the implications of this formulation is that the frame of reference which applies to the rest of the world also applies very well to the Indian society. The other inference is that the dominant variable for analysis of Indian society is the economic in all situations and contexts.**

In India, V.M. Dandekar observes that strikes by wage earners is a very common feature, and they include those earning from two hundred rupees to those who have salaries upto several thousands. Hence wage-earners must be seen as a heterogeneous category.

About three-fourths of the workforce are left out by the Marxian yardstick. The Indian state, being a welfare state, is the largest employer today. Is the Indian slate a capitalist, exploitative and oppressive agency just like an industrialist or an employer of wage earners? About 10 million workers are engaged in small industries and family-owned concerns, and these workers generally do not witness class-antagonism and strikes. The organised labour is one-ninth of the total workforce. Can we accept the Marxian approach? Overlapping of class, caste and occupation, elite conflict, pressure groups and factions, influence of middle classes and the prevalence of 'mixed classes' and 'gentlemen farmers' are some the important elements to be taken into account for a serious analysis of India's class structure. The jajmani system too can be explained in terms of class relations and the mode of production. Let us now look at caste hierarchy and occupation.

7.7 CASTE HIERARCHY AND CLASS-CONFLICT

The dalits have been attacked, murdered, their women-folk raped and inflicted upon with various indignities. Arun Sinha observes that it is 'class war' against Harijans and not haphazard atrocities. In a dispatch to Economic and Political Weekly, Sinha observes that 'in the villages of Bihar, the rise of a rich peasant class has driven agricultural labourers of all castes-Chamars, Dusaudhs, Kurmis,

Yadavs, Bhumihars and so on, to forsake their caste organizations and fight along trade union lines. This is to read as "class war" cutting across caste lines. But the fact is that Harijan or Chamar agricultural labourers cannot simply by equated with his Brahmin or Bhumihar counterpart because the two have the same position in the class structure.

The real situation in post-independent India is that a class of rich peasants from the backward castes is at the top of the class hierarchy. This class is struggling against the social and political domination of the upper castes. The backward classes received encouragement for accelerating their struggle against the upper castes during the Janata government regime in Bihar. The backward classes are at level in the caste hierarchy and so is their position in class structure.

Check Your Progress 2

1) Explain class as a social phenomenon. Use about five lines for your answer.

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2) Outline caste hierarchy and class conflict. Use about five lines for your answer.

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The Janata rule brought about a shift in the structure of dominance in Bihar having implications for the political economy of the State. The Brahmins lost their political dominance substantially.

7.7.1 Incidence of Violence and Exploitation

The incidents of massacre, loot and rape of the women of scheduled castes in Belchi, Agra. Pantnagar, Marathwada and Bajitpur, among other places, show the role of the caste system vis-a-vis class struggle and class organization as reported by the Atyachar Virodhi Samiti. The Samiti investigated the nature and extent of repression of scheduled castes in Maharashtra. The SCs were also poor peasants and agricultural labourers. The specific oppression and exploitation of the rural poor women, both sexually and materially particularly of the dalit women, have been highlighted in the report by the Samiti. The findngs and observations of the Samiti on caste are quite meaningful as caste is seen as a system of relations of production. The ongoing conflict between Ranbir Sena and an ultra-left outfit in Bihar has led to killings and counter-killings of the poor low caste people and the upper caste Bhumihars in particular. The following points may be noted:

i) The caste system functions as an extremely effective method of economic exploitation. The dominant class also acquires political power and social prestige which further perpetuates and consolidates caste hierarchy. Thus, caste hierarchy reflects ownership of land, and economic hierarchy is closely linked with social hierarchy.

ii) Caste determines a definite relation to the means of production and subsistence specially in rural areas. Caste riots reflect the conflict of class interests.

iii) Caste also refers to the relations of production as it controls the access of groups and individuals to the conditions of production of production and to the resources, and provide the social frame work for politico-ritual activity.

iv) B .R. Ambedkar rightly observed that the caste system was not merely a division of labour, but also a division of labourers. However, caste prevents labourers from being a class-for-itself. Hence caste is to be viewed as an ideology in the manner of 'false consciousness". I have observed that both caste and class have played a significant role in the emergence of dalit identity and movement.

v) Caste and religion are used to perpetuate a particular class structure.

vi) Caste persists as a part of feudal ideology.

Activity 2

With reference to the points i)_____ vi) above discuss with other students the present state of the caste system. Note down your answer in a notebook.

The Samiti further states that "caste is one of the most important aspects of Indian society It represents a specific form of oppression at the level of relations of production". To say that there are only class issues, and there is nothing like questions pertaining to caste, is totally absurd. Because caste divisions beyond purely 'economic' class do still persist. So issues around specific caste questions must be taken by all the progressive and leftists, dalits and non-dalits and organizations. The reality today is of class interest, developing alongside caste oppression and class exploitation.

7.8 LET US SUM UP

The structural aspects of caste, namely, economic and political dimensions have remained underestimated. So also analysis of the cultural aspects of social stratification can provide a deeper understanding of India's social formation, since the two are in fact inseparable from each other. As we have noted, classes function within the contexts of castes, caste conflicts are also class or agrarian conflicts. The rifts between the upper the and the lower castes to a large extent correspond with conflicts between landowners and sharecroppers or agricultural labourers.

Four basic points for the understanding of caste and class relations and their transformations may be noted. These are: (i) dialectics, (ii) history, (iii) culture, and (iv) structure.

Dialectics do not simply refer to binary fission in the cognitive structure of the society. It refers to the effective notions which being about contradictions and highlights relations between unequal segments and men and women. History is not conjectural based on mythology, scriptures and idealistic constructions, but it provides a substantial account of existent conditions of work and relationships. Culture does not include just cultural practices, rituals, rites of passage etc., it defines the rules of the game, the nature of relations between the privileged and the deprived, and modes of resistance or consensus. Structure is no doubt a product of dialectical contradictions, historical forces and certain rules of the game, but it becomes 'formation' once it has emerged, and in return, becomes a sort of 'force' to determine in some way the course of history. Thus structure refers to relations between social segments as a point of time, but more as a historical product and reality. Having these elements as the kernel of structural-historical approach, changes in caste and class structure could be considered as "transformational processes".

The following processes of structural changes emanating from the above paradigmatic explanations may be noted:

i) Downward mobility and prolectarianisation,

ii) Upward mobility and embourgeoisiement,

iii) Urban income for rural people and mobility in the village.

iv) Rural non-agricultural income and mobility.

These are themes which require much attention if we are to achieve a more complete understanding of caste and class in India.

7.9 KEY WORDS

Caste : An ascriptive grouping with several characteristics including an allegiance to the varna all-India scheme.

Synchromic : An event or analysis which is happening, or done simultaneously with another event or analysis.

7.10 FURTHER READINGS

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7.11 SPECIMEN ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

1) Beteille has observed that power shifts from one dominant caste to another. Further power has how come to be located in move differential structures such as panchayats and political parties. It has been observed by K L Sharma that the change has been from one kind of structure of inequality to another.

2) To understand caste system as an empirical reality is to put caste groups such as jatis in a specific rural/urban context. This creates a placement in society and provides identity. Identity may not be a function of day to day interactions. Thus while two caste groups may not intermarry they may have a sense of belonging to the same stock and cooperate in crises and challenges.

Check Your Progress 2

1) Marxist notions of caste have been widely used in the study of India' s agricultural and urban industrial structures. It has been pointed out that India's precapitalist formation was based both on caste and class. Various writers have used class in their analyses in agriculture including Rudra and Dandekar.

2) It is found that those at the lower end of the caste hierarchy have been systematically attacked. Sinha feels that this is a' class war' and not incidential atrocities The actual situation in post-independent India is that a class of rich peasants of the backward classes is at the top of the class hierarchy. This class is struggling against the social and political domination of the upper classes, with some success.

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UNIT 8 RACE AND ETHNICITY

Structure

8.0 Objectives

8.1 Introduction

8.2 Defining Race

- 8.2.1 Race as a social construction
- 8.2.2 Racism

8.3 Ethnicity: History, Definition and Element

- 8.3.1 History of the concept

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- 8.4.1 Ethnic groups
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8.6 Ethnic Stratification

- 8.6.1 Ethnic Stratification
- 8.6.2 Nation and Ethnic Group
- 8.6.3 Nationalism and Ethnicity

8.6 Development of Nationality

- 8.6.7 Ethnic Nationalism : The Indian Case

8.7 Let Us Sum Up

8.8 Key Words

8.9 Further Readings

8.10 Specimen Answers to Check Your Progress

8.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through this Unit you will able to:

- define the idea of race, racism.
- provide definition and characteristics of ethnic group
- Outline the diffirent concepts of ethinicity based on biological descent,cultural homogeneity and ethnic self consciousness;
- Explain the rise of ethnicity with the help of cultural ethnicity and political ethnicity approaches;
- Discuss the phenomena of ethnic stratification and ethnic nationalism:

8.1 INTRODUCTION

This Unit will discuss the idea of race and ethnicity. These concepts are frequently used to describe some of the social phenomena of present times. Here, we will initially try to understand the classical definitions of race and ethnicity, ethnic group, its characteristics, etc. Race and ethnicity are used in sociological discourse to understand various social structures of power, inequality, stratification, etc.

Though, the concepts like race and ethnicity are considered as biological but such concepts have deeper meanings and social constructions. Moreover, they are not just social constructions; rather they lead to creation of various identities and marginalization of different social groups. Let us elaborate these concepts and ideas associated with them to understand them in a more lucid manner.

8.2 DEFINING RACE

In a common parlance race is understood as the external physical features of various human beings whose categorization depends upon such features like the skin colour, facial features, height, etc. Race is thus a category of human beings due to some of the physical features including skin colour and other facial features.If we see people from various continents and countries, we will see that most of the people of Europe are largely having fair skin where as people of Africa are often having black skin. Apart from the skin colour, some people have curly hair, some have straight hair, some people are short and some are relatively taller. Similarly, we can see differences in shape and size of nose, lips, etc.Depending upon these differences people are clubbed in various groups popularly known as race, such as, Caucasian, Mongoloid, Negroid, etc. These categories are considered as biological i.e. they are inherited, hence widely race is regarded as a biological category. Thus, a racial group is described as a group having similar physical traits. It is a condition where a group sees similar characteristics between themselves and sees others as different. Such kinds of divisions were made basically by the physical anthropologists during 18th century and considered as scientific classifications of human beings.

The idea of race emerged during 18th and 19th century when European countries started colonising the rest of the world. Such categorization helped to establish the whites Men supremacy over other populations, as well as, domination and conquest. The ethnocentrism of the whites prevented them to look humans as species rather than categorizing them in terms of physical appearances. Along with the physical features most of the times behavioral characteristics were also added to various races. Frederick Farrar in 1866 lectured on the "Aptitude of Races" where he divided people into 3 groups based on civilization:

Savage : All Africans, indigenous people, people of color (with the exception of the Chinese).

Semi savage : Chinese who were once savage type but now well civilized.

Civilized : European, Aryan and Semitic peoples.

Carolus Linnaeus, a German Taxonomist, classified human beings into four categories depending upon the skin colour:

1. American (Red)
2. European (White)
3. Asian (Yellow)
4. African (Black)

He also said that Americans are ill-tempered, subduable, Europeans are serious and strong, Asians are melancholy and greedy, and the African are listless and lazy.

Though, race is considered to be biological but in sociological understanding, race is considered as a social construction rather than biological. Many authors consider race as a category of social stratification. Smedley (1998) argues that till 17th century there was no historical record that the idea of race existed. He further argues that race is "premier source of human identity" (Smedley, 1998, p. 690). He says that:

"The term race had been used to refer to humans occasionally since the sixteenth century in the English language but was rarely used to refer to populations in the slave trade. It was a mere classificatory term like kind, type, or even breed, or stock, and it had no clear meaning until the eighteenth century. During this time, the English began to have wider experiences with varied populations and gradually developed attitudes and beliefs that had not appeared before in Western history. This reflected a new kind of understanding and interpretation of human difference."

The Europeans colonized parts of Africa, Asia and other countries and justified their claim of superiority over others. They took help of religion, beliefs and ever science. They legitimized the slavery of the blacks, supremacy and various other rights of the whites. Such beliefs of racial superiority of the whites they believed gave them the rights to colonise other populations. The racial distinctions and the physical features normalized the idea that whites are superior and others are lesser form of human beings.

8.2.1 Race as a Social Construction

Though it is widely believed by many that race is a biological category but, sociologists, social scientists and even biologists argue that race is not a biological or inherited category rather it is a social construct. As we have mentioned above initially, it was presumed that race is biological, historical and scientific but nowadays it is considered as a myth. The biological studies over race and its genetics indicate that within a so called given race much more variations are found than between the races. It implies that there are no special genetic markers to differentiate people in the name of race. Two people from the same race have even sometime more differences in comparison to the people of different races. The diversity of people many a times are influenced by the geographical locations. So, there is no biological base of classifying people. There is a social basis of their classification. It has its own history and politics of classifying people. The creation of racial identities is a process of creation of hierarchies between people, thereby, some groups enjoy power and privileges. The idea of race hence has no scientific basis. The skin colour of people varies due to the presence of pigment and melanin in the skin.

8.2.2 Racism

As historians and other scholars admit the fact that humans originated in Africa and migrated to different geographical locations in various phases of history. People adopted the geographical differences and adopted the favorable traits suitable in these particular environments. Moreover, there is so much of intermixing between people that biological category has already been lost.

During the 18th and 19th century the colonial powers in different places of the world used racism to establish their supremacy. They even took the help of religion

and science to establish their racial supremacy and differences. Darwin's theory of "survival of the fittest" was used by the colonial powers to justify their genocide and racism. This theory means that the strong would survive and the weak would die. They considered themselves stronger than others and hence, they legitimized their supremacy of power and race. The colonized also legitimized slavery as well as lots of other myths to create subordination of the Blacks and other colonized people. Race is a process of creation of 'othering', i.e. the process by which you separate yourself from other people in terms of superiority and inferiority. This is also a process through which some people are marginalized, dominated and controlled. It also creates various kinds of stereotypes in our society. The racial categorization was made to accept the fact that whites are superior to the others and also gave the legitimacy to it. Thus, the idea of race was not scientific rather a process of racialization of groups. We can sum up that race was a social construction where cultural meaning is attached or imposed on it. Even the very idea of race has changed over time. For example, in Brazil and other countries, the class position is more important than the colour. Even the inter-racial marriages are taking place within the white dominated countries. However, the point being framed is that race is a social construct. (BSOC 102)

Activity 1

From the internet, download the film by Spielberg, "Schindler's List" or Anne-Franks diary written as a victim of the Holocaust during II Word War, when Jews were killed eumass. Write an essay on 'Racism' in at least two pages and discuss with other students at your Study Center.

Check Your Progress-1

1. Define and discuss the concept of race in about 10 lines.

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2. What do you understand by racism?

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8.3 ETHNICITY: HISTORY, DEFINITION AND ELEMENTS

We will now discuss the history, definition and elements of ethnicity.

8.3.1 History of the Concept

The word ethnic has a long history. It is derived from the Greek word ethnos meaning nation which is not depicted as a political entity but as a unit of persons with common blood or descent. Its adjectival form *ethnikos* used in Latin as *ethnicus* referred to heathens, the 'others' who did not share the faith. In English, the term referred for a long time to some one who was neither Christian nor Jew, i.e., a pagan or heathen. In other words, ethnics were those 'others' who are not 'us'. By the twentieth century its meaning changed again with reassertion of its Greek roots indicating the end of the 'them vs us' idea, *(them* or the *others* being ethnics). Now it is used as a particular way to define not only others but also ourselves (Cornell and Hartmann, 1998).

Oommen (1990) using the French version of ethnics, namely, *ethnie* defines them as a people characterised by a common history, tradition, language and life style. However, he also adds the feature of 'uprootedness from home' to this definition. In other words, for him, ethnicity emerges when people are uprooted from their homeland due to conquest, colonization or immigration and diverse groups come into contact with each other in a new setting. If such displaced people are away from their homeland and yet continue to follow their' native' life style, they are ethnies.

8.4 EARLY CONCEPTIONS OF ETHNICITY

A look at the literature reveals three popular conceptions, of ethnicity: biological, cultural and psychological. The biological conception is based on a common *genetic* descent. In this sense, ethnicity has been treated as synonymous with race. In many earlier works (MacCrone, 1937;Dollard, 1937,Fumivall, 1972; Smith, 1965) biological factors have been considered to be the elements constituting ethnicity and emphasis was laid on the origins of race and racism in relation to colonialism. In this approach the cultural aspect of ethnicity was totally ignored. The second conception of ethnicity involved a new thinking . which differentiated race from ethnicity. This view treated race as a cultural phenomenon (Burgess, 1978), Here the mere sharing of physical traits was not seen as a sufficient condition for defining an ethnic group. Rather, the symbolic differences among groups became the bases of ethnicity-with values, customs, historical back ground, life style, territory and most importantly, language and religion being the prominent symbols of ethnicity.

The third conception of ethnicity defines it in terms of the consciousness of a common identity. Both common descent and cultural distinctiveness, individually and together, were no longer considered enough to constitute ethnicity. Instead, *awareness* among the members of a group regarding their similarity te each other and differences from other groups was what gave them an ethnic identity

(Patterson, 1953; Connor, 1978). What is *there* was not important but what is *perceived* and *believed* was seen as the basis of ethnicity. Simply put, sharing of physical, attitudinal, behavioural and cultural features was not considered sufficient to foster ethnic feelings. The group must also *perceive* themselves as distinct from others, that is, the members must define themselves as a we group.

8.4.1 Ethnic Groups

Paul Brass (1991) discusses three ways of defining ethnic groups; a) in terms of objective attributes, b) by reference to subjective feelings and c) in relation to behaviour. The first definition implies that there are some distinguishing *objective cultural features* that separate one group from the other-language, territory, religion, dress etc. All these are called *ethnic markers* through which distinctions between one ethnic group mid another are emphasized between these are maintained. So, while the ethnic groups may interact with one another for the purpose of, say, economic activity, the objective ethnic markers ensure the continuity of separate group identity. The second aspect, i.e., presence of subjective feelings implies the existence of an *ethnic self-consciousness.* As mentioned earlier, at the base of ethnic affinity lies real or assumed common identity. The important tiling to keep in mind is that the fact of common descent is not as important as the belief in it. It is not what is that is critical but *what people perceive.* In other words, ethnicity is a subjective construct, it is how we see ourselves. The third dimension, namely, the behavioural one, points to the existence of concrete, specific ways in which ethnic groups do or do not behave in relation to, or in interaction with other groups. In this sense, the normative behaviour of an ethnic group may include practices related to kinship, marriage, friendship, rituals etc.

Thus, an ethnic group is a collectivity which is perceived by others in society as being different in terms of language, religion, race, ancestral home, culture etc., whose members perceive themselves as different from others and who participate in shared activities built around their actual or mythical common origin and culture. On the basis of these variables a group can be ranged from being barely ethnic to fully ethnic. It is a collectivity within a larger society characterised by elements like real or imaginary common ancestry, memories of a shared historical past, and a cultural focus on one or more symbolic elements such as kinship patterns, religious affiliations, language or dialect forms, etc. Also imperative is some consciousness of kind among the group members. Consequently, most definitions of ethnicity and ethnic groups focus on objective and involuntary external markers, as well as, subjective and voluntary internal consciousness as its major elements.

8.4.2 Major Elements of Ethnicity

Of the two major elements of ethnicity, namely, the presence of objective external markers and subjective awareness, the latter-"'consciousness"-is considered more significant since genetic and cultural similarities are seen as the 'givens' of social existence. However, as I have discussed in an earlier article (Sabbarwal, 1992), this is only a partial explanation of ethnicity since it does not answer a fundamental question, namely, what creates this consciousness in the first place? Some like Kuper and Smith (1969) and Gastil (1978) hold that when different ethnic groups come into contact with each other and interact with each other ethnic

consciousness or awareness arises. However, this too, is not a satisfactory explanation as mere contact between groups need not always result in ethnic awareness. To overcome this problem, a distinction, therefore, has to be drawn *cultural ethnicity* and *political ethnicity.*

Check Your Progress 2

1) Write a note on ethnic groups. Use about five lines for your answer.

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2) Write a note on the political perspective on ethnicity. Use about five lines for your answer.

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8.5 CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVES

More recently, there have crystallized two major perspectives on -ethnicity: anthropological and political. The *anthropological/cultural* approach to ethnicity refers to a belief in shared cultural values and practices. In this sense, ethnic group is identified in terms of cultural phenomena such as common customs, institutions, rituals, language etc. This conception of ethnicity is based on the functionalist view that people need a sense of belonging somewhere which gives them strength to sustain themselves in times of pressures and this is provided by the ethnic identity. It is held that with the emergence of urbanization, economic progress, technological advancement, mass education, mass media etc., the individual faces a loss of tradition and primordial identities. This, how ever, instead of making ethnic identities weaker, actually results in their reinforcement as in a mass society the individual feels the desperate need for some kind of identity which is smaller than the State but larger than the family.

8.5.1 Ethnicity and Functionalism

It is notable that functionalism did not always advance this idea. In fact, initially it held the view that obsolete' ascriptive collectivities like ethnic groups did not fit' in the modem societies. The assumption was that inuniversalistic and achievement-oriented modem industrial societies, ethnic mid cultural differences

decline, the society as a whole becomes increasingly homogenous and this results in the weakening of ethnic distinctions. Some scholars like Kerr *et al.* (1960), Rostow (1960) and Hyden (1983) attributed it to the homogenizing influence of market (economic) forces. Others like Gellner (1983) said that rise of nationalistic (political) tendencies unified the societies which ultimately resulted in the disappearance of cultural and ethnic differences.

Activity 3

Why does ethnicity not cease to exist in a modern society? Discuss with other students and knowledgeable persons. Note down your findings in a notebook.

Writers like Glazer (1975), however, have contended that not only does ethnicity *not* cease to exist in a modem society, but is actually revived' and what's more, the increasing importance of ethnic identities or *ethnicization* can be attributed to the very conditions of modernization. Similarly, Eisenstadt (1973), Murphree (1986) and Wallerstein (1986) point out that they see no visible signs of *de-ethnicization* in the modem world. Rather, one can witness a *resurgence* of particularistic tendencies. Sharma (1990) illustrates this clearly with examples drawn from the Indian society where despite technological, institutional, valuational and behavioural signs of modernization ethnicity reigns supreme. For instance, in terms of food, dress and interior decoration of one's home, being 'ethnic" is considered *chic* (fashionable). Similarly, a "modern" institution like electoral democracy has led to the reawakening of the primordial consciousness of religion, caste etc. In short, the later functionalist writings highlighted the persistence of ethnicity despite, or even because of modemization.

8.5.2 Political Perspective on Ethnicity

More popular today, however, is the *political* perspective on ethnicity. It refers to the political awareness and mobilization of a group on ethnic basis, as a result of which certain groups *consciously* seek to assert their ethnicity, even exaggerating their ethnic characteristics to achieve the end of political autonomy or sovereignty. The argument is that the rise of capitalism has caused uneven development leading to reinforcement of parochial loyalties and ethnic self-consciousness. Most of the literature on ethnicity focuses on discrimination and highlights how the perception of unequal distribution of resources by the disadvantaged groups results in the rise of ethnic awareness among them. A minority group, for instance, in a culturally plural society may opt for political ethnicity when it is pushed to the wall by the majority group which tends to be oppressive in pursuit of its privileges. In such a case, minority groups may mobilize or even invent an ethnic identity in an effort to oppose discrimination. Groups may also exploit primordial loyalties for political reasons which may be used by them to advance their political interests mid maximise their power. A key example of ethnicity being utilized for representing and advancing the interests of a group is its use in politics where ethnic groups employ ethnicity to make demands in the political arena for alteration in their status, economic well-being, educational opportunity, civil rights etc. Put simply, ethnicity is interest based and ethnic groups are interest groups.

Sharma (1996) has called these two categories *generic* mid *emergent* ethnicity. In the generic connotation, it is mi identity based on a set of objective cultural

markers which help the members of a group differentiate themselves from other groups and be differentiated by the oilier groups as well. In this sense, mi ethnic group is a *bounded cultural group* having certain distinguishing features separating in from other groups. What is highlighted here is the awareness of cultural diversity by different groups. However, when this awareness becomes consciousness of political differentiation, emergent ethnicity is born marked by a process of power struggle.

Box 8.01

The origin and resurgence of ethnicity lie in intergroup contact, that is, when different groups come into one another's sphere of influence. Of course, the shape it takes depends on the conditions in that society. The second point is that ethnicity is used to meet the present demands of survival for the oppressed groups. When subjugated groups find it difficult to tolerate the dominance of others and make efforts to improve their position, ethnicity is generated.

8.6 ETHNIC STRATIFICATION

Stratification is a system whereby people are unequally ranked and rewarded on the basis of wealth, power mid prestige. It is part of every society mid may take various forms like class, gender, race mid, of course, ethnicity. The earlier studies of stratification used to focus on the phenomena of caste mid race while gender and ethnicity were treated as side issues. However, of late not only have ethnicity and gender been getting some attention in stratification analysis, but ethnic stratification is even replacing class as the foremost form of social division since now property relations tend to be determined by ethnic ranking instead of it being the other way round. The model of internal colonialism is used to analyse ethnic resurgence mid conflicts by highlighting the dominant group's political control over, economic exploitation of and cultural domination over the minority groups, and their ideological justification of this unequal relationship. Ethnic stratification shares a lot of things with the other forms of stratification, such as, ranking, inequality, discrimination, exploitation etc. However, there is one crucial difference. Ethnic groups have the capability to acquire mi independent nation, an option which is not available to class mid gender groups.

8.6.1 Ethnic Nationalism

Membership of an ethnic group tends to determine a person's status in society. This can occur in two ways. Social rewards like money, prestige mid power me often allocated along ethnic lines. Secondly, in most societies one or more ethnic groups dominate others in economic, political mid cultural matters. Ethnic politics can, therefore, take the appearance of ethnic stratification resulting hi the emergence of ethnic nationalism. As discussed earlier, ethnic identity may sometimes be related to political necessities and demands. This happens when minority groups try to play the ethnic card in order to acquire a better deal for themselves in a plural society. However, some ethnic groups go a step further and demand a say in the political system or control over a piece of territory or even demand a national status, i. e., country of their own. If they succeed in achieving any of these objectives they become a nationality or a nation (Brass, 1991).

8.6.2 Nation and Ethnic Group

The concepts of nation, nation-state, nationality, national minority etc. arose with the rise of capitalism in Western Europe and spread to the rest of the world. Nation is derived from the Latin word *nasci* meaning to be born and Latin noun *nationem,* i.e.. breed or race. It is a historically evolved, stable uniformity of languages, territory, economic life and psychological make up which can be seen in the form of a common culture. More importantly, it is a type of ethnic community which is politicized and has universally accepted group rights in a political system.

Box 8.02

Nation has a variety of meanings-country, society, state and even ethnic group. It has been defined as a country, or the inhabitants of a country united under a single independent government, a State. It is also defined as a people connected by supposed ties of blood which are generally observable in common interests and interrelations. The latter, interestingly, is also the definition of an ethnic group. Often nation and ethnic group are equated or nation is seen as a type of ethnic group characterized by a history or mythology of statehood or a strong desire for statehood. Reinforced by such myths, histories and aspirations nationalism often unites people for ethnic movements in search of higher socio-economic status, independence and autonomy. Thus, the desire of an ethnic community to possess or remember what they once had and wish to repossess, leads to the demands for autonomy and political sovereignty, thereby turning them into a national community.

Oommen (1997) holds that nation and ethnic group share many features but differ on a crucial point, namely, territory. An ethnic group becomes a nation only when it identifies itself with a territory. Contrarily, a nation becomes an ethnic community when the members are separated from their homeland. No single feature of ethnic groups ran be identified as being more important than the others. Each gains importance in different situations. But a nation cannot be a nation without territory. Thus, he rails ethnic groups 'passive nations', groups with potential to become nations while nations are active ethnicity' as they emerge out of ethnic elements. Bacal (1997) too, offers the terms 'micro-nations' and 'macro-ethnies' for ethnic groups and nations, respectively supporting Oommen's empljasis on territory being the key factor in differentiating the two.

Check Your Progress 3

1) Write on the nexus between nation and ethnic group. Use about five lines for your answer.

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2) What is ethno-nationalism? Explain in about five lines.

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8.6.3 Nationalism and Ethnicity

Nationalism refers to the expressed desire of a people to establish and maintain a self-governing political entity. It has proven to be one of the most powerful forces in the contemporary world, both a creator and destroyer of modern states. Nationality and ethnicity are related, yet different. Ethnicity may become nationalism and nationalism is always based on real or assumed ethnic ties. Yet, at the heart of nationalism lie the three themes of autonomy, unity and identity. Autonomy implies an effort by a people to determine their own destiny and free themselves from external constraint. Unity means ending internal divisions and uniting, and identity involves an effort by a group to find and express their authentic cultural heritage and identity (Cornell and Hartman, 1998). Thus, nationalism is a form of ethnicity in which a particular ethnic identity is crystallized and institutionalized by acquiring apolitical agenda. Nations are created when ethnic groups in a multi-ethnic state are transformed into a self-conscious political entities. Hence, it is the goals of sovereignty and self-determination that set nationalism apart from ethnicity.

Activity 4

Discuss the nexus between nationalism and ethnicity with students at the study centre. Also talk with people knowledgeable in the subject. Put down your findings in your notebook.

8.6.4 Development of a Nationality

According to Brass (1991) there are two steps in the formation of a nationality. First there is transformation of an ethnic category into a community which involves changes like creation of a self-conscious linguistic unity, formation of a caste association etc. This happens in the early stages of modernization in multi-ethnic societies where social divisions of various kinds are still prevalent. The second stage involves the articulation and acquisition of social, economic and political rights for the members of the group or for the group as a whole. When the group succeeds by its own efforts in achieving and maintaining group rights through political action and political mobilization, it goes beyond ethnicity and establishes itself as a nationality.

However, why does ethnicity become nationality? This question is answered by the *relative deprivation approach* which focuses our attention on the feeling of frustration caused by the differences between what people feel they legitimately deserve and what they actually get. Similarly, when subjugated groups fail to achieve success according to the norms established by the dominant group the nature of their response tends to be ethnic antagonism which may take the form of a) struggle of the indigenous people's right to their land and culture, b) efforts by minority groups to procure equal economic, political and cultural rights; c) competition by ethnic groups for obtaining scarce resources; and d) movements for a separate nation.

8.6.5 Ethno-Nationalism: The Indian Case

Sharma (1991) has described how ethnic antagonism has posed four serious challenges to tie Indian state. These are:

Casteism-A curious mix of ethnic identity and modern interests in which the ethnic group uses the caste ideology to further its economic and political interests, e.g., a political party asking for votes of aparticular caste group.

Communalism-the "unholy" alliance between religion and politics in which religion may be used for political or economic gains.

Nativism-the 'sons of the soil' concept in which regional identities become the source of ethnic strife, e.g., the movement in Assam to expel the 'foreigners' from Bengal.

Ethno-nationalism-the transformation of an ethnic group to a nationality which may start demanding autonomous governance in a particular territory or even secession, separation aid recognition as a sovereign nation, e.g., the movements in Kashmir and Punjab (Khalistan).

8.7 LET US SUM UP

From the above discussion we have learnt that race and ethnicity are two distinct social constructions. The 18th and the 19th century colonial anthropology and science created the idea of race to create physical differentiation like skin colour, facial or physical differences amongst people different from. The racial classification was used to create hierarchies among the races because it served the interest of the colonial powers. They legitimized their rule on the bases of races. The idea of ethnicity is the idea of group of people who believe to have the same cultural origin, cultural similarities, same language, and religion, etc. Though, race and ethnicity look to be natural, but we have learnt from our discussion that they are two diff erent social constructs.

The final question is under what conditions does ethnic diversity lead to conflict and discrimination and when does it result in cultural affluence and social adaptability. Conceptually, ethnicity is a search for an identity by a group and a demand that this identity be publicly acknowledged. However, it also has a practical aim for that group, namely, the demand for progress, for a rising standard of living, for a more effective political order, greater social justice and of playing apart in the large arena of the world politics of exercising influence among the nations.

Ethnic lines will not disappear in the near future and ethnicity will persist. Ethnic behaviour, attitudes and identities have been, are being and will be determined by not only what goes on among the ethnics themselves but also by the developments in the larger society and by how society treats ethnics. In most multi-ethnic societies the various ethnic groups vary in wealth, power and status and ethnicity is a major factor in stratification despite weakening traditions. As a result, most individuals will continue to think of their ethnic group first when they examine their own identity. The solution is to harmonize the individual, ethnic and humanwide identities. All societies must create an environment which protects the right to ethnicity, strongly supports the concept of mutual respect and also works at making ethnic identity a relatively small part of a person's identity. The ethnic distinctiveness must not be given preference over the equally crucial issues of human individuality on the one hand, and identification with the national society on the other. A balance has to be reached so that ethnic resurgence does not endanger individual selfhood and national integrity and, in turn, individualism and nationalism do not pose a threat to ethnic identities.

8.8 KEYWORDS

Cultural Ethnicity : The anthropological way of defining ethnicity in terms of shared cultural values and practices.

Cultural Markers : Objective cultural features like language, religion, dress etc. which differences between groups are emphasised and distances maintained.

Emergent Ethnicity : When the cultural ethnic identity is used for political differentiation and gain.

Ethnic Consciousness : The subjective perception of a group's members that they area collectivity different from others.

Ethnic Group : A collectivity which is perceived by others in society as being different in terms of language, religion, race, ancestral home, culture etc. whose members also perceive themselves as different from others and who participate in shared activities built around a real or imaginary shared descent and culture.

Ethnic Nationalism : The phenomenon of ethnic groups demanding a political and administrative autonomy, a national status or a country of their own.

Ethnic Stratification : The unequal distribution of financial, power and cultural resources on ethnic lines in a society.

Ethnicity : A shared (real or imagined) racial, linguistic or cultural identity of a social group.

Generic Ethnicity : An identity based on a set of objective cultural features.

International Colonialism : A concept used to describe political and economic inequalities between regions within the same society and the underprivileged status and exploitation of minority groups within a society.

Nation : A country or populace of a country connected supposedly by common blood ties and under a single government.

Nationalism : Expression of the desire of a people to establish a self-governing political entity

Political Ethnicity : Political awareness and conscious mobilization of groups on ethnic lines.

8.9 FURTHER READINGS

Bacal, Azril. 1997. "Citizenship and National Identity in Latin America: The Persisting Salience of Race and Ethnicity", in T.K. Oommen (ed.) *Citizenship and National Identity: From Colonialism to Globalism.* N. Delhi: Sage Publications

Brass, Paul R. 1991. *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Theory and Comparison.* New Delhi: Sage Publications.

Burgess, M.E. 1978. "The Resurgence of Ethnicity: Myth or Reality", *Ethnic and Racial Studies,* 1(3).

8.10 SPECIMEN ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress I

1. Race is commonly understood as the external physical features of different people from different parts of the world; such as, the white complexioned Europeans, black, Negros of Africa, mangolords, who are yellow complained people of Asia, and so on. It was defined by the physical anthropologists during 18th century based on physical features it was also to associate certain mental characteristics with them. Thus Farrar in 1866 divided human races into three groups –Savage, Semi-Savage and civilizes races.
2. Racism is the historical process by which we find during 18th and 19th centuries the colonial powers used it to establish their supremacy. They also used religion and science, sometimes to legitimize their supremacy; such as Darwin's theory of 'natural selection' and 'survival of the fittest' were some explanations used by the colonial rules. Thus, racism is part of social stratification is societies.

Check Your Progress 2

1) An ethnic group has some objective culture features that separate it from other groups. Secondly it possesses an ethnic self consciousness. Thus an ethnic group is a collectivity which perceives itself as different from other and which perceives itself from being different in terms of language, religion, ancestral home culture etc.

2) The political perspective on ethnicity refers to the political awareness and mobilization of a group on an ethnic basis. On this basis certain groups consciously seek to assert their ethnicity even exaggerating their ethnicity to achieve political autonomy or even sovereignty.

Check Your Progress 3

1) Nation is a historically evolved stable uniformity of languages, temporary, economic life and psychological make up in the form of a culture. Thus nation is a type of ethnic community which is politicized and has rights in a political system. Nation and ethnic groups share many features but differ on territory. This an ethnic group becomes a nation when it identifies itself with a temporary.

2) Ethnic antagonism poses many threats to the state including, casteism, communalism and nativism. Above all the threat comes from ethno-nationalism which is the transformation of an ethnic group into a nationality. This is being attempted and has been attempted in India in the past.

UNIT 9 GENDERING INEQUALITIES

Structure

9.0 Objectives

9.1 Introduction

9.2 Body as an Instrument of Social Control

- 9.2.1 Concept of Body
- 9.2.2 Sociological Understanding of Body
- 9.2.3 Communicative Body

9.3 Factors Leading to Gender Identities

- 9.3.1 Socialization Process
- 9.3.2 Culture
- 9.3.3 Religion
- 9.3.4 Education
- 9.3.5 Communication and Media .
- 9.3.6 Language
- 9.3.7 Context or Social Environment

9.4 Let Us Sum Up

9.5 Keywords

9.6 Further Readings

9.7 Specimen Answers to Check Your Progress

9.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit would help in the process of understanding:

- the concepts of formation of self, body, identity etc. and
- How socialization (household, per group) Religion, Education, Culture, Media influence formation of gender identities.

9.1 INTRODUCTION

The gender is a concept which is distinguished from the biological concept of sex. Gender is constructed and expressed in many areas of social life.

Men and Women undeniably have certain physical differences. It is a subject of debate whether these biological differences also cause behavioural differences and whether biology, therefore is one of the causes of sex roles and gender-related social stratification. Biological determinism holds that biology does affect these things, but sociologists argue against the idea. For instance, from birth, a female child is received in a different way than is a male child. There is research studies which show that, the notion of women is inferior to men is stressed from the very moment a child is born. Later, it is supported by the behaviour patterns prescribed for girls and women. Hence gender discrimination and gender roles are to a large extent imposed by the society.

9.2 BODY AS AN INSTRUMENT OF SOCIAL CONTROL

We now turn to the area of the body and its conceptualization.

9.2.1 Concept of Body

The body is, clearly a medium of culture. In the sense, we take care of our body and maintain it, eat dress, and adorn ourselves, communicate with other, and so on. However, the body is not only a text of culture. It is also more directly, a 'locus of social control' so that we are not what we want to be but are made through culture. This is what Foucault calls the 'decile body' which is regulated by the norms of cultural life.

In the Indian context, an important work on the body in contemporary times is David Arnold's *Colonizing the Body.* He emphasizes the importance of 'the body as a site of colonizing power and of contestation between the colonized and the colonizers.

9.2.2 Sociological Understanding of Body

Anthropologists and sociologists have commented on the marked nature of woman's body by caste, religious belief, social norms and practices and on how woman's embodiment and her sexuality serve as important boundary markers. The female sexuality is controlled by caste and class factors are an indisputable fact. A woman's body and sexuality are in any case under the controlling purview of men. It is an assertion not only of patriarchal power but also of social control. Woman is allowed little or no space for an independent, self-perceived articulation, definition or expression of her sexuality. Her body becomes an instrument and a symbol for the community's expression of caste, class and communal honour. Chastity, virtue and above all, purity are extolled as great feminine virtues embodying the honour of the family, community and nation. In a sense, woman's body is often no longer her body but has been taken over by the community, of both men and women, to establish and legitimize its image in society.

To the extent that woman's body is the foundation on which gender equality is built, established and legitimized, understanding the female body in different contexts, settings, and situations is important.

9.2.3 Communicative Body

Only when we view the female body as communicative or lived body that we can begin to understand the implications of both the social construction of lived experience as well as women's own perceptions and articulations of their embodiment. The gender is inscribed on woman in everyday life both socially as well as through her life experiences. perceptions, desires, fantasies. It is in this sense that gender identity is truly both constructed and lived.

The internalization of representation of the female body by women appears to be fundamental to tire formation of feminine identity.

Check Your Progress 1

1) How does the sociological concept of 'body' differ from that of the biological concept?

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9.3 FACTORS LEADING TO GENDER IDENTITIES

Let us now see how socialization affects gender identities.

9.3.1 Socialization Process

Socialization, or the process of internalizing society's values in order to adapt to one's culture, influences how people behave as males and females in society.

At one level, women menstruate, give birth, nurse babies, experience menopause-experiences which are unavailable to men. At another level, women and men are located in cultural settings that shape their experience of embodiment differently depending on class, ethnic, religious and caste factors. These socio-spatial and other historical factors are therefore equally important in the experience of embodiment in everyday life.

Socialization practices in different cultures reflect the care and concern that goes into the upbringing of girls so that they are infact trained to conduct themselves according to social norms, values and practices. Later, women absorb social expectations and infact experience them as their own, so that power, in a sense does not operate coercively but from within.

Sociologists realized that the process of socialization, by which people learn what is expected of them from their parents, peers, and society at large, teaches men and women the norms of conduct for their gender.

Gender Socialization

The social learning process that imbibes people (notably young) into understanding the various aspects of their culture includes the process of gender socialization. Gender socialization encompasses the process of learning society's gender roles and their advantages and limitations.

In most societies, there is a clear categorization of what it means to be made or female. This categorization process and the agents of socialization that transmit knowledge about gender roles influence how individuals define themselves and other in terms of gender and sex roles.

In many societies, gender roles i.e the expected or preferred ways for people of each sex to behave are rigidly defined. For instance, men have traditionally been expected to be strong; aggressive, even dominating. Similarly, the 'big boy's don't cry' typifies one aspect of the male role. Women have been expected to be nurturing, sensitive, emotional, and relatively passive. Children are taught these

values, both consciously and unconsciously, from a very early age. Toys for example are also distinguished. Boys are given large sized, noise making or violent type's whereas girls are often given what might be termed gentler toys. These expressions will influence formation of self as well identities.

Agents of Gender Socialization

These include parents, siblings, peers, schools, society, religion and a variety of other institutions. For very young children, parents and family (including grand parents and other extended family members) play the central role in shaping gender socialization. They determine how the family interacts with a boy (this process is often unconscious) as well as the types of toys and clothes that the baby is given.

Gender identity itself is established by age two. Its central component is the notion "I am male" or "I am female". Sigmund Freud theorized that identification and imitation of same-sex parents leads to effective gender-identity formation. In the latency period described by Freud (ages seven to twelve), males and females tend to segregate themselves from each other. This may be considered part of the socialization process and further solidifies gender identification and role-specific behaviour. Schools and families continue to influence gender socialization throughout adolescence. During adolescence, peer influence becomes the strongest agent of gender socialization as teens form together in small social groups to facilitate their transition into adulthood and into the larger society. The socializing effects of the mass media also become powerful in teen years.

Gender identity and gender socialization can have serious ramifications for an individual's sense of self esteem.

9.3.2 Culture

Culture has traditionally been seen as of key significance in the construction of gender identity. Socialization theory has been very popular in its accounts of how boys and girls are treated differently from an early age and consequently grow up with different social-psychological characteristics. Education has been seen as an important part of this process, drawing boys and girls into different activities and achievements. The recent analysis of gender and culture has drawn heavily on literary theory, with the deconstructionism of Derrida and also on the discourse analysis of Michel Foucault. The emphasis has shifted from the individual's learning experience to the creation of the texts or representations or discourses which construct our notions of gender (Weedon). This work often speaks of difference, both between women and men, but also between women. Indeed some of the emphasis on differences between women has problematized the very concept of 'woman' as a unitary category.

In the Indian context, woman is defined as an ambivalent persona. Woman is located in myth and popular culture as both goddess and dangerous power (Shakti), as virtuous wife and dangerous evil, both pure and impure in her embodiment. Women were not only revered and worshipped but also controlled through a direct regulation of her sexuality.

9.3.3 Religion

In no society men and women experience religion in the same way. Religions are powerful social institutions that shape gender identities in society. There are sacred spaces where only men are allowed to enter and not women. Similarly,

there are norms defined by which only men can perform certain duties or obligations pertaining to religious activities. Hence, religion not only defines how men and women participate in various religious activities but also reinforce and legitimize gender roles assigned to men and women in society.

9.3.4 Education

The formal education indoctrinates gender roles through which "self' gradually gets shaped and influences gender identity. The numerous role models and examples portrayed in the schools, colleges and universities are the major sources of the formation of gender identities. The institution of education has been implied by sociologists in the process of gender socialization and the stereotyping of the genders.

9.3.5 Communication and Media

Most of our lives are in one way or another influenced by the imagery through communication and media. The visual and print media largely influences women's perceptions through the imaging of the female body as the 'perfect' or desirable' body. With the advent of television and the printed word in an increasingly modem urban India, the rules for feminity have come to be culturally transmitted more and more through standardized visual images'. Thus, we learn the rules directly through bodily discourse: through images that tell us what clothes, body shape, facial expression, movements and behaviour are required. Some of these images are presented to us through advertisements, fashion displays, beauty contests, fashion models, through magazines particularly women's magazines and so on. Cable television has brought home the obsession with the perfect female body in the west through commercials, talk shows, etc. Many of these directly or indirectly address the desirability of the female body in one way or another.

9.3.6 Language

Gender identity is conveyed and structured by both verbal and non-verbal means. Recent interest has focused on, among other things, the manner in which gender classifications are influenced by the semantic structure of language. Thus Lakoff has suggested that generic terms in language may influence cognitive structures and attitudes towards gender. The use of generic terms reflects and helps to perpetuate attitudes of male dominance and superiority. For instance, the term "man' means human being in general, while 'woman' refers only to females. Similarly the term 'bachelor' conserves its original meaning of single man, while 'spinster' has acquired the negative connotation of 'old maid'. Hence, language is another medium through which gender identities are imposed or reinforced.

9.3.7 Context or Social Environment

Woman's experience of her embodiment in everyday life is undoubtedly linked to her location in different settings and contexts whether these are the community, the family, the workplace, or other spaces she inhabits or frequents. This in fact is a major axis for the formation of gender identity.

Check Your Progress 2

1) What are the agents of socialization

a) Family b) University c) Library d) Peer Group

1) Only a
2) Only b
3) Only c
4) Only d
5) All

2) According to Sigmund Freud, at which age gender identity is established?

1) 18 years
2) 25 years
3) 30 years
4) 2 years

3) How does media influence formation of gender identities? Use about five lines for your answer.

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9.4 LET US SUM UP

Woman in fact is socially constructed and the concept of gender becomes central to our understanding of the nature of women's embodiment in the everyday world. Gender and Identity is not something fixed and immutable. It is both constructed and lived, sometimes can also be transcended. It is therefore always in the making continuously in the process of communication and exchange, evolving through the everyday life experiences of women.

9.5 KEY WORDS

Gender : Sex refers to the biological attributes of men and women, while gender is understood to be a social construct incorporating the full range of personality traits, attitudes, feelings, values, behaviour and activities that society differentially ascribes to men and women.

Gender Identity : The knowledge of being biologically male or female; it is usually achieved by age two.

Gender Socialization : The adoption of gender roles through societal and parental expectations and the modeling of others in those roles.

Social Control : A term used very widely to refer to all types of forces and constraints which induce conformity to norms and customs in human society.

Socialization : The process of internalizing society" s values in order to adapt to one's culture, influences how people behaveas males and females in society.

9.6 FURTHER READINGS

Thapan, Meenakshi (ed.) 1997. *Embodiment-Essays on Gender and Identity.* New Dellii: Oxford University Press.

Maithreyi Krishnaraj and Karuna Chanana (ed.) 1989. *Gender and the Household Domain: Social and Cultural Dimensions.* New Delhi: Sage Publications.

Faith, Karlene (1994). Resistance: Lessons from Foucault and Feminism. In H. Loraine Radtke and H. J. Stam (eds.). *Power/Gender Social Relations in Theory and Practice.* London: Sage Publications.

9.7 SPECIMEN ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

1) Biological concept of body underlines die physical differences between men and women. Biological determinists argue that behavioral variation between men aid women and subsequent definition of sex roles, are due to physical differences. However, sociological understanding of the concept of body is diametrically opposed with that of the biological concept. Sociologists argue that body is a medium of culture. The cultural norms of each society define and shape the concept of body and to a large extent the gender roles and gender related stratification.

Check Your Progress 2

1) 5 (all)

2) 4 (2 years)

3) Both visual and print media are the major sources of gender biased and stereotype role models propagated thereby influencing the gender identities. The classic example is the imaging of the female body as the 'perfect' or "desirable' body through various media including the powerful cable television and magazines.

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