

BLOCK 3
DIMENSIONS OF SOCIAL STRATIFICATION

THE PEOPLE'S
UNIVERSITY



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 stratification; 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

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 come 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 or 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" comprises 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 ideological 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? It 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 work *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 Empirical 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 is 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 is 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 JatSabha is not a simple caste association, but in effect, it is an organization of peasants. Similarly, the KisanSabha 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 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.

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 offshoot 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 be superfluous and mechanistic. A nominal 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 of 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 Brahminic 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 is 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 is 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 from 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 (1960:1-10) ignores the fact that inter-caste conflicts and revolts by lower castes against the upper

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 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 is 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, Dusadhs, 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 be 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 findings 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 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 bring 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 proletarianisation,
- ii) Upward mobility and embourgeoisement,
- 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.
- Synchronic : An event or analysis which is happening, or done simultaneously with another event or analysis.

7.10 FURTHER READINGS

Beteille, Andre, 1965, *Caste, Class and Power*, Bombay, Oxford University Press.

Ghurye, G.S., 1961, *Caste, Class and Occupation*, Bombay, Popular Book Depot. Earlier this book was published under titles - Caste and Race and Caste and Class.

Singh, Yogendra, 1973, *Modernization of Indian Tradition*, Faridabad, Thompson Press (India) Ltd.

Srinivas, M.N., 1966, *Social Change in Modern India*, Berkeley, California University Press.

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 now come to be located in more 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 incidental 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.

UNIT 8 RACE AND ETHNICITY

Structure

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 - 8.5.1 Ethnic Stratification
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 - 8.6.7.1 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 be able to:

- Define the idea of race, racism.
- provide definition and characteristics of ethnic group
- Outline the different concepts of ethnicity based on biological descent, cultural homogeneity and ethnic self consciousness;
- 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 even 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 colonial 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.

1) Define and discuss the concept of race.

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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 ethnics.

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 to 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 and 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 thing 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.

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8.5 ETHNIC STRATIFICATION

Stratification is a system whereby people are unequally ranked and rewarded on the basis of wealth, power and prestige. It is part of every society and may take various forms like class, gender, race and, of course, ethnicity. The earlier studies of stratification used to focus on the phenomena of caste and 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 and 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 an independent nation, an option which is not available to class and gender groups.

8.5.1 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 and power are often allocated along ethnic lines. Secondly, in most societies one or more ethnic groups dominate others in economic, political and cultural matters. Ethnic politics can, therefore, take the appearance of ethnic stratification resulting in 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).

8.5.2 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 can 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 emphasis on territory being the key factor in differentiating the two.

Check Your Progress 3

- 1) Write on the nexus between nation and ethnic group.

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- 2) What is ethno-nationalism?

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8.5.3 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.

8.5.4 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.

8.5.5 Ethno-Nationalism: The Indian Case

Sharma (1991) has described how ethnic antagonism has posed four serious challenges to the 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 a particular 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 and recognition as a sovereign nation, e.g., the movements in Kashmir and Punjab (Khalistan).

8.6 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 different 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.

8.8 KEY WORDS

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 are collectively 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, Negroes of Africa, mongoloids, who are yellow complexioned 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 civilized 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 rulers. Thus, racism is part of social stratification in 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.

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.



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UNIT 9 GENDER AND INEQUALITIES

Structure

9.0 Objectives

9.1 Introduction

9.2 Theories of Sex Roles

9.2.1 Biological Theory of Sex Roles

9.2.2.1 Sociological Theory of Sex Roles

9.3 Perspectives on the Evolution of Sex Differences

9.4 Colonialism and Development

9.5 Impact of Development on Women

9.5.1 Female Infanticide and Child Neglect in Rural North India

9.5.2.1.1 Gender, Household and Kinship

9.5.2.1.2 Views of Engels Leacock

9.5.4 Equality and Inequality: The Sexual Division of Labour and Gender Stratification

9.5.5 The Cultural Construction of Gender

9.5.6 Women and Domestic Work

9.5.7.1.1 Impact of Industrialization and Urbanization

9.6 Let Us Sum Up

9.7 Keywords

9.8 Further Readings

9.9 Specimen Answers to Check Your Progress

9.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you should be able to:

- discuss the meaning and definition of sex role;
- elaborate reasons for sex role stereotypes;
- discuss various theories regarding sex roles;
- outline the sexual division of labour and gender stratification; and
- explain the subjugation of women in different societies.

9.1 INTRODUCTION

Every human being is a man or woman by sex. The part played by an individual in the course of social interaction is called as "role" Men and women play different roles. Sex role is the role played by an individual due to

his or her sex. Later there is the development of sex role stereotype. In a male dominated society the men's roles are given a higher status and whatever a woman does is rated as low.

The anatomical differences were for a long time viewed as intimately related to differences in emotional and intellectual capacities, as well as differences in physical abilities. The tasks and roles assigned to men and women in our own cultural tradition were assumed to be correlated highly with anatomically based aptitudes.

Patriarchy, means to serve the interest of the male sex. The sex role division is such that men are for production and women for reproduction. The unpaid, unseen household work is considered lower than the work done by men outside the house. Women are sexually vulnerable; therefore many societies put a lot of restrictions on them and many rituals and taboos are linked to the various biological events in life.

9.2 THEORIES OF SEX ROLES

We will now discuss various aspects of the theories of sex roles.

9.2.1 Biological Theory of Sex Roles

George Peter Murdock sees biological differences between men and women as the basis for sexual division of labour in society. Men have more physical strength and therefore they take such roles which require physical strength. Women can bear children and therefore they are associated with activities that are related to the raising of family.

Lionel Tiger and Robin Fox say that biological factors programme human behaviour though there may be cultural variations. They call it "human biogrammer" and there is some difference in the biogrammer of men and women.

Talcott Parsons characterizes women's role in the family as "expressive" which provides emotional support and warmth necessary for the socialization of the child. The man's role on the other hand is "instrumental" as the bread winner of the society. Both the expressive and instrumental roles are essential and they complement each other.

9.2.2 Sociological Theory of Sex Roles

According to a British sociologist Ann Oakley, sex is a biological term and gender is a cultural term. Gender refers to the sex of an individual after socialization.

Oakley argues that division of labour is not universal. She disagrees with Murdock. She regards it as a myth that women are biologically incapable to carry out heavy and demanding work. She also noted that employment of mothers is not detrimental to the children's development. According to her

Parson's explanation of woman's "expressive role" and men's instrumental role, is for the convenience of men.

Emile Durkheim, one of the founding fathers of sociology, said that in the primitive societies men and women were fairly similar in strength and intelligence and only as civilization progressed new codes evolved which restricted women from working outside home. Thus they became weaker and less intelligent.

The process of socialisation begins the moment a person is born. Sex roles are learned activities as children are socialized into these roles. Thus sex role allocation is a social phenomenon and is in fact learned behaviour. Women for centuries have been socialized into passive roles.

9.3 PERSPECTIVES ON THE EVOLUTION OF SEX DIFFERENCES

The earlier anthropologists like Malinowski, Radcliffe Brown etc. had undervalued the role of women. All their studies were centered round males. Moreover, it was through the males in the village they got information about community life as well as the role of women in the community. This male bias was criticized by Margaret Mead, who studied primitive societies of Pacific Ocean Islands.

In the era between the late 1930's and the mid 1960's cross cultural data on the sexual division of labour very quickly dispelled the idea that men (or women) are unable to do some tasks assigned to women (or men) in our culture. Knitting, weaving and cooking sometimes fall into the male province while such things as pearl diving, canoe handling and house building turn out to be women's work in some settings. A noted anthropologist Margaret Mead's pioneering research on tribes in the Pacific raised these issues. She found that sex roles and personality in these tribes were contrary to what are found in the western world. Hence she raised doubts about the biological basis of these roles.

However gender differences do exist in the simple society in the hunting and gathering societies, hunting is a male activity because it involves long travelling and women find it difficult, due to their reproductive and nurturing function. But the women in these societies work very hard and are good and skilled in discriminating between edible and inedible plants and fruits, reading the tracks of animals etc. Hence the actual physical labour of women is no different from that of men. Yet dominance of males in these societies lead to ascribing different statutes for work.

Freidle notes that tasks assigned to men carry higher prestige though the same tasks done by women in other societies do not earn the same prestige. This is primarily due to male dominance which results from the fact that man's life is more public and woman's life is more private due to child

bearing and child rearing. Men thus claim greater rights than women to distribute goods outside the domestic group. When man hunts the flesh is shared by the total community but when a woman gathers by way of food it is shared only by the family members. Men have greater control over exchange of valued goods.

Check Your Progress 1

Note : Compare your answer with one at the end of the unit:

- 1) Say True or False
 - a) Men and women play different roles (T/F)
 - b) Gender is a biological term. (T/F)
 - c) The process of socialization begins the moment a person is born. (T/F)
- 2) Fill in the blanks
 - a)sees biological differences between men and women as basis of division of labour.
 - b)studied primitive societies of Pacific Ocean Islands.

9.4 COLONIALISM AND DEVELOPMENT

We live today in a global world based on complex political and economic relationship. Although most of the colonized world achieved independence by the 1960's, the economic domination of the capitalist world system that was initiated during the colonial period had not been significantly altered. In the late twentieth century an unbalanced relationship between the countries of the industrial or "developed" world and the developing or Third World remains. How have the men and women of the developing world experienced the continuing impact of the penetration of capitalism and the integration of their societies into the global economy.

In many parts of the world, originally egalitarian gender relationships have been replaced by more hierarchical ones, and women have consequently been marginalized, removed from the positions of economic and political decision making that they held in the pre colonial period.

If women got any attention it was as mothers and housekeepers in family planning projects and in training programs for home economics. Male centered development programs often resulted in new division of labour between the sexes, by which the dependency of women on men greatly increased.

Greater female dependency on men has also resulted from the process of urbanization, from the shift from household to factory and industry, from the introduction of cash crops. In some societies women have lost their

traditional rights to land and men, though continuing to rely on women's traditional assistance, claim the entire income from the cash production export crops for themselves.

9.5 IMPACT OF DEVELOPMENT ON WOMEN

Indian demographers have proposed several hypotheses to explain the declining sex-ratio, and five of these suggest important contributing factors.

- i) Females are under enumerated in the Indian census.
- ii) The general mortality rates of females are higher than those of males.
- iii) Indian families prefer sons and female infants are consequently neglected leading to higher female mortality.
- iv) Frequent and excessive child bearing has an adverse effect on the health of women.
- i) Certain diseases have higher incidence in women.

This raises the whole question of attitudes towards females and the role of women in Indian society.

It is hard to avoid the conclusion that a preference for boys lies at the heart of the inferior status of women and girls in India and many other countries. Equally disturbing are the increasing indications that when public services - ranging from medical and health facilities to agricultural extension projects - are provided in the course of development efforts, they may either reinforce the traditional male biases or diminish the status that women enjoyed in the traditional society.

9.5.1 Female Infanticide and Child Neglect in Rural India

It is beyond doubt that systematic indirect female infanticide exists today in India in addition to the sex selective abortion (i.e. female foeticide) and female infanticide (killing of a child under one year of age). It was found that in certain villages in Rajasthan there were no female children. In Salem district in Tamil Nadu female infanticide is openly practiced.

The indirect female infanticide accomplished by nutritional and health care deprivation children results in higher mortality rates of daughters than sons. In several parts of rural India there is a strong preference for sons. Sons are considered as economic assets, they are needed for farming and for income through remittances if they leave the village etc. Sons play important roles in local power struggles over rights to land and water. Sons stay with the family after their marriage and thus maintain the parents in their old age, daughters marry out and cannot contribute to the maintenance of their natal households. Sons bring in dowries with their brides, daughters drain family wealth with their required dowries and constant flow of gifts to their family of marriage after the wedding. Sons, among Hindus are also needed to perform rituals

which protect the family. After the death of the father, daughters cannot perform such rituals. The extreme son preference is more prevalent among upper castes and classes than the lower castes and classes.

9.5.2 Gender Household and Kinship

Let us now take the example of Taiwanese women. These women marry into the household of their husbands. According to Wolf a Taiwanese wife must pay homage to her husband's ancestors, obey her husband and mother in law, and bear children for her husband's patrilineage. After Taiwanese wife gives birth to a son, her status in the household begins to change and it improves during her life course as she forges what Wolf calls a uterine family - a family based on the powerful relationship between mothers and sons. When a Taiwanese wife becomes a mother in law she achieves the greatest power and status within her husband's household.

9.5.3 Views of Engels Leacock

According to Engels Leacock the early communal society was self sufficient. Men and women work together and neither of them were dependent on each other. Thus there was a reciprocal division of labour. Also there was no distinction between the public world of men's work and private world or women's household work. Both the sexes produced the goods necessary for livelihood. Thus in this type of society, goods were produced only for consumption to satisfy everyday needs. Later on as the process of industrialization began goods were produced on a large scale, concepts of trading and exchange became common. Slowly in order to maximize their profits the capitalists started exploitation of the women and workers. This led to the isolation of family as a separate unit and the women were then confined to their families and thus the place of work and residence was separated:

9.5.4 Equality and Inequality: The Sexual Division of Labour and Gender Stratification

In most societies certain tasks are predominantly assigned to men while others are assigned to women. In European and American cultures it used to be considered "natural" for men to be the family bread winners, women were expected to take care of the home and raise the children. An underlying assumption of this division of labour was that men were dominant because their contribution to the material well being of the family was more significant than that of women. Women were dependent on men and therefore automatically sub-ordinate to them.

The "naturalness" of this division of labour has been called into question as women increasingly enter the labour force. However has this significantly altered the status of women within their families and in the wider society? Or has it simply meant that women are now working a double day, performing domestic tasks that are negatively valued and not considered work once they

get home from their "real" day's work? If employment enhances the social position of women, why is it that women still earn only 65% of what men earn for the same work? Why is there still a high degree of occupational segregation by gender?

What precisely is the relationship between the economic roles of women and gender stratification?

Cross cultural research on the sexual division of labour attempts not only to describe the range of women's productive activities in societies with different modes of subsistence, but also to assess the implications of these activities on the status of women.

9.5.5 The Cultural Construction of Gender

We all live in a world of symbols that assign meaning and value to the categories of male and female. Despite several decades of consciousness raising in the United States, advertising on television and in the print media perpetuates sexual stereotypes. Although "house beautiful" ads are less prominent as women are increasingly shown in workplace contexts, body beautiful messages continue to be transmitted. In children's cartoons women are still helpless victims who the fearless male hero must rescue. Toys are targeted either for little boys or little girls and are packed appropriately in colours and materials culturally defined as either masculine or feminine. Argues that women, because of their reproductive roles, are universally viewed as being closer to nature while men are linked with culture. She defines culture in terms of human consciousness including the products of the same like, technology which is used to control and harness nature. That which is cultural and subject to human manipulation is assigned more worth than that which is natural, hence women and women's roles are degraded or devalued, whether explicitly or implicitly.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) What does the cross cultural research on the sexual division of labour aim at? Give your answer in about ten lines.

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- 2) Why is there a strong preference of sons in the North India? Give your answer in about ten lines.

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- 3) What were the observations of Engels Leacock in the early communal society? Give your answer in about ten lines.

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9.5.6 Women and Domestic Work

In virtually all countries and among all classes, women have lost ground relative to men.

Oakley reports that one of the features of housewifery that women value is the feeling of autonomy. Just because housewives express their experiences in terms of enjoying being their own boss does not mean that their condition of work can be analyzed in terms of a high degree of autonomy. Firstly there is the prescription for certain kinds of food for certain occasions. Secondly the food is to be ready within a specific time. Thirdly, the control is exerted by the preferences of the consumer which dictate the exact variant of the dinner to be served.

9.5.7 Impact of Industrialization and Urbanization

On the other hand working couples in an urban society (since spouses need each other help more) have learned to share and cooperate in many ways. Men whose work shifts are different from those of their wives often cared for children while their wives worked. Husbands also helped their wives with the household chores but the subtle discrimination between the two sexes continues.

9.6 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we have seen how there is gender bias or subtle discrimination against women in various fields in the different parts of the world mainly in

9.7 KEY WORDS

Stereotype	: A fixed form, character or image.
Patriarchy	: Male headed family and the descent is reckoned in the maleline.
Socialization	: The basic social process through which an individual becomes integrated into a social group by learning the group's culture and his role in the group.
Horticultural Society	: Society where the occupation is growing flowers, vegetables, fruits and plants.
Demographers	: A person studying the science dealing with statistics of human population including size, births, deaths etc.
Mortality rate	: Death rate
Bias	: Prejudice, leaning of die mind, an opinion before there is a reason for it.

9.8 FURTHER READINGS

Caroline B. Bettell, Carolyn F. Sargent (ed.) (1993), *Gender in Cross Cultural Perspective*, New Jersey Prentice Hall.

9.9 SPECIMEN ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) a) True
b) False
c) True
- 2) a) George Peter Murdock
b) Margaret Mead

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Cross cultural research on the sexual division of labour attempts not only to describe the range of women's productive activities in societies with different modes of subsistence, but also to assess the implication of these activities on the status of women.

- 2) In the rural North India there is a strong preference for sons. Sons are considered as economic assets, they are needed for farming, for income through remittances if they leave the village. Sons play important roles in the local power struggles. Sons stay with their parents after their marriage and maintain the parents in their old age . Sons bring dowries with their brides. Sons are also needed to perform rituals after the death of the father.
- 3) Engels Leacock observed that in early communal society, the division of labour between the sexes was reciprocal and the wife and her children were not dependent on the husband. Distinction did not exist between a public world of men's work and a private world of women's household service. The large collective household was the community and both the sexes worked to produce goods necessary for livelihood. The exploitation of women began with the emergence of individual family as an isolated unit and women's labour was considered as a private service in the context of the family.



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