

Meaning of Social Stratification

- Stratification is the system of status differences which has developed in a society. It is the process of developing and changing this system of status differences.
- When cultures become more complex, status differences appear that automatically creates social hierarchy.
- It is a segmental division of society into different layers of social hierarchy supported by power, prestige and property.
- It is a system of differentiation which includes a hierarchy of social positions whose occupations are treated as superior, equal or inferior relative to one another in socially important respects.

Definition of Social Stratification

- “A stratified society is one marked by inequality, by differences among people that are evaluated by them as being lower and higher’. – *Lundberg*
- The above definition implies that it is the social process in which individuals and groups are ranked in higher and lower unit according to their own ascribed and achieved status, role, income, occupational ranking, social respect and dignity.
- Social differentiation occurs in biological as well as cultural traits like physical appearance, racial character, age and sex composition, caste and creed, etc and similarly, it occurs in manners, values, ideologies, cultural practices, social rituals and entire cultural production as a acted document.
- Hence, social stratification is a vertical and horizontal division of society into higher and lower strata.

Features Social Stratification

- It is universal social phenomena.
- It is diverse in forms mediated through class, gender, division of labour etc.
- It is dynamic in nature as the mode of production is changeable.
- It is vertical and horizontal division of society into different strata.
- It is consequential since each individual has its own intelligence, qualification and performance.
- Cultural diversity, economic difference and nature of profession can create social stratification.
- Prestige, power and property can create the social hierarchy.
- Social hierarchy helps in operating the organizations effectively and efficiently mediated through justices and merit (Weberian perspective).
- Social hierarchy is the major cause of social conflict (Marxism viewpoint)

Functions of Social Stratification

1. Helps to create Peace, Harmony, Order and Equilibrium in Society
2. Encourages motivation, hard work and enthusiasms
3. Helps to check different works, occupations or profession
4. Ensures the circulation of leaders for attaining satisfaction and social recognition
5. Helps to promote democratic spirit, progress and prosperity
6. Provides motivation and coordination mediated through simplification.

Conflict Perspective to Social Stratification

- Conflict theories deny that stratification does function for the betterment. They see them as exploitative (unequal). It rejects the social hierarchy.
- It firmly believes that higher class people (landlords, industrialists and bourgeoisies) are controlling the mode of production and exploiting (using) to the working class people hence this stratification should be ruptured.
- This social stratification is institutionalized by high class bourgeoisie which is exploitive in nature.
- Unequal distribution of resources and power has created social hierarchy in society which has become the root cause of conflict.

Social Inequalities

- Social inequalities occurs when resources in a given society are distributed unevenly, typically through norms of allocation that engender specific patterns along lines of socially defined categories of persons.
- Economic inequality usually described on the basis of the unequal distribution of income or wealth, is a frequently studied type of social inequality.
- **Talcott Parsons** an American sociologist has projected some casual factors (possession (ownership), quality and performance) create social differentiation. As he argues material possession like property, income, wealth, land, industries and consumption of modern commodities create some kind of hierarchy in society.
- Each individual has his own intelligence, industriousness, health condition and dedication towards his work that automatically creates disparity since each individual cannot have equal intelligence and ability.

Social Inequalities Contd.

- Similarly, performance is another an important casual factor in which an individual is expected to execute the task in a given time under a given social situation. Hence, possession, qualities and performance as integrated properties create the hierarchy into higher and lower.
- Age, sex, occupational nature creates social hierarchy.
- **Karl Marx** as a political economist classifies the society into two broad section i.e. Bourgeoisie and Proletariat. He claims that Bourgeoisie (landlords, industrialists, leaders, ruling class people) are controlling the means of production and occupying higher social status in society whereas Proletariats (serfs, labours, workers) are working class people who do sell their labors and earns their subsistence having lass status.
- The members of social class view one another as social equals while holding themselves to be socially superior to some and socially inferior to others.
- It is universal social phenomena and dynamic in nature.

Class Based Social Stratification

- Social class is a category of persons having similar mode of production supported by material resources. They are the groups of persons having similar social status with similar economic privileges.
- Aristocracy (upper class), nobility (goodness), higher class, middle class and marginalized class have been classified based on property, power and prestige.
- **Max Webber** defines that “social classes are aggregate of individuals, who have the same opportunities of acquiring goods, the same exhibited standard of living”.
- Class is open system which is secular in nature. There is a provision of high social mobility that brings social progress to him or her.
- There is an *objective criteria* and *subjective criteria* in evaluating the class formation. Wealth, location of residence, level of education, nature of occupation, human resource are some objective criteria whereas class consciousness, class solidarity, social respect and honor, self pride and gratification are some subjective criteria of evaluation in terms of class.

Features of Class

- Social class is characterized by resources they have owned.
- There is a provision of authority, power and privileges.
- It is an open and democratic.
- There is a provision of class consciousness between and among the members of social group.
- There is a vertical and horizontal hierarchy on the basis of material and resources.
- It is a universal social phenomenon.
- It is a achieved and secular in nature.
- There can be political class, economic class, academic class and professional class in society.

Class Based Social Inequality in Nepalese Context

- Chaintanya Misra a renowned sociologist of Nepal has categorized the class structure of Nepalese society into two broad categories i.e. ***Upper Class*** and ***Lower Class***.
- ***Upper class*** is categorized into four sub-groups; 1) Aristocracy, 2) the land owning nobility, 3) urban administrative, technical and business elites, and 4) the national and local level politician.
- ***Lower class*** also is categorized into five sub-groups; 1) petty traders, 2) wage labors, 3) marginal and non-marginal farmers, 4) tenants and, 5) landless people of rural Nepal.
- Blaikie, Cameron and Seddon have classified the class structure of Nepali society into seven broad categories. They are:
 1. **Aristocracy:** Thakuri, Shaha, Rana fall under this class. They are involved in both the army and the administration along with import-export business, tourism agencies, hotels etc.

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3. **Modern Bureaucrats:** They have come from middle class family. They are the sons of landlords and received their education in University in Kathmandu or abroad. They have occupied high position in bureaucratic administration.
4. **The Bourgeoisie:** They are representative by the large merchants who are involving in tourism and reconstruction. Land lords who are producing agricultural commodities by employing labors for higher profit are occupying bourgeoisie status.
5. **Middle Class:** A middle class is represented by the educated and professional self employment such as doctors, engineers, the bulk of university and college teachers, bureaucratic officers and skilled manpower.
6. **Petty Bourgeoisie:** Small commodity producers, shop keepers, petty officials and school teachers fall under this category.
7. **Peasants:** Peasants are those who have their own means of production like land, livestock etc and producing for their own consumption. They are further classified into three categories. Rich peasants who have acres of land, can hire the agricultural labors for large production. Similarly, middle peasants produce agricultural goods for their own consumption and the poor peasants totally depend on others for their livelihood and work.

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- 7. Rural Proletariats:** They are those who sell their labors for their livelihood. They primarily depend on wage labor for their income. Porters, rickshaw pullers, agricultural labors are entitled to be called rural proletariats.
- This research was conducted in late seventy that exactly cannot resemble the reality of present class since class is dynamic phenomena.
 - Class is one of the powerful criteria of social stratification which is supported by property, material resources and possession. It is vertical division of society into strata based on economy.
 - Connecting to management, it helps to understand vertical and horizontal based differences and stratification that occur in an organization. It also helps to understand how caste based sentiments, class based superiority and inferiority, ethnicity formation can help for unity and consensus (agreement) among members in decision making processes.

Caste Based Social Stratification

- Caste is predetermined social status based on hereditary (inborn) qualities. It is a blood purity and inborn hierarchy supported by genetical character.
- It is believed to have had divine (heavenly) origin and sanction (approve). It is deep rooted and long lasting social institution.
- It is a collection of families, bearing common name, claiming a common descent, following the same common practices.
- **C. H. Cooley** defines that, “When a class is somewhat strictly hereditary we may call it a caste”.
- The above definition states that membership is predetermined within the family that creates social relationships. It is a closed social endogamous group which does not change though practices are changing.

Features of Caste

- It is Hierarchical division of Society.
- It is a social purity or blood purity supported by genetically (hereditarily) character.
- It is a social hierarchy or segmental division of society.

Connecting to Caste based Social Hierarchy of Nepalese Society

- Historically speaking , Jung Bahadur Rana in 1854 AD made some caste based social stratification in order to control and maintain the social order. He prescribed some salient features.
 - **Isogamy** – restriction in marriage with other caste
 - **Hypergamy** – Brahmins from hypergamous marriage get a lower and different caste ranking
 - **Commensality** – union with lower caste and acceptance of rice would result in caste lowering and boycotts
 - **Occupational restrictions** – must follow prescribed occupation

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- Caste hierarchy proposed by J. B. Rana, 1854 AD
 1. ***Tagadhari*** – Brahmins (upadhyaya, jaisi, kumai); Thakuri; Chettri (pure, impure (khatri)); Sanyasi
 2. ***Matawali (alcohol drinking caste)*** – Namazine ; Masine
 3. ***Impure but touchable*** – Kasai, Musalman, dhobi etc
 4. ***Impure and untouchable*** – Kaami, Damai etc.
- Sociological literature projects felt caste based social stratification in practice. Nepali model caste hierarchy viewed by majority.
 1. ***Chokho (clean caste)*** – Brahmin (higher caste/ priest); Chhetri (warrior/ ruler/ administrators); Vaishya (business and farming)
 2. ***Cleaning and services*** – Sudra
- Secular hierarchy viewed by majority and practiced by all
 1. ***Politically or economically powerful*** (mostly Brahmins, Chhetri, Thakuri, Rajput, Shrestha)
 2. ***Commonly poor, politically and economically deprived*** (Matawali, majority of ethnic groups, lower caste groups)

Ethnicity

- Ethnic groups are cultural minorities. It is the distinct cultural identity that is physically, linguistically and mythically distinct from others.
- In anthropology, ethnicity is a feeling of superiority towards their own culture, identity and having strong 'we-feeling' among the members of the same community.
- **Wimmer** defines that "Ethnicity is a subjectively felt sense of belonging based on the belief in shared culture and common ancestry".
- **David Popenoe** has remarked that "A group that is socially differentiated has developed its own subculture and has a shared feeling of people hood".
- It is a powerful shaper of people's identity, organizing their whole orientation to the world and being the key to their identity.

Features of Ethnicity

- Ethnic groups have a sense of 'people hood' that is maintained within larger society.
- Membership in an ethnic group is believed to be passed on from generation to generation from parent to child.
- Members of an ethnic group take part together in activities that are centered in their shared traits (character) and background activities.
- An ethnic group is set apart from others primarily because of its national origin or distinctive cultural patterns.

Ethnicity Based Social Stratification in Nepalese Context

- There is no any uniform type of social hierarchy among ethnic groups.
- Newars and Thakali community have occupied higher status in the field of trade, commerce, business and industry.
- Sociological literature says that janajati groups are coming up in every field especially in education and in political participation.

Gender

- Simply, sex means biological difference between a male and a female whereas gender means the psychological differences between a male and a female.
- It is a socio-cultural construction of society that relegates (refers) the existence of women by claiming that they are less intellect, highly emotional and weaker sex without claiming the presence of rationality.
- Society prescribes certain code of conduct to them which is full of bias and prejudices (injustice) and treats them as 'something other'.
- Hence, gender is psychological aspect, cultural aspect and ideological aspect.

Features of Gender

- It is an issue against the Patriarchal structure and its domination.
- It is the voice against the exploitation, domination, subordination and marginalization.
- It aims to equalize the social justice, social relationship and mobilization of resources.
- Supporting towards equal status, role and social hierarchy.
- It is voice against patriarchy in controlling sex, sexuality and reproduction of female.
- Promotes for self-esteem, equality in division of labor and other self-empowerments.
- It seeks the space in equalizing the social status.

In Nepalese Context

- 1. Rituals and values:** Especially, Hindu based rituals in Nepal, has been attached to sons. It is sons who do most of the rituals for the family, including 'puja', cremation of parents, post-funeral mourning (sorrow) periods and son on daughters, after they get married, are said to have changed their parental clan (gotras) and so do not perform the base of mourning for their families.
- 2. Patriarchal households:** Income and household and major family decisions are made by males.
- 3. Patrilineal society:** That means descent and property transforms from male head to family offspring (children) which has relegated (reduce in importance) the existence of women.
- 4. Gender and social evils:** 'Chaupadi and Dewaki' in far western region of Nepal, witchcrafts and dowry system in many parts of Nepal, especially in the middle Terai, have all been targeted to abuse (mistreatment) women. Domestic violence is on increasing and sexual abuses are common.
- 5. Employment:** There is minority of work-centered women who are financially self-supporting. Research shows that they do not have opportunity for their economic upliftment and creative enterprises.

Effects of Technology on Social Stratification

Unequal distribution of digital resources

- Digital resources include not only access to the Internet and other digital technologies, but also skills and education surrounding Internet and technology use. In an increasingly digital world, these resources and skills are a key factor in socioeconomic outcome. Since the wealthy obviously have greater access to digital resources, they can be seen as an agent of increased stratification.

How digital age technology affects the labor market

- As described above, this section will cover the supply and demand for technological skills and knowledge and how this particular subset of the labor market contributes to stratification. It will also cover mechanization of labor and the ways in which it can potentially drive down wages or increase unemployment.

Interplay between digital disparities and the education system

- Education is one of the biggest predictors of socioeconomic status. Though many other factors combine with digital knowledge and skills to determine socioeconomic outcome, in this section, I want to focus specifically on how different education systems implement technology and technological education and the effects this has on socioeconomic stratification. I hope to examine how this works at multiple levels of education, from elementary school to college.

Gaps in technological acuity in developing countries

- In the United States, even those with a lower socioeconomic status often have Internet access and a basic understanding of the digital world. However, in developing countries, access to technology is less widespread. I expect digitization to have a greater impact on socioeconomic stratification in these countries.