



1. How is social inequality different from the inequality of individual?

Ans: Individual inequality refers to destructiveness and variations among individuals in their psychological and physical characteristics.

Social inequality refers to a social system where some people are getting opportunity to make use of the resources and others are not. Some people are at a higher level in terms of wealth, education, health and status while others are at the lowest level. Social inequality gets manifested in following forms:

- (i) Social stratification
- (ii) Prejudices
- (iii) Stereotypes
- (iv) Discrimination

2. What are some of the features of social stratification?

Ans: The key features of social stratification are

(i) Social stratification:

Social stratification is a characteristics of society, not simply a function of individual differences. It is society-wide system that unequally distributes social resources among categories of people. For example: In the most technologically primitive societies-hunting and gathering societies, little was produced, so only rudimentary social stratification could exist. In more technologically advanced societies, where people produce a surplus over and above their basic needs, however, social resources are unequally distributed to various social categories regardless of people's innate individual abilities.

(ii) Social stratification persists over generations:

It is closely linked to the family and to the inheritance of social resources from one generation to the next. A person's social position is ascribed, i.e., a child assumes the social position of its parents. Births dictate occupation e.g. a Dalit is likely to 'be confined to traditional occupation such as agricultural labours, scavenging or leather work, with little chance of being able to get high paying white-collar or professional work. The ascribed aspect of social inequality is reinforced by the practice of endogamy, i.e., marriage is usually restricted to members of the same caste, ruling out the potential for breaking caste line through intercaste marriages.

(iii) Social stratification is supported by patterns of beliefs and ideology:

No system of social stratification is likely to persist over generations unless it is widely viewed as being either fair or inevitable. For example, Caste system is justified in terms of the opposition of purity and pollution, with Brahmans designated as the most superior and Dalits as the most inferior by virtue of their birth and occupation.

Not everyone, thinks of a system of inequality as legitimate.

Typically, people with the greatest social privileges express the strongest support, while those who have experienced exploitation and humiliation of being at the bottom of the hierarchy are most likely to challenge it.

3. How would you distinguish prejudice from other kinds of opinion or belief?

Ans: Prejudice refers to pre-judgement, i.e., an opinion made in advance. Prejudice refers to pre-thought opinions or attitudes held by members of one group towards another. Prejudice may be either positive or negative. A prejudiced person's pre-thought views are generally based on hearsay rather than on direct evidence. This word is generally used for negative pre-judgements. On the other hand, an opinion is a judgment about someone or something, not necessarily based on fact and knowledge.

4. What is social exclusion?

Ans: Social exclusion is the combined result of deprivation and discrimination that prevents individual or groups from participating completely in the economic, social and political life of the society in which they live. Social exclusion is structural i.e., the outcome of social processes and institutions rather than individual action. In this process, the individuals may cut off from total improvement in the broader society.

5. What is the relationship between caste and economic inequality today?

Ans: In the hierarchy of caste system each caste has a specific place and social status. There has been a close correlation between social or caste status and economic status. The high' castes were almost invariably of high economic status. On the other hand, the "low' caste were almost always of low economic status. However, in the 19th Century the link between caste and occupation had become less , rigid consequently, the link between caste and economic status is not as rigid today as it used to be. At the macro line things have not changed much. The difference between the privileged a high economic status sections of society and disadvantaged (a low economic status) sections still persists.

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