

# STATUS AND ROLE

## Objectives:

- Differentiate between Status and Roles
- Describe various determinants of Social Status
- Discuss the various types of Status
- Differentiate role sets and multiple roles
- Understand role conflicts

# Defining Status and Role

- What the individual does is the role he performs and the degree of prestige or power associated with that role is the status he occupies.
- Status is a position in a social system involving designated rights and obligations whereas role refers to a behaviour oriented to the patterned expectations of others (Linton, 1936).

# Status and Social Status

- A status is a socially defined position in a group or a social system, that is, the position a person occupies in a group.
- Social status is the amount of honour and prestige a person receives from members of the community and from the larger society in a stratification system.

# Status and Social Status Cont.

- The social status of a person is determined by a wide range of factors which together determine a person's social standing.

# Determinants of social status

1. Original nature,
2. Physical characteristics,
3. Accidental conditions,
4. Physique,
5. Mentality and temperament.
6. Sex,
7. Age,
8. Race,
9. Caste,
10. Class,
11. Economic position, etc.

# Types of Status

- **Ascribed Status:** Given at birth (age, sex, kinship, race, caste). More or less determined by the cultural situation over which he has no control initially.
- Generally, four bases: **Sex** (male, female) **Age** (child, youth, adult), **Kinship** (son, father, brother, etc.) **Social factors** (divorcee, widow, etc.).
- In traditional societies most statuses are ascribed with one's occupation and general social standing determined at birth.
- An ascribed status does not have the same social meaning in every society.

# Types of Status Cont.

- **Achieved Status:** Social position resulting from one's personal accomplishment in open or formal market competition with other.
- It is a social position which a person attains through his or her own efforts, individual choice and competition.
- E.g. policeman, husband, mother, father, college graduate, ..
- Main bases:

**property** (rich, poor), **occupation** (doctor, engineer) **education** (college graduate, illiterate) **specialization and division of labour** (foreman, labourer, mechanic, etc.) **Political power** (prime minister, president), **marital relations** (husband, wife, sister-in-law)

# Status set

- The sum of all the statuses that we occupy, the result is known as status set.
- It is a complex of many positions a person occupies. A person can be a doctor, father, husband, citizen, member of a political party, etc.

# Master status

- Out of the many possible positions an individual holds at the same time, one by which he/she is principally identified in a society is known as master status or key status.
- It dominates the others in terms of the person's identity and may even replace his or her name in the society.
- E.g. Prof, Rev, etc.

# ROLE

- William Shakespeare, the famous writer writes:
- *“All the world’s a stage; and all the men and women merely players; They have their exits and entrances; And one man in his time plays many parts . . .”*
- Stepping in Shakespeare’ shoes, Goffman (1959) proposed the ***dramaturgical approach*** in sociology.

# ROLE Cont.

- Ogburn and Nimkoff (1978): Role is a set of socially expected and approved behaviour patterns consisting of both duties and privileges, associated with a particular position in a group.
- In other words, a role is the expectation and obligation held by other members concerning the behaviour of the position incumbent.
- The actual carrying out of the role behaviour is termed role performance.

# Role set vs. Multiple roles

- The various roles associated with occupying a particular status when combined is known as **role set**.
- E.g. a school teacher, who by virtue of his position has roles to play vis-à-vis his students, colleagues, head, parents, members of the board, professional association and so forth.
- A role set designates roles under a single status whereas **multiple roles** designate roles under the various statuses a person occupies.

# Role conflict

- The clash of expectations concerning some aspects of a role has been usually called role conflict (Faris, 1964).
- It takes several different forms:
  1. Role collision,
  2. Role confusion,
  3. Role incompatibility,
  4. Inadequate role preparation,
  5. Failure in role performance.

# Role conflict Cont.

- When two individuals have roles which are in conflict in some respect, it is called **role collision**.
- When the same individual plays two or more roles with contradictory expectations (housewife and employee), it is called **role incompatibility**.
- When there is lack of agreement among group members about expectations for a given role, it is **role confusion**.

# Role conflict Cont.

- Modern society is full of conflicting role demands.
- When this involves roles associated with two different statuses such as employee and parent, the situation is known as **inter-role conflict (role incompatibility)**.
- When the conflicting roles are both associated with the same status, is **role strain or intra-role conflict**.

# Resolving role conflicts

1. Choose which role is most important and violate the expectations of the rest.
2. Leave one of the conflicting statuses.
3. Engage in role segregation – separating the various role partners from one another.
4. Use role distance (a disdainful detachment of the performer from the role he or she performs). For instance, military officials use role distance in similar ways when they refer to ‘soft targets’ and civilian casualties as ‘collateral damage’.

# NEXT TOPIC

- SOCIAL NORMS AND VALUES