

STRATIFICATION AND INEQUALITY
SOC CC410
SOCIOLOGY
SEMESTER IV

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- **Stratification:** As we know that differentiation is law of nature. All societies differentiate member in term of role and all societies evaluates role differently. Some role are regarded as more important or socially more valuable than others. The persons who perform the more highly esteemed roles are rewarded more highly. Thus stratification is simply a process of interaction of differentiation whereby some people come to rank highly than others.
- **Social inequality:** Everywhere individuals and societies differ. In no society people are absolutely equal in all respects. In all societies there is social differentiation of the population by age, sex, occupation and personal characteristics.

- Social inequality is as old as society and throughout history it has been a constant source of tension, conflict, violence, injustice and oppression. In most societies, social inequality is built into the social structure in such a way that it is passed down from generation to generation.
- According to William P. Scott “Social inequality refers to the existence of unequal opportunities and rewards for different social positions or statuses within a group or society”
- According to Ian Robertson “Social inequality exists when some people have a greater share of power, wealth and prestige than others”

Some salient features of social inequality

1. Social inequality is the result of differentiation: All societies differentiate among their members. Every society for that matter differentiates between the old and the young and between males and females. Society treats its members in different ways on various grounds such as skin colour, religion, physical strength, or education achievement. The result of this differentiation is nothing but inequality.

1. Social inequality is universal: In no society of the world all people have equal recognition. Social inequality is apparent when a society values male over female, the rich over the poor, Brahmins over Dalit or Whites over Black and so on. It is in this simple sense, inequality is universal in human societies.

3. Social inequality in normally built into the social structure: In all modern societies, social inequality takes a much elaborate and structured form in which different categories of people have different status. Like the layers of rock, people in these societies are grouped into “strata”. People in any one stratum have a different access to social rewards than people in any other stratum, so the society as a whole is said to be stratified.

4. Social inequality is a source of social conflict social change: Social inequality is strongly related to various other problems of our society such as –social instability, economic ups and downs, political conflicts, potential violence, status insecurities, fear and uncertainties, and so on.

5. Social inequalities are normally sustained by the power of ideas: It is significant to note that “social inequality are rarely maintained primarily through force. Instead, they are sustained by the power of ideas. Members of both the dominant and sub-ordinate groups are inclined to accept unquestioningly the ideologies, or set of ideas that justify the inequalities and make them seem “natural” and even moral. For example, the sex roles in our society show how traditional roles have ensured the dominance men over women.

6. Social inequality are not necessarily based on natural or biological inequalities: Many stratification systems are accompanied by beliefs which state social inequalities are biologically based. For example, Whites claim biological superiority over Blacks, and see this as the basis for their dominance. “Rousseau believed that biologically based inequalities between men were small and relatively unimportant whereas socially created inequalities provide the major basis for systems of social stratification.

Patterns of inequality

There are number of socially defined characteristics of individuals that contribute to social status and therefore, equality or inequality within society.

1. Gender in inequality: Gender as a social inequality is whereby women and men are treated differently due to masculinity and femininity by dividing labour, assigning roles and responsibilities and allocating social rewards. Sex and gender-based prejudice and discrimination called sexism, are major contributing factors to social inequality.

2. Racial and ethnic inequality: Racial or ethnic inequality is the result of hierarchical social distinctions between racial ethnic categories within the society and often established based on characteristics or an individual's place of origin or culture.

3. Age inequality: Age discrimination is defined as the unfair treatment of people with regard to promotions, recruitment, resources, or privileges because of their age. It is also known as ageism.

4. **Economic inequality:** Economic inequality is the unequal distribution of income and opportunity between individuals or different groups in the society. There are three main types of economic inequality

- 1) Income inequality
- 2) Pay inequality
- 3) Wealth inequality

Consequences of inequalities

1. Inequalities tend to **produce social conflict** among the social groups e.g. caste groups like Jaats, Maratha, Patels are demanding reservations but this demand is opposed by caste groups already claiming the benefits of reservations, such clash of interest due to perceived inequality tend to produce violent conflicts between opposing caste groups.
2. High economic inequality is **detrimental to public healthcare and education**. Upper and Middle classes do not have vested interest in well functioning public healthcare and education as they have means to access private healthcare and education. sing caste groups.

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4. Inequalities among ethnic groups have led to various **ethnic movements** demanding separate states or autonomous regions or even outright secession from India. North East has been rocked by numerous such ethnic movements e.g. by Nagas for greater Nagalim etc.

Measures to deal with inequalities

- **Constitutional Provision**

- Enforcement of Constitutional Guarantee of equality as enshrined in fundamental rights. **Articles 14, 15 and 16** form part of a scheme of the Constitutional Right to Equality. Article 15 and 16 are incidents of guarantees of Equality, and gives effect to Article 14.

- **Promoting Civil Society**

- Provide a greater voice to traditionally oppressed and suppressed groups, including by enabling civil society groups like unions and association with in these groups.
- Scheduled castes and Scheduled tribes should be motivated to become entrepreneurs, schemes like Stand up India need to be expanded to widen its reach by increasing funding.

- **Women Empowerment**

- For gender equality policies like affirmative action by reserving seats in legislatures, increasing reservation at Local self government both at Urban and village level to 50% in all states, strict implementation of The Equal Remuneration act,1976 to remove wage gap, making education curriculum gender sensitive, raising awareness about women right, changing social norms through schemes like Beti Bachao Beti Padhao etc.

- **Inclusion of Religious Minorities**

- Religious minority groups need special attention through representation in government jobs, provision of institutional credit, improvement of their education access, protection of their human rights by empowering National commission for Minority, strengthening rule of law etc.

- **Economic Policies**

- By ensuring universal access to public funded high quality services like Public health and education, social security benefits, employment guarantee schemes; inequality can be reduced to great extent.

- **Employment Generation**

- The failure to grow manufacturing sectors like Textile, Clothing, automobiles, consumer goods etc. is the important reason of rising inequalities.
- The Labour-intensive manufacturing has the potential to absorb millions of people who are leaving farming while service sector tend to benefit majorly urban middle