



FACULTY OF JURIDICAL SCIENCES

COURSE: B.A.LL.B 204

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SUBJECT: SOCIOLOGY-II

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Lecture- 24



LECTURE 24:

Caste Divisions – The future? The caste system in India is undergoing changes due to progress in education, technology, modernization and changes in general social outlook. In spite of the general improvement in conditions of the lower castes, India has still a long way to go, to root out the evils of the caste system from the society.

FEATURES OF CASTE SYSTEM

1. There was a segmental division of society in which they were classified in several units called as caste. The term caste used to present race or breed of a person. There have been 2800 different castes found in India and they have their own set of norms and beliefs.
2. Hierarchy system was evolved in those times. There has been the degree of highness and lowness amongst people.
3. Endogamy can be seen as a vital feature of the caste system. Endogamy is practicing marriage function in the same caste and it has been followed in India till now up to maximum extent. For example, even if anyone wishes to marry someone of other caste and class, he/she can face a powerful opposition and sometimes it can lead to Honor Killing. Honor killing is practicing death of people in love with different castes. In UP a couple was killed brutally just to satisfy caste ego which does not permit people to marry someone from other castes.
4. Hereditary Status and Hereditary occupation are some of the basic features which can be called as an ascribed status of a person. It clearly means that caste is not something which is achieved by a man on the basis of merit. Indeed it is clearly a place which cannot be altered or switched. For example, a person born in Shudra category will do chores like cleaning toilets till his/her death. Likewise, a Brahmin's son was bound to follow the priest culture; he was not allowed to go to his career choices.
5. One of the most negative influences of the Caste system is also counted in its feature that is Food and Drinks indifference attitude by upper-class people. For example, if a Shudra prepared food and a Brahmin arrived at a temple where he is hungry. He will die of hunger but will not touch the food prepared by the lower class people. Such was the influence of caste practice in India. They were considered some garbage of society whose presence can be infectious to other people of society.
6. Cultural Difference lingered in every caste and this cultural difference led to some of the major differences. For example in Brahmins, the people do not even touch meat or other non-veg materials but in other cases, people were interested in eating meats which acted as a barrier to cultural practice in different castes.
7. Social segregation was also a deciding factor. It differentiated people on the basis of their economic status. For example, poor people were obliged to stay away from some of the richest people. For example, there was a different path for lower caste people; it was a general practice to not even have a tinge of a shadow of lower caste people.
8. Ascribed status was one of the most fundamental characteristics of a caste system. The caste of a person was assigned to him and this will not change no matter he/she achieves any other things in life or not.

Social Mobility: The Meaning, Types and Factors Responsible for Social Mobility

- (a) A promotion within the same occupational group.
- (b) The accumulation of seniority within a given occupation.
- (c) A change in occupation from one generation to another, as from father to son.

Types of Mobility: Change of social position of an individual or group of individuals takes different forms and shapes. At one period of time there would be one type of mobility and another period of time it can be another type. Each of the following types are not exclusive but they may overlap, it is only for the purpose of convenience and analysis they are given different labels.

1. **Horizontal Mobility:** Under this type of social mobility, a person changes his or her occupation but the overall social standing remains the same. Certain occupations like Doctor, Engineer, and Professor may enjoy the same status but when an engineer changes his occupation from engineer to teaching engineering, he has horizontally moved from one occupational category to another. But no change has taken place in the system of social stratification. In other words, horizontal mobility is the transition of an individual or social object from one social group to another situated on the same level. While explaining horizontal mobility we are mainly referring to movement of individuals from one position to another of more or less equal prestige. Sorokin explains the concept of horizontal mobility still more broadly. According to Sorokin, "Horizontal mobility refers to territorial, religious, political party, family, occupational and other horizontal shifting without any noticeable change in vertical position." An

increase of territorial circulation of individuals within Western societies since the second half of the nineteenth century indicate horizontal mobility. The individuals are no more attached to their place of birth. The individuals move from one place to another in search of jobs which may be of same prestige. The modern means of transportation have brought in more territorial movement of individuals. The other expression of territorial mobility, according to Sorokin, is greater circulation of social things and values which refer to newspaper news, automobile implements, birth control or money, if social thing is used by more and more people of the same class, regardless of the country or territorial boundaries, then this is an example of horizontal expression. In addition to this, the shifting of individuals from one job or factory or occupation' to another of the same kind refers to horizontal circulation especially, if they do not represent any noticeable change in vertical direction. These kinds of intra-occupational circulation or labour turnover, therefore, refer to not only vertical but horizontal intra-occupational mobility. Sorokin further indicates that since territorial, family, intra-occupational mobility of present Western society is intensive it is expected to be accompanied by a considerably horizontal circulation of the individuals from State to State, from one religious group to another, from one political party to another and generally from one ideological group to another.

2. Vertical Mobility: Vertical mobility refers to any change in the occupational, economic or political status of an individual or a group which leads to change of their position. In the words of Sorokin, by vertical social mobility is meant the relations involved in transition of an individual (or a social object) from one social stratum to another. According to the direction of transition, there are two types of vertical social mobility – ascending and descending or social climbing and social sinking. The ascending currents exist in the two principal forms – as an infiltration of the individuals of a lower stratum into an existing higher one, and as a creation of such a group into a higher stratum instead of, or side by side, with the existing group of this stratum. In simple words, vertical mobility stands for change of social position either upward or downward, which can be labelled as ascending or descending type of mobility. When a big businessman meets with losses in his business and is declared bankrupt, he occupies a low status. On the other hand, if a small businessman with occupational skills of money and manipulation becomes an industrialist he occupies a higher position in the social ladder. Hence his position improves in the hierarchical order. Vertical mobility is intensive in relatively open societies. Sorokin has indicated the following general principles of vertical mobility: (i) There has scarcely been any society whose strata were absolutely closed or in which vertical mobility in its three forms – economic, political and occupational was not present. (ii) There has never been existed a society in which vertical social mobility has been absolutely free and the transition from one social stratum to another has had no resistance. (iii) The intensiveness as well as the generality of vertical social mobility, varies from society to society. (iv) The intensiveness and generality of the vertical mobility – the economic, the political and the occupational- fluctuate in the same society at different lines.

3. Upward Mobility: When a person or a group of persons move from lower position to upper position it is called Upward Mobility e.g. a person belonging to a lower caste and occupying a lower position after winning elections becomes a Minister and occupies a higher position. He may not be able to change his caste but with his economic and political power he may move upward. For example, Yadavs in India stand as a testimony to this fact. For the individuals involved, there are many social and psychic costs of upward mobility. Some of the costs are obvious, as men and women break under the strain of a consistent drive for 'success'. In the course of his upward movement, the mobile man must leave behind many people and places. He must leave the ways of thinking and behaving that characterized many of his earlier associations and he must learn, if he can, new ways of thinking and behaving appropriate to his new status.

4. Downward Mobility: Downward mobility indicates that one loses his higher position and occupies a lower position. We can take the example of an individual, who is an Engineer and occupies a respectable position in the society because of his occupational position, education and may be caste. If he is caught for accepting bribe or has committed a sin or has done something wrong, he may be sentenced to jail or members of his caste may outcaste him and as a criminal or as an outcaste he may occupy a lower position vis-a-vis position he was occupying earlier. Under the traditional Indian system if a lady of higher Brahmin caste married a man of Sudra caste, not only the man and woman were out casted but their children were declared as 'chandals.' Downward Mobility is more stressful for persons who suffer a drastic

decline in station position. Men who enjoy orderly -and consistent career tend to make a stable personal, family and community adjustment. Men who are unable to do so are more vulnerable to the most extreme form of personal disorganization – namely suicide. The Downward Mobility is an indicator of the extent to which a society institutionalizes the value of equal opportunity through the creation of structure which supports and facilitates it. Lipset and Zetterberg are of the opinion that this type of mobility is due to interchange of ranks i.e. mobility arising from implementation of equality of opportunity.

5. Inter-Generational Mobility: This type of mobility means that one generation changes its social status in contrast to preceding generation. However, this mobility may be upward or downward e.g. people of lower caste or class may provide facilities to their children to get higher education, training and skills. With the help of these skills the younger generation may get employment in higher position. If the father is a shoemaker but his son after acquiring education becomes a clerk or a doctor or an engineer, this would be called upward inter- generational mobility. Similarly, a family of Brahmins may be engaged on traditional occupation of teaching and performing rituals but its younger generation is neither intelligent nor follows the family occupation. They become daily wagers then the younger generation has downward inter-generational mobility. With the improvement in economic position, people start changing their style of living by discarding the old practices and adopting the practices of those who are high in social ladder. After two or three generations their new position may be recognized. This process of social mobility, according to Srinivas is a process of Sanskritization.

Conditions for Inter-generational Mobility: According to Sorokin, the following conditions affect rates of mobility between generations:

- (a) Differences between Parents and Offspring's: If a parent occupies an important position requiring high capacity, his children who are less capable are likely to be downward mobile. Conversely, children who are more capable than their parents are likely to be upwardly mobile, especially open-class societies.
- (b) Population Change: In developed and developing countries, greater population expansion at the lower than at the higher levels contribute to upward mobility. Overall population growth creates new positions in the upper and middle levels, where growth is not great enough to fill the vacancies.
- (c) Changes in Occupational Structure: With the changing times many occupations have been upgraded and downgraded because their socially defined importance has changed. Some occupations have moved up or down because of changes in the scarcity of workers willing and able to perform their tasks. Such changes in occupational structure has also effected the rates of mobility between generations.

6. Intra-Generational Mobility: This type of mobility takes place in life span of one generation. This can be further divided into two:

- (a) Change in the position of one individual in his life span
- (b) Change in the position of one brother but no change in the position of another brother.

A person may start his career as a clerk. He acquires more education and skills. Over a period of time, he becomes an IAS officer or a Professor. In this way he moves up and occupies a higher social position than the one with which he had started his career. His brother may have also started his career as a clerk but did not occupy higher position in his life span and continued to remain at the same position. Hence, within the same generation we find that one brother changes his position and other brother does not.

7. Occupational Mobility: Occupational mobility means change from one occupation to another. Different occupations' are hierarchically arranged because the incumbent of these occupations gets different economic rewards and enjoys different power, prestige and privileges based on the economic returns, authority and prestige. These occupations are stratified or hierarchically arranged. When a person or a group of persons move from occupations of lower prestige to occupations of higher prestige, this is called Upward Vertical Mobility. Similarly if an individual or a group of individuals from occupations of higher prestige take up occupations of lower prestige, then this occupational mobility is called Downward Vertical Mobility. From a clerk to an officer is upward vertical occupational mobility; from a clerk to a peon or a smuggler is downward vertical occupational mobility. We must keep in mind that society grants recognition, prestige and power not only based on economic returns from a occupation or profession but according to the skills of the individual which are valued most in the society. A smuggler may be earning more than a clerk but his means of livelihood are not recognized in the society. Hence, he is placed lower in the social ladder. Now-a-days politicians with their political power occupy higher position irrespective of the means adopted. Hence, people aspire to occupy positions. Occupational mobility, in short, stands for

change of occupation of lower prestige to higher and viceversa. The above noted forms of mobility are not comprehensive and do not include other types of mobility like accretive status achieved and vice-versa or spatial mobility or mobility under caste system. However, the above forms explain the major trends of mobility i.e. upward or downward, vertical and horizontal. Mobility has to be seen in temporal sense i.e. over a period of time. We cannot think of mobility in the absence of time and space. There are many factors which facilitate social mobility. These factors may be attributed to individual motivation and efforts to improve or the institutions may work out new mechanism or the society at large may bring about drastic changes in the system of evaluation. Let us take these factors individually to find out how they help in social mobility.