

B.A. / B.Sc. Sem-II, Anthropology

Paper- III Unit-I

Status

Status as honour or prestige is a part of the study of social stratification. Social **status** is the position or rank of a person or group, within the society. A status is simply a rank or position that one holds in a group. One occupies the status of son or daughter, playmate, pupil, radical, militant and so on. Eventually one occupies the statuses of husband, mother, cricket fan, and so on, one has as many statuses as there are groups of which one is a member. For analytical purposes, statuses are divided into two basic types:

- *Ascribed*
- *Achieved*

One can earn their social **status** by their own achievements, which is known as **Achieved Status**. Alternatively, one can be placed in the stratification system by their inherited position, which is called **Ascribed Status**. The anthropologist, Ralph Linton, developed definitions for ascribed status and achieved status. According to Linton, ascribed status is assigned to an individual without reference to their innate differences or abilities. Achieved status is determined by an individual's performance or effort.

Ascribed Status:-

Ascribed status is the social status a person is assigned at birth or assumed involuntarily later in life. It is a position that is neither earned nor chosen but assigned. These rigid social designators remain fixed throughout an individual's life and are inseparable from the positive or negative stereotypes that are linked with one's ascribed statuses.

The practice of assigning such statuses to individuals exists cross-culturally within all societies and is based on gender, race, family origins, and ethnic backgrounds. For example, a person born into a wealthy family has a high ascribed status based solely on the social networks and economic advantages that one gains from being born into a family with more resources than others.

Achieved Status:-

In contrast, an *achieved status* is a social position a person takes on voluntarily that reflects both personal ability and merit. An individual's occupation tends to fall under the category of an achieved status; for example, a teacher or a firefighter.

Ascribed status plays an important role in societies because it can provide the members with a defined and unified identity. No matter where an individual's ascribed status may place him or her in the social hierarchy, most has a set of roles and expectations that are directly linked to each ascribed status and thus, provides a social personality.

Role

A **Role** (also rôle or social **role**) is a set of connected behaviors, rights, obligations, beliefs, and norms as conceptualized by people in a social situation. It is an expected or free or continuously changing behaviour and may have a given individual social status or social position.

Roles can be semi-permanent ("doctor", "mother", "child"), For many roles, individuals must meet certain conditions, biological or sociological. For instance, a boy cannot ordinarily take the biological role of mother. Other roles require training or experience. For instance, in many cultures doctors must be educated and certified before practicing medicine. **Role-playing** refers to the changing of one's behaviour to assume a role, either unconsciously to fill a social role, or consciously to act out an adopted role.

Caste system

The caste system in India has been an extreme example of a stratification structure based on ascribed status. Each level in the stratification structure is known as a caste. Everyone is born into a specific caste. The caste of the parents generally determines the status of their children, regardless of ability or merit. The ranks of the caste system include:

- Brahmins: priests and scholars
- Kshatriyas: rulers, warriors, and those concerned with the defense and administration of the well-being of their town or village
- Vaishyas: traders, merchants, and people involved in agricultural production
- Shudras: the lowest of the caste system in Hinduism; laborers and servants for the other castes.
- Dalits: formerly called untouchables, they are so low that they do not have a place in the caste system. The jobs of these people include dealing with dead bodies and excrement.

This is why, castes are known as closed classes (D.N. Majumdar). It is a closed system of stratification in which almost all sons end up in precisely the same stratum their fathers occupied. The system of stratification in which there is high rate of upward mobility, such as that in the Britain and United States is known as open class system. The view that castes are closed classes is not accepted by M.N. Srinivas (1962) and Andre Beteille (1965).

Differences between Class and Caste Systems!

In Max Weber's phraseology, caste and class are both status groups. While castes are perceived as hereditary groups with a fixed ritual status, social classes are defined in terms of the relations of production. A social class is a category of people who have a similar socio-economic status in relation to other classes in the society. The individuals and families which are classified as part of the same social class have similar life chances, prestige, style of life, attitudes etc.

In the caste system, status of a caste is determined not by the economic and the political privileges but by the ritualistic legitimation of authority. In the class system, ritual norms have no importance at all but power and wealth alone determine one's status (Dumont, 1958).

Class system differs in many respects from other forms of stratification—slavery, estate and caste system. In earlier textbooks such as written by Maclver, Davis and Bottomore, it was observed that caste and class are polar opposites. They are antithetical to each other. While ‘class’ represents a ‘democratic society’ having equality of opportunity, ‘caste’ is obverse of it.

Following are the main differences between Class and Caste systems:

1. Castes are found in Indian sub-continent only, especially in India, while classes are found almost everywhere. Classes are especially the characteristic of industrial societies of Europe and America. According to Dumont and Leach, caste is a unique phenomenon found only in India.
2. Classes depend mainly on economic differences between groupings of individuals—inequalities in possession and control of material resources—whereas in caste system non-economic factors such as influence of religion [theory of karma, rebirth and ritual (purity-pollution)] are most important.
3. Caste system is characterised by ‘cumulative inequality’ but class system is characterised by ‘dispersed inequality.’
4. Caste system is an organic system but class has a segmentary character where various segments are motivated by competition (Leach, 1960).
5. Caste works as an active political force in a village (Beteille, 1966) but class does not work so.

Caste System Meaning Definition & Characteristics of Caste System

Meaning of Caste System

The origin of the word caste found differently. Some says that “caste” meaning lineage. In other books the term caste was derived from from Spanish word “Casta” meaning breed or race. It means that the people of the same caste belonging to the same race. The caste system today is still existent, but not in its worst form. It is because of media, education and modern means of communication available to the people. Though the law was passed in 1962 against illegal discrimination of undoubtable caste but it this evil still exist in today’s world.

Definition of Caste System

There are some important definitions of caste system give below:

1. According to Colley, “when a class is somewhat hereditary, we call it caste”.
2. “When status is pre-determined that men are born without any change in their fortune, the class takes the extreme form of caste”.
3. Someone can define it as the extreme form of class is called caste or people belonging to the same breed or race.

Characteristics of Caste System

There are some important characteristics of a caste system.

Segmental Division

In segmental division of caste system, a society is divided into different segments. In this segmental division the status or position of an individual is recognized by birth not by ability or money. Caste confined the behavior of an individual in segmental division and described punishment for the violators.

Group Hierarchy

It divides a group into lower and upper groups. Those who are on the top of such groups or segments are considered pure if they compare to those who are at the bottom. Group hierarchy exists both in social and religious class and everyone is limited to remain in their own group.

Class

A **Social class** (or, simply, **Class**), as in **class society**, is a set of subjectively defined concepts in the social sciences and political theory centered on models of social stratification in which people are grouped into a set of hierarchical social categories, the most common being the upper, middle, and lower classes.

Class is a subject of analysis for sociologists, political scientists, anthropologists, and social historians. However, there is not a consensus on a definition of "class", and the term has a wide range of sometimes conflicting meanings. In common parlance, the term "social class" is usually synonymous with "socio-economic class", defined as "people having the same social, economic, cultural, political or educational status", e.g., "the working class"; "an emerging professional class". However, academics distinguish social class and socioeconomic status, with the former referring to one's relatively stable socio-cultural background and the latter referring to one's current social and economic situation and, consequently, being more changeable over time.

Today, concepts of social class often assume three general categories: a very wealthy and powerful upper class that owns and controls the means of production; a middle class of professional workers, small business owners, and low-level managers; and a lower class, who rely on low-paying wage jobs for their livelihood and often experience poverty.

Upper class

The upper class is the social class composed of those who are rich, well-born, powerful, or a combination of those. They usually wield the greatest political power. In some countries, wealth alone is sufficient to allow entry into the upper class. In others, only people who are born or marry into certain aristocratic bloodlines are considered members of the upper class. The upper class is generally contained within the richest one or two percent of the population. Members of the upper class are often born into it, and are distinguished by immense wealth which is passed from generation to generation in the form of estates.

Middle class

The middle class is the most contested of the three categories, the broad group of people in contemporary society who fall socio-economically between the lower and upper classes. Middle class is applied very broadly and includes people who would elsewhere be considered working class.

Lower class

Lower classes (occasionally described as working class) are those employed in low-paying wage jobs with very little economic security. The term "lower class" also refers to persons with low income. The working class is sometimes separated into those who are employed but lacking financial security, and an underclass—those who are long-term unemployed and/or homeless, especially those receiving welfare from the state

Unwritten Language

An unwritten language is one which does not have a standard written form used by the native speakers of the language. Or Spoken or understood without being written.

Speech

Speech is the vocalized form of communication used by humans, which is based upon the syntactic combination of items drawn from the lexicon. Each spoken word is created out of the phonetic combination of a limited set of vowel and consonant speech sound units (phonemes). These vocabularies, the syntax that structures them, and their sets of speech sound units differ, creating many thousands of different, and mutually unintelligible, human languages. The vocal abilities that enable humans to produce speech also enable them to sing.

In linguistics (articulatory phonetics), articulation refers to how the tongue, lips, jaw, vocal cords, and other speech organs used to produce sounds are used to make sounds. Speech sounds are categorized by manner of articulation and place of articulation. Place of articulation refers to where the airstream in the mouth is constricted. Manner of articulation refers to the manner in which the speech organs interact, such as how closely the air is restricted, what form of airstream is used (e.g. pulmonic, implosive, ejectives, and clicks), whether or not the vocal cords are vibrating, and whether the nasal cavity is opened to the airstream.^[2] The concept is primarily used for the production of consonants, but can be used for vowels in qualities such as voicing and nasalization. For any place of articulation, there may be several manners of articulation, and therefore several homorganic consonants.

Normal human speech is pulmonic, produced with pressure from the lungs, which creates phonation in the glottis in the larynx, which is then modified by the vocal tract and mouth into different vowels and consonants. However humans can pronounce words without the use of the lungs and glottis in alaryngeal speech, of which there are three types: esophageal speech, pharyngeal speech and buccal speech (better known as Donald Duck talk)

Language

Language is the ability to acquire and use complex systems of communication, particularly the human ability to do so, and a **language** is any specific example of such a system. The scientific study of **language** is called linguistics.

Estimates of the number of languages in the world vary between 5,000 and 7,000. However, any precise estimate depends on a partly arbitrary distinction between languages and dialects. Natural languages are spoken or signed, but any language can be encoded into secondary media using auditory, visual, or tactile stimuli – for example, in whistling, signed, or braille. This is because human language is modality-independent. Human

language has the properties of productivity and displacement, and relies entirely on social convention and learning.

As an object of linguistic study, "language" has two primary meanings: an abstract concept, and a specific linguistic system, e.g. "French". The Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, who defined the modern discipline of linguistics, first explicitly formulated the distinction using the French word *langage* for language as a concept, *langue* as a specific instance of a language system, and *parole* for the concrete usage of speech in a particular language.^[4]

Dialect

A dialect is a form of a language that is spoken in a particular area.

A form of a language spoken in a particular geographical area or by members of a particular social class or occupational group, distinguished by its vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation

A dialect is distinguished by its vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation (phonology, including prosody). Where a distinction can be made only in terms of pronunciation (including prosody, or just prosody itself), the term *accent* may be preferred over *dialect*.

Phonemes

Phoneme is the smallest unit of sound that does not alter the **meaning** of words in which it occurs. phonology - the study of sound patterns in language. Physical **anthropology** - study of biological origins and physical variations among human populations. pilgrims - those who travel to a shrine or holy place as devotees.

Morphemes

In linguistics, a **morpheme** is the smallest grammatical unit in a language. In other words, it is the smallest meaningful unit of a language. The field of study dedicated to morphemes is called morphology. A morpheme is not identical to a word, and the principal difference between the two is that a morpheme may or may not stand alone, whereas a word, by definition, is freestanding. When it stands by itself, it is considered as a root because it has a meaning of its own (e.g. the morpheme *cat*) and when it depends on another morpheme to express an idea, it is an affix because it has a grammatical function (e.g. the *-s* in *cats* to indicate that it is plural). Every word comprises one or more morphemes.

With Best Wishes For Bright Future & Career

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