

Available online at <http://www.ijims.com>

ISSN - (Print): 2519 – 7908 ; ISSN - (Electronic): 2348 – 0343

IF:4.335; Index Copernicus (IC) Value: 60.59; UGC Recognized -UGC Journal No.: 47192. 1st July

Social Stratification in Contemporary Kashmir:A Sociological Study

Irshad Ahmad Wani

Research Scholar at the University of Kashmir, India

Abstract

Like in all human societies of the world, the Kashmiri society has developed certain pattern of social stratification. The existing pattern of social stratification in the Kashmir has under gone certain degree of qualitative as well as quantitative change mainly due to the impact of process of modernization, secularization, spread of education and new found economic prosperity. The Kashmiri society is the Muslim dominated society & the religion, which the vast majority follows, is Islam. Islam has no place for caste distinctions, but the Muslim population has remained divided into caste & Sub-caste from ancient times. It is mainly because the Kashmiri Muslims have retained some Pre-Islamic socio cultural features despite the conversion. So, we presume that some features of Hindi caste are prevalent in the Kashmiri society.

Key Words: Social Stratification, Social Differentiation, Caste, Class, Estate, Slavery, Kashmir

Introduction

In every society there is a division of people based on wealth, power, prestige, importance and so on. In some of the primitive societies, where the chief means of livelihood was hunting, social distinctions were narrow. But in large modern, complex societies differences are great¹ (*A. Kumar*). The history of social stratification can be traced back to the times when humans switched their interest from fishing or hunting to sedentary agricultural societies with a surplus economy, a variety of occupations developed that were essential to the proper functioning of that society² (*Magill, N, Frank*). Inevitably, these functions began to be ranked hierarchically, usually based on the amount of preparation and training needed or the importance of that occupation to that particular society.

A harvest of factors/variables responsible for social stratification has been upheld by sociologist, and social Anthropologists. The views vary according to the prevailing social conditions and general outlook and observation of the sociologists of different times. One of the views which explain the cause of social stratification is that at times humans themselves are responsible for their fate. Rousseau says, all men may born equal but some are born more equal but some are born more equal than others, because they are born into families whose members think, speak, and act differently and these thoughts, words, and deeds are more important to the society. Most people of course, are aware of the fact that some are rich while some others are poor. But people in general are usually less aware of the systematic social forces to think that people themselves are responsible for their lot in life. Sociologists have argued that there are varying factors, for determining the nature of stratification in the human society³ (*Owe, C*).

In actuality, the basis of deprivation varies from society to society and from place to place.

Again this fact is endorsed by Christian and Hindu scriptures as well.

In Christianity, the social problems of inequality, poverty, and other miseries are attributed to the original sin of disobedience of man to God⁴ (*D' Souza, Victor*). The doctrine of Karma and Dharma in Hinduism refers to the cycle of rebirths a person has to undergo. A person's situation in the present life is regarded as the one determined by his action in the past life. The remedy to a person's low situation in the present life is doing his duty well, so that he will born to a higher position in the

¹ Kumar, A. Sociology basic concepts. Pub. Sarup and Sons(New Dehli -2002). Page 278.

² Magill, N, Frank, Ed. 1995, International Encyclopedia of Sociology. London, Vol. 2,p 1262.

³ Owe, C, 1968, Social Stratification. New York, P 2

⁴ D' Souza, Victor, 1981, Inequality and its perpetuation. Manohar Pub. New Dehli p 2

next life⁵ (*Ali, A.F.I*). These views were upheld by social thinkers when the human society was in the theological/ metaphysical stage.

Social inequality can be attributed to relative possession or non-possession of some characteristics such as wealth income or status, which becomes the distributing principle for individuals within the system of unequal rewards. Different societies use various organized principles for slotting individuals into the hierarchy. Traditional societies have often hereditary characteristics as the basis for distribution, while more modern societies often use wealth or income. The importance of stratification is that those at the top of the system have greater access to scarce resources than those at the bottom⁶ (*Anther, J*). However, more complicated the society, more differentiated the individuals become. It was believed by some that once the industrial revolution will occur, it will eliminate social inequality or at least minimize it. Now, when societies got industrialized, the differentiation could not be avoided. In feudal societies, ownership of land was considered as the basis of deprivation. Again in capitalist society, it is the relation of human beings with the mode of production that differentiated them⁷ (*Aron, Raymond*).

Thus, summing up the whole it can be stated that social stratification is a universal-societal phenomenon. What are particular about it are its specific manifestations and ramifications depending on the particular type of combination of factors such as the nature of the political system, historical development, advancement, economic development, value system, and the demographic composition⁸ (*Chauhan, S.K*). All these factors severally and collectively undergo, bringing about changes in the stratification system. Thus, the systems of stratification vary in their forms and types, not only stratification varies from one period to another period in the same society, but at the same time may be space bound and time bound.

Conceptual framework

Most people would agree that few societies are really equal. Ideally we want to believe as Thomas Jefferson wrote in the Declaration of Independence we hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal.....'' .But in the real world that is not always the case because some individuals have greater access to the scarce resources of society. Society is this built upon the relationships between the various unequal parts⁹ (*Roman G.S. and Robert, M.L*). So, we know that societies have the internal inequality which may be termed as social stratification.

The study of social stratification is of central concern to sociologists because modern societies display such a wide range of inequalities. These include inequalities between rich and poor, between social classes, between men and women, and between black and white. Inequalities in wide range in almost every area of social life, such as in job security, leisure opportunities, health, housing, income and the power to influence events in society¹⁰ (*Browne, Ken*).

The word *stratification* is basically a *Geological word*, which means different layers which some rocks are having¹¹ (*Horton P.B, and Horton, R.N*). Borrowed by *analogy from the Earths Sciences*, the term social stratification has come into general sociological use only since about 1940 to denote exactly the same type of layers of the society¹² (*Sills, David*). Thus, the term social stratification refers to the existence of different layers, which are created on the basis of unequal positions occupied by the members in a society, the unequal distribution of wealth, power and prestige provides the basis for the creation of different layers or strata in a society. The members of stratum generally have a common awareness, identity, life styles and chances¹³ (*Sahoo A.K*).

⁵ Ali, A.F.I, 1992, Social Stratification among Hindu and Muslim Community. Commonwealth Pub. New Dehli, p 3

⁶ Anther, J, (1st Ed). 2007. Encyclopedia of social sciences (sociology), Ivy, Pub.Delhi, p.463.

⁷ Aron, Raymond (1987). Main currents in sociological thought. vol. 1, London, p.118.

⁸ Chauhan ,S.K(1980), social stratification in Assam, New Delhi,P.4.

⁹ Ramon G.S and Robert, M.L (ed.2000). A social world, Pearson pub,P.137.

¹⁰ Browne, Ken,(3rd ed.2005), An introduction to sociology, polity press,P.11.

¹¹ Horton P.B, and Horton, R.N,(1982) , introductory sociology Homewood,P.65.

¹² Sills, David(ed.1998),Encyclopedia of social sciences, Macmillan vol.15,p.289.

¹³ Sahoo A.K, et.al,(ed.2006),Trends in sociology, Abhijeet Pub.Delhi,p.40.

Social stratification deals with the ways in which human population is socially differentiated i.e. differentiated publicly and demonstrably. The criteria for differentiation may be one but the social display of differentiation usually include a host of factors, including race, religion, family, lineage, kind and amount of property or income, occupation, or some other characteristics. Thus, the process by which individuals and groups are ranked in a more or less enduring hierarchy of status is known as social stratification¹⁴ (*Ogburn and Nimkoff*).

From the very beginning, sociologists have tried to seek the roots, origin and rationales of the phenomenon. In fact, controversies are the natural outcome of the search for the higher orders of explanations and inclusive system of classification of this phenomenon. The differencing value systems, perception of social orders equality and justice have led them, to provide different explanation. The distinction made between social inequality and natural inequality puzzled the analyses. Rousseau made first distinctions between the two and argued that the first one is established by nature and consists of difference in ate, health, bodily strength, and the qualities of mind or the soul. Similarly, social based inequality according to him consists of the different privileges which some men enjoy, to the prejudice of others such as , that of being more rich, more honored, more powerful, or even in a position to concrete ob obedience¹⁵ (*Sahoo, S.K*).

Systems of social stratification

Social stratification / social inequalities exist in all types of human societies. Even the simplest cultures, where variations in wealth or properties are virtually non-existent, there are inequalities between individuals, men and women, the young and old. A person may have a higher status than others, because of particular prowess of hunting or because he/she have special access to the ancestral spirits. To describe inequalities, sociologists speak of social stratification. Stratification can be defined as structured inequalities between different groupings of people¹⁶ (*Giddens Antony*).

The systems of stratification exhibit wide variance in different societies of the world. This variation may be in the criteria, utilized for placing the individuals and groups in various social strata of the system or in the number of strata in the system, with some having two broad strata such as, Feudal Lords and serfs, or nobility and commoners and other's having more. They may further vary in rigidity or flexibility and the sharpness with which each stratum are demarcated. In some systems different strata are easily identifiable, while in others the boundaries are hard to locate considering the various societies that have existed and do exist in the world, certain recurrent forms of social stratification generally can be identified Sociologist have identified four major types of stratification system, which have different differences between them, the slavery system, the feudal estates, the caste and the class system. These types of forms are briefly described below.

Slavery

Slavery is one of the oldest and most resilient systems of stratification. It was strongly associated with early Agrarian civilization, including Greece, and Rome. For centuries it flourished to the other parts of the world¹⁷ (*Thompson W.F. and Hicky, J.V*).

Slavery has been found in societies as diverse as classic Athens and eighteenth - century America. Slavery is an extreme form of inequality in which some individual are owned by their masters. Such ownership might arise by purchase or by capture in war¹⁸ (*Abercrombie, Nicholas*). Although, slaves are working at the most menial and exhausting occupation, as with plantations of the "Caribbean" or what is know the United States of American or the mines of South America. Slaves in ancient societies could occupy senior positions as administrators. However, the lives of slaves were clearly limited by the fact that they were owned. Some were freed by their masters for escaped, but, generally slave societies were very rigid.

Slavery has frequently provoked resistance and struggle for those subject to it. History is punctuated with slave rebellions; so that they can free themselves from their masters system of forced labor. Since freedom was granted to slaves in the

¹⁴ Ogburn and Nimkoff, (1940) Sociology. Cambridge, P.157.

¹⁵ Sahoo S.K, et.al, op-cit, p.39.

¹⁶ Giddens Antony, (3rd, Ed) (1998), Sociology, Polity press, (Cambridge), P.240.

¹⁷ Thompson W. F, and Hicky, J.V, (2nd ed.1996), Society in Focus, Harper, P.187.

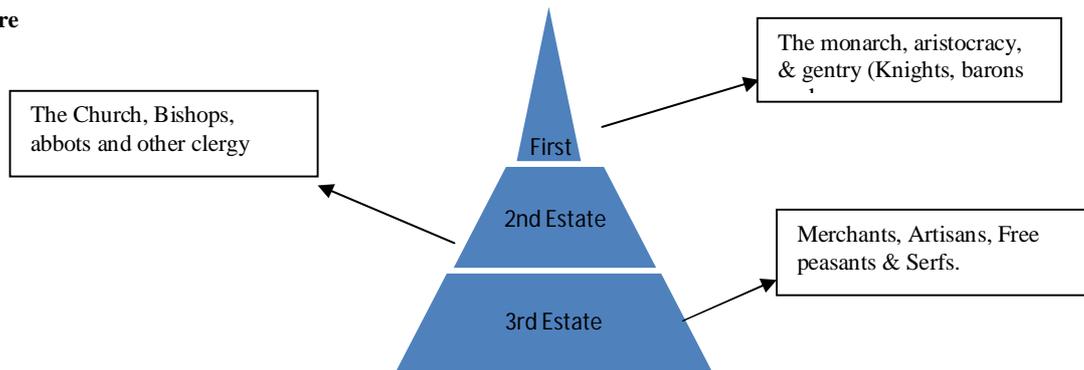
¹⁸ Abercrombie, Nicholas(2005),sociology, Polity press,P.79.

developed countries over a century ago' slavery as a feudal institution has been gradually eradicated and today has almost completely disappeared from the world¹⁹ (Giddens, A). But it is possible to argue that the modern world has the remnants of slavery in the use of forced labor in some societies.

Estate

The estate system was a social hierarchy centered on the monopoly of power and ownership of land by a group of victorious warriors (*Lords*), who were entitled to labour goods and military service from peasants – the vast majority of the Agrarian population Estate (*German – Stände*) is social strata whose position is confined by law or by custom²⁰ (Ginsberg). Estates occurred in federal Europe and in China and in Japan. Feudalism of the Estate system is the war, born of the violent dissolution of the Roman Empire initially²¹ (Thompson & Hickey).

Figure



Estate system of stratification looks like the above diagram

In Estate system, the person's social position depends upon his relationship to an agricultural economy. There were no legal equality between estates, and people in higher estates had more legal rights and privileges than those in lower ones. The lower strata have duties and obligations to those in the hierarchy. Membership of an estate was determined largely by birth, with social position power and status all ascribed at birth²² (Brown. Ken).

The Aristocracy comprised the first estate and was headed by the King or emperor. The second estate was made up of the clergy in Europe and the samurai in Japan. Commoners constituted the third estate, and in Japan there was a fourth estate of out-castes²³ (A .Nicholas). The system worked as a series of rights and duties owned by estates to each other. In feudal Europe, it was to some extent supported by religious beliefs which asserted the divine right of kings. Remnants of estates system persist in Britain in the prestige that continues to be given to the monarchy and the Aristocracy and the defense that is shown to titles of all kinds.

Caste

System of stratification based on caste is typically found in modern Indian sub- continent. Position in the caste system is based on birth and it is therefore, not possible to change one's caste. The relationship between castes is expressed in terms of honour and prestige supported by codes of behaviour and by the Hindu Religion. In particular there are strong taboo's that prevent mixing between castes²⁴ (Abercrombie, Nicholas). Caste – like systems have been found elsewhere in the world. This is particularly true where racial or ethnic distinctions are involved e.g. in the Southern states of U.S.A, or in South Africa, until

¹⁹ Giddens, A, (1997) op. cit, P.241.

²⁰ Ginsberg, (1979), Sociology, Surjeet pub. P.165.

²¹ Thompson W.F, and Hicky, J. V, Op. Cit, P. 187

²² Browne, Ken, op. cit, P. 14.

²³ Abercrombie, Nicholas, Op. Cit, P, 80.

²⁴ Ibid, 79.

recently blacks and whites were segregated from each other by legal measures by customs, or by taboo's such as disgust at intermarriage.

In caste system, people believe the social position they are born in to (their caste) is god given. They generally accept the ascribed caste position. The purity of each caste is maintained by endogamy.

In the India's caste system, the Hindu religion divides the population into five major castes:-

1. Brahman: - highest caste of priests and religious people.
2. Kshatriyas: - Rulers and administrators.
3. Vaishas: - Merchants and Farmers.
4. Shudras: - Manual labours.
5. The Untouchable: - literally, a group without a caste, social outcastes²⁵ (**Browne, Ken**).

Traces of slavery and of the estates characteristic of Aristocratic societies persist in modern times. Caste Continues to inform daily life in India, but its significance is waning under the impact of economic changes and attempts to legislate against it. The contemporary world is however, dominated by a fourth kind of stratification system i.e. Social Class²⁶ (**Abercrombie, Nicholas**).

All systems of stratification are founded in the interrelationships between money, power, and prestige. High strata have more of all these attributes, although in different systems, different elements have relatively more importance. Prestige and honour are particularly significant in caste system, power in Slavery²⁷ (**Abercrombie, Nicholas**). In addition all systems of stratification have in effect; to regulate inter- relationships between strata. Caste, slavery and estate are underpinned by law, force, and religion. Social contact especially, marriage is prevented by custom and taboo and position of an individual is determined by birth. The result is that these systems are fairly rigid and do not allow any mobility, from one stratum to another. Systems based on social class on the other hand, do not erect such firm barriers between strata. They depend furthermore, on economic differences groups of individuals.

Theoretical framework

Social stratification is one of the oldest and most researched areas of sociology. The social stratification, antedates the Christian calendar by more than a millennium certainly, probably by much more. The idea of social stratification is found in the Judeo-Christian Bible, the social thought of the Greeks, and the basic social and religious texts of the Indians and the Chinese. The idea has persisted in relatively crude form, right up to the present day²⁸ (**Sills, David**).

The social stratification was prevalent in all societies that over the centuries its existence was seldom questioned. It was accepted as part of the natural order. Religion was used to support stratification e.g., with the head of state often being considered divinely. In the eighteenth century, however, the America and the French revolution, with their emphasis on human rights and their call for equality, changed the accepted way of thinking²⁹ (**Magill, N. Frank**). Efforts were made both to understand the reasons for social inequality, and to seek means of lessen its negative effects.

Since the second half of the 19th century, four broad sociological theories have been used to explain and interpret social stratification, *the natural superiority theory, The Marxist conflict theory, The Weberian multiple- hierarchies 'theory and the functionalist theory*.

Social stratification is probably as old as the human civilization. The systematic thought, regarding society and social stratification originated with two great masters of Greek society Plato and Aristotle who came from upper strata of the society. The society envisioned by Plato was to be ruled by philosophers king with the remaining citizens divided into three classes; Guardian, auxiliary and workers. Aristotle in his book Politics said that there were three classes in all state viz, very rich, very poor and the mean. St. Thomas and St. Augustine were concerned with understand why human society where seemed to be

²⁵ Browne, Ken, Op-cit, P.13.

²⁶ Abercrombie, Nicholas, Op.cit, P.80.

²⁷ Ibid , p. 80

²⁸ Sills, David, op.cit, P. 289.

²⁹ Magill, N. Frank, Op.cit, P.1262.

cauterized by such distinct and sharp gradations in power, property, and prestige, and attempted to set forth the proper mode of arranging , men in hierarchical order. Later, philosopher's including Locke, Burke, and Boudham in Germany, Rousseau in France and Hegel in Germany, were all aware of the phenomenon presented by social strata based on inherent and /or acquired differences, and each had his own notion of who should govern³⁰ (*Tumin, M.M*).

Though these philosophers' could not provide a scientific understanding of this phenomenon but their ideas prepared the background of the sociologists for further investigation. The main problem of the ancient theories of social stratification was that it has not been empirically verifiable and observable. As the time went on, new scientific ideas were developed in order to understand and interpret these phenomena's³¹ (*Ali, A.F.I*).

By the turn of the 19th century, oligarchies and Aristocratic rules were challenged by popular revolution and it began to crumble. Industrialization and urbanization ushered in forces which gave rise to new classes based on power and wealth.

The natural superiority theory by 'Darwin'

The natural superiority theory also known as social Darwinism was a popular and widely accepted theory of social stratification in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, promoted by Herbert Spencer (1820-1903) In England and William Gham Sumner in the United States. Social Darwinism saw social organization as an environment. Certain individuals or groups had the requisite skills or attributes to compete and to rise in that environment; they would become the leaders and the economically fortunate. Others, not so endowed, would fail. The not- so subtle implication of this idea was that the rich deserved to keep their great fortunes intact. The poor also deserved to keep their lot, because it was the result of sloth, ignorance, or some other flaw; they deserved no pity. The social Darwinists believed that their theory was part of the law of nature. Spencer coined the widely quoted 'survival of the fittest'³² (*Sills, David*).

Karl Marx (1818-1883)

If any individual could be called the founder of the study of social stratification it would Karl Marx' who saw the conflict between social classes as the driving force in history.

Karl Marx as an economic determinist looked at social stratification from a new dimension. He saw class as the key to history, to social organization, and social change, and the individual behavior also. Marx was both a revolutionary and a social scientist. He was concerned with stratification in all types of human societies, beginning with primitive agricultural tribes and continuing into feudalism. But his main focus was on the effects of class on all aspects of 19th century Europe³³ (*Shaffer, Richard T*). Karl Marx, the father of the study of: social class, defined classes by their relationship to the means of production. Thus, as per Marx class differences therefore, are determined by the mode of production. In Marx's view, social relations during any period of history depend on who controls the primary mode of economic production. His analysis centered on how the relationships between various groups were shaped by differential access to scarce resources. Thus, ancient society was based on slavery, feudal society (*estate system*) on serfdom, and capitalist's society on wage labour. The relationship between what Marx labeled as the sub- structure, and the super- structure of society is a key in Marxian theory. According to him, all social life was shaped and determined by the relations, people establish between each other, in the process of economic production. He described economy as society's sub-structure, the institution, which shapes every other aspect of human life-government family, education, philosophy, religion, art, literature, and much more- as 'super-structure because they are all influenced by the economy (sub-structure)³⁴ (*Ibid*). Marx also distinguished between the means of production and the 'Relations of production'. Marx pointed out that classes are stratified according to their relations to the means of production. Classes are historical phenomena originated from the division of labour in society, and the institution of private property. To him, society is divided into two opposite classes- one constituted of those who own the means of production i.e.' Bourgeoisie (have's) or capitalists (such as owners of factories and machinery)' the

³⁰ Tumin, M. M,(2nd ed.1991), Social Stratification, Prentice Hall,(New Delhi) Pp.8-9.

³¹ Ali ,A.F.I, op.cit, P.4.

³² Sills, David, op.cit, P.289.

³³ Shaffer, T. Richard, (6th ed.2006), Sociology, Tata McGraw-Hill pub, (New Delhi), P.207.

³⁴ Ibid ,207

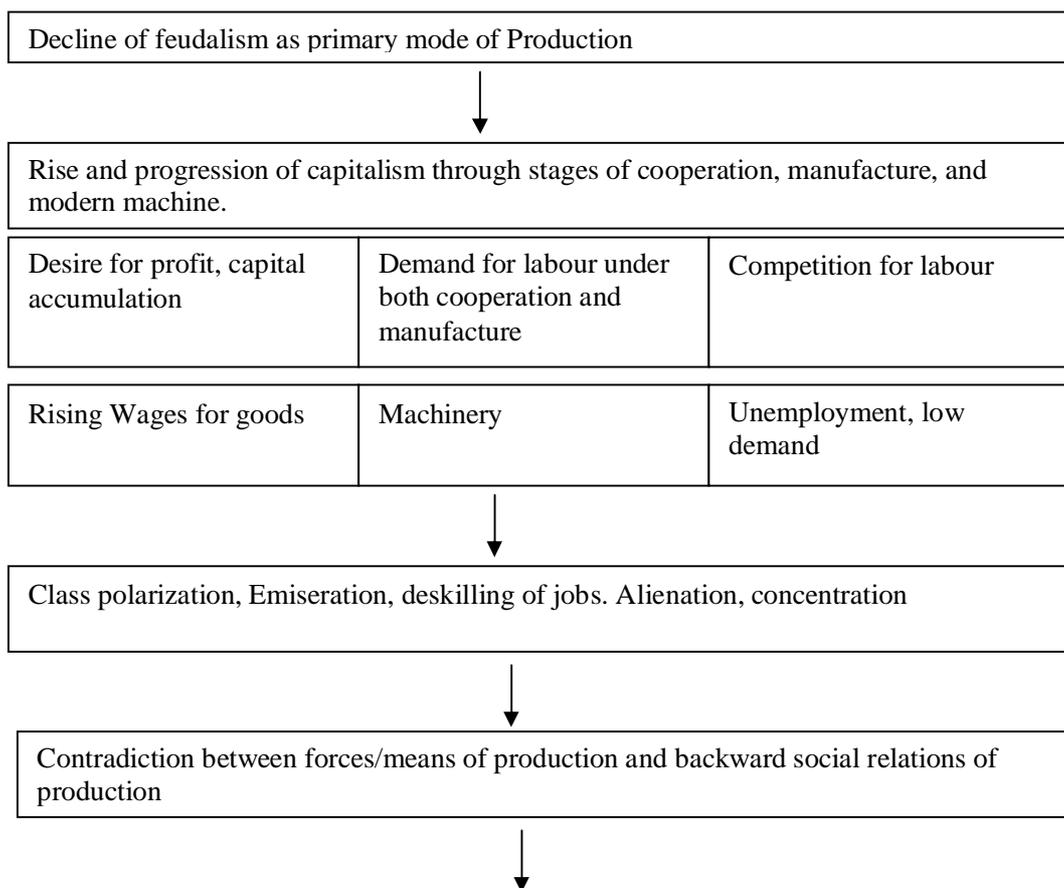
other of those who do not own it i.e. proletariat- working class³⁵ (*Lindsey, L.L, and S. Beach*). In capitalist societies, the Bourgeoisie maximizes profit in competition with other firms. In the process, they exploit workers, who must exchange their labour for subsistence wages.

Private property to Marx is the root cause of the surplus value by the owners of the means of production and this creates class struggle. Marx maintained that the nature of class situation differs according to the forces of production, but the broader character of the classes remains the same, e.g., with the change in the forces of production. The composition of classes also undergoes a change. But with the change in the forces of production the class does not go away rather the exploiting class of the previous phase is replaced by another exploiting class. According to Karl Marx, the weapons with which the bourgeois felled feudalism to the ground is now turned against the bourgeoisie itself³⁶ (*Guerra & Marill*). The capitalist’s mode of production is responsible for its own destruction. Because, the capitalist system reduces the majority members into proletariat and this proletariat class through a revolution overthrown the capitalist class. This class also abolishes private property in order to establish classless society.

With proletarian revolution, the bases for the class system are removed and the proletariat is emancipated. In the interim between the capitalist and the classless society, a dictatorship of the proletariat exist paving the way for a communistic society and the beginning of truly human rather than class society or class history³⁷ (*Hurst, C.H*).

Core elements in Marx’s theory of social stratification within capitalism.

Figure



³⁵ Lindsey, L. L, and Beach, S, (2008), Sociology, Prentice hall New Jersey, P.237.

³⁶ Guerra ,and Maril,(ed.), op. cit, P.142

³⁷ Hurst, C.H, – 4th Ed) (2001)social inequality – (Pearson’s Pub U.S.A) (P-172)

Class consciousness, political organization and revolution

Finally, the Marxists approach to study of class is useful in stressing the importance of stratification as a determinant of social behavior and the fundamental separation in many societies between the two distinct groups, the rich and the poor.

Ralf Dahrendorf

Ralf Dahrendorf another sociologist has also given a conflict perspective of social stratification. In opposing Marx, Dahrendorf says that class and class-conflict would be present not only in the capitalist societies but also in the post-capitalist societies, i.e., class & class-conflict is an inseparable part of all societies- industrial & post industrial. Dahrendorf tried to give a different explanation of the existing inequalities. He maintains the root cause of social inequality is more general factor than the private ownership of the means of production, namely the “exercise of authority”. The private ownership of the means of production is but one of the several modes of exercise of authority; in fact, it is not so much the ownership of property as its control, which gives one effective authority over other, & in the modern industrial society, the control of property is often divorced from its ownership. As a result even when the private ownership is abolished, the scope for the exercise of power does not disappear³⁸ (*Dahrendorf, Ralf*). According to Dahrendorf, social organizations are imperatively coordinate associations rather than social systems. The authority structure is an integral part of every social organization & it leads in excitably to the crystallizations of interest groups & inherent possibilities of conflict.

Dahrendorf recognizes all kinds of individual or group interests. There are interests in obtaining more material rewards, freedom, status reorganization, and leisure, all kinds of service from others & so on. But the main point is that the means of attaining these interests are related to authority positions within imperatively Co-coordinated associations. In other words, the haves get what they want because they are on top in the associations, while the have-nots, find it in their interests to challenge the status quo that assigns them, low positions & low-rewards³⁹ (*Kerbo, A. Harold*).

Criticism

No doubt Marx’s theory provided a new scientific basis for understanding society, but his theory has been subjected to close scrutiny. His theory of classless society has been severely challenged by many scholars on the grounds that, Marx’s theory of class, dealing with social stratification is only by product of his analysis of capitalist society, & formulation of the philosophy of history. Further the use of term ‘class’ by Marx has marked ambiguities.

Dahrendorf pointed out that whatever private property has been reduced to in significance, one still finds social inequality. In the former communist nations, although there is little private property, a system of social stratification developed nonetheless e.g., there were five social classes in former soviet union; “intelligentsia”; “white collar worker”; “skilled workers”, “un-skilled rank”, & “peasants”. Beisanz pointed out, everything happened differently in the U.S.S.R & other communist countries from what the leaders-even such prominent one as “Lenin”, “Stalin”, & “Trotsky” - anticipated. They accepted that the state would rapidly wither away, the democracy would be strengthened. The reverse happened. Webber strongly criticized Marxian perspective of social stratification Webber generally believed that Marx over emphasized the economic factor. The relation to the means of production may be a major factor of differentiating people, but it can never be the only factor. Webber maintained that there are always other factors responsible for social stratification e.g., “status & power”. It is because people differentiate themselves by their way of life status, prestige & position & so on.

Many of Marx’s prediction regarding the future of capitalism have not been borne out. Marx failed to anticipate the emergency of labour unions. Whose power in collective bargaining weakens the strangle hold that capitalists maintain over workers. Despite these limitations, the Marxist approach to the study of class is useful in stressing the importance of stratification as a determinant of social behaviour & institutions.

³⁸ Dahrendorf, Ralf, 1970. *On the Origin of Inequality among Men*, Stanford, P. 16

³⁹ Kerbo, A. Harold, 2000. *Social stratification & Inequality*, New York, P. 137.

Dahrendorfs theory has also been subjected to critical scrutiny. For example, Dahrendorf depended mostly on the secondary literature & his theory is mainly a theory of group conflict. He himself has admitted, the theory is a tentative one & needs refinement. In order to evaluate Dahrendorfs theory, D' Souza rightly comments, as a theory of stratification, Dahrendorfs formulation leaves many questions unanswered- e.g., is it possible to divided people into dichotomous divisions of those who exercise authority & of those who are excluded from exercising it. It seems that the major limitation of Dahrendorfs formulation stems from his assumption that all other categories of sociological analysis may be derived from the unequal but closely related trinity of norms, sanction powers. However, the most prominent sociologist who has come out with the most influential theory till date has been Max Webber. Webber's view has been considered by most of the sociologists as comprehensive & relevant to every society.

"The pioneering German sociologist Max Webber Said how the many layers & rank in capitalistic western Societies are defined by people's skills, credentials, market relationship, and property relationship- and by other determiners of stratification such as status & (power, party). Webber rejected Marx's view that class conflicts inherent in capitalism were simplistic and could be resolved by socialism" ⁴⁰(Magill, Frank. N).

Max Webber (1864-1920).

After Marx, the next great figure in the history of social stratification theory is Max Webber. He made progress in several ways, probably in part because of his desire to correct Marx, who was one of the dominant intellectual figures when Webber's thought was taking shape. Webber's Trinitarian model of social stratification – based on the concepts of class, status, and party- introduced a systematic, explicit, and necessary differentiation into stratification theory⁴¹ (Sills, David).

In comparison with those of Marx, Max Webber's specific contributions to stratification theory were relatively brief-out, but no-less powerful. Two sets of ideas developed and expanded by Webber have had a particular impact in our understanding of advanced industrial societies. The first, his expansion of Marx's single class or economic dimension of social stratification into a multi-dimensional view (class, status and party) has provided us with a very useful tool in understanding the complex nature of social stratification. Perhaps most important, however, Webber's writings on the development and growth of large bureaucratic institutions has enabled us to understand the nature of power and dominance within advanced industrial societies of all types, better than any other single order by a social theorist⁴² (Kerbo, Harold). We begin with his multi-dimensional view of social stratification. For Webber, property, prestige and power are three separate but interacting basis on which the hierarchies are created in any society. He further argues than it is because of property differences that classes are generated. Political parties are generated by power differences and status groups are generated by prestige differences⁴³ (Tumin, M.M.).

Webber argued that power can take a variety of forms. 'Power', in general refers *'to the chance of a man or of a number of men to realize their own will in a communal action even against the resistance of others who are participating in the action'*. A person's power can be shown in the social order, through his or her status, in the economic order through his or her class, and in the political order through his or her party. Thus, according to Webber, class, status, and party are three components of social stratification in modern industrial world⁴⁴ (C.H, Hurst).

⁴⁰ Magill, Frank. N., op. cit., P. 1282.

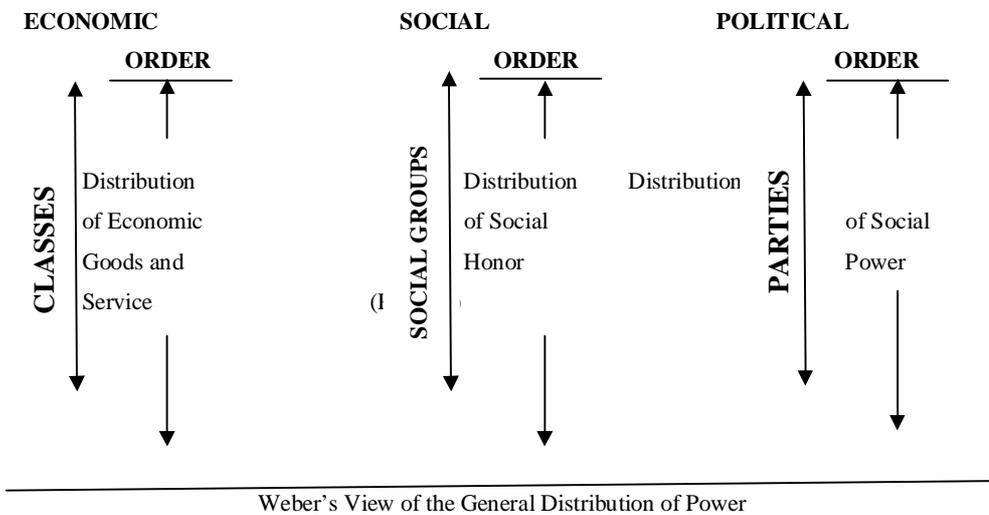
⁴¹ Sills, David- , op.cit- P. 290.

⁴² Kerbo, Harold op-cit. P. 95,

⁴³ Tumin, M.M. op.cit. P.13

⁴⁴ C.H, Hurst, op.cit. P- 179

FIGURE



Class

Webber reversed the concept of class for economically determined stratification. For Webber, however, classes are not stable groups or, communities produced by existing property relations. Instead, they are people who share life chances or possibilities that are determined by economic interests in the possession of goods and opportunities for income” within the commodity & labor market⁴⁵ (*Appelrouth Scott & Edles*). According to Webber, that “property”, and “lack of property” form the basic distinction between classes. But Webber was actually concerned with the conditions under which class consciousness arise. For him, however there was no single form of class consciousness. Rather, which groups develop a consciousness of common interests opposed to those of other group is a specific empirical question; different groups acquire historical significance at different times & in different places. The extent of the consciousness of kind depends to a considerable degree on the general culture of a society particularly the sets of intellectual ideas within it⁴⁶ (*Sills, David*).

Status order

Status groups, on the other hand, are communities. The fate of such communities is determined not by their chances on the commodity or labor market, however, but by “a specific, positive or negative, social estimation of honour”. Such “honour” is expressed through “style of life or” conventions that identify individuals with specific social circles. According to Webber, race, Ethnicity, Religion, taste in fashion & the Arts, & occupation have formed a basis for making status distinctions. More than anything, membership in status groups serves to restrict an individual’s chances for social interaction⁴⁷ (*Appelrouth, Scott & Edles, L.D. op.cit*). But status is not as economic class standing. In our culture, a successful pickpocket may be in the same income class as a college professor. Yet the thief is widely regarded as a member of a low- status group, where as the professor holds high status.

As a general rule, status is associated with a style of life. Those at the top of the status hierarchy have a different life style than do those at the bottom. In this case, life style or status is related to class situation. But class & status are not necessarily linked to one another⁴⁸ (*Ritzer, George*).

⁴⁵ Appelrouth Scott & Edles, L.D (2008) Classical & contemporary sociological theory (sage Pub. Los Angeles, London & Delhi P. 166.

⁴⁶ Sills, David, Op. Cit. P. 301.

⁴⁷ Appelrouth, Scott & Edles, L.D. op.cit P.166

⁴⁸ Ritzer ,George, op.cit P.231

Power

In modern societies, Webber points out, party formation is an important aspect of power, and can influence stratification independently of class & status. "Party" defines a group of individuals who work together because they have common backgrounds, aims or interests⁴⁹ (*Giddens, Antony*). To Webber "power" is always structures struggling for domination. Thus, parties are the most organized elements of Webber's stratification system. Webber thinks of parties very broadly as including not only those that exist in the "state" but also those that may exist in a "social club". Parties usually, but not always, represent class or status groups. Whatever they represent, parties are oriented to the attainment of power⁵⁰ (*Ritzer George*).

Webber then saw all three dimensions are important hierarchies leading to the ranking of individuals or groups in human societies. However, they were not all of equal importance throughout the history of human societies. In the early stages of capitalism the class dimension as more important. In caste societies, the status dimension remained supreme. And as we have said Webber saw that in modern societies the "party" or "power", dimension gained importance⁵¹ (*Ritzer George*).

Criticism

This theory has also been subjected to critical scrutiny Webber's explanation regarding "status group" is not clear, scholars have revealed ambiguities in Webber's assertions, while evaluating the tenability of Webber's theory.

D' Souza rightly comments, although Webber's contribution adds to our knowledge on the subject, but it lacks the requirement of theory. He has mainly given a description, without attempting the formulations of a theoretical model with prepositions which are deductively related to one another. His variable, called status honour lacks empirical referents & his treatment of the dimension of power, called party, is too inadequate. It is clear whether Webber had an opportunity of dealing with the subject-matter, in a thoroughly manner as his manuscript which was post-humously published, was found incomplete. In any case it would appear that Webber was more concerned about presenting a critique on Marx's theory than with putting forward a theory of his own⁵² (*Imam, A.F.I*).

In contrast to the theorists we have discussed, (*Marx & Webber*) Emile Durkheim, was not principally concerned with social stratification. Rather, his emphasis were established sociology as a scientific discipline, uncovering the sources and forms of integration & moral authority, & understanding the place of individualism in modern industrial society. Most of his works revolve around the issues of integration & cohesiveness - that is, the question of order, in society. Although liberal & reformist in outlook, Durkheim was a central founder of the "functionalist school of thought in sociology. Which views society as a social system tending towards equilibrium? The organic analogy of society is clear in his writing. Despite his preoccupations with questions of order & the evolutionary growth of societies, however, Durkheim had something to say about social inequality, and it is for that reason that this brief discussion is included here.

Emile Durkheim (1858-1917)

The key to understand Durkheim's sociological perspective, and thus his view of social stratification, is his "organic analogy". From this perspective, society is considered as similar to a biological organism, there are various parts or organs within this social system that serve different functions for the health and maintenance of the total society much like the functions served by organs within the human body⁵³ (*Kerbo, Harold*). It is easy to see that this organic-analogy could lead a social theorist to focus on the social system as a whole & on the interrelation of its parts rather than on division opposed interests among groups within the society. Hence, this organic- analogy leads to a perspective on social stratification for different from that of Marx and Webber.

Within the social system, it must be added; Durkheim considered morality to be the major factor to social order & integration. For Durkheim, it has been said, "morality was the centre & the end of his work". The importance of morality in

⁴⁹ Giddens, Antony, op. cit, P.247

⁵⁰ Ritzer George, Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Imam, A.F.I, op. cit., P. 10.

⁵³ Kerbo, A. Harold. op-cit. P. 105,

maintaining social order is related to his view of human nature, as well as his view of the needs of the social system. Durkheim was distrustful of human nature. Left to them, he thought people would be in continuous conflict, & selfishly dominating & exploiting fellow human beings for their own narrow interests. In order to save people from social chaos & individual destruction, a strong moral order is necessary⁵⁴ (*Ibid*). In the “Division of Labor” Durkheim saw two types of inequality, what he called, “interval” or “External inequality”.

In a fully developed organic society, characterized by individualism, equal opportunity, specialization, & interdependence, inequality is to be expected because it is based on differences in the internal abilities of individuals. A “normal” division of labour is based on these internal differences between individuals including differences between men & women. Differences in the division of labour between men & women should persist, but other differences, including classes, based on external qualities, (e.g., race, inheritance) should decline & eventually disappear. As society evolves, differential awards should, because of equal opportunity, directly reflect individual differences in abilities & differences in the social value of occupations. In short, Durkheim believed that as time moved on; modern society would be characterized by social inequalities between individuals based on their inner abilities rather than external characteristics⁵⁵ (*Hurst, E, Charles*).

Durkheim also dealt with the existence of “class and class conflict by dismissing them as unnatural, if the division of labour produces conflict, it is either because society is in a transitional state of development, or because of the existence of a pathological condition of social order. This pathological condition of conflict existed, in Durkheim’s view, because the occupational guides were not performing their proper function of providing moral order and society was being threatened by selfish individual or group interests. But it never occurred to Durkheim that the whole system of a division of labour in industrial society could be a power structure for the domination of one class by another⁵⁶ (*Kerbo, A. Harold*). Finally with respect to dominance of norms & values, or the moral order Durkheim held to be so important, it did not occur to Durkheim. This moral order itself could be a mechanism of dominance by one class over other. For Durkheim, the moral integration of society served the interests of all in the society.

The functionalist perspective on social stratification proposes that social stratification is inevitable in society & is therefore universal. Generally, functionalist scholars (Parson & Davis- Moore) have argued that stratification is both necessary & desirable to ensure that difficult & important positions will be filled by individuals capable of filling the duties associated with such positions. The functionalist perspective on inequality is generally interpreted as being conservative when compared to those developed by conflict- oriented or radical theorists. The functionalist theory of inequality is presented in detail because it occupied an important place in discussions & controversies concerning the origins of inequality & because the general framework of functionalism dominated social thought throughout the world for several decades.

Talcott Parson (1902 - 1979)

Talcott Parson’s theory is mostly concerned with how societies maintain order. Generally, functionalist theorists have tended to stress stability, consensus, and integration in society. They view society as similar to the human body with its many organs. Like the body’s organs, society’s institutions must function properly to maintain the general stability of the entire social system. Parsons, more than other functionalist theorists, believed that this social order was based upon values shared by members of society⁵⁷ (*Magill, N. Frank*). According to parson, in all human societies, social stratification is something which cannot be done away with as social stratification systems are right and proper for they express the shared values in a given society. It is because of social stratification rank is given to a person according to the tasks or roles performed by that individual⁵⁸ (*Haralambus, M*).

⁵⁴ Ibid

⁵⁵ Hurst, E, Charles. Op. cit. P- 106.

⁵⁶ Kerbo, A. Harold, Op.cit P. 106

⁵⁷ Magill, N. Frank, op.cit. P. 1267

⁵⁸ Harolombus, M, 1997. Sociological themes & perspectives (New Delhi), P- 31

The central element in parson's theory, maintained that there are four '*functional imperatives*' or requirements encountered by all action systems that is, there are four basic problems that a society, group, or individual must confront in order to survive as a system of action⁵⁹ (*Appelrouth, Scott and Edles L.D*). Parson called all these four problems or functions, '*adaptation*', '*Goal attainment*', '*integration*', and '*latent pattern maintenance*' (AGIL). That is all societies must solve problems of AGIL. The importance of the preceding in understanding social stratification, parsons claimed, is twofold; (I). The differing tasks of these various institutions lead them to stress differing values (or pattern variables). (II), societies differ with respect to which of the four sets of institutions (AGIL) is primary⁶⁰ (*Kerbo, A. Harold*). Thus, the individuals who best live up to the values shaped by the primary institution or institutions will receive more status, as well as the secondary rewards that are tied to high status, like wealth. Let us summarize these abstract lines extracted from parsons' theory of social stratification.

1. A persons place in the status hierarchy is determined by the moral evaluation of others.
2. This moral evaluation is made in terms of a common value system.
3. The common value system is shaped by the institution that is given primary stress in the society.
4. Thus, people who best live up these values or ideas will receive, in addition to high status, other rewards, such as high income or wealth.

It is also important to note that authority or power is attained through an individual's functional position in the occupational structure which of course, is gained through status attainment⁶¹ (*Kerbo, A. Harold*). Thus, parson tried to explain how stratification developed & endures by specifying the '*functions*' that stratification or what he likes to call '*patterned inequality*', plays in any society, whether this is '*feudal*', '*capitalist*' or '*the communist society*'.

Kingsley Davis & Wilbert Moore

Parsons "articulation of a functionalist theory of social stratification was further developed by "*Kingsely Davis & Wilbert Moore*" in the 1945 landmark essay "some principles of stratification", published in "American sociological review". In this essay, they set forth a notion of social stratification that shared the basic premises elaborated by Talcott parsons. They said that social stratification was universal (in varied forms), functional and integral to fulfilling the division of labour.

According to Davis & Moore, inequality is not created by natural differences but by the needs of society. Adopting the functional perspective, they argued that some positions are more important to social wellbeing & required longer training & greater skills⁶² (*Thompson, W.E & Hicky, J.V*). The positive side of social stratification, are aimed at in the theory given by Davis & Moore, it shows that how in a given society the necessity of social stratification is inevitable. They emphasized on the universality of it & also highlighted its beneficial consequences. An individual gains a position in a society as per his deservation; a well- talented & able person deserves & thus gains money & prestige when there is a relative scarcity of talented individuals. The higher position is given to ones who make their efforts & ability count⁶³ (*Schaefer, R.T*). Yet this assessment often devalues work performed by certain segments of society. The following points provide a basic summary of the theory.

1. Certain positions in society are functionally more important than others, and require more special skills for their performance.
2. Only a limited number of individuals in any society have the talents which can be trained into the skills appropriate to these positions.
3. The conversion of talents into the skills involves a period during which sacrifices of one kind or another are made by those undergoing the training.

⁵⁹ Appelrouth, Scott and Edles L.D, Op- cit. P. 360

⁶⁰ Kerbo, A. Harold, op. Cit P. 120

⁶¹ Ibid

⁶² Thompson, W.E & Hicky, J. V, op.cit. P. 236.

⁶³ Schaefer, R.T, op.cit., P. 210

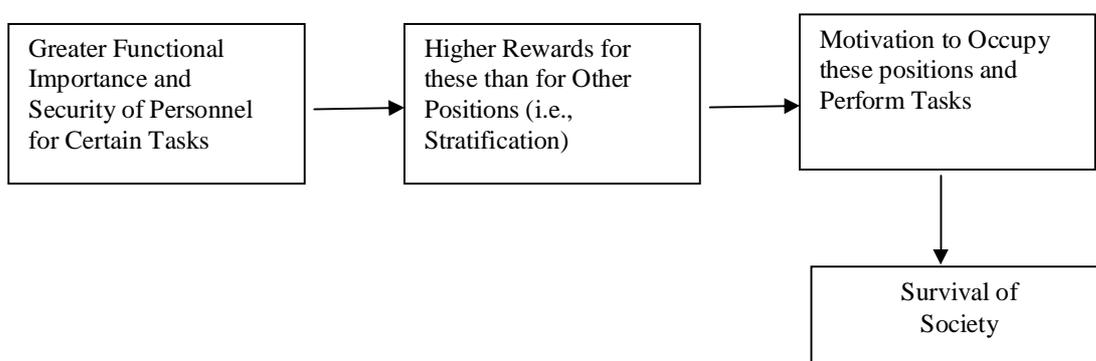
4. In order to introduce the talented persons to undergo these sacrifices and acquire the training, their future positions must carry an inducement value in the form of differential access to the scarce & desired rewards which the society has to offer.

5. These scarce & desired goods consist of the rights & prerequisites attached to, or built into, the positions and can be classified into those things which contribute to (a) sustenance & comfort, (b) humor, & diversion, (c) self-respect, and ego expansion.

6. The differential access to the basic rewards of the society has as a consequence the differentiation of the prestige & esteem which various strata acquire. This may be said, along with the rights & prerequisites, to constitute institutionalized social inequality, i.e., stratification.

7. Therefore, social inequality among different strata in the amounts of scarce & desire goods, and the amounts of prestige & esteem which they receive, is both positively functional & inevitable in any society⁶⁴ (S. Guerra, & Maril, R.L).

Figure



The Davis- Moore Theory of Stratification;

“Thus, social inequality is an unconsciously evolved device by which societies insure that the most important positions are conscientiously filled by the most qualified persons. Hence every society no matter how simple or complex, must differentiate persons in terms of both prestige & esteem, & must therefore possess a certain amount of institutionalized inequality.

Tumin: critical response

Melvin Tumin was the first sociologists to point out the shortcomings in the functionalist perspective, in his essay “some principles of stratification”. A critical response (in 1953) who argued that it was impossible to calculate the “functional importance of any position in society objectively”. The following are “Tumin’s” critical arguments about the “Davis & Moore” theory.

The contribution of “Davis & Moore” especially has evoked critical response on the part of a number of scholars. The most bitterly criticized proposition in the theory which the authors have been persuaded to reject is their assumption that social stratification / inequality is beneficial only when it ensures that the most capable people occupy the most important positions. However, one of the rewards elites receive is the ability to help their offspring’s attain the good life. The problem is that the children of highly capable people are not necessarily highly capable themselves. The result is a situation in which many people enjoy upper-class status, not because of their merit, but because of that of their ancestors. The second thing has also been pointed out that there is no way of knowing the functional importance of the positions. There have also been attempts to suggest that there can be other functional alternatives to unequal rewards for motivating people to fill different positions.

Second, the fact, those modern societies continue to allow ascriptive factors such as race & gender to substantially limit access to elite positions, even for highly talented people, also challenge the logic of Davis- Moore.

Third, there are serious questions about which positions ought to be highly rewarded. In a capitalist economy, a given occupation’s pay is determined by the market, not by a rational assessment of it’s with to society. The result has been extremely

⁶⁴ S. Guerra, & Maril, R.L, op.cit. P. 158

high salaries for 'rock-stars', athletes & movie actors whose contribution to society is debatable, very low salaries for such crucial occupations as social workers, child-care providers & teachers.

Fourth, Davis- Moore ignore the role of power plays in determining how well various occupations will be rewarded, professional associations, such as the medical associations & labor unions, have artificially drive up the wages of their members by restricting the supply of workers.

Finally, the extent of social inequality is the extremes of wealth. Major film stars earn as much as \$ 20 million per movie. Physician's annual salaries commonly exceed \$ 200,000. Presidents of major corporations routinely make at least 100 times more money than their entry level employees. At the same time, 38 million people are living below the poverty line, & hundreds & thousands are homeless.

The Davis- Moore thesis does make some good points. The relatively low wages paid to scientists & engineers in the former Soviet Union did seem to make them less willing to work hard. And 75% of Americans polled in 1987 agreed that "no one could be expected to study for years to become a doctor or lawyer unless they expected to earn a lot more than ordinary workers. However, the theory is at best one-sided in that it ignores the negative impact of structured inequality on the working & lower classes⁶⁵ (Lindsey, L.L & Beach, S).

Review of Literature

There is a lot of literature available on the theme of social stratification in India. In fact, the most researched area in the Indian sociology deals, directly or indirectly with the social stratification or caste. In this regard, the Indian society has been studied both by the local sociologists as well as the alien sociologists. The focus of these studies has been on the origin, dynamics, implications and change in the caste system. Moreover, there have also been numerous surveys which were conducted on the literature available in the broader theme of social stratification including caste in India⁶⁶ (I.C.S.S.R's) (The rise of Indian sociology owes its origin mainly to the interest in understanding Hindu Social Organization and the typical caste institution. A large of Indian as well as western sociologists interested in understanding Indian society have paid special attention to the analysis of the traditional caste system and the changes taking place therein. But along with this interest in Hindu social life, some attention is also now being paid to understand the socio-cultural life of Muslim community who constitute the largest minority of the country. In this way the sociological study of Muslims has also come to the forefront in the development of sociological literature in India today. Andre Beteille (1969) has contributed immensely in this field. Andre Beteilles study of village Sripurum in Tamil Nadu is based on the assumption of a rational distinction between caste, class and power, changing relation of stratification in Tanjore District, brought to light the traditional caste structures as well as he (Andre Beteille 1969) has contributed immensely in this field. Andre Beteilles study of village Sripurum in Tamil Nadu is based on the assumption of a rational distinction between caste, class and power, changing relation of stratification in Tanjore District, brought to light the traditional caste structure as well as the forces of change that were making way into it. According to Beteille, Sripurum village is an agrarian village. The whole village is dominated by the king of the Brahmin to look after the temples and other building of the village. In Tanjore he finds caste system of the village to be more rigid and complex. The caste system, apart from determining the unequal ritual status of villagers, also dominates their political and economic life. The social life of the village has also structured on caste lines. The settlement pattern of the village has also evolved on caste lines. The people of Sripurum divide the many castes of Hindu into three subdivisions- Brahmins, Non- Brahmins and the Adi-Dravidas are clearly segregated from one another in the village. The settlement pattern of the village continues to reflect the basic division of the traditional caste structure. The study finds that in Tanjore, the ownership of land is not only a source of wealth; it is also a source of prestige and power. The study also finds the class structure, which is largely vertical. The class system comprises of three economic units in the society, (1) Brahmins Landowner, (2) Non- Brahmins,

⁶⁵ Lindsey, L. L & Beach, S, Op.cit. P. 236

⁶⁶ in this regard see I.C.S.S.R's "A Survey of research in Sociology and social anthropology. Vol. I (Bombay Popular Prakashan). This includes two trend reports, first by Surjit Sinha "Caste in India" and second by Yogendra Singh "Sociology of Social Stratification".

(tenants of Brahmins) (3) and Adi-Dravidian's, or original Dravida's (Sub-tenants or Agriculturalists or labour) and their mutual relations. In the social stratification system, Brahmins were at the top stratum of the society, Non-Brahmins were next to them, and Adi-dravidian was at the bottom of the social stratification. They were treated as untouchables. Caste, class and power, relate in different ways to the broader phenomenon of social stratification.

In the political sphere, or say in the village Panchayat, Brahmins were occupying the power. They decided the dispute within the village. Before 1920, the Brahmin group was enjoying the political power. Non- Brahmins and Adi- Dravidians were having no say in the village panchayat. Andre Beteille calls it cumulative inequality. The study finds that in comparison to the rigidity of the institution of caste as well as stability of the traditional economic structure of the village, the distribution of political power has witnessed a radical change. The study found that caste, class and power were closely interwoven in the village.

Likewise, other Indian sociologists have contributed in one or the other way in the field of social stratification. The major contribution of Indian as well as alien sociologists in the field of social stratification are;

A. Beteille, 1974; Singh, 1974; Menchar, 1979; Pandit, 1979; M.N. Srinivas, 1966; B.H. Baden Powell's, 1896; N.H. Tooth; 1935; G.S. Ghurye, 1932; L.A.K. Iyers, 1909-12; G.H. Desai's, 1912; F.G. Bailey, 1957- 60; G.D. Barreman, 1960; A. Beteille, 1965; B.R. Chauhan, 1967; S.C. Dube, 1958; D.N. Majumdar, 1958; T.N. Madan, 1965; R.K. Mukherjee, 1957; H. Orenstein, 1965; N.K. Bose, 1968; E. R. Kach, 1960; B. Ansari, 1960; Louis Dumont, 1961; HS. Risley, 1961; Zarin Ahmad, 1962; Victor D'Souza, 1962; I.J. Bailey, 1965; M. Marriot, 1968; A. Nesfield, 1985; Max Webber, 1952; A.L. Kroeber, 1930; A. Dubois, 1960; Y. Singh, 1978; K. Gough, 1979; N. Singh, 1979; A. Jha, 1970; P.K. Bose, 1981; H.A. Iye, 1985; Nandu Ram, 1986; K.L. Sharma, 1986; Ehsan-ul-Haq, 1981; V.K. Vashista, 1992; and Andre Beteille, 2002.

A number of studies have also been conducted on Indian Muslims in different parts of the country. In the beginning these studies were conducted by special historians and social Anthropologists. But later on, the sociologists also joining in the analyzing and understanding different aspects of community life among Muslims. These studies were generally micro-sociological in nature concentrating mainly on the analysis of Muslim communities living in specific villages, towns or localities. These throw some light on various aspects like patterns of stratification and local hierarchy family and marriage, economic organizations, religious attachment and degree of religiosity, virtual and festivities and patterns of interaction in Muslim community. Moreover in course of such studies efforts have also been made to find out the impact of traditional Hindu Culture, deviation from Islamic sanctions, acceptance of western values and exposure to the forces of modernity in Muslim community. Thus, such studies on Muslim communities, no doubt, provide materials on different aspects of social life in the context of the past tradition as well as the present phase of transition.

The important studies in this field are those by; Ghaus Ansari, 1959; S.C. Misra, 1964; M.R.S iddique, 1974; Prof. Imtiyaz Ahmad, 1973; Zeyauddin Ahmad, 1977; Saghir Ahmad, 1977; S.M. Raz, 1976; Ali Ashraf, S.M. Raza, 1976, P.C. Aggarwal, 1973; Victor D'Souza, Zarina Bhatti, Hamza Ali, T.N. Madan etc.

The revelation is made by most of these studies on various trends and patterns of social stratification that these studies were caste – oriented and caste based. Caste being the sole basis of social stratification, but not the only dominating factor, as for classes like political elites, new capitalists, bureaucrats, technocrats and others were emerging as factors for social inequality in past 1947 scenario. It is very clear that the sociologist failed to address these factors and also the cause of their emergence. The result of it was that sociologist's studies caste stratification devoid of above mentioned factors have distorted the reality and the actuality of the situation did not come into light. The sociologists thus, were not able to analyze the role of these factors.

Sociologists did not attribute to highlight the nature of social stratification in urban areas. The study on social stratification in urban areas was not on large scale with the result, the phenomenon of social stratification in urban areas remained far from total revelation. It is also worth mentioning that urban context does not allow caste factor to determine comparatively. So, the need was to look forward with existential realities related to social stratification in urban areas.

Social Stratification among Kashmiri Muslims

Kashmir was peopled wholly by the Hindus till the beginning of the 14th century. Majority of them were converted from Hinduism to Islam after fourteenth century. As a result, all the race, and caste distinctions of the past were obliterated. Foreigners also ruled Kashmir for some time. Consequently, the local population came to have a small sprinkling of the Tatar the Tibetan, The Mughal, and the Afghan families. By the passage of time, however, Promiscuous intermingling of these and other foreign elements in the population took place with the result that the people of Kashmir came to be spoken of either Kashmiri Muslims or the Kashmiri Brahmins, commonly known as Pandiths⁶⁷ (*Kapur, M.L.*). The sub-divisions under both the Muslims and the Brahmins were however, numerous but most of these divisions were nothing more than family titles or personal epithets, lacking in the essential characteristics of a caste.

Kashmiri Society is predominantly a Muslim one, has remained divided into different strata's right from entering in to the fold of Islam. It is mainly because the Kashmiri society has retained some pre-Islamic socio-cultural features despite of the conversion. Caste exists with the religious sanction only among the Hindu and Sikhs, Buddhists (from Ladakh, to Japan and Korea) and Zoroastrians. Islam (like Pristine Sikhism and Buddhism) is egalitarian and yet, as Prof. Imtiaz Ahmad and his team demonstrated, some social stratification and caste like features exist even in Muslim societies, not just in the Indian Sub-continent but also outside it⁶⁸ (*Dewan, Parvez*). Broadly, speaking before 1947 the Kashmiri society was divided into four classes.

First, the Jagirdars, who were either from the royal class or close to royalty? This class comprised mainly of Pandiths of Kashmiri origin or Dogras of Jammu. They were the lords of large quantity of land, which consisted of even many villages. These Jagirs were bestowed upon them by the kings for some deed of theirs in times of war or peace.

Second the government servants who were the real manipulators in political and social affairs. This class was also composed of *Pandits and Dogras* who were mostly educated. The members of this class were higher ranking officials very close to the king as well as lower grade government employees. There was a small number of Muslims in government services, mostly holding lower ranks. This class also composed of Governmental functionaries like Patwari and non-governmental functionaries like Mugdams who were the report agents between the masses and the government.

Third class was dominantly Muslim in composition like *Kashkars (Agriculturalists or peasants)*. The land held by Jagirdars was allotted in name to these peasants who were asked to cultivate it for the Jagirdars. After a hard toil, they used to get a meager portion of the crop with which not even make both ends meet. This class as altogether life conditions was miserable. This category of people was also to beggar to carry on foot the garrison to the far flung areas of Tibet and Gilgat and not paid even a single penny.

Fourth, petty artisans indulgent in shawl making, Gubba making and carpet making, in which number of them were carpenters, blacksmiths, tailors and other craftsman. This class was relatively better placed economically. After 1947, this scenario changed altogether, the Jagirdars stem was abolished and the land reforms act was passed in 1948 and implemented in 1952. The land was provided to peasants, consequently the monopoly of Jagirdars diminished. It was partly also because the Muslim youth of Kashmir were getting higher education outside Kashmir and emerging as a socio-political force inside Kashmir, in the post-1947 decades business flourished and attained new heights. As a result the artisans and business class conditions improved and latter on became prosperous. This trend continues till date.

The Present Study

Like all other societies, in Kashmir also there exist various forms of social stratification among the Muslim community. However, historically a shift it witnessed from one form of stratification to other. According to census 1921 of India, majority of the Muslims in the Indian sub – continent is general and Kashmir in particular of the descendents of locals who changed their religion from Hinduism to Islam. Hence some Muslims and non Muslims say that these local Muslims who originally entered individually or in large groups consciously brought into their practice of Islam, their former Hindu caste practices and customs. With the

⁶⁷ Kapur, M.L, (1992), Social & economic History of J&K State, Anmol Pub. New Delhi, P- 119.

⁶⁸ Dewan, Parvez 204 Jammu, Kashmir & Ladakh , Manas Pub. New Delhi, P- 385.

course of time and advent of Dogra rule in Kashmir, the Muslims of Kashmir came under the oppression of the rulers that divided the people in to two strata's, landlords and the working class resulting in prominent stratification based on the property and agriculture.

The abolition of Zamindari system, modern education, migration from rural to urban areas, changing political attitudes, etc. have produced far – reaching impact on the attitudes, life styles, usages, customary practices and mode of economic life among the Muslims in Kashmir in modern times as well as the impact of Islamic sanctions on the traditional community.

Enormous literature exists on social stratification and its various parameters. The origin and evolution of social stratification at international, national and regional levels have been studied in spatio – temporal perspective. The ancient, medieval and modern literature on it, have been thoroughly received and analyzed, the social stratification, its nature and structure, has also been elaborately studied by sociologists, Anthropologists and ethnographers. But such studies are confined to the social stratification among the Hindus only.

A large of Indian as well as western sociologists and social anthropologists interested in understanding Indian society have paid specific attention to the analysis of traditional caste system and the changes taking place therein. But such studies are confined on the Hindu society and culture, and through insufficient light on different aspects of social life or particularly social stratification among Indian Muslims. The empirical realities demand that the social stratification may also be studied among the Non- Hindus in India.

In the recent time some attention is being paid to the study of social stratification and modes of social life prevailing among Muslims in India. But a comprehensive study of a Muslim community in India is still awaited. In this way the sociological study of Muslim has also come to the forefront in the development of sociological literature in India today.

As it is clear from the above mentioned facts that there is a dearth of data as well as of sociologists and social anthropologist who have taken interest in the study. It is therefore, a matter of some satisfaction that the collection of some papers in Imtiyaz Ahmad's book has succeeded in bringing together papers covering most of the areas significant Muslims concentration in India, excluding Kashmiri society from the coverage in these papers because this field is completely unexplored so far. So, this study is an attempt to explore this cruel social reality.

Hence a sociological study of social stratification among Kashmiri Muslims is of great importance/significance and requires systematic enquiry modes of investigation for understanding the traditional modes of life, the social changes in modern times as well as the impact of Islamic sanctions on the traditional community life. The focus of the study will provide a comprehensive picture of the patterns of social stratification among Kashmiri Muslims. The study will also try to throw light on variation/similarity between other areas of Kashmir. It will help us in understanding of how social stratification arise, how they are sustained, how they change over time, and what are their consequences for a range of social and personal goals.