CHAPTER-1
UNDERSTANDING TRIBAL SOCIETY, GENDER AND STRATIFICATION

Tribal Social Structure

In India, 427 groups have been recognised as scheduled tribes. They form approximately 8% of the total Indian population. According to 1991 census, their population is 51,628,638. Tribal populations are relatively isolated and closed groups, forming homogeneous units of production and consumption. During the ancient and medieval period, the so called tribal population has always interacted with the non-tribal populations as the names of tribes like Kurumba, the Irula, the Paniya in the south India, the Asur, the Munda, the Santhal, the Bhil, the Gond in central India, the Bodo, the Ahom in north-east India occur in old classical Indian literature. Some of the tribal populations like Gond, in central India and Ahom, in north-east India had large kingdoms.

The modern phase of the tribal history begins with the advent of the British. The British were keen to establish their rule in all parts of the country and were also looking for resources for their industries. In the process vast areas of India were opened up and brought under centralised administration. They not only levied new rents for land but also made new land settlement. The areas which were relatively scheduled but rich in mineral resources experienced entry to a new variety of people, namely forest contractors, labourers, officials, neo-settlers, money lenders etc. In many places the indigenous population resented new regulations, new levies and new settlers in their area and they rebelled.
At this stage for a variety of reasons, the British thought of protecting the indigenous population by bringing a regulation in 1833. Certain part of Chotanagpur were declared as non-regulated areas, which meant that normal rules were not applicable on such areas, for example, outsider were not allowed to acquire land in these areas. Later this policy was extended to other areas too. In 1874, the British passed Scheduled Areas Regulation Act and in due course the idea of a distinct and special arrangement in such area got accepted. In the meanwhile the concept of tribe as a social category was also emerging which was different from other organised religious groups. The 1935 Act incorporated the provision of wholly or partially excluded area where the tribal population was concentrated and a policy of reservation emerged for the people notified.

Following Independence, the policy of protection and development for these identified as tribe have been made into a constitutional obligation. A list of tribes was adapted for this purpose. In 1950, this list contained 212 names which were modified by successive presidential orders. In 1971, the list contained 527 names. The people who have been listed in the constitution and mentioned in successive presidential orders are called scheduled tribe. This is the administrative concept of a tribe.

F.G. Bailey (1960) suggested that the only solution to the problem of definition of tribe in India is to conceive of a continuum of which at one end are tribes and the other are castes. The tribes have segmentary egalitarian system and are not mutually interdependent as are caste in a system of organic solidarity. They have a direct access to land and intermediary is involved between them and land.

Surjit Sinha (1982) in his work “Tribes and Indian Civilization” observed that the tribe is ideally defined in terms of its isolation from the
network of social relations and cultural communications of the centre of civilisation. In their isolation the tribal societies are sustained by relatively primitive subsistence technology such as shifting cultivation, hunting and gathering etc. and maintain an egalitarian segmentary social system guided entirely by non-literate ethnic tradition.

Tribes in India can be classified by their geographical distribution, racial and linguistic affinities, demographic features, isolation and interaction with other groups and their economic pursuits. These features act like boundary makers and give them identity. They are also elements in giving shape to their social structure.

Religion of the tribes is simple. Religious belief and behaviours are not treated as something apart from other kinds of beliefs and behaviours. Religion pervades all aspects of their life. Tribal life and society cannot be fully understood without understanding their religion. Due to cultural contact, tribal religions were affected by the religious belief and practice of other groups. There was the emergence of various socio-religious movements among the tribals. These movements were primarily religious in content and reflected the articulation of collective hopes of the tribals.

**Impact of Modernisation on the Tribes**

Modernisation is a process of spreading the values, institutions and technical aspects of modern society. The tribals living mostly in hilly terrains and forested belts and having autonomy in every sphere of their social existence, remained by and large untouched by modern developments till their territories were opened up for strategic reasons. These reasons involved exploitation of forest and mineral resources. At the same time the need for manual labour was also important. Once these tribals exposed to the
wider world, they underwent traumatic experience of losing their rights and land, and being incorporated into a system that they knew little about. The impact of modernisation of tribals is varied. Some tribals (like the north-east) have benefited a lot from modernisation, while others (like those of central India) have been losers. Further modernisation does not lead to a tribal change in the society. Certain aspects of culture, especially pertaining to economic and technical domain, change at a faster pace. Social institutions do not show such a qualitative change. Religious and ritual life may continue to survive essentially in traditional mould. Modernisation reinforces traditional links and bonds. Thus, the consciousness of belonging to a tribe or tribalism is accentuated and this may transform a tribe into a strong ethnic and pressure group.

The separatist movements coming to settle in some large tribes may be curbed if the benefits of modernisation and developments are equally distributed. The effects of modernisation should be visible in all institutions of society. Since the historical experiences of a society, shape the incoming modernity, the concepts derived from the experience of other society, particularly western, are not applicable for a complete understanding of modernity in the tribal societies of India.

**A Profile of Tribal Society in Jharkhand**

In the Jharkhand state, there is a considerable tribal population. There are 30 scheduled tribes in Jharkhand. According to the 1991 census report, the tribal population in overall Jharkhand is 27.67 %. Tribes are found in all the districts of Jharkhand. But the density of population differs from district to district ranging form as low as 8.8 % in the Hazaribag, 12.2 % in Gridih.
and 12.7 % in Devgarh and highest in district like Gumla (70.8 %),
Lohardaga (56.4%), Ranchi (43.5 %) and West Singhbhum (54.7%).

Since the study was carried out prior to the formation of the Jharkhand
state, the socio-economic data for Bihar given in this study pertain to the
eighteen districts of south Bihar that formed the Jharkhand region within
Bihar. Based on the figures of the 1991 census, the eighteen districts of
Jharkhand region have a population of 21,848,860 living in an area of
79,732 sq. km. This represents 23.5 percent total population of 6,044,010.
More than 91 percent of the tribal population of Bihar lives in Jharkhand
region. Today only about 25 percent of the total population of this region is
of tribal origin. There are only small pockets of high tribal concentration.

The most important tribes of this state are Santhal, Munda, Oraon, Ho
and Kharia. They differ not only from the non-tribal population but also
from one another in appearance, manners and customs. These differences
relate to the means of subsistence, social organisation, language but no
consistence correlation can be established between any of these features.
Tribes speaking languages of the same family may differ in their means of
subsistence. There may be tribes more or less on the same economic level,
but they may have no linguistic affinity. They range widely as regard with
their means of subsistence. There are hunting and food gathering tribes like
Birhor, Birjia, Hill-Kharia & Korwa, shifting cultivators like Mal-pharia &
some Hill-Kharia, Korwa and also permanent agriculturists living in
permanent villages. Munda, Santhal, Oraon, Ho and Kharia are settle
agriculturists living in permanent villages. Some tribes of Jharkhand are
pastoral communities like Kharwar. Some tribes like Asur, Mahali, Chik-
baraik are good artisans and make excellent baskets and weave clothes.
“Most of the tribals of this region belong to the proto-Australoid stock though traces of Mangoloid strain have been found in parts of Santhal-Parganas”-(Sachchinand, 1972). All these 30 different communities each have its own distinctive culture and institutions. The tribals differ widely among themselves in the level of socio-economic developments. As most of the settled agriculturist tribes are engaged in plough cultivation, but most of the land in this state is hilly and it is difficult for them to produce any surplus, some thousands of tribals are also engaged in various industrial undertaking in the area.

The largest tribes in Jharkhand are the Santhals, Oraons, Mundas and Hos. The Santhals are most numerous, the Oraons follows and then Mundas and Hos who are linguistically closely related. Most of the Mundas and Oraons live in Ranchi district.

South of Jharkhand is the Singhbhum district where the Ho tribes reside. This district with its primal forest and attractive hills contain some of India’s largest iron ore deposits, within it is the major industrial steel city of Jhamshedpur. The city of Ranchi is the region’s largest town; a fast growing centre serving as the capital of the entire Jharkhand state.

Although indigenous to India, the Ho, Munda, and Oraon tribes ironically are not indigenous to Jharkhand. Of the three tribes Mundas are the earliest settlers in the regions. What we know about their early history is largely derived from Vedic and Puranic text written by invaders. They apparently retreated into the hills and forest tract of Chotanagpur, from elsewhere in north-India. They were soon joined by Hos, a sister tribe of the same linguistic family. The Oraons came later. They are presumed to have migrated from the south to this region, as their language belongs to the Dravidian family, the indigenous language group of south-India.
Simplicity and self-sufficiency are the twin characteristics of the economic life the tribal village in Jharkhand. Tribal economy is mostly a subsistence economy and agriculture is the most important occupation of tribals. Agricultural operations are carried out by the combined effort of both men and women, but organisation of male and female labour varies according to the agricultural technique employed. The importance of cattle and other livestock in tribal economy is considerable. Oxen, buffaloes and cows are yoked to the plough as well as carts. Goat, fish and fowl are used for sacrificial purpose and supplements tribal diet to a large extent. Hunting among the agricultural tribes has been reduced to a ceremonial function and with the disappearance of the forest not many animals are left to be hunted. Fishing is a joyful pastime for children and men. Money places a limited role in tribal economy and while transaction may be large the actual money passing in it may be small. The market is also a place for social gathering.

Each tribe is divided into a number of exogamous totemic clans. Members of one clan are supposed to be descended from a common ancestor and no sexual relation between two persons belonging to the same clan is ever tolerated. Member of the same clan bear common surname which is the name of a totem such a Tirkey, Minz, Soren, Hembrom, Tigga etc. The primary unit of social organisation is the nuclear family consisting of parents and their unmarried children. Descent is patrilineal, daughters having no rights of inheritance in the property of the father. Residence is patrilocal. Joking relation exist between grandparents and grandchildren. Specific obligations are also found with groups of kin in respect of certain domestic ceremonies such as naming, marriage and death.

Each tribe is endogamous and marriage outside the tribe is a severe taboo. The position of women among the tribes is better than the non-tribal
communities. Though they do not possess any right to land, they can own movable property like money, goods and cattle etc. They have the complete charge of their children and move about in the field, forest and farm without restriction. Adult and monogamous marriage is the general rule. But polygeny does exist in some areas. Widow re-marriage and divorce are allowed, though latter requires approval of village Panchayat. The birth of a child an occasion of great joy for the parents after the period of six or nine days, the Chhatti or purification ceremony is performed with feasting and merry-making. The child is usually named after an ancestor called mita, dead or living who becomes the child’s ceremonial friend. The formal incorporation of the child into the tribe takes place at his ear-boring ceremony.

Most of the tribal villages have an Akhara or dancing ground where people gather for regular dancing in the evening and also during festivals. Most of the villages have Sarna or the sacred-grove where village deities are supposed to reside and where worship is offered to them by the village priest.

Youth dormitory an important institution in most of the tribal villages which is known as “Dhumkuria” in Oraon and “Gitiorah” in Munda, is known as school of social discipline and training centre. The boys of Dhumkuria act as a corporate body under a monitor. They learn singing and dancing. Boys and girls are not only initiated into the mysteries of sex but also learn the value of dignity of labour and receive training and organisation.

The tribes of Jharkhand not only differ from the non-tribal population, but they differ also from one another. In their economic organisation, so also in their world view, tradition, orientation and commitment to their past, the
tribals differ among themselves. In some cases, their level of socio-cultural integration is low in others it is vigorous and potent. Among some, the cultural institutions are extremely simple; among others they are highly complex and elaborate. Some have very simple religious beliefs and rituals, while others have a plethora of god and goddesses. Most of them subscribe to believe in witchcraft and sorcery. Severe penalty is prescribed in tribal social code for person found guilty of these offences.

Another basis of classification is that of language. The languages of the tribes of Jharkhand fall into two main groups. Mundari, Santhali, Kharia and Ho belong to the Munda group of language which is regarded as a branch of Austro-Asiatic family of speech. Kurukch and Malto the language of Oraon and Sauria Pharia respectively, on the other hand belong to Dravidian language family.

A large number of tribes are bilingual and besides their mother tongue, they speak Hindi or one of its dialects. In Bengal and Orissa border they speak Bengali and Oriya as secondary language. In Jharkhand, the language of weekly markets and the small towns is Sadri or Gowari whose script is like Hindi but the vocabulary contains a large number of tribal words.

The tribes in the Jharkhand region have a number of languages, but most of them fall into either the Austrics or the Dravidian families. None of them have written script, though efforts have been made to develop one. Tribal folklore has been communicated down the generation with the help of strong oral tradition, but the written is increasingly popular with the help of Devnagari or the Roman scripts. The interaction between tribal and non-tribal has been wide spread and consequently most tribals speak Hindi and variety of related dialects.
A comparative analysis of the kinship system of all the tribes, for instance, reveals a certain uniformity transcending linguistic differences. Though the terms used for relatives in the different tribes vary with their language, the general method of designating kin is classificatory. The specific ceremonial duties assigned to certain kin on the occasion of birth, death or marriage, follow the same pattern among the Munda, Oraon, Ho, Kharia and Santhal. All the tribes share the system of ritual friendship. The practice of sororate and levirate is also common to all tribes and so is the practice of bride-wealth payment. Where there are totemic beliefs there is also the observance of specified taboos.

The tribal area of Jharkhand is not entirely isolated from the rest of the state and country at large. Non-tribal Hindu and Muslim communities have been living in the midst of tribals for several centuries. There is no tribal village in which a few Hindu caste families do not reside. They perform certain essential services for the tribals. Most of them speak the tribal languages it was through these channels that Hindu culture tickles into tribal areas. These alien elements in tribal villages were also important in bringing new ideas, new customs and new concepts. They provided model for the tribals.

Contact with alien zamindars, courts, money-lenders and petty officers of the state government has also let to a new perspective. Christian missionaries were also responsible for changes in many walks of tribal life. There is no aspect of life that is not touched by such changes. Social solidarity of the village has been broken. Formally the emphasis was on co-operation, now people are more individualistic. The authority of the village elders is not so strongly felt as before. Respect for age, tradition, ancient modes and customs are vanishing. Dances in Akhara have become less
popular in Christian areas. The youth dormitory is now a decaying institution.

As majority of tribal agriculturist are not able to produce enough for their subsistence, they go to the tea-garden of Assam, jute-mills and brick-kilns, rail and road constructions near Calcutta and also work as domestic servant in Delhi. All these migrants, when they return to villages not only bring cash but also new fashion, new ideas, they also have cleverness to manipulate things in their favour. These people have to a large extent been responsible for the breakdown of the tribal village organisation.

In recent times industrialisation has come to Jharkhand in a big way. Tribals have been drawn in these industries mostly as unskilled labourers. They have come into contact with people from all parts of India. They have been thrown into the vortex of industrialisation and have been exposed to new influences, values, attitudes and beliefs. But easy money brought drunkenness, debauchery and venereal diseases in its works. The first psychological reaction to these changes was one of the keen frustrations. Losing faith in own values and gods, was the reason for the tribals drifting towards either Christianity or Hinduism.

Rapid growth of education at the university level has helped to breakdown the insularity of tribal life and thought. The general elections, Panchayat elections have brought political consciousness in the areas as different political party's voice for their votes. A number of welfare schemes have been launched in the tribal areas. Schools are being opened and dispensaries are being established in large numbers. Communications are improving and irrigation schemes are making more area cultivatable.

The Christian missionaries have been very active in promoting education, social service etc in Jharkhand region. It is an important agency
of social change. It introduces a new kind of leadership and new form of social control.

The growth of education and continued cultural contact has led to the second psychological phase vis. that in which the tribals rediscover their own culture. This was marked by reawakening of pride in certain aspects of tribal culture. Some tribal dances and institution have received new appraisal.

Social Stratification in the Tribal Society

Social stratification involves a hierarchy of social groups which enjoys or suffers the unequal distribution of rewards in society as members of different social groups or stratum.

For a long time tribal people were seen as an indifferent lot. Moreover, a couple of decades ago it was fashionable among social anthropologist and sociologist to describe the tribal society as a homogenous entity. However, they have gradation based on age-set, sex and kinship which did not form the basis for social stratification as found among the non-tribal people in terms of property, wealth, power and authority.

Social stratification is a multi-dimensional, multi-disciplinary field of study. The traditional systems of social stratification have been witnessing rapid alteration, addition and adjustment due to structural and cultural change all over the world. The Indian society in general and weaker section in participation due to value conflicts are giving way to a new pattern of social stratification, reflecting new social spaces and identities. Such a situation has socially and culturally destabilized the entrenched section on one hand and craved out new social paces for newly aspiring groups on the other.
Tribes are differentiated on the basis of landholding rural urban background, education, occupation income and political power. At the same time they also have many attributes, practices and life-style that distinguish them from the non-tribal people.

Some tribal groups depend upon forest based resources for their livelihood, while some are also engaged in settled agriculture. Some are working in factories and industries. Administrative service, white collar and professional jobs are also been taken up by educated tribals. Some are active politicians and social workers. This varied occupational structure has resulted in a complex tribal stratification.

Tribal economy is also largely like peasant economy. Division of labour, based on gender, work specialisation, tenure differentiation and class distinction are found among the tribal people like any non-tribal peasant community. Despite these similarities, tribes remain distinct from caste because of their geographical isolation, language, dialect or religion.

Besides differentiation of peasantry there is also a rising middle class among the tribal people. Migration, education, social and political awakening have contributed to the emergence of a small middle class. State sponsored measures including the constitutional provisions and special programmes for their development have set in a new process of differentiation and stratification.

Tribes are not caste like entities though some of them have followed the path of Sanskritisation and conversion to Christianity, Hinduism and Islam. Tribes are a highly differentiated lot both ethnically and culturally. Some adhere to “tribalism” and others have converted to Christianity by rejecting tribal pantheon and some have taken up Hinduism by adopting vegetarianism, teetotalism and other Brahmanical ideas and practices. Ethnic
and cultural differentiation can be in terms of tribal identities and religious pursuits.

Social stratification as an existential phenomenon among the tribes is however, different from that of the advanced agricultural and industrial society. It is not unique, the principles of social stratification such as ethnicity, power and class are same everywhere. The difference lies in the operationalisation and actual functioning of these principles due to the structural differences in various tribal societies in regard to their history, level of economic development, nature of colonial impact and exposure of modern forces of social transformation. Thus, in terms of these criteria the tribal people are different. Social stratification is different among them in comparison to the non-tribal societies.

Ethnicity, Power and Class: Main Bases of Tribal Stratification

Social stratification is a relational and relative phenomenon and therefore, it can be observed only in terms of relations between groups, over a period of time based on a certain value frame. It has always existed among the tribes of Jharkhand, though its value frame has changed time to time.

The three important basis of social stratification among the tribes of Jharkhand are ethnicity, class and power dominance. Power includes economic, political and cultural power. Despite being inter related aspects, there are not found in the same proportion of interconnection and efficiency in all tribal societies. Tribal people who are exposed more to influences like Christianity, modern education, developmental programmes and industrialisation would have more of class and power as the basis of status determination rather than ethnicity in the form of stratified languages of clans. There are inter-tribal and intra-tribal status distinctions. Emphasis in
the ethnic perspective is laid on inter-tribal distinction in terms of historicity, land-relation, colonial impact and contact with non-tribal people, economic development and socio-political awakening etc. However, the class perspective emphasizes upon formation of class relation among tribes, keeping in view their economy patterns of exploitation, alienation and backwardness. In the Jharkhand area, the question of class in the form of land alienation, exploitation was transformed into the demand for an autonomous state of Jharkhand.

The traditional patterns, dimensions and processes of social-stratification have changed in the modern times due to the forces of modernisation and urbanisation. The same is true about the tribal society. What is particular about the tribal society is they have been given certain constitutional safeguards, which leads them to the road of development. The constitutional provisions prove a strong force for bringing about transformation among the tribals. The changes that take place among the tribals are partly due to incompatibility of their traditional system and partly due to the impingement of the modern forces of the tribal society. Despite their social origin the tribal elites are more akin to the non-tribal elites and the non-tribal and masses.

Stratification is manifested in almost all aspects of social life. Status determination based on ethnicity is being replaced by new criteria such as education, occupation, income and political power. In urban locality, some new bases of stratification, namely, education, style of life and political consciousness have been found. Tribal women are highly differentiated both socially and economically. S.L. Sharma (1996) had identified mainly three classes viz. upward, middle and lower among the tribal women in urban city, based on occupation, education, income, migration and political power.
The life-style, standard of living, worldview and socio-economic condition of life of the tribals have completely changed. They live in close contact with the wider society and are affected by the forces of modernity, Christianity, education, industrialisation and urbanisation. They feel themselves superior to their fellowmen who are living in rural areas and are leading traditional style of life. They have ceased to interact with their parent group with same frequency and intensity.

**Conceptual and Theoretical Issues of Gender and stratification**

Social stratification has its two main orthodoxies—Marxian and Weberian defining three nuclei: social class, social status or ideology and political power. But gender relations are not part of the core of stratification. But gender relations presents a third area in which a set of properties intersects with the orthodoxies categories in a peculiar yet structured way.

Thus for many stratification theorist, an important argument was whether the life chances of the individual are crucially affected by the kinds of structure such as capital and labour, power and the market.

The topic of gender has been relatively neglected in the main stream stratification theory and research. Theory of Marx and Weber represented the main stream stratification theory. Two most influential works of Goldthorpe and Lockwood drew upon the European tradition of class analysis as represented by Marx and Weber. These approaches sought to distinguish themselves from both the theory and practice of stratification. Their research work gave a normative aspect of class and equal emphasis with the economic and relational. The stress on social relationship to determine class and status rather than individual attributes can be argued to reflect a Marxist stand of the attempted synthesis of Marx and Weber which
in various combinations represented the main stream stratification theory. In the structure of class relationship the capital, labour power and the market have occupied a central place.

Parkins (1972) made an empirical study, “Class, inequality and political order” reveals that the major research work of both Goldthrope and Lockwood of this period have a clear expression of orthodoxy in this regard. The female status certainly, carried many disadvantages compared with that of males in various areas of social life including employment opportunities, property ownership, and income and so on. However, these inequalities associated with the differences are not usually thought of as components of stratification. This is because of great majority of women the allocation of social and economic reward is determined primarily by the position of their families and particular that of the patriarchal head.

Goldthrope (1983) also defined the conventional view which presents a clear recognition of major sexual inequalities. Especially with regard to opportunities for labourer marked participation and the relationship of dependence that generally prevails between married women and their husband. As female life chances are not market determined, women cannot be said to constitute a class, but as there are status difference between women, they cannot be considered as a meaningful status group.

On the other hand, according to H. Braverman, (1974) within a broadly Marxist frame work, women in a monopoly capitalist society are a central component of the “reserve army of labour” to facilitate expansionary deskilling- (Clerical work) and in the period of acute labour shortage (wartime).

So, Parkins (1972) finds out that women within class and stratification theory perhaps not been ignored deliberately. In Weberian approach if
female life-chances are not largely market determined then it is logical to regard such individuals as beyond the boundaries of class theory. In Marxist approach the class position of women is not inherently problematic. Women were members of a class if they occupy the relevant position within the social organisation of production and the particular form of the oppression of women is seen as a reflection of the prevailing economic mode and its associate form of exploitation.

This view of women’s problem has been resisted strenuously by many feminists. Women they argue are oppressed as a class by men and patriarchal structures are geographically and historically almost universal, predating capitalism and also persist in the so called socialist societies. The major axis of differentiation in contemporary society is not class as such, but gender and it is women who face the “longest revolution”. So the women’s problem is not an artifact of the prevailing system of economic exploitation. So they argued that the oppression of women is not to be viewed as secondary.

The omission of gender as a basis of social stratification just like class, power, caste and ethnicity has created a crisis in the stratification theory. Crompton and Mann (1986) in their famous work “Gender and Stratification” review the whole theory of social stratification. The study focused on the gendered aspect which has been emphasised as an essential component in the theory of social stratification. Michall Mann (1994) pleads for the integration of gender division into the core of stratification theory. He has identified and traced the inter-relation of five principles stratification nuclei-five collective actors who have impacted on gender and stratification relation. They are the connected networks of household, family, lineage, gender (the male and female sexes given social power significance) social
classes (viewed broadly in a Marxian perspective, working class). He adopts a multi-dimensional building block approach to stratification theory-contained within patriarchy are two fundamental nuclei of stratification the household or family, lineage and the dominance of the male gender. These coexist in any real society with social classes and other stratification grouping.

Social stratification has these two dimensions. One dimension comprised of two nuclei of household and family and lineage and the dominance of male gender. The second dimension comprised whatever combination of public stratification nuclei (class, military, elite etc.) existed in the particular society. These were two the incommensurate structures of stratification linked through families and households and lineages, the orthodox structure of (male) classes etc and the relation between two genders.

In the modern society stratification became gendered internally. Like in the capitals economy which is based on neo-patriarchal arrangements, generally women were subordinate to men in employment, they were not only dependent on their patriarchs, but also derived a class position from their patriarch and this might raise them above other men. Wage hierarchies were institutionalised. So, economic stratification was gendered, unlike the agrarian structure of patriarchal society where both men and women were largely kept apart in their spheres. Later on legal and political citizenship in the nation-state were achieved and maintained comparatively easily by women, though they have not been virtually represented. Women have entered as individual citizens into legal and political institution and social stratification. As women were now a part of the state and as the role of state was enlarging enormously, gender becomes politicized, again subverting
traditional patriarchy. Gender was not an active agent in this transformation but it could not help, but affected and thus react back upon the state.

Crompton and Mann (1986) have opposed patriarchy because the particularistic distinction between the public and private sphere has been eroded. They have used neo-patriarchy due to the extension of notions of domesticity and feminity into public realms of employment and the welfare state. Now there are two distinct and even opposite form of gendered stratification. First type in which men and women have become in certain way abstract, inter-changeable persons with equivalent rights as legal and political citizens limited of course, by other stratification nuclei around which they might cluster like class, nation but also ethnicity and religious affiliation. Like wise women have the right to choose a marriage partner to terminate that marriage freely in divorce and to hold on to a portion of its material resources thereafter. This deviation of liberalism is reinforced by social democracy and by feminist movement represents fundamental changes in gender-relation. In the second type of gendered stratification, even where men and women are not inter-changeable the pattern of their segregation and inequality has become integral, to the structure of the public stratification. In patriarchal society the dimension of gender stratification was largely segregated from dimension of public stratification (class etc). The participation of women in the realm particularly in employment and through the welfare state, now effects the core stratification relation of our society.

Gender stratification was very much influenced by the feminist movement. In fact the inclusion of gender as a core component of stratification theory was due the effect of feminist movement. Jospline Denovan (1994) has divided the feminist movement into three phases-liberal
feminist movements, the cultural feminist movement and the radical feminism. The first major feminist theory was shaped by the Newtonian world view of enlightenment. The nineteenth century saw feminism becoming involved with larger social issues. Denovan (1994) underscores how profoundly the ideas of Fred, Marx and existentialist thinkers changed feminist awareness of societal force that keep women oppressed. Radical feminist theory was developed by a group of ex-movement women in the late 1960’s and early 1970’s primarily in New York and Boston. Movement women were those who had participated in the political activities of the civil rights and anti-war campaigns of the 1960’s. Much as 19th century feminist became aware of their own oppression through the treatment they received from their male cohorts in the abolition movement, so the 20th century radical feminist came to their consciousness in reaction to the contemptuous treatment they received.

Feminist theory in the 1980’s has become more specific, paying more attention to the differences among women particularly those of race, class, ethnic background and sexuality. A major vain in the recent feminist theory has been a continuing refinement of critiques of liberalism from a gynocentric perspective, especially of the constiuations practices and ideology of modern science, while the conventions in contemporary feminist jurisprudence or legal theory revolve around liberal versus cultural or radical feminist approaches to the law.

Parkin (1972) again emphasizes that the question of gender raises serious problems for both theoretical and empirical work in social stratification. Like if we take family as the basic unit of stratification analysis the class situation of family member including women is derived from that of the main bread winner who is usually a man. This assumption is
being criticized widely. Empirically, the proportion of households without a male head is increasing. Secondly, if we take households as a unit of class analysis it will again be rejected as a system of individual wage labour, families are not engaged as units in the occupation division of labour. The second major problem associated with measurement and classification is that men and women in the same occupation may in practice have a very different life-chances or different status depending on the gender of the occupant is obviously a serious threat to the entire strategy of using occupational classification in empirical work on social stratification. Likewise the question of gender raises serious problems for both theoretical and empirical work in social stratification. Both Marxist and Weberian approach have engaged in empirical research which both documents and attempts to explain structures of inequality.

There is another explanation; however of the neglect of gender by the stratification main stream which requires systematic attention. As Newby (1982) has noted -“The issue of gender inequality was not primarily one which arose from debates within stratification research, but one which arose external to it via the women’s movement. It is not worthy that with very few exception the most prominent figures in stratification research and theory in Britain and elsewhere are and always been male. So now is the question is whether the neglect of gender by stratification theorist therefore a reflection of the conscious or unconscious action of male stream sociology.”

N. Kabeer’s study “Reversed Realities: Gender Hierarchies in Development Thought.” (1995) highlight Gender as the basis of all forms of social inequalities. The male and female of the human species are biologically similar in most ways. They distinguish from each other only by a small range of biological differences. So, Kabeer argues while sexually
differentiated bodies can be seen on as important aspect of human experience. It is the socially differentiated arrangement of gender that we must seek on explanation for the very different ways in which men and women experience the world. The social rules and practices through which gender relations are structured constitute a highly selective interpretation of the human body of its full range of attributes they privileged only those which are necessary for a specific sexually based system of human production. Gender relation therefore simultaneously suppress natural similarities between the sexes and exaggerate the differences ensuring that male and female of human species are channeled into mutually exclusive categories of women and men based on mutually exclusive traits of masculinity and femininity. Gender discrimination varies in different societies, because in some societies, the rules and practices which shape gender relations are relatively flexible, leaving room for multiple interpretations in others, they are severely and punitively enforced. Nevertheless, most of the societies display a proliferation of gender identities along with normative standards which exercise greater or lesser pressure for conformity. It has to be recognised that other social relations mediate the way in which biological difference is translated into gender inequality. Class is clearly an important factor here along with other form of social inequality whose significance in context-specific. Empirically, class and gender tend to be mutually constituted, biological difference are always acted upon in the context of intersecting social inequalities. She argues that sexually based system of human thought has to be deconstructed. All these explanations help to understand the gendered nature of social relation and makes sufficient ground for the addition of gender factor in stratification theory.
Margaret Stancy (1981), made a clear distinction between the public and private domains of contemporary society. Both these domains are ideological as well as empirical reality. The public domain includes the world of waged work, industry and production for market, of politics, welfare etc and the private domain including the domestic world of family of production for use rather than exchange and also the reproduction of human being themselves. She argues that due to male domination of sociological theory which paid exclusive attention to the public domain to the affairs of the state and the market place in the mid-nineteen century, were not affairs with which women were allowed to be concerned. The concepts developed during that period including class and social stratification were therefore in reality only partial as they do not examine society as a whole, but only the public sphere. They are not only partial but also positively misleading. In particular the division of labour has been examined almost entirely using public domain concept of production and market which are inappropriate both for work carried out in the private domain and in the public sphere, i.e., the people’s work of caring and nurturing, nursing, teaching etc. Stancy argues therefore that sociology including stratification sociology must develop new theories and concept which can articulate the private and public domain and address those activities which straddle both domains.

Sylvia Walby (1997) in her study of “Gender, Class and Stratification” has criticised Goldthrope’s approach in defending the conventional view of women and class analysis. She points out that Goldthrope has largely ignored the issue of gender inequality by linking class relation with a structure of positions associated with a social division of labour which excludes the sexual division of within the household. Walby also criticised the new feminist stratification theory which attempts to revive
the stratification theory by including occupational classification of women as a paid worker. And they reevaluate the contribution of women's work to the family. But according to Walby, they have failed in their attempt as the question are derived from a male-centered, problematic viewpoint which has no space for a proper consideration of issues pertaining to gender inequality. Existing work has attempted to demonstrate, its validity in relation to these old questions rather than rethinking the central question of stratification theory, when its attention is turned to gender relations.

The attempt to derive a women's class position from that of her husband assumes a notion of class in which the standard of living is determining factor. That is it assumes work or market situation to be determinant of an individual class location. The idea of derived class is incompatible with any analysis in which class location is determined by individual’s market or work position. According to Walby housewives and husbands can be conceptualised as classes, when class is defined in terms of a distinctive work and market position, but gender should not be reduced to class. That is while husbands and housewives are classes women and men are not.

As per her alternative approach the recognition of housework as a distinctive form of work. It is hard work and the fact that it does not receive a wage should not be held to disqualify it from the status of work. The content of house work changes over time and varies according to the income and wealth of the household. The position of the husband should be taken into account when issues such as the standard of living, access to resources and sources of political influence are considered, but this is not the same as suggesting that married women should take the same class position as their husbands.
But all women are not equally unequal in their families and communities. Women, in fact are attached to two fold stratification namely in relation to men and in relation to other women. Such status distinctions imply a differential distributive process for women in terms of access to resources, position of power and authority. Gender as the basis of social inequality is structured into female and male sphere. Likewise the differentiation within the family is structured and complex. There is no equitable sharing of status among the members of the family. Status which women derived from her own achievement such as education and salaried jobs is not fully recognised and even such individualistic gains are attributed to the husband and their families or to the parents of the upwardly women. Thus it implies that ultimately women have only derived status.

Basically gender in class stratification theories attempt to uncover the sources of structured inequality and social change. Stratification theory to be truly about stratification rather than limited form of inequality between men, needs to reassess the issues to include gender in the stratification theory. Taking inequality between men and women as a key feature of contemporary society and which is in need of explanation along with the action forms of political resistance to and support of this patriarchal domination.

So, the new theory of gender stratification should retain the traditional interest of stratification theory in the relationship between national position and political action, between social structure and social change and not confine merely elaborating more accurate ranking of lifestyle and prestige which include women as well as men. Michael Mann (1986) points out that, the traditional patriarchy might have become weak but neo-patriarchy and feminity have emerged in the public realms of
employment. Women can no longer be kept in separate sociological compartment, as stratification is gendered and gender is stratified. However compartmentalisation of women persists despite involvement of women in politics, developmental programmes and processes, feminism and even in the challenge to patriarchy.

Multi-dimensional approach to social stratification where gender, race, age etc are seen as independent dimensions which cross-cut each other, giving rise to a complex structure of inequality. But the problem is that societies are not built-up of independent "dimensions" or are not homogeneous totalities interacting externally with one another.

Specific Signification of the Gender Studies in Indian Context

In western countries, gender studies have emerged only during the decade or so and initially at a low key. It is a fact that the initiative to introduce the studies of women in the university system largely came through a wider feminist movement. In the west, gender studies are a "movement-born" programme. An important consequence of the growth of gender studies in the west is sensitization about relevant gender based issues. The new feminist such as scholarship during the last two decades has published anthologies, reprints, biographies, abstract, articles, newsletters and books. Gender studies in the west have survived and have been legitimized in the educational system.

Myers, Diana Tietjens (1997) in her study on "Feminist Movement" co-related women's movement with raising awareness level. The study reveals that the second wave of the women's movement revitalized feminist theory both as grass root understanding in consciousness raising groups and as a project of academic pursuit. In colleges and universities today feminist
theory is an influential, intellectual current in many discipline including literary studies, sociology, history, political science, economics, anthropology, law and philosophy. In the programmes of the studies of women which are now well-established at most U.S colleges and universities, the feminist theory is central to the curriculum.

In the Asian region during the last decade considerable progress has been made relating to courses on feminism. Micro studies on women are also in vogue. Now there is a growing feeling for a need to develop a third world focus to understand the gender problems. The Asian women scholars have to be involved to evolve locally relevant concepts and theories taking into consideration the specificities of different region, focusing on the issues like caste system in India, predominance of export oriented industries in south-east Asia, sex tourism in Thailand, significance of multinationals in Singapore, Malaysia and South Korea etc. Significant quantitative and qualitative materials are available in India. Though the concern for studying women and organizing action for improving their conditions is not new, what is striking different is the new perspective both in research and in action.

The Indian society is a patriarchal society. Patriarchal value regulating sexuality, reproduction and social production prevailed and were expressed through specific cultural metaphors prohibiting women from some activities and denying from exercise of certain rights. The very important feature of caste system is its control over the labour and sexuality of women and also regulating mobility of women.
Shifts in the Studies of Social Stratification

The structural-functionalism of fifties encountered conceptual and methodological challenges in the form of Dumont’s structuralist theory and ideology, Marxist theory and method and Weber’s dimensionalistic-approach of class, status and party. Y. Singh (1973) observes that in sixties the debate in the studies of social stratification focused mainly on the choice among conceptual typologies Vs continuum, historical specificity Vs comparison, structure-function Vs conflict and dialectic Vs ideology. Studies of social stratification becomes problem oriented both conceptually and substantively. The new studies dealt with the problems of caste and class exploitation, domination, poverty, alienation and distributive justice.

Surendra Sharma (1985) provides a comprehensive review of the studies of social stratification in India mainly focusing upon the theory, ideology and method from the viewpoint of the sociology of knowledge. The main problem as envisaged by Sharma is that a proper connection between theory, method and data is lacking in the studies of social stratification. The ideological and historical dimensions of social inequality along with the quest for equality remain in most studies unanalysed. A rethinking of the concepts of caste, class, power and social mobility is seriously underway.

Gender Stratification and Indian Social Structure

K.L. Sharma (1997) studied gender stratification as the status inequality between men and women which is reinforced through patriarchy and its institutions like marriage, dowry, property and inheritance and subordination. There is an urgent need for the inclusion of gender in the stratification theory. Although the family is a salient unit of analysis for
stratification studies, whether based on caste or class analysis it is not quite sufficient. Situated within the broader framework the division by sex and status affect its properties of stability and dynamics. Prof. K.L. Sharma discusses the following questions in the context of gender stratification in Indian society:

(1) Is the family the basic unit of stratification?
(2) How do kinship, family and everyday relations structure gender?
(3) Does the male head of the household determine social position of the family?
(4) Within families, is the status of women equivalent to that of men?
(5) Can women determine their status independent of their relationships with men?
(6) How does the inequality between men and women affect the structure of stratification?

He points that a society as divided by economic inequality and as permeated by the ideology of hierarchy. Women hardly constitute a collectivity with shared interests and needs. They are also stratified as men are, by enormous differences in material resources, by the option that are available to them and by the norms of status appropriate work closely linked with their class and class-location. Women particularly those from the Dalit section suffer from this triple oppression of caste, class and gender. Women are the prime mover of the women’s status because there is a correspondence between economic stratification, social hierarchy and differentiation of female work pattern and employment modes.

Maitreyi Krishnaraj and Karuna Chanana (1989) conducted a study to evaluate the position of women within the household. As household is a primary arena for age and sex roles, for strengthening kin solidarity, for
socialization and for economic co-operation, decisions and not because the
decision of any member affects the morphology of the household. This is the
fundamental dilemma for women. A male-member's decision to migrate or a
female member's marriages are actions that call for readjustment in the
household. As their fate is linked to that of the household, they identify
strongly with its welfare and yet the fear of losing its security generates
special vulnerabilities. Episodes like widowhood, separation, divorce,
abandonment are traumatic for women. Women's position within the
household is subject to the additional influence of the placement of that
household in the social hierarchy. Whether a women is in a urban sector or a
rural area household, it make a difference of which caste she is and class
placement also has a bearing on her position in the household- whether she
is landed or landless. It is important to place the women in a household
within this larger social order. Women's status in the social structure is
directly linked with her position in the household domain.

N. Desai and M. Krishnaraj (1987) in their study points out that the
most subtle expression of patriarchy is through symbolism giving message
of inferiority of women through legends highlighting the self sacrificing, self
effecting pure image of women and through the ritual practices which day-in
and day-out emphasised on the dominant role of a women as a faithful wife
and devout mother.

The concept of family status-production work highlights the role of
the women of middle and upper class plat in families and in strategies of
social mobility. This facilitates the increased control over women's labour
and mobility, but also increase the competitive advantage of household as
women's work contribute to family status rather than their own
development. Even withdrawal of women from work among the middle
class families adds to the social status of the family. Thus, women re-
strengthen patriarchy and the welfare of the family undermines their
personal status.

Major findings of Mandelbaum (1986) are that if the family cannot
afford to forego earnings of its female members it has to ignore observation
of Purdah. As soon as there family’s economical and financial standing
improves if may withdraw its women folk from remunerative work and
impose socio-cultural restriction such of observance of Purdah. He calls it
man’s honour and women’s seclusion.

Leela Dube (1986) studied visibility and power to define status of
women in Indian society. The specific objectives of the study were due to
invisibility of women they have a very low status in society, so that suffer
from many disadvantages in social life. This extends to controlled access to
essential domains of life such as education, mobility, employment, property,
income and decision making. This is because the value system perceives
women as a social category inferior to men in all aspects of social life. This
value system holds for all caste and communities. A woman as such derived
her status from the position of her family and husband. Her status within the
family is in fact lower than the family’s status as perceived by outsiders as
she is inferior to her husband and other member’s of her family.

Bina Agarwal (1994) has studied gender and land rights in south
Asia. According to her these gender inequalities in access to resources take
varying forms: intra family differences in the distribution of basic
necessities, Women’s systematically disadvantaged position in the labour
market, their little access to the crucial means of production-land and
associated production technology and growing deterioration and
privatization of the countries common property resources on which the poor
in general and women in particular depend in substantial degree for substances.

The female labour participation varies across regions. The question of visibility of women's work is especially important as it does not appear to be enough that women do productive work, but also that the work they do is socially recognised as valuable. Agricultural fieldwork is more visible (physically) than the home based work and work which bring in earning which is economically more visible than say free collection of fuel, wood, water, fodder appears to be given a higher social valuation. She investigates the central importance of women's lack of effective property rights, especially land in explaining their economic, social and political subordination in south Asia. She recognizes that it is critical for women to win land and property rights for establishing more equal gender relations, while explaining a multiplicity of factors which constrain women a subordinate group. Bina Agarwal points to the interactive effect of economic factors, cultural norms, gender ideology and politics in determining women's property position acquiring of land rights is important for the real empowerment. Land defines social status and political power in the village and its structure relationship both within and outside the household. Development, according to Agarwal, is not gender-neutral. Equality and empowerment are inter-related aspects of gender relation. Gender advantages and gender inequalities can be challenged if rights in land are actualized because they become facilitator for women’s equality with men by empowering them in economic, social and political spheres.

Women do not constitute a collectivity with shared interest and needs like men. Men are by enormous difference in terms of material resources available to them and by the norms of status-appropriation closely linked
with their caste and class background. Women are taken as an incorporated lot in the men-centered stratification.

One important point in understanding of the status of women is the dual-value system. On the one hand women are seen as a fertile benevolent bestowed of prosperity and on the other, they are perceived as an aggressive, malevolent and destructive person.

The social customs and attributes, the idealization of their domestic roles determine the state of their health and nutrition. The status of women has changed due to improved health and nutrition, availability of education, participation in wider societal activities, legislation, movements and employment. However, inequality persists between and men and between women and women.

Today women’s struggle is largely for emancipation from rigid cultural bonds which define their existence. The main issues taken up are- rape, family planning, suffrage, oppression in the family, pornography, improvements in the standard of living, conditions of work, social recognition of housewives and remuneration for their work, political repression and price-rise and so on. It is argued time and again that women have fought against the society to get out of their inhuman subordinate existential conditions.

The issue of status of women is very complex and it is featured along the standard social inequalities in Indian society. Education and employment have been found as the most effective mechanism in reducing unequal relation between men and women and between women and women.

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