CHAPTER – II
THE PROBLEM : INEQUALITY

The heavens themselves, the planets and this centre observed degree, priority and place, insist, course, proportion, season, form, office, and custom, in all line of order...

– Shakespeare

It appears plausible to assume that, “All men are created equal”\(^2\), and “all men are equal”\(^3\). All men are equal is another way of saying, “all men are men”\(^4\). It is no doubt frequently asserted that all men are equal but there is no unanimity as regards the common attributes which make them equal.\(^5\) Thus, the aforesaid proposition look vague and abmiguous on the face of it when we examine the other side of it: One is black (Negro) and the other is white. One is touchable (Brahmin) and the other is untouchable (Harijan). One is master and the other is slave. One is millioner and the other is beggar. One is intelligent and the other is stupid. One is an oppressor and the other is oppressed and so forth. Moreover, when we look on our Dharam Shastras or other writings of Hindus saints, we find more conflicting and contradictory view about equality. Saint Kabir, for instance observed in a famous verse:

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2 Lincon In’s Gettijburg Address …. “Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought-forth on this continent a new nation conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal”.
(that the creator (God) has created all human being equal, in a similar manner and through a common source. And thus, all are Gods own man. Through the same source the God created the whole universe and therefore, there is no one ‘good’ and no one ‘bad’.)

On the other hand, the first reference to the inequality and social stratification occur in a late hymn of the Rgveda in its famous Purusasukta (X 90, 12):

ब्रह्मणोस्य मुखमासीद बाहूं राजनयः कृतः \\
उरू तदवस्य यद०देवर्षयः पद्भ्यां शुद्रोऽजायत

(The Brahmana sprang from the mouth, the Kasriya from the arms, the Vaisya from the thighs and the Sudras from the feet of the creator).

Rgveda, one of the most ancient document, which provides us some information regarding, the origin of Caste-system, is further elaborated by Manu in his Manusmriti. Manu categorised the whole Hindu society into four castes and laid down their legal as well as social boundaries, and branded them as, Kshtriya, Vaishya and Shudra according to their status. Therefore, Manu’s social stratification of the society was towards creation of inequality. “The great paradox of the modern world is that everywhere man attach

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themselves to the principle of equality and everywhere, in their own lives as well as in the lives of the other, they encounter the presence of inequalities". But the two principal political ideologies of the present age, democracy and socialism—either single or in various combinations— are built on the premise of equality for all human beings. And thus, the very idea of equality is first expressed in American Declaration of Independence in 1976:

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

That to secure these rights incorporated in the declaration, Governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. But the very first objection to the principle of political equality is that man are not, in fact equal, K.K. Mathew J. rightly said that, this is not a lethal thrust. Even if the language of the Declaration is ambiguous, the principle is best understood not as a strictly factual proposition but as a moral or ethical assertion. The word ‘equality’ is incapable of a single definition as it is a notion of many shades and connotations. Though it is a notion which makes statements on equality highly problematic, however, a number of noted sociologists, social scientists, philosophers, and great saints gave their explanation regarding the concept of ‘quality’ of men. Abraham Lincoln while elaborating the idea behind the concept of equality, said:

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10 Id., p. 1.
12 Baxi, *op.cit.*, No. 3, p. 207.
Authors of that notable instrument intended to include all men, but they did not intended to declare all men are equal in all respects. They did not mean to say all were equal in colour, size, intellect, moral developments, or social capacity. They defined with tolerable distinctness in what respect they did consider all men created equal – equal with certain inalienable rights, among which are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. This they said, and this they meant. They did not mean to assert the obvious untruth that all were then actually enjoying that equality, nor yet that they were about to confer it immediately upon them. In fact, they had no power to confer such a boon. They mean simply to declare the right, so that enforcement of it might follow as fast as circumstances should permit.  

Justice K.K. Mathew further asserted that, it does not imply that men are identical or equal in intelligence, strength talent, or many other respects. As a moral principle its meaning might be summed up in this way: beings are entitled to be treated as if they are equal on all matters important to them and matters really important to them are matters that are common to men. Both Aristotle and Plato believed in a natural hierarchy of persons, and insisted on appropriate differences of each of its various levels. Medieval Europe also regarded the hierarchical order to be a part of the natural scheme of things. de Tocqueville presented a luminous contrast between the ‘aristocratic’ societies of the past and the ‘democratic’ societies of the future.

John Locke, a political philosopher, who was the prime man behind the framing of the US Declaration of Independence himself clarified the point:

Though I have said above .... ‘that all men by nature are equal’, I cannot be supposed to understand all sorts of ‘equality’. Age or Virtue may give men a just precedence, excellence of parts and merit many place other above the common level, birth may subject some, and alliance—or benefits others, to pay an observance to those to whom nature, gratitude, or other respects many have made it due; and yet all this consists with the equality which all men in, in respect of jurisdiction or dominion one over another which was the equality there spoke of as being proper to the business at hand, being that equal right that every man hath to his natural, freedom without being subjected to the will or authority of any other men.\(^\text{19}\)

Another philosopher Rashdall Hastings, advanced the principle that “.... every human being is of equal intrinsic values and is, therefore entitled to equal respect as an exacter expression of the Christian ideal of brotherhood”. He, however, point out that the principle does not require that every person be given an equal share of wealth or of political power but rather equal consideration in the distribution of ultimate good.\(^\text{20}\) Rashdall takes it to be self-evident, to be an ‘analytical judgement’, to say that what is recognized as being of value in one person must be recognized as being the value in another – “provided it is really the same thing that is implied in the assertion that it has value”.\(^\text{21}\) Such axioms, he agrees, can-not be themselves solve practical moral problems. They are purely formal but they do offer guidelines on how to distribute the good once its nature is known.

\(^\text{19}\) John Locke, Of Civil Government, Two Treaties (1924), p. 142.
\(^\text{21}\) Id., p. 147.
What is implied by the principle, of equal respect for all persons is impartiality in the treatment of all men; it rules out inequality, or rather, arbitrary inequality, inequality not justified by the requirement of social well being, or some other general and rational principle in the treatment of individuals.\textsuperscript{22} No man, he asserts, has a right to anything unconditionally except the right to be equally considered. The rights of man are all ultimately resolvable into the one supreme and unconditional right – the right to consideration.\textsuperscript{23}

Thus some of the philosopher inclined to stress more on the ‘consideration’ than anything else, which is further illustrated by Rashdall’s assertion that every human being is of an equal intrinsic values and hence equally entitled to respect. Another philosopher Frankena, added that, the meaning of the equal intrinsic value of all persons is that we should be concerned for the good lives of every individual, that the just society, must so far as possible, provided equally the conditions under which its members can by their own efforts achieve the best lives of which they are capable.\textsuperscript{24} This precisely mean that the society must at least maintain same minimum standard of living, education and security for all its members.

Hence, in one way or the other we accept the natural and social hierarchy of human being and therefore accept the existence of inequality among man. By simply saying that all men are equal will raise a host of troubling issues and will ultimately become controversial. Ordinarily, we used the term that all men are created equal, notwithstanding that men are very often unequal. In fact the notion of equality belongs to the sphere of values.\textsuperscript{25} It is morally and

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{22} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{23} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{25} Baxi, \textit{op.cit.}, No. 3, p. 208; See also Foot No. 5.
\end{itemize}
ethically justifiable to have equality among men. Inspite of the fact that men are unequal in strength, talent, intellect and in many other things, he wants to be treated equally. Moreover, nobody wanted a total equality which is impossible also. Vonnegut suggested that kind of equality in which everyone is exactly alike is not only inconcievable, but must also be dreadful bore.26

Human beings are different as to their conduct, that is to say, from a moral view point. Thus, without precluding the universal analogies among all human beings and without precluding either the similarities, between the human beings, we must recognize that each human individual is different from all the other individuals, that he is unique. This uniqueness of each individual is precisely essential to human beings.27 Keith Josenh, a prominent member of British Cabinet recently restated the nineteenth century argument and gone up to the extent that, since human beings are by nature unequal, it is both futile and perverse to try to establish a social order on the basis of equality.28 It is true that society has itself become in certain respects the architect of legitimate social inequality. It will be surprising today, that societies of the past have regarded inequality and not equality as the moral condition among men. “…. the distinctive feature of caste and estate societies was that inequalities not only existed in practice but were also principle”.29 In Europe, the acceptance of hierarchical order was general and wide-spread in the old regime. In feudal society the existing order of estates was considered providential and God-given.

The concept of hierarchy as applying to division both in human society and the wider universe was well developed in Christian theology.\textsuperscript{30} In India, hierarchical values and norms were if anything even more deeply and widely accepted.\textsuperscript{31} They were given an elaborate philosophical justification through the development of the main concepts of \textit{dharma} and \textit{karma}. For justifying the existence of inequality T.H. Marshal, said that it is true that class still functions. Social inequality is regarded as necessary and purposeful. It provides the incentive to effect and designs the distribution of power. But there is no over-all pattern of inequality, in which an appropriate values is attached, a priori, to each social level. Inequality therefore though necessary, may become excessive.\textsuperscript{32} As Patric Colauhoun said, in a much-quoted passage: ‘With out a large proportion of poverty there could be no riches, since riches are the offspring of labour, while labour can result from only a state of poverty ... Poverty therefore is a most necessary and indispenable ingredient in society, without which nations and communities could not exist, in a state of civilization’.\textsuperscript{33}

So, these are some of the justification put forward by some of the sociologists as well as political scientists for retaining inequalities on the one hand, and some of them advocating for their elimination. Though it is very contro-versial issue, however, they are right to some also true, that complete elimination of inequality is a futile effort. We can reduce them to some extent. But there are certain inequalities such as caste, which can not be eliminated all-together. But we may therefore rule out the possibility of complete equality; nevertheless, there are people who are capable of cherishing such Quixotic dreams.

\textsuperscript{32} \textit{Sociology at the Crossroads}, (1963), p. 89.
\textsuperscript{33} \textit{A Treaties on Indigence}, (1806), pp. 7-8.
Now, after closely analyzing the aspects of inequality, it becomes very clear that equality is a sort of claim of intrinsic values, which we want to share equally and that in fundamental respects regardless of obvious differences between one man and another, all men deserve to be given certain kinds of equal treatment in crucial inputs of their lives, though not in all. This moral claim need not be description of an existing fact unless it be taken as a peculiar kind of moral fact about whose existence many philosopher would have serious doubts.\textsuperscript{34} There are numbers of ways to express the ideas of equality which is the sole basis of American Declaration of Independance and behind the concept of equality, that all men are created equal.\textsuperscript{35} Nevertheless, there are, of course great people in the world who sacrifice-their lifes for the promotion of the equality, and they dreampt for the elimination of all types of inequalities from the society and anticipated for a egalitarian and just social order. But how far their dreams come true is not at all clear till now.

Martin Luther King Jr. once said that:

\begin{quote}
I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed that all men are treated equal.\textsuperscript{36}
\end{quote}

Now its very interesting to note that, in the former statement people intended to retain inequality while in the latter, they want to eliminate. It enables us to think that it is not possible to have a egalitarian society and just social order were inequality are no more existed and all men are being treated equal by other.

\textsuperscript{34} Baxi, \textit{op.cit.}, No. 3, p. 208.
\textsuperscript{35} See, for, A.D. Tocqueville and John Stuart Mill’s expressions, \textit{Id.}, No. 3, p. 209, foot note 11.
From the above explanation, we finds that every sociologist, and political thinker right from Plato to Laski and Aristotle to Roscoe Pound in one way or the other accept the existence of inequalities either natural, or social in the present society.

Now the question arises, why is there inequality among men? Can it be reduced or even abolished altogether? Or do we have to accept it as a necessary element in the structure of human society.\(^\text{37}\)

There is no unanimity about the answer for these questions among the sociologists as well as political scientists. There is also a question equally important to my mind that when nature itself is not fair or just and itself created inequalities, then how can a men be fair and just towards his fellow being. And we finally come to the conclusion that nature and society both are responsible for creating inequalities in the world.

Thus, we can conclude that both natural and social inequality are natural and social phenomenon respectively. As man is usually called a social animal, the creator by creating highly conscious and mentally developed animal on the earth perhaps expected from him fair and equal treatment towards their fellow beings. But unfortunately, social animal (the men) could not perform this holy duty entrusted by the nature (creator) of equal and fair treatment, and bitterly failed to maintain that men are born physically unequal but in the treatment he is equal to the other men. Hence we can put in this way also, that ‘man is born unequal’, ‘he will remain unequal’ and ‘will die unequal’.

Before we examine the other aspect of inequality, the very important question before us is what is the nature and different forms of inequality.

History has given different names to inequality, what was called in the eighteenth century the origin of inequality, and in the nineteenth, the formation of classes, we described today as the history of social stratification. The idea of inequality very simple and very complex. At one level it is the simplest of all ideas and has moved people with an immediate appeal hardly matched by any other concept. At another level however, it is an exceedingly complex notion which makes statements on inequality highly problematic.

Historically the first step towards a sociological understanding of the problem was taken when a distinction was made between natural inequality among men and inequality in their existence. The latter inequality are men's own creation which may be termed as social inequality, while the former inequality are rooted in features (physical or biological) which is inherent in all human societies and which is called natural inequality. Every scientist, or social anthropologist gave more emphasis on social inequality then on natural one. It is very evident, as I earlier said, that natural inequality is a natural phenomenon and useless to talk about. And, thus, social inequality occupies a central place in sociology and has, in a sense, provided the main impetus to the growth of the discipline itself. D.D. Raphael gave a new name to social inequality e.g., artificial inequality. The distinction between natural and social inequality can be found in Rousseau; indeed it constitute the core of his argument, “I perceive two kinds of inequality among men: One I called natural or physical ..., the other might be called moral or political”. Among inequalities established by

nature, Rousseau includes difference of age, health, bodily strength, and quality of mind or of the soul.\textsuperscript{42}

In pre-industrial societies, which were generally organised on a hierarchical basis, existing inequality must have appeared at one and the same time both natural and social. Just as men are naturally superior to animals, so also different orders of men born into different castes or estates are naturally endowed with unequal abilities, aptitudes and aspirations. This view of the world was worked out in its most elaborate form in Hindu India, but it was also present in other civilisations, including that of Christian Europe.\textsuperscript{43} D.D. Raphael rightly said, that men are unequal in their natural powers; freedom to use unequal powers results in unequal achievement, which in turn increases the inequality of power.\textsuperscript{44}

The principal sources of inequalities are only two: Natural and social, which I wants to termed as \textit{de facto inequality} and \textit{de jure inequality}. However, there is no unanimity about the nature and type of inequality amongst the sociologists. The very term which they used for describing the subject social inequality; social class, social stratification are objects of bitter controversy. But last hundred years development of the discipline enables us to speak with some confidence about a sociological approach to the problem.\textsuperscript{45} In this first modern statement about the distinction of the Inequality; Rousseau maintains that natural or physical inequalities among men were small and unimportant, and he turned his attention to what we called moral or political inequalities, such as those of wealth, honour and power.\textsuperscript{46} In studying inequality our primary concern is with certain basic structural phenomenon such

\textsuperscript{42} See, Jean Jacques Rousseau, \textit{A Discourse on the Origin of Inequality}, see, J.J. Rousseau, the Social contract and Discourse, J.M. Dent and Sons Ltd. (1938).
\textsuperscript{43} See, Andre Betelie, \textit{Inequality among Men}, (1977), p. 3; Betelie, op.cit., No. 40, p. 3.
\textsuperscript{44} Raphael, op.cit., No. 41. p. 543.
as class, status, and power, which are found to exist in all societies. They are social fact to the extent that they exist independently of what individual thinks or feels about them and in the sense that they cannot be changed according to the will and pleasure of the individual.  

There are different reasons for it as I already stated above, that men are unequal in their powers; freedom to use unequal powers results in unequal achievements, which in turn increase the inequalities of power. Social inequality is common to all the other inequality such as class, status, and power. W.G. Runciman have also followed the same typology of social inequality and rightly asked, what exactly should be meant by ‘social inequality’. There is various ways of describing social inequality but number of writers have been greatly concerned with niceties of terminology for the various differences which can exist between groups or classes, in wealth, or rank, or privilige have been readily visible and easy to describe since Aristotle Runciman, said that, the classification results from putting the question in this form is not a new one. Some time it is phrased as the distinction between ‘economic’, ‘social’ and ‘political’ equality. Alternatively, it can be phrased as distinction between equality of ‘class’, ‘status’ and ‘power’.  

Any classification, of course is legitimate if it answers to the purpose at hand. But, if there are three, and only three, basic dimensions in which societies are stratified class, status, and power - then it necessarily follows that all social inequalities (in the sense opposed to individual inequalities such as light or weight) are inequalities of one or other of these three, and only three, kinds. It is

46 Beteille, op.cit., No. 43, pp. 3-4.  
47 This classic statement of this approach is in Emile Durkheim, “The Rules of Sociological Method”, Glencoe, II; (1938).  
perhaps, self-evident that inequalities of class, status and power need not always coincide. “But surprising as it seems, there is as far as I know no major writer on social inequality who has explicitly formulated and consistently retained the tripartite distinction in need. I would go so far as to say that every one of the best-known discussion of inequality from Aristotle to Roussean to Loequeville to Lawney, has been confused by the neglect of it.\textsuperscript{50} The term class, status, and power as used in this sense are generally attributed to Max Weber. These three aspects of social stratification has been widely used by the sociologist.\textsuperscript{51} It will, therefore, be convenient to recapitulate the distinction in approximately Weber’s terms.\textsuperscript{52} Emile Durkheim, has said that social inequalities or social stratifications are social fact. There are two main implication of this statement one is that the pattern of inequality or stratification vary from one society to another. The second implication is that pattern of stratification change over time. So it clarifies the above said statement, that inequality is a social fact and it cannot be changed according to the mere will of the individual. But by the same token it is a product of collective experience, and when this experience changes the pattern of inequality is also likely to change. All sociologist agree that the structure of inequality cannot be changed effectively by arbitrary individual decisions. They defer greatly on the extent to which they consider it possible. Or even desirable to direct change in the pattern of inequality by conscious human intervention either by administrative or by political measures.\textsuperscript{53} There are different aspects of inequality which are too numerous and difficult to listed in

\textsuperscript{50} 1910, II Ch. Ex. III; R. Dahrendrof, 'Democratic Thing', (Detroit 1962), p. 34.
\textsuperscript{51} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{52} See, Reiuhard Bendix and Seymour Martin Lipset (eds.), 'Class, Status, and Power', A Compare Perspective, Glencoe III; (1966).
\textsuperscript{53} This account derives Chiefly from the relevant passage translated in M.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills eds.; From Max Weber, (New York, 1947).
\textsuperscript{53} For a brief but interesting discussion see John H. Goldthorpe 'Social Stratification in Industrial Society', Kecle, (1964).
full, and also difficult to discuss in detail here. There are three principal aspects of social inequality which are most noticeable in the contemporary society: inequality of income, occupation and education. Some of the scholars give importance to the power, status, and great importance to the economic factor.

Economic factor is very controversial issue and of different kind; in fact Marx with whose name the emphasis on the economic aspects of social life is most widely associated explicitly rejected the use of income and occupation as criteria for defining social class. In other words, property, rather than income or occupation, was the economic factor to which Marx assigned crucial significance. Other scholars have emphasized the inequalities inherent in the distribution of power and authority. Ibn Khaldum, the fourteen century Arab historian, said: “the possession of power is the source of riches.” The elite theorist of the present century also assigned primary significance to the political factor. For then the basic cleavage was not between the rich and the poor or the properties and the propertyless. It was between the elites and the masses or the rulers and the ruled. But their approach towards the socialist thought was very different. They argued that in a socialist type regime new classes will emerge and would take the place of the old. Their views find some confirmation in the works of the Yugoslav writer Milovan Djilas.

In addition to the economic and political factor, there are other factors also, e.g., status, prestige, honour, etc., which are equally

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58 For a brief discussion on the Elite theorists see, W.G. Runciman *Social Science and Political Theory*, Cambridge, (1963), Chapter IV.
important. In traditional India, status might be governed by concept of ritual purity; in medieval Europe, by the notion of honours and chivalry; and in classical China, even by Scholarly achievements. Modern Industrial Societies have their own conceptions of status although the gradations of status there tend to less conspicuous than in earlier societies.

The relations among the different aspects of stratification are complex one, all the sociologists differ in the ways in which they view these relations. The main difference is between Marxists and Weber, while the former would described as reductionists and the latter as pluralists. The Marxists would not deny the gradations of power and status, exist in every society. Only, they see these as being derived from or dependent upon class distinctions which they consider to be moot fundamental of all social distinctions.

The pluralists adopted a different position. They would also not deny the importance of economic distinctions. In fact Weber and his followers assigned a central place to class in sociological analysis. But he argued that status and power were also important and not wholly determined by economic factors.

Weber's position has often been misrepresented, however, he did not believe that status and power could be understood in isolation from economic factors. He believed that class, and power, were closely interdependent although none could be fully explained by the other.

Though Marxian theory was a product of this society, it cannot without substantial modification explain satisfactorily the many

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61 See, also, Ossowski’s View in Inequality and Social Change, by Andre Beteille, (1975) p.
inequalities and contradictions which undoubtedly exist in societies of the Soviet-type. Perhaps an approach which gives a more important place to power and authority would be more suitable for analysing such societies.\textsuperscript{62}

When we look on the Indian situation, we find great differences in the explanation. Some of the scholars have argued that the understanding of traditional Indian society is though the caste system which is neither fundamentally economic nor fundamentally political but a hierarchical system built around the opposition of purity and pollution.\textsuperscript{63} But Prof. Andre Beteille suggested that, there is no doubt, that the caste system is general and notion of purity and pollution in particular were very important in traditional India, but it would be wrong to ignore the existence of economic and political distinctions there or even to assign a secondary place to them.\textsuperscript{64} The only thing that we can say very firmly is that inequality manifests itself in different forms in societies of different kinds.\textsuperscript{65}

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\textsuperscript{62} Dahrendrof, \textit{Class and Class conflict in an Industrial Society}, \textit{op.cit.}

