Chapter I

INTRODUCTION: PROBLEM AND PERSPECTIVE
Social stratification is an important field of enquiry for the sociologists and other social scientists. It is primarily concerned with the inequalities regarding distribution of goods, services, opportunities and other resources. It, therefore, also refers to the principles and the processes of distribution of rewards, resources, jobs and amenities. In one sense, it is a system of institutionalised social inequality that prevails in all the societies. In another sense, social inequality is an essential ingredient of social stratification which exists in one form or another in all the societies irrespective of their technological advancement.

One of the important dimensions of social stratification is distribution of 'power and privilege'. Power and privilege exist in various forms and proportions. Power determines the distribution of nearly all the surplus possessed by a society. Privilege is defined as possession or control of a portion of the surplus produced by a society. As such, privilege is largely a function of power, and to a very limited degree, a function of altruism. Thus, understanding and analysis of distribution of power in a society becomes quite crucial. But it is not easy to determine the distribution of power as there are many complex forms of power. Prestige is a function of power and privilege particularly in societies where there is a substantial surplus.
For our study the general notions of power and privilege and systems of distribution of rewards or surpluses are quite relevant points. The assumption that industrially advanced societies have more surpluses hence more power would be there as the basis of differential prestige may not be found universally true. Societies with little surplus or subsistence economy also have power and privilege as the bases of distribution of rewards and prestige. The causes and mechanisms of distribution of power would vary from society to society depending on its social structure, economy, technological know-how and political consciousness of the people.

Viewed in this perspective, we argue that the distribution of power and privilege in the society constitutes an important field of enquiry. The differences of socio-economic status and power which exist among the members, sub-groups and groups of a society determine the nature of social stratification. All the members of a society are divided into different social groups. They may be grouped into various categories such as occupational, professional and the like. The members of a higher socio-economic class carry several advantages including lucrative jobs, positions, higher social and ritual status, living conditions and leisure, prestige and power. Contrary to this, the members
of the lower socio-economic class are by and large relatively disadvantaged in these respects. Some of the members are in a position to derive power and enjoy privileges whereas some are deprived of both in various proportions. The mechanism underlying this process may vary in relation to several contexts in a society.

This, then, refers to what K.L. Sharma observes. According to Sharma: "Social stratification is a very sensitive field which refers to unequal relations and their management." He maintains that all the members of a society are part of this arrangement of unequal social relations. To quote him again: "Those who have occupied lower position in this order of relations have often resented their underprivileged status, whereas those who have enjoyed privileged status have been averse to concede any change in the existing system." And this state of affairs leads to several consequences in the society. (emphasis added).

By considering social stratification as a 'process' as well as a 'state of affairs' we would argue that the norms and processes of distribution of power and privilege in a given society constitute an important aspect of enquiry in the area of social stratification. Though necessary, but not in the context of our present study, a discussion on the various theories of social stratification is not
attempted here. Nor we would discuss various approaches, concepts and methods as substantial literature exists on these aspects. Rather we wish to argue that major theories of social stratification, namely, Functional, Weberian, Marxian -- have had contributed to the understanding of the phenomenon of social stratification, but none of these could be accepted singularly adequate to explain what social stratification refers to. Each of these theories, however, has released corresponding influence on the treatment and understanding of the phenomenon. Lenski rightly observes that all the major theories of social stratification irrespective of their theoretical bias have sought to answer one basic question: "who gets what and why?" Thus, social stratification being a complex phenomenon has to be understood and explained through various dimensions. These can be analysed separately and in a number of ways.

For the purpose of our present study we would analyse some studies which have been conducted in the area of social stratification in India. One objective behind this exercise is to evaluate them in the context of the main hypothetical questions we have formulated for our study. Another objective is to identify the main trends which have remained dominant in these studies. And, how far such studies have contributed to the understanding of the phenomenon of social
stratification in India. In the last, we would also try to assess the studies in terms of their contexts and constraints. This would, hopefully, provide us some feedback to develop necessary insights for evolving a broad framework for the present study.

Studies on Social Stratification in India

From the very beginning the India's caste system attracted the attention of Western social scientists. They looked at caste as a unique system of social inequality based on the conception of purity and pollution. There are numerous studies of caste stratification based on the criteria of pollution-purity. These have been undertaken by both foreign as well as Indian sociologists and social anthropologists of different theoretical dispositions. Most of the studies on social stratification in India have taken clues mainly from the functional, Marxian and anthropological approaches.

Yogendra Singh has written a detailed "trend report" on the studies conducted in India during the fifties and sixties. He has analysed them from the point of theory, structure and process. Singh writes: "This in fact is the framework in which most of the literature on social stratification can be meaningfully analysed. It offers a basis for the analysis of substantive as well as theoretical
issues in social stratification". With this perspective major studies conducted in the fifties and sixties have been reviewed by him. The specific structural units of stratification taken into account include: (1) caste system and social stratification, (2) Scheduled Castes and social stratification, (3) class structure and social stratification, (4) agrarian class stratification and change, (5) elites and social stratification in India (consisting of traditional elites, business elites, professional and bureaucratic elites, intellectual elites).

Singh further observes: "The important structural units that sociologists have used for the analysis of social stratification in India are caste, class, elite and professional occupational categories. There are some functional overlaps within each of these structural units with other units; but by and large, these correspond roughly with the triology of status, wealth and power as interdependent systems of stratification."  

Weber's essay "Class, Status and Party" as three orders of stratification namely, economic, social and power has served a reference point for many sociological works. The concepts of class, status and party have inspired a few social scientists to undertake useful works in the area of stratification. The studies by Andre Beteille Caste, Class and Power, P.C. Aggarwal's Caste, Religion and Power and
that of Anil Bhatt Caste, Class and Politics are a few such studies which deserve a mention here. In another "trend report" Singh analyses the studies on social stratification which have come up during the seventies. The focus is on the new trends which have emerged in the studies on social stratification in India. The study focuses upon the new 'theoretical' and 'substantive' issues which have emerged due to 'self-awareness' of the Indian sociologists. Two trends -- 'self-criticism' and 'search for relevance' are remarkable focal points observed among the Indian sociologists which have contributed in their respective studies during the decade. The main points are: ideological debate, changing theoretical orientations, structuralist approach, Marxist analysis of social stratification, other social sciences and stratification, social stratification in non-Hindu communities, Tribes and Scheduled Castes, and sociology and social change.

These two trend reports are quite comprehensive. However, for the purpose of the present study we would review some of the major studies in the area of social stratification. In this endeavour we will adopt a somewhat different perspective. Our objective is not to provide a chronology of the studies. We intend to derive 'insights' from them. The major concern of the review would, therefore, be to examine some of these studies in order to evaluate and assess
their relevance in understanding some dimensions of the problem that the present study poses. For this purpose we divide the studies on social stratification into three parts: (1) Mono-dimensional studies on social stratification, (2) Multi-dimensional studies and (3) Recent studies on social stratification.

**Mono-dimensional Studies on Social Stratification**

A large number of studies were conducted in the fifties and the first half of the sixties. These studies were conducted by both foreign and Indian sociologists and social anthropologists. Consequently, a voluminous literature exists in the field, and to provide a full coverage is not feasible here. We, therefore, would analyse some selected studies which have been regarded as 'trend setters' for a number of studies which have been produced in the subsequent period. One notices the dominance of structural-functional theory of stratification during the fifties. Towards the end of the decade and beginning of the sixties studies of stratification were marked by structuralism and Marxism in regard to both as an explanation of and approaches to social stratification.9

K.L. Sharma divides the studies on stratification into two categories: (1) the studies on caste stratification, and (ii) the multidimensional studies (other determinants of
stratification along with caste). The studies enumerated under the first category are those of Kroeber, Weber, Hutton, Ghurye, Hocart, Myrdal, Dumont, Leach, Srinivas, Dube, Bailey, Lewis, Mayer, Mathur, Majumdar, Marriott. These scholars have treated caste as the most dominant feature of Indian social system. The caste has been viewed as one of the most important structural units for the analysis of social stratification in India. They have considered caste as the 'sole institution' of 'social ranking'. In these writings the phenomenon of caste has been considered synonymous with the Indian social structure. In fact, the theoretical perspective of the 'caste model' of Indian society is the result of certain conception about the traditional Indian society which the social anthropologists have developed primarily on the basis of set of ideas elaborated in the classical Hindu texts. The main features of this model are (1) it is based on the ideas and not on the actual behaviour of people; (2) it attaches significance to caste as this has been conceived in the classical texts; (3) the system is based on explicitly formulated principles or 'rules of the game'; and (4) the different castes are conceived as fulfilling complementary functions and their mutual relations are "non-antagonistic". However, such conception of the Indian society has prompted a large number of studies which were carried out in the
conventional framework of caste. The caste has also been treated as an 'extreme form of class' or as a 'close community'. In such studies the caste has been projected as the most dominant institution of the Indian society.

The multidimensional studies in the fifties and early sixties have shown a shift from the earlier studies. In these studies, which were brought out during this period, caste is not considered as 'an all inclusive basis of stratification'. Other determinants of 'status' and 'rank' are given due consideration. The factors like economic position, education, occupation, cultural style of life, caste rank and personality attributes and other varied determinants have been examined in some of these studies. There is less emphasis on the caste as a vital determinant of stratification in these studies. Caste is considered as one of the factors of status determination. Another characteristic of multidimensional studies is the analysis of the role of the factors which weaken caste stratification. Thus, the multidimensionality of social stratification provides a sharper focus in understanding other sides of reality. A few studies conducted in the same vein have also focussed upon 'class relations', 'power structure' and 'universal voluntaristic orientations'. In the early sixties, Sharma observed an 'acute dearth of multidimensional studies on stratification'.

However, some studies are less obsessed with caste than the
the studies on caste-stratification. Some of the important multidimensional studies are by those of Kathleen Gough, Ramakrishna Mukherjee, F.G. Bailey, Y. Singh, Andre Beteille, Anil Bhatt, P.C. Aggarwal and K.L. Sharma.

In the following pages we will examine some major studies by discussing the salient features with particular reference to their relevance in the understanding of the phenomenon of social stratification in India. Singh's analysis of the studies on social stratification is relevant here. On the basis of a classificatory scheme he observes that four types of conceptualizations have existed in the sociological literature on caste stratification in India. 15 These are: (1) cultural-universalistic, (2) cultural-particularistic, (3) structural-universalistic, and (4) structural-particularistic. On the basis of this analytical scheme Singh identifies the orientations of the prominent sociologists and social anthropologists. Among them, Weber and Ghurye take cultural-universalistic view of caste; Louis Dumont considers caste as cultural particularistic, Barth, Berreman and Harper consider caste as structural-universalistic; and Leach, Bailey and Singh take the structural-particularistic view about the caste system. It is noteworthy that "the structural-particularistic treatment of caste is the most dominant feature of stratification studies in India." 16
Studies on stratification based on caste have focussed on caste as the sole institution of social ranking. Sharma observes that such studies have concentrated on the caste system only to analyse stratification system in the village community in India. Summarising the main characteristics of some of the writings of the prominent sociologists he points out that Weber, Kroeber and others have treated 'caste as an extreme form of class' and of the stratification system. Weber calls caste as 'closed community'. For Myrdal 'caste is the extreme form of absolutely rigid class'. Hutton, Ghurye and Hocart have taken into account the 'socio-religious' and 'ritualistic' considerations which are central foci of caste hierarchy. Oscar Lewis treats caste system as an integrative and cohesive factor in the village. He observes that it covers not only kinship ties but political and economic relationships too.

The sociological studies conducted by Western and Indian scholars concentrated on the caste system in India in early fifties. Naturally, their interests in village communities and village studies was much influenced by the 'caste model of Indian society'. The studies on the rural stratification during this period were not free from such orientation. Hence, most of the empirical studies on stratification in India confined to micro units only.
M.N. Srinivas's study on *Religion and Society among the Coorgs of South India* focusses on the caste organization in a Coorg village in Karnataka. Srinivas considers caste as functionally integrative mechanism; hence an organic view of social reality is emphasised. The role of religion has been examined. The socio-religious and ritualistic considerations are taken as the basis of caste hierarchy. It is pollution-purity which is the basis of caste-hierarchy and the inter-caste relations in Rampura village (a village studied by Srinivas). The caste-hierarchy is based on the ritual 'purity' and 'impurity' along-with ritual status. The study does not take into account other criteria of social ranking such as class, education in this village.

S.C. Dube's *Indian Village* published in 1955 is a "holistic" study of a village community in Andhra Pradesh. It is a comprehensive monograph which describes almost all the major aspects -- social, economic, ritual and family ties, etc. Though the specific focus of the study is not on stratification, Dube observes that the main factor in social ranking is the ritual criterion and not the economic one. And, it is the notion of purity and pollution which is the governing principle of all social relations in village community.
In another study 'Caste Ranking and Community Structure' by McKim Marriott we notice some departure from the earlier studies. Marriott has analysed caste ranking in five regions viz. Kerala, Coromandal, Upper Ganges, Middle Indus and Bengal Delta. He develops a rigorous comparative method for studying 'elaborateness' of caste ranking. Marriott identifies that the caste-ranking is more elaborate in Kerala and slightly less elaborate in Coromandal region. In the Upper Ganges region caste ranking is relatively simple and horizontal. In this region elaborate stratified interaction is rather weak. However, in the remaining two regions caste-ranking is less elaborate and simpler. The factors like wealth and power have relatively more weightage than the ritualistic factor of social ranking in these regions. He argues that in order to comprehend the stratification system in India its processes should be observed at various levels. For him, rural stratification is 'closed' rather than 'open' one. And, the ranking depends largely on the traditional evaluation of caste-status which gets manifested in inter-group and inter-individual interactions. Contrary to this the stratification system in the urban areas is relatively 'open' and its character is 'attributional' and not 'interactional'. Singh observes that Marriott's analysis does indicate the complexity of the social
stratification system in India but it is devoid of an 'insight' to explain the mechanism through which stratification process occurs at various levels.\(^{24}\)

Louis Dumont's *Homo Hierarchicus*\(^{25}\) is an exposition of the structuralist perspective on social stratification. Dumont makes use of the indological sources in formulating his model for understanding of the caste system. The use of ethnographic material serves two purposes; (1) to confirm nexus between ideology and observation; and (2) to elucidate or qualify various aspects of the main thrust of the book.

Dumont treats caste as a 'cultural-particularistic' phenomenon of the Indian society.\(^{26}\) He deals with the problem of hierarchy in the caste system. His approach seems to be the construction of a model of the traditional caste system in an ideal form. In fact, he builds up an ideal construct of 'hierarchical model of Indian civilization in opposition to 'equalitarian model of Western civilization.'\(^{27}\) According to Dumont unlike western tradition, Indian tradition distinguishes absolutely between "hierarchical status and power". He does not concern himself with the social formation of the present day India and does not provide a history of the Indian caste system.

For Dumont caste is a fundamental social principle. The caste system is a system of 'ideas and values'. According
to his view, the opposite of equality is hierarchy. It is an indispensable element of the Indian social life. Hierarchy is conceived of as a purely ritual, non-competitive ranking oriented to a single idea of higher and lower. For him hierarchy is an all-embracing comprehensive concept. But "Dumont's structuralist view lacks a conception of history and analysis of politico-economic dimensions of India's social reality."^28

A critical review of Dumont's Homo-Hierarchicus has brought him both admiration and criticism in the sociological literature. ^29 Y. Singh observes: "In our view the Dumont's approach succeeded more in creating high self-consciousness among Indian sociologists rather than in offering a widely acceptable model for interpreting the reality of caste and class in this (the Indian) society." ^30 Sharma exposes such ideological particularism which has been advocated by the Western scholars in order to achieve certain ends. ^31

These studies and many others not hitherto referred to have treated caste system as a form of social stratification. These have explained caste system from various points of view. No rigorous and detailed studies of the caste system as a stratificational system has been explicitly conducted. The caste-ranking in these studies,
as is evident, has been based on the continuum of purity and impurity. Hence the ritual status emerges to be the sole determinant of hierarchy. But this does not explain various kinds of hierarchy noticed in the rural areas. The major thrust in these studies is on the social status (rank) which occupies the central place in the study of the caste system. None of these studies have taken into consideration the phenomena of 'class' and 'power'. However, Romila Thapar draws a distinction between 'ritual status' and 'secular status' in the context of status mobility among elite groups in ancient India. She observes that changes at the level of elite groups were brought about largely by foreign invasions and migrations which together affected status relationships and the marriage rules. Hence, the ancient Indian society was not a rigidly structured society. There persisted a distinction between ritual status and actual status in terms of economic and political power.

The studies on caste stratification, according to Sharma, have by and large implied that Indian rural stratification system is only vertically based. But it is not so. There are evidences as demonstrated by some studies inspite of vertical caste differentiation, horizontal differentiation within the same caste rank does exist. Sharma, therefore, argues that consideration of some extra-
Caste factors other than 'ritualistically oriented' is necessary. These factors are the role of 'modernising forces' and the individual capabilities.\textsuperscript{34}

**Multi-dimensional studies**

The earlier studies on stratification were mainly concerned with caste ranking. Caste was treated as an institution of social ranking, hence the 'sole locus' of stratification. Consequent upon this view, most of the studies on stratification during the fifties and early sixties relied on 'caste' as an 'involute' system of ranking. Towards the mid-sixties inherent inadequacies of the theoretical perspective of the 'caste model of Indian society' in the analysis of rural stratification were realised. The social anthropologists and sociologists initiated a number of studies which showed some departures from the earlier studies. These studies analysed stratification by applying a number of determinants of status and rank. In these studies caste was considered as one of the factors along with other bases of stratification. In fact, the emergence of "differentiated institutional structures" has invited attention on the other determinants\textsuperscript{35} of stratification other than caste. Such studies based on extra-caste considerations are, in fact, an offshoot of the earlier studies on caste stratification.\textsuperscript{36}
One important trend which has continued since sixties in the studies of stratification is the focus on comparative relationship between such categories like caste and class. In such studies the social structure is analysed with the help of two or more conceptual categories. Stratification is analysed by using analytical typologies which constitute a set of variables for studying comparative relationship among them. Elaborating his observations Singh states that "the class element in the social stratification in India is organically connected with caste stratification although for heuristic purpose a conceptual distinction should be made." It is important to note that there is overlap between the caste and class status situations or interactions in the Indian social stratification system. It is not easy to demarcate a line of distinction between caste and class. For the purpose of our study some characteristic features of such studies may be given in the following pages.

The sociological studies on agrarian class stratification in India are a significant development. Singh observes that most of the formulations of class have been guided by two approaches: (1) interactional and (2) attributional or mixed ones. The sociologists of both Marxist and non-Marxist theoretical dispositions have studied agrarian class stratification from the viewpoint of
these approaches. In most of the studies of agrarian classes the interactional formulation of class has been a prominent feature. In the analysis of agrarian classes the concepts like malik, mahajan and majdur have been used by the social scientists of Marxist orientation to refer to the main agrarian classes. Some of them have preferred to use terms like bourgeoisie, capitalist-type land owners, rich peasants, landless or land-poor peasantry and agricultural labourers. Still some have used terms like substantial landlords, traders, moneylenders and cultivators. These class categories have been used to denote both the agrarian classes as well as agrarian hierarchy. Singh observes that one of the important features of these class categories is the emphasis on the process of "interrelationships 'through a process of 'class-interaction', 'dependence', 'independence' and conflict."

The agrarian classes in India have also been studied from the point of attributional approach. These have also been analysed by using attributional class categories. These are of two types. In the first type, households or landholdings constitute the unit of classification. In the second type, regions, states or size of holdings constitute the bases of classification. Most of the classifications used from the census records and the survey types of studies
of agrarian problems have by and large followed this classification. Some such studies are: K. Ghosh, Agricultural Labourers in India, S.C. Gupta, 'Some Aspects of Indian Agriculture, Udai Mehta, The Problems of the Marginal Farmers in Indian Agriculture, S.M. Shah, Rural Class Structure in Gujarat and Report of the Agricultural Labour, Rural Manpower and Occupational Structure, 1954.

A good number of the studies on agrarian class stratification focus upon the structure, process and change. Most of the sociological studies of the agrarian structures have been undertaken to study the process of social change which were set in motion consequent upon the introduction of land reforms in most of the states soon after the Independence. The studies by Dammel Thörner, G. Kotovsky, Andre Beteille, etc. are important. Some of them are concerned in the changes brought about through "structural innovations". This in fact remained central theme in a number of studies.

During the sixties Weber's triology — 'class', 'status' and 'party' has been used to analyse social stratification. The three most often analysed bases of stratification are 'caste', 'class' and 'power'. In some studies these have been treated as separate structures of social relations. In some studies of caste and class 'change' is the focal point of analysis. In such studies structural-historical
perspective has been applied to study social differentiation, evaluation and change in caste and class in India. \(^{42}\)

In the following section we would present a synoptic view of a couple of studies connected with our discussions in the preceding pages.

The study by Ramkrishna Mukherjee - *The Dynamics of Rural Society* \(^{43}\) published in 1957 is a study of selected villages in the erstwhile East Bengal which now are a part of Bangladesh. In this study Mukherjee analyses relationship of caste with economic structure in the pre-British and the British periods. He refers to three rural class categories based on nine occupational categories. He names these class categories as (i) landholders and supervisory farmers, (ii) self-sufficient peasantry (consisting of the cultivators and artisans) and (iii) the share-croppers, agricultural labourers, service holders and others. These categories roughly correspond with the caste hierarchy. The major findings of this study explain that landholders and supervisory farmers maintain their economic and social status which did not facilitate upward mobility among the remaining two classes consisting of the cultivators, artisans, share-croppers, labourers etc. This shows that caste and class coexist.
Mukherjee's study establishes that the ritualistic considerations alone do not determine hierarchical character of the caste system, economic hierarchy also goes with the ritual hierarchy. Other factors such as occupation, education, too are important for analysing rural stratification.

F.G. Bailey's study Caste and the Economic Frontier is another important contribution during the late fifties. The main objective of the study is to examine change and overall framework adopted is the caste. It is the study of changes in the intercaste relations as a result of abolition of the Zamindari system. Due to this structural change the non-remunerative traditional occupations became gainful as those who served the landlords started working independently. Their produce became a part of market forces. The landlords had to avail those very services from open market by spending money. Consequent upon this the landlords had to spend a lot of money, and therefore, they even sold out their lands. The thrust of Bailey’s argument is on social change. According to Bailey, the factors external to the system are important in bringing about changes in economic structure, and the latter in turn bring changes in the social and power relations. It is further observed that the opening of new avenues of 'wealth' and economic opportunities have
enabled the lower castes to improve their social position. The landowning castes suffered a setback as their traditional bases of power eroded due to such structural change. The change in the status of a caste leads to changes in the intercaste relations. Thus, Bailey observes that the economic, social and political structure of the village is undergoing change by wider political and economic developments.

Following Bailey's line of enquiry there is another study Economic Development and Social Change in South India by T.S. Epstein. Epstein has studied social change from a comparative perspective. The study aims to analyse social and economic changes and opportunities brought about as a result of 'structural innovations'. These changes have been analysed in two villages -- Dalera, a dry village, and Wangala, a wet village in Karnataka. By using anthropological and economic techniques to the problems of economic and social change, she has studied the impact of irrigation. She focuses on the major changes brought about in the traditional social structure and hierarchy in the village community. It has been demonstrated that means of irrigation reinforced traditional economic, political and social institutions in the wet village which was already in the process of decline. But the non-availability of the means of irrigation in the dry village brought more and diversified opportunities which
induced radical changes into the economic roles and relations within the village.

In her study of the social structure of a Tanjore Village Kathleen Gough analyses economic organization, local administration, ritual practices at the village level. She also analyses inter-caste relations within the village and the relations of the village with the wider community. She considers that caste today is a limiting rather than determining factor in the choice of occupation. The caste community is no longer homogeneous in terms of occupation and wealth. Referring to the economic polarisation among the Brahmins she observes that some of them own upto 30 acres of land, and others 3 acres only. The majority of the landless poor caste people stand at the bottom of social hierarchy. Gough argues that the economic depression of the poor caste is not caused by the caste-system but due to economic and political legislations. The landowners class has deprived the lower caste tenants of their tenancy rights by manipulating tenancy laws in their own favour. This ultimately resulted into conflicts between the landless and the landlords.

Gough reports that the village she studied is undergoing radical changes. The most evident change is the decline of the economic and social powers of Brahmins
and rise of the depressed groups. She concludes that such economic and class conflict may weaken the caste identities.

Inspired by Weber's formulation 'class, status and purity', Andre Beteille's study Caste, Class and Power is an intensive study of the changing patterns of social stratification in a village in Tamil Nadu. In this study the social structure of Sripuram village in Tanjor district has been studied with analytical categories - caste, class and power. The major concern of the study is the phenomena of caste, class and power and their changing relations. He deals with these phenomena separately and then examines their interrelations in the context of change. Beteille argues that the village can no longer be viewed as an isolated entity as social, economic and political forces operating over a much wider field meet and intersect. He observes that though caste still has social relevance in Sripuram, political and economic spheres are gradually becoming independent of it. If the process continues, traditional bases of economic and political power would be eroded. Beteille writes: "Today there are many areas of life which are becoming progressively "caste-free". Thus, landownership, occupation and even education are not to the same extent dependent upon caste." The emergence of 'differentiated institutional structures' of various kinds
and 'caste-free zones' are some important findings as revealed by this study. It demonstrates how education is no longer the monopoly of Brahmins, other non-Brahmins also are attaining education. It also enables them to compete for white-collar jobs in towns and cities. There has been radical changes in the distribution of power. The traditional elites consisting of landowning Brahmins have lost their grip over the village. New political institutions such as Panchayats, political parties etc. have been created. The new bases of power no longer depend upon caste alone.

Another objective of Beteille's study is to examine change in the village community with reference to the new forces originating from outside the caste system. These new forces, namely, democratization, industrialisation, land reforms, modernisation etc. affect the traditional system of caste stratification. Beteille observes that the "caste, class and power relate in different ways to the broader phenomenon of social stratification. The caste system is clearly a hierarchical system. The land-owners, tenants and agricultural labourers also constitute hierarchy. The distribution of power creates a certain hierarchy in the village, although of a very fluid and amorphous character. The hierarchies of caste, class and power in the village overlap to some extent but also cut across."
Following Beteille's study a series of other studies were undertaken by researchers. The studies by Aggarwal, Bhatt and those others conducted in the similar vein are of Verba and Ahmad and Aurora. P.C. Aggarwal's Caste, Religion and Power\textsuperscript{51} is another study that has used additional sets of castegories for comparative study of social structure. He has studied Meo community of a village in the Mewat region. The economic activities, political life, caste-system, rituals, religion etc. of the village people have been studied in depth. The major findings of the study reveal that unequal distribution of power and economic resources are significant determinants of the status in the village and the ritual status is the main criterion of social ranking in the village community.

The study Caste, Class and Politics by Anil Bhatt\textsuperscript{52} can be clubbed with Beteille's study of Sripuram. Bhatt informs that the study has grown out of a more than six years participation in a cross-national study. Major objectives of the study are: (1) to examine the relationship among three major dimensions of social structure in modern India, (2) to compare and correlate ascriptive, socio-economic and political dimensions of social stratification, (3) to study the interaction between the traditional social structure and modern democratic politics, and (4) to examine
the extent to which the traditional model of social stratification in India (which characterised 'status summation') limited mobility and cumulative inequalities.53

By using large quantitative data gathered through the survey method, the study attempts to explore, among other things, the classical model of social stratification in India (summation of statuses). Bhatt argues that social stratification in India no longer approximates the traditional caste model. This study demonstrates that an individual's socio-economic and political life today is not entailed by his caste position in any significant measure. It concludes that the profile of social stratification in modern India is one of increasing status incongruence, relative openness, competitiveness and mobility. Such changes are not of a degree but of a kind also.54

K.L. Sharma's study The Changing Rural Stratification System55 is a study of six villages in Rajasthan. The study has been taken up from the viewpoint of changes in social stratification. It aims at a sociological analysis of changing rural stratification by analysing the structure and process of stratification system of the six villages. The study is based on intensive fieldwork. The data have been generated through the techniques of survey, intensive interview and case-study. Use of historical records and
secondary data enriches self-generated data in this study.

Sharma realises an 'acute' dearth of multidimensional studies in the area of social stratification. His study presents a number of hypotheses. The questions posed and issues raised in the study are analysed by applying structural and cultural perspectives.

Sharma sums up his major findings in the concluding chapter. He reports that "ascribed elements such as birth in a caste, inherited property, wealth and style of life of the incumbents continue to be primary determinants of status in the villages." Caste in the rural areas still operates as a reference group in the evaluation of overall statuses of the families. And, there are 'status-dissimilarities' among the families of the same caste because of the achievements of the families in various fields of activities determine the status. This has led to the 'inter-caste' and 'intra-caste' hierarchies. Referring to the classes, Sharma observes that the classes constitute a 'system of hierarchy' which is somewhat similar to the traditional class-hierarchy in the six villages. It is quite interesting to know that 'family' and 'individual' are also treated as units of status which are found to be closely related to caste and class. He further observes the coincidence between caste
and class which also correspond with power. The powerful families of the higher castes and classes constitute the ruling minority in the villages.

Pointing to the recent changes brought out by forces of modernisation Sharma observes that these have not been able to 'decentralise' the power and mitigate the 'cumulative inequalities'. The impact is limited and confined to some sections of the society. He observes that the secular elements of status and power are also being monopolised by the upper castes because of their superior status in the traditional stratification system. Contrary to this the lower caste and classes are unable to achieve them because of their depressed status accorded to them in the traditional set up. Although opportunities to achieve prestigious positions and jobs are theoretically not denied to such class of people. 57

In some other studies on social stratification the help of statistical approaches has been taken to analyse social stratification. The main concern in such studies is to understand nature and magnitude of caste or class functions with the help of certain indices. Such approach has been found more useful for macroscopic and comparative analysis of social stratification. There are some studies which have used indices and scales of socio-economic status and inter-caste distance. In these studies selected sets of variables
such as education, occupation, income, social prestige, caste, etc. have been used to construct the 'socio-economic status' scale (SES). In the studies by Kuppuswamy and Singh and that of Yogesh Atal education, occupation, income, social prestige and caste occupation and education have been used respectively to construct SES scale. Referring to the limitations of SES and other indices applied in Indian context Singh observes: "Very often the operational devices are simply borrowed from other countries and applied to the Indian situation. The attempts thus suffer from methodological adhocism as well as intellectual dependency."

Victor S. D'Souza in his study Social Structure of a Planned City, Chandigarh applies attributional approach. He uses education, occupation and income variables to construct a scale to classify the classes into upper, middle, working class and lower class based on the "prestige" of the individual members. He notices that educational, occupational and income hierarchies are prominent features of social stratification in Chandigarh city. These are also closely related to each other. His study highlights the significance of the continuum of "rigidity-fluidity" dimensions. D'Souza maintains that "caste and class systems stand for different patterns of distribution of properties of individuals in hiereditary groups. These
two systems can coexist in an inverse relationship and the ideal typical forms of the caste and the class systems constitute the opposite poles of the caste-class continuum. This continuum refers to the rigidity-fluidity dimension of social stratification.\textsuperscript{62} At the same time the study suffers from some limitations. Sharma comments about this study: "Concrete interacting social groups such as professionals, businessmen, mill-owners, industrial workers etc. have not been studied in situations of concrete interaction. Caste groups and forms of corporateness have also been left out."\textsuperscript{63}

Recent Studies on Social Stratification

In this section we would focus upon some of the important characteristic features noticed in the studies conducted during the seventies and later on. This would be followed by a review of some selected studies that are relevant to our study. The aim is not to present a detailed review of such studies but to look into them in order to locate "departures" in them compared to the earlier studies. In this attempt, we would dwell upon the important features which have emerged in these studies consequent upon the formulation and reformulation of the issues and hypotheses in the area of stratification.

It is observed that the studies on social stratification in India are consistently indicating certain definite trends.
The emergence of such trends could be attributed to ideological moorings, theoretical perspectives, methodological approaches which together have shaped these studies. A set of orientations in these studies can easily be identified as they are discernible from these studies. Y. Singh observes that structural-functional theory dominated during the fifties. The decade of sixties witnessed prominence of structuralism led by Dumont, and the Marxism advocated by A.R. Desai, Daniel Thorner and Charles Bettelheim.

In the decade of seventies the historical perspective in the studies of social stratification was adopted by both Marxist and non-Marxist scholars. According to Singh, the theoretical concerns of the studies on stratification during the seventies are: (1) structural-functional, (2) structuralist, (3) structural-historical, and (4) historical-materialist or Marxist. However, Surendra Sharma differs from Singh while making an observation on the evolution of approaches to stratification. He points out that the categorisation offered by Singh has some exceptions too. He cites some studies to show that some scholars in fact departed from the trends prevalent in a particular decade. Scholars, for instance, like A.R. Desai, Bougle, Dumont and Hocart did adopt the perspectives other than those which were dominant in a particular decade for studying social stratification.
The new trends which have emerged in the studies on social stratification could be looked upon from another angle. The scholars have tried to derive insights from the earlier studies. In this endeavour they have re-examined the concepts, frameworks and paradigms used in earlier studies. The relevance of approaches, methods, and data too have been questioned in the studies undertaken during the seventies. The results of such analyses have paid rich dividends. Some of the most widely used concepts such as 'caste' and 'class' have been challenged. A 'rethinking' on them has been suggested. Their conventional application to understand various facets of social stratification has either been refuted or revised or replaced. This process has not ended. It is likely to continue in future also.

Y. Singh identifies new trends in the studies of social stratification during the seventies and considers them to be reflective of the following issues: (a) increased debate on the ideological moorings of concepts and theories, (b) efforts to re-schematise conceptual systems and their pre-suppositions in the light of shifting paradigms, (c) the new substantive concerns in stratification studies, and finally (d) fruitful convergence of multi-disciplinary interests, both substantive and theoretical in the studies of social stratification.
The major trends as observed by Singh in the studies of the decade are broadly speaking the new orientations in stratification studies and some innovations in methodology. He identifies the process of (1) concretization of class-caste contradictions as a result of the emergent economic and political forces, and (ii) polarisation of caste-class identities through the crystallisation of the middle class-caste domination in the rural society. These developments have generated significant impact on the paradigms used in the studies of social stratification during the seventies.

Other significant developments during the same decade relate to theoretical and methodological directions which have stepped into the studies of social stratification. The emergence of historiography and historical anthropology in the Marxian studies is a notable trend. Interestingly the 'origin' theme in the analysis of caste has resurfaced in the studies of both Marxists and non-Marxists. This is indicative of the shifts in paradigms. In addition to this, Singh notes that non-Marxist structural studies too have shown tendencies for historical depths in studying the relationships between infrastructures such as economic and existential institutions, kinship and primordial identities while analysing the super-structures of caste and class and its ideology.
Referring to other parallel developmental trends Singh observes: "In the substantive domain studies have remained enclosed in the concerns of caste-class structures and their overlap in stratification, and its emerging dialectics."\(^7\) In order to substantiate this observation Singh cites some studies relating to professional classes, entrepreneurs, elites, industrial working classes etc. to show that these have remained confined to caste and class framework. In the studies of agrarian structures and peasant economy also such tendency is noticed. And, there is predominance of substantive orientation in the analysis being entrenched into the caste-class nexus.\(^7\)

Lastly, it is also observed that the social stratification studies during the seventies have been influenced by the contributions made by history and economics. Singh holds the view that interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary input made available to the sociologists have contributed to their studies on stratification. This has particularly helped them in shaping their conceptual and methodological orientations.\(^7\)

Now, we would take up some recent studies from the viewpoint of their relevance for the present study. For our specific purpose, the studies by Kolanda, Klass, Sinha, Gough, Omvedt are relevant. Observing the main features of
these studies it can be said that these are characterised by the issues such as differentiation, evaluation and change in caste and class. There are studies which analyse caste or class alone, and there are some which analyse both caste and class simultaneously. Some of the studies undertaken by historians, economists, sociologists and social anthropologists in the area of agrarian stratification also deserve a mention. Studies by Hira Singh, P.K. Bose, D.N. Dhanagare, Jagannath Pathy, Kathleen Gough are few such studies which have made indepth empirical studies of the agrarian structures.

Pauline Kolanda's Caste in Contemporary India treats caste as a localised social structure. She argues that in Indian caste system the theory of organic solidarity has been overemphasised. The segmentary character of caste has not been properly evaluated. Her observations contradict the views of Betelille and Bailey about the caste structure. In support of her argument she observes that the emergence of caste movements and conflicts to realise certain goals such as economic gains, status mobility, control over resources etc. are in no way the proof of organic solidarity in the structure of caste.

The origin of caste has surfaced in some studies. This trend has been focussed in the studies by Marxist ideologues like S.A. Dange, B.T. Ranadive and
E.M.S. Namboodiripad. They consider 'caste' as an institution of exploitation. The upper castes exploit the lower castes. They look at caste as a mechanism of exploitation. Mencher too views caste as a form of class and looks at it as a mechanism of caste-class exploitation with particular reference to the rural working classes predominantly the Scheduled Castes. She, therefore, suggests to study caste from "upside down" view rather than through "top-down" view. She observes that looking at from the bottom up, the caste system has two striking features. First, from the point of view of those who are at the lowest end of the scale, the caste has functioned as an effective system of economic exploitation. Second, one of its functions has been to prevent the formation of classes with any commonality of interest or unity of purpose. Mencher, therefore, maintains that caste is a system of exploitation rather than a system of interdependence and reciprocity.

Recent studies by Mortan Klass and S. Sinha also refer to the issue of 'origin' of the caste system. In these studies the origin of caste has been studied from the point of structural - historical perspective. The continuity of the caste system is attributed to the economic factors and the "internalization" of the hierarchical norms among the people.
Mortan Klass has raised the issue relating to the origin of caste. He observes that the caste in south Asia might have been evolved due to historical and ecological factors. According to Morton, uneven opportunities to generate surplus brought in hierarchical relationships among the totemic clans. The emergence of such clans was the beginning of caste stratification in south Asia. It was a process which took place all over south Asia and relative abilities to generate surpluses by various clans played an important role in this process. Y. Singh comments that Morton's inability to explain the factors which historically contributed to the transformation of clan into caste render the assumption unreliable. Further, why did it not happen in other parts of the globe? Further, the assumption that the clan exchanges women and caste system exchanges goods without exchanging women constitute the central idea behind the possible development of the caste system. Sharma makes a reference to Morton's paradigms of the origin of caste system in India. He observes that the "corporateness of caste groups is equated with their egalitarian character; and this might be historically and substantively incorrect." In the light of these observations and the weak evidences his postulation cannot be comprehended.
Study by Kathleen Gough analyses the agrarian structure. She studies the kinship structures, colonial economics, mode of production and peasant movement. In order to enrich her study she has combined historical approach with intensive field data. Her main thrust is that the capitalist mode of production has brought about class polarisation. The rich landlords were benefitted but the poor peasantry suffered a decline. The colonial rule also played its part in this regard. The technological advancements and the introduction of newer institutions brought by the colonial rule proved tools of exploitation. Consequently upon this new bourgeoisie, polarisation of peasantry and the pauperisation of the working class were some of the crucial changes which took place. Sharma's observations differ from that of Gough. The uneven structures of landlords, peasants and tenants existed in India much before the colonial rule came into being. Sharma observes that these unevenness existent in the traditional society have been transformed into new structures.

Gail Omvedt combines history, anthropological method and Marxism in her study of agrarian relations. Her emphasis is on the nexus between caste, class and land relations. She argues that the caste is not a 'cultural category' only. To elaborate her viewpoint about the conception of caste,
she refers to the movement among the downtrodden, the atrocities they suffer and the unity move among the upper castes. According to her, these manifestations are more of the nature of classes than the castes. Hence, the classes should be basically defined in terms of the social relations of production as these are linkages between the caste and class structure. She maintains that "castes and classes are found in a mix, and both have 'feudal' and capitalist forms and affect each other hence a social formation perspective."  

There are several other studies on different aspects of social stratification conducted during seventies and eighties. We would refer to some of them later on.

An Overview of the Studies on Social Stratification

Upto this point, we have analysed some major studies on social stratification conducted by different scholars at various points of time. The review of these studies shows certain methods, theoretical models and conceptual categories have been employed in order to examine various aspects of social stratification in India. What is more important to understand is the fact that a continued tradition of research based on a variety of methods, intellectual orientations did exist in these studies
conducted by foreign as well as Indian scholars during the last four decades.

The point that is of special reference to us here is to ascertain (i) how various dimensions of social stratification in India have been examined and understood by the social scientists, (ii) how far they have been able to study these dimensions by applying certain approaches and methods, and (iii) to what extent the application of certain concepts and frameworks in analysing the Indian stratification system have been relevant especially in terms of the Indian social reality. A brief appraisal of some of the related aspects is presented in this section.

India's colonization has been a great factor in shaping the growth of knowledge that was provided to us by persistent distortion of the Indian social realities. In this regard Sharma observes that "The Western social science approaches and models have influenced the Indian social scientists to a great extent and the British Rule in India itself is a big historical factor in shaping the kind of research which social sciences have been carrying on for the last four or five decades."89 We may elaborate this observation by presenting a brief but relevant account in order to identify the process of development. The British ethnographers and administrators took keen interest in the
institution of 'caste' which was to them a unique Indian phenomenon. The colonial rule became largely interested in understanding the Indian social structure for their own ends. Ironically, an understanding of the phenomenon of caste was equated with knowing the Indian social structure by these scholars. The British government made efforts to 'understand' the Indian people by way of their ethnic affiliation, religious beliefs, customary practices and their life styles. As part of the administrative requirements they also got interested in the Indian polity and economy. They thought that these could not have been studied without a reference to the traditional occupations, crafts, rituals and festivals. Against this background a number of researchers and administrators took a lot of interest in presenting the "accounts" of the "natives". It was this time when the fieldwork tradition grew in India during the late nineteenth century. Among the prominent contributors were Risley, Hutton, Wilson, Dalton who conducted ethnographic surveys. Consequently, full scale monographs on selected 'castes' and 'tribes' were produced. Apparently these served both administrative as well as academic purposes besides the colonial interests. The Indian Census was perhaps found to be the most suitable agency to focus upon various aspects of the Indian people in which caste emerged as the central
This exercise started more systematically in 1891 Census and continued vigorously till 1931 Census.\textsuperscript{91}

With these developments a distorted account of the major aspects of the Indian society was incorporated in the Census Reports. Subsequently a series of Provincial and Imperial Gazetteers, Revenue Settlement Reports and a number of other similar works were brought out. These works contained material on Indian rural society. 'Village' and the 'caste' were the central foci around which information was gathered by the British administrators-cum-ethnographers. The net result is that we get in these records and reports an 'official view' of the caste system and the village community.\textsuperscript{92}

These developments made tremendous negative impact on the academic horizon of the Indian sub-continent. One notices that the caste system was regarded a unique Indian phenomenon. The British ethnographers and administrators conducted studies on caste system and declared it as an all-inclusive and encompassing system which was "functional" for the Indian society. It was an attempt towards seeking legitimacy and justification of the British Rule in India.\textsuperscript{93} It was an attempt to govern the heterogeneous population of various races and varied cultures. And, this would have not been possible without studying the life and cultures
of the ruled which they did under the garb of the 'academic interests in the natives. Sharma's observation at this point is noteworthy. He discovers that the studies on caste and the glorified version of the pluralism of the caste was an exercise to befool the Indian people, the caste leaders including the intellectuals. This helped in establishing the British rule on a strong footing.94

What Sharma observes is a fact. It is also true that deep imprints of the British Rule in India led to negative consequences. At the same time positive contributions made by these ethnographers have been undermined by Sharma. In this connection some of the factual elements have remained unexplained. As such few researchers and administrators commissioned by the British Government to present the accounts of the Indian people include the names of Wilson, Dalton and Risley. Whether by accident or by design, most of the earlier Census commissioners happened to be anthropologists par excellence in their own right. Among them Bains, Risley and Hutton were quite important.95

In the light of the above, it is rather difficult to ascertain that the 'insights' they showed in understanding the Indian society were motivated by the colonial design. How far their 'academic interest' was overshadowed by
colonial interests is a matter of debate. It must be looked into and evaluated by weighing the contributions they made at large in the field of ethnography in India. The maiden efforts made and the ethnographic materials produced by them were and still are invaluable source of information for social and cultural analysis. These still serve a source of archival information. Had these data not been collected these would have probably disappeared through the process of social and cultural change.

It should also be borne in mind that the early efforts made by the ethnographers paved the way for an understanding of the Indian people rather than for an inbuilt design to rule them. However, later on such understanding became instrumental in germinating the policy of erecting barriers between various groups and sections of the Indian population. It also helped British in pursing the policy of 'divide and rule'. Sharma's observations lack these limitations. Nevertheless it cannot be denied that the sociological and social anthropological researches today bear tremendous impact on the 'understanding of the Indian society' by earlier scholars.

As we see, the early studies on social stratification were mainly concerned with the caste system at the village level which was regarded as functionally integrative. In
a large number of early studies the 'organic-integrative' viewpoint remained quite dominant feature. The studies conducted from such a perspective emphasised 'harmony' and 'stability'. These failed to explain mutual relationship between caste and other forms of inequalities which also existed in the rural society. The nature and dimension of inequalities too could not be explained by these studies. It is further observed that a variety of researches and analyses of caste have been guided by several 'misconceptions'. The tendency to regard caste as an 'all-encompassing' institution ignored completely researches on 'class' and 'power'. In fact, these dimensions were ignored assuming that these were subsumed by caste.

The studies on stratification in India have other relevant aspects too to be recalled here. These have got several implications which generally remain in the background in most of the studies. We would briefly present some important observations in this regard. Reviewing the relevance of various theories and methods for studying social stratification and understanding the realities K.L. Sharma makes some critical observations. According to his view there are some popularly held notions in regard to the studies of social stratification. Most of the Indian
scholars have freely used Western theories and concepts for studying social stratification and mobility without weighing their relevance. Ironically they have done so 'consciously' or 'unconsciously' without being aware of their deeprooted ideological and political as well as material implications. But Sharma himself seems to be aware of such implications hence argues that in the Indian context such theories and concepts should be used with caution. Extending his argument further, Sharma maintains that he is not opposed to making use of some of the theories and concepts only on the ground that these were developed in the West. Rather it is suggested that their 'relevance' to study Indian social realities must be evaluated. In order to substantiate his viewpoint he points out that some of the studies conducted in India by applying Weberian and Marxian theories and concepts have been found both relevant and irrelevant. However, the balance tilts towards the latter.

In pursuance of these parlous academic interests a large number of studies in the area of social stratification have yielded 'superfluous' outputs at the cost of 'genuine sociological research'. In fact, the tendency to borrow concepts uncritically from the old tradition of sociology and social anthropology and to use them in the Indian
context for studying social stratification has been quite common till recently. Why this has been happening? To this question the explanations are many. Sharma offers a number of explanations. The most important one is the British rule in India. The applications of Western theories, concepts and methods and for understanding the Indian society has been in vogue for time long enough due to the above factors. Another contributory factor is the economic dominance of the Western societies. A handful of Indian scholars who were privileged to go abroad for training and research were treated superior to indigenously trained researchers. These handful of 'superior scholars' too have contributed to this state of affairs. Somewhat similar views are held by others also. Saberwal attributes to the "narrow social backgrounds of the Indian sociologists and their experiences to relatively narrow grounds." Other things apart these are the important factors which have contributed to this state of affairs.

It is logical to think that the concepts and paradigms evolved in the West under certain historical conditions could best be suited to the study of Western societies. But it would be illogical to apply them in the Indian context which is historically and contextually quite different from the Western societies. Even if these are applied for
studying Indian social realities their utility is limited and the relevance debatable. A more relevant question today is to study 'social inequality and its ramifications 'historically' and 'contextually'.

Unfortunately, a substantial number of studies in the area of social stratification in India have not been able to arrest the passions to emulate the 'Western models'. The studies on caste, class, mobility including some agrarian studies have not been able to shed aside this passion. And, therefore, the serious drawback in these studies is a lack of "indigenization". This situation of imitating approaches, models and methods uncritically used by the British and American scholars propels Sharma to search for an alternative. He suggests that an appropriate exercise in this regard would be to address oneself to a set of broad questions such as:

(i) How far the studies of social stratification have incorporated the historicity of Indian society? (ii) What are the approaches, methods and techniques in regard to social stratification? (iii) Where did they originate and how the experiences behind their origin is different from the experience of Indian social reality? (iv) What measures have been taken to ascertain priorism of these tools of understanding?
The above questions raise the issue of crucial importance some of which have already been discussed. It is true that the shadow of colonialism and "positivism" which continued for long time left many harmful impacts on Indian sociology. It is equally true that the researches on social stratification in India grew faster under spell of colonialism and positivism than the wisdom to realise their impact on such researches. Social scientists could not take note of many harmful impact of colonialism and positivism during fifties and sixties. A careful examination of this state of affairs reveals that the concepts and frameworks to understand the Indian social reality were provided by the British scholars and administrators from the very beginning of the colonization. The impact of the American social scientists on the academic world of the Indian social scientists left great imprints on their academic horizon and self assessment of their own capability. However, a gradual realisation is emerging among the sociologists about 'appropriateness' of the theories, methods, concepts and techniques being used in the studies today. The 'new substantive' and 'theoretical concerns' in social stratification studies is being taking place. And, it has become quite apparent since the decade of seventies. Singh attributes its emergence to (1) the consolidation of 'self-awareness' of the Indian sociologists in respect of
theory and methodology, (2) the interplay of social forces realised by social, cultural, political and economic developments, and (3) the national ideology of social stratification which has come under sharper evaluation. These along with other developments have left two distinct marks in the studies of social stratification in India. One is "self-criticism" and the other is the "search for relevance" about which the Indian sociologists are showing a deep concern. This of course is a recent trend, but an important one. It is likely to bear great promises in the studies of Indian social stratification in the days to come.

The Present Study: Its Argument and Objectives

The study argues that most of the studies on stratification have relied on caste as an 'involute' system of ranking during the fifties and early sixties. A recent trend has emerged which puts emphasis on analysis of class relations. The studies on class, as we have seen, have been guided by two approaches: attributional and interactional. The studies guided by the attributional approach are based on a set of attributes or their combinations with an emphasis on 'order' of the classes. Emphasis on relations between super-ordinate and sub-ordinate groups is found in the studies which have applied the interactional approach. The two approaches are not exclusive, and therefore, the
application of the two to a given study of class relations and power hierarchy would contribute to relatively richer collection of data and understanding.

The other argument of the study relates to the "universe" and its dimensions. A large number of studies on stratification are 'single village studies'. Their focus is found in such studies ignoring historicity and extensions of the village to the neighbouring villages and the surroundings. Even multi-village studies lack inter-village, inter-group, and inter-family comparisons as the villages selected in such a study do not form a particular unit. The advantage in studying a sub-region (in our case a block) is that we are in a position to analyse nature of social stratification beyond a given village. Status of an individual or a family is determined not by his position and its evaluation in the village alone, but also by those factors outside the given village which have contributed to this very position in the village. Since members of a village have differential networks outside the village, they are differentially evaluated by the people other than the co-villagers. We have analysed this aspect too by studying the block as a unit of our research.

This study further argues that the caste, land and education are crucial factors in determining the status of
an individual, family or a group of people especially in the village community. These are the important components of the socio-economic life of the rural people. The 'land' as a resource is vital to the people especially in the rural area. Some people possess land whereas others donot have any land. Hence the ownership of land particularly in an agricultural economy is of great importance. The ownership, possession and control of land confers prestige and status on the owner. It also facilitates control over other resources such as economic, educational and political. These together facilitate dominance of various kinds. On a more general level, caste, land and education are closely interlinked. Those castes which control land also monopolise power and enjoy privileges in various ways.

Caste rank determines to a large extent the educational achievement, deprivation or 'backwardness'. It is, therefore, necessary to examine relationship between education and other sub-systems especially those which either influence or get influenced by family, caste and class background. Social stratification and education are closely linked. However, in view of the fact that education today has become apparently open, secular and achievement-oriented we would examine these aspects in the present day context. More precisely we would evaluate the
achievement-deprivation nexus with special reference to
education as a "caste-free zone". We notice that inspite of
the equal educational opportunities to everyone irrespective
of his caste and class background, there is considerable
disparity in the attainment of education among the various
sections of people. Broadly speaking, the rate of literacy
and levels of illiteracy vary. A higher rate of literacy
is found among the members belonging to the higher castes
and classes than those belonging to the lower sections.
The former tend to acquire better education than the latter.
They are privileged, hence attain higher levels of education.
Contrary to this, the lower caste and class groups are
relatively deprived of such advantages.

The present study concerns broadly with the caste,
land and education. At a more general level, the variables
of caste rank, land ownership and educational attainment will
be the main concern of the present study. It would also
deal with certain assumptions. Some people are more
advantaged than others. Those who occupy superior positions
in the context of caste, class and education enjoy dominance
of various kinds. Those who occupy low positions are a
deprived lot. The former are in a position to utilise
goods, services, opportunities and various resources
available in the society, while the latter lag behind in
all these respects. In other words, some of them derive power and enjoy privileges, whereas some are deprived of both.

Another assumption relates to the close relationship between caste, land and education. This in turn determines the nature of power and privilege. The control over resources affects both the general pattern of power relations and place of individuals and groups within that pattern. The control over resources in varying degrees by various castes creates hierarchy of power. At the same time power hierarchy among the various families of the same caste also exists because of differential control by them over various resources in varying proportions. Thus, the power hierarchy exists among the power-wielders as well as among those who have limited power or little power. Therefore, caste, family and individual in a structured system of relations need to be seen in terms of control over land, educational attainment and access to power positions.

In the last, the study is concerned at a more specific level with selected individuals, families belonging to certain caste-groups in the Block. It is assumed that the activities of these individuals and the families are not confined to a particular village in which they are located. Therefore, their status is determined not only by those who live in the village but also by those who live outside it. Our
assumption is that the status is inter-village, inter-family and inter-caste phenomenon. Hence, the present study is concerned with these extensions beyond a single village.

In view of these observations the present study is destined to examine and analyse some of the issues which have been raised and discussed above. The main objectives of the study are:

1. The study aims to study in a block the phenomena of power and privilege.
2. It seeks to analyse the distribution of power and privilege among certain groups, families and individuals.
3. It would also investigate the causes of distribution and principles on the basis of which distributive system functions.
4. At a more specific level, the study would explore the issues connected with the processes and factors of distribution of power and privileges among certain groups, families and individuals in specific historical and cultural contexts of the sub-region.
5. The study also intends to explore the extensions of ranking of caste and class groups, families and individuals beyond a single village and ascertain
the nature of these extensions.

6. It also aims to explore the patterns of interactions between the groups, families and individuals through an analysis of networks and informal associations between them.

7. The present study is concerned with caste, land and education as its main variables.

The Area and Method of Study

The present study is based on the data collected through fieldwork conducted in the Dobhi Block of Jaunpur district in Eastern Uttar Pradesh. The selection of this Block is purposive. It is a large-sized, multi-caste Block which has been taken up for this study keeping in view the operational convenience in data collection.

Methodology

The fieldwork was undertaken in three phases.

In the first phase preliminary information and some statistics were collected from the records of the Block and other local institutions. It was followed by an identification of selected families of the Block. After having known about these families a detailed survey was undertaken through a family survey schedule. The broad items included were related to basic information pertaining to these families.
The details such as family composition of the members including their age, sex, education, occupations, place of work, income etc. were collected. Other details such as intergenerational occupation pattern, landownership, agricultural practices, sale and purchase of assets, house-type etc. were collected. Information pertaining to the families' friends and relatives, their education, occupation and political linkages was also gathered. Background data of the agnate families belonging to the referent families were also collected. These included size of family, landholdings, educational status of the family members, their occupational details, including mobility, political participation, house-types etc. Some details were also collected regarding the friends and relatives of the agnate families along with their educational, political and occupational achievements.

In the second phase of the fieldwork, an intensive investigation was undertaken through an interview schedule. Detailed information was collected from 214 families drawn from 64 villages of the Block through personal interviews. The broad items covered during this phase of fieldwork consisted of qualitative as well as quantitative data relating to various aspects of these families. These included details about the family, caste, mode of production,
patterns of expenditure and consumption, power and dominance, distribution of privileges, networks and perceptions. During this phase of fieldwork additional data were collected relating to the patterns of educational achievements. Some case studies pertaining to educational institutions and specific events were also conducted. In the third phase of fieldwork some additional data were collected to fill up the gaps which could be identified only after the preliminary analysis of the earlier data. During this phase data were gathered to strengthen the data collected earlier. Some aspects of the data collected in the earlier phases were also updated. The entire data collected in these phases were arranged systematically. This included codification and tabulation of data.


3. Ibid., p. 21.


5. Yogendra Singh, Social Stratification and Change in India, New Delhi, Manohar, 1977.

6. Ibid., pp. 5-6.


8. Ibid., pp. 1-50.


11. Ibid., p. 15.


13. Ibid.


18. Ibid., p.17.


23. McKim Marriott wrote about the inadequacies of the attributional theory of caste ranking wherein the caste's rank is determined by its behaviours or attributes. The characteristic way of life of a caste is judged to be high and pure or low if its way of life is judged to be low and polluted that are measured by certain criteria which constitute a scale of Hindu ritual values. Marriott writes: "By an interactional theory, I mean one which holds that castes are ranked according to the structure of interaction among them." See McKim Marriott, 'Interactional and Attributional Theories of Caste Ranking', Man in India, Vol.II, 1959.


27. Ibid.


33. Romila Thapar, Social Mobility in Ancient India, with Special Reference to Elite Groups', R.S. Sharma and Vivekanand Jha (eds), Indian Society: Historical Probings, New Delhi: People's Publishing House, 1974

Beteille refers to (i) the growth of money economy as opposed to inherited status, (ii) the new non-caste occupational structures, (iii) the modern educational system and the (iv) development of new political forces and differentiated political structures as the differentiated institutional structures.

39. Evidences are not lacking. K.L. Sharma's study of six villages of Rajasthan clearly demonstrates this. A fuller account in this regard can be found in 'A Rethinking on the Concepts of Caste and Class' by K.L. Sharma.
41. Ibid., p.41.
43. Ramakrishna Mukherjee, The Dynamics of Rural Society, Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1957.
48. Ibid.
49. Ibid., p.5.
50. Ibid., p.4.
53. Ibid., pp. 198-99.
54. Ibid.
56. Ibid., p.205.
57. Ibid., pp. 111-112.


65. Ibid.


69. Ibid., p.47.

70. Ibid., p.48.

71. Ibid.

72. Ibid.

73. Ibid.


91. Ibid., pp. 1-5.


94. K.L. Sharma, op.cit., 1986, p.34.
98. Ibid., p. 22.
99. Ibid., p. 22.
100. Ibid.
101. Ibid., p. ix.
108. I belong to one of the villages of this block. I also started my research career from this region. I lived in village Senapur for one year during 1964-65. My acquaintance with the area and people facilitated the fieldwork in many respects.
109. The first phase started during the end of 1976 and was abandoned after preliminary work due to unavoidable circumstances. The second phase of work started in March 1978 and ended towards the end of July 1978. The third phase took place during summer of 1980, 83, 85. Nevertheless the total period of fieldwork was eight months only.
110. The Family Survey Schedule is given at Appendix I.
111. The Schedule for Collecting information for agnate family is given at Appendix II.
112. The Interview Schedule is given at Appendix III.

113. Generally, the caste-wise data are not maintained in the schools and colleges except for the SC/ST. In order to get caste-wise break-up of the members of the Management Committees, the teaching and non-teaching staff and the students all the nine institutions were visited. (1) The heads of these institutions were interviewed to get information relating to the history of the institutions, social composition of the management committees etc. Records of the schools were made available which proved very useful for data collection. Besides (i) a cyclostyled questionnaire was circulated among the teachers of each institution. They were cooperative to furnish desired information in the questionnaire. (ii) Information concerning the non-teaching staff was compiled from the school records. The head clerks being local proved excellent informants. They knew many things about their institutions very intimately. (iii) Caste-wise break up of the students was obtained with the help of the class-teachers of each section/class. They were requested to furnish the caste-wise break up of students enrolled in their respective classes. Most of the classes were covered, however, due to absence of a few class-teachers, few sections of certain class were left out. To collect caste-wise break up of student by the class teacher concerned was an easy task. He would ask each present student in the class to tell his/her caste. This device is simple and takes very little time. Although the data thus obtained are not based on the total coverage, the sample is fairly large and represents the universe to the maximum.