UNIT 29 CONCEPTS AND FORMS OF SOCIAL MOBILITY

Structure

29.0 OBJECTIVES

After having studied this unit you will be able to:

● describe various types and forms of mobility;

● highlight dimensions of mobility and its implications; and

● outline modern analyses of mobility.

29.1 INTRODUCTION

By social mobility is meant any transition from one social position to another. Change in social position involves generally significant change in life-chances and life styles. The concept of **social mobility** is classically defined by Pitirim A. Sorokin. According to Sorokin, the shift of position may be undertaken by an individual or social object or value. That is to say, anything that has been created or modified by human activity can experience social mobility.

The importance of social mobility as a concept in sociology is quite obvious. Any change of position in society experienced by an individual or a group has its impact not only on the individual or the group, but also on the society at large.

Implicit in invoking the concept of social mobility is the recognition of gradation in a society. The gradation is normally done in terms of power, prestige and privileges. That is to say, a hierarchical structure then operates in such societies. This opens up the possibility of sociological investigation of whether or how an individual or a group gains or loses power, prestige and privileges in a society. In other words, along the line of hierarchy whether one moves up or falls down signifies change of social position i.e., social mobility.

Time taken to effect the change of social position may vary from society to society. The dimensions of social mobility are many. Sociology of social mobility is right with the contributions of various scholars who have theorized on the concept on the basis of their respective field-studies and data collected thereby.

It is quite obvious that a change of position may take place either along a horizontal axis, or a vertical axis. So, the shift of social position can also be analytically understand in terms of two basic, viz, **horizontal mobility** and **vertical mobility**.

29.2 TYPES AND FORMS OF MOBILITY

We will now turn to a description of types and forms of social mobility.

29.2.1 Horizontal Mobility

Horizontal social mobility means movement by individuals or groups from one position to another in society which does not involve a shift into a higher or lower stratum. According to Sorokin, horizontal social mobility means the transition of an individual or social object from one social group to another situated on the same level. With respect to the American society, transitions of individuals, as from the Baptist to the Methodist religious group, from one citizenship to another, from one family (as husband or wife) or another by divorce and remarriage, from one factory to another in the same occupational status, are all instances of horizontal social mobility.

Since horizontal mobility does not involve a major movement up or down the hierarchical ladder, the horizontal dimension of social mobility cannot throw much light on the nature of stratification present in any society. Nevertheless, it does indicate the nature of divisions exiting in a society. Such divisions do not primarily indicate any major status differentiation in a society. More contemporary sociologist Anthony Giddens considers that there is a great deal of mobility along the lateral direction in modern societies. He prefers to define horizontal mobility as **lateral mobility** involving geographical movement between neighbourhoods, towns or regions.

29.2.2 Vertical Mobility

In sociological literature, most attention is given to vertical mobility, simply put-an upward or downward change in the rank of an individual or group. Examples of vertical social mobility are for too many. A promotion or demotion, a change in income, marriage to a person of higher or lower status, a move to a better or worse neighbourhood-all serve as examples of vertical mobility. Essentially vertical mobility involves a movement which ensures enhancing or lowering of rank. It is important to remember that some movements may be bother horizontal and vertical at the same time.

Classically P. Sorokin defines **Vertical Social Mobility** as the relations involved in a transition of an individual (or a social object) from one social stratum to another. According to the direction of the transition there are two types of vertical social mobility: **ascending** and **descending,** or 'social climbing' and 'social sinking' respectively.

Anthony Giddens refers to vertical mobility as movement up or down the socio-economic scale. According to him, those who gain in property, income or status are said to be **upwardly mobile**, while those who move in the opposite direction are **downwardly mobile**.

Interestingly, Giddens comments that in modern societies vertical and horizontal (lateral) mobility are often combined. Often one form of mobility leads to the other. For instance, on individual working in a company in one city might be promoted to higher position in a branch of the firm located in another town, or even in a different country.

29.2.3 Forms of Mobility

Analytically one can conceptualize various modes or forms of the change of social position

experienced by an individual or a group. Drawing evidences from the American society P. Sorokin states that, both the ascending and descending currents of economic, political and occupational mobility exists in two principal forms.

They exist as:

i)   an infiltration of the individuals of a lower stratum into an existing higher one; and

ii)   a creation of a new group by such individuals, and the insertion of such a group into a higher stratum instead of, or side by side with, the existing groups of this stratum. Correspondingly, the descending or downward mobility has also two principal form as:

iii) dropping of individuals from a higher social position into an existing lower one, without a degradation or disintegration of the higher group to which they belonged; and

iv)   degradation of a social group as a whole, in an abasement of its rank among other groups, or in its disintegration as a social unit.

A more recent treatment on forms modes of mobility is advanced by Ralph H. Turner. Contrasting the predominant modes of mobility of England and the United states of America, Turner has suggested two ideal-typical normative patterns of upward mobility. They are:

i)   **Contest Mobility** is a system in which elite status is the prize in a open contest and is taken by the aspirants on efforts. The term elite is used by Turner in a simplified sense to mean high class category. White the "contest" is governed by some rules of fair play, the contestants have wide choices in the strategies they may employ. Since the "prize" of successful upward mobility is not in the hands of a established elite to give out, the latter can not determine who shall attain it and who shall not.

ii)   **Sponsored Mobility** is one where the established elite or their agents recruit individuals into their fold. In this case elite status is given on the basis of some criterion of supposed merit and cannot be taken by any amount of effort or strategy. Upward mobility is like entry into a private club where each candidate must be "sponsored" by one or more the members. Ultimately the members grant or deny upward mobility on the basis of whether they judge the candidate to have these qualities they to see in fellow members.

As along as in a society there is a gradation of social positions, there is a scope, at least theoretically, to conceptualize a transition from one social position to another. Such changes are undertaken or experienced by a individual, a group, or even a social value/ object. Such change of social position is called social mobility.

> **Activity**
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> Try to locate examples of horizontal and vertical mobility among the people you know. Note your results and discuss with other students in your study centre.

If such a change in experienced laterally it is called horizontal social mobility. A movement along a vertical axis would be a case of vertical mobility. In sociology most attention is given to the various aspects of vertical mobility - which could be either upward or downward.

Analytically one can talk about various forms of social mobility also. The important forms are: contest mobility and sponsored mobility. In case of contest mobility, an individual or a group though its own efforts and achievements actualize mobility. Whereas, under sponsored mobility, instead of the strivings and efforts of the depressed categories it is being granted or offered by either already entrenched higher social groups or government/ society at large in terms of certain criteria.

Check Your Progress 1

i)   Describe in about five lines the concept of 'contest' mobility

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ii)   Outline in about five lines the idea of 'sponsored' mobility.

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29.3 DIMENSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS OF MOBILITY

In order to operationalise the concept of social mobility and to study its various forms, we need to discuss the various dimensions of the concept. Subsequently, these dimensions are all linked with the basic character of any society. In this section, we identity the important dimensions of social mobility and also indicate their implications in terms of the wider social structure.

29.3.1 Intragenerational Mobility and Intergenerational Mobility

There are two ways of studying social mobility. Either, one can study individual's own careers-how far they move up or down the social scale in the course of their working lives. This is usually called **Intragenerational moblity**.

Alternatively, one can analyse how far children enter the same type of occupation as their parents or grandparents. Mobility across the generation is called **Intergenerational mobility**.

In other words, study from the standpoint of changes over the lifespan of an individual is a case of intragenerational mobility-study. If the study is undertaken from the standpoint of changes within family over two or more generation, it would be a case of intergenerational mobility study.

Intragenerational mobility is also called popularly as **career mobility**. To find out about career mobility, people are asked to identify the jobs they held at various points in their lives.
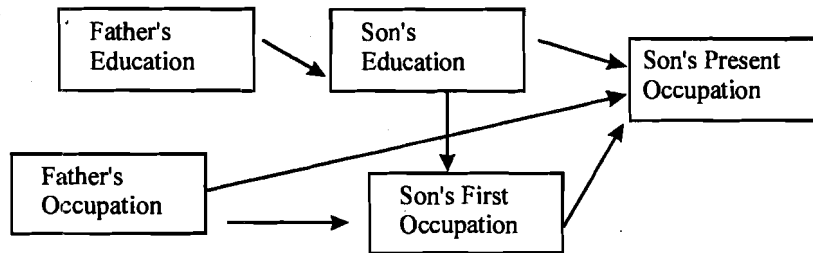
Studying the American occupational structure, Blau and Duncan have found that a person's chances of moving up the occupational ladder are strongly influenced by.

i)   Amount of Education

iii)   Father's occupation

Blau and Duncan's mobility model can be figuratively illustrated as follows:

In the illustration the direction of the influence is shown by the arrows, and the importance of the influence is indicated by increasing the number of lines constituting the arrow.

Less obvious factors also play a part in occupational attainment. Small families can given each child more resources, attention and encouragement. Those who postpone marriage are more likely to succeed than those who marry early, Willingness to postpone marriage may be a sign of an underlying personality trait, etc.

The study of career mobility or intragenerational mobility which deals with the changes during a person's working life, covers a rather short period and does not throw much light on how class is inherited. Also, such a study throws less light on the nature of the society as such. To judge the extent to which a society is open or closed it is always better to compare the positions of parents and children at similar points in their career or at similar ages. That is, intergeneration mobility studies are more fruitful in sociological research.

29.3.2 Range of Mobility

When people move up or down the social scale, they may travel through one or many strata. The social distance thus covered is denoted by the term 'range'. It could be movement covering a short social distance, i.e., short-range shift. Also, a big slide across a number of strata (up or down) is also possible. This is a case of long-range mobility. For example, when Blau and Duncan collected information on a national sample of 20,000 males, they concluded that there is much vertical mobility in the United States. Interestingly, nearly all of this is between occupational positions quite close to one another. 'Long-Range' mobility is rare. On the contrary, Frank Parkin stresses on instances of 'long-range' mobility.

29.3.3 Downward Mobility

Anthony Giddens proposes that, although downward mobility is less common than upward mobility, it is still a widespread phenomenon. According to his findings, over 20 percent of men in the UK are downwardly mobile intergenerationally although most of this movement is short-range. Downward intragenerational mobility is also common. This trend is most often linked up with psychological problems and anxieties, where individuals fail to sustain the life-styles to which they have become accustomed. Redundancy can also be the cause of downward mobility. Middle-aged men who lose their jobs, for example, find it hard to gain new employment at all, or can only obtain work at a lower level of income than before.

In terms of intragenerational mobility at any rate, many of the downwardly mobile are women. It is so, as many women abandon their promising careers on the birth of a child. After spending some years bringing up a family, such women return to the paid work force at a later date, often at a lower level than that at which they left.

29.3.4 Upward Mobility

Acquiring wealth and property is the major means of moving up in modern societies, but other channels are also there. Entering an occupation with honour (Judge etc.), receiving a doctorate degree, or marrying into an aristocratic family are a few such channels.

Popularly it is being held that, the family serves as that social unit through which an individual is placed into the class structure of a society. Through the family the child can inherit property, occupation, educational opportunity, life-style, family connections, even titles and legal privileges. In pre/non-industrial societies, these may constitute the major process for locating individuals in the social structure. In industrial societies, inheritance processes do not guarantee transmission of social status by kinship to nearly the same extent, but such societies still do not eliminate inheritance as a significant process. Important here to note that imitations of higher class life-styles and behavior (at times crude, or otherwise) have also served as useful means of upward mobility in traditional as well as in modern societies.

29.3.5 Possibilities of Mobility

Studies of social mobility invariably leads one to the question of opennes and closeness of a society. Mobility is not possible if a society is rigid enough to allow any movement within its graded structure. On the other hand, mobility is facilitated if a society exhibits flexible character.

Very little vertical mobility is possible in a closed society. Pre-modern Colombia and India more or less approximate such type. In contrast, an open society allows for greater vertical social mobility. However, even in open societies people cannot move from one stratum to another without resistance. Every society has established criteria - which might be proper manners, family lineage, education, or racial affiliation etc., which must satisfied before people can move to a higher social level.

Most open societies tend to be highly industrialised. As societies industrialize, new skills are demanded and occupations are created that were pervasively unnecessary. New occupations mean more opportunities for a wide section of people. Additionally, urbanization contributes to vertical social mobility because ascriptive criteria become less important in the anonymity of the city. People become achievement oriented, competitive, and status-striving . In industrial societies, most often government also undertake welfare programmes which foster mobility

What makes mobility a reality is a change in occupation structure, enlarging the range and proportion of middle - and upper-level occupations while reducing the proportions of lower ones. Mobility created by changes in the occupational structure of the society is called **structural mobility** (sometimes also called forced mobility).

> **Box 29.01**
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> It is important to appreciate that modern society has moved beyond the crucial transition from agricultural to industrial society. Advanced industrial countries move beyond the predominance of manufacturing occupations to develop the tertiary branch of the economy, viz., trade transportations, communications, and personal and professional services. That is to say, overall there is a predominance of 'service' sector in any advanced industrial society. Such a situation was forecasted by Daniel Bell almost three decades back. Agricultural employment declines both proporationately and absolutely, while manufacturing declines proportionally. This change increases white collar and middle-class occupations. These developments, rather than individual effort, account primarily for social mobility.

Many scholars have pointed out that the overall impact of capitalist path of industrialization has resulted in widespread downward mobility. While-collar occupations do not provide sufficient scope for vast sections of population for upward mobility. Marxist theory

inspired scholars have showed that there is systematic 'degrading', rather than upgrading, of labour under the compulsion of late capitalism. The consequence has been large-scale downward mobility of a collective kind.

29.3.6 Comparative Social Mobility

Once social mobility as concept is clarified and we are acquainted with the theoretical implications, it would be useful to take note of actual empirical studies of social mobility. The findings and inferences of such studies covering diverse societies would help us to relate the concept and forms of social mobility with real determinate social situations. We can indicate the most representative studies.

Box 29.02

Originally, through Sorokin's study (1927) it is popularly believed that the chance to be mobile is greater in the United States than in any European society. Drawing instances from industrial societies of European continent Seymour Lipset and Reinhard Bendix (1959) showed that there is little difference from one industrial country to another. They divided their data into a simple manual - non manual distinction for a number of industrial societies.

Gerhard Lenski computed a manual- non manual index based on data from a variety of sources. His study shows the United States as first with a mobility rate of 34%, but five other European countries are close behind: Sweden, 32%, Great Britain, 31%, Denmark, 30%, Norway, 30% and France, 29%. So we can observe that the mobility rate is fairly similar in industrial societies.

Frank Parkin made a subtle, yet a substantive study to throw new light on social mobility. He sought out data from erstwhile communist run societies of eastern Europe and attempted some comparison.

i)   the dominant class of managers and professionals, like such classes in capitalist societies, is able to transmit competitive advantage to their own children, and

ii) the privileged classes assure high position for their children, there is nevertheless much social mobility for peasants and manual workers in these societies.

Parkin cited a study of Hungary to show that 77% of managerial, administrative, and professional positions were filled by men and women of peasant and worker origin, and that 53% of doctors, scientist and engineers were from such families.

The increase in white-collar positions as a consequence of industrial expansion had provided in Eastern Europe a level of mobility for those lower in occupational rank that exceeds that in the United states and Europe. This fact instilled higher aspirations among the working classes.

These studies indicate that social mobility - its possibilities and implications, are all being connected to specific social contexts. In the next section, we would take up the more recent studies of social mobility which have been conducted with more rigorous theorization on the concept of social mobility and use of sophisticated techniques of research.

There are various dimensions in any study of social mobility. If change of social position in diagnosed over the life-span of an individual, it is a case of intra-generational mobility. If the change us across two or more generations, then it is called intergenerational mobility.

The change of social position may be across short long 'social distance.' Range of mobility takes care of this phenomenon.

As against popular belief, downward mobility is also widespread in modern industrial

societies. In modern industrial societies it is mainly the 'achievement' oriented criteria that determine upward mobility. Most modern societies are believed to be more 'open' to facilitate social mobility. Nevertheless, every society has its own criteria and mobility attempts are also resisted differently.

Generally speaking all industrial societies exhibit a more or less similar degree of mobility. Communist societies may not be as closed as popularly thought to be so.

Check Your Progress 2

i) Distinguish between intergenerational and intragenerational mobility in about ten lines.

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ii) Write a note on 'downward' and 'upward' mobility in about ten lines.

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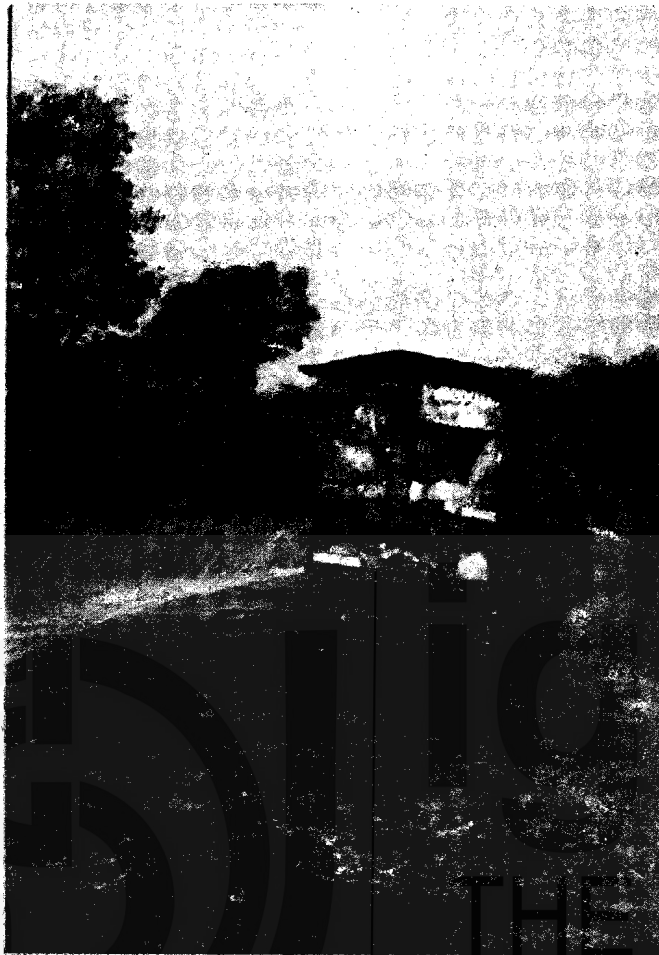
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Successful entrepreneurs often begin with small enterprises
Courtesy : B. Kiranmayi

29.4 MODERN ANALYSES OF SOCIAL MOBILITY

Seymour Martin Lipset, Reinhard Bendix and Hans L. Zetterberg advanced a thesis that
observed mobility rates are much the same in all western industrialized societies. This
thesis had generated a debate among scholars of social mobility. With the help of more
recent and detailed data many sociologists have contested the above thesis.

To appreciate the thesis of Lipset et. al, it is useful, first, to briefly consider the popular
'liberal theory' of industrialism inspired mobility studies. We can state its fundamental
propositions as well as list down the logic of this thesis. Once we know this, we then can
examine the Lipset, Bendix, Zetterberg's theory vis-à-vis the theory of industrialism.
Subsequently, we would draw upon the view of other scholars who have strongly debated
and reformulated the Lipset, Bendix and Zetterberg's view.

29.4.1 'Liberal Theory' of Industrialism

The main tenet of the 'Liberal Theory' is that there are certain defining pre-requisites for,
and necessary consequences of industry impacting upon any society. Accordingly, mobility
trends in industrial societies, in comparison with pre-industrial one are:

i) absolute rates of social mobility are generally high, and moreover upward mobility
    i.e., from less to more advantaged positions predominates over downward mobility;

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ii) relative rates of mobility of that is, mobility opportunities are more equal, in the sense that individuals of differing social origins compete on more equal terms; and

iii) both the level of absolute rates of mobility and the degree of equally in relative rates tend to increase over time.

P.M. Blau and O.D. Duncan (1967) are among those leading sociologists who hinted upon the above scenario. The arguments for such a conclusion are:

i) Within industrial society the dynamism of a rationality developed technology demands continuous, and often rapid, change in the structure of the social division of labour. The structure of division of labour itself gets more differentiated with more specialized jobs. High values of mobility thus follow as from generation to generation, as well as in the course of individual life times.

ii) Industrialism transforms the very basis of selection and allocation of particular individuals to different position within the division of labour. Instead of occupation, achievement orientation suits the rational procedures of selection. Moreover, the growing demand for highly qualified personnel promotes the expansion of education and training, and also the reform of educational institutions so as to increase their accessibility to individuals of all social backgrounds; and

iii) The new modes of selection will suit the new sectors of economy - that is, the more technologically advanced manufacturing industries and services, and also within the increasingly dominant form of large-scale bureaucratic organisation. So, areas of economy which are resistant to the industrial way of life get marginalised and achievement oriented mobility pervades the expanding areas of economy.

29.4.2 Lipset and Zetterberg's Theory

Quite conveniently Lipset and Zetterberg's theory of mobility in industrial society is generally assimilated to the above mentioned liberal position. Instead, it is interesting to note that they do not seek to argue that mobility steadily increases with industrial development. According of them, among industrial societies no association is apparent between mobility rates and rate of economic growth. Social mobility of societies becomes relatively high once their industrialization reaches a certain level. Also they do not consider the high mobility of industrial societies as the result of a tendency towards greater openness. High mobility is then primarily due to effects of structural change of these societies. Lipset and Zetterberg's central hypothesis is that rates of social mobility display a basic similarity across industrial societies.

29.4.3 Reformulation of Lipset and Zetterberg's Hypothesis

Featherman, Jones and Hauser researched with advanced tools and techniques to revise the Lipset and Zetterberg's proposition. They showed that if relative rates of social mobility is considered, then only the proposition stands. Otherwise, if social mobility is expressed in terms of absolute-rates it would not be true.

Cross-national similarity cannot be confirmed if one goes by absolute rates i.e. going by set of observable characteristics of individuals or groups. This is so, as these rates are greatly influenced by a whole range of economic, technological and circumstances which vary widely (the structural context of mobility).

Activity 2

Talk to various people in industry and see how far the Lipset and Zetterberg's hypothesis holds for India. Compare your notes with other students in the study centre.

The relative rates of mobility - that is, when mobility is considered as net of all such effects, the likelihood of cross-national similarity is much more, in this case, only those

factors are involved that influence the relative chances of individuals of differing social origin achieving or avoiding, in competition with one another, particular destination positions among those that are structurally given.

Finally, the study of nine European countries conducted by Robert Erickson and John Goldlthorpe too refuted the 'liberal theory' of industrialism. They studies both western and eastern European societies and found no evidence of general and abiding trends towards either higher levels of total mobility or of social fluidity within the nations. They did not find any evidence that mobility rates, whether absolute or relative, are changing in any other consistent direction; nor again evidence that such rates show a tendency over time to become cross-nationally more similar.

29.4.4 Problems in Studying Social Mobility

After our exposure to the most elemental knowledge about social mobility, we have also tried to acquaint ourselves with the current, more advanced research findings on social mobility. Before we conclude our understanding of the concept and forms of social mobility, we need to at least indicate some of the basic problems that one encounters in studying mobility.

Following Anthony Giddens, we can list down the possible problems as follows:

i)   The nature of jobs alters over time, and it is not always obvious that what are regarded as the 'same' occupations are in fact still such. For example, it is not clear whether mobility from blue-collar to white-collar work is always correctly defined as 'upward'. Skilled blue-collar workers may be in a superior economic position to many people in more routine white-collar jobs.

ii) In studies of intergenerational mobility, it is difficult to decide at what point of the respective careers to make comparisons. For example, a parent may still be at mid-career when a child begins his or her work life; parents and their offspring may simultaneously be mobile, perhaps in the same direction or (less than) in different directions. Now, the problem arises in term so whether to compare them at the beginning or the end of their careers?

Still to some extent these problems can be resolved. When it becomes apparent that the nature and esteem of a job has shifted radically over the period covered by a particular study, we can take care in attending the grading of occupational categories. The second problem, above mentioned, can be sorted out if the data allows so. This is done by comparing parents and children both at the beginning and at the end of their respective careers.

Check Your Progress 3

i)   Briefly describe Lipset and Zetterberg's theory in about ten lines.

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ii)   Describe two of the problems in studying social mobility in about five lines.

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29.5   LET US SUM UP

Modern analyses of social mobility essentially debate over the proposition of 'liberal theory' of industrialism. The 'liberal theory' of industrialism proposes that all industrial societies over a period of time would coverage to share similar characteristics of openness. Accordingly, the social mobility rates and pattern would also tend to be similar.

Lipset, Bendix and Zetterberg's study on social mobility confirms that rate of mobility display a basic similarly across industrial societies. But they also point out that the high mobility of industrial societies is less an effect of greater openness of these societies. Instead they consider the high mobility as primarily caused by structural change of these societies.

Featherman, Jones and Hauser hold that only if relative rate of social mobility is considered then only the similarity of mobility trend among industrial societies would be confirmed.

Erikson and Goldthorpe through their studies showed that no common trend of mobility is available among different societies.

Studies of social mobility should also take note of the problems associated with such studies. Particular social position as determined by job-status is not immutable, because the social value attached any occupation may change overtime. Also, while studying intergenerational mobility it is to be carefully decided at what point of their careers should parents and children be compared.

29.6   KEY WORDS

Contest Mobility	:	Refers to mobility which occurs through open competition.
Horizontal Mobility	:	Refers to shifts in Position in a society which does not involve movement between strata.
Intragenerational Mobility	:	This is mobility which occurs within different generations of people.
Intergenerational Mobility	:	Refers to mobility within the time span of two or more generations.
Sponsored Mobility	:	This type of mobility refers to upward status shifts which occur due to the decision of the 'sponsor' or member of the elite group into which the individual is invited to join.

29.7   FURTHER READINGS

Blau, P.M. and O.D. Duncan (1967) *The American Occupational Structure*, New York: Wiley.

Erikson, R. and J.H. Goldthorpe (1987). *The Constant Flux: A Study of Clas Mobility in Industrial Societies*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

29.8 SPECIMEN ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

i)   Contest mobility comprises a situation where the elite status is the goal which is achieved in an open contest. Success depends on the aspirants own efforts. This means that the contest is governed by some rules of fair play, and it complies that the successful upward mobility is not in the hands of the established elite to give out.

ii) Sponsored mobility is a situation where it is the established elite to recruit individuals into their group. The requirement for this cannot be acquired by open competition, effort or strategy. Thus upward mobility here is like being 'sponsored' by other members.

Check Your Progress 2

i)   There are two different methods for analyzing social mobility. The first is intrageneration mobility and comprises a study of an individual's careers, and assessing how for up or down they have moved in the social scale.

The second method, that of intergenerational mobility is to see mobility in career and status across the generations.

iii) Downward mobility is when an individual loses status; in the case of upward mobility individual gains status. Downward mobility is widespread. According to Giddens 20 percent of the men in UK are downwardly mobile intergenerational upward mobility involves gaining wealth and power, and position to a greater extent than earlier.

Check Your Progress 3

i)   Lipset and Zetterberg's hypothesis is that there is no apparent relationship between industrial society and mobility rate. However social mobility becomes relatively high once industrialization reaches a certain level. They do not consider the high mobility of industrial societies as a result of greater openness, but feel it is a result of structural changes.

ii) Two of the problems in studying social mobility are:

a)   The nature of jobs alters over time.

b)   In studies of intergenerational mobility the point of comparisons regarding careers is difficult to decide.

UNIT 30 SOCIAL MOBILITY IN CASTE AND CLASS

Structure

30.0 OBJECTIVES

- to outline the processes and factors that influence mobility in caste;

- to describe the nature of mobility in class and the factors influencing it; and

- to highlight the factors influencing class mobility in India.

30.1 INTRODUCTION

Sorokin has made pioneering contribution to the analysis and study of social mobility and has contributed to conceptualization, types and channelization of it. He differentiated between societies that are 'closed' rigid, immobile and impenetrable and those that are 'open', plastic, penetrable or mobile, the nature of stratification has a bearing on the nature of mobility while caste systems is often associated with 'closed society' where avenues for mobility rare, restricted and few. Classes are found in 'open' societies' which often-ample opportunities for mobility through achievement. It is important to investigate into the nature of mobility in caste and class to find out how far they confirm to the generalization mentioned by Sorokin.

30.2 MOBILITY IN CASTE

While the general impression has been that caste is a 'closed' system of stratification's, yet in reality it is far from true. No society is static and even in the traditional set up where ascription was the prime determinant of one's ritual and occupational standing, access to rewards and resources and social mobility both upward and downward was not totally absent.

Social mobility in the caste system is evident in the increasing discrepancy between caste and occupations, withering away of jajmani obligations, the rigidity regarding purity and pollution and acceptance of secular lifestyle. In the olden days, Srinivas points out, there were two major sources of mobility. First was the fluidity of the political system, which made it feasible for new castes to assume the status of Kshatriyas and exercise power. Second was the availability of marginal land which could be brought under cultivation. As a consequence of these two available routes to upward mobility, leaders from dominant castes such as Reddis, Marathas could seize political power and claim Kshatriyas status. The medieval Pala dynasty of Bengal was Shudra in origin. The Patridars of Gujarat originated as peasant caste. When the leader of a dominant caste escalated the rank of raja or king, it became a source of mobility for the other members and this was strengthened by adoption of practices and life styles of the upper castes.

30.2.1 Level of Mobility

Mobility has taken place at the level of individual, family and group. Sharma has made a careful analysis of these levels of mobility.

i)   **Mobility of an Individual within a family:**   Some individuals even though of low caste, may have better status and prestige compared to other members of their family. This may be on account of one's personality traits such as integrity, honesty, acquisition of education and other achievements. Similarly an individual of higher may lose his position on account of misdeeds and slothful habits. This may result in downward mobility for the individual. The individual mobility is therefore a consequence of the individual's capabilities or lack of it and hence does not influence the prestige of the caste and is least corporate in nature.

ii)   **Mobility of a minority of families within a caste:** This kind of mobility is linked to socio-economic and political aspects of the families. The improvement in status could be result of acquisition of land and education which is further reiterated by emulating the practices of higher caste with regard to dress, lifestyle and rituals. Mobility of this type is not cooperate in nature and can be viewed as 'horizontal mobility' rather than 'vertical mobility' which bridges the gap between status distinctions. Burton Stein points out that this trend was predominant in medieval period.

iii)   **Mobility of a majority of family or group:** This kind of mobility is 'corporate' in nature. It involves collective state at prestige, honour, status and is therefore marked by changes in socio-cultural practices regarding purity and pollution. Certain castes improve their positions by discarding practices regarded impure and degrading. Sanskritization was the chief process which helped these castes to move up in hierarchy and legitimize their claim to the upward mobility.

30.3   SANSKRITIZATION AND WESTERNIZATION

There are several features and processes of mobility. We now turn to these.

30.3.1 Sanskritization

M.N. Srinivas formulated and contributed immensely to the concept of Sanskritization as a process of mobility in caste. He refers to Sanskritization as a "process by which a now Hindu caste or tribal or other groups, changes its customs, ritual ideology and way of life in direction of a high and frequently 'twice born' castes" (Srinivas 1966) Sanskritization has been prevalent throughout history and has assumed various forms. It has been used as mechanism to bridge the gap between secular and ritual rank. Whenever a caste achieved secular power it tried to legitimise its status by acquiring traditional symbols of high castes by adopting their customs, rituals.

Beliefs and ideas such as vegetarianism and teetotalism. Besides, they tried to obtain the services of Brahmin priests, visited pilgrimage centres and acquired knowledge of sacred texts.

The census recording was considered an excellent source of making claims to higher status. This claim according to Srinivas was upgraded in subsequent operations. For example if in one census the caste claimed to by Vaishya, in the subsequent operations it would lay claim to Brahmin or Kshatriya. This attempt was followed by attempts made by the castes to emulate the lifestyle of the respective caste they laid claim to. The status attributes of highly ranked warrior ruler category i.e. Kshatriya and the Brahmin served as model or most upwardly mobile groups.

Another very significant pattern of Sanskritization involved increasing Puritanism on the part of the castes who rejected superiority of the twice born e.g. the Koris of eastern Uttar Pradesh refused to accept water from Brahmins. Such a process of **de-sanskritization** contributes to crystallization of new groups and greater political mobilization. **Re-sanskritization** is another process in the endeavour to attain mobility. In this case formerly westernised or modernised groups discard many symbols of modernization and revert to traditional sanskritic life styles.

From the above discussion, it is clear that Sanskritization was a process of social mobility which resulted only in **positional changes** for particular castes and their sections i.e. the individual castes moved up or down the hierarchy while the structure remained the same.

30.3.2 Westernization

Srinivas defines "Westernization as the changes brought about it Indian society and culture as result of over 150 years of British rule, the term subsuming changes occurring at different levels technology, institutions, ideology and values". (Srinivas 1966) Westernization is therefore a vast, multidimensional and a complex process which impinged upon various domains through a member of institutions and hence had a significant bearing on caste mobility. It not only altered the existing set up but also opened fresh avenues and doors for social mobility. A large number of inter-related factors are responsible for this.

Under the British rule, land became a saleable commodity and this had far reaching consequences for mobility. The members of low caste who could afford to buy land could now become upwardly mobile and those who lost their rights to lands suffered downward mobility.

Activity 1

Observe the society in a suburban village near you. How far does social interaction confirm the westernization thesis. Make notes and compare with other students in study centre.

The introduction of new means of and communication served to dilute the restrictions and inhibitions associated with caste.

The British rule provided fresh avenues for social mobility altering the nature of pre-existing institutions such as schools and colleges which opened their doors to all castes and establishing new ones such as army, bureaucracy and law courts which recruited members on the basis of merit and hence provided ample source of mobility. Most of the new economic opportunities generated under the British rule were taken advantage of by the upper castes who availed of the educational facilities. This not to say that the lower castes were unaffected by them for example Bailey mentioned how the prohibition policy resulted in the relative prosperity of Ganjam and Board Distillers. Similar Srinivas cites the examples of Noniyas of Western U.P. and Kolis of Surat coast who benefited from new employment opportunities resulting from railway road and canal constructions. The telis (oilmen) all over eastern India became wealthy on account of larger market and trade for oil.

Westernization accelerated the mobility process in more ways than one. On one hand it was a desirable mechanism of attaining mobility, on the other, it generated mobility also because the 'westernized' become a model for emulation for the others.

It must be noted that westernization did not begin and end with British rule. It provided tracks which furthered and accelerated the mobility process. It set the ball rolling which gained further momentum after Independence. The independent India took over from the rationalistic egalitarian and humanitarian principles from the British and created further room for mobility.

i)   **New Legal System:** The British rule resulted in the political integration of the country into a single administrative unit with a uniform and homogeneous pattern of law and order grounded in the principles of rationalism, humanitarianism and egalitarianism. These laws were sometimes in contradiction with the pre-existing ones. For example under the traditional law punishment varied according to the caste of the person committing the offence, while the British laws treated everyone equally. The Caste Disabilities Removal Act and Abolition of Slavery were a great leap forward towards upliftment of lower castes. These laws were efforts in the direction of bridging the gap between lower and higher castes.

Box 30.01

The principles of universalism and egalitarianism which have guided the legal system in India after Independence have fostered social mobility among the lower castes. The new civil, penal and procedural law has done away with the inequities inherent in traditional law. Another important contribution of the new legal system was the creation of consciousness of positive rights. The abolition of untouchability and adoption of protective discrimination' policy have proved immensely beneficial for the lower rung of society.

The principle of universal adult franchise, adoption of Panchayati Raj System have altered the distribution of power the strengthening the hands of the weaker sections and restricting the appropriation of power by the upper castes. Similarly land reforms have been a motor force affecting mobility. Ceiling of holdings have proved a blow to the status and prestige of zamindars and boon for peasant cultivators who have attained ownership rights

ii)   **Adoption of Reforms:** Whenever efforts are made at reforming the society it generates opportunities for mobility. Buddhism, Jainism and later Sikhism which are the sects of Hindu religion have disregarded the rigidities associated with purity and pollution. They have advocated against the prevalent inequities and established a new egalitarian order within the sects. Similarly the Christian missionaries during the British rule proselytized the most oppressed castes they extricated the untouchables from a life of misery and exploitation and provided them education and health facilities. This enabled them to find new employment opportunities and attain higher status and prestige than before.

The educated liberal reformers such as Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Keshab Chandra Sen, Swami Vivekananda, Swami Dayananda in their endeavour to reform the society got abolished evil practices such as sati, child marriage, human sacrifice etc. To alleviate oppression and elevate the status of lower castes, they tried to infuse elements of rationality and modernity into Hindu religion. This they did by doing away with dogma and rituals associated with Hindu religion and wakening the clutches of Brahmins who they regarded as the oppressors. The new religious sects like Arya Samaj, Ramakrishna Mission, Brahm Samaj were egalitarian and were against disabilities and discrimination based on caste. They have played an important role in imparting education and modern knowledge and hence raising the status of their members.

Mahatma Gandhi and B.R. Ambedkar fought vociferously for the upliftment of the untouchables and their efforts bore fruits in the form of abolition of untouchability and the provision for protective discrimination. This has generated large scale upward social mobility among.

30.4 SECULARIZATION

The term "secularization" implies that what was previously regarded as religious ceases to be such and it also implies a process of differentiation in the various aspects of society, economy, polity, laws and morality becoming increasingly discrete in relation to each other. In the traditional set up the principle of purity and pollution was the prime determinant of the status, ranking, occupation and the general lifestyle. With increasing emphasis on rationality and education the notion of purity pollution weakened and today it is common the see people of different castes work together in factories or rub shoulders against each other in buses and trains and even dine together in restaurants. Together with this, the manner of dress in the modern society serves to blue caste distinctions. The new law based on universalism and the constitutional recognition of equality for all citizens and the declaration of India as a secular state has served to abolish discrimination based on caste.

30.4.1 Education

Education was the prerogative of the Brahamins and 'twice born' castes in the traditional set up. During the British rule educational institutions were opened to all and knowledge had a secular and rational basis. Acquisition of education opened avenues for individual and group mobility. Those trained in modern education could find jobs in army and bureaucracy which gave impetus to upward mobility. Besides this education instilled the minds of people with new principles of the justice, liberty and equality. The educated elite fought against discriminations on the basis of caste.

Education had such a deep impact on the pace and pattern of mobility that it created a new middle class. After independence , in an effort to uplift the SC, ST and OBC's through education, seats have been reserved for them in educational institutions. Since then these benefits have been appropriated by a small section. It has resulted in new cleavages among these sections. These cleavages are an aspect of mobility patterns based on those who have and do not have access to education.

30.4.2 SC's and OBC's

Under this section we will analyze two main modes of mobility i.e. **mobility through conflict** and mobility on account of **protective discrimination.**

For years the backward sections who were oppressed remained submissive and servile. But under British rule they improved their status and tried to legitmise it though Sanskritization. But simultaneously, the upper castes leaped forward by usurping new opportunities. The gap between the upper and lower castes widened and this they tired to bridge by laying claim to economic and political resources. These under privileged castes consolidated themselves against the upper castes in the form of Caste Sabhas the anti-Brahmin movement date back to 1870's in Maharasthtra and were led by dominant castes such as Kammas, Reddis, Nayars etc. The most significant movements were launched by Mahars under the leadership of B.R. Ambedkar. The other movements include those of 'Dalit Panthers" who united all sections of depressed people.

Activity 2

Talk to various strata of people and find out how far protective discrimination will help the SC's and OBC's Compare your notes with other students in the study centre.

These movements are illustrations for horizontal mobility and endeavours at vertical (upward) mobility. Pradeep Bose has identified two main mobility courses i.e. **movement for consolidation** and **movements for assertion.** In the former the caste associations tried to raise their status through census operations and petitioning the rulers. These moves were legitimized through Sanskritization and maintaining distance from equivalent castes. For example Kayasthas and Bhumihar in Bihar. In the other mobility course represented economic grievances and deprivations. These castes formed associations to alter the

existing political land economic relations. For example Yadavs, Kurmis and Keories illustrated this pattern.

The backward sections have found opportunities for upward mobility on account of 'protective discrimination' policies which involves reservation of seats in educational institutions, freeship and scholarships, Besides, there are reservations in jobs and legislative bodies. These welfare measures have benefited only a small section who have claims to much higher status than their counterparts of the same caste resulting in further divisions in the castes.

30.4.3 Industrialization and Urbanization

Industrialization accelerated the rate of social mobility in various ways. It provided employment opportunities which emphasized on achievement and qualifications rather than caste. In the factories jobs were hierarchically graded according to qualifications and experience rather that ritual ranking. These employment opportunities were open to all and proved a source of upward mobility for the landless labourers.

Industrialization brought with it a new work set up and work culture based on technical division of labour and uniform standards. In the factories workers from different castes worked together on same machines irrespective of considerations regarding purity and pollution.

Box 30.02

Most of the industries are city based and this generates migrations of work force to cities which results in urbanization. The urbanization induced by industrialization had far reaching ramifications on social mobility. In the city the lifestyles and residential patterns are no longer ordained by caste and have served to mellow down caste distinctions. The cosmopolitan set up is also responsible to inter caste marriages.

The mobility in cities is largely on account of achievement through education and new occupational avenues. Class as system of stratification in replacing caste. But caste divisions are also simultaneously crystallizing in the form of caste associations, federations etc. Urbanization has created greater avenues for both vertical and horizontal mobility. Horizontal mobility characterizes both caste and class in cities. Formation of caste associations is an example of former and job transfers is an illustration of the latter.

Check Your Progress 1

Tick the right answer in the following questions.

i)   Sanskritization refers to:

    a)   Speaking in Sanskrit

    b)   Spreading knowledge in Sanskrit

    c)   A process of mobility in caste.

ii) Westernization refers to:

    a)   Brain Drain

    b)   Changes brought about on account of British Rule.

    c)   Aping the western culture.

iii) What is 'Protective Discrimination'?

    a)   Policy of reservation of seats in educational institutions, legislative and jobs for weaker sections

    b)   Policy for the upliftment of the upper classes.

    c)   Oppression and exploitation of the untouchables.

iv) Tick the factors which have generated mobility in caste:

a) Education

b) Legal Reforms

c) Industrialization

d) Urbanization.

**Those at the lower rungs of society often have to travel uncomfortably.
They also have low social mobility**
Courtesy : B. Kiranmayi

30.5 CLASS AND SOCIAL MOBILITY

We will now discuss the significance of class and social mobility below.

30.5.1 Significance of Class Mobility

Classes are a very significant and pervasive dimension of stratification and the analysis of mobility along class lines is of crucial significance not only as an end in itself but also on account of its ramifications on other social processes. The extent of mobility has been used as a measure of the "openness" of industrial society and high mobility rates are an indication of the society being characterized by achievement rather than ascription and that it is meritocratic where individuals reap regards on the basis of their personal qualities rather than through inherited wealth and positions.

Class mobility is a crucial factor for the understanding of class formation. Also, study of class mobility can provide indications of life chances of the members of society i.e. the impact of one's class of origin on life chances. Besides this, the responses and reactions of the those undergoing mobility are important for analyzing social stability and expansion. Together with these the extent of social mobility has been used as measure of "openness" of industrial society and high mobility rates are an indication of society being characterized by achievement rather than ascription.

The most crucial aspect of class formation. A large number of scholars have shown keen interest in this area of study. Karl Marx was concerned about the relationship between class formation and action on the hand and the extend of mobility between class positions on the other. He was of the view that proletarianization was inimical to the process of class formation. Also in advanced capitalist societies, the expansion of middle class in based on recruitment from proletariat. Marx also recognized that a certain degree of immobility is seen as an indispensable prerequisite for the emergence of class consciousness. Similarly, Weber too emphasized on the significance of social mobility for class formation. Weber recognized immobility as a chief determinant for social and cultural identity of a class.

Westergaard and Resler reiterate the crucial part played in shaping of class structure as a whole by the division between those who own the capital and those who do not. They also recognise the importance of mobility and lack of it as a factor influencing peoples responses to their class situation, class consciousness and class organization. Like Westergaard and Resler, Giddens too visualizes mobility as process of central importance to class formation. But for Giddens, its importance lies not only in the development of class consciousness and organisation as classes for themselves, it also extends back as recognizable social phenomena i.e. as 'classes in themselves'. Giddens is of the opinion that greater the restrictions on mobility i.e. greater the immobility, greater the chances for formation of distinct identifiable classes in terms of reproduction of life chances, cohesion and class solidarity. Similarly in a society with constant flux and greater mobility rate, class distinctions are blurred. Mobility is a basic source of class 'structuration' i.e. it is the rate and pattern of mobility that will determine the extent to which classes may be recognized as collectivities of individual or families occupying similar locations. Secondly, the extent of mobility may be taken as significant indicator for prevailing modes of class action. Parkin has argued that class conflict is to an important degree expressed in the formation of strategies of exclusion adopted by advantaged groups. Mobility rates and patterns serve to reveal the effectiveness of exclusion and potential success for solidarism.

30.5.3 Industrialization and Mobility

In the analysis of mobility processes and patterns that term class in not used strictly in the sense used by Marx or by Weber. Rather class is viewed in terms of occupational groupings because occupation is an aspect of one's merit, education and qualifications and it determines one's status, prestige and salary which is turn influences the consumption patterns pattern and life chances.

Industrialization has introduced a lot of changes not only in the economic sphere but in all realms of society. Industrial societies are referred to as 'open' societies where the opportunities for mobility are available in plenty. The high rates of mobility in industrial societies is attributed to rapid economic change which necessitates occupational geographical and social mobility to make optimum and efficient use of available talent. It is on this account that Lipset and Zettergerg feel that industrialism creates uniform mobility patterns. Duncan and Blua emphasise on a number of factors generated by industrialization that have a bearing on mobility patterns. They are of the opinion that industrialization is connected with growing rationalism which accounts for universalistic criteria for selection and upgrading occupational division of labour, weakening of Kinship and neighborhood ties.

The emphasis on achievement as a criteria for selection in industrialization has generated both upward and downward mobility. While it is clear that upward mobility is the result of the recognisation given to merit, downward mobility is the result of lack of inheritable positions of the elites.

Industrialization affects the occupational patterns. In every industrialized or industrialising society there is an increase the proportion for professional official managerial and white - collar positions and decline in the proportion of unskilled labour jobs which create a surge of upward mobility. More and more people are required to manage industry, for administration and for distribution of goods and services.

30.5.4 Education and Mobility

The impetus on achievement and qualifications as determinants of one's merit has resulted in the increasing emphasis on education and training to obtain them. Education has attained a key role in facilitating mobility especially in the industrial societies. The increasing specialization and division of labour presuppose the existence of qualified personnel who can handle specialised tasks. These specialists whether in the field of industry laws, or medicine are trained and educated in specialised branches of knowledge. These educational and training facilities are open to all in the industrial societies. In the traditional set up, it was imparted to a very small number of people in the guilds which then restricted mobility. Education has been used as a route to attain upward mobility. Educational attainment is a major determinant of career mobility and deeply affects the patterns of inter-generational and intra-generational mobility discussed below.

30.5.5 Intergenerational and Intragenerational Mobility

It refers to mobility or shift (upward or downward) vis-à-vis one's parents' class. It a son or a daughter of a supervisor becomes an unskilled labour it would **be downward mobility** and if the same person's son or daughter becomes a manager it would amount to **upward mobility.**

One of the first major studies on inter-generational mobility was conducted in England and Wales by David Glass in 1949. It was found that intergenerational mobility was quite high and about two-third of the persons interviewed were in a different occupational category from that of their father. Most of the mobility was short range i.e. people were found in categories close to their father. Upward mobility was more common than downward mobility and was mostly concentrated in the middle levels of the class structure.

Another significant study was conducted in Western Europe and U.S. It was found that cross-class mobility was about 30% for all western industrial societies and that most of the mobility was short range. They found that inter-generational mobility links the effect of family background on the occupational and social placement of individuals. Educational qualifications have a bearing on mobility patterns. Those with higher qualifications were found in non-manual occupations. Also, with similar educational attainments, some of manual workers entered in manual jobs while those of non-manual workers entered manual jobs. Only college education enabled some manual workers to enter in non-manual jobs. According to Lipset and Bendix, poverty, lack of education, lack of exposure are other factors that affect mobility.

Later studies by Hauzer and Hout have confirmed that short range mobility is greater than long range and that mobility is more likely in the middle of socio-economic hierarchy than at its peak. Intra-generational Mobility i.e. where the individual changes social position during his/ her career. For example a clerk may be promoted to managerial cadre during his/ her career. It has been found that work like mobility is generally less than inter-generational mobility its degree depends on the first job. Work life mobility decreases with age i.e. it does not increase much after the age of 35 years. Although it is not the rule, yet worklife mobility is largely upward. It has been found that intra-generational mobility is also linked to educational qualifications and more specific the educational qualifications and more specific the educational training less the scope for mobility. According to Lipset and Bendix self employment is one of the few means of the acquiring higher positions and mobility among manual workers.

30.6 SOCIAL MOBILITY AND CLASSES IN INDIA

Very often it is expressed that classes in India are a result of social mobility induced by British rule in India. This statement is far from true because classes did exist in pre-British times. However, it cannot be denied that in the traditional set up caste system was more predominant system of stratification. In the present set up classes and castes have co-existed as dynamic systems and have interacted to create a complex and multi-dimensional empirical reality. It is only for analytical purposes that the following different class strata are being identified.

In the traditional set up load could be brought or sold and was a source of great prestige. During the British rule land became a saleable commodity and it had serious repercussion on the nature of agrarian relations and on socio mobility.

The introduction of land reforms in the 1950 which aimed at abolishing the intermediaries, such as the Zamindars and providing land to the tiller generated vertical mobility - both upward and downward. While some tenants could buy surplus land and become upwardly mobile, others were thrown out by the Zamindars who claimed to be the cultivators. This resulted in the pauperization of the landless labourers, land reforms were also a source of downward mobility for the Zamindars. They lost their right to extract taxes and share from the cultivators which was a source of their wealth. They were left with fragmented holdings which could not support their feudal lifestyle. With the introduction of legal measures such as introduction of panchayats and universal adult franchise, they felt uncomfortable for their influence and power waned.

Green Revolution programme launched by the government in 1960's has also altered the pattern of inequalities in the villages. The emphasis of this programme was on the use of High Yielding variety seeds and use of fertilizers for increasing productivity. But these seeds and fertilizers also required other basic infrastractural facilities such as tubewells for regular water supply. These along with other requirements cannot be afforded by small peasants. A new class of **'Progressive Farmers'** have come to characterize the villages under the Green Revolution Programme. They have large land holdings and can afford to invest in resources like tractors, pumpsets, power threshers etc. These progressive farmers are entrepreneurs who invest in land to reap profits. They are a distinct class who are separated from the small farmers and from the agricultural labour whom they employ Green revolution has thus further reinforced social inequality.

The increasing prosperity of the rich landlords at the cost of pauperization of the workers has generated conflict and strife in the agrarian set up. Political mobilization of the agrarian classes on an all India basis started during the freedom struggle. This continues even today, although the spread and intensity of mobilization varies across regions, classes and time periods.

It is now clear that a large number of processes have influenced the nature of agrarian classes and mobility among them. They have been measures and mechanism for the formation of new castes and the upward and downward mobility of the existing ones.

30.6.2 Social Mobility in Urban Classes

Urbanization is not a new phenomena for Indian society. During the pre-British period, there were a large number of cities with a district pattern of ranking and administration. After industrialization, the resultant urbanward migration has been rapid and enormous. This has grossly affected the nature of the social classes. There are four major classes that can be identified in an urban set up. These include:

i) **The capitalists/bourgeoisie:** The Britishers introduced modern industrialization in India. The setting up of industries, free trade and new markets gave impetus to trade and commerce. The traders became wealthier and took to industry. It is noteworthy that even today a large number of industrialists hail from trading castes and communities such as Marwaries in Rajasthan, Gujarati Banias and jains in the west, Chettiars and the South. The merchant class was the first to become capitalist. Certain artisans and craftsmen who availed of the new economic opportunities also set up small scale factories. The Jatavs of Agra studied by Lynch have taken to shoe manufacturing some landowning castes too become industrialists, these include Patidars of Gujarat, Naidus and Reddies of Andhra Pradesh.

Industry has expanded immensely after independence and diversified into all fields ranging from iron and steel, textiles, automobiles, electronics to aeronautics. The class of industrialists has become economically and numerically stronger.

ii) **Entrepreneurs Traders and Shopkeepers:** Urban society always comprised of entrepreneurs who included traders and shopkeepers. These classes have flourished and expanded with the growth of cities and towns and cashed on the rising demands of new goods and services in them. This class would include entrepreneurs running restaurants, marriage bureaus, video libraries and other like property dealers, grocers, laundered, dry cleaners, vegetable renders who are a direct link between suppliers of goods and service and consumers. A large number of people have become wealthy by joining this rung of class structure in the cities while some have diversified and expanded in their traditional occupations and arts such as Dhabi's taking to dry clearing and barbers opening beauty parlours. Other have established absolutely new enterprises and other consumer durables, travel agencies etc.

iii) **Professional Classes:** This class has undergone vast changes in its nature and complexion on account of the changes introduced under the British rule and after independence. The British required a large body of professionals for various purposes. They felt it was cheaper to educate Indians for the same. Hence a large number of educational institutions were established to train professionals. This class included doctors, lawyers, managers, bureaucrats scientists, technocrats etc.

With the expansion of tertiary sector, this class has expanded both in size and prestige. Even though it is a highly heterogeneous class comprising of those ranging from clerks to C.A.'s, Babus to bureaucrats, yet one factor that characterizes them all is that they have achieved their status through qualifications that befit their positions.

The members of this class have made use of education and training to attain their positions. Another common feature of this class is that a large majority of them are salaried employees of state or private sector, they are neither direct rulers nor economic producers like industrialist of peasants.

iv) **Working Class:** Studies have shown that the earliest working class population comprised of pauperized agricultural labour who were landless or impoverished peasantry who had mortgaged their land. The later joined the labour force on a short term basis as **'target workers'** to earn a fixed sum of money to be able to get back their land, Others joined as seasonal workers in search of work during slack periods in agriculture. These workers worked in factories, textile mills. Plantations, and in informal sectors what characterized them all was abject living conditions in slums.

With the expansion of industry in recent decades, working class has expanded and diversified into various industrial set ups in all ports of the country. They have organized themselves into unions to enter into better bargaining positions with their employers. These trade unions have political affixations and have raised their leaders to position of power land prestige and mediators between management workers. The workers have provisions for both intra and inter-generational mobility. They can opt for change in the industrial unite they work for, on the basis of pay structure and work conditions. Besides vertical mobility, the workers also depict horizontal mobilization in terms of labour unions, clubs associations etc.

Check Your Progress 2

Tick the right answer in the following questions.

1) Inter-generational 'Mobility refers to:
   a) Mobility during a persons worklife.
   b) Mobility on account of Migration.
   c) Shift of mobility (upward or downward) vis-à-vis one's parents

2) The factors responsible for mobility in the agrarian set up in India are:
   a) Land Reforms
   b) Green Revolution Programme
   c) White-Collar Jobs
   d) a) and b)

3)   The four major classes that are found in Indian cities are:

   a)   Bourgeoisie, Entrepreneurs, Kisans and

   b)   Bourgeoisie, Entrepreneurs, Professionals and Zamindars

   c)   Bourgeoisie, Entrepreneurs, Professionals and working class.

30.7   LET US SUM UP

It can be noted from the above discussion on social mobility that even in so called 'closed' system of stratification, there is constant effort among members to improve their social positions through the means available to them. As we have seen in India, some of the mechanisms and progresses involved in social mobility were culture specific as is the case of Sanskritization. The new avenues for mobility provided by education, urbanization and industrialization were quickly united for advantageous shifts in hierarchy.

Industrialization and urbanization have played at vital role in generating mobility both in the caste and class societies by emphasizing on the role of achievement and skill acquired through education. These twin processes have widened the horizons the horizons for vertical and horizontal mobility.

In India caste mobility and class hierarchy co-exists, intermingle and have resulted in a complex and multi-dimensional pattern of stratification and mobility where the two may or may not be co-terminous.

30.8   KEY WORDS

Sanskritization	:	It is a process of social mobility in caste whereby a low caste may change its customs, lifestyle, rituals and ideology in the direction of high castes mainly Brahmins and Kshatriyas. Emulation is the main process involved here.
Westernization	:	It is a term used to describe the changes that came about as a result of British rule in India. These changes include those at the level of technology, institutions, ideology etc. Westernizations opened new doors for mobility at the level of individuals and castes.

30.9   FURTHER READINGS

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30.10   SPECIMEN ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

i)   c

ii)   b

iii)   a

iv)   a, b,c and d

Check Your Progress 2

i)   c

ii)   b

iii)   c

UNIT 31 FACTORS AND FORCES OF SOCIAL MOBILITY

Structure

31.0 OBJECTIVES

After studying this unit, you should be able to:

- sum up the factors affecting mobility; and

- present the different views on this

31.1 INTRODUCTION

Social mobility is one of the most researched areas of social stratification. You have so far seen what is meant by mobility in different societies. In this section, we will look at some of the factors that have been identified as influencing social mobility. Certain things must be borne in mind before we begin this discussion. Firstly, no theory of social mobility (for, when we are talking of factors of social mobility, we implicitly have a theory in mind) can be separated from a theory of stratification, or of how society is structured more generally. In other words, the study of social mobility cannot be separated from social placement or recruitment. Secondly, while the following discussion will focus on factors affecting social mobility, it must not be regarded as a passive, dependent variable. Social mobility, or the denial of it, can itself have far reaching consequences for society and social stratification more specifically. Towards the end of this discussion, this will be touched upon in a little more detail. Lastly, there are differences among scholars on what are seen as the factors affecting social mobility. In this section, we will take a brief look at some of the different ways in which the questions of mobility has been dealt with.

While it is true that social mobility has existed in all societies, even the most 'closed' societies such as the caste system in India, industrialization, it has been argued has significantly increased the rates of social mobility. Consequently, much of the mobility research has focussed on the study of social mobility in industrial societies, and the factors affecting mobility there.

One of the pioneers in the study of social mobility is the Russian sociologist, Sorokin. According to him, there are certain primary factors that affect mobility in all societies, and secondary factors that are specific to particular societies at particular times. That is, has argued that no society can be regarded as completely closed, denying any mobility, nor can it be completely open, as there are always barriers to mobility. He listed four primary factors, namely the demographic factor, the abilities of parents and children, the faulty distribution of individuals in social positions, and most importantly, the change of the environment. Let us now discuss each of these in turn.

31.2 THE DEMOGRAPHIC FACTOR

One factor that affects mobility in all societies is the demographic factor. In general, it has been observed that the birth rate of higher groups is lower than that of lower groups. Even though the death rates of the lower groups are higher, the net reproduction rate is such that there is usually some room at the top for members of lower groups. Perray, for e. g., found that out of 215 noble lineages in a certain region of France in 12000 only 149 were left a century later. In general, he found the life span of such lineages to be only 3 to 4 generations. They were then replaced by lineages of non noble birth, or by collateral lineages. Similarly, Alex Inkeles, in his study of stratification in the Soviet Union in the middle of this century, attributes the very high rates of mobility there partly to the loss of lives in the war, necessitating a high degree of mobility. The other important reason, of course, is rapid industrialization.

This is true not only in terms of higher and lower groups, but also in terms of urban and rural populations. The latter usually have higher net reproduction rates. Despite this, urban populations have been growing much more rapidly than rural ones. This is due largely to migration, rather than due to a natural increase in population.

> **Box 31.01**
>
> The demographic factor has a bearing on social mobility. Today advances in medical care and other factors have caused an increase in life expectancy. One consequence of this is a rise in the retirement age, and the consequent loss of vacancies for new recruits. From another angle, society has a larger pool of human resources to deploy, because the working age now extends longer. On another front this has caused the problem of looking after the aged, a problem which has been there for decades in the western societies.

There a concomitant of this has been the emergence of old age homes, hospitals for looking after terminally ill patients, etc. From the mobility angle, this means that new kind of vacancies are created which must then be filled.

Thus the demographic factor definitely has a bearing on social mobility, but is itself not a purely biological phenomenon, as social factors in general have a bearing on demography. Mandelbaum and others have for example written on how cultural factors such as son preference have affected population structures

31.3 TALENT AND ABILITY

Talent and ability as factors making for social mobility have been discussed in different ways by different people. Sorokin notes that usually, abilities of parents and children do not match. In ascriptive societies, children may not always be as suited to their inherited status positions as their parents. Many ways are suggested by Sorokin to get around this problem. Popular pressure may force individuals to vacate positions they are unsuited for. The incumbents may themselves preempt this by vacating their positions and so on. Lipset and Bendix state that there are always new supplies of talent which must be absorbed somewhere or the other. Even in societies with inherited status positions, there were always opportunities for talented individuals to be upwardly mobile. For example under feudalism's first age, Bloch shows now individuals with military prowess could rise. Similarly, Bergel, in his study of social stratification points out that even in the rigidly

hierarchical feudal system, there was opportunity for persons of low birth, even from among the bonded, to rise into favour, the 'ministeriales.' Closer to home, the bestowing of a jagir was a sign of appreciation for services rendered. Mobility of this kind, Turner has called 'sponsored mobility', contrasted to 'contest mobility', although these terms were not coined with respect to pre-industrial forms of mobility.

While the absorption of new talent might be regarded as problematic in societies with ascriptive status positions, even in societies that are regarded 'open', this may not prove to be easy. That is to say, an achievement oriented society may not really be as open as it is thought to be. In this context, it may be relevant to briefly mention the functionalist theory of Davis and Moore. In substance, this theory states that positions in society are filled on the basis of talent and training of individuals for the different social positions. The most able are attracted to the most important positions by the differential reward attached to them. In this way, society is able to use its best human resources in the most important positions. Thus stratification is a device by which social placement and motivation takes place.

Now while this theory has an appeal in terms of neatness and tightness, very fundamental criticisms can be and have been leveled against it. In the context of what we are at present discussing, namely the abilities of individuals, critics have pointed out that it is naïve to assume that even the 'open' societies, much less the more 'closed' ones, allocated individuals to positions on the basis of ability. Class of origin, if not overt forms of inequality such as caste or race, bring about a situation where there is a reproduction of inequality generation after generation. Inequality of opportunity means that even able individuals from the less privileged groups will not be able to rise. We can also mention here the satire on "The Rise of the Meritocracy" by Michael Young, where he effectively debunks the myth that the 'open' societies are really responsive to talent and ability. Various empirical studies of mobility in western industrial societies have also shown that at large amount of that mobility recorded is ' mass mobility', that is mobility across the manual/ non manual divide. The class of origin still matters in that the topmost positions and the lowest positions are largely self recruiting. Therefore talent as a factor has a limited role in explaining mobility.

31.3.1 Elite Theories

Talent and ability as the main reason for why individuals come to occupy certain positions was the chief argument of Vilfredo Pareto, one of the elite theorists. He contended that over time generations lose their innate qualities, or persons from lower strata might exhibit those qualities, and thus a change in the personnel of the elite would take place. "History is the graveyard of aristocracies," and Pareto. This was his famous theory of the circulation of elites.

This circulation in Pareto's theory was of two types. In the first, talented individuals from lower strata enter higher strata. At other times, when the abilities of higher groups are called into question, it is likely that groups from lower strata challenge and overthrow the supremacy of such groups. In other words, both individual and group mobility is possible. Max Gluckman has referred to this as 'repetitive change', in the context of changes in African chiefdoms. Of course, it may also happen that such a change does not take place within the confines of a given system, but ends in changing the system itself, i.e, the structure of positions itself. Maurice Duverger has referred to this as the difference between conflicts 'within the regime' and conflicts ' over the regime.'

31.4 CHANGE IN THE SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Of all the factors that Sorokin deemed relevant, the changes that take place in the social environment is the most important. Indirectly in fact, this can influence the demographic factor (for e.g. advances in medicine lengthening life expectancy), as well the talents of individuals (expansion of educational opportunities may allow the discovery of talent, for e.g.)

A major factor for mobility is thus social change. Changes of various kinds, economic, social, political, legal, technological, and other, have an effect on social mobility. These macro processes of change which affect not only mobility, but other aspects of society as well. One of the important economic changes that have been unidentified by sociologists as having an impact on social mobility is industrialization.

31.4.1 Industrialization and Mobility

Much of the theorizing on mobility has been concerned with the relationship of industrialization with social mobility. One of the leading arguments in this field, associated with Lipset and Bendix is that industrialization leads to an increase in mobility over pre industrial rates, and that once all societies have reached a certain level of industrialization, there is a similarity in their rates of social mobility. A different but related thesis is the Convergence thesis, which has been propounded by Kerr and others, that all industrial societies converge towards a common pattern of mobility among other things, like overall patterns of stratification.

Let us discuss first the theory of Lipset and Bendix. In a famous comparative study of a number of European countries and the USA, they sought to test two main hypotheses. First, that once all societies have reached a certain level of industrialization, they experience higher rates of mobility than pre industrial societies, Second, the common perception that the USA offers significantly greater opportunities for mobility than the countries of Europe. Their data confirmed the first hypothesis but not the second. Lipset and Bendix, list five main points, the factors of social mobility in industrial societies. These are:

i)   Changes in the number of available vacancies

ii) Different rates of fertility

iii) Changes in the rank accorded to occupations

iv) Changes in the number of inheritable status positions

v)   Changes in legal restrictions pertaining to potential opportunities.

Some of these, such as the different rates of fertility have already been discussed. Let us discuss the other.

31.4.2 Available Vacancies

It is commonly agreed that with industrialization, there is a shift in the occupational structure from Agriculture, to Industry, and later on, the Services. With the shift to industry, there is a sudden spurt in economic activity, an increase in the number of positions available in society. This has been well documented in numerous cases. The migration of people to cities from rural areas in order to work at the new factory jobs is one form of mobility. This has both geographical aspects, as well as a vertical aspect, as usually, city jobs are ranked higher in prestige hierarchies than rural ones. Other examples, can also be cited. New white collar positions also come into existence, as for example in the computer profession. All of these result in the expansion in the number of available vacancies. In this way then industrialization acts as a major factor generating social mobility.

31.4.3 Legal Restrictions

Changes in the political and legal framework can also be an important source of social mobility. The traditional caste order in India assigned individuals to traditional occupations, and certain occupations such as the learned occupations were legally or customarily forbidden to people of low birth. The democratization of political systems, with the concept of all citizens having equal rights under the law, removed barriers to social mobility. At the same time, the introduction of measures such as universal franchise, Panchayati Raj, etc. enabled persons hitherto denied political rights to enter into the

political arena. Anand Chakravarti's study of village Devisar in Rajasthan, shows how changes in the wider political system were used for social mobility. Other examples abound.

Related to this is the fact that with industrialization and its demand for skills hitherto not known, it is unlikely that positions will come to be occupied on the basis of traditional specializations. Thus there is a reduction in the number of inheritable positions, and far larger increase in the number of positions filled through criteria of achievement. In this the education system play a major role. It is not the place of this section to discuss the relation of education to stratification, which is done elsewhere in your course, but this is directly related to the increase in non ascriptive positions.

31.4.4 Rank and Position

Mobility can also occur without any change in an individual's position, if the ranking of positions changes. For example, in the USA, one study shows that government positions have enhanced their prestige in the fifties compared to the twenties. Therefore government servants have experienced upward mobility without changing their jobs. This could, of course, lead to downward mobility as well. Due to reranking some occupations would come to be less important in the society and economy than formerly, and thus those occupying those positions would be demoted.

31.4.5 The Convergence Hypothesis

A well known and much debated hypothesis regarding the relationship of industrialization and stratification is the Convergence Hypothesis. This was most clearly articulated by Kerr and others who stated that in today's world, the fact of industrialization was a common denominator which would impel all industrialized societies towards a common future society which they called a pluralistic industrialist society. These societies would have common patterns of stratification as well as common patterns of mobility. Mobility would be high, as the demands of industrialization would necessitate the free and easy mobility of persons from one position to another. This was a functionalist argument in one sense. They also implied that there would be a continuous increase in mobility rates over time.

The argument of Kerr and others has been comprehensively criticized by Goldthorpe. He cities the work of Miller, who, using more data than Lipset and Bendix, shows that in fact there is a lack of convergence between the rates of mobility of industrial societies. This shows that perhaps it is not industrialization per se, but also other factors, such as cultural factors, the education system etc., which also have a bearing on social mobility. Goldthorpe himself holds the view that it is the political and ideological differences that are important between the socialist and capitalist societies, which Kerr and Company include under one umbrella category of 'industrial society'.

Activity 1

Converse with other students and teachers regarding the   thesis. To what extent can it be upheld? Note down your findings.

There is a superficial similarly between the argument of Kerr and that of Lipset and Bendix, but in fact the latter's argument as already discussed simply states that after a certain level of industrialization, there is a rise in mobility rates. A continuous increase is not predicted, nor also a convergence. We may also note here that Sorokin did not predict either a continuous increase in mobility rates over time, nor did he predict a fall. He in fact believed that industrialised societies are not completely open, nor are pre-industrial ones completely closed. If at all, he held to a cyclical view of the rates of mobility, which would rise and fall.

31.5 DOWNWARD MOBILITY

So far we have only been looking a how various kinds of changes have enabled people to

become upwardly mobile, however this is defined. The same argument has another side as well. Just as industrialization is seen as increasing rates of upward mobility, it also brings about a great deal of downward mobility. Downward mobility can occur because certain occupations have lost in prestige through a reranking of positions, and thus their occupants have moved down. In a number of cases however, it may not merely be a case of demotion, but rather, that those very positions cease to exist. So this would be a case of structural (downward) mobility, rather than circulation (downward) mobility if such terms can be used. For example the coming of polyester and other synthetic fabrics in India has drastically reduced the demand for cotton. Coupled with a fall in global demand for Indian short staple cotton, many cotton farmers in India have had to face ruin. Some have turned to other crops, others to other occupations, and some have even committed suicide. With the coming of modern household gadgets for example, traditional occupations such as the washing of clothes can no longer employ so many people. What is of concern is not so much the loss of traditional jobs, which may have been quite demeaning to human dignity as in the case of the tasks performed by the lower castes in India, as that if no alternative • sources of livelihood are offered, large sections of people may sink deeper into poverty. Unemployment therefore is a consequence or aspect of downward mobility.

Check Your Progress 1

1) Explain what are 'elite theories' in about five lines.

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2) Describe the importance of the social environment in about five lines.

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3) Convergence Hypothesis implies:
   (Tick the right answer)

   i)   low mobility rates

   ii)   high mobility rates

   iii) no change in mobility rates

   iv)   increase in rates of mobility

The Locomotive links the society and nation state. There are different
compartments and 'classes' for travellers
Courtesy : Kiranmayi Bushi

31.6 BARRIERS TO MOBILITY

Another aspect that is often ignored by the proponents of the view that industrialisation
provides avenues of upward mobility, are the barriers to mobility. We have already
mentioned during the discussion on talent as a factor of mobility, that industrial societies
are not as open as they are made out to be. Some writers suggest that today the systematic
class inequalities have given way to 'case' inequalities. There is also the view that capitalist
societies are no longer as inegalitarian as Marx had predicted they would become, and that
there is a reduction in inequalities. It is doubtful whether this is true of the western
countries today, but it is certainly not true of countries like India, where groups of various
kinds have systematically been denied access to things that are valued. It is true that many
of the occupations today are filled on the basis of formal qualifications acquired though the
education system; however, it would be wrong to assume that all have equal access to
education, or to education of uniform quality. Thus though legal barriers to mobility may
have been removed, social inequalities themselves prove to be barriers to mobility.

31.7 THE MARXIST VIEW

At this point, it may be relevant to discuss the Marxist view, as many of the critical
viewpoints may be directly or indirectly derived from it. The Marxist view of stratification
and mobility is based on the class nature of society. Although Marxist view of these
matters. Marx posited that as capitalism (he would not have used the term industrial
society) developed, there would be a tendency towards polarization. By this he meant that
the stratification system would come to resemble a pyramid, with the masses of people
bunched at the bottom.) Even the intermediate groups such as the petty bourgeoisie, small
landowners and others would in course of time find themselves demoted. Thus if at all
mobility was a feature of capitalism, it was downward, rather than upward. The result of
this polarization and pauperization would be the overthrow of the capitalist system and the
creation of socialism.

> **Box 31.02**
>
> Marxist writers have further developed the theme of proletarianization. Given the growth in service sector occupations, they have sought to see whether the lower rungs of white collar occupations can in fact be included into the proletariat, and have concluded that they can be. Notable amongst those who have argued thus are Braverman and others, although other Marxists have disagreed. Outside the Marxist fold, there are those like Dahrendorf and others who argue that the changes that have taken place since the analysis of Marx have been so far reaching, that today's societies can no longer even be called capitalist, but rather, post-capitalist.

Therefore, from the Marxist perspective, the factors causing mobility are those that are basic to the system of capitalism, and furthermore, the opportunities for upward mobility are negligible, and the bulk of mobility is downward.

31.8 SUBJECTIVE FACTORS

The foregoing discussion has been about the various objective factors affecting social mobility, as seen from the different perspectives. Let us now look at the subjective factors, namely those factors that motivate people to be mobile. Here we are obviously talking about aspirations for upward mobility. In many cases, of course, mobility takes place involuntarily, as many happen in the case of a re ranking occupations. But given individuals in similar positions, what motivates one to strive for mobility and another not to. Let us look therefore at some of the subjective factors of social mobility. We can assume safely that individuals usually with to be upwardly rather than downwardly mobile. Veblen's book, The Theory of the Leisure Class allows us to infer that every stratification system is automatically a source of mobility. This is because every individual's estimation of himself or herself is largely based on other's evaluation of them. And individuals will always seek to be well thought of in the eyes of their fellow men. Thus they will aspire to those positions which society deems to be worthwhile. The process of Sanskritization shows how it is in fact a commitment to the values of the caste system that is the source of aspiration for mobility.

> **Activity 2**
>
> Try to locate the subjective factor in people you know have had any kind of social mobility. Discuss your findings with other students in the study centre.

But as Beteille points out, while the upwardly aspiring groups wish to be included among the higher groups, once they arrive there, they try to retain their exclusivity. Thus in the case of the caste system both processes, those of inclusion and exclusion paradoxically coexist. This idea is similar to that of social closure, used by Weber.

But to return to the main argument, we may generalise by saying that wherever there exist systems of values, commitment to those values will automatically generate motivations for mobility.

Merton has also written about the importance of the reference group in determining social behaviour. He states that the individual who seeks to be mobile has as a reference group a non membership group, rather than his own group. Thus the norms which be adopts are deviant so far as his own groups is concerned. This process he terms "anticipatory socialization". Those individuals who for a variety of reasons are at the periphery of their social groups may undergo such anticipatory socialization. The process of Sanskritization can once again be used as an example of this, where a caste adopts the life style and customs of a higher caste, and over a period of time strives to be recognized as higher in the hierarchy.

31.9 SOCIAL MOBILITY AND SOCIAL CHANGES

In the discussion so far social mobility has been treated as a dependent variable, whereas social structure is the independent one. However, as the brief mention of Marx above shows, mobility, or the lack of it can itself be a source of the system. Thus instead of a discussion in terms of objectives factors versus subjective factors as distinct and separate, one should link structure and agency, and look at their interrelation. Giddens criticizes conventional discussions of mobility which look at classes as fixed categories which can be populated by different people at different times. Schumpeter for example likens classes to buses, which have different passengers at different times. The problem here is two-fold. Firstly, one cannot separate a discussion of mobility from factors that structure class relations in general, and secondly, the very process of mobility from factors that structure class relations in general, and secondly, the very process of mobility can bring about changes in the system of stratification.

Merton's work on social structure and anomie, sheds more light on this. He differentiates between socially accepted goals and means of achieving these goals. The goals refer to the values of society. Those who accept the goals and the means of achieving them are Conformists. But there may be those who reject the goals, i.e. The values, as well as the means of achieving them. These people may either retreat from social life, Retreatism, or may rebel against society, Rebellion. In the latter case, they may, as referred to earliest, postulate a new structure of society, rather than seek advancement within the given structure.

When a discontent with the existing system leads to change of the system, this itself will throw up new positions and therefore mobility. Therefore it is difficult to clearly separate the objective and subjective factors into watertight compartments. Social structure may itself generate anomie.

Check Your Progress 2

1) Marx has posited that in capitalism.

    i)   these would be pauperization

    ii)   there would be low mobility

    iii) there would be a tendency for polarization

    iv)   all of the above

2) Describe some of subjective factors is social mobility in about five lines.

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31.10 LET US SUM UP

This discussion has tried to present some of the main macro structural as well as more subjective factors that affect social mobility. At the same time, we have tried to take a somewhat critical look at the factors generating social mobility. An attempt has also been made to present differing viewpoints to enable student to develop their own critical faculties. A brief reading list is provided for students who with to go further. Unfortunately there is no a comparable amount of empirical work on mobility in India as there is on the developed countries of the west.

31.11 KEY WORDS

Convergence	:	A theory which stresses advent of a common industrial society as capitalism progresses.
Demographic	:	Pertaining to population, its growth rates and various other aspects such as life expectancy
Elite	:	The strata of society which has all the benefits of wealth and property.
Subjective	:	That which depends upon inter-person attitudes

31.12 FURTHER READINGS

Goldthorpe, J.H. (1967) Social Stratification in Industrial Society, in Bendix and Lipset, ed, *Class, Status and Power*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Lipset, Seymour and Bendix, Reinhard, (1959). *Social Mobility in Industrial Society*, Berkeley, University of California Press.

31.13 SPECIMEN ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

1) According to Pareto, talent and ability is the chief reason why individuals occupy certain positions. Pareto argued that is was innate superiority that created the elite. Yet it was possible that the elite might lose their abilities, or persons from lower strata can exhibit those qualities and thus a change in the elite could take place.

2) Sorokin is of the view that changes in the social environment lead to charges in the demographic factors such as life expectancy, and the talents of the individuals. Thus a change in social environment is a major factor in creating social mobility. Changes of different kinds like the economic, social, political, legal, technological all affect mobility.

Check Your Progress 2

1) (iii)

2) Every stratification system according to Weber is a source of mobility. This is because self-evaluation depends on the other evaluation of oneself. A good example of the subjective factors also, is the process of Sanskritization in which it is commitment to the caste system which is the source of aspiration for mobility.

UNIT 32 CONSEQUENCES OF SOCIAL MOBILITY

Structure

32.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit deals·with the social, political and social-psychological consequences of social mobility. After studying this unit, you would be able to understand :

● meaning of social mobility will become clearer;

● consequences of social mobility for all the three major classes–the lower class, middle class and upper class respectively;

● consequences of social mobility for the society as a whole-image of the social order;

● impact of social mobility on social groups or class–the political consequences; and

● effect of social mobility on an individual living in a modern industrial society–the social psychological consequences.

32.1 INTRODUCTION

As you must have already read that 'social stratification' refers to a system of ranked statuses by which the members of a society are placed in higher and lower positions. These positions or statuses are not always fixed. There are possibilities of movements of individuals or groups in either direction, upward or downward from the given rank. This upward or downward movement in known as Vertical mobility. They are usually referred to as upward mobility and downward mobility. Mobility can also take place laterally i.e., movement from one position to another along the same social class and status. This lateral movement is known as Horizontal mobility.

Social mobility is usually measured in terms of occupational rankings, income and consumption patterns of the upwardly or downwardly mobile groups or individuals. In the previous units you must have already read about various theoretical approaches, dimensions, and factors and forces of social mobility. In this particular unit, we will be looking at yet another aspect of social mobility i.e. its 'consequences'.

By 'consequences' we mean the impact or effect of social mobility. Now the question arises, impact on what? Here, we study the impact of social mobility not only on the

individual or groups, but also the society as a whole. Therefore, we shall study the consequences of social mobility along three axis's. First, 'Social Consequences' dealing with the impact of social mobility on the whole society. Secondly, 'Political Consequences' dealing with the effect of social mobility for various 'groups and associations' in a society. Finally, 'Social-Psychological Consequences' dealing with the impact of social mobility at the level of an 'individual' living in a society experiencing rapid mobility.

32.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY OF CONSEQUENCES OF SOCIAL MOBILITY

'Consequences' as an aspect of social mobility was studied systematically for the first time by Pitirim A. Sorokin. He studied the effects of mobility from three dimensions viz. the 'demographic impact' of mobility on society, effects of mobility on 'human behaviour and psychology', and mobility influencing 'processes and organizations' in a society. Though he had collected immense data from various societies to corroborate his findings, yet the techniques he used to arrive at the conclusions, which he did, were not adequate. He used the dichotomy between mobile and immobile societies, illustrated by taking examples randomly from historical and contemporary societies, to ground his theory of social and cultural mobility. Later, many other social scientists have worked upon and qualitatively improved studies on mobility by using sophisticated techniques and methods of research.

Box 32.01

Researches carried out by S.M. Lipset and R. Bendix, (1959) have made a detailed study and analysis of social mobility and its consequences in various contemporary societies of the world, crossing national borders. Melvin M. Tumin's (1957) study of impact of mobility in a 'mass society' have rekindled a hope for better future by the very virtue of knowing the fallacies besetting a society undergoing rapid social mobility. While, M. Janowitz has confined his study of consequences of social mobility to United States alone; George Simmel's 'The Stranger', E.V. Stonequist's 'The Marginal Man' are the portrayals of despair enshrouding the lives of 'individual beings' in a fragmented social structure.

We also have political scientists like Robert Michels, making a detailed analysis of the political behaviour (voting) of upwardly or downwardly mobile populace of Europe before World War I. On the other hand elite theorists like G. Mosca and V. Pareto in their theory of 'circulation of elites' have given an account of social factors and political forces leading to mobility. Mosca has further extended his thesis to include the rise of a new class—middle class—as a consequence of social mobility.

Every society is ordered in a particular manner such that each individual or group is assigned particular tasks, which fulfill the functions of the social whole for its maintenance and perpetuation. It is in the context of each society these tasks or duties performed by the individuals living in it, are assigned high or low statuses or ranks according to the importance attached to the functions fulfilled by that task for the society as a whole. Therefore, in any society, at any point of time, some tasks have higher prestige associated with them, accompanied by corresponding privileges, than others. On the basis of performance of tasks, thereby, individuals and groups, are assigned higher or lower positions or ranked statuses in the society—i.e., stratification system in that particular society-known as classes (or castes in Indian society.)

According to many thinkers, past and present, there could be two antagonistic classes struggling for supremacy (Marx), or there could be four or more classes, each with its own strategies to obtain maximum economic political and cultural rewards from the social order of which they, are members (Weber and others).

32.3 SOCIAL CONSEQUENCES OF MOBILITY

We now turn to some of the consequences of social mobility

32.3.1 Embourgeoisement

Envisioning a more heterogeneous society than Marx, most recent social thinkers like Clarke Kerr, Jessie Bernard and others in 1950s and 60's put forward the 'Embourgeoisement' thesis in contrast to Marx's notion that increasing number of non-manual workers or the middle class(es) would fall into the ranks of manual workers (proletarianization) as the capitalist society advances. But, according to the proponents of the embourgeoisement thesis, a process was occurring in most of the industrial societies, whereby increasing number of manual workers were entering the middle stratum and becoming middle-class. This process was explained by the increase in general prosperity due to advances in technology and the nature of industrial economy of the societies after the Second World War. This had led to the increase in the wages of the manual workers such that they touched non manual, white-collar, range of salaries. Thus, by many writers, these workers were known as 'affluent workers', who had achieved the middle-class status, and increasingly adhered to norms, valued and attitudes of the middle-class. Further, this process led to the belief that the shape of the stratification system was also being transformed. It was argued that the pyramidical structure of the stratification system in which the majority of the population fell into the large impoverished working class at the bottom, with a small wealthy group at the top, was being transformed into a diamond shaped structure of the stratification system, whereby an increasing proportion of the population fell into the middle range. Thus, lending credibility to the term 'middle mass society'.

Activity 1

How far is the embourgeoisement thesis valid for Indian society? Look at the newspapers and magazines and study daily the appropriate portions for several weeks. Note down your findings and discuss with other students in the study centre.

Despite strong support for the 'embourgeoisement thesis' it has been refuted by the findings of research (The Affluent Worker in Class Structure) carried out by Goldthorpe, Lockwood, Bechhofer and Platt among the affluent workers of Luton, a prosperous area in south east England. This area was supposed to be a favourable setting for the confirmation of the embourgeoisement hypothesis. If the process of embourgeoisement was not evident in the most favourable setting then the hypothesis would stand refuted. The workers in this area who had high wages, comparable to white-collar workers salaries were contrasted with them along four criteria-attitudes to work; interaction patterns in the community; aspirations and social perspectives; and political views. On all the four basis the affluent workers differed significantly form the white-collar workers. Further, they differed in their interaction patterns in the community, and aspirations and social perspectives from the traditional manual worker. In addition, they differed in their motives in terms of above mentioned four criterias from the traditional non-affluent manual workers. Therefore, lending credence to Lockwood and Goldthorpe's conclusion of the emergence of a 'new working-class' in the societies characterized by a advanced industrial economy.

Hence 'embourgeoisement' remained an hypothesis based on impressionistic evidence, rather than a thesis based on actual empirical findings.

32.3.2 Heterogeneity of the Working Class

Unlike Marx's prediction of increasing homogeneity of working class with the progress of technology, some sociologists have seen a definite reversal of the trend. In advanced and advancing industrial societies, due to progress in science and technology, in its application to industry, are influencing the very character and content of the working class. According to Ralf Dahrendorf, the working class has become increasingly heterogeneous or dissimilar. Due to changes in technology, complex machines are being introduced, which require well-trained and qualified workers to work on them, to maintain them and do repairs on them when necessary. Not just simple minders of machines of yesteryears but technically trained and hence highly skilled workmen are required. (Even agriculture no longer is a hard, back-breaking task, irrespective of weather conditions. Increasing mechanisation of agriculture has transformed its character, and nature of work done. Now it is counted as one

of the industries constituting an economy of the society). Therefore according to Ralf Dahrendorf, on the basis of nature of work required in various industries, workers can be divided into three distinct levels-unskilled, semi-skilled and skilled workers. This classification of workers is accompanied by differences in economic rewards (i.e., wages) and prestige accorded to each of them. Thus, skilled workers enjoy higher wages, more fringe benefits, greater job security and so higher prestige than the other two category of workers. Dahrendorf believes that in the twentieth century, due to mobility among workers, it has become meaningless to speak of working class, rather there has been a 'decomposition of labour' into various divisions as mentioned above.

Many sociologists like K. Roberts, F.M. Martin and others have negated this aspect of heterogeneity of the working class as a consequence of social mobility in the industrial societies of today, as enumerated above. Rather, they have suggested, through the findings of various researches, that the manual workers share similar market situation and similar life-chances. The workers are also aware of their shared class identity due to common class interests. Therefore, they can be distinguished from other classes in the society by their distinct sub-culture. Hence, to speak of heterogeneity of working class as an impact of social mobility is a fallacy. The working class do form a social class, and has not disintegrated into distinct categories.

32.3.3 The Enlarged and Fragmented Middle Classes

Though the middle class was never a cohesive social group in its origin, yet it was too small in numbers to actually make its presence felt in a decisive manner in the economy and polity of a society. In the earlier days it usually comprised of the lowermost officials of the state, the petty tradesmen, or the exceptionally few peasants who owned a free plot of land. But in the nineteenth century, with the expansion of commercial interests of various nations and the State playing an increasingly active role in governance, led to a demand for educationally and technically qualified personnel who could be mobile geographically as well as aspirationally. Thus, the on-going process of expansion of the middle class since the mid-nineteenth century onwards has once again proved the fallacy of Marx's prediction that the middle strata would disappear (be proletaranized). Instead, Max Weber, A. Giddens, Frank Parkin etc. see the rise and expansion of the 'middle class', inherent in the very logic of industrial economy. Each has given a classification of classes According to Weber, the white-collar middle class expands rather than contracts as capitalism develops, because the capitalist enterprises and the bureaucratic organization of modern nation state requires the services of large number of administrative staff. As capitalism advances, the enterprises undergo vast changes—there is separation of ownership and control—leading to increase in number and role of managers and administrators. Therefore for Weber middle class would comprise of 'property less white-collar workers' whose market situation and life chances depend upon skills and services offered by them. Secondly, 'the pretty bourgeoisie' i.e., the small property owners who due to competition from large capitalists take to white-collar professions. Anthony Giddens identifies three major classes in advanced capitalist society, of which the middle class is based on the possession of educational and technical qualifications.

- Higher professionals, managerial and administrative—comprising of judges, barristers, lawyers, doctors, architects, planners, university lecturers, accountants, scientists and engineers.

- Lower professionals, managerial and administrative—comprising of school teachers, nurses, social workers, librarians etc.

- Routine white-collar and minor supervisory—comprising of clerks, foremen etc.

Each sub-division occupies different positions not only in the occupational reward system, but are also accorded differential prestige and the corresponding status in the social scale of a particular society.

Not only are these people accorded differential prestige and status, but they perceive their market situation and life-chances to be non-analogous. Therefore from a study of 'images of class', Robets, Cook, Clarke and Semenoff came to the conclusion that the middle class

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is itself increasingly divided into a number of different strata, each with a distinctive view of its place in the stratification system. So to speak of a common class identification of the middle white-collar middle class needs to be discounted. The diversity of class images, market situations, life chances and interest within the white-collar group suggests that the middle class is becoming increasingly fragmented (Kenneth Roberts). Hence, to speak of a single social group as a middle class is debate, rather it is more meaningful to conceptualize it as a plurality of 'middle-classes'.

32.3.3 Rate of Social Mobility and Class Solidarity

Rate of Social mobility is the amount of movement from one strata to another in a particular society. In the contemporary society characterized by industrial economy, the rate of social mobility is considerably higher than the earlier societies. The reason behind this high rate of social mobility is the criteria of achievement based on merit, ability, talent, ambition and hard work, which determines a person position in the society. Class solidarity is the degree of cohesiveness of a particular class in the society. Therefore, the rate of social mobility has important consequences for class solidarity. According to many sociologists, the rate of social mobility is indirectly proportional to social solidarity i.e., if the rate of social mobility is low, class solidarity and cohesion will be high and vice versa. So for Anthony Giddens, if the rate of social mobility is low, most individuals will remain in their class of origin. This will lead to common life experiences over generations, formation of distinctive class subcultures, and aspirations to identify with the next higher class. Thus sounding a death knell for class solidarity.

Even Marx believed that a high rate of social mobility would tend to weaken class solidarity. Classes would become increasingly heterogeneous as their members cease to share similar backgrounds. Distinctive class sub-cultures would disintegrate as norms, attitudes and values would change not only over generations but within a single generation for a particular class. Therefore, for Marx, the potential for class consciousness and the intensity of class conflict would be considerably reduced. Whereas, according to Ralf-Dahrendorf, due to high rate of social mobility in the contemporary industrial societies, the nature of class conflict has changed. Since nowadays societies give primacy to the criteria of achievements, and he have become open, there is an increased competition among individuals of the same class for higher positions in the occupational reward structure. Therefore there is a reduction in class solidarity and intensity of class conflict.

> **Box 32.02**
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> **Goldthrope and C. Llewellyn, based on the 'Oxford Mobility Study' have shown a very optimistic side of social mobility for class formation amongst the working class. According to their findings, since in the contemporary societies upward mobility is greater tha... downward mobility, few people actually move down to the level of manual working class. This will lead to the formation of a homogeneous working class, as they usually have similarity of origins and experiences which provides a basis for collective strategies in pursuit of common interests. Therefore, there is a greater potential for class solidarity and formation of a homogeneous class amongst the manaul workers.**

Simultaneously, even Goldthorpe and Llewellyn have discounted class solidarity amongst the middle class. Due to heterogeneity of social background of its members, it thus lacks cohesion i.e., low classness, and the image of middle class as a single social group is negated, akin to Kenneth Robert's image of 'fragmented' middle class, as mentioned in the previous section.

32.3.5 The Image of Social Order

The effects of social mobility on social order has been the theme of many writers since Durkheim wrote about the concept of 'anomie', meaning, disruptive impact of unlimited aims and aspirations of people in a society unable to fulfill all these demands. Durkheim recognized that social mobility might have negative consequences, both for the society as well as the individual, in his classic study 'Suicide'. According to him, earlier societies maintained strict restraints on its stratification system such that an individual living in a

particular society knew the legitimate limit of his aspirations. But when the stratification system is no longer subjective to these restraints, both—sudden growth of power and wealth, and economic disasters lead to situations which are potentially disastrous for the moral order of the society. Therefore, not only during periods of upheavals, like that of economic depression (as there would be declassification) but also, during a rapid rise in fortune or power (as there would be no ceiling on ambitions) have dissociative impact on the social integration of a system, leading to suicides by individuals due to undermining of personal integration. Thus exhibiting anomic tendencies.

In similar vein, Lipset and Bendix and Germani have emphasized that social mobility have different consequences in different social structures. Social mobility is more likely to be disruptive in its effects in traditional societies, which have an 'ascriptive' system of stratification, with high degree of status rigidity and hence inadequate preparation for mobility. This is based on the assumption that the constraints of 'class of origin' in a traditional society are very powerful and binding, and when once broken by social mobility, leave the individual isolated and anxious about his social status and identity. While in an 'industrial' society, marked by openness of its stratification system. Social mobility is a normal process fovourable for the maintenance of the system.

Even P.A. Sorokin, talking about 'Social and Cultural Mobility' (1927) too wrote about the disruptive consequences of social mobility. He believed that social mobility contributes to instability of the social order, cultural fluidity, diminishing solidarity. It may also lead to exhaustion of elite's and therefore decay of nations. It facilitates atomization, a superficiality in personality, skepticism, cynicism and misoneism. According to Sorokin social mobility plays a vital role in diminishing intimacy, sensitivity, increases mental strain and accompanying diseases. Increase in isolation, loneliness, restlessness may lead to a hunt for transitory sensual pleasures, which further leads to disintegration of morals in the society. Sorokin also attempted to balance out the negative impact of social mobility by putting forward positive influences of social mobility for the society as well as the individual. In this regard he talked about 'better and more adequate distribution of individuals' such that the best men at the top reduce narrow-mindedness and occupationally hazardous idiosyncratic behaviour; it facilitates economic prosperity and a rapid social progress, thereby enhancing the positive consequences of social mobility for the social order.

Box 32.03

Melvin M. Tumin in a paper, has also made a study of 'Some Unappalauded Consequences of Social Mobility in a Mass Society'. Taking the contemporary mass society as a fame of reference, he has seen 'consumption' as the motive force in each and every sphere of life, be it wealth, income, social status, art and aesthetics, culture or polity, the basic institutions like family, religion and education; even social criticism are all weighed against a criteria of marketability.

This means-in the sphere of work, the inherent virtue of work has lost all its meaning and given way to 'open portrayal of being successful' through consumption of power and property, has become the most important criteria of social mobility. This has led to denigration of work and thereby dignity of all tasks but few which are high income generating ones. This 'denial of work' has negative consequences for social integration. Further, rapid social mobility leads to imbalance of institutions like family, kin groups, religion, political and educational institutions, which are now measured against the yardstick of income and wealth generation. This has effect on the changing definitions and parameters of these institutions now based solely on their utility value. Thus, seriously endangering the major functions traditionally performed by them. In addition, not only are the various social institutions being undermined by the encroaching impact of social mobility, even the human element in terms of the older generations, steeped in the customs and traditions of the bygone era, are looks upon with vituperative contempt by the new-mobile segments of the population. This has been proved by the mushrooming of 'old age homes' not only in the so-called advanced Western societies, but nowadays even in the more tolerant societies of the East. Any society which wallows in its past indiscriminately or equally indiscriminately rejects it, will be the loser. Hence, a society should aim to achieve a balance between tradition and modernity to offset the negative impact of rapid

social mobility.Further, Melvin Tumin laments the decline of 'social criticism' under the impact of 'a cult of gratitude' among significant sections of the mobile population. Even the intellectuals who are supposed to be upholders of creative criticism of the social order, responsibility for actively persuing open and sharp debate for the maintenance of an open society, have not been spared by the vituperative impact of social mobility. Their ideas have now become commodities for sale in the aid of populist measures of the State. They derive their value from their marketability. There is a 'depreciation of taste and culture…when marketability becomes the criteria of aesthetic worth'. Conumption of art and culture is determined by elite fads and fashion. This process portends a doom for democratic tendencies in a pluralist society, as everything and every body, even ideas give way to the advancing authority of capital and its social correlates. The ethnic groups become converted into status-competing hierarchies instead of being cultural groups. Thus, diminishing the possibility of genuine cultural pluralism in a diverse society. When such a dissociative image of social order is presented, then the individual is lost in the welter of rapidity of social change. Hence, engendering insecurity leading to alienation, extreme individualism, suicide and many similar processes disruptive in their consequences.

The portrayal of social order engendered by rapid social mobility as given above is extremely pessimistic. For some thinkers like Peter M. Blau this pessimism in its extreme is unfounded. He tries to give reasons for the changing social order in the dilemma's of acculturation faced by the socially mobile. Blau argues that a socially mobile individual faces dilemma in choosing between the values, attitudes, behaviour and friends of his class of origin, or the class of destination. It is this dilemma which leads to various observed consequences of social mobility like—social disintegration, insecurity or over conformity by the socially mobile individuals. Therefore, Blau has not really challenged the dissociative image of social order, but through his 'acculturation hypothesis' tried to assign reasons for social change engendered by social mobility.

Activity 2

Enumerate the various consequences of social mobility in India. Discuss your list of the findings with other students in the study centre.

In contrast to the dismal picture of the social order portrayed by the exponents of 'dissociative hypothesis' (as explained above), Frank Parkin and C.J. Richardson in Britain, and H.L. Wilensky and H. Edwards in America examined class in capitalist society. Frank Parkin studying the effect of high rate of upward mobility, came to the conclusion that , it acted as a 'political safety-valve'. Upward mobility provides opportunities for the fulfillment of aspirations of individuals to reach higher status and pay. As a result, it prevents frustrations from developing, which in the absence of upward mobility if intensified might threaten the social fabric. Usually, those who move out of working class are more preoccupied with acculturing themselves to the new norms and values of the higher class, rather than bothering about people left behind. Thus, weakening the intensity of class conflict between classes in a capitalist society. On the other hand, H.L. Wilensky and H. Edwards examined the consequences of 'downward mobility'. According to them people who actually move down in social hierarchy from middle class to working class, usually do not accept their lowly position, and so do not adapt themselves to the norms values of the working class. They always aspire to regain their lost status. Hence, engendering conservatism in their outlook. Thus, C.J. Richardson's study of social mobility in Britain, concludes that neither upward social mobility, nor downward social mobility arouse feelings of relative deprivation or dissatisfaction with their present lot, or has may disruptive consequences for the social order. Hence, both upward and downward mobility tend to reinforce status quo. Both tend to become even more conservative in their social and political outlook, one (the upwardly mobile) in the hope of restoration of their former status. Thus, none of them actually threaten the stability or integrity of a society.

Both the images of social order are based on actual and impressionistic studies of various societies. How far can they be wholly applied to a particular society, is debatable. But, we can safely presume that in reality a mixture of elements from both the images obtain. The consequences of social mobility are neither wholly pessimistic, nor overly positive. Thus, the image of social order of present societies, will lie in between the two poles of social order in a continuum.

i) What is 'embourgeoisement'? Why is it known as hypothesis and not thesis? Outline in five lines.

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ii) Can we call, 'working-class' a social group? Give your reasons in about five lines.

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iii) What do you understand by the phase 'fragmented' middle class? Explain in about five lines

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iv) What effect does the rate of social mobility, has on class-solidarity? Elucidate in about five lines.

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v) Elucidate the image of social order as a consequence of social mobility. Use about five lines for your answer.

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32.4 POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES OF SOCIAL MOBILITY

The consequences of social mobility can also be viewed through an 'impact of stratification dynamics on political behavoiur'. It usually depends upon what dimension of the stratification system is being challenged. Generally it has been seen that, when the social class position of the order elite (or upper-class) is challenged by the emerging elite (usually referred to as 'nouveaux riches'), then all kinds of barriers are put forward to stop their incursion. This happens during periods of high occupational and consumption mobility. The upper-class feeling threatened, would take recourse to traditional values of ascription, with elements of irrationality associated with to redefine their valued status. Even though the nouveaux riches would have acquired enough income, education, occupational rank and other criterias to enter the elite status, the older elites would invoke other traditionalistic criteria, ascriptive in character, like kinship, ethnic origin, table and bar manners etc., to deny them access to higher status and their associations. Thus it can be inferred that occupational mobility did not lead to social mobility. These actions of the order elites would make the newly-mobile aspirants lose faith in the fairness of the social process and make them question the openness or democratic ethos of their culture. Thus rejected, they would create alternate' symbols of status like various ethnic associations (e.g. Dalit Associations in India), political parties (e.g. Samajwadi party or the Rashtriya Janata Dal) residential sites (e.g. Ambedkar Nagar) Colleges, schools, recreational facilities etc. This process would be further reflected in the voting behaviour of both the older elite and the nouveaux riches. The older elites trying to consolidate and reinforcing their traditional aspects of culture would become extremely conservative in their political outlook. Therefore 'extreme rightism' is seen as a response to insecurity about social class position. While on the other hand, the newly-mobile aspirants would support any faction of political party which opposes the older elite. Thus the strains introduced by mobility aspirations will predispose individuals towards accepting more extreme political views.

Box 32.04

Closely associated with the above mentioned process, is Franz Neuman's 'Conspiracy Theory of Politics', which reflects the irrational element of the social class insecurity. When an individual or a particular group is unable to achieve an aspired status or experience downward mobility; then instead of looking for reasons for such a happening in their own inability or their stratification system; they tend to place the blame for their social evils on another group, supposedly on the conspiracy by a secret group of evil-doers. By laying the blame elsewhere, they believe they have done all they could, and continue to adhere to the stratification system which gives them their valued position in the society. Thus, discounting the actual changes which are taking place in the social structure of their society. Again, such tendencies are reflected in the political behaviour of the people adhering to such irrational theories. They then tend to believe in actual or imaginary target groups against whom to consolidate their power position in the political field.

More often than not, social mobility gives rise of 'status discrepancy' such that mobility in one' sphere need not necessarily lead to mobility all the other spheres. For instance S.M. Lipset studying political behaviour in the province of Saskatchewan (Canada) found that leaders of the Socialist Party were either businessmen or professionals. Though they belonged to high occupational and income category, yet they were considered low in the social hierarchy, as they were largely of non-Anglo Saxon origin. Whereas, the Liberal and Conservative Parties were dominated by the middle class. Though lower in income and occupational category, they belonged to higher social class, as they were from Anglo-Saxon origin, (they formed 90% of the population). Even when the higher status, 'upper class' Anglo-Saxon population did not economically exploit the non-Anglo-Saxon group, yet they felt socially deprived of the privileges, which usually accompany high occupational and income category. Thus the cleavage between the two groups was very sharp. The contradictions in their status positions were such that, the minority group (i.e., the non-Anglo-Saxon group) preferred to ideologically align themselves with the political party which was opposed to the 'upper class' (i.e., the Anglo-Saxon group). Thus,

portraying extreme political views due to frustrated aspirations, brought about by status discrepancy.

In a similar vein, Robert Michels has analyzed European Socialism before the First World War. The Jews had come to occupy a prominent position in the European socialist movement, because, even when legally free, they were still discriminated against socially all over Eastern Europe and Germany. Even though they were economically rich, no corresponding social or political advantages were ensured by the prevailing system. Only the socialist's utopia assuaged their feelings of hurt and rejection. This attitude of the Jews has been evident in the recent times also. For example, in Scandinavia, where there is relatively little anti-Semitism (i.e. Anti-Jewish feelings) and the Jews are progressively achieving a higher social class position, it is expected that they would not exhibit leftist political orientation to the same extent as earlier.

Thus discrepancy in status may lead to many permutation and combinations of social class statuses and their ideological alignments in the political sphere. Therefore one come see any of the following combinations actually operating depending upon the social, economic, statistical and political circumstances:

i)   Political orientation to the left, when a group's social class position is lower then its occupational or economic position, in spite of the fact under normal circumstances, the group would have conservative outlook.

ii) Political orientation to the left, when a social group's deprived position normally orients it to take radical position against the economically and socially dominant group.

iii) Political orientation to the right, when a group's social class position is higher then their occupational and economic position.

iv) Political orientation to the right, when for example, nouveaux riches are sometimes even more conservative than the older elite, as they seek to move up in the social hierarchy and be accepted by the order elite.

v)   Political orientation to the extreme right, when a group's higher social class position if felt to be threatened by the incurrsion of emerging mobiles. For instance, when the older elite close their ranks against the emerging nouveaux riches

vi) Political orientation to the left, when a group's old but declining upper class status makes it more liberal in its outlook.

Box 32.05

Another political consequence of social mobility about which P.A. Sorokin refers to directly, but is also implied in G. Mosca and V. Pareto's theory of 'elite circulation' is the recruitment from the lower to the upper strata. According to Mosca and Pareto's theory of elite circulation, when the superior elements of the elite get exhausted, then of necessity they have to recruit new individuals of superior quality from among the lower starata. This is a continuous process. If this does not happen, then the degenerate elements in the upper strata, increase in number which will have negative consequence for the whole society. In addition, the superior quality individuals in the lower strata, in the absence of restricted avenues of mobility would get concentrated, and in a concerted action overthrow the degenerate ruling minority and take over the reins of the governance. Even Sorokin has pointed out the negative consequence of the excess of degenerate elements in upper class, in the absence of mobility.

Mosca had even seen the emergence of a new social class—the middle class—in modern democracies, as a product of social mobility. He sees middle class as the intermediate strata from which the ruling elite usually recruit fresh talent to fill their vacant ranks. In this manner ambitious and talented individuals in the lower strata are able fulfil their aspirations. Thus, as can be seen from above, the political consequence of social mobility are important in their implications for the processual develo. nent of society as a whole.

Check Your Progress 2

i) What happens when the newly-mobile aspirants (Nouveaux riches) try to enter the ranks of upper class? Write in about five lines.

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ii) What is meant by 'conspiracy theory of politics'? Elaborate in about five lines.

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iii) What are the political ramifications of 'status discrepancy' in mobile society? Explain briefly in five lines.

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iv) How does 'circulation of elites' help in the maintenance of order in the society? Outline in about five lines.

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32.5 SOCIAL-PSYCHOLOGICAL CONSEQUENCES OF SOCIAL MOBILITY

Inequality being the hallmark of stratification system, distributes rewards and privileges differentially amongst its inhabitants. Modern industrial societies usually organised around the democratic ethos undergo immense ideological pressures from all sides, as they are supposed to be upholders of 'opportunity for all'. It is this criteria of 'opportunity of all' whitch enjoins upon all the members of that society to aspire for a position in the 'sun' i.e. the higher-most, most sought after positions in the society. But, just as the most sought after goods are scarce and therefore valuable, similarly, the most sought after positions too are scarce and hence valuable. Not everybody can occupy them. It is after a long process of selection, starting from primary education till a person actually reaches the coveted position. Chances of his being rejected are built into the system. Therefore, the people who do not reach their desired goals usually suffer from mental strain, evoked by their denial of self-worth. In many cases it may also lead to rejection of he 'self' i.e., 'self-hatred'-acceptance of lower conception of self-worth. This according to Veblen, acts as a barrier to the possibility of self enhancement. This rejected image of self-worth is usually found in the inviduals of lower-status minority groups, e.g. Jews. But, this self-hatred is difficult to maintain as self worth reasserts itself, and culminates into social action which may have ramifications for the society as a whole. The social consequences of a predominantly psyhological phenomenon can usually be seen in the following three processes as put forward by S.M. Lipset and H.L Zetterberg.

i) Some people may reject the dominant values of the upper classes. In such cases, rejection may take the form of lower-class religious values which morally deny the values accorded to wealth and power.

ii) Secondly, another form of rejection of dominant values and assertion of self-worth could take the form of rebellious 'Robin Hood' bands, or formal revolutionary, or social reform movements.

iii) Finally, individuals may make efforts to improve their status through ligitimate or illegitimate means.

Thus, inequality inheres in itself an instability in the social order. This aspect of instability being such a pervasive phenomenon in the modern industrial society, has negative consequences for the individual personality as well. 'Anomie', (a well-known concept, explained by Durkheim; spreads through the society when its members become highly mobile. The age-old definitions of various roles and statuses are distorted. Even if these are not destroyed and replaced by others, the incumbents move so rapidly, such that they usually neither have the time nor inclination to be absorbed in traditional responsibilities, which that role entails. Thus, the security which derives from stability of a role and the expectations built into it are shattered. This has disruptive consequence for the socialisation of the young ones, who are unable to fill a role adequately, in the absence of proper role-preparation. Even the parents are unable to cope up with the fast changing definitions of the situations, such that within a decade, they themselves need to re-socialise themselves. This leads to diffusion of insecurity amongst a population of a society on a mass-scale. It is in this context that many thinkers have talked about atomization of individual, fragmented personality or the marginal man.

Hence, the social psychological consequences of social mobility may be disruptive in their impact, yet some people may find in their individual mobility an affirmation of self-worth, a positive culmination of their individual effort.

Check Your Progress 3

i) What consequence does the rejection of self-worth have for the individual? Write your answer in about five lines.

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ii) How does diffusion of insecurity take place in a modern industrial society? Elaborate in about five lines.

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32.6 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, we have analysed the various consequences of social mobility from three perspectives–its ramifications for the society as a whole i.e. Social consequences; its influence on the political behaviour of various groups in the society i.e, political consequences; and finally, the impact of social mobility on an individual in a modern industrial society i.e, social-psychological consequences.

In the first section, dealing with the social consequences, initially we tried to analyse the present status and the character of the two statistically predominant classes–the working class and the middle class(es). Various viewpoints tend to either discount or reinforce their image as a social group. This led us to examine the very nature of class-solidarity in terms of rate of social mobility i.e., the amount of movement between various classes in the light of above given segmental portrayal of society, in the final section, we try to cohere an image of the social order as a consequence of social mobility. Many traditional and impressionistic studies propagate the 'dissociative hypothesis', while Peter. M. Blau's study of American mobility led to the formulation of 'acculturation hypothesis'. But finally, the negative or disruptive consequences are balanced out by the positive consequences for the social order indicated by researches carried out in Britain by Frank Parkin and in America by H.L. Wilensky and H. Edwards, and C.J. Richardson.

The political consequence of social mobility has taken account of the topmost section of the society—the upper class the ruling elite (Mosca and Pareto). Here, we have analysed the consequences of individual and group social mobility on their political behaviour. Political behaviour as seen in their voting behaviour tends to be on the extreme reaches of the left or right depending upon the thwarted social status aspirations of the occupationally and income mobile group i.e., 'status-discrepancy'. Thus the degree of anomaly between social privilege accorded and income ranking achieved will give the degree of political extremism. Each group tries to undermine the power bases of the other.

32.7 KEY WORDS

Social Stratification	:	When people are ranked heirarchically along some dimension of inequality, whether income, wealth, power, prestige, etc.
Sub-culture	:	This is a system of values, attitudes, modes of behaviour and life-styles of a social group which is distinct from, but related to the dominant culture of a society. It occurs due to great diversities in society.

Social Order	:	When cohesion and peace are maintained in the society.	Consequences of Social Mobility
Class-solidarity	:	When there is unity of values among members of the same class.	

32.8 FURTHER READINGS

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32.9 SPECIMEN ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

i) Embourgeoisement is the process whereby increasing members of manual workers are entering the middle stratum of the society and becoming middle class. It is still known as a hypothesis since it was based on impressionistic evidence, which on being tested under most favourable circumstances, stood disproved.

ii) According to Ralf Dahrendorf, due to the logic of modern industrial economy, the nature of work has changed. Working class can be divided into highly skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled workers, each with differential economic rewards and corresponding prestige in the social hierarchy. Yet, some other thinkers discount this heterogeneity by putting forward the similar life-chances and shared identity of interests as the basis of their homogeneity.

iii) 'Fragmented middle class' is a phrase used by Kenneth Roberts to depict the increasing heterogeneity of middle classes.

iv) There are two viewpoints about the effect of rate of social mobility on class solidarity. One, the rate of social mobility is indirectly proportional to the social solidarity i.e., higher the rate of social mobility, lower will be the degree of class solidarity. Secondly, upward social mobility increases conservative tendencies at all levels.

v) First, we talk about the 'dissociate hypothesis' in which is explained the disruptive or negative consequences of social mobility for the society as a whole. Second, the 'acculturation hypothesis' forwarded by P.M. Blau gives reasons for the disruptive consequences for the individual. Finally, findings of Frank Parkins and others portray an optimistic note, as social mobility is seen to have positive consequences for the social order.

Check Your Progress 2

i) When the newly-mobile aspirants try to enter the ranks of upper class, the upper class feels threatened and places many obstructions to stop their entry. So much so, it even uses traditional ascriptive criterias to block the entry of newly-mobiles

ii) The irrational element of social class insecurity, is depicted by Franz Neuman, who put forward the 'Conspiracy theory of politics'-placing the blame for social evils on a secret group of evil-doers.

iii) 'Status discrepancy' in a mobile society can lead to changes in the normal political behaviour associated with particular groups of a social class or for the social class a whole. Thus we see its reflection in the voting behaviour of the individuals and groups.

iv) 'Circulation of elites' allows the ambitious and talented individuals to rise in social hierarchy. Thus, dissipating frustrated aspirations. Hence, it lessens the intensity of conflict and periodically rejuvenates the social order by inclusion of higher quality individuals.

Check Your Progress 3

i)   Individuals may reject the dominant values of wealth and power, as held by the upper class. Or, they could individually or collectively initiate reform movements. Or, they may individually make efforts to improve their status by any means.

ii)   Rapid social mobility leads to breaking down of traditional roles and statuses, and the expectations built into them. The individual is effectively left unanchored and uprooted. Thus, leading to diffusion of insecurity in a modern industrial society.

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