

SOCIOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF EDUCATION:

ACTIVITY-1

Cultural practice:

Cultural practice generally refers to the manifestation of a **culture** or sub-**culture**, especially in regard to the traditional and customary **practices** of a particular ethnic or other **cultural** group. In the broadest sense, this term can apply to any person manifesting any aspect of any **culture** at any time.

Examples of cultural practice

- Religious and spiritual practices
- Medical treatment practices
- Forms of artistic expression
- Dietary preferences and culinary practices
- Cultural institutions (see also [Cultural Institutions Studies](#))
- Natural resource management
- Housing and construction
- Childcare practices
- Governance, leadership, conflict resolution
- Power relationships
- "Everyday life" practices (including household relationships)

Qualifications

The real (Makalaka morros) question of what qualifies as a legitimate cultural practice is the subject of much legal and ethnic community debate. The question arises in controversial subject areas such as [Genital Mutilation](#), indigenous [hunting](#)^[5] and [gathering](#) practices ^[6], and the question of licensing of traditional medical practitioners ^{[7][8][9]}.

Many traditional cultures acknowledge members outside of their ethnicity as cultural practitioners, but only under special circumstances. Generally, the knowledge or title must be passed in a traditional way, such as family knowledge shared through [adoption](#), or through a master of that practice choosing a particular student who shows qualities desired for that practice, and teaching that student in a hands-on manner, in which they are able to absorb the core values and belief systems of the culture. The degree to which these non-ethnic practitioners are able to exercise "customary and traditional" rights, and the degree to which their practice is acknowledged as valid, is often a subject of considerable debate among indigenous and other ethnic communities ^[10]^{[[dead link](#)]}^[11], and sometimes with the legal

systems under which these communities function. The difference between bona fide non-native cultural practitioners and [cultural piracy](#), or cultural appropriation [12], is a major issue within the study of [globalization](#)[13] and [modernization](#)[14].

Evolution of culture

The evolution of traditional cultures is a subject of much discussion in legal, scholarly, and community forums [15]. It is generally accepted that all cultures are to some degree in a continual state of [Sociocultural evolution](#). However, major questions surround the legitimacy of newly evolved cultural expressions, especially when these are influenced by [modernization](#) or by the influence of other cultures. Also, there is significant debate surrounding the source of evolution: for example, an indigenous community may accept the use of store-bought materials in the creation of traditional arts, but may reject requirements to apply for a permit for certain gathering purposes; the central difference being that one is an *internal* cultural evolution, while the other is *externally* driven [16] by the society or legal body that surrounds the culture.

ACTIVITY2:

Indian Society : Socio-Cultural Unity and Diversity

Indian Society : Socio-Cultural Unity and Diversity!

Historicity of Unity in Diversity:

The Indian cultural tradition is unique. The notions of dharma (normative order), karma (personal moral commitment] and jati (caste) as the hierarchical principles of social stratification are basic to Indian culture. A certain level of configuration of these elements and consensus have brought about persistence and equilibrium in Indian society, and hence no major breakdown has taken place in its culture. It is said that the change is in the cultural system and not of the system. In other words, basic cultural and social values and norms still continue with some modifications.

The values of dharma, karma and jati continue to guide social and cultural activities to a large extent. Hence, change is in the system and not of the system. However, the contemporary India has witnessed basic structural changes in economic and political fields. The traditional value system has lost its ground to a considerable extent as the jati has acquired a new form, and it is no more an effective mechanism of division of labour and status determination.

The uniqueness of the Indian culture does not simply refer to its esoteric nature. It requires a thorough study in terms of its history. Absorption and assimilation characterised social and cultural change. Aryans and Dravidians lived together. Hindus and Muslims lived in close proximity – socially and culturally.

Later on, Christians joined them. Today, Hindus, Jains, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians and people of other faiths participate together in the government, industry, commerce and other sectors of public life. Thus, there has been a continuous unity even in the situation of stark diversity.

Diversity is reflected in thousands of caste groups, each having its own rituals, rites, rules and customs. It can be seen in terms of linguistic, religious and other ethnic variations. The styles of life differ from region to region and vary even between different castes and religious groups within the same village. Some rulers made conscious efforts to ensure unity in diversity.

The emperor Ashoka worked for the unity of India by achieving cultural and religious harmony and administrative efficiency. Akbar, one of the most powerful Mughal emperors, projected the concept of a state religion called Din-e-Illahi, a synthesis of Hinduism and Islam.

The majority of Muslims in villages transformed their social life beyond recognition. They mingled with Hindus freely in almost all walks of life. The Hindu rajas and Muslim kings recognized literary and artistic abilities in individuals from both the communities. Kabir and Nanak were greatly influenced by the teachings of Islam.

Conversion to Islam, and later on to Christianity, and today to Buddhism, has resulted in a 'mixed' culture. The Father of the Nation, Mahatma Gandhi, worked throughout his life to achieve national unity and integrity through communal harmony, upliftment of the poor and downtrodden and propagation of a just social order.

The colonial India has two histories. One is of colonialism produced by the colonisers, and the other is of India's culture and civilization perpetrated through its intellectual and philosophical fervour. India's history, its architectural treasures, its literature, philosophy, music, drama, dance, and its other fine arts, all contributed to its social life, and could not be destroyed by alien rule. It is this history which remained neglected during British Raj.

Mahatma Gandhi desired radical changes. However, he wished to associate such changes with India's tradition and cultural heritage. Jawaharlal Nehru, the architect of modern India, with a modern and secular outlook, upheld India's past with reverence and a sense of pride. He (1956) writes: "Yet the past is ever with us and all that we are and that we have come from the past. We are its products and we live immersed in it. Not to understand it and feel it as something living within us is not to understand the present. To combine it with the present and extend it to the future, to break from it where it cannot be so united, to make all this the pulsating and vibrating material for thought and action – that is life."

In another passage, Nehru highlights India's cultural heritage. He (ibid) writes: "The rising middle classes ... wanted some cultural roots to cling on to, something that gave them assurance of their own worth, something that would reduce the sense of frustration and humiliation that foreign conquest and rule had produced... The past of India, with all its

cultural variety and greatness, was a common heritage of all the Indian people, Hindu, Moslem, Christian and others; and their ancestors had helped to build it.” But Nehru never wanted the deadwood of the past to dominate the present. He was, in fact, a man with a democratic spirit and modern outlook.

Forces of Unity in Modern India:

M.N. Srinivas (1952), a noted sociologist, writes:

“The concept of unity is inherent in Hinduism. There are sacred centres of Hindu pilgrimage in every corner of the land. Certain salient aspects of Sanskritic culture are to be found all over the country. India is the sacred land not only of the Hindus but also of the Sikhs, Jains and Buddhists. The Muslims and Christians, too, have several sacred centres of pilgrimage in India. The institution of caste cuts across diverse religious groups and gives them all a common social idiom.”

Srinivas further notes that India, as a secular state, tolerates diversity. The Five-Year Plans, the spread of egalitarian ideals, a single government and a common body of civil and criminal laws are enough evidence of India’s plural character and oneness. However, one may not agree with Srinivas’ observation regarding Hinduism in general and about the caste system, in particular.

Orthodoxy of these two systems has, at times, endangered India’s unity. The two have often been misused for suppression and exploitation of weaker sections of society, including women. Recently, the Noble laureate Amartya Sen, pleaded for a common civil code for all the communities, including Muslims.

The Constitution of independent India has established the ‘rule of law’ throughout the entire country. All citizens are equal and subject to the same authority. Birth-based privileges have been abolished. Religion, language, region, caste or community are no longer the basis of special powers and privileges.

The weaker sections of society, the Scheduled Castes (SCs), the Scheduled Tribes (STs), and the Other Backward Classes (OBCs) have been given special concessions to bridge the gap between them and the upper castes and classes. Today, no caste or social group suffers from any kind of social disability. Women enjoy equal rights with men, in all respects.

The policy of ‘divide and rule’, adopted by the British to rule this country, is no more in operation. Colonial exploitation has been replaced by processes of development and egalitarian ideology. However, despite constitutional and legal enactments, the weaker sections and women lag behind because of the deep-rooted entrenchment of the upper castes and patriarchy.

Factors of Disunity:

Despite a rich cultural heritage, egalitarian policies and programmes, and the ‘rule of law’, narrow loyalties, parochial ties and primordial interests have also increased in the post-independence India. We find divisive forces in many parts of the country. India is a land of sharp contrasts having very rich, upper caste and class people on the one hand, and extremely poor, lower caste and class people on the other.

There are minority groups based on a variety of considerations such as religion, language, region, customs and traditions. Even, the so-called majority group, namely, the Hindus, is divided into several sects, castes, clans and linguistic groups. These groups have certain aspirations for their members in regard to better education, employment and a high standard of living.

All members belonging to different castes and communities do not have equal chance or access, and hence they are denied 'distributive justice'. Such a situation of unequal opportunities in life, which itself is rooted into socially structured inequalities, aggravates tensions, mutual distrust and frustration.

The consciousness of unity and a feeling of Indianness are seriously hampered due to situations of hierarchy and inequality. Today, India is faced with this problem due to a lack of synchronisation between the form and contents of its social structure. There is an urgent need to reduce the hiatus between the ideal and the actual. National integration can be achieved by bridging up this gap, which is, in fact, between the strong and the weak, the rich and the poor, the educated and the uneducated, and between the upper caste and class and the lower caste and class people.

Ethnicity

Defining Ethnicity:

Literally speaking, the word 'ethnos' means nation, and the word 'ethnicity' is developed from it. However, ethnicity is not defined as nationhood. It is defined as a collectivity of people of a distinct nature in terms of race, descent and culture. Thus, an ethnic group is a social collectivity having certain shared historicity and common attributes, such as race, tribe, language, religion, dress, diet, etc. A combination of them in a group makes it an ethnic group, which is perceived as such by its members and by members of other groups.

One may call this self-perception ethnic consciousness for status and for recognition as a distinct social entity. Ethnicity is not a static or pre-ordained category; it is a manifestation of the common economic, political, social and cultural interests and their protection by certain members in a plural society. Thus, ethnicity, at times, is used as an instrument of mobilisation for realising social, economic and political goals.

Ethnicity is a cultural phenomenon, and as such no culture is superior or inferior. Culture belongs to a people, and they endear it like any other people. E.B. Tylor defines culture as "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society". Culture is the man-made part of the environment.

Culture is social as it relates people in a variety of situations. Being a relational phenomenon, culture has instrumental significance. Therefore, all ethnic entities are cultural groupings, hence they enjoy the same position in terms of the normative orientations of different sets of people. The Constitution of India declares that India is a secular state in which distinctions and discriminations based on caste, creed, region, language, religion, etc., are not allowed.

The people have been given 'fundamental rights', according to which, primordial or ascriptive considerations do not find any place in modern India.

Ethnicity and Culture:

An ethnic group may think that it is a living being of a unique kind. Its members generally think in terms of a real or fictitious commonality based on common ancestry, cultural heritage, language, religion and even economic interests. Internally, all ethnic groups are stratified despite their claim of commonality in all respects. Ethnicity has also become a very sensitive aspect of India's social fabric because of ethnic cleavage, conflict, violence and hatred.

Are ethnic groups classes? Are they the same groupings as of caste groups? A plural or multi-ethnic society like India would have an overlapping of ethnic, caste and class groupings. Contextuality of these groupings is important to distinguish among ethnicity, caste and class as three bases of social ranking and identification.

A given country consists of various communities; and facts about their origin and migration help understand the history of its civilization. The present population of India is over 1,000 million. More than 100 years ago, Sir Herbert Risley noted that there were 2,378 main castes among the Hindus in India. Certainly, this number must have reached over 3,000 by this time due to the processes of fission and social mobility.

Marriage takes place in accordance with the rules of caste endogamy, clan exogamy and avoidance of relations on father's and mother's sides. Besides these caste groups, there are other communities, such as, Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Parsis, Jains and many tribal groups, who limit marriage and social interaction to their own groups. However, inter-caste marriages are taking place, particularly among the educated urban middle and upper-middle class families. Resistance to such marriages is negligible due to weakening of the caste system.

Nature of Ethnic Conflict:

At times, ethnic groups tend to operate as diametrically opposed groups due to clash of their real or supposed interests. Such a clash of interests may also take the form of communalism. Some groups may take undue advantage of their large numbers or of superior social origins to corner a major share of the national resources.

The other communities with smaller populations may feel deprived of what they feel are their 'legitimate claims'. Situations of mutual distrust, disaffection and distance may arise between various ethnic groups. One perspective is that 'relative deprivation' is the root cause of all ethnic strife. The lack of distributive justice, differential accessibility to resources and cultural differences have been considered the main reasons of ethnic problems.

Sometimes ethnic conflict is due to the distinction made between 'outsiders' and 'insiders'. 'We' (insiders) against 'they' (outsiders] is an attitude found in all societies. Immigrants are treated as 'foreigners'. Such a problem arises when people speaking Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Oriya, Hindi, Kashmiri, Punjabi, Urdu, Marathi and Sindhi consider each other different in the national context.

As such ethnic groups may be referred as 'primordial collectivities'. Members belonging to one state often consider members from other states as outsiders. They would not like them to seek employment in their state. Sub-regions, cities, towns and even villages are often used for drawing a line between the insiders and the outsiders. The question is: can we call it ethnicity? The answer is a clear no. India is a poly-ethnic society having distinctions based on race, caste, language, religion and territory.

ACTIVITY 3:

Social Stratification:

Social Stratification: Forms of Social Stratification and Rural Social Stratification!

Stratification is ranking of people in a society. Ranking is made on certain criteria. These criteria include power, status and prestige. The Marxists look at stratification from the perspective of mode of production.

As a matter of fact social stratification in contemporary sociology has become a multi-disciplinary and multi-dimensional field of study. It is qualified by the adjective multi because the disciplines of sociology, rural sociology, social anthropology, psychology, political science and economics also study stratification. Because of its multi-disciplinary nature, its approaches to study are also different.

We can categorise them into two parts:

- (1) Marxist, and
- (2) Non-Marxist or Weberian.

As stated above, the Marxist analyse the social stratification in terms of made of production. Such an approach is historical and takes into consideration the conceptual framework of production forces and production relations. The Marxist approach to stratification has several variants but mode of production remains the prime framework.

The Weberian approach to stratification takes into consideration the concepts of wealth, power and prestige. Wealth, for example, may be defined by occupational category and its accompanying ability to produce income, or by inherited valuables such as real estate. Prestige refers to honour and style of life; for example, how elegant one's lifestyle is.

Power refers to the ability to control or dominate the course of events which make up social life. Thus positions in a society are ranked in terms of the amount of those desirables that are attached to them. Stratification, then, involves inequality because the higher the rank of a position, the more desirable one can get by holding that position.

When we look at rural social stratification we either stress on the mode of production that is the owners of the land, types of peasants, role of technology in production, surplus for market and circulation of labourers. By way of example the study conducted by Jan Breman, entitled, *Of Peasants, Migrants and Paupers*, in the region of south Gujarat takes into consideration the mode of production as a basic framework for his analysis.

Those who look at stratification from the Weberian point of view accept class, status and power as basic determinants of stratification or ranking, Andre Beteille's study, *Caste, Class and Power* is an excellent example of studying rural stratification from the Weberian perspective. K.L. Sharma's classical work, *The Changing Rural Stratification System* (1974), is another example of employing Weberian approach to the inquiry of rural stratification.

Social stratification is very simple term that means inequality. And, inequality in class, status and power or mode of production is found in all societies. Recently, the sociologists have begun to stress on criterion of power as a major determinant in stratification. Stratification thus is found in all the societies mechanical and organic. It is, however, possible that in some societies stratification is elaborate whereas in some only nominal.

Admittedly, rural stratification is not much complicated compared to urban stratification. It is possible that in some societies the pace of social stratification is faster in comparison to other societies, but there is certainly some pattern of stratification in all the societies.

Forms of Social Stratification:

There are four basic forms of social stratification:

- (1) Slavery,
- (2) Caste,
- (3) Estate, and
- (4) Class.

(1) Slavery:

Slavery is an extreme form of inequality in which some individuals are literally owned by others as their property. The legal conditions of slave ownership have varied considerably in different societies. There are different variants of slavery. Bonded labour is one such form of slavery in India. In all parts of world slavery, as a form of stratification has become extinct.

(2) Caste:

Caste system is extremely elaborate and varies in its structure from area to area so much so that it does not really constitute one 'system' at all, but a loosely connected diversity of

varying beliefs and cultural practices, though certain principles are shared by all the castes. This form of stratification as we shall see later on, has assumed wider structural and cultural dimensions.

(3) Estate:

Estates are the feudal clusters with varying obligations and rights towards each other. Estates have developed both in Europe, United States and Asia. In our country jagirdars and zamindars were the traditional estate holders.

With the abolition of zamindari and jagirdari systems these groups of people do not legally exist. However, the former estate holders in rural society even today hold much power. They are big peasants and occupy positions of power in PRIs and legislatures. At operational level they constitute a considerable rank in both rural and urban stratification.

(4) Class:

Classes are not established by legal or religious provisions. Nor membership to class is based on inherited position as specified either legally or by custom. Class systems are typically more fluid than the other types of stratification and the boundaries between classes are never clear-cut.

There are no formal restrictions on inter-marriage between people from different classes. Some of the characteristics of class include individual's achievement, social mobility, economic status and class consciousness.

Thus, class is a large-scale grouping of people who share common economic resources, which strongly influence the types of lifestyle they are able to lead. Ownership of wealth, together with occupation, is the chief basis of class differences.

The major classes that exist in India are:

- (1) Upper class,
- (2) Middle class, and
- (3) Working class.

Rural Social Stratification:

Indian rural society like any other society has its stratification pattern which is specific to it only. In rural society an individual is normally identified with his village. In the south Indian states the name of a person also includes the name of his village.

Irawati Karve, the noted Indian anthropologist, once observed that an Indian is identified by his caste, language and village. Viewed from this perspective the village social stratification is synonymous with village caste. Caste is the chief identification mark of a person in rural society.

ACTIVITY4:

EDUCATION AND SOCIAL MOBILITY

WHAT IS SOCIAL MOBILITY?

- **Social mobility** is the movement of individuals or groups of people in [social position](#).
- It may refer to [classes](#), [ethnic groups](#), or entire [nations](#), and may measure health status, [literacy](#), or [education](#).
- More commonly it refers to individuals or families, and their change in income or wealth ([economic mobility](#)).
- It also typically refers to vertical mobility—movement of individuals or groups, up or down from one socio-economic level to another often by changing jobs or marriage.
- In addition it can also refer to horizontal mobility—movement from one position to another within the same social level.
- Social mobility can be the change in status between someone (or a group) and their parents/previous family generations (“[inter-generational](#)”); or over the change during one’s lifetime (“intra-generational”).
- It can be “absolute” i.e. total amount of movement of people between classes, usually over one generation (such as when education and economic development raises the socio-economic level of a population); or “relative” which is an estimation of the chance of upward or downward social mobility of a member of one social class in comparison with a member from another class.
- A higher level of intergenerational mobility is often considered a sign of greater fairness, or [equality of opportunity](#), in a society.
- Mobility is enabled to a varying extent by [economic capital](#), [cultural capital](#) (such as higher education), [human capital](#) (such as competence and effort in labour), [social capital](#) (such as support from one’s [social network](#)), [physical capital](#) (such as ownership of tools, or the ‘[means of production](#)’), and [symbolic capital](#) (such as the worth of an official title, [status class](#), [celebrity](#), etc.).
- Absolute mobility measures whether (and by how much) living standards in a society have increased—often measured by what percentage of people have higher incomes than their parents.
- Relative mobility refers to how likely children are to move from their parents’ place in the income distribution.
- The more absolute mobility, the better off the population is than their parents, and their children will consequently be better off than them.
- Relative mobility refers to the fluidity of a society. In other words, if one person moves up in relative terms, another by definition must have moved down.

ABSOLUTE AND RELATIVE MOBILITY

Sociologists can classify social mobility as:

- **Vertical mobility:** the movement of individuals and groups up or down the socioeconomic scale. Those who gain in property, income, status, and position are dubbed “upwardly mobile”, while those who move in the opposite direction are “downwardly mobile”.
- **Horizontal mobility:** the movement of individuals and groups in similar socio-economic positions, which may be in different work-situations. This may involve change in occupation or remaining in the same occupation but in a different organization, or may be in the same organization but at a different location.
- **Lateral mobility:** geographical movement between neighborhoods, towns or regions. [Modern societies](#) exhibit a great deal of geographical mobility. Lateral mobility is often combined with vertical as well as horizontal mobility.

EDUCATION AND SOCIAL MOBILITY

“No man should bring children into the world who is unwilling to persevere to the end in their nurture and education. If a man neglects education, he walks lame to the end of his life. The direction in which education starts a man will determine his future in life.” Plato

- It has been argued that high rates of education are essential for countries to be able to achieve high levels of [economic growth](#).
- Empirical analyses tend to support the theoretical prediction that poor countries should grow faster than rich countries because they can adopt cutting edge technologies already tried and tested by rich countries.
- However, [technology transfer](#) requires knowledgeable managers and engineers who are able to operate new machines or production practices borrowed from the leader in order to close the gap through imitation.
- Therefore, a country’s ability to learn from the leader is a function of its stock of “[human capital](#)”.
- Recent study of the determinants of aggregate economic growth have stressed the importance of fundamental economic institutions and the role of cognitive skills.
- India has made progress in terms of increasing [primary education](#) attendance rate and expanding [literacy](#) to approximately two thirds of the population.
- India’s improved education system is often cited as one of the main contributors to the [economic rise of India](#).
- Knowledge capital is a concept which asserts that ideas have intrinsic value which can be shared and leveraged within and between organizations. It is an essential component of [human capital](#).

- Knowledge capital connotes that sharing skills and information is a means of sharing power.
- Knowledge capital is the 'know how' that results from the experience and education of the [employees](#) or [individuals](#) of an organization or group. Of all the factors of production, knowledge capital creates the longest lasting competitive advantage.
- Education is important for every individual in a nation. It plays a vital role to change the status of a country. No country could bring a revolution in it unless its people are educated enough to meet the challenges.
- Education makes a man realize his own self and his goals and also how to achieve those goals.
- Basically, education is divided into three groups. The Education which teaches the concerns of a society is called Social Education. The Education which develops the personality of a man is called Spiritual Education. The Education that is concerned with developing professionalism is called Vocational Education.
- So it helps in creating a balanced individual who becomes a responsible and productive citizen of the nation.
- Education in every sense is one of the fundamental factors of development.
- No country can achieve sustainable economic development without substantial investment in human capital.
- It enriches people's understanding of themselves and world.
- It improves the quality of their lives and leads to broad social benefits to individuals and society.
- Education raises people's productivity and creativity and promotes entrepreneurship and technological advances.
- Thus, education plays a very crucial role in securing economic and social progress and improving income distribution.