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

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

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 superficiallty 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 assauged 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. |
| 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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