

Status & Role

Introduction-

1. In this sub-bit we will discuss about social status and social roles.
2. Both are important concepts in understanding how social life is organized and activities are distributed.
3. Status, originally a Latin word, means state of affairs, condition of a person as defined by law.
4. Social status is a position occupied by a person in the society. In a lifetime an individual occupies.
5. different statuses on the lines of age, gender, class, occupation, and education.

Introduction-

6. A person can have several statuses at a point of time such as being a daughter, social worker, member of a book-reading club and a manager in a company.
7. Status may be ascribed—that is, assigned to individuals at birth without reference to any innate abilities—or achieved, requiring special qualities and gained through competition and individual effort.
8. Ascribed status is typically based on sex, age, race, family relationships, or birth.
9. while achieved status may be based on education, occupation, marital status, accomplishments, or other factors

Definitions of Social Status

- The term status captured the imagination of social scientists and particular sociologists, for they thought that the term could explain the constitution of social order and the position and relation of individuals to this order.
1. **Ralph Linton: (1936)** defines status as “a collection of rights and duties”
 2. **Max Weber** defined status as “positive or negative social estimation of honors”

Characteristics of Status:

- As the definitions have pointed out the term status has physical as well as a psychological situation. This situation forms certain element and characteristics. The characteristics of status may be enumerated as below.
 1. The status is determined by the cultural situation of the particular society.
 2. The status is determined only in relevance of the other members of the society.
 3. Every individual has to play certain role in accordance with the status.
 4. Status is only a part of the society as a whole.
 5. As a result of status the society is divided into various groups.
 6. Every status carries with it some prestige.

Types of status

According to **Linton** status can be divided into:

1) **Ascribed status :**

The ascribed roles are those obtained at birth. Here role learning commences at birth itself. Such learning pertains to one's caste, class, family, gender and so on. Each caste, for example, has its own set of rituals to be performed at the birth of a child, who is subjected to various ceremonial procedures at every stage of growing-up.

2) **Achieved status :**

Achieved roles are acquired by individuals through merit and competition. Thus, this method of classification is based on the way that roles are allocated.

Social Role: Meaning

As a social being we have to perform some functions.

These **functions are known as roles**. In life, we have a great variety of roles-father, mother, businessman, shop assistant, consumer, bus-driver, teacher, voter, and politician and so on. These **roles are an integral part of group behavior**. In everyday usage the word role is used for the part an actor undertakes in a theatrical production, or in a motion picture. Suppose an actor or actress is assigned a part (role) in a play or motion picture. He or she is now supposed to play the role in a convincing manner. To make the playing of the part successful, the actor or actress, must be able to really understand the role, he or she is playing. This includes portraying the feelings. It also includes portraying the **responsibilities**, and the gestures that go with the role.

Social Role: Meaning

- According to **Shakespeare**, the world is a stage and each person is playing a role.
- In this view all people are **playing roles in life**. However, Shakespeare did not elaborate what he meant by this.

In Sociology, role and role-playing have been developed as specific.

Characteristics of the Role:

- 1. Action Aspect of Status:** The role is in fact the action aspect of status. It involves various types of actions that a person has to perform in accordance with the expectations of the society. These actions are dependent not on the individual's will but on the social sanction.
- 2. Changing Concept of Role:** Social roles as already stated are in accordance with the social values, ideals, patterns etc. These ideals, values and objects change and so the concept of the role also changes. The role which is justified at a particular time may not be justified at some other time.

Characteristics of the Role:

- 3. Limited Field of Operation:** Every role has a limited area of operation and the role has to be confined within that. For example an officer has a role to play in the office but when he reaches his family.
- 4. Roles are not Performed 100% for the Fulfillment of the Expectations:** It is not possible for anyone to perform his role fully in accordance with the expectations of the society. There is bound to be some distinctions. For example one may not be able to perform his role to the full satisfaction of the children.

Characteristics of the Role:

5. Difference in the Importance of Role: From the socio-cultural point of view all the roles are not equally important. Some of the roles are more important while the others are less. The roles that are most important are called key roles while the roles that are of general importance, are called general roles

Summary

- Both are important concepts in understanding how social life is organized and activities are distributed.
- Social status is a position occupied by a person in the society.
- A person can have several statuses.
- Ralph Linton: (1936) defines status as “a collection of rights and duties

Summary

According to **Linton** status can be divided into:

1) **Ascribed status** :

2) **Achieved status**:

- **functions are known as roles.**
- **roles are an integral part of group behavior.**
- **According to Shakespeare, the world is a stage and each person is playing a role.**