

Status and Role

Lesson No.	Title	Activity
9	Status and Role	Write down as many of your own statuses that you can think of. Classify them as ascribed or achieved.

Summary

In society, there are different norms of behaviour associated with different people for instance a teacher, a soldier, a politician, a sports person, All are expected to follow a particular code of conduct. This code of conduct is defined by the position they occupy in society i.e. their status. Each of the statuses involves a role, set of behaviour or action-patterns that people belonging to a given status are expected to perform

Concept of Status

- Status defines how they conduct themselves or how they play **roles** in society.
- Ralph Linton defined a status simply as a position in a social system, such as child or parent.
- Status refers to what a person is, whereas the closely linked notion of role refers to the behaviour expected of people in a status. One cannot exist without the other they are two sides of the same coin.
- A person occupies many statuses in society. For example if a person is called Dr. Thakur that means he is a doctor, he is also a son, a husband and a father. He can also be a story teller and an artist. Thus, a person's position in society is defined by the sum total of all the statuses he occupies.

Types of Status

- **Ascribed Status Vs. Achieved Status:** Some statuses are defined by birth i.e. they are **ascribed** for example a brother, a son or a North Indian. Other statuses are **achieved** i.e. it is chosen for example the status of a husband, a soldier, a father and a painter.
- **Relational Status:** A status can be **relational** for example the position of a husband and wife, teacher and student, exist in relation to one another.
- **Participatory Status:** A status can be **participatory** i.e. it exists independent of the person occupying the status. For instance, the status of the Prime Minister exists even when there is no person occupying the position

Role

- Role is the dynamic aspect of status. Roles are the socially defined expectations which a person in a given status fulfils.
- It is a set of ideas associated with social status that facilitates social interaction. For example, the role of a teacher is built around a set of ideas about teachers in relation to a student. Beliefs about who they are, values related to the goals they pursue and their attitudes
- Each status typically includes a number of roles. A person who holds the status teacher behaves one way with students, another way with other faculty members and still another way with the principal. The collection of roles that goes with given status is termed a - roles set.
- Social roles regulate and organize behaviour. In particular they provide means for accomplishing certain tasks. For example, teaching can accomplish more effectively if teacher and student perform their appropriate roles. This involves the exclusion of other areas of their lives in order to concentrate on the matter in hand.
- Roles provide social life with order and predictability in Interacting in terms of their respective roles, teacher and student know what to do and how to do it. With knowledge of each other's roles they are able to predict and comprehend the actions of the other. As an aspect of culture, roles provide an important part of the guidelines and directives necessary for an ordered society.
- Corresponding to ascribed and achieved status, there are ascribed and achieved roles.
- Ascribed roles: A role that an individual acquires automatically at birth, or on the attainment of certain age. The most universally ascribed role is one's sex role, male or female.
- Achieved roles: A role that an individual has because he has either chosen or earned it. It is the result of his efforts and his action. Thus, roles, which are gained by personal efforts, are known as achieved role such as a general in the army, doctor or an engineer and so on.
- Role conflict is the conflict among roles corresponding to two or more statuses. For instance, the trend of more women entering the workforce is creating role conflict for men who are now expected to participate in household chores which they traditionally did not participate in.

Evaluate Yourself

1. Describe social status as a relational term?
2. Compare and contrast the difference between ascribed and achieved status.
3. Explain the concept of status-set with examples from your family.
4. 'Some statuses appear to have both achieved and ascribed elements'. Justify the statement with suitable examples