
UNIT 4 POWER AND AUTHORITY

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Learning Objectives

- To understand the concept of power and authority
- To understand the difference between the concept of power and authority
- To understand various types of power and authority
- To understand the different theories of power
- To understand the role of power in social stratification through examples.

4.1 CONCEPT OF POWER

The word power has its roots in the Latin word *posse*, which means to be able to do something. It moved onto becoming Anglo-Norman French *poeir* and eventually made its way into modern English. In common parlance, the term power is used in multiple ways. We not only hear about the deterrent power of nuclear weapons in the news bulletins but also the power of love, which moves mountains. The mysterious presence of an evil power becomes part of everyday conversations at our workplaces. The power of wealth, which can buy not just commodities but also the individual conscience, often comes in our discussions when we tell the merits of being a wealthy person. Politicians' often recount the power of votes when they campaign in their constituency. The power of attraction of a particular actor/actress often becomes a topic of discussion in hostel rooms.

In various academic disciplines, the use of the term power is more specialised. In our school days, we have studied the concept of power in Physics, where it is defined as ‘the rate at which work is done. It is the work time ratio. It is computed using the following equation: $\text{Power} = \text{Work}/\text{Time}$. The standard metric unit of power, we were told, was the Watt. That the power of a number says how many times to use the number in a multiplication was taught to us in our mathematics class. Power was told was written as a small number to the right and above the base number.

However, the term power has been used as a concept in social sciences. In these disciplines, the concept of power has an intellectual genealogy and deep-rooted meaning. Power is a major resource in social life.

Many social theorists from Plato and Aristotle through Machiavelli and Hobbes to Pareto and Weber devoted their attention to power and the phenomenon associated with it. But still today the scientists have not formulated any rigorous statement to the concept of power.

Modern thinking about power starts in the writings of Nicollò Machiavelli (*The Prince*, early 16th century) and Thomas Hobbes (*Leviathan*, mid-17th century). Their books are considered classics of political writing, and both represents the two main routes along which thought about power has continued to this day (Clegg 1989). According to Machiavelli, thinking power is represents a strategy and decentralised. For him, power is a means, not a resource, and seeks strategic advantages, such as military ones, between his prince and others. For Hobbes power is centralised and focused on sovereignty. In the mid-twentieth century, Hobbes’ view seems to be victorious. Hobbes’s language and his images were more appropriate to the modern scientific approach than Machiavelli’s military images.

After the Second World War, the social sciences started taking interest in power. At that time, the work of Max Weber (1947) served as a point of departure for thought about power because it continued the rational Hobbesian line and developed organisational thinking. Weber’s approach to power connected with bureaucracy and he linked power with concepts of authority and rule. Weber defined power as the probability that an actor within a social relationship would be in a position to carry out his will despite resistance to it. Weber was interested in power as a factor of domination, based on economic or authoritarian interests. He researched the sources that activate legitimate power and identified three sources of legitimation, or accordance of social permission, for the activation of power: the charismatic, the traditional, and the rational-legal. Theories of power after Weber developed in the direction of investigation of illegitimate power and the direction of the critique of Weber’s bureaucratic model (Merton, 1957).

Bertrand Russel, one of the most celebrated philosophers in *Power, a new social analysis* (1938: 4) writes:¹

In the course of this book, I shall be concerned to prove that the fundamental concept in social science is Power, in the same sense in which Energy is the fundamental concept in Physics.

For most sociologists, power is the ability to influence others to believe, behave, or value as those in power desire them to or to strengthen, validate, or confirm present

¹Russell, Bertrand. 1938. *Power, a new social analysis*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co.

beliefs, behaviours, or values. Power is the social force that allows select persons to mobilise others; organize others to act in concert and melt away resistance to leaders' authority.

Power is a fundamental concept for an understanding of processes. The concept of power is not new; it is as ancient as any social theory can boast. Many ancient social theorists from Plato and Aristotle through Machiavelli and Hobbes to Pareto and Weber devoted their attention to power and the phenomenon associated with it. But still today the scientists have not formulated any rigorous statement to the concept of power. Modern thinking about power starts in the writings of Niccolò Machiavelli (*The Prince*, early 16th century) and Thomas Hobbes (*Leviathan*, mid-17th century). Their books are considered classics of political writing, and both represents the two main routes along which thought about power has continued to this day (Clegg 1989). According to Machiavelli, thinking power represents strategy and decentralisation. For him, power is a means, not a resource, and seeks strategic advantages, such as military ones, between his prince and others. For Hobbes power is centralised and focused on sovereignty. In the mid-twentieth century, Hobbes' view seems to be victorious. Hobbes's language and his images were more appropriate to the modern scientific approach than Machiavelli's military images. After the Second World War, the social sciences started taking interest in power. At that time, the work of Max Weber (1947) served as a point of departure for thought about power because it continued the rational Hobbesian line and developed organisational thinking. Weber's approach to power connected with bureaucracy and he linked power with concepts of authority and rule. Weber defined power as the probability that an actor within a social relationship would be able to carry out his will despite resistance to it. Weber was interested in power as a factor of domination, based on economic or authoritarian interests. He researched the sources that activate legitimate power and identified three sources of legitimation, or accordance of social permission, for the activation of power: the charismatic, the traditional, and the rational-legal. Theories of power after Weber developed in the direction of investigation of illegitimate power and the direction of the critique of Weber's bureaucratic model (Merton, 1957).

According to Robert A. Dahl, it is not easy to define what is power since one formal definition cannot be applied to all research problems. Thus, Dahl suggested that we should produce varieties of theories of power of limited scope each of which employs some definition to power that is useful for research problems. Robert A. Dahl suggested that power is a relation among people and actors may be individuals, governments, nation-states, or other human aggregates. In other words, Dahl had defined power as the ability to make somebody do something that otherwise he or she would not have done. According to his *theory*, a particular individual exercises power in a community, while other individuals are prevented from doing what they wanted to do. Power is exercised to cause those who are subject to it to follow the personnel preferences of those who possess the power. Power is the production of obedience to the preferences of others, including an expansion of the preferences of those subject to it to include those preferences.

4.1.1 Properties of Power Relation

According to Robert A. Dahl, there are certain properties of power relation as follows:

- i) The first essential condition for the power relation is that there exists a time lag. This requirement merely accords with one's belief that *A* can hardly be

said to have power over **B** unless **A**'s power attempts precede **B**'s responses. It is important in the actual study of power relations. Who runs ABC Corporation? Whenever the President announces a new policy, he immediately secures the submission of the top officials. But upon investigation, it turns out that every new policy he announces has first been put to him by the head of the sales department.

- ii) The second essential condition is, there must be a connection between the one who possesses power and the one who is respondent. Unless and until there is some "connection" between **A** and **B**, then no power relation can exist.
- iii) The third important condition for power relation involves the attempt of one who possesses the power to get one who is respondent to do something he would not otherwise do. In other words, **A** must have the power to get **B** to do something he would not otherwise do.

4.1.2 Power Comparability

Ultimately, we need to define the concepts like which have more power, or which has less and which have equal power. Suppose we want to compare the power of two different individuals. According to Robert A. Dahl, we have at least four factors that might be included in a comparison:

- a) differences in the basis of their power
 - b) differences in means of employing the basis
 - c) differences in the scope of their power, that is in the type of response evoked
 - d) differences in the number of comparable respondents
- **Peter Bachrach and Morton Baratz (1962)** developed a model as a response to Dahl named as *the two faces of power*. This model is a critique of Dahl's basic idea. They dealt mainly with the connection between the **overt face** of power and the **covert face** of power. The overt face of power is the way decisions are made and the covert face of power is the ability to prevent decision making. They pointed to the strategy of mobilising bias to prevent discussion on certain issues and thus to determine what is *important* and *unimportant*. They referred to this as the *non-decision-making process* where power conflicts do not rise above the public face of power which is confined to certain values, rituals or beliefs that tend to favour the interests of one group relative to others (Clegg 1989).
 - **Steven Lukes (1974)** modified Bachrach and Baratz's approach further. According to Lukes power is measured by the ability to implant in people's minds interests that are contrary to their good. He shifted the discussion from *community power* to a focus on power as such by introducing a three-dimensional model into the discussion of the subject. The third dimension that Lukes added to the discussion of power was the latent dimension of power. The third-dimension deals with the relations between political preferences and *real interests*. The third latent dimension is the hardest of all to identify because it is hard for people who are themselves influenced by this dimension to discover its existence.

- **Michel Foucault** (Foucault 1979, 1980, 1996) extended the discussion of the concept of power from sociology to all other fields of the social sciences and the humanities. Through Foucault's influence, the empirical activity of identifying those who possess power and of locating power loses its importance. He rejected the belief in the existence of an ordered and regulating rational agency. According to Foucault's thinking, there is no source from which actions are born, only an infinite series of practices. One of the greatest innovations of his thinking is the Decentralisation of the position of power.

Foucault deals with power discourse in contemporary Western society only, which he characterizes as follows:

- A. Power not only operates in specific spheres of social life but occurs in everyday life. Power occurs at sites of all kinds and sizes including the most minute and most intimate, such as the human body.
 - B. Power relations are mobile and asymmetrical.
 - C. Since power is not a thing, is not control of a set of Institutions, nor a concealed historical pattern, the researcher of power aims to discover how it operates. To do this, we must isolate, identify, and analyse the network of relations which creates political technologies.
 - D. Power has a direct and creative role in social life. It is multi-directional and operates from the top-down and the bottom up. Although power is at its peak when it is situated inside specific institutions such as schools, prisons, or hospitals.
 - E. When disciplinary technologies create a permanent connection with a particular institutional framework, they become productive. This is the positive aspect of power which is known as a productive power.
 - F. Power is a general matrix of power relations in each society at a given time. No one is outside this matrix, and no one is above it. The prisoners and the jailers are subject to the same procedures of discipline and surveillance practised in the prison, and act within the actual limitations of the prison architecture.
 - G. Domination is not the essence of power. Domination does exist, but power is exercised upon the ruled ones and the rulers too.
 - H. In power relations, there is an intention, but there is no subject. Only on the micro-level, the tactical level, does power have intentions.
- **Anthony Giddens** (Giddens 1982, 1984) developed his approach as a continuation he was a critique – of Foucault and his predecessors. He constructed a social theory which he called *structuration* or *duality of structure*. According to him, power is an important component of the social structure. Power is exercised by human agents and is also created by them, influences them, and limits them. According to him, power is not a quality or a resource of people, or a position in the social structure, but a social factor that is created by human society and influences human society.

4.2 THE CONCEPT OF AUTHORITY

The first thing to say about the sociological usage concerning authority is that there is no agreement among sociologists about its conceptualisation and meaning. For some,

it is always a sub-set of the larger concept, power. Some sociologists, however, include both power and persuasive influence as elements of authority. Still, most sociologists, start any discussion of authority with Max Weber's classic definitions of power and authority. For Weber, power is the "probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance, regardless of the basis on which this probability rests." Authority (*Herrschaft*), for its part, is the "probability that a command with a given content will be obeyed by a given group of persons." Those who follow Weber's definition of authority agree that "wherever there is an organisation, there will be authority and authority will become intermeshed in traditions."

Ralf Dahrendorf draws out the implications of Weber's understanding of authority as legitimate power:

- a) Authority relations are always relations of subordination and superordination.
- b) Where there are authority relations, the superordinate element is expected to the behaviour of the subordinate element by commands, orders, warnings, and prohibitions.
- c) Such expectations attach to relatively permanent social positions rather than to the character of individuals; they are in this sense legitimate.
- d) They always involve the specification of the persons subject to control and the spheres within which control is permissible. Authority, as unlike power is never a relation of generalised control over others.
- e) Authority, being a legitimate relation, non-compliance with authoritative commands can be *sanctioned*; it is indeed one of the functions of the legal system to support the reflective exercise of legitimate authority.
 - Roberto Michels defined authority in *The Encyclopaedia of Social Science* as the capacity, innate or acquired, for exercising dominance over a group. It is a manifestation of power and implies obedience on the part of those subject to it. According to him one principal means of exercising authority is the dispensation of rewards and punishments.
 - Sociologist Robert Bierstedt defines authority as "sanctioned power, institutional power." According to Bierstedt, that authority is not a capacity or innate. It is relational and exists even when it is not being explicitly exercised.

4.3 DIFFERENCES BETWEEN POWER AND AUTHORITY

- The major difference between power and authority is that power is essentially tied to the personal characteristics of individuals or groups whereas authority is always tied to social positions or roles.
- Weber observes that power is a *merely* factual relation, authority is a legitimate relation of domination and subjection.
- Authority must be consensual whereas Power need not be consensual.
- A dictator may frighten (or even physically force) people to agree to his commands. But the control of a manager over workers or of the civil servant over her business or of an army officer over her soldiers is authority. Authority, for Weber, is *legitimate*

power. It rests on a voluntaristic understanding and is intertwined with notions of imposition of will, obedience, and assent to commands.

- The distinction between authority and power can be illustrated by an example: suppose an industrial manager who would try to control people outside his factory or the private lives of those who work inside the factory. These actions would trespass the borderline between authority and power. Although the manager has authority over defined aspects of the work-life of people in the factory, his control would assume the form of only power as soon as it goes beyond the specified persons and spheres of legitimate control. But, of course, just this kind of trespassing is present everywhere in almost *every* authority relation because power even legitimate power, is never simply neutral or benign.

4.4 TYPES OF AUTHORITY

Weber postulated three major sources to legitimate authority (either societal-wide or within smaller groups or traditions within society). Each form of legitimate authority rests on common beliefs, shared by subordinates as well as authorities, about the grounding, scope, and purpose of authority. When an agreement to these beliefs deteriorates then authority loses its belief. These are captured by Weber's three "ideal types" of authority relations.

4.4.1 Traditional Authority

This form of authority is legitimised by long-established cultural practices. It often attaches to inherited statuses. For example, tribal chiefs, village elders, and old caste councils claim authority based on traditions and customs. The authority of the oldest male member in a patriarchal family is another example. This type of authority may not be based on formal offices or legal systems. Weber devoted a large section of his analysis of legitimate authority to traditional legitimate authority. This type of authority grounds its legitimacy by reference to its connection to the past and justifies its actions by claiming that they conform with preceding in time. Traditional authority tends to be conservative and intrinsically lacks any inner motor for social change. Examples of traditional authority include patrimonial, feudal, and monarchical-bureaucratic regimes. Typical motifs and appeals within are traditional authority systems "As the ancients taught us," "As our originating sacred document declares," "As the founding fathers saw". Traditional forms of authority never fully fade away. All authority rests on some variant of tradition.

4.4.2 Charismatic Authority

This type of authority is based on extraordinary personal, almost magical, qualities of a person, actual, alleged or presumed. People with unique leadership qualities, religious or moral influence, or enormous popular appeal are charismatic leaders. Charismatic leaders may or may not hold formal office. The point to remember is that such authority rests on the charisma or 'gift of grace' or personal magnetism of an individual. As Weber put it, the charismatic leader maintains authority 'by providing his strength in life'. Mao Zedong, Hitler, Martin Luther King, Fidel Castro, and John F. Kennedy had charisma. In India, Mahatma Gandhi, Satya Sai Baba and Matha Amrithanda Mayi represent charismatic authority. As we can see, the charismatic leader may or may not hold the formal office and in any case, charismatic leadership is not transferable.

Weber points to charismatic authority, which rests on the wisdom or even sacred gifts of an extraordinary individual and his followers. Charismatic authority does not derive from the consent of the governed. The charismatic leader's unusual gifts or direct contact with God are seen as compelling and self-justifying. In that sense charismatic authority is *non-rational* (that does not mean *irrational*). Charismatic authority represents the major carrier or discontinuity and change in systems of traditional authority. Many of the examples Weber presents of charismatic authority derive from the religious realm, *charisma* need not be specifically religious. Weber applies the concept to the realm of law (e.g., *khadi* justice in Islam, the justice of Solomon) and politics. Charismatic authority can be malevolent (Caesarism, Hitler) as well as benevolent (Jesus). Weber thought *charisma* to be an inherently unstable form of authority. *Charisma* either lapses back itself into a form of traditional authority or passes over into a form of rational-legal legitimate authority.

4.4.3 Rational- Legal Authority

The authority that is attached to formal offices and established legal systems is called rational-legal authority. People exercise this type of authority so long as they hold an office. All officeholders from the Class IV officer at the local Panchayat, to the president of India, are part of the rational-legal authority. Also, office-bearers of associations, unions, corporations, schools, and all non-governmental organisations fall under this category. Simply put, rational-legal authority is attached to any office established by formal arrangements.

The final ideal type of authority Weber proposes is rational-legal authority. It is embodied in formal bureaucracy, the rule of law the appeal to efficiency, and the rational fit between means and intended goals. Procedures properly followed displace the personal rule of charismatic authority (based mainly on witness and virtuosity) or the substantive traditions of traditional authority. Like charismatic change, rational-legal authority systems allow for social change but, unlike charismatic change, in rational-legal authority systems change is orderly, incremental, and constrained by procedure, law, and scientific calculation. Weber feared that this modern form of authority might become a kind of iron cage, devoid of spirit and radical possibility. Charismatic authority can yield revolution or a major paradigm change. Rational-legal authority only yields progress within a received paradigm. While Weber partially hoped that some new charismatic outbreak in modernity might renew modern rational-legal authority, he mainly remained pessimistic about its possibility.

4.5 THEORIES OF POWER IN SOCIETY

In a democracy, people vote for a candidate or a party. The party that forms a government is supposed to be in power. But who wields power in society? Who has the power to influence decision-making at the highest level? There are two major theoretical perspectives on power in society.

4.5.2 The Power Elite Model

C. Wright Mills, the chief architect of this theory, argued that economic, social, and political power in American society is manipulated by three interlocking hierarchies – the military, the industrial and the political. The central thesis of this theory is that political leaders, chieftains of large corporations, and top military brass work together and

make most decisions that affect American society. This theory is a variant of the conflict perspective and expounds on the principle of the monolithic power structure. That is, all major decisions are made by an autonomous few whose interests are cohesive. The elite few hail from the same kind of families, have superior education at prestigious schools, enjoy important connections, and have direct access to strategic power centres. A close examination of the power elite model shows that it is akin to the Marxian view of the ruling class. Marx does not speak of a triumvirate but leaves no doubt that economic dominants are the real power-wielder. The capitalists make up the ruling class and the ideas of the ruling class are the ruling ideas, Marx insisted. Thus, according to the power elite theory, the rich and the powerful in society can manipulate power centres and the decision-making process.

4.5.3 The Pluralist Model

Pluralism (Dahl, Rose and others) contends that power is dispersed broadly among many different individuals and groups. They argue that in a modern democracy there are many contending groups, political parties, and interests, and groups who compete with one another for more power. In other words, pluralists reject the notion that power is concentrated in the hands of a small stratum of elites but contend that many veto groups compete with one another for power and who seek to influence decisions in specific contexts with varying degrees of success. The pluralists also point out that the elitist approach invariably overlooks factional disrupts and conflicts of interests within leadership groups. Instead of a notion like 'monolithic' 'political machines' and 'ruling elite' pluralism emphasises competes like 'multiple decision centres' and 'balance wheels'.

However, it must be emphasised that the distinction between elitist and pluralist systems is a matter of degree, rather than of mutually exclusive contrasts. As Presthus (1964:38) contends, the two perspectives uncover two facets of social reality. In his judgment, 'To some extent, where the sociologist found the monopoly and called it elitism, political scientists found oligopoly but defined it in more honorific terms as pluralism'.

4.6 ROLE OF POWER AND AUTHORITY IN SOCIAL STRATIFICATION

All societies in various types are heterogeneous. History adds new elements to it without eradicating the older ones. The differentiation of functions multiplies the groups that carry out these functions. Politics unifies them by imposing order. In short, there are no societies without political power and no power without hierarchies and unequal relations between individuals and social groups. Anthropological theories seem to be marked by uncertainty. Some observe the domination in the pecking order of birds or the situation of dominant males in monkeys. On the other side, some theories see social stratification as 'rooted in culture'. (Fallers). From this point of view, hierarchisation represents the passage from nature to culture and this change is more observable in simple societies. Some inequalities are natural like age and sex. These primary or natural inequalities already determine privilege and obligations. They became more complicated when kinship and descent fields were mixed with it. Kinship determines the first although its structure reveals classes of kinsmen and the play of equality (for example between the brothers or of domination and subordination (for example between parents and their children). The dominant principle on which this order lies is that of

seniority and genealogical proximity the descent group closed to the common ancestor or founder occupies a superior position and possess political pre-eminence. And attributes power to the oldest member of the oldest generation. History often begins with a mythology that expresses inequality of status symbolically and provides a justification of the domination-subordination releases.

- It is in black Africa that this system shows the greatest diversity of forms (Eisenstadt 1954). The Nandi and Kikuyu of east Africa possess a social organisation based on territory, a hierarchical of age-groups with the military, political and juridical responsibilities that intervene directly in the government of the collectively, while clans and lineages are reduced to a secondary role. In West Africa, for example among the Ibo of Nigeria and their neighbours' agegroups are one of the basic elements of the village structure, they have an economic function and can decide participation in the running of village affairs. Southern Africa, with the Swazi and Zulu kingdoms, shows how a strongly centralised power rests on a powerful age-group structure, which plays more than a military role.
- Most Asiatic societies possess complex social stratification. Leach studied the Kachin of Burma. He sees there is a combination of a 'class system' and the 'lineal system' in the process of being transformed into feudal systems. He distinguishes three main orders:
 - i) The chief or lords (*du*)
 - ii) The freeman (*darat*)
 - iii) The slaves (*mayam*)

Between the chief and freeman, there are aristocrats, the assumed descendants of the former chief. Between the free man and the slaves are descendants of *daratman* and *mayam*woman. This stratification is a neither rigid nor direct correlation with economic status. It relates to the ritual distinctions and political considerations.

4.7 EXAMPLES

4.7.2 The Indian Political Scene

The salient features of the Indian political system are as follows:

- a) **The Role of Caste-** The role of caste in Indian politics is legendary. Numerically large castes have become important pressure groups in politics at all levels, and all political parties consider them to be important vote banks. For example:
 - The politics of Andhra Pradesh is dominated by the two competing castes of Reddy and Kammas and in Karnataka, the rivalry between the Okkaligas and Linayats dominates the political process.
 - In Maharashtra, the Marathas, Brahmins and Mahars.
 - In Gujarat, the Banias, Patidars and Kolis.
 - In Bihar, the Kayasths, Bhumihars, and Rajputs compete in the political process.

- The coalition politics of Kerala sees shifting alliances among the Nairs, Ezhavas, Syrian Christians, and Muslims.
 - Every party takes utmost care to see that its candidate in a particular constituency belongs to the caste which has a majority in the area.
- b) Coalitions** – Although several democracies in the world have multiple parties, India has the unique distinction of having multiple parties often under the same banner, having the same goals and subscribing to the same ideology but owing allegiance to different personalities.
- The existence of multiple parties also makes it necessary for parties to form coalition governments. In a pluralist society like India with numerous castes, religious and linguistic groups, political alliances, and multiple power centres are essential to protect diverse interests.
 - Coalitions act as a check against dictatorial tendencies of a single party with an absolute majority.
- c) Prosecution of Public Servants is a Cumbersome Process**- everybody is equal before the law is one of the fundamental principles of democracy. India is probably the only democracy where prosecution of public servants is deliberately designed to be a cumbersome process.
- In India, we cannot prosecute even an ex-minister without the permission of the cabinet and the governor or the president. The procedure often means that you end up getting permission from the accused or his party colleague.
 - During the colonial rule, the British had such a rule to protect British officers and their minions from the Indian legal system. But in a democracy where all citizens are equal before the law, any procedure that grants special privileges to the leaders is not consistent with the principle of the rule of law.
 - Thus, it is very difficult to identify a power elite or a ruling class in Indian society. Every political party claims to be on the side of the poor and the downtrodden. Therefore, it is hard to make out a case for the existence of a ruling class with ruling ideas in India.
 - However, several interest groups compete with one another for power. For instance, The Bhartiya Janta Party (BJP) wants to protect the interests of the Sangh Parivar, Backward classes clamour for more reservation while the upper castes oppose any increase in the reservation. Women's groups demonstrate the presence of multiple power centres in Indian politics.
 - Rampant corruption is another big problem in Indian politics. Recent movement by Anna Hazare has called attention to multiple scams and generated some interest in the need for an effective mechanism to curb corruption.
 - Thus, it is a theme where more research is required in the light of relevant theories of power and privilege.

4.7.3 Power and Social Stratification in Chinese Society

To understand the social stratification in China, let us divide the society into two parts as follows:

- a) China at the time Chairman Mao
- b) China after the death of Chairman Mao

Now let us investigate detail each section:

- a) **China at the Time of Chairman Mao (1893-1976)**- Chairman Mao, as he was popularly known as the Chairman of the Communist Party of China and ruled China from 1949 until he died in 1976. His full name was Mao Zedong or Mao Tse-tung. He was a Chinese communist revolutionary and founding father of the People's Republic of China.
 - Under the leadership of Mao, a stringent communist regime was to promote egalitarianism. The regime prohibited the private ownership of any productive resources.
 - An institution of collective farming and state monopoly of agricultural products was in place. To stop land alienation a system of rural peasant communes in which they have common ownership of land, and they equally work upon the land.
 - Just as peasants were put into their collective rural communes, the urbanites are put into large working units of state-sector or collective-sector jobs, also known as *danweis*.
 - Under the danwei system, everyone belonged to a working unit and a range of material benefits is guaranteed by their unit, such as insurance, housing, education, employment, health care, etc., which the rural communes are denied.
 - As a stringent household registration system, the *hukou* system divided the population into rural and urban residents. The system reinforced the distinction between the rural and the urban by restricting the people to move from their birthplace. Due to this restriction, the rural farmers were devoid of privileges that their urban counterparts enjoyed.
 - Two crude job categories were assigned to two distinct status groups:
 - **the cadres** - Cadres are those who occupy highly reputable and eminent jobs of management or professionalism. They are exclusively trained for promotion into leadership posts in party or government offices.
 - **the workers**- The workers are a lower group than the cadres.
 - As it was a closed system, it was extremely rare that workers to achieve cadre's position.
 - Therefore, the managers and the professionals are extremely dependent on the ruling state party i.e., the Communist Party. A person with high authority subsequently is highly honoured by the people, thus gaining social

prestige and occupying a higher status in society. The workers, on the other hand, with minimal or no authority consequently occupy a lower status in society.

- The division is based on political power and connection, reflecting the fact that the ruling Communist Party played an extraordinarily large role in the social stratification of Chinese society.

b) After the Death of Chairman Mao- In December 1978, after Mao's death, reformists within the party led by Deng Xiaoping initiated the Chinese economic reforms.

- The reforms gradually began to disintegrate the previously implemented systems during the Mao era.
- The danwei system began to dissolve and a non-permanent employment system was adopted.
- The non-state-controlled economy appeared and flourished, and despite the restriction of movement under the hokou system peasants began to migrate largely to urban areas in search of jobs.
- The migrant workers were hired mostly by these private sectors and the government did not attempt to stop it.
- Due to the collapse of hokou and danwei systems, which were the bases of communism, capitalism started to replace the communist regime.
- Even the once protected and highly reputed Mao's managers and professionals now live on the unstable source of income.
- However, political officials, on the other hand, continue to enjoy large advantages because of their involvement in decision-making in the administration. Due to their political participation, they enjoy a relative amount of authority (power).
- Thus, they continue to occupy a 'high class' status and prestige in society. Despite the huge changes, the intellectuals (especially) continue to have a murky class status. Though they enjoy a high prestige due to their professionalism, they continue to occupy a low social status in society due to the lack of political authority.

So, through this case study, we learnt that how power forms the basis of Chinese social stratification in both the Mao and Post-Mao eras. Chinese citizens with political authority or those who had political ties with them enjoyed not only higher social prestige but also additional material benefits and stable lifestyles. Power brought them repute and they occupied a higher place in the social hierarchy than those with little or no power.

4.8 SUMMARY

We have seen how difficult it is to find an agreed definition of power. Various social scientists had explained power according to their thinking and understanding. The views about the essence of power are as follows:

- Power is a relation among people and actors may be individuals, governments, nation-states, or other human aggregates.
- Power is the ability to make somebody do something that otherwise he or she would not have done.
- Power must be acquired. Power may only be exercised.
- Power is a matter of authority. Power belongs to an individual. Power belongs only to the collective. Power cannot be attributed to anyone; it is a quality of social systems.
- Power generally involves conflict, but not necessarily.
- Power presupposes resistance. Power, first and foremost, has to do with obedience.
- Power relates to oppression and rule. Power is productive and makes development possible. Power is evil, good, diabolical, and routine.
- The major difference between power and authority, power is essentially tied to the personal characteristics of individuals or groups whereas authority is always tied to social positions or roles.
- Then we have seen power can be explained with the two models: the elite model and the pluralist model.
- Then we have seen the role of power in social stratification with the example of India and China.

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Suggested Readings

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Sample Questions

- 1) What is power?
- 2) What is authority?
- 3) What is the difference between power and authority?
- 4) What are the different types of authority?
- 5) What role of power and authority plays in the social structure?

