



DIPLOMA IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT

DRD-01

Rural Society

Block

4

CASTE SYSTEM

Unit – 1

Caste System in India: Social and Economic Inequalities

Unit – 2

The Jajmani System in India

Unit – 3

Changes in the Caste System and Labour Market



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DIPLOMA IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT

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Unit-1

Caste System in India: Social and Economic Inequalities

Learning Objectives:

After completion of this unit, you should be able to:

- *Explain the concept of caste and Varna*
- *Understand the historical backdrop and theories of origin of caste system in India*
- *Describe the characteristics of Caste*

Structure:

- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 The Varna and Caste Division
- 1.3 Indian Caste System: A Historical Backdrop
- 1.4 Caste Structure and Characteristics
- 1.5 Rules Inherent in the Caste System
- 1.6 Theories of the origin of the Indian caste system
- 1.7 The Later Stages
- 1.8 Characteristics of Caste System
- 1.9 Views and Opinions on Caste
- 1.10 Let Us Sum Up
- 1.11 Key Words
- 1.12 References

1.1 Introduction

Caste is closely connected with the Hindu philosophy and religion, custom and tradition .It is believed to have had a divine origin and sanction. It is deeply rooted social institution in India. There are more than 2800 castes and sub-castes with all their peculiarities.

The term caste is derived from the Spanish word caste meaning breed or lineage. The word caste also signifies race or kind. The Sanskrit word for caste is varna which means colour. The caste stratification of the Indian society had its origin in the chaturvarna system.

1.2 The Varna and Caste Division

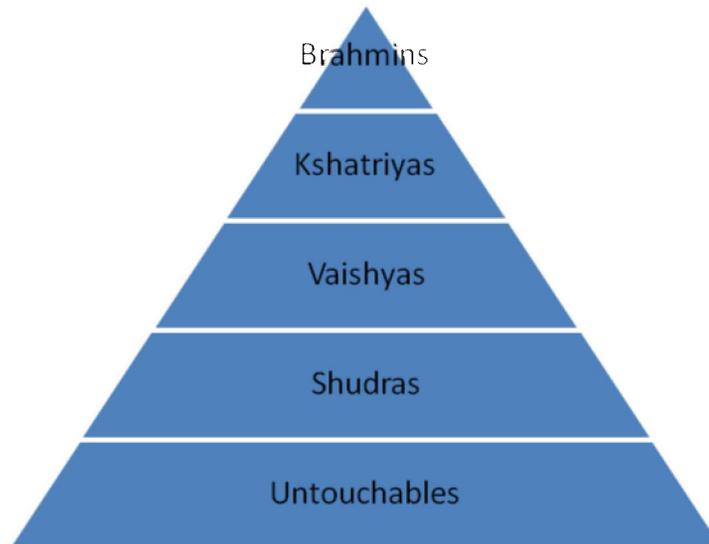
According to this doctrine the Hindu society was divided into four main varnas: -

- 1) Brahmins,
- 2) Kashtriyas,
- 3) Vaishyas and
- 4) Shudras.

The Varna system prevalent during the Vedic period was mainly based on division of labour and occupation. The caste system owns its origin to the Varna system. The Indian Caste System is considered a closed system of stratification, which means that a person's social status is obligated to which caste they were born into. There are limits on interaction and behavior with people from another social status. The caste system is a classification of people into four hierarchically ranked castes called varnas. They are classified according to occupation and determine access to wealth, power, and privilege.

The Brahmins, usually priests and scholars, are at the top. Next are the Kshatriyas, or political rulers and soldiers. They are followed by the Vaishyas, or merchants, and the fourth are the Shudras, who are usually laborers, peasants, artisans, and servants. At the very bottom are those considered as the untouchables. These individuals perform occupations that are considered unclean and polluting, such as scavenging and skinning dead animals and are considered

outcastes. They are not considered to be included in the ranked castes.



The varnas are then divided into specialized sub-castes called jatis. Each jati is composed of a group deriving its livelihood primarily from a specific occupation. People are born into a certain caste and become members. They then acquire the appropriate occupation according to their jati. Maintaining this hereditary occupational specialization and hierarchical ranking of occupations is said to be done through an elaborate ritual system regulating the nature of social interactions between the jatis. Vedic texts from the Hindu religion, which have been compiled, legitimized, and interpreted by the Brahmins, provide the rationale for the hierarchical classification and the rituals governing social behavior. There were, and still are, rules that are laid down concerning appropriate occupational pursuit, appropriate behavior within and between castes, as well as rules related to marriage.

Since India's independence from Britain in 1947, there has been considerable relaxation of rules related to the caste system. There was more sharing between members of the middle and upper

castes, but those in the lowest castes continued to eat separately from the rest. There was also a significant change in occupational goals and pursuits among men from 1954 to 1992. Earlier, most men were dedicated to their traditional caste related jobs, but by 1992, most had taken up newer occupations. Although some caste-based prejudice and ranking still existed, wealth and power was now less associated with caste. Caste became a lot less significant part of daily lives of people who lived in urban areas compared to rural areas, but its significance still varies by social class and occupation. Among urban middle-class professionals, caste is not openly discussed and is pretty insignificant, except when it comes to marital arrangements. Even then, there are adjustments made with considerations towards education, occupation, and income, as well as religion and language. Although discrimination on the basis of caste has been outlawed in India, it still exists in the community today.

1.3 Indian Caste System: A Historical Backdrop

The Indian Caste System is historically one of the main dimensions where people in India are socially differentiated through class, religion, region, tribe, gender, and language. Although this or other forms of differentiation exist in all human societies, it becomes a problem when one or more of these dimensions overlap each other and become the sole basis of systematic ranking and unequal access to valued resources like wealth, income, power and prestige. The Indian Caste System is considered a closed system of stratification, which means that a person's social status is obligated to which caste they were born into.

Social stratification refers to a system by which a society ranks categories of people in a hierarchy. In the United States, it is perfectly clear that some groups have greater status, power, and wealth than other groups. These differences are what led to **social stratification**.

Social Stratification

- **Social Stratification** = a social hierarchy, or evaluation-ranking-reward system
 - People at the top are considered **better** than those at the bottom.
 - The definition of 'better' depends on the criterion of evaluation: Braver, Smarter, Stronger, Purer...
 - People are not only *different*, they are seen as superior or inferior.



There are limits on interaction and behavior with people from another social status. Its history is massively related to one of the prominent religions in India, Hinduism, and has been altered in many ways during the Buddhist revolution and under British rule.

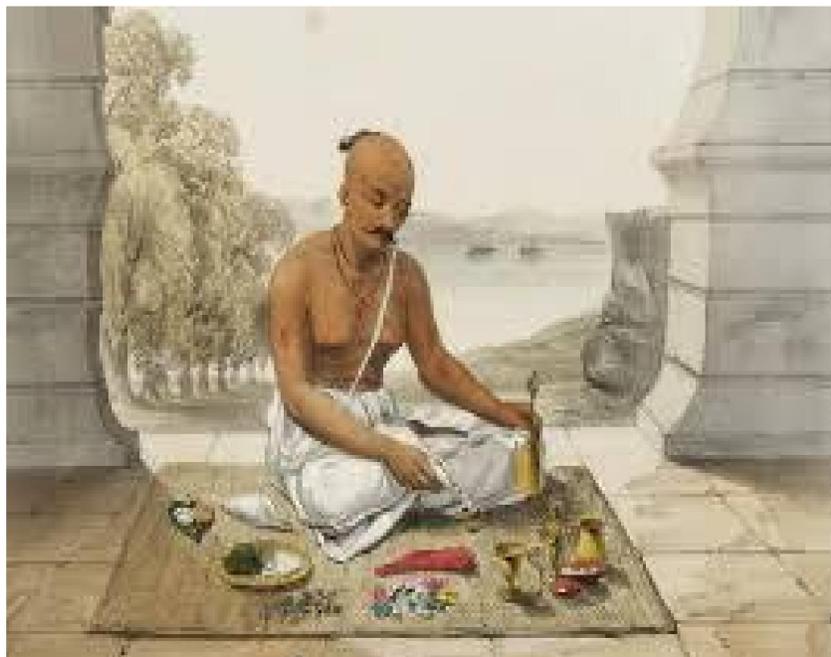
1.4 Caste Structure and Characteristics

Defining the word “caste” itself is harder than thought to be. Risley¹ defines it as “a collection of families or groups of families

¹ **Sir Herbert Hope Risley** KCIE CSI (4 January 1851 – 30 September 1911) was a British ethnographer and colonial administrator, a member of the Indian Civil Service who conducted extensive studies on the tribes and castes of the Bengal Presidency. He is notable for the formal application of the caste system to the entire Hindu population of British India in the 1901 census, of which he was in charge. As an exponent of race science, he used the ratio of the width of a nose to its height to divide Indians into Aryan and Dravidian races, as well as seven castes.

bearing a common name; claiming a common descent from a mythical ancestor, human or divine; professing to follow the same hereditary calling; and regarded by those who are competent to give an opinion as forming a single homogeneous community”. It can also be defined as an endogamous and hereditary subdivision of an ethnic unit occupying a position of superior or inferior rank of social esteem in comparison with other such subdivisions. Caste name is generally associated with a specific occupation and, as mentioned before, is a closed stratification, which makes it endogamous. The Indian caste system is a classification of people into four hierarchically ranked castes called varnas. They are classified according to occupation and determine access to wealth, power, and privilege. Leadership positions in society are monopolized by a few dominant castes. The two upper castes are ritually considered as superior to the lower castes. The Brahmins, usually priests and scholars, are at the top.

The Brahmins:



The Brahmin class is essentially defined by its supposed priority (as the class created first by the creator god), by knowledge of the

Veda, and by the monopoly this class holds on the operation of sacrifice. These traits justify the social position of the class vis-à-vis others: they are predominant because they are prior, and they claim to stand outside of the power relations that govern social life for others because of their superior knowledge and sole possession of the ultimate “weapons,” sacrificial techniques. There are, however, varying “degrees” of Brahmans, such as Kanya-Kubja, Tamil, Tanjore, and others who are part of numerous villages. These sub-castes, called jatis, are very specifically endogamous, so that a Brahman is not only restricted to marrying another Brahman, but to marrying a woman of the same subdivision of Brahmans. Each jati is composed of a group deriving its livelihood primarily from a specific occupation. People are born into a certain caste and become members. They then acquire the appropriate occupation according to their jati. Separation of these Brahmans from others is one of several indications of social status, which include material goods, social power or influence, and social skills. In modern India, economic competition and education are predominate, and the Brahmans occupy this position in both aspects. Following the Brahmans are the Kshatriyas, or political rulers and soldiers. They were the ruling class and often times collaborated with the Brahmans as they reigned over their kingdom. In ancient India, the rulers were bound by Holy Scriptures to govern their kingdoms with justice. A Hindu ruler was the protector of his subjects, and in order to protect his subjects the king needed to be an expert warrior.

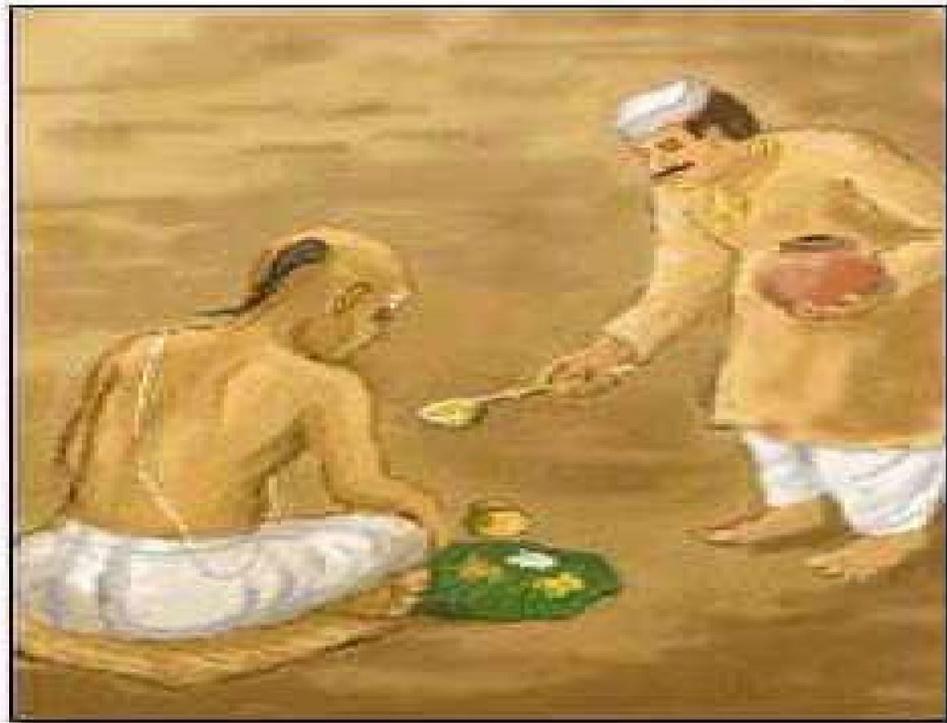
The Kshatriyas:



They are characterized by physical and martial strength. These qualities determined his relations with others: “the Kshatriya is charged with the protection of the higher Brahmin class with rule over (and unrestricted exploitation of) the lower Vaishyas”. The word ‘kshatra’ in Sanskrit means government, power, and dominion. Kshatriyas are considered to be bold, alert and full of fortitude, generosity, discipline and modesty. Priests and warriors were said to be “better” than or “superior” to the other castes, and in general the Brahmans and Kshatriyas were regarded as united into a ruling class according to the populace at large. But although the Brahmans and Kshatriyas together proclaimed to be superior to the commoners, the Brahmans never hesitated to declare their own caste as higher than the Kshatriyas. The reason of this, according to the Vedas, is that Brahmans have been characterized as being self-sufficient, whereas the Kshatriyas are dependent on priests.

Thus, it is said that Brahmans can live without rulers, but rulers cannot sufficiently execute their tasks without the aid of Brahmans.

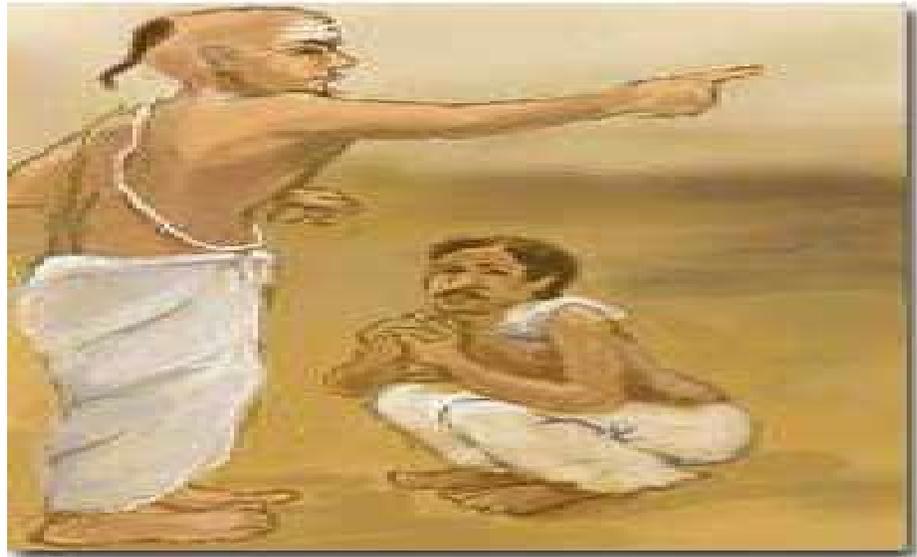
The Vaishayas (or merchants):



A Vaishya's duty was to ensure the community's prosperity through agriculture, cattle rearing and trade. The Vaishyas were considered and expected to be weak in comparison to their rulers, and were infinitely exploitable and regenerative. These oppressions however, were usually not boycotted because this was presented as a natural state of affairs in the social realm. Later, the Shudras took over agriculture and cattle rearing while the Vaishyas became traders and merchants. However, though they were “twice-born” and economically strong because they controlled commerce, Vaishyas were denied a high social status, for which they resented the upper castes. One expression of this resentment was their

support of the anti-Brahminical sects that developed around the 6th century BC, like Buddhism and Jainism (Gurjari).

The Shudras:



They are usually laborers, peasants, artisans, and servants. Shudras were thought to not have any special abilities and were considered only capable of serving as slaves to the upper three classes. Shudras enjoyed no rights or privileges, and were not permitted to perform any sacrifices or homa, read or learn the Vedas or recite the mantras (prayer rituals). They were also not allowed to enter temples and could only serve the upper three castes as a slave, barber, blacksmith or cobbler (Gurjari). They too supported the anti-Brahminical groups that came about.

The Untouchables:



At the very bottom are those considered the “untouchables.” These individuals performed occupations that were considered unclean and polluting, such as scavenging and skinning dead animals and are considered outcastes. The Hindu law books insisted that there were only four varnas and never a fifth, which was used as a reason to not accept the tribal people of India. They were therefore not considered to be included in the ranked castes. In some cases, the untouchables could face criminal charges if they polluted certain things with their presence. For example, it was a criminal offense for a member of an excluded caste knowingly to pollute a temple by his presence. They were also forbidden to enter the streets in which the houses of the upper castes were situated, and there were many customs and laws that kept them beyond the villages and towns. Since they were rated outside the caste system, they were destined to only live in the outskirts of the village and were never an integral part of village community. Their services, however, were still essential to the health of the community and therefore still had to be part of the system in order to serve the upper castes. Caste includes three elements: repulsion, hierarchy, and hereditary specialization.

1.5 Rules inherent in the Caste System

There are many rules in the Indian caste system which caste members must adhere to in order to avoid being shunned from their caste members or, according to Hinduism, being born less fortunate in their next life.

- a) The two most important characteristics of the Indian caste system have to do with endogamy and occupational restriction. Every member of a caste or sub-caste is required to marry within their own caste. Any violation of this results in excommunication from one’s family and

caste. When it comes to occupation, every caste is associated with a particular one to which its members are required to follow.

- b) Another characteristic is that every caste imposes restrictions on its members with regards to diet and has its own laws which govern the food habit of the members. There are two types of food: Pacca, which is food prepared with ghee (melted butter), and Kachcha, which is food prepared with water. According to the castes, only certain kinds of foods can be exchanged between certain castes. For example, a Brahman can accept only Pacca food from a Shudra, but Kachcha food can only be accepted from a person of one's own caste or of a higher caste (Pyakurel).
- c) Another is the social interaction between castes. There are strict barriers when it comes to the mixing of a superior caste with an inferior caste. Hence, under the caste system every caste abides by well established customs and well defined norms of interactions.
- d) A fourth idea is the belief of purity and pollution. Cleanliness is considered to be a very important value in Hinduism, and the caste system enforces this idea. Untouchability was thus a means of exclusion, a social device that became religious only by being drawn into the pollution-purity complex.

Social exclusion is the process in which individual of people are systematically blocked from (or denied full access to) various rights, opportunities and resources that are normally available to members of a different group, and which are fundamental to social integration within that particular group (e.g., housing, employment, healthcare, civic engagement, democratic participation, and due process).

Therefore, it was believed that the higher castes were more pure and less polluted, while the lower castes were regarded as less pure and more polluted.

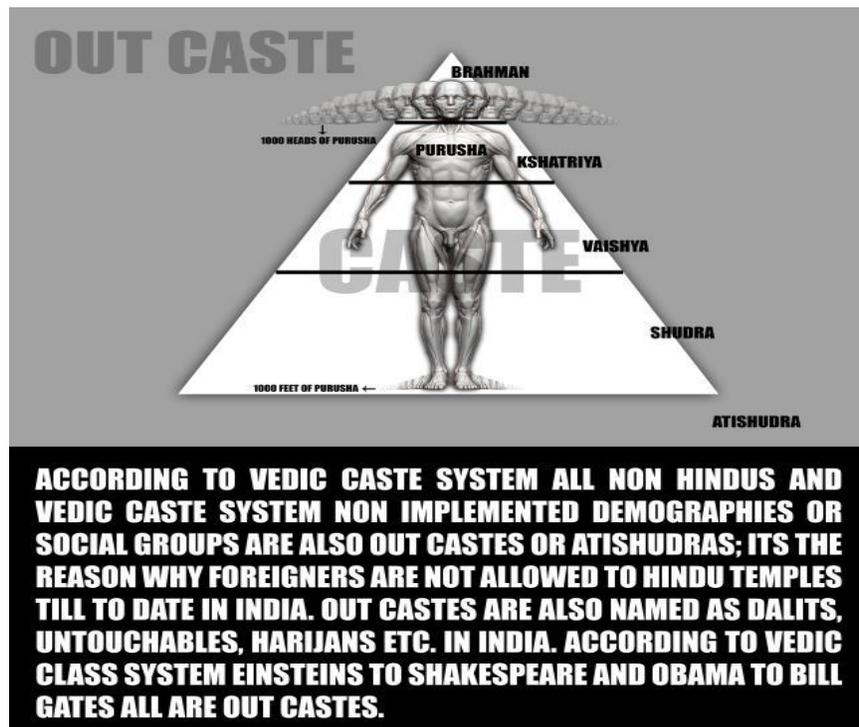
- e) A final characteristic that is very important to the stabilization of the Indian caste system is the restriction of caste mobility, which was mentioned earlier. Birth in a particular caste confines a person to staying in this caste and restricts an individual's mobility up or down the hierarchy. The caste system very much impacted the economic structure in the Indian village. The village was essentially a food-providing unit, where each family of the craft or service caste was linked with one or more of the land owning-farmer-caste family.

Each individual had a fixed economic and social status. Even the beggar, for example, had a fixed status. Giving alms to the beggar was considered as a religious duty so that it could be demanded as of right and each was related to others in employed-employer relationship. Basically, the same individual who was an employer in one relationship was the employed in another. It can be seen from the above list of caste distinctions that the web of economic stability and security that was provided by an individual's respective caste and by those relationships the individual acquired through his or her occupation was essential to village life. The caste system is what drives these relationships and these relationships are one of the reasons the caste system stays intact.

1.6 Theories of the origin of the Indian Caste System

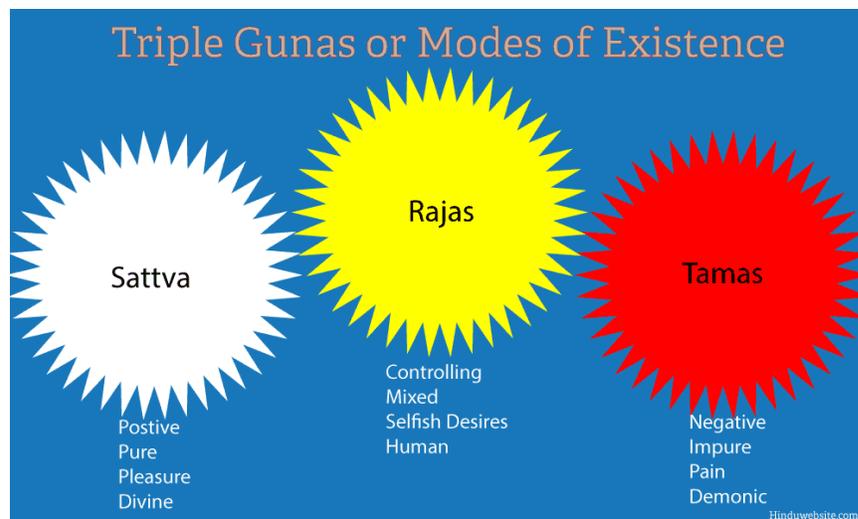
There are many theories pertaining to the origin behind the caste system. Some of them are religious, while others are biological.

a) **Religious theories:** They explain that according to the Rig Veda, which is the ancient Hindu book, the primal man, Purush, destroyed himself to create a human society and the different parts of his body created the four different varnas. The Brahmins were from his head, the Kshatriyas from his hands, the Vaishyas from his thighs, and the Shudras from his feet. The Varna hierarchy is determined by the descending order of the different organs from which the Varnas were created (Daniel). For example, Brahmins, who were derived from the head of Purush, are considered the intelligent and most powerful varna because of their wisdom and education and are a representation of the brain. In the same way, Kshatriyas, considered the warrior caste, were created by arms, which represent strength. Another religious theory claims that the Varnas were created from the body organs of Brahma, who is the creator of the world in Hinduism.



b) **Biological theories:** They claim that all existing things inherit three one of three categories of qualities. Varna means different shades of texture or color and represents mental temper. There are three Gunas: Sattva, Rajas and Tamas. Sattva is white, Rajas is red, and Tamas is black. These in combination of various proportions constitute the group or class of people all over the world with temperamental differences.

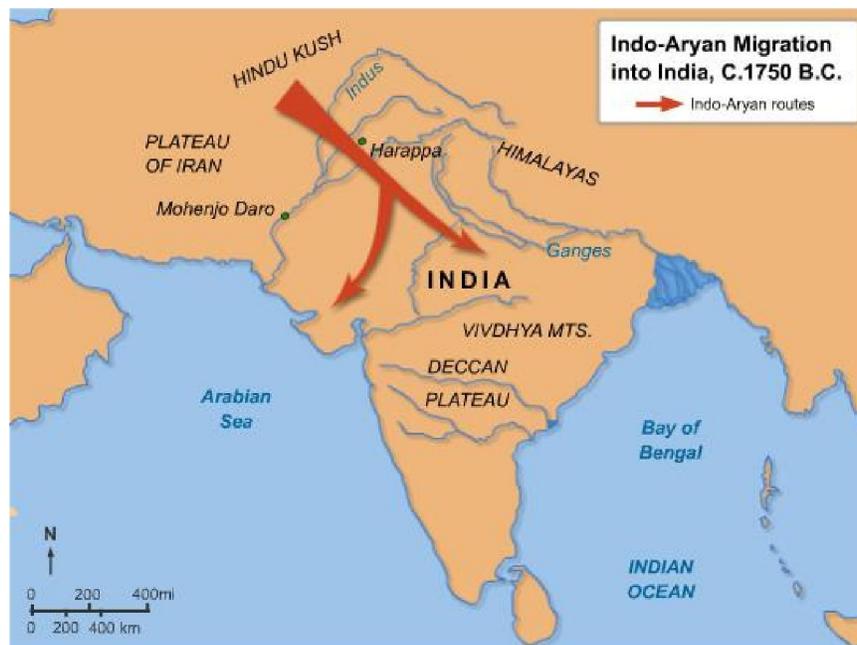
- 1) **Sattva** qualities include characteristics related to wisdom, intelligence, honesty, goodness, and other positive qualities.
- 2) **Rajas** include qualities such as passion, pride, and valor.
- 3) **Tamas** are considered to acquire qualities that include dullness, stupidity, lack of creativity, and other negative qualities.



People with different inherent qualities end up adopting the appropriate occupation. According to this theory, the Brahmins usually inherit the Sattva qualities. They are serene and self-controlled and possess the quality of austerity. They are

considered to have purity, uprightness and forbearance. Brahmans also have the will to acquire knowledge, wisdom, and faith. The Kshatriyas and Vaishyas inherit the Raja qualities, and the Shudras inherit the Tamas qualities. The type of one's actions, the quality of ego, the color of knowledge, the texture of one's understanding, the temper of fortitude, and the brilliance of one's happiness defines one's Varna.

c) **Historical Theories:** Historically, however, it is believed that the caste system began with the arrival of the Aryans in India around 1750 BC. Of the many cultures that flourished in India, the literary records of the Indo-Aryan culture are not the earliest. They do, however, contain the first mention and a continuous history of the factors that make up the caste system.



The Aryans came from southern Europe and northern Asia with fair skin that contrasted with the indigenous natives in India. When they arrived, their main contact was with the Dravidians. The only

other culture whose records are dependable about the origins of the caste system are the Dravidians, but when that culture's documents were put forwards, it had already been largely influenced by the Indo-Aryan tradition. Unfortunately, the Aryans completely disregarded their local cultures and began conquering regions all over north India (Daniel). At the same time, the local people were pushed south towards jungles of mountains in north India.

The Aryans possessed a particular principle of social ordering called Varna Vyavastha, which was based on the four hierarchical divisions of function in society. They were placed in order of decreasing importance: religious and educational functions, military and political functions, economic functions, and menial functions. The Aryans organized themselves in three groups. The first group, Rajayana (later changed to Kshatriya) was the warriors, which were followed by the Brahmans, who were the priests. These two groups constantly struggled for political leadership among the Aryans. Eventually, the Brahmans became the leaders of the Aryan society. The final group consisted of the farmers and craftsmen, and was called the Vaishyas.

The Aryan conquerors subdued the locals and made them servants. In this process, the Vaishyas became the landlords and businessmen of the society and the locals became the peasants and craftsmen. In order to secure their status, the Aryans laid out social and religious rules which stated that only they were allowed to become priests, warriors, and businessmen of the society. Maharashtra, which is a state located in west India, is a great example. This region has been known by this name for hundreds of years, and many think that the meaning of its name is Great Land. But there are some who claim that the name Maharashtra is

derived from the category called Mahar, who are considered to be the original people of this region. These individuals were forced to adhere to the social and religious rules the Aryans laid out. In the caste hierarchy, the Mahars were outcasts because they were dark-skinned compared to the light skinned Aryans.

Skin color was an important indicator in determining an individual's caste. As mentioned before, the word varna does not mean caste or class, but color. Having come across people who were very dark in color and had rather snub noses, the Aryans described the earlier settlers as "dark color," as people without noses, and applied them to the term dasa, which in Iranian stood for "enemy".

Between the outcasts and the three Aryan varnas were the Shudras, who were simple workers of the society. The Shudras consisted of two communities: one community was of the locals who were subdued by the Aryans, and the other was the mix of Aryan and local descent. One of the main regulations the Aryans began with was the exclusion of these Shudras from their religious worship. Very early in their Indian history, the Aryans enjoined that the Shudras shall not practice the religious worship developed by them. The various factors that characterize caste-society were the result of the attempts on the part of the upholders of the Brahmanic civilization to exclude the aborigines and the Shudras from religious and social communion with themselves. In Hindu religious stories, there are many wars between the good Aryans and the dark-skinned demons. Stories of demon women trying to seduce good Aryan men in deceptive ways are very prominent.

Many believed that these incidences really occurred in which the Gods and the positive heroes were of Aryan origin and the demons were in fact the original residents of India who the Aryans themselves coined as devils and demons. As most of the societies in the world, India had a patriarchal system. Most of the time, the son inherited his father's profession, which led to developing families, who acquired the same family profession for generations. Later on, as these families got bigger, they were seen as communities, or jat. Different families who professed the same profession developed social relations between them and organized as a jat. After a while, the Aryans who had created the caste system slowly began to add non-Aryans to their statuses. Different jats were integrated into the various varnas according to their profession. Other foreign invaders of ancient India—Greeks, Huns, Scythians, and others—conquered parts of India and created kingdoms. These were integrated with the Kshatriyas. Most of the communities that were in India before the arrival of the Aryans were categorized with the Shudras or were made outcasts depending on their occupations.

1.7 The Later Stages

The beginning of the Dalit varna began here, where the communities exercising polluting professions were made outcasts and considered as “untouchables.” Brahmans are very strict about cleanliness, and in the past people believed that diseases could be spread not only through physical touch but through the air as well. This is one of the reasons why Dalits were not allowed to touch the high caste community and were required to stand a certain distance away from the higher castes. Around the 6th century, many individuals of the lower castes who were getting fed up of suppression turned to Buddhism. Buddhism actually began as a

reaction to the violence of Hindu society, including the brutality of the caste system.

Buddhism concentrates not on the society, but on the individual, thus separating religion from the interests of the ruling and dominance. In Buddhism, one is no longer born into a position due to past injustice. Although Buddhism does see life as pain and suffering and reincarnation as a renewal of this suffering, there is a potential escape. The Buddha, himself born into the warrior caste, was a severe critic of the caste system. Buddhism utterly rejects any system of caste, and it actually reached high levels of support during the rule of Ashoka, who adopted the Buddhist concept of ahimsa, or non violence, and its tendency toward greater equality. He ridiculed the priests who claimed to be superior, criticized the theological basis of the system, and he welcomed into his community people of all castes, including outcasts (Malalasekera and Jayatilleke). His most famous saying on the subject was, “Birth does not make one a priest or an outcaste. Behavior makes one either a priest or an outcaste” (Malalasekera and Jayatilleke). Even during the time when Buddhism was decaying in India and Tantrayana (another sect of Buddhism practiced after the 7th century) had adopted many aspects of Hinduism, it continued to welcome all castes (Malalasekera and Jayatilleke).

Buddhism is a religion and dharma that encompasses a variety of traditions, beliefs and spiritual practices largely based on teachings attributed to the Buddha. Buddhism originated in India, from where it spread through much of Asia, where after it declined in India during the middle ages. Buddhism is the world's fourth-largest religion, with over 500 million followers or 7% of the global population, known as Buddhists.



The fluidity of the caste system was affected by the arrival of the British. The British brought with them their own traditional form of government, and as Christians, they did not have much sympathy for the Hindu institutions. During the initial days of the British East India Company's rule, caste privileges and customs were encouraged, but the British law courts began to disagree with the discrimination against the lower castes.

The East India Company (EIC), also known as the Honourable East India Company or the British East India Company and informally as John Company, was an English and later British joint-stock company, which was formed to pursue trade with the East Indies but ended up trading mainly with the Indian subcontinent and Qing China. Originally chartered as the "Governor and Company of Merchants of London trading into the East Indies", the company rose to account for half of the world's trade, particularly in basic commodities including cotton, silk, indigo dye salt saltpeter tea and opium. The company also ruled the beginnings of the British Empire in India.

However, British policies of divide and rule contributed towards the hardening of caste identities. As British civilization multiplied in India, however, it was fatal for the members of different castes,

affecting the beliefs they have about contact and “using the same instruments at the cost of traditional repulsion”. For example, when the British government wanted to install a water system in Bombay, there was a great outcry at first from the upper castes. They could not believe that pure and impure, twice-born and Shudra, were going to be drinking from the same taps as themselves. This was, however, resolved by the panchayat, which is an assembly of five wise and respected elders chosen and accepted by the village community. They claimed that the tax raise by the British administration for this canalization could be considered as reparation and that it would redeem the sins to which this sharing of taps would expose them to.

Britain did not only affected the Hindu people by indirect means. A certain number of traditional caste-linked crafts were made impossible to make because of the large number of importing manufactured goods from the metropolis. Because of this, many weavers had to turn to agriculture. In other places, occupations that had been passed down from generation to generation had to be closed down because of newly opened factories. From these events, not only were occupations changed, but the very social situations between the castes were affected. The three supporting pillars of the caste system—hereditary specialization, the sacred hierarchy, and mutual repulsion—were basically directly undermined by the British administration.

1.8. Characteristics of Caste System

1.8.1. Segmental Division:

Caste system divides society into small groups. Each group is well developed. The membership of the group is based on birth. So the

caste mobility is restricted. Under no circumstance one can change one's caste. A member of the caste group is bound to follow the norms and values of the group.

1.8.2 Hierarchical Division:

Hindu society is divided into castes and sub-castes. These social groups are arranged hierarchically in the society. These groups are ranked higher and lower. Higher castes are considered as 'pure' and lower 'impure'. So, there is a feeling of superiority and inferiority among these groups. Brahmins are placed at the top and untouchables in the bottom of the hierarchy.

1.8.3 Restrictions on Occupational Choice:

Gradation of caste hierarchy is closely related to gradation of occupation. Society has selected some of the occupations as 'pure' and some other as 'impure'. Accordingly, 'pure' occupations are allotted to the higher caste groups and 'impure' or inferior occupations to the lower caste groups. For example, shoe-making, sweeping, scavenging, barbering etc. are considered to be inferior occupations and priesthood, teaching etc. are superior and prestigious! Whatever the gradation of the occupation may be the group members are expected to follow the same occupation. So, the occupations are hereditary.

1.8.4 Restrictions on Food Habits:

The caste system imposes restrictions on taking food and drink on its members. These restrictions differ from caste to caste. Two things are decided by the caste system in this regard.



(Schematic Presentation of Caste restriction on Food habits.)

Firstly, who will take food from whom, and secondly, what sort of food he will take. Foods are mainly divided into two categories: Kachcha and Pakka. In Kachcha food water is added and in Pakka, ghee is added. For example, a Brahmin can take Kachcha food from his own caste members, but not from other caste groups.

1.8.5. Restrictions on Marriage:

Caste system follows the rules of endogamy at the time of marriage. Caste system is based on endogamy. The members of caste or sub-caste are forced to marry within the group. If anybody violates the rule of endogamy he gets punishment such as ex-communication from the caste.

1.8.6 Restrictions on Social Relations:

The caste system imposes restrictions in the field of social relations. While interacting with others each caste group and/or individual has to follow certain rules and regulations. Different sets of principles are prescribed for different caste groups. For example, the higher caste people do not touch lower caste people.

1.8.7 Unequal Distribution of Civil and Religious Privileges:

In the caste system the higher caste people enjoy all the privileges such as wealth, power and prestige. For example, Brahmins are considered as superior and they enjoy all types of civil and religious privileges. They are given high status in the society. The higher caste groups enjoy socio-economic, political, legal and religious privileges.

1.8.8. Social and Religious Disabilities:

The impure castes suffer from certain civil and religious disabilities. The Harijans or the untouchables are not allowed to enter into the temples or to use public places. After independence, though constitutionally and legally they are given equal rights and privileges, but in practice it is not happening. For example, caste conflicts of Bihar, U.P., Rajasthan etc.

1.8.9. Jajmani System:

It is the economic aspect of caste system. In this system the specialist castes provide services to the land owning castes. It provides scope to the villagers for the exchange of goods and services. The relationship which comes under jajmani system is usually durable, stable and multiple.

1.8.10. Caste Panchayat:

Each caste has its own panchayat. There are five members in a panchayat. They enjoy social status from their caste members. The caste panchayat looks after the caste matters and settles the internal disputes. For example, it solves the problems arising at the time of marriage or divorce or extra marital relations or land disputes etc. Now-a-days the function of caste panchayat has been reduced to a great extent.

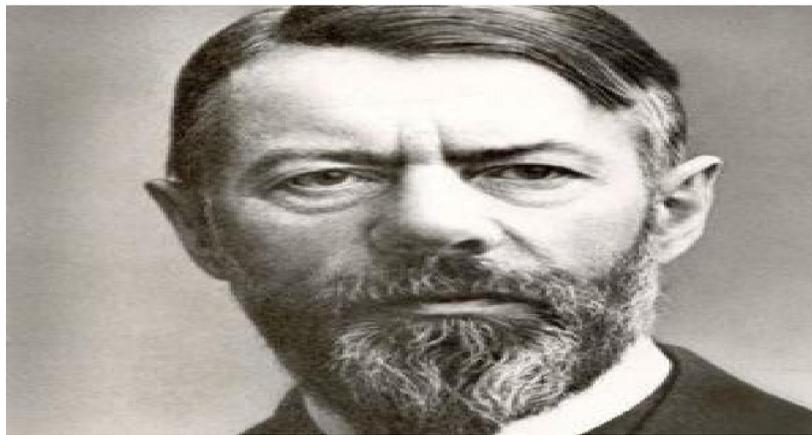
1.9 Views and Opinions on Caste

- **Pre-Dumontian Views of the Hindu Caste:**

When Max Weber prepared his study of religion and society in India, as a part of his famous treatise on the sociology of religion, all the major Sanskrit scriptures of Hinduism had been made available in high quality translations, through the efforts of orientalist. Weber was well acquainted with these sources, and he was also familiar with the census reports, which he described as

"scientifically excellent". Weber considered the Indian society an "ideal type" of his general notion of belief systems as main determinants of the social and economic structure (in contrast to the Marxist view). In India the link between religious beliefs and social differentiation was direct and explicit, whereas in western society the connection is indirect and obscure. Hence caste appeared, to Weber, as an integral aspect of Hinduism, and he started out by declaring this central notion quite axiomatically: before any things else, without caste there is no Hindu. Weber then went on to explore the alleged parallel between caste and guild. He concluded that there was much more to caste than mere occupational specialization. For instance, the guilds of the European Middle Ages were not closed, endogamous social units like castes.

Max Weber (21 April 1864 – 14 June 1920) was a German sociologist, philosopher, jurist, and political economist whose ideas profoundly influenced social theory and social research. Weber is often cited, with Émile Durkheim and Karl Marx, as among the three founders of sociology



the essential features of both phenomena. This served to corroborate the major point Weber wanted to prove. The formative forces underlying caste are not to be found in economic or material

conditions, but in ideology, i.e. religion, in the shape of Hinduism. Weber construed caste as a special and extreme case of status groups. Whereas a class was considered as being constituted by individuals in similar economic positions, the cohesive force of a status group was honor and prestige. Identity was created and maintained by imposing restrictions on social intercourse and marriage with those who "do not belong", primarily those being inferior in terms of honor and prestige. In the Indian caste system this mechanism was developed to the extreme with strict caste endogamy and the religious concept of pollution. Caste was thus a more perfect variety of closed status of class. The interplay between class and the Protestant Ethic ideology is a main point in Weber's analysis of industrialization. He explained industrialization by applying John Calvin's religious beliefs that an after-life could be secured by hard work, self-discipline, and thrift. A similar Hindu ideology of rebirth prescribes strict adherence to one's caste duties and prospect of transcendental rewards in subsequent reincarnations. In Weber's synthetic construction of caste and Hinduism, the karma doctrine was the key principle of cosmic reality. How was it that the karma theology, which is found in several ideologies other than Hinduism, combined in India with caste to form such a peculiar structure? In his analysis, Weber was rather uncertain, but pleaded in favor of a notion of racial differences in ancient India as the main determinant of the evolution of caste. Weber did not elaborate the comparative perspective explicitly, but the juxtaposition was symbolic for how an understanding of the caste system influenced sociological thought about the distinctive characteristics of western civilization.

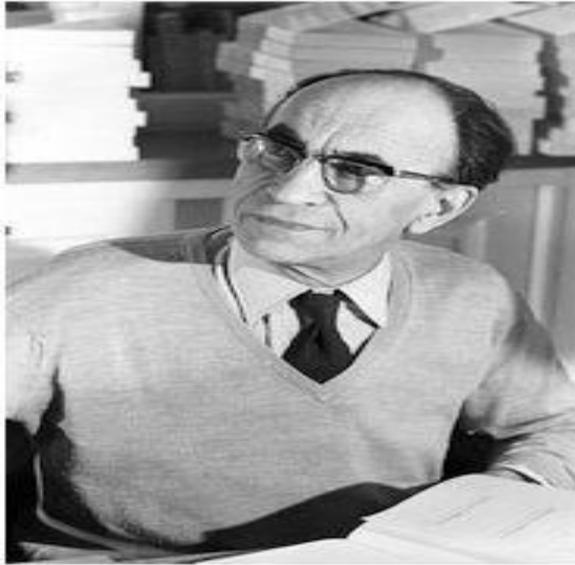
Célestine Bouglé's essay stands as an important landmark in the intellectual history of caste. In the essay's introduction, Bouglé

lists what he considers the three defining principles of "the spirit of caste":

- Hereditary specialization: The hereditary association of caste and a specific trade or profession.
- Hierarchy: Personal status, as rights and duties, is unequally divided and determined by the rank of the group to which one belongs.
- Repulsion: The phenomena of mutual repulsion between social groups, division into opposed fragments, isolation at the group level, and mechanism to prevent alliances and relations across the group boundary, like endogamy, pollution concepts, and food taboos.

These three features combined constitute the defining properties of caste. Taking this definition as a starting point, Bouglé discussed if caste ought to be considered an exclusively Indian (Hindu) phenomenon or not. He concluded, like Weber, that many social systems, including the western ones, exhibit caste like properties, but that "the spirit of caste" in its fully developed sense, is found only on Indian soil. Finally, Bouglé attributed the hierarchical aspects of castes to the ritual and religious dominance of the Brahmans. Furthermore, he is among the scholars who recognized, or at least emphasized, the crucial distinction between socio-religious rank and secular power in Indian society - thereby initiating a heated discussion in the anthropology of caste. Louis Dumont considered himself to be the first one to have been influenced by Bouglé's essays on caste.

- **Louis Dumont on Caste :**



Louis Dumont

Louis Dumont was a French scholar and the author of the famous book on caste, *Homo Hierarchicus*, originally published in French in 1966 and translated into English in 1970. The book constructed a textually informed image of caste, portraying two opposing conceptual categories of purity and pollution as the organizing principle of caste structure and hierarchy (Dumont, 1980).

Dumont's principle of ritual hierarchy operates on two levels, p. the opposition between the Brahmin (as the very epitome and essence of purity) and the "untouchable" (as the carrier of impurity); and between the Brahmin (as the figure of sacred/ritual status) and the king (as the figure of the temporal/secular power). Since the pure always necessarily encompasses the impure, at least at the level of the ideology (if not at the level of the fact), the Brahmin is placed at the top of the hierarchy. And this is so not only in relation to the progressively receding states of less purity (or more impurity) as embodied in the person of other castes, but also in relation to the king or the holder of the temporal authority.

These unique core principles of caste hierarchy, according to Dumont, are observed in scriptural formulation as well as in the everyday life of all Hindus (understandably in India). The Dumontian notion of caste puts hierarchy at the centre and assumes that this more or less (coiled in the notions of purity and pollution) prevails all over Hindu populations. Dumont's concern was with the traditional social organization from a comparative theoretical point of view. Dumont argued that the introduction of the idea of structure was a major event in social anthropology. The essential challenge for contemporary thought was to rediscover the meaning of the whole or systems, and structure provided the only logical form as yet available to this end. Dumont argues that a structural analysis is concerned with the relationships, not substance-relationship parts and between parts and totality.

For Dumont, it was legitimate to include in the caste system only what we could call inter-caste relations, and not intra-caste relations. He was critical of contemporary anthropologists who "take the part of the whole" and who did not address sufficiently inter-caste relations or the total system. Dumont also criticized anthropologists who had studied only one aspect of the system such as jajmani system or food transactions between castes. For Dumont, the dominant principle of Hindu caste system was hierarchy – hierarchy, of course, of a religious, rather than of a political, sort. Other key principles were purity and impurity, also being religious, and interdependence by which parts are interrelated, and related to the whole. Thus, Dumont said that "the Indian caste system is not individualistic; it emphasizes its totality, not its individual members". This religiously based conception of hierarchy is different from its meaning in other parts of the world. For Dumont's purpose, the most important feature of the Varna

writings was the superior status of the Brahman over the Kshatriya on the basis of the Brahman's monopoly of the offering of sacrifices. Brahman and Kshatriya are interdependent and superior to the other two Varnas. It is a matter of an absolute distinction between priesthood and royalty. The Brahman performs sacrifices and never rules; the Kshatriya rules, but never performs sacrifices. But the Kshatriya is dependent upon, and inferior to the Brahman. Dumont indicated that the disjunction, in the dominant Indian tradition, between priest and king is different from those societies in which the king is also a high priest (ancient Egypt, for example), as well as from modern Western societies where the political is both completely secularized and absolutely autonomous from religion.

Dumont associated man's purpose in life, for instance as described in the ancient Hindu law books, the Dharmasastras, with the Varnas. There are three 'human goals': dharma, artha and kama, (duty, profit and pleasure). The analogy with the hierarchy of Varna is apparent: dharma corresponds to the Brahman or priest, artha to the king or Kshatriyas, the temporal power, and kama to the others. Brahman counsellors know the dharma advice to the king; it is the king's duty (dharma) to protect the people in exchange for grain payment. Dumont defined Dharma as 'the holistic idea of order'. This is to be seen in the jajmani system that is oriented toward the welfare of all. Dumont rejected the idea that morphological similarities of ranked strata are enough to make other systems into caste systems. On these grounds he argued that the society in Sri Lanka is built upon 'quasi-caste rather than caste proper', since Brahmans have never been numerous in Sri Lanka and the Buddhist concept of kinship rejects the Brahman-Kshatriya duality. Dumont's notion was criticised as it failed to explain the

social change, dynamism and individualistic strivings that can and do take place even within the orthodox Hindu way of living. The most important criticism, among others, is methodological.

There were debates that Dumont had listened too much to Brahmans and their religious texts, which, in Berreman's argument, offer an artificial, stiff, stereotypic and idealized view of caste. Critics pointed out that the principle of Brahmanical hierarchy (the one reconstructed by Dumont) is not uniformly followed by all Hindus. They also criticized the Dumontian notion that power and economic factors are distinct and epiphenomenal to caste and asserts that the power status opposition is a false dichotomy in the context of caste - the two are inseparable. Dumont was concerned essentially with the structure of value and not with the structure of interest.

It can of course be argued that Dumont's observation apply to the traditional and not to contemporary India. Hindus have long lived in political subordination while thinking their religious and social life superior to that of their overlords. In contrast, West Indians, the heirs to an originally unequal racial situation, devoted to the idea of an egalitarian and democratic Britain, are deeply disappointed that some are more equal than others. Whatever Dumont might have said about caste as a method of studying Indian society, he did support the caste system and its allied sanctions. For him caste was 'social' as religion is 'social' for Radcliffe-Brown and Durkheim. Dumont advocated the continuity of the caste system by emphasizing its functions for individual members, for a group, and for the entire Indian society or state. Such an advocacy during the British days had led to the promotion of their colonial interest in India. However, this view stands

contradicted when they make a sharp distinction between caste and class. Class is considered as a characteristic feature of western societies, being characterized by its emphasis on democracy, individualism and openness. On the contrary, caste, as a core-feature of Indian society, is defined as an archaic institution lacking democracy, individualism and freedom. Dumont brought in a mystic aura around the caste system. Why did he consider caste as a cultural form of social inequality? Is inequality based on racial criteria not an extreme form? Continuing monarchy in England or depriving women from contesting to become President in USA were equally retrograde and archaic practices, but Dumont forgot them conveniently, not declaring them as extreme types of institutions.

- **Post-Dumontian Views of Hindu Caste:**



McKim Marriott

McKim Marriott advocated an interpretative framework based upon 'coded bodily substance' concepts to analyze the Hindu caste system, slightly different from the one proposed by Dumont. Taking issue with western dualism, Marriott proposed an approach called ethno-sociological, transactional, interactional, monistic, and substance codes based. He saw caste as built on a series of notions concerning bodily substances and inter-personal

exchanges. Based on the study of the Konduru village in the Andhra Pradesh, India, he introduced the interactional approach focusing on who is willing to accept food, water, etc., from whom as a sign of relative status. Those of lower ranks are supposedly willing to accept food from those of higher ranks, but not vice versa. The Brahman caste appears nowhere as receivers of any lower forms of substance-code, such as ordinary payment for services, wives from a lower caste, or ordinary cooked food. Brahmans typically accept substance-code only in a very perfect form, such as gift of a piece of land, money or grain. Brahmans take the highest position through their own divinity, through their exclusive exchanges with still higher, more generous goods, and through their great gifts to other-terrestrial men - cosmic knowledge in the form of substance transformative ceremonies, teaching and advice. Castes that follow, according to Marriott, some kind of maximizing strategy include Rajput and their allies which try to increase a symmetrical exchange through land control, labor, or food distribution, as well as maximizing strategies of marriage, descent and diet to achieve the greatest quality and potency in substance, action, and group substance-code. Those whose tactics include minimizing the number of relationships in which they exchange cooked food, are identified as skilled artisans. The minimizing transactional strategy is designated by the classical name Vaishya, being those with productive power to grow grain, rear cattle, trade, supply butter, and pay taxes.

The groups with more "receiving" than "giving" relationships fall into two occupational categories: Both barbers and leather workers take food as well as bodily substance-codes directly from patrons of many castes. Perhaps the most important aspect of these strategies is that it makes it easy to find out the local caste ranking.

However, does eating the proper food symbolize religious purity or does it actually make a person pure? Knowledge is another important component as a symbol of high status and sacredness, and is seen as partly independent of purity and pollution per se. The strategy is unable to answer the questions addressed above. Dumont's dualism, hierarchy and purity of caste as a religious phenomenon have been challenged by Gloria Godwin Raheja (1990)² based on fieldwork in Pahansu, India, an Uttar Pradesh village dominated by landowning Gujars. The Gujar caste holds 98 percent of all arable land in Pahansu and is hence, by virtue of economic strength, the dominant caste. Raheja suggested that castes were interrelated by three different orders that were actualized and emphasized to various degrees depending on the contexts. The 'hierarchical ordering' constituted by the principle of ritual purity, has the Brahman and the Bhangi (sweeper) as its extreme points. This ordering corresponds to the traditional conception of caste rank.

Inter-caste relationships and Gujar dominance are, however, constituted primarily by dan prestations made in and through jajmani relationships. Jajmani relationships entail an ordering of mutuality in which the members of the service castes receive a share of the harvests, "payment" for loyalty and service rendered to their Gujar patron (jajman). Although asymmetrical, and linked with power and economy, jajmani relations do not define a hierarchical order among castes. The ritually most significant ordering principle in Pahansu is the 'ordering of centrality'. She

² **Gloria Goodwin Raheja** is anthropologist who specializes in ethnographic history. She is the author of several historical works where she explores the concepts of caste and gender in India, colonialism, politics of representation, blues music, capitalism in the Appalachia and other diverse topics. Raheja argues that caste stratification in India was influenced by British colonialism.

argues that sovereignty has political and religious aspects, the Gujar having the crucial function of distributing evil and inauspiciousness through their dan prestations. In their roles as someone who "sacrifices" (jajman), it is right for Gujars to give dan and duty to "others", mainly the members of other castes, including those who are hierarchically superior, and which must accept.

Through dan prestation inauspiciousness is transferred from the giver to the receiver in non-reciprocal relations that express Gujar dominance. Dan prestation are related to notions of the social world as a closed, circular system with regard to inauspiciousness. The luck and wellbeing of one means the misfortune and suffering of another: one man's meat is another man's poison. The duty of caste members to accept dan from their Gujar jajmans, and thereby absolve their sins, is a ritual expression of their subordination. In this respect all other castes than Gujars, Brahmans along with sweepers, carry out virtually identical ritual roles in relation to the jajmans.

Raheja (1990) saw the dominant land controlling caste at the centre of the local jajmani system. Its ritual centrality, rather than superior purity of Brahmans, makes the system operate. Raheja's study clearly demonstrated the multi-dimensionality of caste in a Hindu society. Moreover, although hierarchy is evident in inter-caste relationships, Raheja rejects Dumont's claim that there is one ideological principle and one type of relationship. Instead, she claims that differently valued relationships come to the fore depending on the context. The "centrality" of the Gujar in the exchange structure when they distribute inauspiciousness to "others" is one example of this. However, in the different contexts

defined locally as transactions between “one’s own people,” relationships between the very same castes are conceptualized as sharing and “mutuality. Therefore, it can be said that Brahmans always do not possess high rank and purity, and in such cases they are regarded as polluted and dependent.

Whereas Dumont pointed out that Brahmans are always high ranking and considered as pure. These two visions about Hindu caste clearly contradict each other, and clearly show that there is not a uniform concept of caste within the Hindu value system. Raheja's view of centrality is nearer to the Marxist view of social class in which those who control the means of production are regarded as superior to others, than to the Hindu concept of purity and pollution. In spite of the variation in their empirical reasoning, all three views follow the essentialist paradigm where society is divided into a set of rigid, hierarchical groups bound together in an immutable bond, justified in terms of moral superiority of the clean caste to those considered unclean.

This type of nation state, in my view, remains ontologically and politically inaccessible to its own citizens, representing an injustice against the fellow citizens. By virtue of this situation, it generates enormous conflicts and a constant threat to status quo. It is suppressed whenever possible, but the process of suppression is difficult and will never completely be effective. Many argued that the most prominent and related transformed traditions are kingship and caste. In pre-colonial South India – as in other parts of India – local kings were part of a dynamic network of major and minor kings struggling for dominance in warfare as much as in worship and the support of temples. Kingship was an institution involving the political and religious domains. The social hierarchy at that

time was not so much on the ideology of the pure and the impure as on the institution of the king. Ruling was about people not territory. A system of gift giving was common.

The king bestowed honours, privileges, and tax-free land on all sorts of institutions and people, such as his militia affine, castes, priests, and village heads, thereby securing their loyalty and support as well as his own position. The British, Dirks argues, did not understand how this system worked and what it was all about. In effect, they froze kingship by taking away the political and dynamic aspect and turning it into a theatre state, a hollow crown. He emphasized that the colonial project was not one homogenous design of planning and insight but rather a matter of unintended consequences.

Caste replaced the crown that came before. Caste became the colonial form of society; it justified denial of political rights to Indian subjects (not citizens) and explained the necessity of colonial rule. And caste became the focus of progressive movements and debates – both local and national – about the character of post-colonial politics.

Check Your Progress I

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answers.

b) Check your answers with the possible answers provided at the end of this unit.

1) Explain the Varna and caste system? Spell out the ten characteristics of caste.

Ans.

2) What are the theories of origin of caste system in India?

Ans.

1.10 Let Us Sum Up

- Caste is closely connected with the Hindu philosophy and religion, custom and tradition .It is believed to have had a divine origin and sanction. It is deeply rooted social institution in India. There are more than 2800 castes and sub-castes with all their peculiarities

- The Indian caste system is a classification of people into four hierarchically ranked castes called varnas. They are classified according to occupation and determine access to wealth, power, and privilege. Leadership positions in society are monopolized by a few dominant castes. The two upper castes are ritually considered as superior to the lower castes.
- For Dumont, the dominant principle of Hindu caste system was hierarchy – hierarchy, of course, of a religious, rather than of a political, sort. Other key principles were purity and impurity, also being religious, and interdependence by which parts are interrelated, and related to the whole.

1.11 Keywords

- Varna is a Sanskrit word which means type, order, colour or class. The term refers to social classes in Brahminical books like the Manusmriti. These and other Hindu literature classified the society in principle into four varnas, the Brahmins, the Kshatriyas, the Vaishyas and the Shudras.
- Hierarchy is an arrangement of items (objects, names, values, categories, etc.) in which the items are represented as being "above," "below," or "at the same level as" one another.
- Social stratification is a society's categorization of people into socioeconomic strata, based upon their occupation and income, wealth and social status, or

derived power (social and political). As such, stratification is the relative social position of persons within a social group, category, geographic region, or social unit.

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Unit-2

The Jajmani System in India

Learning Objectives:

After completion of this unit, you should be able to:

- *Understand the meaning of Jajmani System in India*
- *Learn the characteristics of Jajmani System*
- *Know how Jajmani System operated in India*

Structure:

- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Jajmani System
- 2.3 Main Features of Jajmani System in India
 - 2.3.1 Hereditary:
 - 2.3.2. Durable or Permanent Relation
 - 2.3.3. Goods against Services (Barter exchange)
 - 2.3.4. Peace and Satisfaction
 - 2.3.5 Difference in Scope of Work
 - 2.3.6 Ideology of Paternalism
 - 2.3.7 Integration of Castes
 - 2.3.8 It is Functional
 - 2.3.9 It is related to Ritual Matters
- 2.4 Functions, Roles, Norms and Values involved in the Jajmani System
- 2.5 Disintegration of the Jajmani System
- 2.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 2.7 Key Words
- 2.8 References

2.1 Introduction

Jajmani system or Yajman system was an Indian social caste system and its interaction between upper castes and lower castes. It

was an economic system where lower castes performed various functions for upper castes and received grain in return. The term Jajman has its origin in the Sanskrit word yajñamān which means the patron who holds the yajna (Sanskrit: fire worship) which is conducted by the Brahmin (priest) in lieu of Dakshina (Hindi: gift). It got converted to Yajman and finally to Jajman. Jajmani system is the backbone of rural economy and social order. The term 'jajman' refers to the patron or recipient of specialised services and the term 'jajmani' refers to the whole relationship. In fact, the jajmani system is a system of economic, social and ritual ties among different caste groups in a village. Under jajmani system the primary functions of the Brahmin caste is to perform various religious and ceremonial rituals. The Kumhars or Potters make certain pots. In the village the people use earthen pots for various domestic purposes.

The 'Dhobi' or Washerman washes the clothes of others in the village. The Barber dresses the hair of villagers, Carpenter meets the wood-work requirements and 'Kamar' or Blacksmith makes agriculture equipment and other household effects like tounge, hammer etc. which are made of iron. Everyone works for certain family or group of families, with whom he is linked hereditarily. The son performs and will perform same kind of duties performed by his father or forefather. Thus, professions and services in villages are determined by the caste and have come fixed by long traditions. The family or families entitled to certain services from certain persons are called jajman.

These two terms, jajman and Kamin are popular in North Indian villages. Though this system is found all over India the terms used for jajman and kamin are different in different regions. The first

study of jajmani tradition in India was made by William H. Wiser in his book, "The Indian Jajmani system." Oscar Lewis had made more elaborate study of this system. Various sociological studies on jajmani system conducted in Eastern Uttar Pradesh, Malabar, Cochin, Tanjore, Hyderabad, Gujarat and Punjab regions show that this system is universal in rural India.

The serving castes offer their services to landowning upper and intermediate castes and in turn are paid both in cash and kind. The patrons are the landowning dominant castes such as Rajput, Bhumihar, Jat in the North and Kamma, Lingayat and Reddi in Andhra Pradesh and Patel in Gujarat, while the suppliers of the services are from the castes of Brahmin (priest). Barber, Carpenter, Blacksmith, water-carrier, leather workers etc.

A patron had jajmani relations with members of high castes (like Brahmin Priest whose services he needed for rituals). He also required the services of specialists from lower castes perform those necessary tasks like washing of dirty clothes cutting of hair, cleaning of rooms and toilets etc.

Indian Society is structured on caste pattern and the economic and professional relationship between various castes in this setup is called jajmani system. It is a pre- established division of labour among the castes sanctioned by religious and social traditions.

Jajmani is a peculiarity of Indian villages. In India professions are generally hereditary and there is a long tradition of families carrying on selfsame professions over generations. Normally, there is no deviation from the hereditary professions Thus, the son of a Carpenter will become carpenter and the son of an iron-smith will become an iron-smith. Every Indian villager considers it natural

and right to engage in professions peculiar to his caste and, on account of long tradition, feels at home in it and easily acquires proficiency.

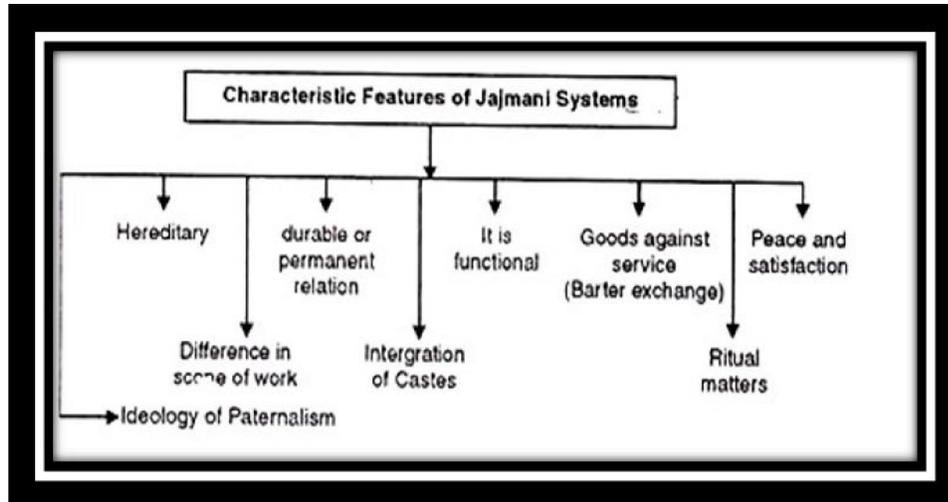
2.2 Jajmani System

According to the Jajmani System, there is exchange of goods and services between landowning higher castes and landless service castes. The service castes traditionally include weavers, leather workers, blacksmiths, goldsmiths, barbers, washermen and so constitute groups of artisans serving the community. The landed higher caste Jajman are the patrons, and the service castes are the kameen (servers) of the jajman. The Jajmani system is based on the agricultural system of production and distribution of goods and services. It is the link between the landowning high caste groups and occupational castes. Oscar Lewis mentions that each caste group within a village is traditionally bound to give certain standardized services to the families of other castes. While the landowning high caste families receive services from lower castes and, in return, the members of low castes receive grains.

The terminology of Jajmani System was introduced into the Indian social anthropology by William Wiser³. In his study of a village in Uttar Pradesh he discovered how different castes interacted with one another in the production and exchange of goods and services. It was found that, with some variations, this system existed throughout India.

³ **William Henricks Wiser** (1890–1961), spelt also as **William Hendricks Wiser**, was an American anthropologist and a Fourth Presbyterian Church, Chicago IL Presbyterian rural missionary sent to North India - Uttar Pradesh. He authored several books, notably, *Behind Mud Walls*, *The Hindu Jajmani System*, and many more

2.3 Main Features of Jajmani System in India



2.3.1 Hereditary:

Jajmani ties are hereditary; i.e. various families belonging to various castes keep on providing their specialist services to particular agriculturist family's generation after generation. The latter do not have the right to discontinue the services of the families of serving occupational castes. If they are not satisfied with the quality of the service, or they notice slackness on the part of the service-providers, they are expected to bring this matter to the attention of the Council of the caste to which the erring family belongs. The jajman-kamin relationship is hereditary in the sense that in case there is separation in the family, these rights are also divided like any other property of the family. Jajmani jobs are considered to be proprietary. When a person has no son but only daughter, the rights are passed on to the son-in-law. If one has no daughter as well, it is passed on to the next nearest relative. Jajmani rights are equally distributed among the successors of the deceased jajman."

2.3.2. Durable or Permanent Relation:

The Jajmani relations are not like wage-relations which can be terminated after the transaction is over. They are durable. They continue over generations. They are exclusive. They are exclusive in the sense that one family will carry out its relations with only one particular family of the particular occupational caste. For example, the farmer family is supposed to carry on such relations with only one blacksmith family, and this blacksmith should make tools only for their own farmer families. The relations are durable in that the link may be inherited on both sides. A blacksmith serves the same farmer family that his father and grand-father served. It is not within the power of the Jajman to remove a particular Kamin or Praja. "It is not easy for an agriculturist to remove a family attached to his household and secure the services of another".

2.3. 3. Goods against Services (Barter exchange):

The relationship between Jajman and Kamin is not purely economic but is a human relationship. Accordingly Jajman takes full responsibility for the welfare of kamin and kamin serves Jajman with full dedication and devotion. Jajman not only provides kamin with food but also gives him clothing's and residential accommodation. The amount of food grain given to kamin depends upon the nature of services rendered. Oscar Lewis conducted a detailed study of the Jajmani system and collected some data regarding Jajmani payments:

Category of Kamin	Nature of Service	Compensatory rights
1. Carpenter (Khati)	Repair of agricultural implements relating to wood work.	One mound foodgrain in a year. 2/3rd seers of foodgrain at the time of harvesting.
2. Ironsmith (Lohar)	Repair of agricultural implements of iron	-do-
3. Potters (Kumhars)	To provide earthen pots and vessels and to do odd jobs during marriages.	Food grains as per value of the pots and vessels and grains according to situation and capacity of the jajman at the time of marriage.

4. Sweeper (Chuhra)	Removal of filth, To prepare dung cakes.	Two meals per day. As much foodgrain he can carry at harvest time. More food grain at marriages.
5. Shoe-maker	Assistance in agriculture. Removal of carcass etc.	1/20th of produce and skins of dead animals.

2.3.4. Peace and Satisfaction:

Peace and satisfaction or contentment is a significant feature of Jajmani system which it provides to the villagers. The kamins of a jajman feel a sense of security. They are not worried of finding employment. This system provides relief to the jajmans also. They are assured of the services of the kamins. Thus both Jajman and Kamin get a sense of security and peaceful living in the village. The old age customs and traditions had made the adjustment between the two and nobody has to bother.

2.3.5 Difference in Scope of Work:

Under jajmani system the range of work of different kamins is not uniform. There is no specific provision that certain kamin should work for one family or one village. A kamin may or can effectively cater to the needs of two or three villages depending upon his nature of work. For example, a barber can serve in more than one village; who can spare time for serving extra jajmans, his services are not required by the jajmans everyday. Another important factor is that demand and supply of a particular type of kamin in the region may also affect the differences in the scope of work. If the supply is greater, then the demand for a particular type of kamin, his scope of work is naturally going to be narrower. Payments also fluctuate according to the available supply of skills and labour and the demand for them. Specialists are imported into a village where there need for them. Brahmins have been entitled to settle in places where previously there were no Brahmins.

2.3.6 Ideology of Paternalism:

It is noticed that there are multiple bonds between the jajman and the kamin or we can say between the patron and client. The patron looks after all those families that work for him. He advances loans or gifts to them at the time of festivals and other similar occasions. He safeguards their interests. He saves them from exploitation at the hands of others. So another Important feature of jajmani system is that it is based on the ideology of paternalism.

2.3.7 Integration of Castes:

Jajmani system leads to the integration of castes. Interconnectedness within different castes is reflected through the joint celebrations of festivals such as Hoh, Kumar Punima, observation of Raja Sankranti etc. on the part of various caste

groups. Through these celebrations caste integration and solidarity is maintained and strengthened and social unity is ensured in the village.

2.3.8 It is Functional:

Jajmani system is functional. It gives security to lower castes that they will never go hungry, for the upper castes. It ensures a regular and uninterrupted supply of services. Because of these relations, the village emerges as a unified body, where the patrons organize rituals and activities that symbolically affect the unity of the village. For Instance, it is believed that some deities like Bhumia, Kshetrapal etc. guard the boundaries of the village. The patrons regularly organize collective worship of these deities. The overall picture is that those who receive the largest number of services are the ones who are expected to care the most for the welfare of the village.

2.3.8 It is related to Ritual Matters:

Under the Jajmani system the servicing castes, the kamins perform the ritual and ceremonial duties at the jajman’s houses on occasions like birth, marriage and death. D.N. Majumdar (1958) has given the example of a Thakur family (Rajput caste) in a village in Lucknow district In U.P.; which is served by as many as ten castes for the life-cycle rites.

Example at the birth-feast of a child	
1.	Brahmin—presides over the ceremony of nama-sanskarana (Giving a name)
2.	Sunar (Goldsmith)—provides gold ornaments for the new born.
3.	Dhobi (Washerman)—washes dirty clothes.
4.	Nai (Barber)—carries the messages.
5.	Khati (carpenter)—provides wooden stool (patta) on which the child is kept for the ceremony.
6.	Lohar (blacksmith)—provides kara.
7.	Kumhar (Potter)—provides Kulhar (jugs) for keeping drinking water.
8.	Pasi—provides patal (leaf plates).
9.	Bhangi (scavenger)—cleans the place after the feast.

All people who help in the function receive gifts of food, money and clothes depending partly on custom, partly on jajman's affluence and partly on the recipient's entreaty.

2.4 Functions, Roles, Norms and Values involved in the Jajmani System

Jajmani system is important as it performs important functions and roles both economic and social. Its role is to regulate the division of labour and economic interdependence of castes. It serves to maintain the Indian village as a self-sufficing unit. It distributes the agricultural produce in exchange for menial and craft services.

The system also helps in maintaining the prestige of higher castes. The kamin castes are expected to render their services to jajman castes, for which the kamins are paid in cash or kind at fixed intervals. The clients of kamins may be from same or different villages.

The significance in this jajman-kamin relationship is that the jajman is expected to give concessions in the form of free food, free clothing, rent-free lands, etc., during various emergencies. The jajmani system is not reciprocal in all the villages. As most of the village economic institutions are undergoing change, such changes are also affecting the inter-caste relationships. Various land reforms had their impact on the interaction among castes, which gradually had affected the jajmani system and other social systems of village life.

The jajman-kamin relationship involves many norms and values. There are various norms concerning rights, duties, payments, concessions, etc. The relationship between them must be like that of a father and a son. The jajman has to fulfill all the needs of his kamins, and the kamin has to support his jajman during disputes.

In jajmani system, the cultural values of generosity and charity are religious obligations. Almost all the sacred, secular Hindu literature authorizes the relationship between the jajman and kamin. The caste councils have the power to punish the jajmans and kamins, if they commit any mistake. The jajman also has the power to take the lands granted to the kamin, if he does not perform his services.

2.5 Disintegration of the Jajmani System

The challenge in the jajmani system came when India was under the British rule. Here, the Britishers were more interested in developing their economy at the cost of Indian economy. They were interested in collecting taxes and using them for war of territorial expansion or to lead a luxurious life.

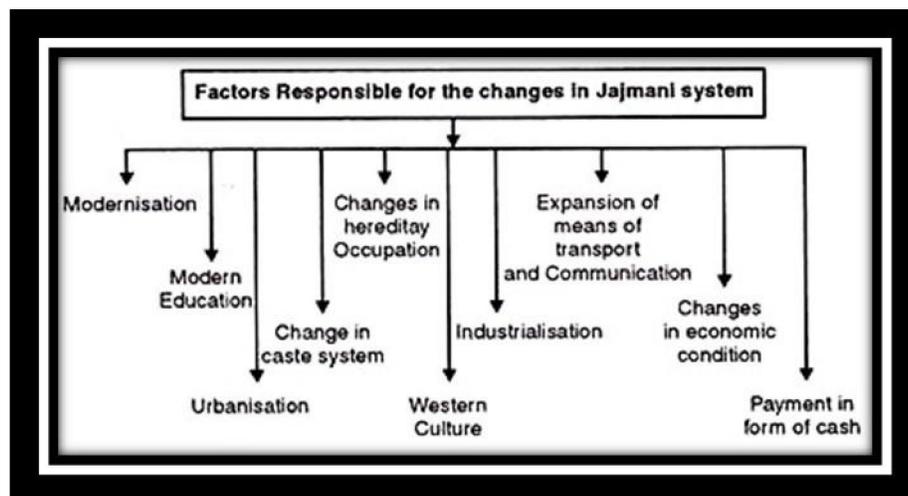
Due to such attitude of Britishers, the local communities suffered both economically and socially. The jajmani system due to its inner strength did not allow the spread of feudalistic tendency to grow, as it contributes to the growth of social barriers. Profit in place of sacrifice and substitution of money for service further weakened the jajmani system.

The changes taking place in the caste system, religious system, political structure, kinship, brought about a change in the jajmani system. All these systems are linked very closely to the jajmani system. Some of the important changes that have influenced the jajmani system are as follows:

1. Industrialization—with the growth of industries, chances of getting new employment have increased. This made the kamins to leave their caste occupations and migrate to urban areas. As a result, the jajman lost the services of the kamin.

2. The rigidity in the caste system decreased, which made possible for kamins to take up new opportunities of employment.
3. Spread of education.
4. Losing of powers by the caste councils and Village Panchayat. The Village Panchayat are deprived of their traditional roles.
5. Abolition of Jagirdari system and introduction of land reforms have also contributed to bringing about a change in the jajmani system.
6. The improved means of transport and communication has helped in making the market transactions easier.
7. Most of the artisans prefer to get money for their goods. Cultivators also prefer to buy articles for their daily needs, from the market, by paying cash.
8. The jajmans, in the present day, prefer to have more political support than depending on their kamins.

Due to the above mentioned factors, the jajmani system is deteriorating day-by-day. Thus, most of the village communities are not dependent on the jajmani-kamin arrangements



Check Your Progress II

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answers.

b) Check your answers with the possible answers provided at the end of this unit.

1) What is Jajmani System? What are the various characteristics of the system?

Ans.

2) What are the reasons for disintegration of the Jajmani system?

Ans.

2.6 Let Us Sum Up

Indian Society is structured on caste pattern and the economic and professional relationship between various castes in this setup is called jajmani system. It is a pre- established division of labour among the castes sanctioned by religious and social traditions.

Jajmani is a peculiarity of Indian villages. In India professions are generally hereditary and there is a long tradition of families

carrying on selfsame professions over generations. Normally, there is no deviation from the hereditary professions Thus, the son of a Carpenter will become carpenter and the son of an iron-smith will become an iron-smith. Every Indian villager considers it natural and right to engage in professions peculiar to his caste and, on account of long tradition, feels at home in it and easily acquires proficiency.

The same relationship had also existed in the last generation and will continue in the next generation. As for example, the Rajput family ... gets the tools and repairs from the descendant of the same blacksmith (lohar) families, whose family members made tool for their family members but when a family becomes extinct, another of its lineage may take its place in the relationship

2.7 Key words

- ***Jajmani System:*** Jajmani system is the backbone of rural economy and social order. The term ‘jajman’ refers to the patron or recipient of specialised services and the term ‘jajmani’ refers to the whole relationship. In fact, the jajmani system is a system of economic, social and ritual ties among different caste groups in a village. According to Webster’s Dictionary Jajman is a “person by whom a Brahmin is hired to perform religious services, hence a patron, a client.” Etymologically, the word jajmani is derived from the Sanskrit word ‘Jajman’ which means a person who performs a Jajna and for the purpose of performance of Jajna he has to hire the service of a Brahmin. Gradually this term came to be applied to

everyone who hired services or to whom some service was given.

- **Barter Exchange:** Barter is a system of exchange where goods or services are directly exchanged for other goods or services without using a medium of exchange, such as money. It is distinguishable from gift economies in many ways; one of them is that the reciprocal exchange is immediate and not delayed in time. It is usually bilateral, but may be multilateral (i.e., mediated through barter organizations) and, in most developed countries, usually only exists parallel to monetary systems to a very limited extent. Barter, as a replacement for money as the method of exchange, is used in times of monetary crisis, such as when the currency may be either unstable.

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Unit-3

Changes in the Caste System and Labour Market

Learning Objectives:

After completion of this unit, you should be able to:

- *Understand the comparative analysis of caste*
- *Differentiate between caste and class*
- *Learn the factors leading to caste and social change*
- *Understand the changing caste based occupational structure*

Structure:

- 3.1 Caste in a Comparative Perspective
- 3.2 Various Studies on Comparative Analysis of Caste
- 3.3 Caste, Social Inequality and Marginalization
- 3.4 Caste and Social Change
 - 3.4.1 Process of Modernization
 - 3.4.2 Education and Adoption of New Skills
 - 3.4.3 Occupation based Mobility
- 3.5 Caste Continuity
- 3.6 Castes in Contemporary times
- 3.7 Affirmative Action and Reservation Policy
- 3.8 Constitutional Provisions
- 3.9 Impact of Reservation Policy on employment and education
- 3.10 Caste and Class: A Comparison
- 3.11 Caste to Class: The changing labour dynamics
- 3.12 Let Us Sum Up
- 3.13 Key Words
- 3.14 References
- 3.15 Check Your Progress – Possible Answers

3.1 Caste in a Comparative Perspective

Caste as a structural phenomenon is considered as a category or type within a general theory of social stratification, comparable in many respects to hierarchical organizations elsewhere.

Indian caste, is analogous to social structures elsewhere in which rank is ascribed, such as, for instance, racial differentiation in the United States. Comparative social theorists have generally placed caste systems not as a unique religious ideological or structural category but as a matter of social differentiation and social stratification.

Among the anthropologists studying caste in India, there exist different theoretical approaches, including those who regard it as an extreme form of social stratification, comparable with other forms of inequality based on social classes, wealth or political power. This approach emphasizes that caste system are held together by power concentrated in certain groups (the landholding and dominant caste), more than on a general consensus among the population.

There was focus on caste in terms of bounded groups and argue that very strict separation and endogamy only operate in particular circumstances and for particular groups. Those who aspire to dominance, have to define themselves as this is always an inherently fluid business. Castes are always relatively, rather than absolutely, bounded. One way to begin explaining caste is to say what is not – that is to see it in comparative perspective.

Few theorists argued that caste is a peculiar institution with peculiar consequences. They suggested a more comprehensive approach that allows cross-cultural comparisons without sacrificing cultural factors and distinctive patterns of social integration. Accordingly, a caste system occurs where a society is made up of birth-ascribed groups which are hierarchically ordered and culturally distinct. The hierarchy entails differential evaluation, rewards, and association.

Caste systems were analyzed in terms of how they work, and what they do to people. When viewed comparatively and structurally, caste systems have customarily been described as systems of stratification – rigid, birth ascribed, permitting no individual mobility, but nevertheless examples of ranked aggregates of people. Comparative social theorists argue that every system of social stratification allocates power and privilege in the society in which it occurs, and most, if not all, such systems are associated with some ranked division of labor that promotes interdependence. Caste systems are systems of social stratification that, although unique in that they are based on birth-ascription, share the general attributes of such systems.

Theorists argued that analyses of caste systems often have overlooked that they are more than simply rigid systems of stratification. Thus, castes are recognized as groups that usually have specific names, and they are in some ways interdependent. Between castes there exist barriers to social intercourse, cultural differences, and differential degrees of power and privileges. Associated with caste in many and perhaps all instances is a degree of occupational specialization.

They are also systems of cultural pluralism, maintained by enforced differential association among culturally distinctive groups. The most striking similarities among caste systems are the social relations and patterns of interaction. There are numerous rules and restriction on marriage, on sex relations, on living together, on eating together, on sitting together, and on a variety of other forms of interaction symbolic of social inequality. Concept of caste was applicable anywhere outside Hindu India, and usefully could be applied to societies with hierarchical endogamous sub divisions where membership is hereditary and permanent, wherever they occur.

3.2 Various Studies on Comparative Analysis of Caste

The literature on caste in India, the race in America, on the Burakumin in Japan, on specific societies such as Rwanda and South Africa provide a starting place of a comparative study of caste.

- Jacques J. Maquet (1970) described the tri-partite system, comparing three different groups among the Rwanda people: Tutsi, Hutu, and Twa. The immediately noticeable differences among these groups occur in their activities, their social statuses, and their physical types. To be Tutsi, a Hutu or a Twa gave an individual a different status in society. Birth ascribed social status and occupation, marriage endogamy, and food transaction rules are very near the model of a caste. Therefore, it can be said that Rwanda strata are more castes than classes.
- There are studies which have found caste among Muslims, Sikhs and Christians also. In a study of the Pathan of Swat, North Pakistan, Fredrik Barth (1960) described social

stratification, and argue that the concept of caste is to be useful in sociological analysis and its definition must be based on structural criteria and not on particular features of the Hindu philosophical scheme. He regarded caste as a system of social stratification and concluded the principle of status summation seems to be the structural feature which most clearly characterizes caste as a system of social stratification. Barth compares the system of social stratification among the people of Swat with Hindu caste system. Although the people of Swat are Muslims, Barth considers their division into social groups known as qoum similar to castes. The population is divided into various qoums that strongly resemble Hindu castes. Following the basic characteristics of Indian caste system, Barth postulated the patron client relationship as the basis of the caste system. According to Barth, the Pathan system of patronage and the Hindu jajmani system are similar, where the lower status groups pay service to the higher groups. Each qoum are ranked by status, and high portions of the marriages are endogamous. In Swat, as in Hindu societies, the notion that pollution derives from body processes marks off certain castes as occupationally polluted. The indigenous polluted castes include washer man, sieve-makers, and dancers who are similar to India. This similarity, he points out, is a matter of structure rather than of culture. In Barth's essay, caste was analyzed not as a set of ritual groups, but as a pattern of social stratification. Caste systems are considered to be characterized by the relatively high degree of congruence between the various status frameworks found in the community, with their hierarchies, and the hierarchy of caste categories. He

further argued that the model for social identities should be composed of the silent features of the life circumstances for different caste at different times.

- In another study of Fredrik Barth (1993) of Bali-Hindu people in Indonesia the 'basic division of population is that of caste'. This provides a different picture than the one of Hindu caste in Nepal and India. On the one hand, people are divided on the basis of the Warna (sanskrit) system, and on the other hand, caste is not a very silent feature of their everyday life and contemporary social relations. Many aspects of caste behavior are no longer observed. Level of seating and head elevation are no longer respected by the general public, even in the context of formal ritual. Endogamy is disappearing, so that even high caste girls are increasingly marrying down, and wealth and modern education are far more significant assets than high birth. He further wrote that “caste in North Bali exhibits confusing features” and provides similar problems about purity and pollution. These two brilliant studies of Barth provided the clear picture that there are more similarities of the Hindu caste in the non-Hindu area (Swat), while there are Hindus in Bali without traditional types of castes or Varna rights and duties. It can be said that Barth's generative models see social reality as an emergent phenomenon.
- Muslims in India are divided into groups closely parallel to the caste system and notions of pollution and untouchable are found among them. Caste groups are found even in Sri Lanka, where Buddhism has been the religion of the Sinhalese people. Examples of similar caste systems are also reported from Burma, Japan and some other countries.

The Marxist approach to the study of caste has been applied with successful results in India.

- André Beteille's important study in India introduced a new system in which lower castes have some political and economic power. According to Beteille, "the caste system is clearly a hierarchical system, although the nature of this hierarchy may be difficult to ascertain beyond certain broad terms. Landowners, tenants and agricultural labourers (of the same caste) also constitute a hierarchy". In the past, the division of a village was dominated not only by rituals, but also economic and political life. Today, there are many areas of life which are becoming progressively "caste free". Thus, landownership, occupation, and even education are not to some extent dependent upon caste. Today, the education system is far more open both in principle and practice. Education not only enables to compete on more equal terms with the Brahmans for white-collar jobs, but also provides them with more equal chances of political participation. In the towns and cities, white-collar jobs are relatively caste free.

3.3 Caste, Social Inequality and Marginalization

Marginalization is the process by which established or emerging elites create superior versus subordinate/dependent socio-economic relations through manipulations of labor and distributions of social resources. In the caste-based society, high caste groups promoted their own advancement and initiated various economic changes at the community and regional levels that effectively marginalized the people in several important ways.

Marginalization

- ▶ Marginalization is defined as a complex process of relegating specific groups of people to the lower or outer edge of society. It effectively pushes these groups of people to the margin of society economically, politically, culturally and socially following the policy of exclusion. It denies a section of the society equal access to productive resources and avenues for the realization of their productive human potential and opportunities for their full capacity utilization.

For instance, as rising elites begin to accrue power, privilege and status, they draw increasingly economic dependent sectors of the population into important production roles or labour-intensive group activities. There was an argument that if rising elites learn to control the information or technology critical to economic success and thus orchestrate network of interdependencies that limit power outside their small circle, then non-elites become marginalized from positions of substantial political or economic influence.

This process establishes the foundation for permanent social inequality. Important potential sources for emerging elite power include, most fundamentally, control over human labor, but also over information, and/or transportation. The ability of dominant groups to bring more and more labor under its control resulted rather quickly in exaggerated wealth inequities and higher social positions for some. Higher caste groups gained considerably more power, wealth and influence than the lower caste groups, thus bringing them higher economic status.

The Dalits were forced to continue their work to sustain food, clothing and shelter. Men continued to work for wages or jajamani systems and the households became increasingly stratified based on caste identity. Dalit women continued to provide subsistence in traditional ways and thus supported the men, who provided most of the household's income. The role of some upper caste household members in supporting an increasingly wage-based (and less subsistence oriented) household economy as male pursued income from the outside, may have a counterpart in internal changes within agricultural societies.

3.4 Caste and Social Change:

Social change refers to an alteration in the social order of a society. Social change may include changes in nature, social institutions, social behaviours or social relations.

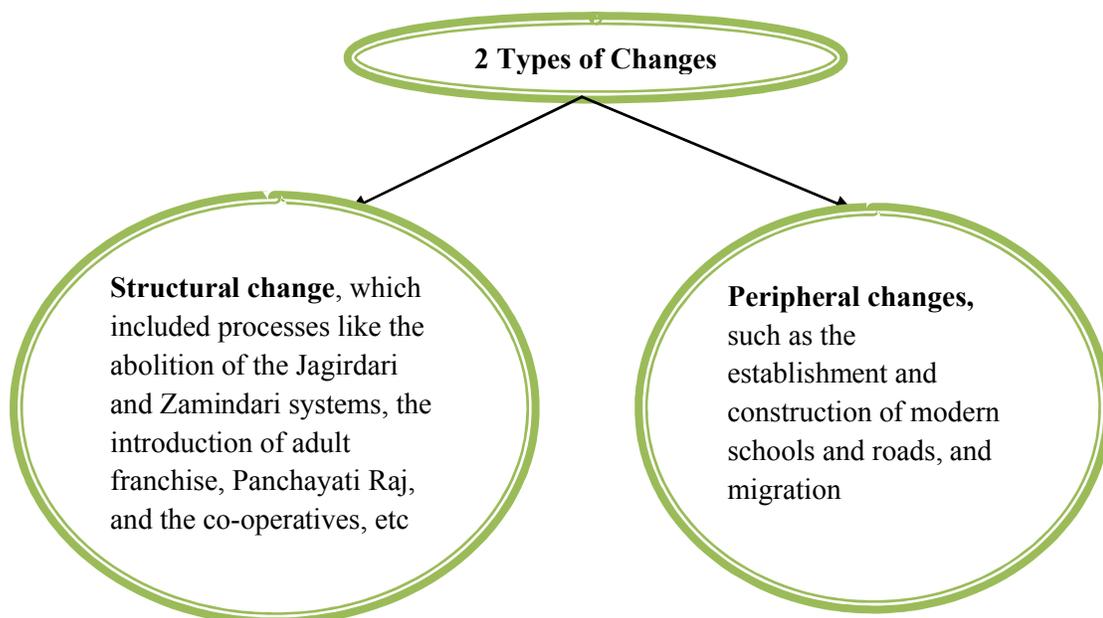
Commenting on the nature of change taking place, G.S. Ghurye as early as in 1932, argued that attacks on hierarchy started with the rise of non-Brahmin movements in the southern provinces in India. These mobilizations generated a new kind of collective sentiments and the feeling of caste solidarity.

Mysore Narasimhachar Srinivas (1916–1999) was an Indian sociologist. He is mostly known for his work on caste and caste systems, social stratification, Sanskritisation and Westernization in southern India.



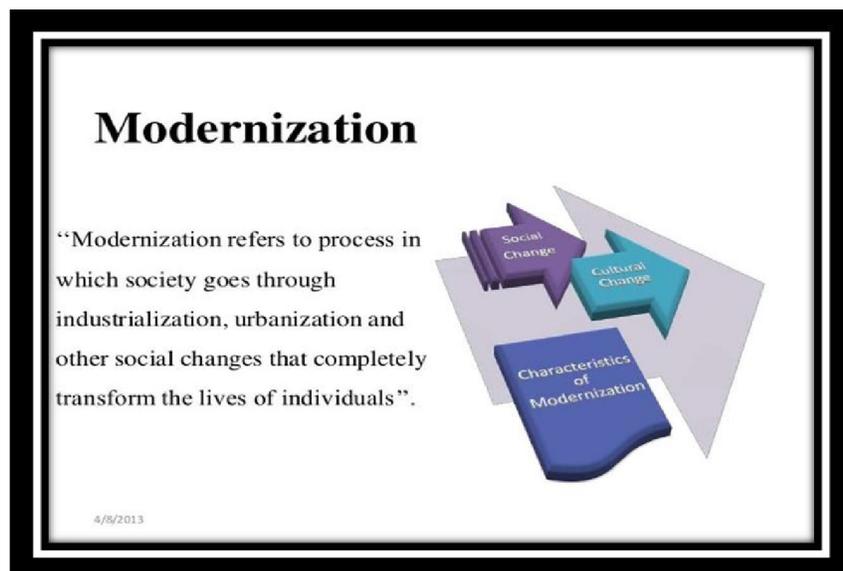
colonial rulers in India, he argued that, far from disappearing with the process of modernization, caste was experiencing a 'horizontal consolidation'. Commenting on the impact of modern technology on caste, Srinivas wrote: The coming in of printing, of a regular postal service, of vernacular newspapers and books, of the telegraph, railway and bus, enabled the representatives of a caste living in different areas to meet and discuss their common problems and interests. Western education gave new political values such as liberty and equality. The educated leaders started caste journals and held caste conferences. Funds were collected to organize the caste, and to help the poorer members. Caste hostels, hospitals, cooperative societies etc., became a common feature of urban social life. In general, it may be confidently said that the last hundred years have been a great increase in caste solidarity, and the concomitant decrease of a sense of interdependence between different castes living in a region.

Based on the empirical materials from six villages in Rajasthan, it was found that two types of changes had taken place in the village community:



3.4.1 Process of Modernization

The process of modernization in a caste starts when the ritualistic considerations of caste stratification become considerably less effective, and new attributes are substituted to maintain status. For example, the upper castes, in general, put more emphasis on achieving higher education, higher income, white-collar occupations, and positions of power and influence than on reinforcing their ritualistic endowments. The systems of Jagirdari and Zamindari in the past vested a kind of economic power in the hands of the upper castes, which reinforced their ritual status and its accompanying privileges and obligations.



The abolition of these institutions has thus affected the role of ritual superiority in the village’s social stratification system. Many aspects of the Jajmani relations have been weakened; a variety of ritual obligations are now becoming obsolete. Consequently the upper castes are finding new means through education, political

participation, and mechanization of agriculture, etc, to compensate the loss of their traditional social status.

3.4.2 Education and Adoption of New Skills

On the one hand, this leads to adoption of new skills and technologies, and on the other hand, it weakens the role of traditional values and rituals in their social and cultural life. Thus, what is modernization from one point of view also turns out to be de-sanskritization from another. Education is another factor through which some castes that previously were not dominant in a village, have improved their status. In such cases, the position of the educated families compares even more favorably with that of the former dominant castes families whom they have now replaced.

3.4.3 Occupation based Mobility

Mobility in caste structure is evidenced by a sense of caste solidarity that exists in the minds of the people of the various castes. This sense of caste unity prevails more among the Dalits than the upper castes. There is another level at which this statement needs to be approached in order to gain an insight into the exact nature of change in the caste-occupation nexus. For instance, what has happened to ancient occupations that have survived changes in economic structure, for instance, the priest in temples, scavengers, traditional moneylenders, and several of the agricultural jobs? Are these jobs still performed by castes to which they were traditionally allocated? Or, is the reshuffling of the deck total, that is, is the modern occupational structure randomly distributed across castes? Is it likely that here we may find more change than

continuity. Also, what happens to those who have left traditional jobs, either because those occupations themselves are vanishing or because of the quest for better jobs? Is it true that lower castes tend to get absorbed into lower paying and less prestigious modern occupations and higher castes get concentrated at the upper end of the modern spectrum.

Major occupation of workers (% of total workers) by Social status

Occupational structure	Year 1975					Year 2010				
	OBC	ST	SC	Others	Total	OBC	ST	SC	Others	Total
Males										
Agriculture (I)	92	94	90	88	91	76	69	53	85	74
Cultivation	45	47	19	59	44	48	47	16	56	47
Livestock	14	18	7	16	14	6	9	5	5	7
Agricultural labourer	33	29	64	13	33	22	13	32	24	20
Non-agriculture (II)	8	6	10	12	9	24	31	47	15	26
Non-agricultural labourer	0	0	1	1	0	17	12	37	15	16
Salaried	2	5	5	6	3	6	3	11	0	4
Business	1	1	2	3	2	1	1	0	0	1
Others	4	0	2	2	3	1	15	0	0	6
Total (II)	100									
Females										
Agriculture (I)	100	84	100	100	93	76	72	75	71	74
Cultivation	49	38	0	8	35	47	48	24	55	46
Livestock	9	0	0	0	3	2	4	3	3	3
Agricultural labourer	42	46	100	92	55	27	20	48	13	25
Non-agriculture (II)	0	16	0	0	7	24	28	25	29	26
Non-agricultural labourer	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	2	0	1
Salaried	0	0	0	0	0	8	16	12	15	11
Business	0	4	0	0	2	4	4	1	9	5
Others	0	12	0	0	5	11	6	10	5	9
Total (II)	100									

Notes: OBC: Other Backward Caste; SC: Scheduled Caste; ST: Scheduled Tribes

It is possible then, that the link between caste and occupation can be broken and yet the overlap of caste and class can be very strong. If this is true, the contemporary situation could be regarded as a permutation of an earlier caste structure where the link between caste and occupation may be strong for some castes, weak for others, but the association between caste and status or, more correctly, between caste and privilege, persists, albeit in a different form. It can never be argued that the cumulative advantage of upper castes has been so strong that they no longer need an

institutional structure of hereditary reservations in order to perpetuate their privilege.

This is one more instance where a rigorous social and economic investigation into the caste composition of the occupational structure can help drive an objective, larger picture of the nature and degree of change. Does this suggest that caste today simply captures class? This is a perennial question, confounded by the fact that the overlap between the two is very strong. However, my belief is that they are distinct, despite the very large overlap.

One of the most significant contributors to the study of caste, Srinivas (2003) argued that the subsistence economy of rural India, dependent on jati-based division of labor, is the 'essence of caste'. As this is rapidly breaking down, it 'augurs the end of social order which has continued for 2000 years or more'. He suggested that production will become freed from jati-based division of labor, economic relation will payments become autonomous, and payments in goods will be replaced by cash. Indian rural society will move, or is moving, from status to contract. The reality, as any serious observer of India can tell, is that caste has changed tremendously over time.

So much so that many, especially those with exposure only to the metropolitan cities, believe for all purposes that it is virtually dead. It would be argued, for instance, that the fewer overt instances of untouchables in urban areas than in the more traditional rural settings, demonstrates that caste is increasingly irrelevant. However, that should be the least expected outcome in a society in which the untouchable phenomenon has been formally abolished for six decades.

3.5 Caste Continuity

What is astonishing is the extent of untouchable practice that continues in the country, even in urban settings, despite the abolition after independence, the bulk of which is unreported and goes unpublished. Caste-based matrimonial alliances continue to be more the rule than the exception, even among otherwise westernized, modern, apparently caste blind youth. The agitation against caste-based quotas in education and employment that are pre-dominantly urban-based, display a very high level of caste consciousness and use overt caste-related slogans and acts of protest, thus putting a question mark on the supposed disappearance of caste in urban India.

It would, therefore, not be an exaggeration to argue that caste remains a powerful and potent force in Indian society, decisively shaping the contours of social and political development. Here again, Srinivas took the view that while the caste system is dying, individual castes are flourishing. He discussed the post independence mobilization of people on the basis of ethnicity and caste, and how this has resulted in the 'horizontal stretch' of caste. Thus, he suggested that what are called castes today, are more accurately clusters of (agnate) sub-castes that have come together for better access to such scarce resources as political power, economic opportunities, government jobs, and professional education. It can be argued that the real key to the degree of change in the caste system is the degree of change in conditions of those who are its worst sufferers—the (ex-) untouchables. As long as the three dimensions of untouchable – exclusion, humiliation,

and exploitation - continue to persist, we cannot declare the caste system to be dead.

3.6 Castes in Contemporary times

The leaders of independent India decided that India will be democratic, socialist and secular country. According to this policy there is a separation between religion and state. Practicing untouchability or discriminating a person based on his caste is legally forbidden. Along with this law the government allows positive discrimination of the depressed classes of India.

The Indians have also become more flexible in their caste system customs. In general the urban people in India are less strict about the caste system than the rural. In cities one can see different caste people mingling with each other, while in some rural areas there is still discrimination based on castes and sometimes also on untouchability. Sometimes in villages or in the cities there are violent clashes which, are connected to caste tensions. Sometimes the high castes strike the lower castes who dare to uplift their status. Sometimes the lower caste gets back on the higher castes.

In modern India the term caste is used for Jat and also for Varna. The term, caste was used by the British who ruled India until 1947. The British who wanted to rule India efficiently made lists of Indian communities. They used two terms to describe Indian communities.

According to the central government policy, the three categories SC, ST and OBCs are entitled for positive discrimination. Sometimes these three categories are defined together as Backward

Classes. 15% of India's population is Scheduled Castes. According to central government policy 15% of the government jobs and 15% of the students admitted to universities must be from Scheduled Castes. For the Scheduled Tribes about 7.5% places are reserved which is their proportion in Indian population. The Other Backwards Classes are about 50% of India's population, but only 27% of government jobs are reserved for them.

3.7 Affirmative Action and Reservation Policy

The term '*affirmative action*' is typically used as the generic term covering measures of many sorts that are used to give members of traditionally disadvantaged groups a better shot at social advantage. Such measures may include encouragement, recruitment, and many non-formal types of support, as well as more formal devices, such as quotas, or reservation.

Affirmative action reservation and **positive discrimination** in India is the policy of favoring members of a disadvantaged group who currently suffer or historically have suffered from discrimination within a culture. Often, these people are disadvantaged for historical reasons, such as oppression or slavery

Among such measures, '*positive discrimination*' has typically been salient – that is, giving an extra boost to members of disadvantaged groups in certain competitive contexts. Positive discrimination itself comes in many varieties: quotas or 'reservations', a preferences or priorities in hiring or awarding contracts; a specific types of numerical advantage, such as adding points to standard test scores; and finally, a much more informal and unquantifiable weighting of group membership as one among

many characteristics relevant to a decision. India pioneered the adoption of an elaborate program of affirmative action which is sanctioned in the constitution.

The affirmative policies in India fall broadly into two types: anti-discriminatory or protective measures, and developmental and empowering measures. Anti-discriminatory measures include the provision of legal safeguards against discrimination. Development and empowering measures to overcome past economic and social handicaps take the forms of reservation policies for the public sector and state-supported sectors.

- The most significant of these measures was the provision of reservation in education and government employment for Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs), and special representation rights for both these groups by way of reserved seats in legislatures. The existence of caste has been recognized negatively to identify the historically discriminated groups and eradicate caste inequality through a public reservation (quota) policy so that all members of the nation would be able to participate in public and political life as equals. In the past, the lower castes had been denied all kinds of social and economic endowment. Hence, they had been lagging behind in the development process. Therefore, there was a need for special safeguard policies. The objective of a reservation policy is to eradicate the existing social and economic disparities in the society by introducing a quota system.
- Furthermore, the justification for upholding reservations for SCs and STs came from acknowledging that these

communities lacked viable marketable assets that would allow them to pursue a life of dignity in a democratic society.

- The SCs were denied education, and could only perform menial and polluting jobs, besides suffering from a variety of other deprivations. In the case of the STs, it was their physical isolation that put them at a disadvantage with respect to others in society.
- Reservations for these communities were therefore meant to raise their marketable skills and educational standards in order to compensate for their historic disadvantages and facilitate their participation as equal citizens.

3.8 Constitutional Provisions

The exact necessities for the reservation in services in favour of the members of the SC/STs have been made in the Constitution of India. They are as follows:

- Article 15(4) and 16(4) of the Constitution enabled both the state and Central Governments to reserve seats in public services for the members of the SC and ST, thereby, enshrining impartiality of opportunity in matters of civic service.
- Article 15(4) states that: “Nothing in this Article shall prevent the State from making any provision for the reservation of appointments or posts in favour of any backward class or citizens, which, in the opinion of the State, is not adequately represented in the services under the State.”
- Article 16(4 A) states that: “Nothing in this article shall prevent the State from making any provisions for

reservation in the matter of promotion to any class or classes of posts in the services under the State in favour of SCs and STs which in the opinion of the State are not adequately represented under the State”(Constitutional 77th Amendment, - Act, 1995).

- Article 16 (4 B) states that: “Nothing in this article shall prevent the State from considering any unfilled vacancies of a year which are reserved for being filled up in that year in accordance with any provision for reservation made under clause (4) or clause (4A) as a separate class of vacancies to be filled up in any succeeding year or years and such class of vacancies shall not be considered together with the vacancies of the year in which they are being filled up for determining the ceiling of fifty percent reservation on total number of vacancies of that year” (Constitutional 81st Amendment, - Act, 2000).
- The Constitution prohibits discrimination (Article 15) of any citizen on grounds of religion, race, caste, etc.; untouchability (Article 17); and forced labour (Article 23). It provides for specific representation through reservation of seats for the SCs and the STs in the Parliament (Article 330) and in the State Legislative Assemblies (Article 332), as well as, in Government and public sector jobs, in both the federal and state Governments (Articles 16(4), 330(4) and 335). (Sukhadeo Thorat and Chittaranjan Senapati 2006).

3.9 Impact of Reservation Policy on employment and education

The strategy of reservation had a helpful effect in conditions of induction of scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and other backward classes into public sector employment and in educational institutions. However, their accessible share in employment and educational institutions still falls short of the target in certain categories of jobs and higher education. The target in the case of Groups D and C are close to the population mark of 15 per cent for scheduled castes and 7.5 % for scheduled tribes but fall short in Groups A and B. As against this, the true position regarding the representation of other backward classes in central services is not available. However, as stated in para 6.4, in the All India Services and central services for which employment is made through the Union Public Service Commission, representation of other backward classes is very near to their share. With the growth in the share of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes in public services, it had positive multiple effects on the social and economic situation of these two disadvantaged groups. The data provided by the ministry of personnel indicates that in recent years the vacancies reserved for the scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and other backward classes are being filled fully even in the „elite“ services at the centre. 8.3. Reservation did not provide equal opportunities within each group/community to all beneficiaries. Consequently, different castes and tribes within a group/community have not benefited from reservation equally. Almost in all categories of beneficiaries among scheduled castes, scheduled tribes or other backward classes and minorities, there is a growing sense of deprivation amongst different categories, which is leading to

internal dissension. For example*, in Punjab, the Valmiki Samaj is asking for a separate quota of reservations on the ground that Ramadasis and Mazbis have cornered the benefits. Likewise, Chamars in Uttar Pradesh and Mahars in Maharashtra are said to have benefited from the reservations more than other castes identified in the schedule from these regions. Similar accusations have been made against the Meena community by other scheduled tribes.

Problems of this kind are manifold in the case of other backward classes, as in each state there are dominant groups, usually with economic and political clout, who reap the benefits of reservations. There are Ezhavas in Kerala, Nadars and Thevars in Tamil Nadu, Vokkalligas and Lingayats in Karnataka, Lodhs and Koeris in Central India, Yadavs and Kurmis in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh and Jats in Rajasthan, which, despite their dominant status, have been clubbed as backward classes eligible for benefits under reservations. For these reasons, reservation has become a contentious issue today, more so when it is applied to other backward classes.

Reservation for minorities has been provided by the state governments of Kerala and Karnataka. [Kerala provides 10 per cent reservation in educational institutions and 12 per cent reservation in employment for Muslims as well as two per cent reservation in educational institutions and four per cent reservation in employment for Christians/LCs/Anglo-Indians. Karnataka provides four per cent reservation in educational institutions and four per cent reservation in employment for Muslims.] The government of Andhra Pradesh also passed an act providing five per cent reservation for Muslims. However, this has been turned down by the apex court for want of specific recommendations by

the state Backward Classes Commission. On March 25, 2010 the Supreme Court gave an interim order up- holding the validity of four per cent reservation provided to backward members of the Muslim community in the situation. A bench comprising Chief Justice KG Balakrishnan and Justices JM Panchal and BS Chauhan however referred the issue to a Constitution bench to examine the validity of the impugned act, since it concerned vital issues of the Constitution.

3.10 Caste and Class: A Comparison

The resurgence of caste, with its multiple facets, is a new phenomenon in the post-independence period. Those who have analysed class relations as a dominant causality, they explain caste and other cultural aspects in Indian society as a part of class analysis. Class alone is not a result of the new forces of change. Changes are in the traditional caste and class relations and not in caste alone paving the way to the emergence of class relations. Thus, classes are found as a part of a system of social stratification in the same way as castes are rooted in Indian society. Class, class relations and class conflicts are not monolithic. There are objective criteria of class identification, and class is- also a concrete unit of interaction vis-a-vis other units.

Characteristics	Class pattern	Caste pattern
Value-definition of inferiority-superiority	Applied to any characteristics	Usually applied to biological aspect
Relevancy in norm-role definitions	Less than in caste system	More than in class system
Self-definitions	Labels and awareness may be vague.	Rigid labels and awareness
Change and mobility	provided for and expected	Neither provided for not expected.
Material objects	Possession of valued objects increases as class position increases.	Possession of valued objects increases as caste position increases.

Caste inheretes numerous problems related to economic domination and subjugation, privileges and deprivations, and conspicuous waste and bare survival. Class relationships are treated as background assumptions in the treatment of caste and kinship in India. The jajmani system can be explained in terms of class relations and the mode of production. Division of labour and patron client relationships refer to the economic dimensions of the jajmani system.

Caste riots are frequent in areas where economic deprivations have been reported. The upper castes have waged a class war against Harijans. Dalits/Harijans have been attacked and murdered, their womenfolk raped and put to indignities by the upper caste landlord families. The intermediate castes have ascended in the class hierarchy, but they are struggling against the upper castes socially and culturally. These castes have been benefited by land reforms and adult franchise more than other caste groups. The Brahmanas have lost their traditional dominance mainly because of the emergence of the numerically preponderant middle castes.

The caste system is used as an effective method of economic exploitation. The dominant class (caste) also acquires political power and social prestige with which it further perpetuates and consolidates caste hierarchy. Thus, caste hierarchy reflects ownership of land, and economic hierarchy is closely linked with social hierarchy. Caste determines a definite relation to the means of production and subsistence, especially in rural areas. Caste riots reflect conflict of class interests. Ambedkar rightly observed that the caste system was not merely a division of labour, but also “a division of labourers”.

However, caste prevents labourers from becoming a class-by-itself, hence caste is an ideology. Caste has persisted as a religious and feudal ideology. However, today, the caste system is not strong because of disappearance of inter-caste relations. Castes are discrete groups, and hence segmentary entities. Depending upon a given situation, members of caste behave or do not behave like a caste group.

Caste is no more an everyday life phenomenon. Incongruities between caste, class and power are indicative of social mobility in the caste system. The corporate character of caste is under attack; the dominant castes do not enjoy hegemony of power.

Mobility in the caste system, therefore, takes place at three levels:

- (1) Individual,
- (2) Family, and
- (3) Group.

Individual is present in both family and caste, and family is considered significant in caste, and both family and caste become sources of identity and support for individual. Intra-caste differentiation can be explained in terms of the status and honour of the members and the families of a given caste. Castes function as interest groups because they strive for new patterns of distributive justice and equality. Caste associations, caste panchayats and caste-run magazines have strengthened caste ideology. Caste lobbies in parliament, state assemblies and in zila parishads, panchayat samitis and village panchayats have become a fact of today's political life.

3.11 Caste to Class: The changing labour dynamics

A significant connection between the caste status and job status could historically be established, as many castes have traditionally been associated with occupations. Thus, the caste seemed to determine the type of occupations a person can pursue. The traditional village economy revolved around a hereditary caste hierarchy that prescribed individuals' occupations. The upper castes were priests & landowners, middle ranked castes were farmers and artisans and the lowest ranked castes, the Dalits (Scheduled Castes) were the labourers and performers of menial tasks.

The position of castes in the social hierarchy had a clear relationship with their economic status and wellbeing. The Scheduled Castes (SC) clustered in occupations that were least paid and most degrading in terms of manual labour. The social and occupational restrictions imposed by the hereditary nature of the caste system were the biggest impediment to social mobility among them. The continued occupational linkage with caste contributed in the perpetuation of the caste system.

The association of caste and occupation in the Indian society has been studied by scholars from diverse fields. While some have viewed it as a rigid system with very little or no chance of social mobility, others have viewed the caste system to be dynamic in nature.

The ethnographic studies have documented the changes in occupational structure in Indian villages across castes over time. Several studies find clear evidence of occupational mobility among low castes over time. For example, based on fieldwork for around

20 years in Behror, a village in the Western State of Rajasthan, Mendelsohn finds that with increasing political consciousness, the *Chamars*, engaged in shoe repair and leather work, the *Bhangis* engaged in toilet cleaning and the *Dhanaks* engaged in weaving are no longer willing to perform small traditional work and are increasingly moving out of the village in search of new employment opportunities. This has adversely affected the old jajmani system in which such functional castes used to work.

Many scholars believe that caste as a traditional system of social hierarchy and culture would weaken and eventually disappear with the processes of development and modernization. Studies have shown that with increased educational opportunities, the inter-generational occupational mobility rates have increased.

The increased modernization and development have created supply and demand of new goods and services. With this, new occupations with skilled and diversified job requirements and division of labour have emerged. There is a need to look into the impact of these changes on the old occupational structure and on the association between occupations and caste. As 'new work opportunities emerge, competition opens up and productivity increases, the economic growth rate is likely to get accelerated, which in turn would multiply job opportunities to such an extent that workers and the employers may not consider caste factor in getting and providing jobs.

Looking at the traditional linkage between caste and menial labour we find that the occupations connected with the Dalits were mainly unclean and degrading ones, with little or no scope of vertical mobility. However, with the enactment of radical affirmative

action policies, providing quotas in state and central legislatures, village governments, the civil service and government-sponsored educational institutions to SCs a progressive shift and dissociation can be seen between occupations and caste status. Such changes albeit slow are the indications of social change.

The dissociation between caste and occupation can be seen relatively more in urban than rural areas because of the concentration of modern occupations in urban areas. The analysis of the process of delinking becomes important to know whether the trend points towards the evolving of a homogeneous, integrated and casteless society. More so in light of the series of welfare and development measures that have been taken up in the country post liberalization that have resulted in increased opportunities for all sections of the society. The studies have indicated that the impact of caste is declining on new and modern occupations. However, it is quite possible that the social stigma associated with traditional occupations reinforces the continuance of SCs and marginalized groups into the traditional occupations. To a large extent the influence of caste on occupation varies by the level of education and professional skills and unless the community is empowered both educationally and socially, the disparity in society entrenched within the caste-occupation nexus cannot be eliminated.

Check Your Progress III

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answers.

b) Check your answers with the possible answers provided at the end of this unit.

1) Discuss the changes in the Caste System.

Ans.

2) What are the Constitutional Provisions for affirmative action?

Ans.

3.12 Let Us Sum Up

- Indian caste, is analogous to social structures elsewhere in which rank is ascribed, such as, for instance, racial differentiation in the United States. Comparative social theorists have generally placed caste systems not as a unique religious ideological or structural category but as a matter of social differentiation and social stratification.
- Among the anthropologists studying caste in India, there exist different theoretical approaches, including those who

regard it as an extreme form of social stratification, comparable with other forms of inequality based on social classes, wealth or political power. This approach emphasizes that caste system are held together by power concentrated in certain groups (the landholding and dominant caste), more than on a general consensus among the population.

- The process of modernization in a caste starts when the ritualistic considerations of caste stratification become considerably less effective, and new attributes are substituted to maintain status. For example, the upper castes, in general, put more emphasis on achieving higher education, higher income, white-collar occupations, and positions of power and influence than on reinforcing their ritualistic endowments.
- The strategy of reservation had a helpful effect in conditions of induction of scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and other backward classes into public sector employment and in educational institutions.

3.13 Key Words

- *Affirmative action reservation and positive discrimination* in India is the policy of favoring members of a disadvantaged group who currently suffer or historically have suffered from discrimination within a culture. Often, these people are disadvantaged for historical reasons, such as oppression or slavery
- *Social exclusion, or social marginalization*, is the social disadvantage and relegation to the fringe of society. It is a term used widely in Europe and was first used in France. It

is used across disciplines including education, sociology, psychology, politics and economics.

- **Modernization** is a characteristic process. It brings about social, financial and political changes. The modern society changes according to social and moral ethics. Modernization means deciding an objective and processing towards its accomplishment. There is a difference between modernization and westernization. Westernization is optional, outward and personal and it has its influence on middle class and higher class people

3.14 References

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3.15 Check Your Progress – Possible Answers

Check Your Progress - I

- 1) Segmental Division
Hierarchical Division
Restrictions on Occupational Choice
Restrictions on Food Habits
Restrictions on Marriage
Restrictions on Social Relations
Unequal Distribution of Civil and Religious Privileges
Social and Religious Disabilities
Jajmani System
Caste Panchayat

- 2) Religious
Biological
Historical

Check your progress - II

- 1) Jajmani system is the backbone of rural economy and social order. The term 'jajman' refers to the patron or recipient of specialised services and the term 'jajmani' refers to the whole relationship. In fact, the jajmani system is a system of economic, social and ritual ties among different caste groups in a village.

Various characteristics:

- Hereditary
- Durable or Permanent Relation
- Goods against Services (Barter exchange)
- Peace and Satisfaction
- Difference in Scope of Work
- Ideology of Paternalism
- Integration of Castes
- Functional
- Ritual Matters

- 2) Industrialization
 - New opportunities of employment
 - Spread of education
 - Loss of powers by the caste councils and Village Panchayat
 - Abolition of Jagirdari
 - Introduction of land reforms
 - Improved means of transport and communication

Check your progress - III

- 1) Modernization
 - Education
 - Acquisition of new skills
 - Occupational Mobility
- 2) Article 15(4) and 16(4) (elaborate)