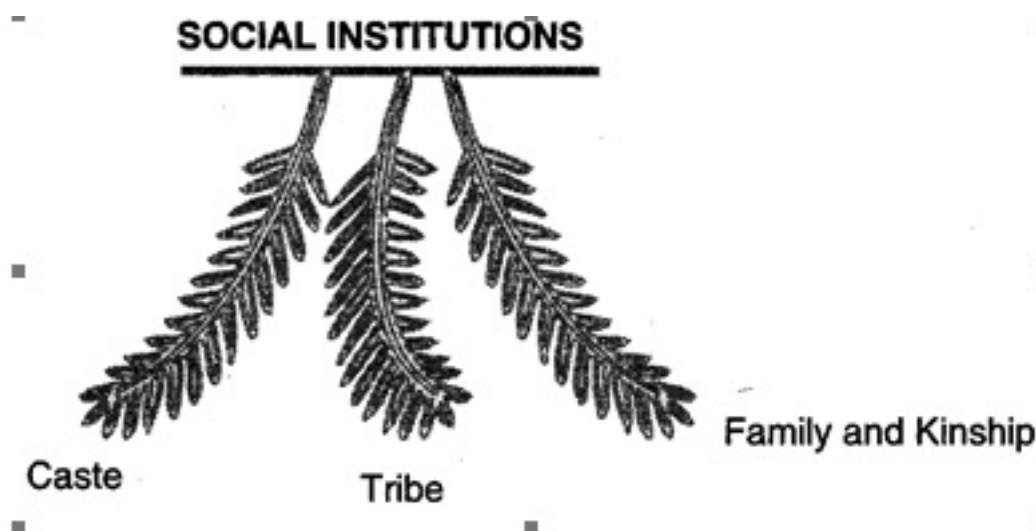


Chapter-3

Social Institutions: Continuity and Change

Facts that Matter



I. Caste

The term is derived from the Portuguese word 'casta' which means pure breed. In other words it also means a group/community of people. The word refers to a broad institutional arrangement that in Indian languages (beginning with the ancient Sanskrit) is referred to by two distinct terms, varna and jati.

	Caste		Varna
(1)	Closed system	(1)	Open system
(2)	Post vedic period	(2)	Vedic Period
(3)	3000 castes and sub castes	(3)	Four Varnas
(4)	No social mobility	(4)	Social mobility present
(5)	Very rigid	(5)	Not rigid

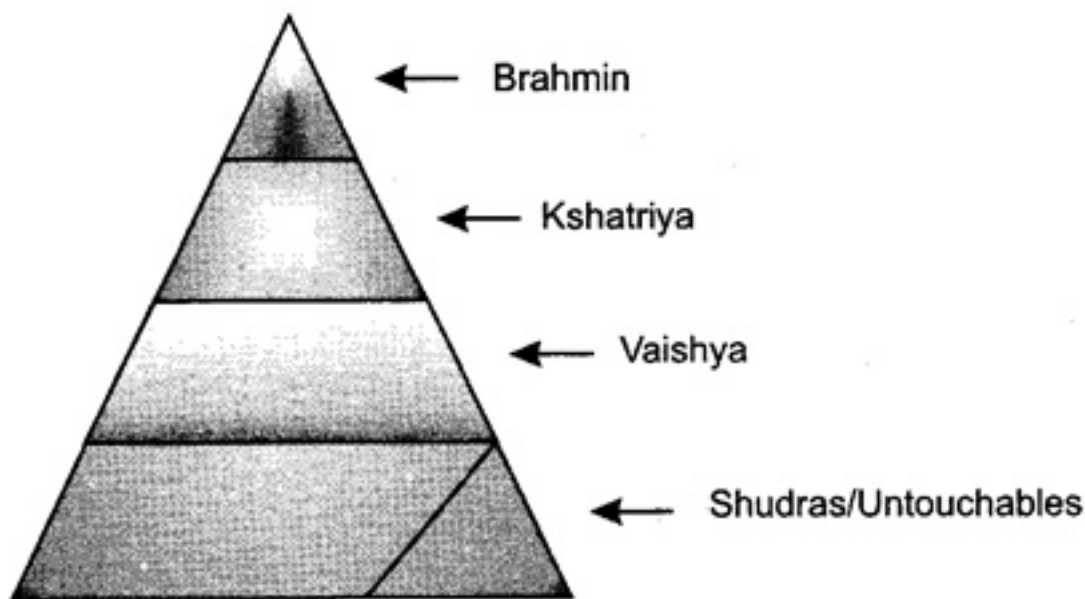
Varna, literally 'colour', is the name given to a four-fold division of society into brahmana, kshatriya, vaishya and shudra, though this excludes a significant section of the population

composed of the 'outcastes', foreigners, slaves, conquered peoples and others, sometimes referred to as the panchamas or fifth category.

Jati is a generic term referring to species or kinds of anything, ranging from inanimate objects to plants, animals and human beings. Jati is the word most commonly used to refer to the institution of caste in Indian languages, though it is interesting to note that, increasingly, Indian language speakers are beginning to use the English word 'caste'.

Features

1. **Ascribed status:** determined by birth, you are born into your status, no choice, permanent.
2. **Hierarchical of rank and status**



3. **Strict rules about marriage:** Membership in a caste involves strict rules about marriage. Caste groups are "endogamous", i.e. marriage is restricted to members of the group.
4. **Rules about food and food-sharing:** What kinds of food may or may not be eaten is prescribed and who one may share food with is also specified."
5. **Segmental organisation:** Castes also involve sub-divisions within themselves, i.e., castes almost always have sub-castes and sometimes sub-castes may also have sub-sub-castes. This is referred to as a segmental organisation.

6. Occupation: Brahmins were meant to be priests, teachers, kshatriyas were meant to be warriors, vaishyas were meant to be businessmen or traders, shudras were meant to serve the rest and do all the dirty work. There was no mobility in terms of occupation.

Principles of Caste

1. Differentiation and Separation: Separation in each caste is distinct by itself and has its own rules and regulations:

- Ascribed status
- Occupation
- Concept of communalism
- Endogamous marriage
- Concept of pollution and purity

2. Wholism and Hierarchy: Each caste is dependent on the other caste system rather than egalitarian system. Each caste has its place in the hierarchical system.

- Each caste also has its own occupation, but there was no social mobility.
- Hierarchical system
- Concept of pollution and purity
- Segmental division

Caste and Colonialism

• When the British came to India, they were shocked by two things:

(i) Untouchability (ii) The number of sub-castes

• They decided to take some initiatives:

(i) Census: To make sure of number and sizes of the castes and sub-castes.

(ii) They wanted to know the values, beliefs, customs, etc of different sections of society. (iii)

Land settlements

• There were three types:

(i) **Zamindari:** The zamindars/landlords were appointed to collect tax on behalf of the British. However they exploited the farmers and collected more tax than required.

(ii) **Ryotwari:** They saw that there was a lot of exploitation in the zamindari system. The head of the family collected revenue from the members, this ensures much less exploitation from the zamindari system.

(iii) **Mahalwari:** Each village was appointed a head who collected taxes from the villagers and this also ensured much less exploitation than the zamindari system.

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- **Government of India Act of 1935:** They used the term 'Scheduled caste' and 'Scheduled Tribes' and they felt that these people should be looked after.

Caste System and Freedom Struggle

- Everyone came together, including the lower caste people (untouchables)
- Names used for the lower caste: Shudras ~untouchables~ harijans -e schedule castes Harijan.
- Many people fought for the upliftment of the Harijan and made it part of the national movement.
e.g. Mahatma Gandhi (Brahmin), BR Ambedkar (Dalit), and Jyotiba Phule (Dalit)

Gandhi's views

- Harijans should not be ill-treated which includes removal of untouchability and other social evils.
- Upliftment of Harijans was required.
- Even when Harijans are uplifted, the rights and superiority of the Brahmins will remain.
- They should be included in the national movement.

Caste in Contemporary India

- **Abolition of untouchability:** The implementation of Article 17 was difficult initially because of upper caste people protest.
- **Constitution:** People should be given jobs without considering castes etc, it should be based on achievements. Now there are reservation for SCs and STs therefore successful SCs and STs become a part of the mainstream leading to the upliftment of the SCs and STs.
- In urban areas, industries were encouraged and job opportunities were given to people irrespective of their caste and based on their skill and qualification.
- However, till today in small areas etc, people still offer jobs based on ones caste e.g. in BSP of Ms Mayawati there are 80% dalits.
- Two aspects where caste is still important

Marriage- rural areas - honour killings for inter-caste marriage, urban areas - inter caste marriages now accepted.

Politics-reservation in educational systems, parties etc. It is also called politicisation of caste.

Sanskritisation

When the lower caste tries to copy/imitate, model of the upper caste, without changing their

caste.

Advantage

- Better standard of living.
- Improve social status of everyone.
- The gap between upper caste and lower caste is reduced.

Disadvantage

- Their culture gets eroded.
- They automatically become inferior because they copy them.
- Copy practices such as dowry which declines the position of women.
- It is a positional change, not a structural change.
- People look down to people of their own caste of copying others.

How do they copy?

- Tribals give up eating non-veg and give up drinking alcohol. They thought by giving up their practices, people would consider them of a higher caste/status/ position.

Dominant Caste

- After independence there was the zamindari system where the zamindar's land was sold off to marginal, small and/or landless farmers due to the Land Ceiling Act.
- The zamindars thus sold off their land to work in the industries.
- Thus the middle/medium landowners acquired the land.
- So they had social, political and economic power.
- These people comprised of the dominant caste.
- Even some shudras got land.

For example-

Yadavas - Bihar

Jats - Haryana, Punjab

Reddys and Khammans Arunachal Pradesh

Upper Caste

- Caste is invisible.
- Achieved status is given more importance than the ascribed status.
- Life chances are better.
- Education also plays a very important role.
- Had resources available (technological and educational).

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- Qualifications will be considered.

Lower Caste

- Caste is visible.
- For education there is reservations and it leads to upliftment of the castes.
- In rural areas especially in occupation more importance is given to ascribed status.
- The lower castes take advantages of reservations using caste to push themselves forward.
- They did not have life clauses before but now they use their caste to power themselves.

Tribal Community

- The total population of tribes in India is 8.2%.
- They are also called Janjatis, Adivasis (first inhabitants of our planet), vanjatis and Harijans.
- Have hierarchy but have an egalitarian society.
- Share same name, language, area, occupation, culture e.g. Gonds, Santhals, Gujjars.
- Isolated community are trying to get them into mainstream.

Classification of Tribal Societies In terms of positive characteristics, tribes have been classified according to their 'permanent' and 'acquired' traits.

Permanent Traits include region, language, physical characteristics and ecological habitat.

In terms of population

1. The tribal population of India is widely dispersed, but there are also concentrations in certain regions.
2. 85% in 'middle India', from Gujarat and Rajasthan in the west to West Bengal and Orissa in the east, with Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, Chattisgarh and parts of Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh forming the heart of this region.
3. Over 11% is in the North Eastern states
4. 3% living in the rest of India. I
5. The North Eastern states have the highest concentrations, with all states except Assam having concentrations of more than 30%
6. States like Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Nagaland has more than 60% and upto 95% of tribal population.
7. In the rest of the country, however, the tribal population is very small, being less than 12% in all states except Orissa and Madhya Pradesh.



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8. The ecological habitats covered includes hills, forests, rural plains and urban industrial areas.”

In terms of language

1. Categorized into four categories.
2. Two of them, Indo-Aryan and Dravidian, are shared by the rest of the Indian population as well, and tribes account for only about 1% of the former and about 3% of the latter.
3. The other two language groups, the Austric and Tibeto-Burman, are primarily spoken by tribals, who account for all of the first and over 80% of the second group.

In terms of physical-racial terms

1. Classified under the Negrito, Australoid, Mongoloid, Dravidian and Aryan categories.
2. The last two are shared with the rest of the population of India.

In terms of size

1. Vary a great deal, ranging from about seven million to some Andamanese islanders who may number less than a hundred persons.
2. The biggest tribes are the Gonds, Bhils, Santhals, Oraons, Minas, Bodos and Mundas, all of whom are at least a million strong.
3. The total population of tribes amounts to about 8.2% of the population of India, or about 84 million persons according to the 2001 Census.

Acquired Traits

1. Classifications based on acquired traits use two main criteria – mode of livelihood, and extent of incorporation into Hindu society – or a combination of the two.
2. On the basis of livelihood, tribes can be categorised into fishermen, food gatherers and hunters, shifting cultivators, peasants and plantation and industrial workers.
3. The dominant classification both in academic sociology as well as in politics and public affairs is the degree of assimilation into Hindu society.
4. Assimilation can be seen either from the point of view of the tribes, or (as has been most often the case) from the point of view of the dominant Hindu mainstream.
5. From the tribe's point of view, apart from the extent of assimilation, attitude towards Hindu society is also a major criterion, with differentiation between tribes that are



positively inclined towards Hinduism and those who resist or oppose it.

6. From the mainstream point of view, tribes may be viewed in terms of the status accorded to them in Hindu society, ranging from the high status given to some, to the generally low status accorded to most.

Integration towards the mainstream.

- Tribal point of view

~ They want to be part of non-tribals due to reservations, better opportunities so that their status gets uplifted.

They didn't want to be Part of non tribals because they didn't want to lose their identity and wanted to be isolated didn't want to lose their culture.

Tribal elite-upliftment of status, educated gained a position and are treated very well.

Others who are not as high casual labourers are treated badly.

Give respect to skilled and don't respect the unskilled.

	Caste		Tribes
(1)	All India character	(1)	Different tribes in different geographical
(2)	Do not have a particular name	(2)	Have their own nature
(3)	Don't have their own religion	(3)	Have their own religion totemism,
(4)	Hierarchical Society	(4)	Egalitarian society
(5)	Occupation based on ascribed Status	(5)	Occupation based on geographical

Criticism:

The definition of tribals is criticized, since they should not be isolated.

- They are part of our country and should be mixed with the large population.
- Castes are doing tribal occupation and tribals are doing caste occupation.
- We have Hindus who are fishermen.

Tribals-Not Always in Isolation

They were not always isolated, but when the British came, they exploited tribals.

- The tribals came up with a name 'tribalism'.
- They have been part of many kingdoms like the Gonds and they had a very important role



in Madhya Pradesh.

- In Rajasthan, many tribals were a part of the Rajput and they were a part of military set up.
- They were traders in salt.
- During British rule, they lost their status and became casual labours in plantations and people exploited them.
- Tribalism is when the tribal are by themselves live in isolation to say that they are different from the non-tribal.

Mainstream Attitudes Towards Tribes

Socio-Economic and Political

- Forests were cleared to build roads, life of tribals changed drastically (went through the forests).
- Money lenders gave money to tribal and charged huge rates of interest.

During this period mining was introduced.

British started reserving forests for themselves when tribals protested. Exclusive reserved areas or partially reserved areas of tribals land for tribals to use.

Sociologists had two views:

1. **Isolationists:** Let the tribals have their privacy, but they should not be exploited by moneylenders.
2. **Integrationalists:** They are a part of society, integrate them and treat them as lower classes castes and give them the facilities.

Constituent Assembly

- Group of people who came together to formulate the constitution.
- It took 2 years and 11 months.
- People came from all areas and sections of society.
- A lot of case was taken about the lower caste and tribals.
- There were special plans, 'Tribal Plans' that spoke about giving them reservations.
- They were included in the 5 years plans.
- Integrate them through reservations and uplift their status.

National Development Vs Tribal Development



1. Building up of hydroelectric projects by cutting the forests.

- It prevents floods, generates electricity and irrigation facilities.
- Taking away land and occupation from natural habitat.
- No rehabilitation for occupation.

For example:

(i) Sardar Sarovar Dam on river Narmada (ii) Pollavaram Dam on river Godavari

2. Forests are rich in mineral resources and mining projects take place. This displaces tribals.
 3. Non tribals who come in for setting up resorts, hotels for recreation disrupt life of tribals.
 4. So many people come in the tribal culture get coded and diluted.
- e.g. North Eastern states, Jharkhand are most affected.

Tribal Identity Today

The life of the tribals has changed tremendously because of their incorporation into mainstream. It has had an impact on all four areas social, cultural, political and economic. A lot of tribal revolts and movements have taken place in rebellion.

1. This has resulted in a few changes

- Jharkhand from Bihar founded in 2000 and managed
- Uttarakhand from UP by the tribals. (occupied all
- Chhattisgarh from MP important government post)

2. In some states in North East in Manipur and Nagaland are declared as disturbed areas.

- The main power is present with the non-tribals, thus they have violent revolts.
- The civil rights have been curtailed and tribals do not enjoy same freedom as rest of the country do not have same rights.
- The political situation of the newly formed states is still not in the control of the tribals.
- This is because the non tribals are more politically powerful, knowledgeable and still in control.

- The tribals do not have any political experience. '

- Actual decisions are taken by the non-tribals, central government.

3. A new educated middle class of tribals has emerged today.

- Because of reservation, they have been educated.
- The job opportunities have increased, improved standard of living, status improved.
- This tribal elite influenced the lower class tribals to educate themselves.
- They are creating awareness among the tribal community, occupying jobs.



- Assertion of tribal identity is on the rise. Because the tribals are being educated they want to be part of the development taking place in their areas.

- They want control over all aspects of life (social, economic, political and cultural).

At the same time, they want to maintain their tribal identity, their culture.

- They want to develop a 'tribal consciousness'.

Family and Kinship

Family

- A group of people who are related to each other either legally (by marriage) or biologically (by blood).

- A unit of people living together as sanctioned by society.

Bond of togetherness, security and a sense of sacrifice, belongingness. It is a universal and permanent relationship.

Kinship

A person related to the other biologically or legally. - Biologically (blood)-consanguineous e.g. parents.

- Legally (marriage)-allinal e.g. spouse in laws

Classification of Family

- **Size**

1. Nuclear - small family (Parents and children)

2. Joint - 2 or 3 generations live together

3. Extended - 2 or more siblings live together with their families.

- **Residence**

1. Patrilocal - after marriage girl goes to boys house.

2. Matrilocal - after marriage boy goes to girls house.

3. Neolocal - couple sets up their own house.

- **Descent**

1. Patrilineal

- Males surname is adopted.

- Lineage is traced through the father.

- Property is inherited by the males.

2. Matrilineal

- Mother's surname is used.
- Lineage is traced through the mother.
- Property is inherited by the females.

3. Bilinear

- Property is shared.
- Movable property goes to girl (the jewellery and money).
- Immovable property goes to the boy (land, house).

The Diverse Forms of the Family

1. Patriarchal

Power and authority is with the male who makes all the important decisions.

2. Matriarchal

Power and authority is given to the female of the house.

Matrilineal and Matriarchal Society is found in Meghalaya-Khasi, Jaintia, Garo tribes

Kerala - Nayyar family

- Property goes from mother to daughter inheritance (mother to daughter) control (uncle to nephew)

Matriarchy – unlike patriarchy – has been a theoretical rather than an empirical concept.

There is no historical or anthropological evidence of matriarchy – i.e., societies where women exercise dominance. However, there do exist matrilineal societies, i.e., societies where women inherit property from their mothers but do not exercise control over it, nor are they the decision makers in public affairs.

Contradictions in matrilineal systems

1. Arises from the separation of the line of descent and inheritance on the one hand and the structure of authority and control on the other.
2. The former, which links the mother to the daughter, comes in conflict with the latter, which links the mother's brother to the sister's son.
3. A woman inherits property from her mother and passes it on to her daughter, while a man controls his sister's property and passes on control to his sister's son.
4. Thus, inheritance passes from mother to daughter whereas control passes from (maternal) uncle to nephew.

Intense role conflict in the Khasi matrilineal system

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1. Generates intense role conflict for men. They are torn between their responsibilities to their natal house on the one hand, and to their wife and children on the other.
 2. The strain generated by such role conflict affects Khasi women more intensely. A woman can never be fully assured that her husband does not find his sister's house a more congenial place than her own.
 3. Similarly a sister will be apprehensive about her brother's commitment to her welfare because the wife with whom he lives can always pull him away from his responsibilities to his natal house.
 4. The women are more adversely affected than men by the role conflict generated in the Khasi matrilineal system not only because men wield power and women are deprived of it, but also because the system is more lenient to men when there is a transgression of rules.
 5. Women possess only token authority in Khasi society; it is men who are the defacto power holders. The system is indeed weighted in favour of male matri-kin rather than male patri-kin.
 6. In other words, despite matriliney, men are the power holders in Khasi society; the only difference is that a man's relatives on his mother's side matter more than his relatives on his father's side.

