

CBSE Class 12 Sociology

NCERT Solutions

Chapter-3

Social Institutions : Continuity and change

1. What is the role of the ideas of separation and hierarchy in the caste system?

Ans. Theoretically, the caste system can be understood as the combination of two sets of principles, one based on difference and separation and the other on wholism and hierarchy. Each caste is different and strictly separated from every other caste on the basis of restrictions. These restrictions are related to marriage, food sharing and social interaction to occupation.

Different and separated castes do not have an individual existence. They exist in relation to a larger whole. This societal whole or system is a hierarchical rather than egalitarian system. Each individual caste follows an ordered rank-a particular position in a ladder like arrangement going from highest to lowest.

The hierarchical ordering of castes is based on the distinction between purity and pollution. Castes that are considered ritually pure have high status, while those considered less pure or impure have low status.

This idea of separation and hierarchy has inculcated discrimination, inequality and prejudices in Indian society.

2. What are some of the rules that the caste system imposes?

Ans. The most commonly cited rules that the caste system has imposed are as follows:

1. Caste is determined by birth – Caste is never a matter of choice as one is born in the caste. One can never change one's caste, leave it, or choose not to join it, although there are instances where a person may be expelled from their caste.
2. Membership in a caste involves strict rules about marriage. Caste groups are “endogamous”, i.e. marriage is restricted to members of the group.
3. Caste membership also involves 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.
4. Caste involves a system consisting of many castes arranged in a hierarchy of rank and status. In theory, every person has a caste, and every caste has a specified place in the

hierarchy of all castes. While the hierarchical position of many castes, particularly in the middle ranks, may vary from region to region, there is always a hierarchy.

5. 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. Castes were traditionally linked to occupations. A person born into a caste could only practice the occupation associated with that caste, so that occupations were hereditary, i.e. passed on from generation to generation. On the other hand, a particular occupation could only be pursued by the caste associated with it – members of other castes could not enter the occupation.

3. What changes did colonialism bring about in the caste system?

Ans. The institution of caste underwent major changes during the colonial period.

Present status of caste in India is more a product of colonialism than of ancient Indian tradition.

- The British administrators tried to understand the complexities of caste in an effort to learn how to govern the country efficiently.
- The most important official effort to collect information on caste was through census. It began in 1860s.
- The 1901 census under the direction of Herbert Risley was particularly important as it sought to collect information on the social hierarchy of caste i.e. the social order of precedence in particular regions, as to the position of each caste in the rank order. The counting of caste and to officially recording of caste made this institution of caste identity became more rigid in India.
- Other interventions by the colonial state also impacted the institution of caste.
 - The land revenue settlements and laws gave legal recognition to the caste based rights of the upper caste.
 - Large scale irrigation schemes were accompanied by efforts to settle population there, and these also had caste dimension.
- Towards the end of the colonial period, the administration also took an interest in the welfare of downtrodden castes, referred to as the ‘depressed classes’ at that time.
- The Government of India Act of 1935 was passed which gave legal recognition to the

lists or 'schedules' of castes and tribes marked out for special treatment by the state. This is how the terms 'Scheduled Tribes' and the 'Scheduled Castes' came into being.

- Castes at the bottom of the hierarchy that suffered severe discrimination, including all the so-called 'untouchable' castes, were included among the Scheduled Castes.

4. In what sense has caste become relatively 'invisible' for the urban upper castes?

Ans.

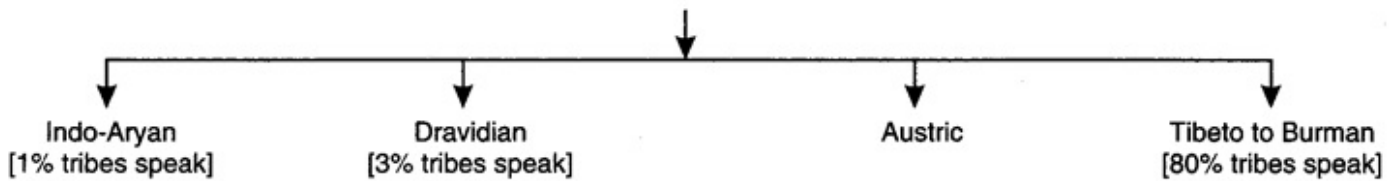
- In the contemporary period, caste has tended to become 'invisible' for the upper caste, urban middle and upper classes.
- For these groups, who have benefited the most from the developmental policies of the post-colonial era, caste has appeared to decline in significance precisely because it has done its job so well.
- Their caste status had been crucial in ensuring that these groups had the necessary economic and educational resources to take full advantage of the opportunities offered by rapid development.
- In particular, the upper caste elite were able to benefit from subsidised public education, specially professional education in science, technology, medicine and management.
- They were also able to take advantage of the expansion of state sector jobs in the early decades after independence. In this initial period, their lead over the rest of society (in terms of education) ensured that they did not face any serious competition.
- As their privileged status got consolidated in the second and third generations, these groups began to believe that their advancement had little to do with caste. Certainly for the third generations from these groups their economic and educational capital alone is quite sufficient to ensure that they will continue to get the best in terms of life chances.
- However, a further complication is introduced by the fact that this is a differentiated group. Although the privileged as a group are overwhelmingly upper caste, not all upper caste people are privileged, some being poor.

5. How have tribes been classified in India?

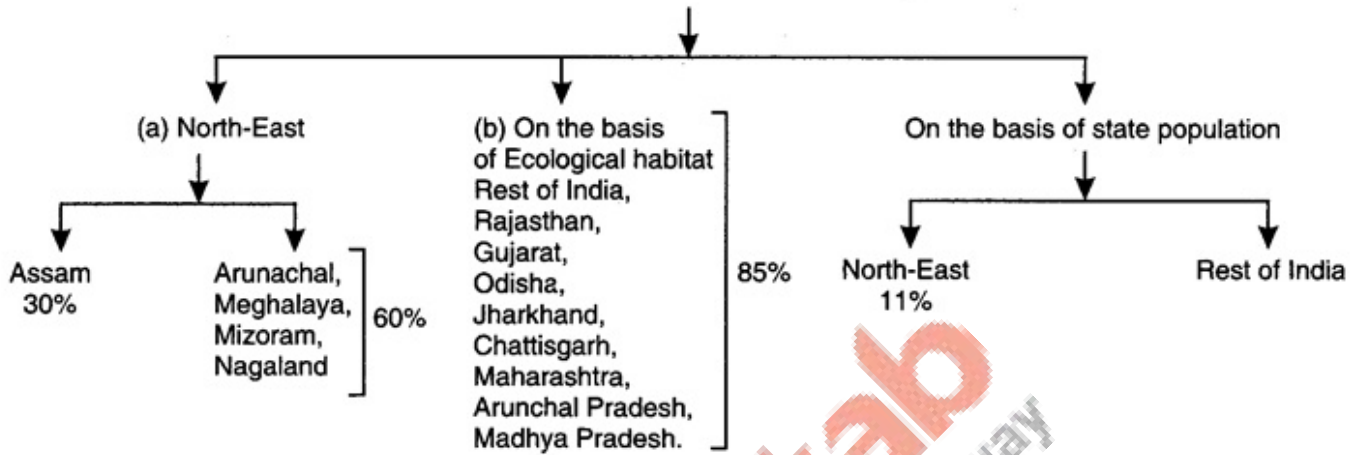
Ans. Tribes have been classified in terms of their their permanent and acquired traits.

Permanent traits

Classification on the basis of language



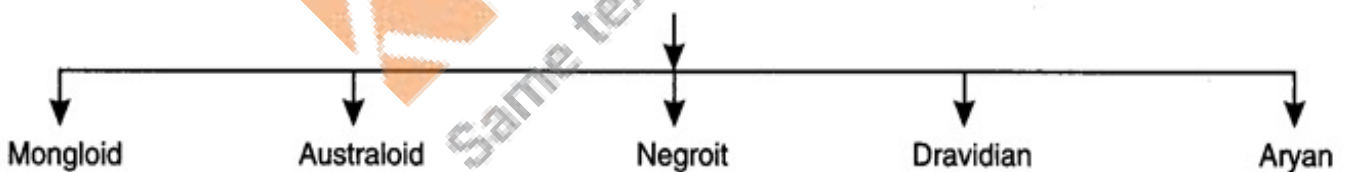
Classification on the basis of Region



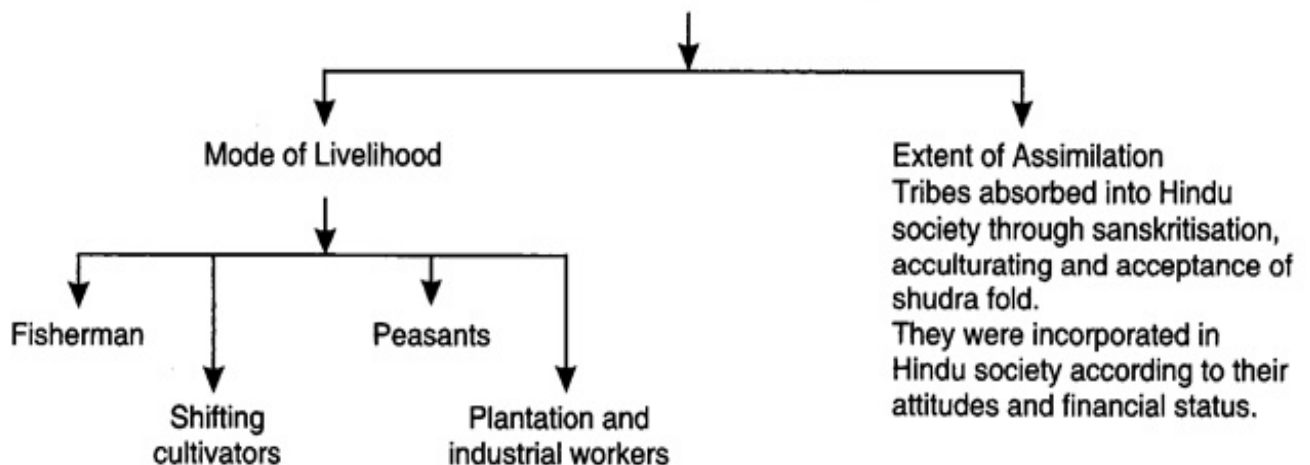
Classification on the basis of size:

In terms of size, tribals range between seven million to less than 100 person (In Andaman Nicobar Islands). The biggest tribes are the Gonds, Bhils, Santhals, Oraons, Minas, Bodos, and Mundas each at least a million people. The tribals in India shared 8.2% of total population i.e. 85 million people according to 2001 census.

Classification on the basis of Physical characteristics



Classification on the basis of Acquired traits



6. What evidence would you offer against the view that 'tribes are primitive communities living isolated lives untouched by civilisation?'

Ans. Some scholars have also argued that there is no coherent basis for treating tribes as “pristine” – i.e., original or pure – societies uncontaminated by civilisation.

They propose instead that tribes should really be seen as “secondary” phenomena arising out of the exploitative and colonialist contact between pre-existing states and non-state groups like the tribals. This contact itself creates an ideology of “tribalism” – the tribal groups begin to define themselves as tribals in order to distinguish themselves from the newly encountered others.”

To begin with, adivasis were not always the oppressed groups they are now – there were several Gond kingdoms in Central India such as that of Garha Mandla, or Chanda. Many of the so-called Rajput kingdoms of central and western India actually emerged through a process of stratification among adivasi communities themselves. adivasis often exercised dominance over the plains people through their capacity to raid them, and through their services as local militias.

They also occupied a special trade niche, trading forest produce, salt and elephants.

Moreover, the capitalist economy’s drive to exploit forest resources and minerals and to recruit cheap labour has brought tribal societies in contact with mainstream society a long time ago.

7. What are the factors behind the assertion of tribal identities today?

Ans. Tribal identities today are formed by this interactional process rather than any primordial (original, ancient) characteristics peculiar to tribes. Because the interaction with the mainstream has generally been on terms unfavourable to the tribal communities, many tribal identities today are centred on ideas of resistance and opposition to the overwhelming force of the non-tribal world.

The positive impact of successes – such as the achievement of statehood for Jharkhand and Chattisgarh after a long struggle – is moderated by continuing problems. Many of the states of the North-East, for example, have been living for decades under special laws that limit the civil liberties of citizens. Thus, citizens of states like Manipur or Nagaland don’t have the same rights as other citizens of India because their states have been declared as ‘disturbed areas’.

The vicious circle of armed rebellions provoking state repression which in turn fuels further rebellions has taken a heavy toll on the economy, culture and society of the North-eastern states. In another part of the country, Jharkhand and Chattisgarh are yet to make full use of their new-found statehood, and the political system there is still not autonomous of larger structures in which tribals are powerless.

Another significant development is the gradual emergence of an educated middle class among tribal communities. Most visible in the North-eastern states, this is now a segment beginning to be seen in the rest of the country as well, particularly among members of the larger tribal communities.

In conjunction with policies of reservation, education is creating an urbanised professional class. As tribal societies get more differentiated – i.e., develop class and other divisions within themselves – different bases are growing for the assertion of tribal identity.

8. What are some of the different forms that the family can take?

Ans. Family is a very important social institution. In either form i.e. nuclear or extended, it has post to perform. Lately, a lot of changes have come about in the structure for example, those people employed in the software industry have odd working to this, grandparents have shifted in as caregivers to young. A family could be headed by a male or female; descent could be traced from the mother or the father. This structure and composition of the family is based on various factors such as economy, polity, culture and education.

The changes in the structure of family that we see today could be

- (i) Same sex marriage
- (ii) Love marriage

But history and contemporary times suggest that such changes are met with violent reactions.

Nuclear Family: It consists of one set of parents and their children.

Extended Family: It consisted of more than one couple and, often, more than two generations live together. The extended family is symptomatic of India.

Diverse forms of family

- (i) Matrilocal-patrilocal (based on residence)
 - (ii) Matrilineal and patrilineal (based on rules of inheritance)
 - (iii) Matriarchal and patriarchal (based on authority)
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9. In what ways can changes in social structure lead to changes in the family structure?

Ans. The structure of family can be seen as social institution and also in its relationship to other social institution of society.

- The internal structure of the family is usually related to other structure of society i.e. political, economic, cultural, etc. Therefore any significant change in behaviour pattern of members of family may change the nature of society for example working schedules of young parents in the software industry in India may lead to increasing number of grandparents moving in as caregivers to the young grand children.
- The composition of the family and its structure thereby changes. And these changes can be understood in relation to other changes in society.
- The family (the private sphere) is linked to the economic, political, cultural and educational (the public) spheres.
- Sometimes the changes in the families and corresponding changes in the society occur accidentally e.g. due to war or riots people migrate in search of work or for security reasons.
- Sometimes these changes are purposefully brought about, e.g. due to independence and openness of ideas, people choosing their jobs, life partner and life style and such changes are very frequent in the Indian society.

10. Explain the difference between matriliney and matriarchy.

Ans. Matriliney is formed with regard to the rules of inheritance. In matrilineal societies pass on property from mother to daughter.

Matriarchy on the other hand is formed with regard to the exercise of authority and domination. A matriarchal family structure is where the women exercise authority and dominance.

Matriarchy is 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.