



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

Ans:

1. 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.
2. 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.
3. 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.
4. Each individual caste follows an ordered rank—a particular position in a ladder like arrangement going from highest to lowest.
5. The hierarchical ordering of castes is based on the distinction between purity and pollution.
6. Castes that are considered ritually pure have high status, while those considered less pure or impure have low status.
7. Historians believe that those who were defeated in wars were often assigned low caste status.
8. Castes are not only unequal in ritual terms. They are complementary and non competing groups. It means each caste has its own place in the system which cannot be taken by any other caste.
9. Caste is also linked with occupation, the system functions as a social division of labour. It allows no mobility. 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:

- Caste is determined by birth—a child inherits the “bom information” the caste of its parents. One can never change one’s caste, leave it, or choose not to join it. Caste is never a matter of choice.
- Membership in a caste involves strict rules about marriage. Caste groups are “endogamous” i.e. marriage is restricted to members of the group.
- Members of a particular caste have to follow rules about food and food sharing.
- An individual bom into a caste could only practice the occupation associated with that caste, so that occupations were hereditary.
- Caste involves hierarchy of rank and status. Every person has a caste. Every caste has a caste. Every caste has a specified place in the hierarchy of all castes.
- Castes involve sub-division within themselves. Sometimes sub-castes may also have sub-caste i.e. segmental organisation.

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.

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.

So colonialism brought about major changes in the institution of caste. In short the Britishers took initiative in following areas:

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

(ii) To understand the values, beliefs and customs of different sections of society.

(iii) Land settlement.

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

Ans: The changes in the caste system benefited the most were urban middle and upper class. Caste status ensured these groups the necessary economic and educational resources and they took full advantage of the opportunities offered by rapid development. Particularly 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 advantages of the expansion of state sector jobs in the early decades after independence. Because of this earlier lead over the rest of the society in terms of education ensured a privileged status.

For the so called SC and ST and backward castes this change became detrimental. For these the caste became all too visible. They had not inherited educational and social capital and they had to compete with already established upper caste group. They cannot afford to abandon their caste identity. They continue to suffer from discrimination of various kinds.

5. How have tribes been classified in India?

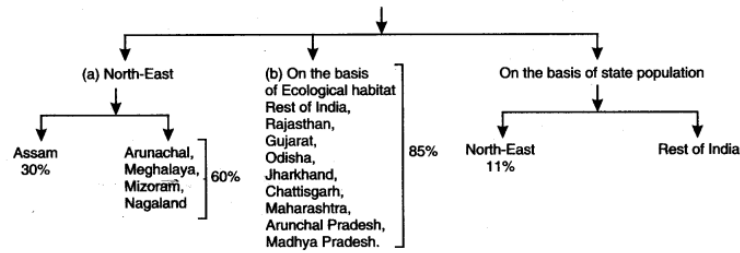
Ans: Tribes have been classified according to their permanent and acquired traits. Classification of Tribal societies: • Permanent traits • Acquired traits

Permanent traits are language, region, physical characteristics and ecological habitat.

Classification on the basis of language



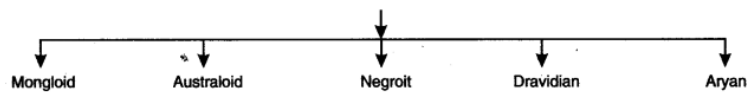
Classification on the basis of Region



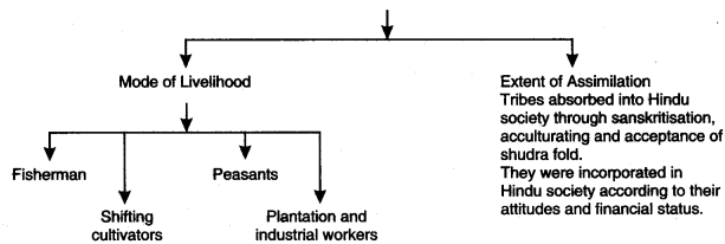
Classification on the basis of size:

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



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