



Caste and Class in India

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Introduction

- Caste and Class jointly determine the position of an individual in social structure. Particularly in rural communities where caste system has maintained its rigidity. It forms the basic for economic and special life. Thus the castes have maintained their importance in class system of social stratification.



Caste

- According to Sir H. Risley, "a caste may be defined as a collection of families or groups of families bearing a common name which usually denotes or is associated with specific occupation, claiming common descent from a mythical ancestor, human or divine, professing to follow the same professional callings and are regarded by those who are competent to give an opinion as forming a single homogeneous community."
- C.H. Cooley defines caste as "when a class is somewhat strictly hereditary, we may call it a caste"



Features of Caste

1. Segmental Division of Indian Society
2. Hierarchy
3. Hereditary Membership of Caste
4. Restrictions on Fooding and Social Intercourse
5. Endogamy
6. Selection of Traditional Occupation
7. Civil and Religious Disabilities and Privileges
8. Economic Disparity



Functions or Merits of Caste

Individual point of View

- Functions of Caste from Individual point of view
 1. Mental Security
 2. Social Security
 3. Free Technical Training
 4. Social Control
 5. Cooperation and Brotherhood
 6. Social Equality



Functions or Merits of Caste Relating to Community

- Functions of Caste relating to Community
 1. Function of a Trade Union
 2. To maintain pure line of Genetics
 3. Spiritual Security
 4. Hospitality
 5. To impart Social Status
 6. Maintenance of Caste Solidarity



Functions or Merits of Caste

Social and Political functions

- Social and Political Functions of Caste
 1. Maintenance of Integrity of Indian Society
 2. Political Stability
 3. Consciousness about Rights and Duties
 4. Protection of Culture
 5. Removal of Dissatisfaction
 6. Basic of Socialistic Structure
 7. To implement simple division of labour in society.



Dysfunctions or Demerits of Caste

1. Hindrance in the Development of Society
2. Hindrance in Selection of Competent Occupation
3. Hindrance in Economic Development
4. Unequal Distribution of Property and Labour
5. Fatalism
6. Hindrance of Social Justice
7. Hindrance in Social Reforms
8. Development of Untouchability
9. Various Social Evils
10. Social Disorganization
11. Undemocratic



Class

- According to W. F. Ogburn and M. F. Nimkoff “A social class is the aggregate of persons having essentially the same social status in a given society.”
- According to R. M. MacIver and C. H. Page “A social class, then, is any portion of a community marked off from the rest by social status.”
- According to T. B. Bottomore “Social classes are defecto (not legally or religiously defined and sanctioned) groups; they are relatively open, not closed. Their basis is indisputably economic, but they are more than economic groups.”



Characteristics of Social Class

1. Definite hierarchy
2. Universality of Class
3. Class Consciousness
4. Achieved Membership
5. Open System
6. Restricted Social Relations
7. Economic Base
8. Common Life
9. Determination of Social Status

Difference between Caste and Class

Basis	Caste	Class
Determination	By Birth	By Education, Qualification, Capabilities and Economic Status
Selection of Life Partner	Restricted within Caste	No Restriction
Membership	By Heredity	Achieved
Occupation	Fixed based on Caste	No Restriction based on choice and qualifications
Stratification	Closed and Rigid	Open and Flexible
Untouchability	Evil of Caste	No such evil
Stability	More Stable	Less Stable
Social Distance	Prevelant	Absent