

## CHAPTER 3

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# SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS; CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

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### 1. CASTE AND THE CASTE SYSTEM

- A population is made up of inter-related classes and communities. These are sustained and regulated by social institutions and social relationships.
- Three institutions, Caste, Tribe and Family are central to Indian Society.
- “Caste” is a social institution that has been in existence for thousands of years.

### 2. Definition of Caste:

- “Caste”, an English word is derived from a Portuguese word “Casta”, meaning pure breed. In Indian language it is referred to two distinct terms, Varna and jati.

### 3. Varna & Jati

- Varna which literally means ‘colour’ refers to a fourfold division of society into Brahmana, kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra. It is an all India aggregative classification.
- Jati, is a regional or local sub-classification term consisting of hundreds or thousands of castes and sub castes. (It is a generic term referring to species or kinds of anything ranging from inanimate objects to plants, animals & human beings.)

#### 4. Vedic & post Vedic period

- During the Vedic period the caste system was elaborate, very rigid or determined by birth.
- But, in. post Vedic period it became very rigid with certain defining features such as caste being determined by birth, membership of caste adhering to strict rules of marriage, rules regarding food.& food sharing, caste being traditionally linked to occupations and it being arranged in a hierarchy of rank and status.

#### 5. Features of caste.

- **Caste is determined by birth**
- **Membership in a caste involves strict rules about marriage.** Caste groups are “endogamous”, i.e. marriage is restricted to members of the group.
- **Caste membership also involves rules about food and food-sharing.**
- Caste involves a system consisting of many **castes arranged in a hierarchy of rank and status**
- **Castes also involve sub-divisions within themselves**
- **Castes were traditionally linked to occupations.**

#### 6. Theoretical interpretation of caste

- **Caste is a combination of two sets of principles —**
- (1) Difference and separation. The scriptural rules ranging from marriage, food sharing to occupation prevents the mixing of castes.
- (2) Wholism and hierarchy: the hierarchical division of caste, on the other hand is based on the distinction between “purity and pollution”.

**7. In the caste system, Endogamy** is the practice of marrying within the caste. **Exogamy** is the practice of marrying outside the clan or gotra.

**8. A proprietary caste group** is a group that owns most of the resources and can command labor to work for them.

**9. Caste panchayats** are panchayats which are controlled by the dominant group and represent their interests, needs & demands. Primarily decision making is controlled by the upper caste, rich landlords and landed peasants.

**10. Caste in Present day**

- In the contemporary period the caste system has become 'invisible' for the upper caste, urban middle and upper classes. Because it has already benefited these groups ."
- caste has been shaped as a result of the influence of the colonial period and changes brought about in independent India.
- The British undertook methodical and intensive surveys of various tribes and castes in order to learn how to govern the country effectively.
- The first such survey was carried out by Herbert Risley in 1901 and thus caste began to be counted and recorded.
- Other institutions like the land revenue settlement gave legal recognition to the customary rights of the upper caste.

**11. The Govt. India Act of 1935** gave legal recognition to the lists of 'schedules' of castes and tribes.

- Gradually, towards the end of the colonial period the welfare of downtrodden caste was looked after by the administration.

**12. In Post Independent India**, programs were undertaken for the upliftment of depressed classes. Social reformers like Jyotiba Phule, Periyar etc. worked towards lower caste upliftment, abolition of caste distinctions and other restrictions.

**13. The abolition of caste** was explicitly incorporated in the Constitution by the state. During this period some of the steps undertaken were reservation of seats for SC & ST's, no caste rules in the jobs created in the modern industry, urbanization & collective living in cities and stress on meritocracy.

**14. In the cultural & domestic spheres**, caste has remained unaffected by modernization and change while in the sphere of politics it has been deeply conditioned by caste as formation of caste based political parties.

**15. New concepts** were coined to understand the process of change. The terms were sanskritization and dominant caste by **M.N. Srinivas**.

**16. Sanskritization** is a process whereby members of a caste (usually middle a lower) attempt to raise their social status by adopting the rituals & social practices of the higher castes.

**17. Dominant caste** was those which had a large population and were granted landrights. They were politically, socially and economically dominant in their regions for example: the **Yadavs** of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, the **Vokkaligas** of Karnataka, **the Reddys and Khammas** of Andhra Pradesh, the **Marathas** of Maharashtra, the **Jats** of Punjab, Haryana and Western Uttar Pradesh and the **Patidars** of Gujarat .

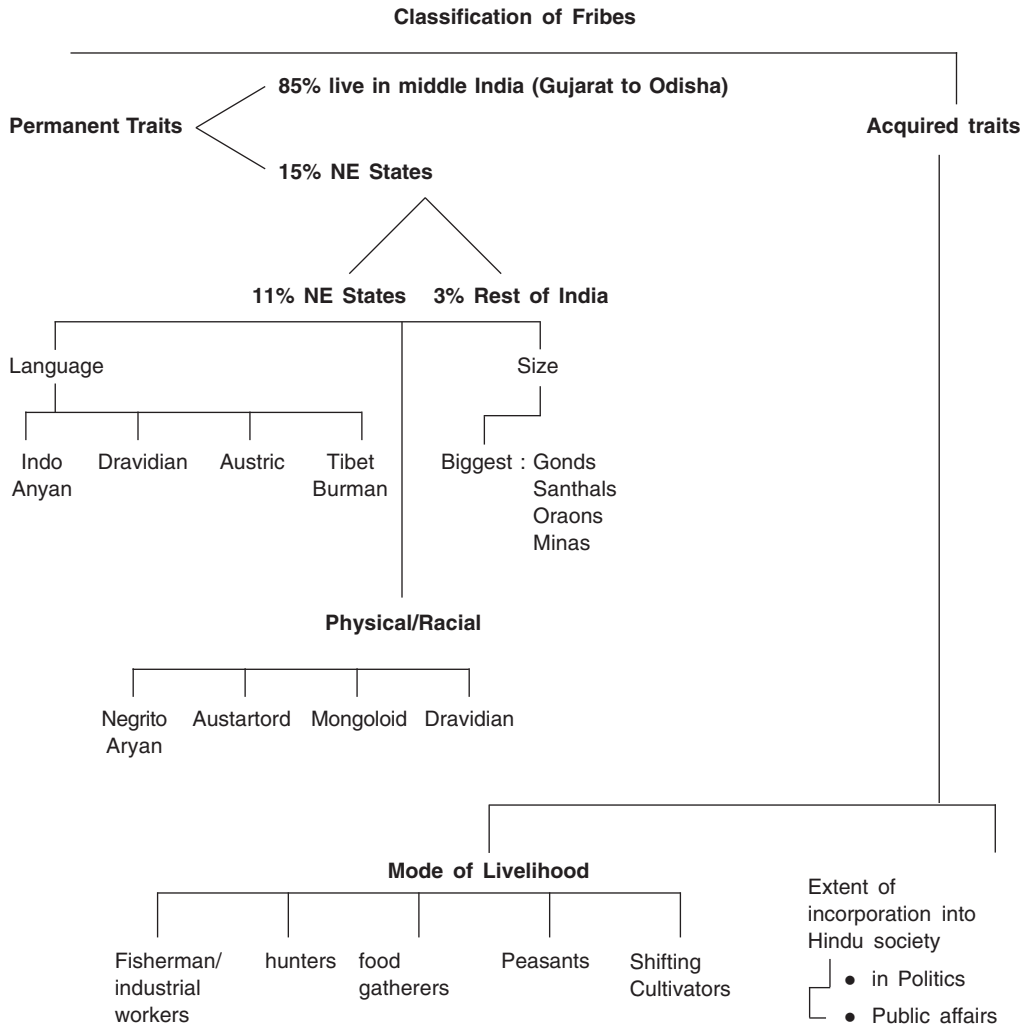
**18.** In the contemporary period caste has tended to become invisible for the upper caste, urban middle and upper classes and more visible for the lower caste.

## **19. TRIBAL COMMUNITIES**

### **Definition of tribes.**

- The oldest inhabitants of the sub-continent.
- Tribes were communities that did not practice a religion with a written text;
- did not have a state or political form of the formal kind;
- did not have sharp class divisions; and,
- they did not have caste distinctions.

**20. Discuss the classification of tribes**



**21. The 'Isolation' and 'Integration' debate on tribes is** based upon tribal societies as isolated wholes. The isolationist believe that tribals needed protection from traders, moneylenders and Hindu and Christian missionaries, all of whom try to reduce tribals' to detribalised landless labour. **The integrationists**, believe that tribal's are merely backward Hindus, and their problems had to be addressed within the same framework as that of other backward classes.

22. National development involving the building of large dams, factories and mines were undertaken at the expense of the tribes. Eg Narmada Bachao Aandolan.

23. **Tribal identities** today are centered on idea's of resistance and opposition to the force exercised by the non-tribal world. The formation of Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh has been a result of this assertion of tribal identity but the political system is still not autonomous.

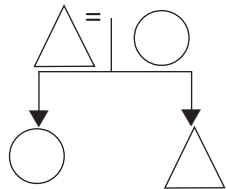
24. Tribal movements emerged to tackle issues relating to control over vital economic resources, matters of cultural identity. All this has been made possible due to the gradual emergence of an educated middle class among tribal communities, though the assertion of identity of tribal middle class maybe different from a poor and uneducated one.

## 22. FAMILY AND KINSHIP

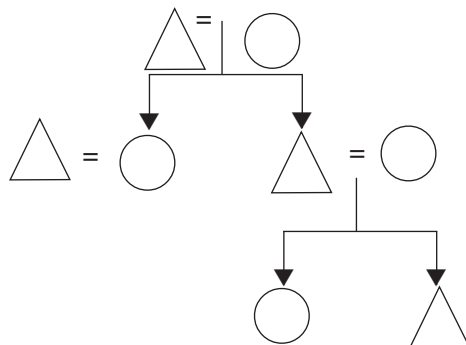
A. Family can be nuclear or extended. Modern family consists of only one set parents and their children unlike extended family where that is more than one couple and after more than two generations living together.

B Diverse forms of family

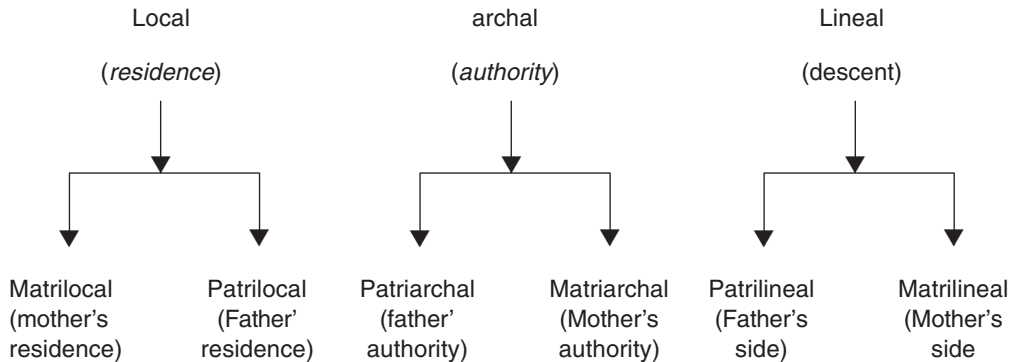
→ Nuclear



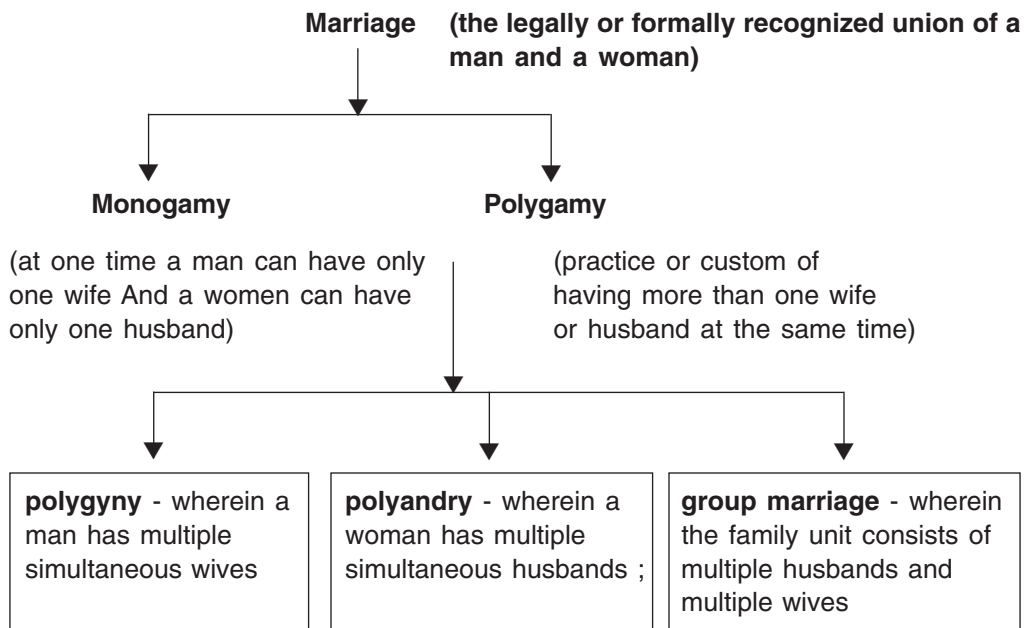
→ and Joint family



→ **Other forms of family are:**



23. **Kinship** are connections between individuals, established either through marriage or through the lines of descent that connect blood relatives (mothers, fathers, siblings, offspring, etc.)



24. **The Khasi matriliney highlights the distinction between matriliney and matriarchy.**

- There is an inherent disagreement in matrilineal systems. On the one hand, **the line of descent and inheritance**, where a woman inherits property from her mother and passes it on to her daughter and the other

structure of authority and control where a man controls his sister's property and passes on control to his sister's son. 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.

- Khasi matriliney 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.
- The tension 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 pleasant place than her own.
- The women are more badly 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
- Thus, 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.

## 2 MARKS QUESTIONS

1. What is caste?
2. What is dominant Caste?
3. Distinguish between Varna & Jati.
4. Mention any 4 dominant caste.
5. Define Tribes.
6. Mention the isolation and integration debate on tribes.
7. Mention the two broad sets of issues most important in giving rise to tribal movements.
8. Distinguish between Nuclear and Joint Family.
9. Define Kinship.
10. Distinguish between Endogamy and Exogamy



### **4 MARKS QUESTIONS**

1. Discuss the features of caste.
2. Explain the role of caste panchayats.
3. Differentiate between tribe & Caste.
4. Explain the main factors influencing the formation of tribal identity today.
5. Explain the meaning of Sanskritization.
6. What is the role of the ideas of separation and hierarchy in the caste system?
7. What are the rules that the caste system imposes?
8. How have tribes' been classified in India?
9. In what ways can change in social structure lead to changes in the family structure.
10. Differentiate between tribe and caste.
11. Explain the different forms of family.

### **6 MARKS QUESTIONS**

1. Discuss the theoretical interpretation / or principles of the caste system.
2. Discuss the ways that strengthened the institution of caste in India under colonial rule.
3. Highlight the sources of conflict between national development and tribal development.
4. Write a note on tribal movement with special reference to Jharkhand.
5. Discuss the classification of tribes based on their traits.
6. Discuss the features of the Caste System.
7. Differentiate between Matriliney and matriarchy, in the context of the Khasi matriliney system.