

VARNA AND JATI SYSTEM 4TH SEM. COURSE CC 7

DEBANJAN MAITY

JATI AND VARNA

Caste= The first term is varna and the second is jati. Varna and jati have both been described as caste. They are not unrelated to each other but they are not the same, and it is very important to understand the distinction between the two in order to understand the social logic of caste.

Peculiar institution found only in India is Jati & Varna.

- Although many other nations are characterized by social inequality, perhaps nowhere else in the world has inequality been so elaborately constructed as in the Indian institution of caste.

THEORIES OF ORIGIN

❖ ~~The *Purush Shukta* theory~~

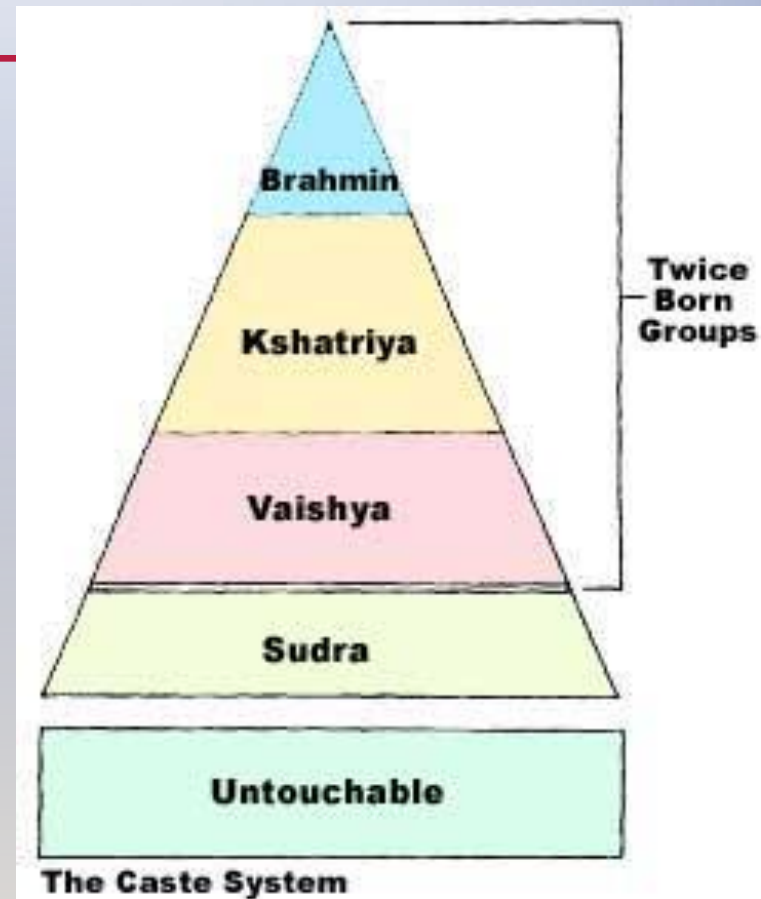
❖ Social division or racial theory

❖ Varna or division of labor theory

- Varna system as it existed in the *Rig Vedic* period-based not on birth but by dint of one's profession.
- Room for flexibility –no restriction, continued till the first of the *Later Vedic* period .

VARNAS (THE NATURE OF A MAN OR THE COLOR)

- ~~Brahmin: Satva Guna~~
- Kshatriya: Rajas Guna
- Vaishya: All Gunas to a lesser degree
- Shudra: Tamas Guna



- The Hindu idea of Varna (nature of man) inspired the separation of groups based on profession.
- Because one's Guna (desirable qualities) recommends him/her to specify types of work and Gunas are closely tied to determination of one's Varna, it was only natural that specific profession would become connected to Varna.

Examples:

- **Dronacharya**-a brahman by birth but a kshyatriya by profession.
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- **Vasistha**- born of a prostitute.

- **Vyas**- from a fisherman background.

- **Vidura**- a Dasiputra.

All were renown brahamans of high characters.

CHANGES IN PURANIC AGE

- Situation changes in the *Puranic* age, rigidity crept in and the system was compartmentalized.

- Castes are ranked, named, endogamous (in-marrying) groups, membership in which is achieved by birth. There are thousands of castes and sub-castes in India, and these large kinship-based groups are fundamental to South Asian social structure. Each caste is part of a locally based system of inter-dependence with other groups, involving occupational specialization, and is linked in complex ways with networks that stretch across regions and throughout the nation.
- The word *caste* derives from the Portuguese *casta* , meaning breed, race, or kind. Among the Indian terms that are sometimes translated as caste are *varna*, *jati*, etc. All of these terms refer to ranked groups of various sizes and breadth. *Varna* , or color, actually refers to large divisions that include various castes; the other terms include castes and subdivisions of castes sometimes called sub-castes.

FACTORS FOR THE SPREAD OF CASTE SYSTEM

- Selfishness of priestly class

- Migration of groups

- New crafts and occupation

- Foreign invasion

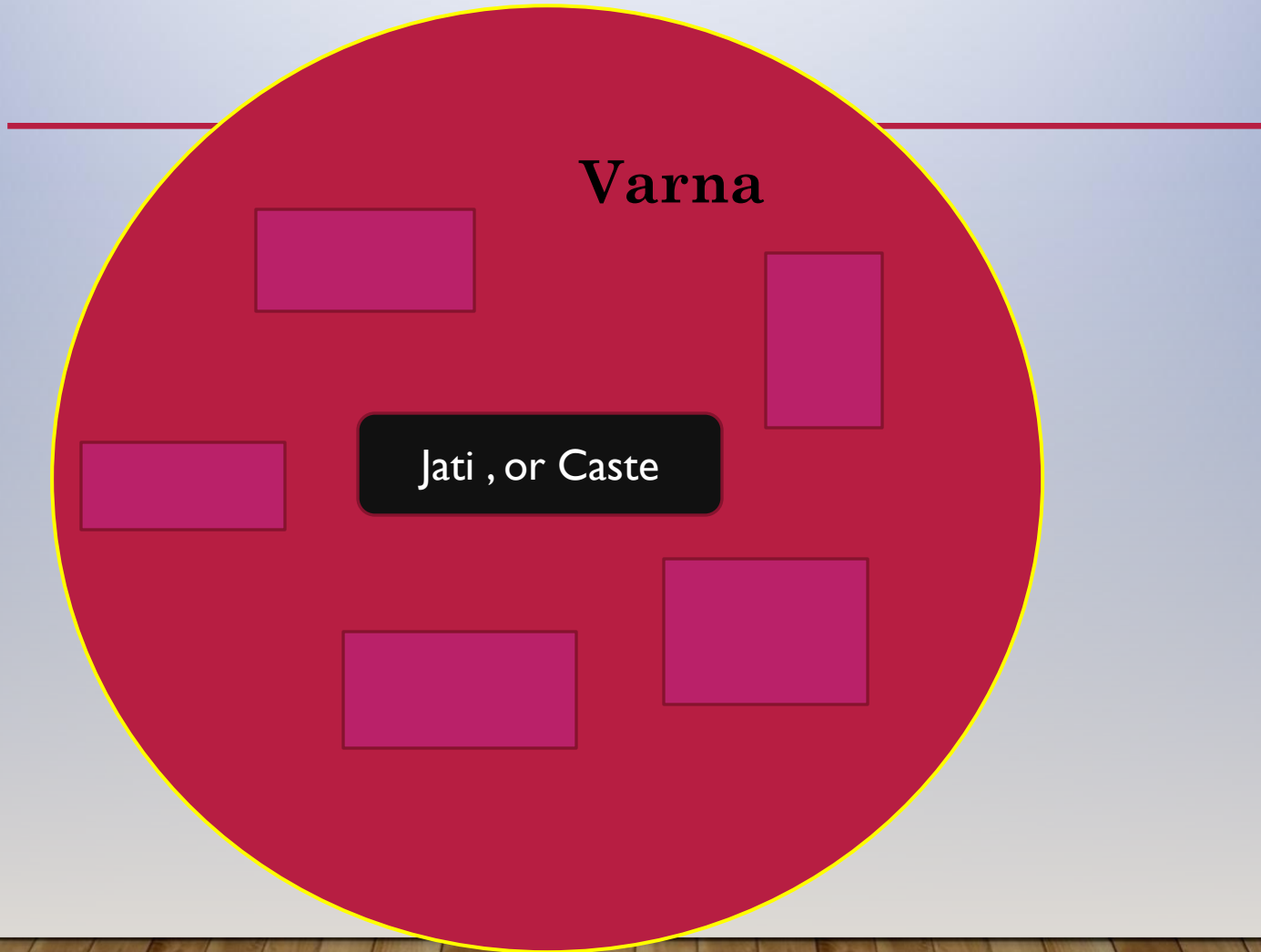
- Ahimsa

- Inter marriage

- Islam etc.

- Adoption of new religion

PROLIFERATION OF CASTE



CASTE SYSTEM (VARNA)

A diagram illustrating the Caste System (Varna). It features five red circular nodes arranged in a circle, connected by a horizontal line at the top. The nodes are labeled: Brahmins (top), Shudras (left), Kshatriya (right), Untouchables (bottom-left), and Viashyas (bottom). The text in the center explains that these are the Varnas as defined in Hinduism, with the addition of the fifth, untouchables, originally designed to complete jobs that would pollute the being and spirit of those in higher Varnas.

Brahmins

Shudras

Look familiar ?
They are the *Varnas* as defined in *Hinduism* – with addition of the fifth, untouchables, originally designed to complete the jobs that would “pollute” the being and spirit of those in higher *Varnas*.

Kshatriya

Untouchables

Viashyas

Dalits, Harijans,
Schedule caste

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- Within each Varnas are thousands of identified Jatis, or castes, generally determined by profession.
 - Jatis span across religions, but not castes, and are endogamous.

CONTRIBUTION OF CASTE SYSTEM

- Preservation of culture and religion
- Expansion of Hinduism
- Economic strength and efficiency
- Professional discipline
- Solution to economic problem
- Spirit of brotherhood

DISADVANTAGES OF CASTE SYSTEM

- Disintegrating factor
- Against the principle of equality
- Restriction on individual liberty
- Instrument of operation
- Check on social progress
- Hindrance in defense of the country
- Economic drawback
- Against national spirit
- Against universal brotherhood
- Evils of untouchability

ASHRAM SYSTEM

- The *Graha-sutra* and *Dharma-sutra* laid down a series of acts which an average person was expected to perform. Perhaps this could be an attempt by the social thinker to counter the increasing influence of ascetics in the society, who eventually challenge the Brahminic at structure.

ASHRAMAS

Eventually an Aryan life was divided into four ashrams:

- *Brahmacharya (1-25 yrs.)*
- *Grihastha ashram (25-50 yrs.)*
- *Vanaaprastha (50-75 yrs.)*
- *Sanyas (75-100 yrs.)*



Thank you.

