

CBSE Class-12 Sociology Test Paper-03
Social institutions continuity and change

General Instruction:

- Question 1-5 carries two marks each.
 - Question 6-8 carries four marks each.
 - Question 9-10 carries six marks each.
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1. Mention some of the new concepts coined by sociologists and social anthropologists to understand the process of change in the institution of caste.
2. Define the term “tribe”.
3. How are the tribal societies classified?
4. During the 1960s what did the scholars debated on with regard to tribes?
5. What is the foundation for the argument on tribe-caste distinction?
6. Why did caste proved to be strongest in the cultural and domestic spheres?
7. What does the process of sanskritisation refers to?
8. Give the classification of tribes based on acquired traits.
9. Why did efforts of the post-Independence Indian state in relation to caste reflected contradictions?
10. Who were the dominant caste and how did they play a decisive role in regional politics and the agrarian economy?

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1. Sociologists and social anthropologists coined many new concepts to try and understand the processes of change in the institution of caste. Perhaps the most common of these are 'sanskritisation' and 'dominant caste', both contributed by M.N. Srinivas, but discussed extensively and criticised by other scholars.
2. Tribe is a modern term for communities that are very old, being among the oldest inhabitants of the sub-continent. Tribes in India have generally been defined in terms of what they were not. Tribes were communities that did not practice a religion with a written text did not have a state or political form of the normal kind did not have sharp class divisions & most important, they did not have caste & were neither Hindus nor peasants.
3. In terms of positive characteristics, tribes have been classified according to their 'permanent' and 'acquired' traits. Permanent traits include region, language, physical characteristics and ecological habitat. Classifications based on acquired traits use two main criteria – mode of livelihood, and extent of incorporation into Hindu society – or a combination of the two.
4. During the 1960s, group of scholars debated on the concept of tribes as different from caste whereas others saw tribes as similar to caste-peasant societies. Those who argued for the continuum saw tribes as not being fundamentally different from caste-peasant society, but merely less stratified (fewer levels of hierarchy) and with a more community-based rather than individual notion of resource ownership. However, opponents argued that tribes were wholly different from castes because they had no notion of purity and pollution which is central to the caste system.
5. The argument for a tribe-caste distinction was founded on an assumed cultural difference between Hindu castes, with their beliefs in purity and pollution and hierarchical integration, and 'animist' tribals with their more egalitarian and kinship based modes of social organisation.
6. In cultural & domestic spheres, caste has proved strongest because of following reasons:
 - i. Endogamy, or the practice of marrying within the caste, remained largely unaffected by modernisation and change.
 - ii. Even today, most marriages take place within caste boundaries, although there are

more intercaste marriages.

- iii. While some boundaries may have become more flexible or porous, the borders between groups of castes of similar socio-economic status are still heavily patrolled.
 - iv. For example, inter-caste marriages within the upper castes (eg., brahmin, bania, rajput) may be more likely now than before; but marriages between an upper caste and backward or scheduled caste person remain rare even today.
 - v. Something similar may have occurred with regard to rules of food sharing.
7. Sanskritisation' refers to a process whereby:
- i. Members of a (usually middle or lower) caste attempt to raise their own social status by adopting the ritual, domestic & social practices of a caste (castes) of higher status.
 - ii. The patterns for emulation chosen most often were the brahmin or kshatriya castes; practices included adopting vegetarianism, wearing of sacred thread, performance of specific prayers and religious ceremonies, and so on.
 - iii. It usually accompanies or follows a rise in the economic status of the caste attempting it, though it may also occur independently.
 - iv. There are arguments that sanskritisation may be a defiant claiming of previously prohibited ritual/social privileges (such as the wearing of the sacred thread, which used to invite severe punishment) rather than a flattering imitation of the 'upper' castes by the 'lower' castes.
8. Classifications based on acquired traits use two main criteria – mode of livelihood, and extent of incorporation into Hindu society – or a combination of the two.
- i. On the basis of livelihood, tribes can be categorised into fishermen, food gatherers and hunters, shifting cultivators, peasants and plantation and industrial workers.
 - ii. The dominant classification both in academic sociology as well as in politics and public affairs is the degree of assimilation into Hindu society.
 - iii. Assimilation can be seen either from the point of view of the tribes, or (as has been most often the case) from the point of view of the dominant Hindu mainstream.
 - iv. From the tribe's point of view, apart from the extent of assimilation, attitude towards Hindu society is also a major criterion, with differentiation between tribes that are positively inclined towards Hinduism and those who resist or oppose it.
 - v. From the mainstream point of view, tribes may be viewed in terms of the status accorded to them in Hindu society, ranging from the high status given to some, to the generally low status accorded to most.

9. The efforts of the post-Independence Indian state in relation to caste inherited and reflected contradictions.
 - i. On the one hand, the state was committed to the abolition of caste and explicitly wrote this into the Constitution. On the other hand, the state was both unable and unwilling to push through radical reforms which would have undermined the economic basis for caste inequality.
 - ii. At yet another level, the state assumed that if it operated in a caste-blind manner, this would automatically lead to the undermining of caste based privileges and the eventual abolition of the institution.
 - iii. For example, appointments to government jobs took no account of caste, thus leaving the well-educated upper castes and the ill-educated or often illiterate lower castes to compete on “equal” terms.
 - iv. The only exception to this was in the form of reservations for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.
 - v. In other words, in the decades immediately after independence, the state did not make sufficient effort to deal with the fact that the upper castes and the lower castes were far from equal in economic and educational terms.
10. Dominant caste’ is a term used to refer to those castes which had a large population and were granted land rights by the partial land reforms affected after Independence.
 - i. The land reforms took away rights from the erstwhile claimants, the upper castes who were ‘absentee landlords’ in the sense that they played no part in the agricultural economy other than claiming their rent.
 - ii. These land rights now came to be vested in the next layer of claimants, those who were involved in the management of agriculture but were not themselves the cultivators.
 - iii. Once they got land rights, they acquired considerable economic power. Their large numbers also gave them political power in the era of electoral democracy based on universal adult franchise.
 - iv. These intermediate castes became the ‘dominant’ castes in the country side and played a decisive role in regional politics and the agrarian economy.
 - v. Examples of such dominant castes include the Yadavs of Bihar and UP, Vokkaligas of Karnataka, the Reddys and Khammas of AP, Marathas of Maharashtra, the Jats of Punjab, Haryana, Western UP and Patidars of Gujarat.