

Varnasham

Part 2

Varna System Characteristics

Key characteristics of the varna system include its hierarchical structure, occupational roles, concept of dharma, purity associations, and religious justification, which evolved into the caste system over time.

Hierarchical Structure: Society is divided into four categories—Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Shudras—each with a defined role, with Brahmins at the top and Shudras at the bottom.

Occupational Specialization: Each varna is linked to specific occupations: Brahmins (priests, scholars), Kshatriyas (warriors, rulers), Vaishyas (merchants, farmers), and Shudras (labourers, service providers).

Concept of Dharma: Dharma refers to the duties and responsibilities of each varna, believed to contribute to social harmony and spiritual progress.

Purity and Pollution: Higher varnas (Brahmins, Kshatriyas) are associated with purity, while lower varnas (Shudras) are considered impure, influencing social practices.

Religious Justification: The system is supported by religious texts like the Vedas, Dharmashastras, and Mahabharata, which outline the roles of each varna.

Evolution Over Time: Originally more fluid, the Varna system became rigid and evolved into the caste system based on birth.