

## Caste and पॉलिटिक्स इन कंटेंपरेरी इंडिया -4

### #MAIN FEATURES OF CASTE

Notwithstanding difficulties in arriving precise definition of caste as a unit, there is a consensus among the scholars regarding general characteristics of caste system as a social order. Most sociological writings on caste conclude that homo hierarcliicus is the central and substantive element of the caste system. The phrase is used by a French sociologist Louis Dumont to differentiate Hindu social system from other social systems - particularly that of the western society. Hierarchy is the central core of the caste social order. It includes hierarchy of status, values, customs and behaviour on the basis of purity and impurity, interpersonal relationship among individuals in terms of blood, food and occupation; and rituals divided into two orders: pure and impure. Certain occupations or type of food are considered as pure for certain castes and the same are impure therefore forbidden for other castes. It is obligatory for each Hindu to confine relationship and interaction within the restricted circle called Jati, as to maintain purity in marriage relations; exchange of food and pursuing caste based occupation. There are four essential features of the caste system. They are:

- (1) hierarchy
- (2) commensurity
- (3) restrictions on marriage
- (4) hereditary occupation

## #DYNAMIC RELATIONSHIP

No social system remains static. Social system changes from time to time with the changing social, economic and political circumstances. This is also true for the caste system. At the empirical level the caste hierarchy has never been static throughout history. Theoretically, all Jatis are hierarchically placed within a prescribed social status. Some Jatis enjoy high status and some occupy low status. Place of the Jati in the social order in the hierarchy is determined by its ritual status based on the observance of customs for interpersonal relationship. Some scholars believe this value system - acceptance of one's station in the life is the result of previous birth - has consensus among all Hindus including the Untouchables.