

Difference Between Caste and Class

What is Caste?

A caste is a social group determined at birth, and hence it is hereditary. A person born in a particular caste is expected to follow its rituals, customs, and traditions. The caste system is very deeply embedded in India as compared to any other part of the world. The Indian caste system segregates Hindus, the majority religion in India, into four categories:

- Brahmins
- Kshatriyas
- Vaishyas
- Shudras

Caste is also referred to as 'Varna' according to the Vedic Indian texts.

In the four classes mentioned above, the Brahmins are the priestly people, Kshatriyas are the rulers, administrators, and warriors, and the Vaishyas are the tradesman, farmers, merchants, and artisans, whereas Shudras are the labour and working-class people. There is also a fifth element of the Varna System that falls at the bottom of the hierarchy, the untouchables. These are tribal people and undergo extreme discrimination as they are seen to be too impure to be touched.

What is Class?

An economic and social class is a category of people who have the same socio-economic status in relation to other groups in society. Unlike caste, class is not determined at birth but is determined much later in life through various aspects like wealth, education, social standing, etc. However, in a country like India, where caste and class walk in hand, it is very challenging for people to climb up the class ladder due to class discrimination.

Difference Between Caste and Class

Mark the key differences between caste and class to comprehend the meaning of both terms aptly. Stereotypes and prejudices are attached to the classification of society on the basis of caste and class.

Key Difference Between Class And Caste	
Caste	Class
Determined at birth	Determined by social and economic standing in society
Stems from religious beliefs	Not affected by religious beliefs
Bound to follow its custom, rituals, and traditions	Does not come with such constraints
Static	Dynamic
No scope for upward social mobility	Can change their class state by climbing up the social and economic ladder
Inter-caste marriages are frowned upon and not very acceptable	Inter-class marriages are more common and acceptable, especially when a girl is married into the upper class
Many political forces work behind the caste system	The class system is not as political
Forced to follow their ancestors' occupations irrespective of personal interests	People are free to choose any occupation they desire