INTRODUCTION
Meaning of caste

Caste are social strata into which people are born and in which they remain for life. Membership in a caste is an ascribed status (a status acquired at birth) rather than an achieved status (one based on the efforts of the individual).
Definitions of caste

E. A. Blunt defines caste as an endogamous or a collection of endogamous groups. Bearing a common name, membership of which is hereditary, imposing on the members certain restrictions in the matter of social intercourse, either following a common traditional occupation generally regarded as forming a single homogeneous community.
Caste

In India we come across a special type of social stratification the form of castes. Although evidences of caste are to be found in many parts of the world as among the present day Massai, Polynesians and Americans the most perfect instance is that which exists in India.
Characteristics of Caste

- Segmental division of society
- Hierarchy
- Restriction on eating and social intercourse
- Social and religious disabilities and privileges of different castes
- Caste panchyates
Class

Classes, like castes, are social strata, but they are based primarily on economic criteria such as occupation, and income, wealth. Classes are generally open to newcomers, at least to some extent, and in modern societies there tends to be a good deal of mobility between classes.
Definitions of class

According to Max Weber, Classes are aggregates of individuals with the same exhibited standard of living. It is a portion of the community or collection of individuals standing to each other in relation of equality and marked off from other portion by accepted or sanctioned standards of inferiority and superiority.
Characteristics of class

- Hierarchy of status
- Social ranking based primarily on economic position
- Unequal distribution of wealth and power
- More mobility than caste system
- A system in which status is achieved by one’s own efforts rather than ascribed, assigned or inherited
- A system having some degree of permanency of the class structure
- A system based on stratum consciousness and solidarity
- A system having distinctive mode of life and cultural expressions of each class
- A system based on the recognition of superiority and inferiority in relation to those who stand or below in the social hierarchy.
- A system in which boundaries between classes are fluid and are less precisely defined
- A system in which social classes act as sub-cultures - each social class is a system of behaviours, set of values and a way of life
Significance of social classes

- Determining life opportunities
- Assigning social responsibilities
- Shaping life-adjustment patterns
- Explaining many group differences
- Defining the conventional morality
- Cultivating class ethnocentrism
Determinants of social class

- Wealth and income
- Occupation
- Education
- Prestige
Difference between class and caste

- Caste are found in Indian subcontinent only, especially in India, while classes are found almost everywhere.
- Classes are especially the characteristic of industrial societies of Europe and America.
- Classes depend mainly on economic difference—whereas in caste system non-economic factors such as influence of religion, rebirth and rituals are most important.
- Class system is typically more fluid than the caste system. Caste system is static whereas the class system is dynamic.
- Caste system is characterized by cumulative inequality but class system is characterized by dispersed inequality.
- Caste system is an organic system but class has a segmentary character where various segments are motivated by competition.
- Caste works as an active political force in a village but class does not work so.
- In the class system there are no formal restrictions on inter-dining and inter-marriage between people from different classes as is found in the caste system.
Interface between class and caste

Under interface, following three main views regarding caste and class have been proposed:

► Caste is changing into Class.
► Caste is not changing but is strengthening.
► Caste is changing but only at superficial level.
Caste is Changing into Class

As caste has lost all its distinctive features such as
- Endogamy
- Occupation
- Restrictions on intermixing and commensality
- Purity and pollution
- Social rigidity

We can say that system of stratification is now being based on class which means it has become an open system. It is the individual who achieves a status based on the following attributes:
- Ability
- Education
- Occupation
- Income
- Style of Life
- Residence
Caste is not Changing but Strengthening

The press, mass media and communication are used to reach the message of caste to its members scattered over large areas.

Different educational and professional institutions are being run on the caste basis to help the members of a specific caste to acquire a new knowledge and occupy higher positions.

In the democratic setup, caste is also strengthening.

- The choice of party candidates at election is determined by the numerical strength of a caste in a constituency.
- People belonging to one caste support the members of their own caste.
- The alliances and counter alliances are formed between minority caste and sub caste to offset the predominance of a particular caste.
- The State provision of protective discrimination has further strengthened caste affiliations in the shape of pro and anti reservation agitations.
Caste is changing only at Superficial Level

1. Keeping in view, the modern mode of living it is not possible for caste system to retain its distinctiveness and impose traditional restrictions.

2. The restrictions regarding dress, inter mixing and inter dining have been removed to some extent.

3. With industrialization, new occupations have come into being.

4. Caste is becoming secular or less rigid but with regards to its ritual aspects and social structure it is not changing but re strengthening to gain new powers based on democratic set up.
Conclusion

In certain facets of our life, we are becoming secular and class oriented but in other aspects we remain traditional oriented and our behaviour pattern is being regulated in caste system.
Thank you