

# India's Caste System

# Caste Description

- “The Indian caste system has been in use for many years. Still today the values of the caste system are held strongly. It has kept a sense of order, and peace among the people. There are five different levels of the system: Brahman, Kshatriya, Vaishya, Shudra, and Harijans. Within each of these categories are the actual “castes” or *jatis* within which people are born, marry, and die. They all have their own place among each other and accept that it is the way to keep society from disintegrating to chaos. This system has worked well for Indian people and still has a major role in modern India.”

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<http://www.csuchico.edu/~cheinz/syllabi/asst001/spring98/india.htm>

# Caste Hierarchy

- Brahman – highest caste, priests
- Kshatriya – ruler, warrior, landowner
- Vaishya - merchants
- Shudra – artisans, agriculturalists
- Harijans – ‘untouchables,’ poor, dung handlers, musicians, really outside of the caste system

# India's Surnames

Delhi – Hindi(Language)- Sharma, Singh, Agrawal, Kapoor, verma  
Punjab – Punjabi's – Sharma, verma, Singh.  
Rajasthan – Marvadi's – rajput, chaudary.  
Gujarat – Gujarati's – Patel, shah, trivedi, Bhesania\*(Iran), ambani.  
Uttar Pradesh – jatt's – Singh,rathva, jath,vaidya (doctors)  
Maharastra – Marathi's – kelkar, panikar, etc. - ...kar suffix.  
Calcutta – Bengali's – Chokraborty, Bose, Majumdar,Mukharjee, chatterji etc.  
karnataka – Kannada – jagadish, patil , ray, shetti.  
Hyderabad – Andhra's – kurapati, thonta, ravula, kottam, reddy.  
Tamilnadu – tamilian's – venkataraghvan, vidya , vijaya...etc.  
Exceptions – "Salim Patel" , "Abdul Shah" - Hindu surnames in Muslim families. – adopted surnames.



# Name of families from occupations

- 55% of the communities derive their names from the traditional occupations they pursue.

## **Maiden surnames:-**

- Topiwala (cap seller)
- Batliwala (bottle seller)
- Daruwala (liquor seller)
- Ganjawala (weed seller)
- Sodawala (soda seller)
- Joonjoonwala (unrecognized)

## **By occupation:-**

- Maji - fisher
- Bhuiyar (peasant),
- Alvan (salt maker),
- Churihar (bangle-maker),
- Lohar (blacksmith),
- Bunkar (weaver),
- Chitrakar (scroll-painter),
- and also gaddis, gujjars, julahas, dhobis, sapera, nai, etc. etc.

## **By names of creatures :-**

- Mankad – bug.
- Kansari – bug.
- Hathi – elephant.

## **By family Business:-**

- Ambani, valia – chemical business.
- Parikh – ornaments.
- Shah – gold,diamond.
- Kapoor,kumar – film industry.
- Raipara – wire making.
- Nai – barber.
- Chattopadhyay – professor.
- Prajapati – potter.
- Jaiswal – liquor business
- Gupta – different food profession like – sweet maker.
- Bhandari,pandit,pandya,joshi – priest

## **Surnames by ordinary names:-**

- Veena, veera (brother), veer, vidyarthi (student), tina, tushar, kunal.....

Trade names used as surname:- developed quite recently from English

- Merchant
  - Contractor
  - Engineer
  - Doctor
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- Patel – farming, grocery shop, small and big retail businesses.- any new business – depend on land and the business which makes money.
  - Caste categories are also based on occupations, and cut across religion. Many surnames derive from occupations pursued, offices traditionally held, and original villages, cutting across community boundaries and region.
  - Singh, Acharya, Patel, Naik, Prasad, Gupta, Sharma, Khan are examples.