

ANANTAM IAS · OPTIONAL NOTES

Anthropology Optional The Indian Social System: Caste, Tribe and the Sacred Complex

Paper 2 · Unit 3

The idea-scaffolding of traditional Hindu society (varnashrama, purushartha, karma, rina, rebirth), caste read structurally and theoretically with Srinivas's tools, the jajmani economy, the tribe-caste continuum of Bailey and Sinha, and Vidyarthi's two indigenous models, the sacred complex and the nature-man-spirit complex.

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UPSC SYLLABUS

The structure and nature of traditional Indian social system: Varnashram, Purushartha, Karma, Rina and Rebirth. Caste system in India: structure and characteristics of Varna and Jati systems, theories of origin of caste system, dominant caste, caste mobility, future of caste system. Jajmani system. Tribe-caste continuum. Sacred Complex and Nature-Man-Spirit Complex.

The Traditional Framework: Varnashrama, Purushartha, Karma, Rina and Rebirth

The syllabus asks for the 'structure and nature' of the traditional Indian social system, and the answer is a single integrated worldview rather than five separate topics. Varnashrama assigns duty, purushartha sets the goals of life, karma supplies the moral mechanics, rebirth is the arena in which karma works itself out, and rina names the debts that bind the individual to society. Present them as one system that made caste look natural and moral.

- Varna is the four-fold ritual model of society, Brahmana (priest-teacher), Kshatriya (ruler-warrior), Vaishya (trader-cultivator) and Shudra (servant), with its scriptural charter in the Purusha Sukta of the Rig Veda, where the four emerge from the cosmic being (mouth, arms, thighs, feet). The upper three are 'twice-born' (dvija), entitled to the sacred-thread rite (upanayana); the untouchables lie outside varna altogether (avarna).
- Ashrama is the four-stage life-cycle, Brahmacharya (celibate studentship), Grihastha (the householder), Vanaprastha (withdrawal) and Sannyasa (renunciation), and together varna-plus-ashrama forms varnashrama-dharma, duty defined by one's social order and stage of life. The scheme reconciles worldly obligation with the ultimate goal of release.
- Purushartha is the doctrine of the four legitimate aims of human life: dharma (righteous duty), artha (wealth and material welfare), kama (desire and pleasure) and moksha (liberation). The first three, the trivarga, are worldly and are meant to be pursued under the regulation of dharma; moksha is the transcendent fourth, sought especially in the later ashramas. The system is not ascetic denial but ordered pursuit.
- Karma is the law that every action bears fruit, so present condition is the harvest of past deeds and present deeds shape the future. It supplies the causal engine that links conduct to destiny and, sociologically, that explains and legitimizes one's station of birth.
- Rebirth (punarjanma) and the cycle of samsara are the field in which karma operates: the atman transmigrates through successive lives determined by karma, and moksha is release from this cycle. Karma-plus-rebirth-plus-moksha is the metaphysical core, and its social effect is powerful, since caste position becomes the just result of past karma and the ladder to a better rebirth lies in performing one's svadharma.
- Rina, the doctrine of debts, is the least-known and most-rewarded element. A person is born owing three debts (rina-traya): deva-rina, the debt to the gods, discharged by worship and sacrifice (yajna); rishi-rina, the debt to the sages, discharged by study of the scriptures (svadhyaya) during studentship; and pitri-rina, the debt to the ancestors, discharged by marrying and raising offspring to continue the line. A fourth, the debt to fellow humans (manushya-rina), discharged by hospitality, is sometimes added.
- The integration is the exam point: rina makes the householder stage obligatory (you owe ancestors a son and gods a sacrifice), karma and rebirth make dharma prudent as well as moral, and varnashrama supplies the content of dharma. Together they form a closed, self-justifying moral order in which duty, debt and destiny reinforce caste. The critical reading, which Ambedkar pressed, is that this same integration sacralized inequality by making birth-rank the wage of karma.

Concept	What it is	Social function
Varnashrama	Four varnas x four ashramas = duty by order and life-stage	Fixes svadharma (one's own duty) by birth and age
Purushartha	Four aims: dharma, artha, kama, moksha	Orders worldly pursuit (trivarga) under dharma; sets liberation as the end
Karma	Law that action bears fruit across lives	Supplies moral causation; explains and legitimizes birth-rank
Rina (three debts)	Deva (gods), Rishi (sages), Pitri (ancestors)	Makes worship, study and household life obligatory duties
Rebirth / samsara	Transmigration of the atman, ended by moksha	Makes dharma prudent; rank becomes the just result of past karma

KEY TERMS

Varnashrama-dharma — Duty (dharma) defined jointly by one's varna (social order) and ashrama (life-stage); the organizing norm of traditional Hindu society.

Purushartha — The four legitimate aims of life, dharma, artha, kama and moksha, the first three worldly and regulated by dharma, the fourth transcendent.

Rina-traya — The three debts every person is born owing, to the gods, the sages and the ancestors, discharged respectively by sacrifice, study and progeny.

The Caste System: Structure of Varna and Jati, and Its Features

Caste has two faces, the tidy four-fold varna of the texts and the thousands of jatis on the ground, and half the mistakes in this paper come from confusing them. Get the varna-jati distinction exact, then give Ghurye's features as the standard structural description, with endogamy as the operative core.

- Varna is the pan-Indian, scriptural, four-fold model; jati is the empirical unit people actually belong to, an endogamous, hereditary, usually occupation-linked, locally-ranked birth-group, numbering in the thousands. Varna is theory and vocabulary; jati is practice and structure.
- Srinivas's crucial clarification: the varna model is a language in which jatis stake mobility claims (a rising jati claims Kshatriya or Vaishya status), and the fourfold varna scheme has distorted the picture of caste by making a fluid, thousand-fold, locally-variable reality look neat, fixed and all-India. Use varna to explain claims, jati to describe society.
- Ghurye's six features of caste, from 'Caste and Race in India' (1932), are the standard structural checklist: (1) segmental division of society into groups whose membership is by birth; (2) hierarchy of these groups; (3) restrictions on feeding and social intercourse (rules about who may accept food and water from whom); (4) civil and religious disabilities and privileges of different sections; (5) lack of unrestricted choice of occupation; and (6) restrictions on marriage, that is, endogamy.
- Endogamy is the essence: Ghurye, and even more sharply Ambedkar, treat marriage within the group as the mechanism that keeps caste boundaries sealed across generations. Every other feature can erode while endogamy holds, which is why it is the last to go.

- The purity-pollution axis underlies feeding and intercourse rules: relative ritual purity ranks jatis and governs the acceptance of cooked food (kacca and pakka distinctions) and physical contact. This axis, made a single generative principle by Bougle and Dumont, is what turns a set of groups into a graded hierarchy.
- The structural summary to write: caste is a system of hereditary, endogamous, hierarchically ranked, occupationally associated groups bound by rules of commensality and purity, in which the varna model supplies an idiom of legitimation and mobility while the jati is the real unit of social life. Keep varna and jati explicitly separated throughout.

KEY TERMS

Varna — The four-fold scriptural model of Hindu society (Brahmana, Kshatriya, Vaishya, Shudra); a pan-Indian idiom, not the operative social unit.

Jati — The endogamous, hereditary, locally-ranked, occupation-linked birth-group, running into the thousands; the unit people actually belong to.

Endogamy — Marriage within the group; treated by Ghurye and Ambedkar as the essential mechanism that maintains caste boundaries across generations.

Theories of Origin of the Caste System

This is a pure attribution section, and attribution is exactly what the paper marks. Each theory picks one factor and names one theorist; the sophisticated position, which Ghurye and Hutton both reached, is that no single-factor theory works and caste is a peculiarly Indian synthesis of several. Give the theories, tag them correctly, and close with the multi-causal verdict.

- Traditional or divine-origin theory: caste is ordained by the Purusha Sukta, the four varnas issuing from the cosmic being. This is the scriptural self-account, not a sociological explanation, and is best presented as the ideology to be explained rather than an explanation.
- Racial theory, associated with Herbert Risley and, in a qualified way, G.S. Ghurye: caste arose from the contact and conflict of a fair 'Aryan' people with darker indigenous populations, endogamy preserving supposed blood purity; Risley anchored it to the nasal index. Report it and reject the racial premise, since race is not a valid biological unit.
- Occupational theory, associated with John C. Nesfield: caste grew out of occupation, functional groups and guilds hardening into hereditary endogamous castes, with rank following the nature of the work. It explains the occupation-caste link but not the ritual purity ordering.
- Political or Brahmanical theory, associated with Abbe Dubois and pressed by Ghurye's Brahmanical thesis: caste is substantially a Brahmanical creation and device, elaborated to secure and perpetuate priestly supremacy. It captures the ideological work of caste but overstates deliberate design.
- Religious and ritual theories: Emile Senart derived caste from ancient Indo-Aryan family and gotra institutions, sacraments and ideas of ritual purity and pollution; A.M. Hocart located its origin in the organization of the royal sacrifice, with castes as ritual roles around the king rather than a purity ladder around the Brahmin. These put ritual, not race or economics, at the root.
- The mana or magico-religious theory, associated with J.H. Hutton: caste is a distinctively Indian synthesis of many elements, beliefs about mana and taboo, ideas of food and pollution, occupational specialization, geographical isolation and the absorption of tribes, which fused under Indian conditions into the caste system. Hutton drew heavily on tribal India for this.

- The verdict to write: single-factor theories each capture something (occupation in Nesfield, ritual in Senart and Hocart, Brahmanical interest in Dubois, tribal absorption and mana in Hutton) and each fails alone; Ghurye and Hutton converge on a multi-causal account in which several factors combined to produce caste. Naming the theorists correctly and refusing a single cause is the full-marks move.
- Attribution discipline: Risley = racial; Nesfield = occupational; Dubois = Brahmanical-political; Senart = family/ritual; Hocart = the king's sacrifice; Hutton = mana and multiple factors; Ghurye = Brahmanical emphasis within a broadly multi-factor stance. Getting one of these swapped is the classic error.

Theories of the origin of caste and their authors

Theory	Author	Core claim
Divine / traditional	Purusha Sukta (scriptural)	Varnas ordained by the cosmic being; ideology to be explained, not an explanation
Racial	Risley (also Ghurye, qualified)	Aryan-indigenous contact; endogamy to preserve 'blood purity' (racial premise rejected)
Occupational	J.C. Nesfield	Occupations and guilds hardened into hereditary endogamous castes
Political / Brahmanical	Abbe Dubois (Ghurye's emphasis)	Caste as a Brahmanical device to secure priestly supremacy
Family / ritual	Emile Senart	From Indo-Aryan family, gotra, sacraments and pollution ideas
Ritual / sacrifice	A.M. Hocart	From the organization of the royal sacrifice; the king, not the Brahmin, at the centre
Mana / multiple-factor	J.H. Hutton	An Indian synthesis of mana, taboo, occupation, isolation and tribal absorption

KEY TERMS

Multi-causal theory of caste — The position (Ghurye, Hutton) that no single factor, race, occupation, religion or politics, explains caste, which arose from the fusion of several under Indian conditions.

Hocart's ritual theory — The view that caste originated in the division of roles in the royal sacrifice, placing the king at the centre rather than the Brahmin's purity.

Dominant Caste, Sanskritization and Westernization: Srinivas's Toolkit

M.N. Srinivas gave Indian sociology and anthropology its most-used concepts for how caste actually works and changes, and the paper leans on them heavily. Learn the precise definitions, the works they come from, and the essential riders, especially that Sanskritization is positional not structural, and that dominant caste separates local power from ritual rank.

- Dominant caste, from 'The Social System of a Mysore Village' (1955) and 'The Dominant Caste in Rampura' (1959): a caste is dominant when it combines numerical strength, economic power (above all in land), and political power, together with a reasonably high (though not necessarily the highest) ritual rank; in modern times Western education and positions in administration are added criteria.
- Why dominant caste matters: it prises apart local secular power from ritual purity, explaining how numerically strong land-controlling castes (Okkaligas, Lingayats, Jats, Yadavs, Marathas, Reddys, Kammas,

Patidars) run their regions without being Brahmin. It is the concept that a purity-only model of caste cannot accommodate.

- Sanskritization, from 'Religion and Society among the Coorgs of South India' (1952): the process by which a low caste, tribe or other group takes over the customs, rituals, beliefs, ideology and way of life of a higher, frequently twice-born caste. Srinivas renamed it from his earlier 'Brahminization' once he found groups modelling themselves on Kshatriya, Vaishya or locally dominant non-Brahmin castes.
- The two riders that make or break the answer: Sanskritization produces positional change, not structural change, one group climbs but the hierarchy and the ladder survive intact; and the ritual claim follows prior material or political gain rather than causing it, a group that has acquired land, numbers or power then adopts vegetarianism, the sacred thread and a higher-origin story, and the claim is conceded because the power is already there.
- Westernization, Srinivas's paired concept: the changes in technology, institutions, values and ideology brought about by over a century and a half of British rule, humanitarianism, rationalism, equality, secular education. It is distinct from Sanskritization (which stays within the traditional frame) and from the wider notion of modernization. Often the dominant caste Westernizes and thereby sets a new model for those below.
- The interaction to note: Sanskritization and Westernization operate together and sometimes pull in opposite directions, a group may Sanskritize its ritual while Westernizing its economy and education. Srinivas's own vocabulary here includes the term 'vote bank', coined in the 1955 Mysore essay, for caste blocs mobilized in electoral politics.
- Critiques to carry (they earn marks): Sanskritization describes without explaining (Yogendra Singh) and is not strictly a theory; it may be protest rather than imitation (Harold Gould); 'Sanskritic' is too varied to name one model (Staal); it carries a Brahmanical bias by treating the upper-caste style as the natural destination; and post-Mandal Dalit and OBC assertion has often repudiated rather than imitated the upper-caste model, the strongest contemporary objection.

KEY TERMS

Dominant caste — Srinivas's concept for a caste preponderant in numbers, land and local political power with a reasonably high ritual rank, which controls a locality regardless of who outranks it ritually.

Sanskritization — A lower group's adoption of the customs, ritual and ideology of a higher, often twice-born, caste; positional change following prior material or political gain, leaving the hierarchy intact.

Westernization — Srinivas's paired concept for the technological, institutional and value changes wrought by British rule, distinct from Sanskritization and from modernization.

Caste Mobility and the Future of the Caste System

The paper regularly asks whether caste is changing, weakening or merely changing form, and it wants an argued position, not a lament. The evidence points to transformation rather than disappearance: the ritual hierarchy has weakened while caste as identity, endogamy and a political resource has strengthened. Marshal the mechanisms of mobility and then state the trajectory.

- Mechanisms of mobility: Sanskritization (positional ritual mobility, always following secular gain); the dominant-caste route (numerical and land power translated into local control); caste associations and federations that cluster jatis for collective advancement; reservation and modern education opening structural mobility; and electoral politics converting caste into a mobilizable interest.

- Rajni Kothari's formulation ('Caste in Indian Politics', 1970) is the key citation for the political dimension: it is not that politics is caste-ridden but that caste is politicized, and entry into politics modernizes caste by making it associational and instrumental rather than purely ritual.
- What has weakened: the ritual-purity hierarchy in public life, occupational rigidity (caste and occupation have loosened, though not at the bottom), untouchability's overt forms, and the everyday enforcement of commensal rules in cities. Ritual rank no longer straightforwardly commands secular power.
- What has strengthened or persisted: endogamy, which remains remarkably intact and is the surest sign caste survives; caste as identity and as a vehicle of political mobilization and welfare claims; and, in Dumont's term, substantialization, caste turning from a relational hierarchy into competing, self-conscious blocks that assert identity and interest against one another.
- Andre Beteille's reading is the balanced position to cite: the caste system as a ritual hierarchy is decaying, but caste as a unit of identity and collective action is very much alive; the harmony between ritual status, economic class and political power (once cumulative) has broken, and the three now diverge.
- The future thesis worth defending: caste is not disappearing but changing form, from a hierarchy ordered by purity to a horizontal field of competing identities operating through democratic politics, associations and endogamous marriage. Srinivas himself argued caste would persist by adapting; the death-of-caste prediction is repeatedly falsified by the census, the marriage market and the ballot box.
- The honest qualifier: mobility and change are highly uneven, the middle and dominant castes have gained most, while Dalits and the landless remain tied by the persistence of untouchability's covert forms and by landlessness, so any 'weakening of caste' claim must be disaggregated by position in the hierarchy.

KEY TERMS

Positional vs structural mobility — Positional mobility raises a group within an unchanged hierarchy (Sanskritization); structural mobility changes the shape of the hierarchy itself (as reservation and modern occupations can).

Substantialization — Dumont's term for modern caste turning from a relational purity-hierarchy into competing self-contained blocks asserting identity and interest, the form in which caste survives.

The Jajmani System

The jajmani system is the traditional non-market economy of caste, the hereditary exchange of goods and services within the village, and it is examined both as an institution and as an argument between those who read it as reciprocity and those who read it as exploitation. Attribute the two readings precisely; that contrast is the answer.

- The term and its source: 'jajmani' was brought into anthropology by William H. Wiser's 'The Hindu Jajmani System' (1936), based on Karimpur in Uttar Pradesh. The jajman is the patron, typically the landowning dominant-caste household; the kamins or purjans are the service and artisan castes, barber, washerman, potter, carpenter, priest, water-carrier, leatherworker.
- The structure: the tie is hereditary (a family serves a family across generations), multi-stranded (the same relationship carries economic, ritual and social content), ritually framed, and paid not in wages but in a customary share of the harvest, plus perquisites at festivals and life-cycle rites. It integrates the castes of a village into a functioning division of labour outside the market.
- Wiser's interpretation, the thesis to be examined: jajmani is a system of mutual obligation and reciprocity, each caste serving the others and being served in turn, so that the village is bound by interdependence rather

than by pure domination.

- The counter-reading, the critique to set against it: T.O. Beidelman ('A Comparative Analysis of the Jajmani System', 1959) argued that the relationship is asymmetric and exploitative, resting on the landowner's monopoly of land, so that 'reciprocity' is the ideology of a fundamentally coercive arrangement. Pauline Kolenda added that regional variation is so large that a single uniform 'system' may be an overstatement.
- The functional-versus-exploitation debate is the exam core: functionalists (following Wiser) see integration and stability; the critics (Beidelman, and Marxist readings) see the extraction of unfree labour and service secured by the landowning castes' control of land. The honest position holds both, jajmani did integrate the village, and it did so on terms set by and favouring the dominant landholders.
- Decline and its causes, in order of weight: monetization and the spread of wage labour; the market supplying goods the artisan castes once made; migration and the exit option; the Green Revolution converting patrons into employers; land reform and tenancy law; education and reservation; and the refusal by service castes, especially Dalits, of degrading hereditary service. What survives is largely the ritual segment, priests and sometimes barbers at life-cycle rites.
- The anthropological significance: jajmani is the economic face of caste, the mechanism by which ritual hierarchy was translated into a material order of production and exchange, which is why its decline tracks the wider loosening of the caste economy under money, market and mobility.

KEY TERMS

Jajmani system — The hereditary, ritually framed village exchange in which landowning patron (jajman) households receive services from artisan and service (kamin) castes in return for a customary share of the harvest rather than a wage.

Jajman and kamin — The patron (jajman), usually the landowning dominant-caste household, and the service or artisan caste (kamin/purjan) that serves it hereditarily.

The Tribe-Caste Continuum Debate

The question here is whether 'tribe' and 'caste' are two distinct types of society or two ends of a single continuum along which groups move. The continuum view is the mainstream anthropological answer in India, and it is associated above all with F.G. Bailey and Surajit Sinha; attribute their versions precisely, because they differ in the criterion they use.

- The problem: colonial classification separated 'tribe' from 'caste' as if they were fixed types, but Indian ethnography kept finding groups that were part tribal and part caste, and communities in the process of turning from one into the other. The continuum concept is the response to that messiness.
- F.G. Bailey's version, from 'Caste and the Economic Frontier' (1957), based on Bisipara in the Kondmals of Orissa: tribe and caste are the two ends of a single continuum, distinguished by the degree of access to land and the form of political-economic organization. A group is 'more tribal' the more it has direct, relatively egalitarian access to land within a segmentary order, and 'more caste' the more it is drawn into a dependent, hierarchical, organically interdependent system. The criterion is political-economic, not cultural.
- Surajit Sinha's version, from his study of the Bhumij of Barabhum (on the Bihar-Bengal borderland) and 'Tribe-Caste and Tribe-Peasant Continua in Central India' (1965): central Indian tribes transform into castes through Rajputization or Kshatriyization and through incorporation into regional state systems, so 'tribe' is better seen as a dimension or a stage in a continuum with caste (and with peasantry) than as a sealed type. Sinha stresses political incorporation and state-formation as the transforming process.

- N.K. Bose supplies the mechanism that underlies both: 'The Hindu Method of Tribal Absorption' (1941), the economic pull of settled plough agriculture drawing a tribe into a caste-like occupational niche until it becomes a jati. Absorption is how a group travels along the continuum from the tribal to the caste pole.
- The wider policy debate to gesture at, without confusing it with the continuum proper: G.S. Ghurye called the tribes 'Backward Hindus' ('The Aborigines So-Called and Their Future', 1943) and favoured assimilation, against Verrier Elwin's early argument for relative isolation (later softened to integration), a dispute that shaped the Nehruvian 'tribal panchsheel'. The continuum idea (Bailey, Sinha) is analytically distinct from this assimilation-versus-isolation policy quarrel.
- The critical qualifiers: the continuum can flatten real differences (segmentary tribal polity versus caste hierarchy) and can read history as a one-way march into Hinduism, understating tribes that resisted or reversed absorption; and some scholars argue 'tribe' is partly a colonial administrative construct. Note these, but hold the continuum as the working position.
- The synthesis to write: tribe and caste in India are not watertight categories but ends of a continuum along which groups have long moved, measured by Bailey through access to land and political-economic form and by Sinha through Rajputization and state incorporation, with Bose's absorption as the underlying mechanism. This continuity is itself evidence that tribal society is part of, not outside, Indian civilization.

Versions of the tribe-caste continuum

Scholar	Study / work	Criterion of the continuum
F.G. Bailey	Bisipara, Orissa; 'Caste and the Economic Frontier' (1957)	Degree of access to land and political-economic organization (tribal = direct/egalitarian access; caste = dependent/hierarchical)
Surajit Sinha	Bhumij of Barabhum; central India (1965)	Rajputization/Kshatriyization and incorporation into regional state systems; tribe as a dimension/stage
N.K. Bose	'The Hindu Method of Tribal Absorption' (1941)	Economic pull of settled agriculture turning a tribe into a jati (the mechanism)

KEY TERMS

Tribe-caste continuum — The view that tribe and caste are not distinct types but ends of a single continuum along which groups move, mainstream in Indian anthropology.

Rajputization / Kshatriyization — Sinha's process by which central Indian tribes claimed Kshatriya (Rajput) status and were incorporated into regional states, moving from the tribal toward the caste pole.

The Sacred Complex and the Nature-Man-Spirit Complex: Vidyarthi's Models

L.P. Vidyarthi gave Indian anthropology two indigenous conceptual models, the sacred complex for studying a Hindu civilization through its pilgrimage centres, and the nature-man-spirit complex for studying a tribe as an integrated ecological-religious whole. These are prized in the paper precisely because they are Indian concepts, so attribute the studies and the works exactly.

- The sacred complex comes from Vidyarthi's 'The Sacred Complex in Hindu Gaya' (1961), a study of the pilgrimage town of Gaya in Bihar. (Note the exact title: the study is of Hindu Gaya, in Bihar.) It applies Robert Redfield's little-tradition and great-tradition framework to a living Hindu sacred centre.

- The three components of the sacred complex to name: sacred geography (the sacred zones, centres, clusters and segments of the pilgrimage landscape, such as the Vishnupad temple and the ritual sites of Gaya); sacred performances (the rituals and rites enacted there, above all pinda-dana and shraddha, the ancestral rites for which Gaya is famous); and sacred specialists (the priestly functionaries, the Gayawals or pandas, and others who mediate the rituals).
- The argument the model carries: the sacred complex shows the continuous interaction of the little (local, folk) tradition and the great (pan-Indian, textual) tradition, so that Hinduism at a centre like Gaya is a working synthesis of the two levels rather than either alone. It is Vidyarthi's demonstration that a civilization can be studied anthropologically through its sacred centres.
- The significance of the sacred complex: it was among the first major Indian studies to apply the Redfield-Marriott-Singer apparatus (little/great tradition, universalization/parochialization) to Indian civilization, and it established a model, later extended to Kashi and other centres, for the 'anthropology of Indian civilization' from within.
- The nature-man-spirit complex comes from Vidyarthi's 'The Maler: A Study in Nature-Man-Spirit Complex' (1963), a study of the Maler (Sauria Paharia) of the Rajmahal Hills. It is his model for the integrated life of a tribe.
- The content of the nature-man-spirit (NMS) complex: the tribal world is organized by the interrelations of three domains, nature (the physical environment, the hills, forest and soil), man (the community with its social organization and its economy, here shifting cultivation), and spirit (the supernatural realm of deities and spirits that must be propitiated). Among the Maler, shifting cultivation binds the three together: the forest and soil (nature) are worked by the community's labour (man) under the sanction and propitiation of the hill and forest spirits (spirit), so ecology, economy, society and religion form a single interdependent complex.
- Why the pairing matters and how to deploy it: the sacred complex is Vidyarthi's model for the peasant-Hindu, great-tradition end of Indian society, and the nature-man-spirit complex is his model for the tribal end, together giving an indigenous, holistic framework spanning caste-Hindu civilization and tribal culture. Cite them as evidence that Indian anthropology generated its own concepts rather than only importing them.
- Attribution discipline: both models are Vidyarthi's; the sacred complex = Gaya (1961), sacred geography plus sacred performances plus sacred specialists, little-and-great tradition; the nature-man-spirit complex = the Maler of the Rajmahal Hills (1963), nature plus man plus spirit integrated through shifting cultivation. Do not swap the studies or drop the components.

Vidyarthi's two models

Model	Study / work	Core components
Sacred Complex	'The Sacred Complex in Hindu Gaya' (1961); Gaya, Bihar	Sacred geography + sacred performances + sacred specialists; integrates little and great traditions
Nature-Man-Spirit Complex	'The Maler' (1963); Sauria Paharia, Rajmahal Hills	Nature + man + spirit, integrated (among the Maler) through shifting cultivation

KEY TERMS

Sacred complex — Vidyarthi's model (Gaya, 1961) of a Hindu sacred centre as the integration of sacred geography, sacred performances and sacred specialists, linking little and great traditions.

Nature-man-spirit complex — Vidyarthi's model (the Maler, 1963) of tribal life as the integrated interrelation of the natural environment, the human community and the supernatural realm.

Little and great traditions — Redfield's paired levels, local-folk and pan-Indian-textual, whose interaction the sacred complex was designed to demonstrate in a living Hindu centre.

Last-mile revision

- Traditional framework as one system: varnashrama (duty by order and life-stage), purushartha (dharma, artha, kama, moksha), karma (action bears fruit), rebirth/samsara (arena of karma, ended by moksha), rina-traya (debts to gods, sages, ancestors: sacrifice, study, progeny). Together they sacralized rank.
- Varna (four-fold scriptural model, idiom of claims) vs jati (thousands of endogamous local birth-groups, the real unit); Srinivas: varna distorts the picture. Ghurye's six features, endogamy the essence, purity-pollution the ranking axis.
- Origin theories, attribute exactly: Risley (racial), Nesfield (occupational), Dubois/Ghurye (Brahmanical-political), Senart (family/ritual), Hocart (royal sacrifice, king-centred), Hutton (mana + multiple factors). Verdict: multi-causal (Ghurye, Hutton).
- Srinivas: dominant caste = numbers + land + political power + fairly high ritual rank (separates power from purity). Sanskritization = positional change following prior secular gain (not structural; renamed from Brahminization). Westernization = British-era value/institutional change. 'Vote bank' also his.
- Caste mobility: Sanskritization, dominant caste, caste associations, reservation, politics (Kothari: caste is politicized). Future: ritual hierarchy weakens, endogamy and caste-as-identity persist; Dumont's substantialization; Beteille: caste system decays but caste as identity survives. Changing form, not disappearing; disaggregate by position.
- Jajmani (Wiser 1936, Karimpur): jajman patron vs kamin service castes, hereditary, multi-stranded, paid in grain. Wiser = reciprocity; Beidelman (1959) = exploitation on land monopoly; Kolenda = regional variation. Declines with money, market, migration, Green Revolution, land reform.
- Tribe-caste continuum: Bailey (Bisipara 1957, criterion = access to land and political-economic form), Sinha (Bhumij/Barabhum 1965, Rajputization and state incorporation), Bose (absorption via settled agriculture, the mechanism). Distinct from the Ghurye-Elwin assimilation-vs-isolation policy debate.
- Vidyarthi's two models: Sacred Complex ('The Sacred Complex in Hindu Gaya' 1961) = sacred geography + performances + specialists, little/great tradition; Nature-Man-Spirit Complex ('The Maler' 1963, Rajmahal Hills) = nature + man + spirit integrated through shifting cultivation.

Common errors to avoid

- Treating varnashrama, purushartha, karma, rina and rebirth as five unrelated topics. They form one integrated worldview in which duty, debt, action and destiny reinforce caste; that integration is the point.
- Confusing the three debts. Deva-rina is repaid by sacrifice/worship, rishi-rina by study, pitri-rina by raising offspring. Swapping them is a common slip.
- Blurring varna and jati. Varna is the four-fold scriptural idiom of mobility claims; jati is the endogamous local unit people belong to. Never present varna as the operative structure.
- Misattributing origin theories, the single biggest error here. Occupational is Nesfield, racial is Risley, ritual-sacrifice is Hocart, family/pollution is Senart, mana/multiple is Hutton, Brahmanical is Dubois. Learn the pairings and refuse a single cause.
- Calling Sanskritization structural change or saying the ritual claim causes the mobility. It is positional (the hierarchy survives) and the claim follows prior material or political gain.
- Conflating Sanskritization and Westernization, or Westernization and modernization. Sanskritization stays within the traditional frame; Westernization is British-era value change; modernization is the broader process.
- Presenting jajmani only as harmonious reciprocity. Wiser's reciprocity thesis is the position to be tested against Beidelman's exploitation critique resting on the landowner's monopoly of land.
- Merging the tribe-caste continuum with the Ghurye-Elwin policy debate. Bailey's and Sinha's continuum is an analytic claim about types shading into each other; assimilation-versus-isolation is a separate policy quarrel.
- Getting Bailey's and Sinha's criteria backwards. Bailey uses access to land and political-economic form (Bisipara); Sinha uses Rajputization and state incorporation (Bhumij, central India).
- Swapping Vidyarthi's two studies or mis-titling them. The sacred complex is 'The Sacred Complex in Hindu Gaya' (1961); the nature-man-spirit complex is 'The Maler' (1963), the Sauria Paharia of the Rajmahal Hills. Keep the three components of each intact.