

A Well-defined Role and Position in Society for Everyone

In ancient India, caste was a defining element of a person's identity. It gave certain people some privileges that other people did not enjoy. The notion of karma could justify this basic inequality: a person's position in society was pre-determined by what he or she had done in his or her previous life, that was why they could not be equal.

There were five large groups of people but only four castes since the lowest group had no caste and were known as Untouchables. Those people usually did the hardest jobs, like cleaning up the streets or collecting garbage. Below them were the slaves who were not really considered as a group of people.

The lowest caste was the Shudras – the farmhands or servants who had to work for other people.



Above them were the Vaishyas, or farmers and traders who owned their own farms or businesses.

Above the Vaishyas were the Kshatriyas, or warriors, but there were not many of them.

The highest and most powerful caste was the Brahmins: the priests and leaders. There were only a few of them. Going to school or teaching in schools was

a privilege reserved for Brahman men. Brahman women were not allowed to go to school.

Within each caste, there were a lot of smaller groups. Usually people from one caste did not have much contact with people from another caste because little interaction was allowed between the groups, one example being that marriages were forbidden between castes.