

JAJMANI SYSTEM

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A very important feature of traditional village life in India is the jajmani system. The term jajman refers to the patron or recipient of specialized services and the term jajmani refers to the whole relationship. The jajmani system is a system of economic, social and rituals linked with among different caste groups in a village. The serving castes offer their services to the landowning upper and intermediate caste and in return, they get paid both in cash and kind.

The patron castes are the landowning dominant castes eg, Rajput, Bhumihar, Jat in the North, and Kamma, Lingayat and reddi in Andhra Pradesh and Patel in Gujrat. The service castes are like Brahmin, Barber, carpenter, blacksmith, water-carrier, & leather-worker, etc.

The Jajmani relations essentially operate at the family level. Rajput land owning family has its ties with one family each from Brahmin, barber, carpenter etc. and a family of service castes offers its services to specific families of Jajmani. However, Jajmani rules are enforced by caste panchayats.

The Jajmani relationship is supposed to be and often is durable, exclusive and multiple. Jajmani tie is inherited on both sides i.e. Patron and client (the Jajman and the Kamra). The relationship is between ~~of~~ specific families. Moreover, it is more than exchange of grain and money in lieu of service. On various ritual occasions, such as marriage, birth and death, the service-castes render their services to their Jajman and get gifts in addition to customary payments.

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Further, it has been observed that the jajmani system has weakened over the years due to market forces, increased urban contact, migration, education, social and political awareness on the part of the service castes.