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- iii) There may in fact be discrepancies between attribute of a caste and its rank: Thus in a Mysore village studied by Srinivas the traders caste is vegetarian and follows a clean occupation relative to the peasants. Yet peasants are ranked about traders.
- iv) There is also the problem of which of the attributes is more and which of the attributes is less important for ranking of castes.

It was due to these anomalies that the interactional approach was proposed as an alternative to the attributional approach. This has been presented earlier but is itself subject to some problems. Let us turn to these now.

- i) The interactional approach subsumes within it the importance of attributes. Thus interaction alone cannot account for rank without



questioned caste division itself. The element of control is missing while the integrative function of caste is highlighted

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## 6.5 LET US SUM UP

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In this unit we have explored the features of caste rank and identity. We began with early explanations of caste, including the religious and sociological explanations. We then moved on to a presentation of the attribution approaches to caste including those of Ghurye, Hutton, and Srinivas. Following this we described the interactional alternative to caste ranking and identity, including the work of Bailey, Mayer, Marriott and Dumont. Having presented this view we appraised both of the approaches to caste ranking and identity, and found that there difficulties present in both. It is clear however that the work. Discussed presents a tremendous advance over the early religious and sociological explanations of caste hierarchy and ranking.

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## 6.6 KEYWORDS

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Attributes	:	Qualities and features
Commensality	:	Eating together or sitting together
Dominant Caste	:	A caste which is influential in a village due to its economic and political power.
Endogamy	:	Marriage only within a particular groups
Hierarchy	:	Rank order in which items are arranged from high to low
Ideology	:	A coherent consistent of set of ideas
Jajmani System	:	Custom of ritualised, personal, specialized services offered by the dependent castes to the dominant castes.
Kaccha food	:	Food that is uncooked, or cooked in water
Pakka food	:	food cooked in ghee or oil
Pollution	:	A state created by coming into contact with 'unclean' items or castes
Purity	:	A state of ritual cleanliness, or being free from all polluting things and persons.

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## 6.7 FURTHER READINGS

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- Mandelbaum D. G. 1987 *Society in India*. Bombay: Popular Prakashan.
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## 6.8 SPECIMEN ANSWER TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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### Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Srinivas sees caste as a segmentary system. All castes are divided into sub-castes which are; i) endogamous; ii) have common occupation; iii) are units of social and ritual life; iv) follow a common culture; v) are governed by the village council or 'Panchayat'. The factors of hierarchy, caste occupation commensality and restrictions, principle of pollution and caste panchayat are also considered by Srinivas. Thus

Srinivas's concept of 'Sanskritization' talks of a lower caste emulating higher caste attributes in order to rise higher within the ranking system.

**Attributional and  
Interactional**

### **Check Your Progress 2**

- 1) For Dumont the ideology of purity and pollution is a general one and not confined to any local context alone. Thus for Dumont caste is a set of relationships of economic, political and kinship systems, sustained by mainly religious values. Hierarchy is the essential value underlying the caste system and it is this value that integrates Hindu Society. Caste has the principle of pure and impure underlying it.

'Pure' is superior to 'impure' and has to be kept separate. For Dumont power has been subordinated to status and thus the king is subordinate to the priest. Hierarchy is thus ritualistic and supported by religion.





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