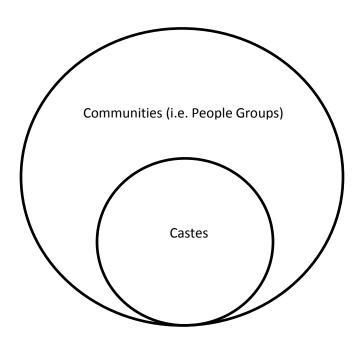
People Groups, Communities and Castes: Some Observations

- All castes are communities, but not all communities are castes.
- Strictly speaking, only Hindu groups are in the formal caste system, and beyond that, only Hindu high caste groups.¹
- However, the caste perspective, where there is wide-spread awareness of a social hierarchy, permeates communities outside the Hindu caste system.
- Communities which may be considered to be outside the formal caste system include Scheduled Tribes and Muslim and Christian communities. Others, such as Other Backward Castes, may also be considered outside the formal caste system. Ambiguity exists about these issues, and people may disagree.
- "Community" is the all-inclusive term, and is preferable to "castes" or "castes and tribes".
- The terms "people group" and "community" can be used interchangeably, as synonyms.



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¹ The Hindu religion follows a caste system that recognizes four distinct classes or divisions among people based on occupation and family lineage. These main classes are Brahmins (priestly caste), Kshatriyas (warrior class), Vaisyas (merchant and peasant class), and Shudras (labor class). There is a lower caste called the Dalits which doesn't fit within the four main classes.