

SANSKRITIZATION

Definition

- Sanskritization is a process wherein *a low caste, tribe or other group collectively change their customs, rituals, ideology and way of life in the direction of some upper dominant caste to acquire higher status in society.*
- It is a process of upward mobility.

Origin

- The term Sanskritization was introduced in the 1950's by **Prof M.N Srinivas**.
- He introduced this term to explain the process of cultural mobility in India, in his book 'Religion and Society among the Coorgs of South India'.
- Srinivas found that in order to raise their position in caste hierarchy lower castes adopted some customs and practices of Brahmins and gave up some of their own which were considered as impure by the higher castes.

Examples:

- Lower caste people gave up meat eating, drinking liquor and animal sacrifice to their deities.
 - They imitated Brahmins in matters of food, dressing and rituals.

Characteristics:

1. Collective Phenomenon

- Sanskritization is not the upward mobility of an individual, rather, it is a collective phenomenon where the whole caste attempts to get higher status in society.

2. Sanskritization is not Brahminization

- The lower castes follow not only the Brahmins but also other caste groups.

- So, the more appropriate term for this process is Sanskritisation and not Brahminisation.
- 3. Beyond Caste Groups**
- Besides caste groups, the process of Sanskritisation has been seen also in tribal communities like Bhils of Rajasthan and Gonds of Madhya Pradesh.
 - By the process of Sanskritisation, a tribal community tries to prove itself to be a part of the Hindu society.
- 4. Integrated with Economic & Political domination**
- Sanskritization is the upward mobility of a caste or tribe or group in the ritual hierarchy.
 - However, it generally becomes possible only through an upward mobility in the secular hierarchy, i.e., in the economic and political fields.
 - The dominant castes get their higher status (in ritual mobility) because of factors like land ownership, government jobs, political power etc.
- 5. Imitation and change**
- The process of Sanskritization is characterised by imitation, change of ideals, social mobility and social change.

Models

- Sanskritization needs a medium to transmit in society.
 - There are mainly **three modes** in which it gets transmitted:
- 1. Cultural Model**
- Castes have been assigned high or low status according to cultural characteristics.
- Example: wearing of sacred thread, denying the use of meat and liquor, observing endogamy, prohibition of widow remarriage etc.
- Low castes or tribes imitate the culture, beliefs, values and lifestyles of the dominant caste so as to get a status equal to the upper caste.

2. Varna Model

- In the Varna system, Brahmins are accorded the highest status, followed by the Kshatriyas, the Vaishyas and the Sudras.
- Lower castes imitate the ideals and lifestyle of superior castes
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