

# Sanskritisation

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## Sanskritization

- In the 1950's, Prof M.N Srinivas introduced the term sanskritization to Indian Sociology to explain the process of cultural mobility in India, in his book 'Religion and Society among the Coorgs of South India'.

## Definition of Sanskritization

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

## Characteristics of Sanskritization

The process of Sanskritization is characterised by imitation, change of ideals, social mobility, social change etc.

- **Collective Phenomenon** : Sanskritization is not the upward mobility achieved by an individual rather it is a collective phenomenon where the whole caste gets higher status .
- **Sanskritization is not Brahminization**: Initially, Prof. Srinivas used the term 'Brahminisation' for this process as he thought that the lower caste people must be trying to reach the place of Brahmins. But later on he found that lower castes are not only following Brahmins but also other caste groups. So, he replaced Brahminization by Sanskritization.
- **Beyond Caste Groups**: Besides the castes, the process of Sanskritisation has been indicated in tribal communities like Bhils of Rajasthan, Gonds of Madhya Pradesh and

other hilly tribes. By the process of Sanskritisation a tribal community tries to prove itself to be a part of Hindu society.

- **Integrated with Economic & Political domination:** Sanskritization is the upward mobility in the ritual hierarchy and it generally becomes possible because of the upward mobility achieved in the secular hierarchy i.e in the economic and political sectors. The dominant castes got the higher status (ritual mobility) because of the factors like land ownership after the land reforms, government jobs, political power, constitutional safeguards etc.

### **Models of Sanskritization**

Sanskritization also needed a medium to transmit in the society. There were mainly three modes in which it took place in the society.

- **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. The low castes or tribes imitate the culture, beliefs, values and lifestyles of the dominant caste so as to get the status equal to the upper caste.
- **Varna Model:** In the Varna system the highest status is given to that of a Brahmin followed by Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra. The lower castes coping with the ideals and lifestyle of the superior castes. Where the Kshatriyas enjoy superiority, the lower castes followed their lifestyle and ideals. Simultaneously where the vaishyas enjoy superiority, the lower castes followed their lifestyle and ideals.
- **Local Model:** In every area, some castes are considered to be more respectful than others on account of their economic power. This caste can be referred to as the "dominant caste". So the lower caste copies the

lifestyle of the local dominant caste in order to improve their status.

### **Effects of Sanskritization**

- Social Mobility in closed social structure: lower castes/tribal people can elevate their social status and get higher status in caste hierarchy.
- Lower caste people have given up uncleaned occupation to raise their economic status because clean trades are a symbol of social light.
- Sanskritization in religious field: Lower caste also go to their temple regularly and perform Arti and Bhajan. They have left prohibited food and uncleaned occupation. Even they have specialised in performing ceremonies like Brahmins.
- Sanskritization in living patterns: Lower caste people have adopted better living conditions, similar to dominant castes of Brahmins.