



Sanskritization: Domination and Social changes

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Agriculture has been the cornerstone of Indian rural life since a long time. Agro-based economic system has been instrumental in the creation of the characteristics of the caste system. Before British government in India, there are not any basic changes in our caste system nor turbulence for it. Gradually develop industry-trades, technical and modern education was introduced to change the caste system. People began think on the basis of individual freedom and the nation, because in Indian social structure there are a hierarchy in our ancient caste system. Where, a caste is considered a higher or a lower status than other. Prof A.R. Desai wrote in his famous book '*Rural Sociology in India*', that caste differences, even effects differences in the lifestyle of domestic and social life.¹

According to Louis Dumont, India is a religious society, which is constructed by pure hierarchical structure of caste system and this hierarchy is based on the dichotomy on sacred and polluted. (Dumont, 1970) When the lower class of social hierarchical structure follow the rituals and lifestyle of higher caste to make his social status like them and increase their status in caste system, this process is called in terminology 'Sanskritization'.

Indian Culture has gone through several rounds of changes. In this process of change several factors have acted as a catalyst which M.N. Srinivas's '**Sanskritization**' concept has a special significance. M.N. Srinivas first introduced the notion of Sanskritisation to explain the process of cultural mobility in India, in his book '*Religion and Society among the Coorgs in South India*'. Sanskritization or Sanskritisation is a particular form of social change found in India. It denotes the process by which castes placed lower in the caste hierarchy seek upward mobility by emulating the rituals and practices of the upper or dominant castes. It is a process similar to passing in sociological terms. It means,

*"A process by which a low caste or a tribe or other group changes its customs, rituals, ideology, and a way of life in the direction of a high and frequently, twice born caste."*²

Before concept of Sanskritization was said 'Brahminikaran'. When he was studying, then he saw that some lingayat, who considered Vishwakarma to their presiding deity, they are adopting Brahmins civilization and culture:³

- They began to hold sacred thread like Brahmins.
- They consumed stopped Meat-Alcohol.
- They banned widow remarriage.
- They started child marriage.

Srinivas preferred the term 'Sanskritisation' to 'Brahmanisation'. Sanskritisation is a broader term, while Brahmanisation is a narrower term. In fact, Brahmanisation is subsumed in the wider process of Sanskritisation.

Although its old mentioned downward process simulation in social hierarchy could find in Gabriel Tarde's '*The Laws of Imitation*' (1980) and also in '*Castes in India: Their mechanism, Genesis and Development*' (1917) written by B.R. Ambedkar.⁴

Another concept of 'dominant caste' was propounded by M.N. Srinivas. According to him-

*"That caste can be said dominant caste which have political and economic effect in a particular village or area. The caste does not to be the top slot in social hierarchy or ethnic category. Some factors like strength of population, education, cultural hierarchy etc. are creates dominant caste for a special village or area."*⁵

According to Srinivas, to be sovereign for any caste must have following features-⁶

- A caste dominates when it wields economic and political power.
- It has a high rank in caste hierarchy.
- Numerical strength.

Later Srinivas mentioned some others features to more clear the concept of Dominant caste-⁷

- The modern education and innovative business.
- The economic and political domination.
- Working for the entire village unity, justice and welfare.

In his study of Rampura village, M.N. Srinivas found **Okkaliga** Caste as Dominant caste. Besides some more studies done on the concept of dominant caste like Andre Beteille found 'Brahmin' Caste as dominant in Tanjaur, K.L. Sharma found 'Rajput' caste as dominant in six villages of Rajasthan, Oscar Lewis found 'Jaat' caste as dominant in Rampur village (U.P.), N. Shukla found 'Yadav' caste as dominant in Jhumko village near Bhagalpur, D.N. Majumdar

¹ Sharma,G.L. (2012). Samajshastra.p.115.

² http://www.academia.edu/3218832/Sanskritisation_Westernisation_and_Modernisation

³ Yadav,R.G. (2014). Bharatiya Samaj Ke Agrani Chintak.p.94.

⁴ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sanskritization>

⁵ Rawat,H. (2006). Samajshastra Vishwakosh.p.97.

⁶ Yadav,R.G. (2014). Bharatiya Samaj Ke Agrani Chintak.p.102.

⁷ Ibid.

found 'Thakur' caste as dominant in Mohana and Duldi village, Hitchcack found 'Rajput' caste as dominant in Khalapur, Mayre found 'Brahmin' caste as dominant in Kumbhapetard etc.⁸

Change is universal law of nature. This law of nature has been prevailing from the primitive period till now. Since Caste System is a social institution, its aspects are naturally changed. In the modern age, many changes happen in the features and functions of Caste System. Modernization has deeply influenced Caste System. The old rigid caste structure with neat hierarchy and segregative norms has undergone drastic change it has adapted to the modern institutions. Now, cases of inter caste marriages are not unknown, untouchability, as it was, is almost disappeared and affirmative action has enhanced the social status of many lower caste people and families, if not of the whole caste. However, caste still persists in many ways. Some political parties have been found, for historical reasons, associated with particular castes. The election process in the country is indeed democratic but the use of power and caste loyalties by some people to some extent may not be ruled out. The recent debate on the reservation issue has to some extent vulgarized the existence of caste.

The All India Backward Student Forum (AIBSF) has appealed to progressive forces of social justice to celebrate Mahishasur Martyrdom day at the national level. A release of AIBSF said that the organization has been celebrating Mahishasur Martyrdom Day at key educational institutions of the country since 2011.⁹ Last year, the day was celebrated around 60 places in the country.¹⁰ The release said the Mahishasur Martyrdom is celebrated on the 'Purnima' (Full moon day), falling on the fifth day of Dusshera. Jitendra Yadav, national President of AIBSF, who started the practice of celebrating Mahishasur Martyrdom Day at JNU after a long struggle with Brahminical forces, said that the Day was important as it enabled us to know our history and our real heroes.¹¹ Mahishasur Martyrdom Day, he said, was a movement of cultural liberation of the Dalit-Bahujans movement that stands up to Brahmanical domination.¹²

On 6 December, a Shudra Sammelan was held at SK Memorial Hall to mark the death anniversary of Babasaheb Ambedakar.¹³ At the conference organized under the auspices of the social organizations, Baagdoor and Mission 341, those present resolved to intensify the battle for social and economic change, and to work with renewed vigour for securing respect and partnership.¹⁴ It was emphasized that instead of being allergic, to the word Shudra, one should feel proud to be called a Shudra, and that Shudras need to shed their inferiority complex.¹⁵ The function was chaired by Shashikant Maharaj. Addressing the gathering, Bijendra Prasad Yadav, Bihar's finance minister, said that the basic character of our social system was discriminatory.¹⁶ Only a mass movement and revolution could bring about this change.

The emergence of caste associations and caste politics exhibits the process of modernization but some traditional norms continue. Lloyd Rudolph characterizes caste association as having the mixed attributes both of the ascriptive and voluntary groups leading to what he calls 'Shadow society' which has a modernizing impact without overtly replacing the traditional institution of caste.¹⁷ Yogendra Singh writes that modernity has entered into Indian character and society but it has done so through assimilation, not replacement.¹⁸

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Forward Press, September 2014

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Forward Press, January 2015

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ <http://www.yourarticlelibrary.com/essay/essayoncastesystemchangesinthecastesystem/30745/>

¹⁸ Ibid.