

...mobility in class systems is very high.

4 Social Mobility

Meaning. By "social mobility" sociologists mean movement of persons and

groups up or down the ranking order of a social stratification system. It means a change in socio-economic position. A person's class status is determined originally by the class status of his parents. But when he gets a different amount of education from that of his parents, or moves into a different occupational group, or adopts a different "style of life", he has been socially mobile. In all social systems there is some movement of individuals up or down the social ladder as a result of which an individual changes his or her degree of prestige and style of life as well as the more objectively measurable occupational and economic rankings. Even a whole strata or substantial groups within them may undergo such changes in the wealth, power and prestige. Such collective mobility may occur through such structural changes as revolution, modernisation, and reforms. Or a whole group may decide its way of life and thus rise in status according to cultural values. Some backward castes in India, as pointed out by M.N. Srinivas, take on the customs, rituals and symbols of higher castes, becoming "Sanskritized".

3 Sanskritisation

Ever since the Vedic Aryans settled in India Sanskritisation has been an important cultural process. Professor Suniti Kumar Chatterjee had written : "The progressive Sanskritisation of the various pre-Aryan or non-Aryan peoples in their culture, their outlook and their ways of life, forms the keynote of India through the ages. And in the course of this "Sanskritisation" the affected peoples also brought their own spiritual and material values to bear upon the Sanskrit culture which they were adopting and thus helped to modify and enrich it in their own circle." In course of time Sanskritisation spread in different parts of the Indian subcontinent and affected a wide variety of groups, both those within the Hindu fold and others outside. Thus Sanskritisation, to quote A. Beteille, "was an important feature of traditional Hindu society, where it appears to have been the principal idiom of social mobility."

M. N. Srinivas has employed the concept of Sanskritisation in explaining social change in India and his theory of Sanskritisation, as Dr. Singer observes, is "the most comprehensive and widely accepted anthropological theory of social and cultural change in Indian civilization." Srinivas defines Sanskritisation as "the process by which a low caste or tribe or other group takes on the customs rituals, beliefs, ideology and styles of life of a high and in particular a twice-born (Dwijia) caste". In his opinion, this usually takes place when there is either

an improvement in the economic or political position of the group concerned or a higher consciousness resulting from its contact with a source of the Great Tradition of Hinduism such as pilgrim centres or monastery or a proselytising sect. "In the case of a group external to Hinduism, such as the tribe or an immigrant ethnic group, Sanskritisation has resulted in drawing it into the Hindu fold, which necessarily involved its becoming a caste having regular relation with the low caste".

In other words, Sanskritisation is the process by which a caste or a group of people move up the social hierarchy by adopting the styles of life associated by tradition with the upper caste. The beaconstar in the Sanskritisation process was the Brahmin, with traditional authority and respectable position accorded him by the Hindu law-givers, and a way of life that was highly esteemed by all the others not only because it was Brahminical but it was regarded as an esteemable way of life and conduct. Originally, in his well-known study, "Religion and Society Among the Coorgs of South India" (1952), Srinivas held to this view.

Later, on the basis of further research and critical discussions in which he participated, Srinivas has modified his previous position and accepted the proposition that in addition to the Brahminical model of Sanskritisation, there are also Kshatriya, Vaisya, and Sudra models. In many areas, for example, the kingly or martial life-style has a rank equal with, or sometimes higher than that of a Brahmin group. In these areas individuals or groups who wish to improve their status do so by adopting some of the aspects of Rajput style of life, that is, by "Rajputising" their way of life. Even the life-styles of the merchants and peasants and the saints are sometimes adopted as models for cultural mobility. Thus the Sanskritic model is not an undifferentiated model. In addition to the Brahminical model, it may be Kshatriya, Vaisya, and even Sudra model. For a caste aspiring to have status improvement within the framework of caste, "the models of conduct are the castes higher than itself with which it is in contact." Srinivas says, "properly speaking, we may not even, speak of one caste imitating another but rather one local section of a caste imitating another local section."

means by the priestly castes. Such mobility "came into being as a historical necessity" and hence it "had wider historical implications".

In the contextual context, Sanskritisation is a process of change in a relative sense. Prof. Srinivas deals with this contemporary phenomenon of Sanskritisation and its impact on cultural change. It differs from the historical context of Sanskritisation in that when a caste or a sub-caste attempts to move upward in the village local hierarchy, it very often faces opposition by the dominant castes in the village or region. Sanskritisation is seldom legitimised. The magnitude of the process varies from region to region or even from village to village, depending upon the factors internal to the context and also upon the factors external to it. The maximum number of empirical cases of Sanskritisation refer to this type of change.

In the past the process of Sanskritisation was slow and gradual and it offered very limited opportunities to the lowest sections of society. Narrow social horizons of relatively static economy and limited population movements made it extremely difficult for a lower caste to acquire quickly economic and political power to base its claim for higher status. Legal and ritual sanctions also strengthened "social closure". The pace of Sanskritisation increased during the British regime which released the Backward Classes (including the Harijans) from the grip of many traditional sanctions. The increased pace of Sanskritisation has depended, in particular, upon a number of forces: improvements in transport and communication, greater mobility in non-traditional sectors of the economy, the spread of literacy and education among the lower strata and the institution of a secular order.

Improved transport and communication system has thrown open pilgrim centres—the sources of Sanskritisation—to even the modestly poor people from far and near. The modern mass media of film, radio, television, newspapers and magazines have spread Sanskritic values and beliefs. The activities of caste associations and organisations such as the Arya Samaj and Sanatan Dharma Samaj have also been instrumental in the diffusion of Sanskritic styles of life among large sections of people belonging to Backward Classes and other lower castes.

Sanskritisation affects the culture of castes in the lower and middle regions of the hierarchy in a variety of ways. Sanskritisation has often symbolised an effort on the part of the lower castes to replace their traditional names with new and more high-sounding ones or even the names of a higher caste and thus claim higher socio-cultural status. They have also modelled or remodelled their behaviour—dietary and commensal, familial and occupational, sartorial and so forth—on the behaviour of another local *Jati* which is generally regarded in the region or village as enjoying the twice-born status to which the claimant *Jati* aspires. They have also attempted to give up many of the practices (like "bride-price") considered degrading by the upper castes. Thus "Sanskritisation

served", to quote Beteille, "to lower the barriers between sections of society which had one time been clearly separated."

The tribal people have also come under the general effects of Sanskritisation. Their connection with the mainstream of Hindu society have led to the integration of sections of tribal society into the wider caste structure (e.g. the Bhumiji in Eastern India, the Raj Gond in Central India, the Oraons of Chotanagpur, the Meenas of Peepulkhunt in Rajasthan).

4 Westernization

Westernization as a process of social change generally refers to the adoption by a non-Western country of Western elements in language, dress, habits,

manners, values and customs. But M. N. Srinivas has used the term 'Westernization' to denote the changes introduced into Indian society and culture during 150 years of British rule and which continue with added momentum in post-Independent India. It includes under 'Westernization' technical improvements in communication and transportation, urbanisation, industrialisation, and the new occupations accompanying them, as well as the civil and military institutions of parliamentary democracy, and the new occupations associated with them. All these collections of changes are usually called 'modernisation' but Srinivas prefers the term 'Westernization' to 'modernisation'. Thus Srinivas's concept of Westernization is so broad and comprehensive that it has become vague. We shall therefore use the generally accepted concept of Westernization as a process of social change in India.

The process of Westernization in India began with the advent of British rule in the eighteenth century and still continues. "The British were the first conquerors superior and therefore inaccessible to Hindoo civilization". The establishment of British rule brought 'traditional' Indian society into direct contact with the leader of modern Western capitalist culture and civilization. To serve their colonial interests the British unified the country administratively by introducing uniform and Western system of government, introduced modern trade and industries on an all-India scale (thus destroying the rural self-sufficient economy) and introduced the modern communication system along with English education. While these acts of British rulers laid the material foundations of the development of Indian nation, they helped more and more Indians to learn Western culture and thought such as rationalism, and later on egalitarianism. It was however modern English education that acted as the chief agency of Westernization in India.

British administrators introduced modern education in order to use English educated indigenous elites as instrument of their administrative and often indirect rule. A section of these English-educated Indians became the pioneers of genuine Western culture but created "an Indian variety of the colonial culture which was springing up in the colonies and dependencies of the Western powers in Asia and Africa." Like devoted cultural disciples they tried as best they could to imitate their colonial masters in outward appearances. Their Westernization was confined to the imitation of English dress, food and general outward living. But the basic qualities of Western character like self-respect, self-control and scientific spirit of inquiry remained hidden from their eyes. These "Indian Sahibs", as says S. Abidhusain, "put on what looked like English dress, spoke English to one another and pigeon English to their servants or other 'natives'. The well-to-do lived in bungalows furnished in the 'English' style, ate 'English' food served on tables, sitting on uncomfortable chairs and using awkward knives and forks. Casting yearning looks at the clubs of the real Sahibs they played billiards, tennis, and cards in their own consolation clubs". In manners, movements and gestures they assiduously tried to follow 'English etiquette'.

This new variety of Indian colonial culture was almost wholly confined to men of upper and middle class. The new culture brought a very few women from home into 'society', the club to dance with 'strangers'. The examples of these so-called 'emancipated', Westernised women produced a deplorable reaction among Indians generally who opposed genuine reform movements for the freedoms and even education of women. But as modern Western education spread during the 19th century, a large number of Indians imbibed a modern rational, secular, democratic, and nationalistic political outlook. The modern humanistic philosophy helped the educated Indians to take a new critical look at their own society, economy and government. This led to the emergence of the nineteenth-century Indian Renaissance in the social and cultural spheres which created a soil for the growth of nationalism in our country.

The social and religious movement launched by Raja Rammohan Roy, the pioneer of the Renaissance, and the Brahma Samaj founded by him as a reforming agency was followed by Swami Dayananda Saraswati's Arya Samaj. Both attacked the evils (or abuses) of religious and social orthodoxy and roused the people from the slumber of ages. No less important role was played by Ramkrishna Mission whose exponent was Swami Vivekananda. These social and religious movements played a very progressive role in fighting against the forces of superstition and obscurantism and thereby kindled feelings of patriotism that made a deep impact on the national awakening of India. The Indian intellectuals, Westernised and European in cultural orientation, brought about a renaissance of traditional Hinduism as one aspect of the struggle against British colonial administration. They were generally committed to modernisation but an emergence of Indian national-identity was partially fostered by explicit adoption of customs and styles which were both traditional and closer to popular behaviour.

It was again the Westernised indigenous elites—the new middle class—who became the organisers and leaders of political activities in cities and towns. As governmental policies curtailed their opportunities for employment and advancement, the Westernised elites crystallised as a self-conscious class, concerned with their own particular class interests and identity. This gave birth to an incredible diverse set of organisations and associations articulating those interests—traders' associations, civil servants' groups, intellectual clubs and overtly political associations, such as the Indian Association in Calcutta—the early Indian National Congress.

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