

## Sociology Daily Answer Writing

Week 3 - Day 1

Model Structures

**1. The concept of Sanskritization lays emphasis on hierarchy rather than on differences between cultural groups. Analyse using suitable examples. 20**

### Model Structure

#### Introduction

- The concept ‘Sanskritization’ was first introduced by Prof. M.N. Srinivas in his book “Religion and society among the coorgs of South India” to describe the cultural mobility in the traditional caste structure of Indian society.

#### Main Body

- In his study of the coorgs of Mysore, he came to know that the lower castes were trying to raise their status in their caste hierarchy by adopting some cultural ideals of the Brahmins. As a result they left some of their ideals which are considered to be impure by the Brahmins. To explain this process of mobility, Srinivas used the term ‘Brahminization’.
- Later on he called it ‘Sanskritization’ in a broad sense. According to him, Sanskritization is a process by which a lower caste or tribe or any other group changes its customs, rituals, ideology and way of life in the direction of a higher or more often twice-born caste.
- **Characteristics of Sanskritization:**
  - Sanskritization is a process of imitation in Indian society, the social status of an individual is fixed on the basis of caste hierarchy. There are many lower castes who suffer from economic, religious or social disabilities. So in order to improve the status, the lower castes imitate the lifestyle of the upper caste people.
  - Sanskritization is a process of cultural change towards twice-born castes. Sanskritization is a process in which the lower castes adopt the cultural patterns of the higher castes, to raise their status in the caste hierarchical order. In some societies the lower caste people followed not only the customs of the Brahmins

but also the customs of the locally dominant castes like Kshatriyas and Vaisyas to raise their status.

- Sanskritization is helpful in the social mobility of lower castes: In this process a caste group is only trying to change the status and not the social structure.
  - The Sanskritization process is not only confined to the caste people of Hindu society, it is also found among the tribal society.
  - The concept of Sanskritization has also given rise to De-sanskritization. There are some instances in modern times, some of the higher castes are imitating the behaviour pattern of lower caste, and for example Brahmins have started taking meat and liquor. This process is called Desanskritization.
  - Thus, it can be seen that Sanskritization as a concept focuses on the vertical arrangement of castes in a hierarchy.
  - Dipankar Gupta writes that the caste system should be understood in terms of the principle of differences among different caste groups, rather than a hierarchical principle.
  - He believes instead that there are many competing hierarchies within the caste system. Gupta also argues that notions of purity and pollution are relatively recent additions in the history of the caste system.
  - They emerged mainly to separate the untouchables from the rest and became operative at various planes of the caste system much later. According to him, castes exist first as discrete categories and hierarchies come later. Individual castes, Gupta believes, are discrete entities with well-developed views and ideologies. Castes that are lower down the scale do not accept the degrading status accorded to them by what he calls the "sacerdotal" view of caste.
-

**2. Ghurye argued that the whole Indian society is caste based and even tribals are part of it. Elaborate.** **10**

## **Model Structure**

### **Introduction**

- Ghurye believed in the diffusionist approach according to which caste originated in Gangetic plains and then spread to other parts of the country. He examined caste from Indological, comparative and integrative perspective.

### **Main body**

- According to Ghurye caste, though it originated in plains, it was a pan Indian phenomenon. Even tribes are also part of the system.
- His views were in contrast to the colonial view, which saw both tribes and caste as two different concepts.
- To him tribals are ‘backward Hindus’ who gradually lost cultural contact leading to backwardness.
- Integration of tribals with mainstream Hindu society
  - He opposed the colonial view of isolating tribals and argued that they should be assimilated in mainstream Hindu society.
  - Various tribes are at various levels of assimilation in the Hindu society. Few of them took education and are making shifts in their ritual dimensions to embrace Hindu culture, thus there is no need for a separate tribal identity for them.
  - He presented examples of Bhils and Gonds of central India who over generations have accepted and assimilated into Hindu culture.
  - Some others remained loosely integrated and the rest living in deep forests and hills were barely touched by Hinduism. He called them ‘imperfectly integrated classes of Hindu Society’.
  - He argued that Hinduization of tribes is to be done for the process of development and for that ‘grand process of merger’ is to be followed.

- Andre Beteille was also of the view that tribe and caste are similar as there are little racial and language differences.
- Ghurye is criticised:
  - For his over Hinduised view of Indian society.
  - He took a favourable view of caste and failed to see its dehumanising aspect.

## Conclusion

- Ghurye visualised tribals as part of the larger Indian society and opposed the British view of isolation. This in turn was a pioneering step towards integration and assimilation of tribes into mainstream society.
-