

## REVISITING THE LEGACY OF M. N. SRINIVAS

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Delhi, New Delhi[Bardhan.vikramendra@gmail.com](mailto:Bardhan.vikramendra@gmail.com)**Abstract**

During the 1960s, M.N. Srinivas proposed the idea of a "dominant caste" where the term "caste" was used informally rather than in context. The "dominant caste" has six characteristics according to Srinivas. (i) a large quantity of fertile land in the area, (ii) a large population, (iii) a high social status in the community, (iv) access to Western education, (v) administrative positions, and (vi) urban revenue streams. Without being overtly didactic, this was a subtle method of introducing class. Furthermore, Srinivas stated in his final public talk on "An Obituary on Caste as a System" at the National Institute of Advanced Studies that lifestyle may become more significant in social interactions, particularly in cities. In light of this, it is easy to see how Srinivas approached a class position over time, especially in regard to his time spent living in cities. The "malnourished underclass" was another topic Srinivas touched on. He emphasised the need for social workers and NGOs to prioritise on the nutritional and empowerment levels of girls, particularly in rural India.

**Keywords:** land, hierarchy, education, caste, class, pollution, purity, power, jati, disparity.

**Introduction**

A wide range of social, cultural, and geographical variations may be found in India. One of the distinct ways in which the nation's diverse population influences its social fabric is through the caste system. The intricate social groupings denoted by 'jati', which are incorporated into the Varna system, provide the basis for the ceremonial importance of caste. Separating the related ideas of varna and caste is crucial moving ahead. According to Varna, there are four distinct social strata in human society: the Brahmin, the Kshatriya, the Vaishya, and the Shudra. The "untouchables" or Dalits constitute a fifth group that is not considered within this paradigm. Alternatively, according to Upadhyay (2013), "caste" refers to any of the endogamous, hereditary groupings that are linked to a certain occupation or vocations. The caste system has endured the test of time in large part because no one agrees on how to rank the various classes. Even if caste is so pervasive in Indian culture that it gives birth to caste-based hierarchies and institutionalised social inequity, there is still mobility of some type. Undoubtedly, this presents a challenging undertaking when trying to elucidate its complex social realities, particularly in respect to its involvement in the evolution of cultures, institutions, and relationships that witness societal development. But social scientists have brought a lot of ideas to the table when it comes to studying societal transformation; one of them is the "Sanskritization" process, suggested by M. N. Srinivas and extensively

researched. All of these actions show that people were trying to get ahead, both inside and outside of the caste system. This has prompted fruitful discussions on its evolving function and ongoing significance, the framework of which this article will use to examine modern India's flirtation with these two societal transformations.

Contrary to popular belief, M. N. Srinivas considered caste to be an adaptive social institution that has changed its function in modern society in response to the general belief that caste is irrelevant in the post-independence era. Oomen (2008) states that he embraced a structural-functionalist perspective and argued in favour of field-view over book-view. But Oomen argues that it is possible to misrepresent social reality by taking only one side of an argument (ibid., 66).

While researching the Coorg people of southern India for their religion and society, he attempted a structural analysis of the interplay between caste statuses and functions, drawing distinctions between Varna and caste and dwija and non-dwija castes as a result of upanayana. The concept of Sanskritization was proposed by M. N. Srinivas so that the struggles of lower-caste people for advancement and social mobility, especially in the middle regions, could be better understood. To paraphrase his definition, "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" (cited in Upadhyay 2013: 9), Sanskritization is that. After these kinds of shifts, it usually takes a few of generations for someone to lay claim to a higher position.

Adopting Brahmin lifestyle by lower-caste people was a common tactic, yet one that was incongruous in theory. So, for two reasons, Srinivas favours the term Sanskritization over Brahmanization. Sanskritization, first of all, is more general. According to this view, the upper-caste people had a special place in society since they were entrusted with the preservation of Vedic knowledge (ibid., 2). Most Brahmins nowadays are vegetarians or at least limit their alcohol use; nevertheless, there are a small number of Brahmins from Saraswat, Kashmir, and Bengal who continue to eat meat (Srinivas 1956: 481). On the other hand, there could be instances where the two terms don't match up. Also, the reference groups aren't always Brahmins (ibid.). At first, he saw similarities between the Brahmins and the upper-caste people's imitation of ceremonial and cultural traditions, such as clothing, food, and lifestyle (ibid.). A significant force in the Sanskritization of lower-caste populations in South India was the Lingayat community (ibid., 482). The movement was anti-Brahminical and was founded by a Brahmin (ibid.). Similarly, to provide a different angle on his argument, he refers to the Smiths of South India instance (ibid.). He claims that the Smiths, who identified as Vishwakarma Brahmins and who sanskritized their ceremonies, kept eating meat and drinking wine (ibid.). On top of that, not everyone believed them, and the untouchables, or Holeya, refused to drink their water or eat their prepared food (ibid.). There were several more instances like these that demonstrated how the Brahmanical paradigm was unable to account for Sanskritization. Depending on the circumstances, this also showed that there were different types of castes, such as Kshatriya, Vaishya, and Shudra.

The reference group was therefore established as the caste that achieved significant authority in the ceremonial, economic, or political spheres (ibid., 483). Acquiring dominion in one field paves the way to domination in the other two (ibid.). However, anomalies do occur. This highlights how important the emulation process is. This is where Srinivas's "historical" and "contextual" theories come into play; he discusses these in reference to Upadhyay 2013: 3. Therefore, this practice of mimicry spread not just among Hindus but also among certain remote tribes. Taking on the habits of a higher-caste member is the surest way to prove Srinivas' claim that this is because every group aspires to be a "higher" caste member in a society with clear social stratification (1956: 482). He claims that the Brahmin lifestyle permeates all levels of society (ibid., 483). The spread of Sanskritization among the 'low' castes was facilitated by two "legal fictions": one that let non-twice-born castes to participate in Vedic rituals, and another that enabled post-Vedic songs to substitute Vedic mantras in religious ceremonies. (ibid., 483-484).

It is worth noting that Srinivas claims that the propagation of non-Brahmanical ideals would be slowed down if the dominant caste is a local Kshatriya or Vaishya caste, rather than a Brahmin (ibid., 496). If the leading group is neither Sanskritic or has a low Sanskritic content, he says de-Sanskritization could be possible (ibid.). Though neither necessary nor sufficient for mobility, Sanskritization sometimes accompanies the upward mobility of the lower-caste group in question. Nevertheless, according to Carroll (1977: 367), the mobility associated with Sanskritization results in little more than a shift in position inside a static framework. There is no change to the system itself (ibid.).

For a practical grasp of the concept, read up on cultural emulation. According to Srinivas (1956: 484), as a result of Sanskritization, women may lose some of their cultural autonomy, including the ability to pick their own spouses and the acceptance of strict sexual morality norms. As a result of Sanskritization, the formerly liberal and progressive views on lower-caste women's roles in society are gradually giving way to more traditional views (ibid.). The result is a shift in family dynamics towards the more traditional Hindu joint family model, which emphasises the role of the father, monogamy, and rigid caste systems (ibid., 485). Coupled with shifts in emphasis from bride-price to dowry, strict commensality practices—such as a prohibition on steak and pork—and alcohol consumption—ibid., 489-490. The importance of Sanskritization, according to Srinivas, is due in large part to Westernisation, and he attributes this to political and economic forces (ibid.). Even though Sanskritization is a cultural phenomenon, it often occurs when a caste gains secular authority. Both procedures aid in the evolution of society.

### **Sanskritization and Westernization**

Changes in Indian society that began under British control and gained steam after independence are what Srinivas means when he talks about Westernisation (ibid., 486). The establishment of modern institutions, technologies, ideologies, and values by the British laid the groundwork for a modern state in India, which necessitated long-term, revolutionary transformations in Indian society (ibid.). A number of practices were eventually outlawed by the British, including Sati (1829), human sacrifice, slavery (1833), and female infanticide

(ibid.). The development of Sanskritization was actually aided by the growth in Westernisation, contrary to appearances. In an article published at the same time as the printing press made its inexpensive copies of Hindu literature widely available, Srinivas explains how Indian cinema helped popularise the practice (ibid.). There has been a recent upsurge in the dissemination of Sanskritic ideals through Hindu mythical soap operas seen on Indian television. In addition, he stresses the significance of "Prohibition," which is crucial to Sanskritic teachings, and its incorporation into the Indian Constitution (ibid.). Furthermore, it is noted that the top echelons of the Brahmin caste, who are more Sanskritized, were the first to take advantage of the colonial administration's chances, which allowed them to maintain their control (ibid., 488). However, it is also true that certain upper-caste Indian elites tolerated activities like drinking wine and eating beef or pig despite the obvious conflicts with Sanskritic conventions, while other Brahmins were opposed to these things (ibid.). Sanskritization and Westernisation did not always go hand in hand; in fact, there were instances where they were mutually exclusive. Also, although certain parts of Sanskritization are making a comeback, others are falling by the wayside as a result of western influence. A. M. Shah provides context for this by mentioning modern women who show attentiveness during crucial rituals but don't adhere to the strict standards of cleanliness vs. pollution when they menstruate (2005: 244).

Srinivas makes a valid argument when he says that lower-caste people get more Sanskritized and upper-caste people become more Westernised, both of which serve to maintain social gap (1956: 490). Maybe this explains why lower-caste aspirants are so involved in the westernisation process, even if it might be complicated and unpleasant. As a result, we see a substantial and ever-changing interplay between the Sanskritization and Westernisation processes.

When asked if Sanskritization is required before Westernisation may take place, Srinivas concedes that it is possible for Westernisation to happen even without Sanskritization (ibid., 494-495), despite the fact that empirical evidence supports the idea. Since gaining independence, modern Indian society has been defined by industrialisation, ostensibly less restrictive social structure, and modernisation. The ever-changing nature of caste and Sanskritization raises the question of whether or not they continue to have any relevance in modern society. The reinforcement of Sanskritization has led to the gradual erasure of cultural differences between the "higher" castes and their practices. Due to its continued significance in modern society, particularly in politics and education, caste consciousness emerged as a result of the desire to emulate the upper-castes. The impact of caste has persisted due to the fact that many non-caste structures and institutions have also become potent Sanskritizers. Class was the outward manifestation of the desire for equality, according to Ram Manohar Lohia. According to Lohia, the need for justice is reflected in caste. According to him, the rigidity that had crept into class relationships—the incapacity of both individuals and entire castes to rise in rank or income—was what set caste apart from class. Caste was a static class, whereas class was mobile, according to Lohia. He went on to say that social stratification may become more rigid into castes and less rigid into classes. Lohia said that the aristocracy in India is defined by three things: (i) high caste, (ii) access to English

education, and (iii) money. "The combination of any two of these three factors makes a person belong to the ruling class," says Lohia.

The class category, which Marxist thought emphasised, is inadequate in Indian theory and analysis since it is based on the western epistemic model. A famous Marxist historian, Dhamodar Dharmananda Kosambi, examined the complexities of caste in ancient India through the lens of a class framework. Despite recognising the uniqueness of the Asian mode of production, caste-based injustice, and exploitation, Kosambi continued to embrace class as an analytical concept and a means of liberation. In order for the proletariat revolution and the building of people's democracy in India to succeed, E M S Namboodiripad and B T Ranadive thought it was crucial to integrate class struggle with the battle against the caste system in India.

Reservation is a provision in the Indian Constitution that guarantees economic and social justice to the country's historically disadvantaged and oppressed minority. While analysing Sanskritization, Gopal Guru uses Reservation as a variable, drawing a comparison between the two (1984: 29). One of the things that makes Sanskritization possible, according to him, is the constitutional provision that promotes economic and political power (ibid., 32). Actually, the idea and the phenomenon are both communal (ibid.). Additionally, he brings attention to the seeming contradiction between the Sanskritization of Scheduled castes and reservation, arguing that although reservation allows lower-caste people to gain political and economic power, it is based on affirmative action, which goes against the Sanskritization process (ibid.). Consequently, reservations have a dual purpose. As a result, upper-caste members from economically disadvantaged backgrounds are driven to seek downward mobility through de-Sanskritization in order to enjoy reservation benefits, while middle-class scheduled caste members are able to seek upward mobility through compulsive Sanskritization in order to be structurally integrated (ibid., 32-33). However, because upper-caste Hindus committed crimes against the lower scheduled castes to safeguard their socioeconomic interests and quell their assertiveness against their superiority, the Sanskritization process excludes them from its scope (ibid.). According to research conducted in the Ghazipur district of Uttar Pradesh, scavengers, who are primarily Dalits, face physical abuse, social boycott, and neglect from government agencies. This is on top of the humiliating nature of the job and the fact that it is illegal. Despite seeking alternative employment opportunities, scavengers often find themselves forced to return to scavenging (Singh and Ziyauddin 2020: 523).

As an alternative to Sanskritization, this highlights the significance of positive discrimination as a means of creating fairness. Additionally, Dalit-Bahujans place a high importance on education since it is perceived as the source of "cultural distinction" that challenges caste-based disparities (Upadhyay 2013: 8).

### **Caste and Politics**

Political parties utilised caste as a determinant in collecting votes after independence. A shift in power has resulted from the increased political participation of the Dalits and Shudras. To back up his claim, Upadhyay mentions how the Sangh Parivar appropriated the Dalits and



Shudras in the early 20th century by honouring mythological heroes and caste characters (2013: 5). To further their nationalist and political goals, this united the Hindu faith's "lower" castes in an effort to numerically dominate Muslim and other religious minorities (ibid., 6). This did lead to a shift in status, but it couldn't be argued that Sanskritization followed because of the widespread approval (ibid.). Changes in position may not necessarily imply changes at the level of rituals, but rather "recognition of certain rights or sharing of certain spaces or 'allowances' made to groups to sit together and so on" (ibid., 7). The Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) was also instrumental in integrating Dalits and other marginalised communities (ibid., 6). BSP chief Mayawati portrayed herself as the Dalits' saviour, someone who would lead the struggle to end the increasing brutality they were subjected to. The construction of several Dalit monuments in the wake of Mayawati's electoral triumph in Uttar Pradesh (UP) aimed at bolstering Dalit pride and establishing their distinct identity. The result has been heightened awareness of caste among both Dalits and non-Dalits. As it became more integrated with the Brahmins and upper-castes, the BSP modified its motto to "Manuvaad Nahi Manavtavaad" (not the rules of Manu but humanitarianism) and gradually began associating its political emblem, a Haathi, with Lord Ganesh (ibid., 14). The Bharatiya Janta Party's (BJP) current political affiliations show that they want to keep doing what they've been doing. Take UP and Haryana as examples; all main communities favour it, with the exception of Muslims and Yadavs. Similarly, in Haryana, all major communities support it, with the exception of Jats. Even while it's not a true conversion, it may be seen as one (Shah 2005: 247). This reflects the fact that political parties are competing with one another to win over certain castes.

The shift from a vertical hierarchy to a horizontal one has occurred for a number of reasons, including political parties' acquisition of caste associations, the rewriting of historical caste narratives to support a bottom-up view, and the fact that political leaders often come from within the affected communities. This has resulted in a reorganisation of caste from a structural to a substance level, without taking equality of castes into consideration (Upadhyay 2013: 6). The "development of pride in one's social background" is what Dumont calls this process, and he calls it substantialization (ibid., 7).

"Sanskritization is a many-sided cultural process, only a part of which is connected with the caste system" (Srinivas, 2005: 238 quotes him in Shah, 2005: 238). The steady decline of the ceremonial hierarchy of castes in modern India is being explained by this (ibid., 241). Nevertheless, it is incomplete (ibid.). Because of this, one may argue that Sanskritization is decoupling caste from the language: "it can even be impersonal" (ibid.). In terms of adherents, temple complexes, and the proliferation of activities, sects like the ones created by Shankaracharya, Ramanujacharya, and Swaminarayana have been expanding (ibid., 242). Numerous spiritual teachers, such as Mata Amritanandmayi, Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, and many more, who may one day become the architects of nearby sects, are another factor (ibid.). There has been a dramatic increase in the number of pilgrims visiting the ashrams and temple complexes established by religious leaders, suggesting that the Sanskritization process is progressing as planned (ibid., 243). We must examine these cults, spiritual gurus, and temples because of the substantial social, economic, and political ramifications they have. Upadhyay

(2013) argues that the notion of religious participation is changing due to the growing connections of media in religious propagation through religious literature, movies, journals, newspapers, and CDs. It is said that contemporary spiritual leaders adhere mostly to the principles of the "Great Tradition of All-India Sanskritic Hinduism" (ibid.) and ignore caste-related matters. The idea of Sanskritization might provide a definition for this. Indeed, "Vashistha as Rama's guru" (ibid.) and other passages in Hindu epics establish the guru concept. The increasing number of tele-gurus' sermons immerse their listeners in profound spiritual teachings by offering fresh takes on ancient Hindu disciplines such as Ayurveda, Yoga, Jyotish Shastra, classical music, dance, theatre, etc. (ibid., 18). The result has been an increase in interest in Hinduism outside of India, which has consequences for the religion's practice at home (Shah 2005: 243).

The term "Sanskritization" is characterised as "a process by which an individual from any caste or religion adopts, emulates, learns and preserves the customs, rituals, way of life and ideology derived from Vedic/textual Hinduism" by Upadhyay (2013: 20). Even among Hindus of lower caste, Sanskritization is characteristic, especially among the urban middle class that has profited from the dissemination of "mosaic Hinduism" via spiritual tele-gurus (ibid., 19). This represents the pinnacle of India's many transitions.

On the other hand, one may argue that certain political groups, such as the BJP, are manipulating communities by appealing to the caste identities of spiritual gurus in order to forward their Hindu fundamentalist agenda. The Dheeveras are a Hindu caste in Kerala, and their caste organisation, the Akhila Kerala Dheevera Sabha (AKDS), is pushing for their Sanskritization (Alex 2018: 42). Further impacted by the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), it endeavours to sanskritize the Dheeveras' religious observances (ibid., 46). Ibid., 48. RSS's goal is to divide the Hindu and Christian fishermen by changing their eating patterns. Mata Amritanandmayi, a revered Dheerava goddess from Kerala, gives a monthly lecture in the RSS journal Viswakanthi, in which she teaches the community spiritual guidance based on the principles of Sanskritic Hinduism (ibid., 46).

It would be unfair to Srinivas's labour if we attempted to include every detail. In order to discuss his views on the discipline and evaluate how they shape his opinions about Indian society, I will focus on his ideas about content and procedures.

According to Srinivas, social anthropology is the right name for the field of sociology in India. Does this mean anything? On the surface, it would appear that the two fields are identical. Srinivas has raised concerns that have been addressed by both fields. For instance, Srinivas's concerns are linked to more conventional sociological investigations: In particular, how would you characterise contemporary Indian culture? How would you say it most eloquently? His questions and answers are future-focused, much like the work of classical European sociologists like Emile Durkheim and Max Weber. He concurs with their aim of preserving the distinctive feature of the past while it reimagines itself in the future, as he describes in his 1966 work *Social Change in Modern India*.

What also differentiates the two fields is not the methodology used. While Srinivas advocated for fieldwork as the gold standard, European sociologists have employed a variety of

approaches—such as Marxist "historical materialism" in contrast to Durkheim's "positivism" or Weber's "ideal types"—to study how civilisations evolved from pre-modern to modern times.

So, is it true that the two fields are identical? Do social anthropology and sociology mean the same thing? We are aware that this is not true. While sociologists may disagree on what exactly defines sociology as a field, they may all agree that there are three distinguishing features of the sociological tradition. A substantial theory of modernity plus an appreciation for modernization's dynamics make up the first. The second one has to do with approaches and procedures. This facet of sociology is now examined via the lens of reflexivity, and different modern sociologists bring different theoretical frameworks to bear on this idea and point of view. Evaluation of the pre-modern is the third defining feature of the field. As a means of comprehending the modern, the majority of sociologists theorise the per-modern. All ancient sociologists were particularly guilty of this. Sociologists in Europe differentiated between mechanical and organic solidarities, as well as feudal and capitalist solidarities, *Gemeinschaft-Gessellschaft*, and so on, regardless of their theoretical disagreements. When it came to pre-modern and pre-literate cultures, social anthropologists looked at things from a cultural or structural perspective.

Krishna needs to make a choice. Srinivas is rather forthright in his advocacy of social anthropology. In this collection, you may find some of his older works that explain this viewpoint. His work in social anthropology is in the tradition of that of Bronislaw Malinowski and A.R. Radcliffe-Brown. He claims that modern sociologists view society as an interdependent system in an article he wrote for the *Sociological Bulletin* in 1952. If we take society out of its social reality matrix, he argues, we can never understand it. Religion, law, and morality are just a few examples of the narrowly focused areas that benefit from his holistic view of society (p. 460).

Srinivas lacks a two-stage paradigm for structural change, namely the modernisation of pre-modern systems. The caste system, which appears to include both phases, is the sole structure that Srinivas addresses. Second, a philosophy of modernity is absent from his writings. As an alternative, we offer a theory of social change that views the processes of sanskritization and westernisation as determinants of group mobility within society.

Srinivas reveals his prejudice towards the traditions linked to social anthropology by reducing sociology to social anthropology. After reviewing Srinivas's thoughtful responses to the aforementioned issues, it becomes clear that he is not proposing an integration of the two fields, but rather a rebranding of sociology as social anthropology. Instead of a combination of the two fields, his writings show how sociology formally collapses into social anthropology.

Srinivas was just carrying on the work of his first boss, G.S. Ghurye, who had done it long before him. The field of sociology, which Ghurye oversaw as Head of the Department at the University of Bombay, was deeply rooted in anthropological traditions that placed an emphasis on the Orientalist viewpoint. This inclination towards anthropology was further legitimised by Srinivas's subsequent studies with the British school of social anthropology.



While he acknowledged Ghurye's Orientalist viewpoint, his own theoretical leanings caused him to separate himself from it. Srinivas rightly points out that social anthropology must differentiate itself from physical anthropology and ethnology, two of its modern Indian offshoots, if it is to provide light on Indian civilisation.

I would venture to say that Srinivas's sociology is affected by the merging of sociology and social anthropology. This is evident in his writings on Rampura and other topics pertaining to the caste system. The system appears to be an enduring framework that has been shaped by history. Still, Srinivas was obviously curious in and keen to evaluate the developments taking place in contemporary India. 'The Caste System and Its Future,' 'On Living in a Revolution,' 'Nation Building in Independent India,' and 'Science, Technology, and Rural Development in India.' Several of his articles exhibit this. The collection of his personal works, especially "Practicing Social Anthropology in India," also bears witness to this. These essays demonstrate his evident concern with modernism. To do this, he investigates the changing caste structure and argues that the present political situation allows for a radical overhaul of the system, which may cause it to collapse. For instance, he claims that, among other things, the Constitution's and a major portion of the population's intellectual rejection of hierarchy, the rise of vast castes fighting for secular advantages, and the erosion of purity-impurity beliefs all indicate a systemic shift. Individual castes are likely to persist even if caste as a whole starts to crumble, as they provide members with a sense of belonging and a number of advantages. A person's ethnicity, including their caste, is expected to take on a far larger significance as India's urban population grows and diversity becomes the norm (p. 684)

So, is Srinivas putting up some sort of philosophy of modernisation? Despite its opacity, the difference between sanskritization and westernisation may be seen as a division between pre-modern and contemporary forms of movement. He confirms that, even in modern India, sanskritization and westernisation coexist. After the fact, it appears that Srinivas is not clearly differentiating between the pre-modern and modern periods; rather, he is advocating for a theory of gradual progress, as opposed to the idea of change with breaks put out by sociologists. His work fails to differentiate between the two phases of development since he attributes this type of transformation to its "civilisational" nature, which in turn causes his sociology to rely on anthropology (and an Orientalism of sorts). In light of this, how does Srinivas think India and the caste system should be evaluated? Here I will go over two parts of his writings: first, his analysis of caste in the Rampura hamlet, and second, his view of modern India and the impact of modernisation.

The village of Rampura, which Srinivas came to call "his," is the ideal setting in which to observe his examination of caste structure in action. By segmenting the villagers according to their professions, Srinivas examines the caste structure in his writings detailing this community. It isn't until afterwards that he makes the connection to farming and examines the customs of different castes in relation to their work. Using the functional viewpoint developed by Radcliffe-Brown, the goal here is to demonstrate the organic integration of one caste with others and the relationships between them. The interdependence of the components demonstrates the system's adaptability.

In order to get the solution to this issue, we need to evaluate one of Srinivas's previous articles concerning caste. Classical essay "Varna and Caste" by Srinivas first appeared in print in 1954. He starts a conversation on the caste system in India in this essay. His obvious bias towards the field view in methodology explains why he places so much emphasis on jati. What does caste mean if hierarchy (in which he critiques Louis Dumont's stance) is not it? Jati is his response. Second, he argues that considering the internal ranking of each jati in respect to others is more helpful than only looking at the intermediate ranks when trying to understand caste. The absence of clear hierarchies makes mobility a necessary prerequisite. In this setting, he comes up with a new idea: the "dominant caste," which refers to the peasant group that controls the community.

What does the village's caste system mean? Regarding the connection between caste and village, Srinivas's writings appear to be vague. For starters, is it the system, the village, or the caste that is unclear? As a defining social structure in Indian society, the caste system is likely what he is referring to. Nevertheless, the village is also perceived as a system. "Rampura is a village of many castes, yet it is also a well-defined structural entity," the opening lines and title of the article "The Social System of the Mysore Village" imply this issue. (as stated in 2000: forty-one) "Cannot be disentangled...as it operates in the village" (p. 237, citing an earlier essay of his) is his repeated assertion in this regard. Does this imply that there is no difference between the caste system and the village system? This fuzziness shows itself in the hamlet's understanding of castes and how the village is evaluated in relation to the castes.

What type of information about Rampura's village system can we glean from ethnographic research? In his account of village life, Srinivas delves into the intricate web of relationships between the various castes. He argues that the caste system's fundamental structure is robust and is also adjusting to the changing economic and political realities. He details these transformations in his ethnography. Opportunities are opening up as a result of the market, which is also bringing about the introduction of new techniques, the establishment of oil mills, the launch of new bus routes, and the launch of new enterprises. Srinivas praises these alterations, but he freezes them in the village as he studies them. Why? Why doesn't it explain how the market connects the rural areas to the metropolis and the country as a whole? According to the state, the country is structured. While talking about the panchayat, why doesn't he mention the state?

And why exactly is the social relegated to the physical space? Does one unconsciously equate the nation-state with the nation, as well as the village and caste with these larger social and geographical units? In Srinivas's sociology, does this connection transform the hamlet into a "microcosm" of India, the "macrocosm"? What happens when territory and socialities are reduced to one another? How can one build a sociology when a fragment of the present is preserved in time? Would it be easier to read it as something from the past instead of the present?

Similar to other formerly colonised regions, the idea of a village in India has its roots in the country's own colonial past. Administrative authority over clearly delineated geographical

areas was crucial in the construction and legitimisation of the notion. Colonialists saw space as fundamental to authority. The foundation of the East, according to Orientalist philosophy, was the Asiatic village structure. Understanding the East and its institutions thereafter became possible via the gathering of information and knowledge at the village and sub-village levels. But this information was not meant for archival purposes only. An administrative framework was to be put in place with the end goal of establishing a two-tiered power structure between the village and the state.

By the nineteenth century, the Indian village had taken on a multitude of connotations: it was both a primitive and fundamental part of Indian society; it had considerable political and administrative independence, even though it paid taxes to different revenue collectors; it was economically self-sufficient; its people engaged in subsistence agriculture and low-tech crafts and services; their ways of life seemed timeless; and they were immobile, ideologically bound to the land.

As a component of the nationalised ideology, the village language persisted. But in light of the current push for a national identity, its status as India's treasury of cultural heritage has been reaffirmed. Attempts to bolster the position were made by empirical study in the early 1900s. The fact that ethnographers had to locate a location to live and study only served to strengthen the mentality. My community, the site of the research, became an opportunity for "good" ethnography as a result of this process. Paradoxically, space became inseparable from social life at a time when capitalist ties and colonial practices had broken down the so-called relative isolation of villages. Despite Srinivas's stated objections to the idea of the village as an autonomous and self-sufficient entity, his paradigmatic principles became congruent with this view due to the ethnographic study's fixation on the village.

The town assumes structural, geographical, and spatial significance in Srinivas's canon. A once-small village came to represent a whole nation and its culture. Looking down from this height makes it harder to make out the web of connections that links the town or towns to the state, the country, and the world at large. By expanding our perspective to encompass these networks, we may better understand how the three pillars of the global system labor, money, and communication—connect and divide the many villages that make up the system, ultimately reshaping the very foundations of sociological theory.

When social processes and external social forces are ignored in the collapse of the social to the spatial, it becomes possible to exclude nation-state groups and communities whose culture and practices cannot be explained by the caste system, or the dual system of 'varna' and 'jati', as Srinivas understood it. He makes no reference in his works to the increasing number of interest groups, tribes, faiths, or ethnicities whose members did not live or do business in accordance with the caste standards. Both the conservatism of this method and the broader concern of excluding many groups that make up the sociological field are at stake. Plus, all sociologists should start asking themselves this question while evaluating their own work, right? When we utilise spatial categories, what kinds of social spaces are distilled? On the other hand, how can we combine all the socialities we're talking about into these geographical categories?

Srinivas appears to have abandoned the concept of village as a framework for analysing social structure beginning in the late 1960s. Above all else, his commentary now covers changes happening in the country and nation-state, and it has a broader scope. His attention is shifting from the caste system itself to how different parts of it are adapting to both internal and external pressures. As shown before, the mobility patterns that were common before, during, and after the British Empire and continued after independence are crucial to his understanding of the caste system (see, for example, the article "Mobility in the Caste System"). In this section, he emphasises the significance of the monetary shifts brought about by the British (such as the establishment of schools and other educational institutions, the expansion of trade and transportation, the development of urban centres and manufacturing, and the establishment of a new legal system, among other things). In addition, he stresses how the transformation of caste affiliations into movements like backward class movements ushered in new political realities. Since independence, all of these developments have become more pronounced, altering the caste structure in the process.

It is intriguing that mobility serves as the basis for his theory of caste systems and his definition of social transformation in India. Srinivas calls attention to the system's capacity to adapt to new processes that emerge via nation building and governmental interventions while studying mobility in modern India. A number of the articles in this collection touch on the topic of how politics has meddled to alter the caste structure, resulting in the proliferation of retrograde caste groups across. In his article "The Caste System and Its Future," he claims that three social classes have emerged as a result of official policies: the scheduled caste and tribes, the backward classes, and the advanced caste. There is a lot of animosity amongst these social groups since they all want a piece of the country's wealth. Therefore, there is a glaring difference between the caste system of today and its predecessors, which valued diverse professions and lifestyles. As a result of these shifts, caste is able to adapt to new environments, alter and moderate its traits, but neither entirely transform nor disappear. According to Srinivas, the caste system in India functions as an adaptable framework that can accommodate new circumstances and incorporates all outside influences.

I would contend that Srinivas's dedication to ethnography is the sole reason these perspectives are conceivable. It is hard to imagine how Srinivas could have seen and commented on these developments if he hadn't placed such a focus on ethnographic study and continually analysing and reinterpreting social processes. His work is considered current in part because of his dedication to ethnography, which appears to overshadow other parts of his body of work, such as the theoretical ideas linked with social anthropology. Everything from his views on gender to his evaluation of the caste system demonstrates this.

One example is how Srinivas, towards the conclusion of his career, realised the interconnectedness between female exploitation and caste. He began to focus on gender in his work beginning in the late 1970s. In his two pieces for this collection, "The Changing Position of Indian Women" and "Some Reflections on Dowry," Srinivas reveals an intriguing change in his theoretical stance. In the first piece, he mostly situates women in rural areas, namely within the familial moral framework of Hinduism. Their role is strictly defined by space and hierarchy, and they perform intricate rituals. Education and "career consciousness"

undergo transformations. Yet, when he delves into the topic of dowry, he finds himself acutely aware of the injustices, the "status asymmetry," and the women's ongoing dependency that underpin this terrible institution. Srinivas believed that a broad social movement that challenges an unfair system was the only option to topple this system, rather than relying just on stronger legislation. This eloquently demonstrates Srinivas' empirical sensitivity and how it enables him to rethink and improve upon his previous theories.

An insider, not an outsider, can perceive the evaluation of these structures, their components, and their relationships better, which is why Srinivas is so adamant about this. If you want to know how a society works, ask an insider, says Srinivas. He argues that anthropologists studying their own civilisation 'do it well,' in contrast to Edmund Leach's claim to the contrary. Firstly, a sociologist researching his own country has a significant advantage due to his familiarity with the language and culture. Secondly, due to the variety in India, the insider-outsider conundrum becomes more of a matter of degree than of kind. Neither being an insider nor an outsider in India is ever wholly satisfactory. Being a sensitive and well-trained anthropologist can help one overcome such a barrier, according to Srinivas, who disagrees with Leach's view that early preconceptions of insider prejudice studies are problematic.

While collecting and analysing data is challenging in and of itself, Srinivas argues that anthropologists engaging in participant observation must go above and beyond this. He needs to put himself in the shoes of the individuals he's researching and try to understand their perspective. An innate capacity for empathy is necessary for this, as is the capacity for an author to put himself in the shoes of his characters and see the world from their varied perspectives. A time Page 583 states that a perfect anthropologist would feel compassion for everyone, regardless of their socioeconomic status. This includes both the Brahmin and the untouchable, the landowner and the landless labourer, both the consumer and the moneylender.

Did Srinivas feel compassion for these individuals? Does his sociology focus on the underprivileged, the powerless, and the destitute? Several critics have pointed out the conservatism in Srinivas's theory, citing the centrality of the middle class, their upward mobility, and their relative insignificance in relation to hierarchy. His most significant impact on Indian sociology is undoubtedly the field perspective on the discipline. His theoretical stance, however, has limited this field vision. Undoubtedly, this perspective aids him in reorganising his work and shifting towards sociological inquiry; it also provided a path for a generation of students to shed the ideological shackles of Indology.

The connection between ethnography and the functionalist paradigm, as well as its positioning within the liberal ideology of the 1800s, lies at the heart of this matter. Political science and economics, according to this worldview, were essentially autonomous fields with their own logic and distinct analytical frameworks. From an epistemological standpoint, it distinguished between subject and object and advocated for the subject—the scientist or philosopher—to separate himself from the object of his observation. In addition to emphasising how ethnography, once built, only reflects the ideology of the subject and



promotes study that can become empiricist, functionalism emphasises how the subject is distinct from the object and refuses to acknowledge that the object is the product of the subject.

Srinivas exemplifies a simplistic paradigm of social development, one that views societal transformation as contingent upon alterations in economic and political systems. There is a failure to acknowledge the potential for outcomes to initiate new processes or the possibility that a confluence of events and processes might produce conflicts, which can subsequently arrange societies in unique and distinctive ways. Uncritical ethnography must also be part of the problem, right? In modern times, ethnography has recognised the political component in knowledge formation and the power factor in insider-outsider relationships. Good ethnographic research can be ruined by a lack of critical thinking.

How does this relate to sociology? Our understanding of history seems to be fading along with it, and with it, our ability to assess colonialism for what it was: a destructive force; capitalism for what it is: a change agent that unequally distributes rewards; and development and planning for what it is: an ideology organised by the elites to reshape society. Since we do not get any ideas or theories that can assess and comprehend the modern societal processes of change and conflict, this excellent ethnography leaves us high and dry. We can't have this repertory until we embrace the fact that change, particularly in this global system era, is external, market-oriented, and unequally rewards people. This, in turn, creates unequal relations between different places, regions, classes, and ethnic groups.

The geographically constructed borders of social inquiry are not acceptable to such a procedure. Instead, it necessitates that social scientists observe the reconstruction processes and use that information to structure their ethnographic research. With the release of Srinivas's collected essays, we get an opportunity to consider the ideas and assumptions that shape Indian sociology.

In contemporary sociology and social anthropology, Srinivas stood head and shoulders above the crowd. An international authority on India's caste system for over forty years, Srinivas was adamant that caste will not disappear but undergo several transformations, in contrast to the beliefs and proclamations of India's intellectuals. He maintained that caste will persist as an underlying social construct in Indian culture and beyond. As an intriguing aside, Srinivas was not in favour of caste-based quota as a means to rectify caste inequality.

"Obituary on Caste as a System" by Srinivas does not serve as a lament for casteism. This discourse focusses with the shifting shapes of caste and the impact of rural economies on caste transformation, while simultaneously restating the enduring nature of caste in contemporary India. The truth of what Srinivas said all those years ago is that caste is pervasive in today's society, from the socioeconomic to the political spheres.

Srinivas, a specialist on India's caste system, established the groundwork for studies of rural Indian society in the years after independence. The Institute of Socio-Economic Change (ISEC) was established in Bengaluru in 1972 by VKRV Rao and Srinivas. At the age of

ninety-one, Srinivas passed away. "Perhaps we will never find a sociologist as great as Prof. M. N. Srinivas," remarked A. M. Shah, one of M. N. Srinivas's inaugural pupils.

### Analysis of writings of Srinivas

Srinivas has started a trend of drawing macro-sociological conclusions from micro-anthropological findings by bringing a sociological lens and breadth to anthropological investigations of local communities. According to Qoshi, the year 2000 was prophesied. Srinivas would rather have learnt about his people by direct experience, field study, and observation than through western textbooks or indigenous sacred texts. He did a lot of fieldwork on the Coorgs between 1940 and 1942. His studies of the ceremonial interactions amongst various Coorg castes—including the Brahmins (priests), Kaniyas (magicians and astrologers), and the Bannas and Panikas—illuminate the concept of functional oneness. As part of his studies on Rampura, he talks about how the castes in a community are dependent on one another.

The structural-functional features of religion and caste were brought to light in Srinivas's research on these topics (1952, 1959, 1962, and 1966), which also examined the dynamics of caste in rural areas. In order to comprehend and explain the dynamics of inter-caste relations, he put forward conceptual tools such as "dominant caste," "sanskritization-westernization," and "secularisation."

When researching power dynamics in rural areas, the term "dominant caste" has proved useful. Srinivas (1960) summarises research on the evolution and form of rural communities. In the 1940s, Srinivas published essays about folk music from the Telugu and Tamil languages.

In order to comprehend our culture, Srinivas clarifies two fundamental ideas. Among them are:

- (a) Book view, and
- (b) Field view.
- (a) Book view (bookish perspective):

The fundamental components that make up Indian society include its religious beliefs, varna, caste, family, village, and geographical framework. Books and religious writings are the sources of information regarding these aspects. Some refer to it as "book view" or "bookish perspective," which is what Srinivas uses. Srinivas placed an emphasis on the field perspective since he found the book view, also called Indology, unacceptable.

- (b) Field view (field work):

The belief held by Srinivas is that fieldwork may provide light on the many parts of Indian society. He refers to this as field view. Thus, he thinks that understanding our civilisation is best accomplished via empirical investigation. Srinivas eschewed the development of

expansive ideas in favour of more manageable localised investigations. Here, fieldwork is crucial for comprehending the genesis of rural Indian society.

Srinivas came to the same conclusion about the importance of statistics and mathematics in sociology. His self-analysis from 1973 emphasises this. For both ideological and pragmatic reasons, academics seldom go to the aforementioned secondary level of analysis. Identifying the practical considerations is a breeze. Maybe in the past, more so than now, many bright and hard-working students avoided mathematics in favour of more "humanistic" fields like sociology.

Many facets of Indian society and culture have been covered in Srinivas's writings. Religion, rural life, caste, and social transformation are some of his most famous works. His Oxford Professor Radcliffe-Brown's concept of structure had an impact on him.

Taking a holistic view of Indian culture, he investigated "the various groups in its interrelationship, whether tribes, peasants or various cults and sects" (Patel, 1998) to better understand the country's community. Extensive fieldwork in South India, namely in the Coorgs and Rampura regions, served as the basis for his articles (Shah, 1996).

Outstanding works were created by Srinivas, for example:

1. Marriage and Family in Mysore (1942)
2. Religion and Society among the Coorgs of South India (1952)
3. India's Villages (1955)
4. Caste in Modern India and Other Essays (1962)
5. Social Change in Modern India (1966)
6. The Remembered Village (1976)
7. India: Social Structure (1980)
8. The Dominant Caste and Other Essays (1987)
9. The Cohesive Role of Sanskritization (1989)
10. On Living in a Revolution and Other Essays (1992)
11. Village, Caste, Gender and Method (1996)
12. Indian Society through Personal Writings (1996)

A great deal of Srinivas's other important writings illuminate different facets of the continuing social turmoil in India. 'On Living in a Revolution' (1986), 'Some Reflections on Dowry' (1984), and 'The Insider and the Outsider in the Study of Cultures' (1984) are among these. The fields covered by Srinivas's writings are extensive.

## Social Change

Among Indian sociologists and anthropologists, "social change" remains a major topic of interest. This is true both before and after 1950, when Srinivas (1966) sought to synthesise several micro-level results on "sanskritization," "westernisation," and "secularisation" to form a macro-level analysis. It is worth noting that Srinivas revisited his micro-empirical setting—a hamlet—nearly twenty-five years later and, using a diachronic frame, emphasised the nature of social development in that community across time (Srinivas, 1977).

## Religion and Society

The term "Brahminization" was used by Srinivas in his 1952 book *Religion and Society* among the Coorgs of South India to describe how lower-caste Hindus began to adopt the lifestyle and religious practices of the Brahmin caste. Extensive and meticulous field research on the lower castes' ceremonial practices and lifestyles revealed changes that the idea helped to explain.

However, there were underlying opportunities for Brahminization to be abstracted further into a more general concept called "sanskritization." Srinivas developed this term because, based on his own and others' field data, it became clear that the Brahminic model alone had its limitations. Thus, sanskritization eventually superseded Brahminization on a more theoretical basis.

To do this, Srinivas used these concepts in a methodical way to explain the social development processes in India, expanding their significance and separating them from another word, westernisation. Although this theoretical framework primarily addresses cultural copying processes, it incorporates a structural notion—namely, power and privilege inequality—into its very design. This is due to the fact that, in every instance, lower-status groups or castes are the ones who imitate.

Srinivas' *Social Change in Modern India* (1966) provides a structured explanation of the two concepts. In this book, he describes "sanskritization" as a lower-caste or tribe's assimilation into a higher-caste group's mores, particularly those of a "twice-born" (dwija) caste.

The process of sanskritization typically elevates a group's status within the local caste system. Research on social change via the levels of tradition and the ideas of sanskritization and westernisation mostly focusses on how cultural styles, customs, and ritual practices have changed.

On the other hand, certain assumptions made during both the Sanskritization and Westernisation processes do suggest prior or simultaneous structural changes. These include the sanskritizing caste's economic advancement, the imitating caste's superiority and dominance, and the low castes' psychological disillusionment with their existing position in the caste hierarchy.

Nonetheless, westernisation was a shift brought about by the encounter with British socio-economic and cultural advances, whereas sanskritization introduced modifications within the

framework of Indian culture. In addition to these ideas, Srinivas has used the word "secularisation" to describe how religious minorities and groups were dealt with following independence through the process of institutional innovations and ideological construction. It evolved into a national philosophy.

The hamlet, in Srinivas's view, is a miniature representation of Indian society and culture. The hamlet is where you may still find many of the original components of India's cultural heritage. One of the most prominent members of India's first-generation sociology community is Srinivas. D.P. Mukerji, N.K. Bose, R.K. Mukherjee, and G.S. Ghurye are all stars in his galaxy.

It was after conducting research among the Coorgs of southern India that he published *Religion and Society* (1952). As far as Indian sociology is concerned, Dumont and Pocock consider the book a masterpiece. Srinivas establishes the groundwork for Indian traditions in this book. T.N. Madan gives the book high marks, stating:

Radcliffe-Brown, who had initially suggested the subject to Srinivas for the dissertation, also happened to be the one who laid the solid theoretical groundwork for the Coorgs, which is its greatest value. *Religion and Society* lays forth the complex network of links between ritual and Coorg social structure in a very straightforward way.

Additionally, it delves deeply into important ideas like pollution and cleanliness, as well as the integration of non-Hindu groups and religions into Hindu society. The propagation of Hinduism was Srinivas's primary focus in *Religion and Society*. The principles of "Sanskritic Hinduism" were the subject of his discourse. This was connected to Srinivas' use of the term "sanskritization" to characterise the spread of Sanskritic principles to India's most distant regions.

As a means for lesser castes to improve their social standing, they were believed to model their behaviour after that of the highest, twice-born castes. Srinivas, oddly enough, failed to account for the fact that many Hindus maintained a low or no position under the caste system.

He believed that the tale of the Coorgs' integration into Hindu society was the most important and noteworthy part of their history. The only societal reform, in Srinivas's view, is the rising of the downtrodden to higher social ranks by emulating the virtues of the twice-born. And the lower-caste and indigenous peoples will always be at a disadvantage if they can't keep up with the rest of the pack in this race to imitate.

Srinivas seems to be describing the mimicking lower castes as the beginning of a new age. Srinivas asserts that some traditions of Indian culture may be categorised as belonging to the highest castes, sometimes called the twice-born. That is to say, Indian traditions include the customs, practices, and beliefs shared by the Baniyas, the Rajputs, and the Brahmins.

Moreover, the traditional beliefs of the untouchables, tribals, and other lower-class peoples are not respected. His understanding of Indian tradition is that it pertains to the upper castes of Hinduism and has nothing to do with the lower castes. Unsurprisingly, Srinivas's true interest was in caste, which he solidifies by incorporating sanskritization into tradition.



The "structural bases of Hinduism," in his view. Hinduism in its entirety did not captivate him. He sought it out inside the hierarchy of castes. So, according to his argument, the caste system is an integral part of Hindu heritage, and Indian customs are essentially Hindu traditions. His area of expertise does not include holistic Hinduism.

### Study of Village

The third aspect of tradition that Srinivas examines is the village, in addition to religion and caste. While working with Radcliffe-Brown as a mentor in 1945 and 1946, Srinivas received the initial notion to research rural India. He came up with the idea of "dominant caste" while studying Rampur, a hamlet near Mysore, after returning to India from Oxford. Only in *The Remembered Village* (1976) does Srinivas devote any space to discussing the economic and social shifts that have occurred in Rampura; the rest of the research is covered elsewhere. "The people of Rampura soon after independence occupied a prominent place in their life due to technological change," he says. Naturally, societal, political, and economic shifts occurred together with technological advancements. For Srinivas, learning about Indian culture has always been paramount. Furthermore, he views Indian culture as fundamentally a caste system. Faith, family, caste, and rural life are some of the topics he has studied and written about in India. Along with Radcliffe-Brown and Robert Redfield, his functionalist mentor Evans Pritchard was also an influence. As functionalists, these anthropologists were prominent.

The Dalits should be allowed to continue existing while the upper castes continue to enjoy their dominance over the lower castes, according to their ideology. In his quest to understand tradition, Srinivas deduces that caste, village, and religion are the three main pillars upon which Indian traditions rest. He seems to think that Hindu nationalists, for example, hold views on Indian social structure that are comparable to their own.

Despite his many references to economic and technical progress, Srinivas always calls for reform within caste, religion, and the family unit in his writings. Even when delving into these topics, he ends up ignoring the most disadvantaged members of society. What he calls "untouchables" are people like them. The socioeconomic problems of caste society have been widely discussed in Srinivas's writings. He argues that the caste system has to be reformed and suggests that modernity and westernisation might be models for this transition.

However, his view of change is rooted in traditionalism or Brahminical Hinduism. He has alienated and marginalised religious minorities in his haste to promote sanskritization. Indian traditions, in his view, are best shown by the ways in which caste and rural life coexist. His customs are not secular in the least; rather, they are Hinduized.

In defence of Hindu traditions, Srinivas fiercely rejects secularism. He questioned Indian secularism in a short article that appeared in the *Times of India* in 1993, stating that secular humanism is not the solution to India's cultural and spiritual issues and that the country's present philosophical atmosphere is insufficient to do so.

The centrality of God as creator and preserver is essential. Srinivas was more aligned with the Hindu nationalist philosophy of Hindutva as he constructed sanskritization and dominating caste. Given that the constitution outright rejected caste, any tradition originating from it cannot be considered a national tradition, according to Doshi's (2003) remarks on India's traditions.

The Remembered Hamlet, Srinivas's renowned masterwork, has all the makings of a great novel about a hamlet in southwest India that is undergoing change. In "Three Important Men of Village Rampura," Srinivas plays three different roles: Nadu Gowda, a wealthy landowner with an entrepreneurial spirit; Kulle Gowda, the traditional village headman and landlord; and Nadu Gowda, the intermediary between the hamlet and the outside world.

Srinivas conducted extensive research on important facets of Hindu society and culture, including looking at the ways in which Hindus and non-Hindus interacted with one another. There were not many people who were not Hindu in the area he researched.

Until other sociologists started investigating non-Hindu aspects of Indian society and culture, he believed, no Indian sociology could emerge that would be authentic and comprehensive enough to reflect India's variety and complexity.

It has long been believed that Srinivas was an Indian sociologist who, according to Joshi (2000), conducted substantial study on the social structures of Hinduism in a specific area. As a Hindu sociologist, he never claimed to be.

### **Views on Caste:**

Caste is seen by Srinivas as a segmental system.

According to him, there are sub-castes inside every caste. These sub-castes include:

1. The endogamy unit;
2. The members of which share an occupation.
3. Whose members have a shared culture?
4. Whose members are ruled by the same authoritative body, the panchayat?
5. Whose members are the units of social and ritual life?

For Srinivas, there are more characteristics that matter beyond these sub-caste variables. The following:

1. Hierarchy:

The hierarchical structure is Srinivas's main argument against the caste system. It suggests that family groups are structured hierarchically. His main point is that the most obvious indicator of rank is the distinction between the Brahmins and the untouchables. Those in the centre of a hierarchy are the ones who have the most leeway to act as they see fit.

## 2. Occupational differentiation:

A caste and its profession are closely related, according to Srinivas. "Caste is nothing more than the systematisation of occupational differentiation," he claims. Some castes get their names from the professions practiced by its members; for example, the Lohar, Sunar, Kumhar, Teli, Chamar, and many more. There is a hierarchy of high and low occupations, which he emphasises as well.

3. There are also limitations on commensality, clothing, speech, and customs within castes. Food acceptability is limited and there is a dietary hierarchy.

## 4. Pollution:

According to pollution principles, there should be no contact between castes. Like many others, Srinivas contends that members of the lower castes should avoid interaction with anything that may be considered contaminated. A caste becomes impure upon contact with a polluted and must perform cleansing procedures if they wish to regain their purity. A person's caste can be revoked in extreme cases of contamination, such as when a member of a higher caste engages in sexual intercourse with an untouchable.

## 5. Caste Panchayats and Assemblies:

All castes are governed by a Panchayat or other authority that ensures order, in addition to the characteristics already listed. In a village, the social order is maintained by the elders of each caste who exercise their power together. Moreover, the power of each caste's assembly is ultimately responsible to its members. A Caste Assembly's power may encompass caste matters in neighbouring villages as well, even if they are not physically located inside the same village.

The above suggests that the characteristics of a caste unquestionably dictated the kind of connections between castes. A caste's status is also determined by these characteristics or practices. This is made clear in Srinivas's writings on sanskritization and caste mobility.

## Sanskritization:

We have seen up to how the purity or impurity of an attribute determines the status of a caste. While researching a hamlet in Mysore, Srinivas discovers that every caste strives to move up the social ladder by emulating the characteristics of higher-ranking castes.

Sanskritization refers to the effort to change one's position by acquiring characteristics that are indicative of higher status and abandoning those that distinguish a lower caste. Going from a non-vegetarian to a vegetarian diet and switching from a "unclean" to a "clean" job are the two main changes that are required for this process to take place. Interactions between castes are based on the characteristics of a caste. Srinivas' use of the term "dominant caste" exemplifies the formation of patterns of interaction and interconnections.

## Idea of Dominant Caste:

As if caste weren't enough, Srinivas seeks for another expression of tradition. "Dominant caste" was the concept he uncovered. He initially brought it up in his early writings on the Rampura community. Much research on political and social organisation in India has used and analysed the idea.

Using a combination of six characteristics, he had described the dominating caste:

- (1) Vast tracts of farmland;
- (2) Quantitative power;
- (3) At the very top of the local food chain;
- (4) Western schooling;
- (5) Administrative positions; and
- (6) Urban sources of income.

The following three characteristics of the ruling class stand out among the others:

- (i) quantitative power,
- (ii) land ownership as a source of economic power, and
- (iii) influence on politics.

As a result, in each given rural community, the most powerful caste is the one that possesses all three of these characteristics.

The intriguing thing about this idea is that a caste's ceremonial standing isn't the key determinant of its social status anymore. The numerical size, property ownership, and political clout of a caste or group can propel it to the position of dominant governing caste or group in a village, regardless of how low it ranks in society. It seems to reason that a more ritually-ranking caste would have an easier time rising to the top. However, this does not always hold true.

To demonstrate the foregoing, we will use the hamlet of Rampura in Mysore as an example. Brahmins, peasants, and untouchables are just a few of the castes represented in this community. Although they are ceremonially lower in rank than the Brahmins, the peasants possess the majority of the hamlet's land and have considerable political sway over local affairs.

The peasants, despite their low ritual position, are the dominating caste in the village, as we find out. The village's other castes are all subservient to the dominant one; put simply, they are at the rear of the pack.

Critics of Srinivas's work claimed that he had stolen this idea from African sociology, namely the concept of domination. In response to the criticism, Srinivas stated that his fieldwork in the southern Indian Coorgs had inspired the concept of dominant caste.

Based on his observations in the field, he concluded that certain groups, like the Coorgs and the Okkaligas, had a lot of influence on a regional level due to similar characteristics like population density, economic might, and ceremonial purity. He went on to say that the ruling caste may either facilitate or impede the growth of sanskritization in a given area.

That is why the ruling caste and Sanskritization are symbols of Indian culture. Furthermore, according to this theoretical framework, the subaltern groups are the dominant caste in rural India, and the traditions of the lower castes and Dalits are completely out of place.

### Criticism

Srinivas has made it his life's work to learn about Indian culture. Despite his claims to the contrary, he ignores the needs of the working class in favour of discussing economic and technical progress. Religious minorities have been marginalised and alienated by his efforts to promote sanskritization.

Indian traditions, in his view, are best shown by the ways in which caste and rural life coexist. His customs are not secular in the least; rather, they are Hinduized. He was drawn to the Hindu nationalist ideology of Hindutva due to his work on sanskritization and the ruling caste. His perspective may have been more elitist or exclusive of the upper class.

Sociologist M.N. Srinivas viewed indigenous social change theories as "limited processes in modern India and it is not possible to understand one without reference to the other" (see *Caste in Modern India*, 1966: 8-9), which were prevalent in the 1950s and, to a large extent, the 1960s.

While working on his dissertation at Oxford with Radcliffe-Brown and Evans Pritchard, Srinivas developed the idea of sanskritization (1952). In the end, he defined it as the transformation of a "low" Hindu caste, tribal group, or other people into a "high" and often "twice-born caste" in terms of its beliefs, practices, and rituals.

"The British conquest of India set free a number of forces - political, economic, social and technological... (which) affected the country's social and cultural life profoundly and at every point. The withdrawal of the British from India not only meant the cessation of these forces but, on the contrary, their intensification" (Srinivas, 1966: 53), according to Srinivas's 1956 statement on the concept of westernisation.

Since these concepts only summarise characteristics that are visible in society, they cannot be considered unique (Mukherjee 1979: 50). According to Mukherjee's *Sociology of Indian Sociology* (1979), the word "sanskritization" used by Srinivas had previously been called "Aryanization" and "Brahminization" by proto-sociologists Lyall and Risley.

If you believe Srinivas, who acknowledges the sources of his idea (Srinivas, 1962: 42-43), sanskritization may be a better way to describe the process in question. Similarly, Srinivas was not the first proto-sociologist to observe and characterise westernisation in a way similar to that of Mukherjee (1979).



D.P. Mukerji and Coomaraswamy were among the pioneers who were aware of the two processes and who paid great attention to them within the context of their respective research philosophies, theoretical frameworks, and value systems. Both Yogendra Singh (1973: 6) and Milton Singer (1959: 179) argue that the two stages of sanskritization are "historic-specific" and "contextual-specific" based on their respective meanings.

## Conclusion

One of the most prominent members of India's first-generation sociology community is Srinivas. His dedication to the "field view" rather than the "book view" is an impressive stride towards comprehending Indian culture as it really is. This echoes the insights of nativity sociology. His time spent living among the Coorgs shed light on the intricate web of relationships between ceremonial practice and social hierarchy, and he describes his method as structural-functional.

The crucial ideas of purity and contamination are discussed with the process of non-Hindu communities becoming absorbed into the Hindu social order. His description of the dissemination of Sanskrit concepts to rural India, "sanskritization," is applicable here.

Sanskritization, according to Shah, is a combination word signifying the merging of Sanskrit (culture) and Sanskrit (language) (2005: 239). Srinivas may have conceived of the procedure when he saw it happening in a group and the upper-caste society was associated with religion due to its roots in "textual Hinduism" (Upadhyay 2013: 12). There is now some flexibility in the process, seen at the individual and communal levels, as a result of caste's transformation from a structure to a substance (ibid.).

Opposition arises in response to the description of Sanskritization in its current use. The idea that the higher classes would perpetually maintain their Sanskrit status is highly arrogant (ibid., 9). Actually, local and imported elements of other traditions predominate in their modern activities, with little allusions to the Vedas (ibid.). This proves that it is hazardous to associate Sanskritization with imitating upper-caste culture. In addition, the 'low' castes' increasing influence in politics and the economy allows them to pretend to be higher-caste without actually adopting upper-caste practices. On the other hand, one could argue that the lower-castes are interacting with Hinduism without considering the upper-castes as a benchmark (ibid., 10). As an example, Dalit women in Sonapat, Haryana celebrate Karva Chauth today (ibid., 11). Actually, "emulation of upper-castes" as a concept is contested (ibid.). This emulation process is only one example of how westernisation has diminished its significance (ibid.). In addition, the conversion of Dalit-Bahujans reflects the divide in the affiliation of lower-castes with Hinduism (ibid., 10), which challenges the process of Sanskritization but does not operate across Sanskritization itself.

Finally, Srivastava argues that Sanskritization is incompatible with the idea of changing one's place in the hierarchy. He contends that a more realistic metric for studying Sanskritization would be to pit progressive households against dominating castes (1969: 697). He backs up his claim with evidence from Barigaon and Koiris, where he says the lower-caste people follow the lead of their most advanced family rather than the Chattris, who seem to be the

most powerful caste in the area, second only in rank to the Brahmins (ibid.). In areas where there is no dominant caste and the lower-caste residents do not aspire to adopt upper-caste customs, he makes this observation. Since he considers progressive families to be more privileged economically and culturally than their caste peers, this might be seen as a "class within a caste" idea.

Up to now, Sanskritization has taken several shapes, including attempts to gain social mobility by mimicking upper-caste culture and efforts to challenge the dominance of the upper-caste. One of the earliest social institutions is caste. Cases of de-Sanskritization and obsessive Sanskritization were complexities of the theme of social mobility after independence. Contrary to what one might expect from a literary interpretation, caste does not promote collaboration and peace but rather strife. Sanskritization, although providing profound insight into caste processes, requires correction. Since the Sanskritization process excludes scheduled castes living in rural areas and those with lower socioeconomic status, it fails to achieve the goal of horizontal integration (Guru 1984:36). The tribal condition is underappreciated, and the monographic method of research implies otherwise (Shah 2005:245). In addition, the Sanskritization movement was mostly centred around the historically favoured upper-castes. So, how it managed to accomplish vertical cultural integration within the Indian social environment is puzzling (Guru 1984: 37). The current political atmosphere is making this disparity wider. As a result of their devotion to textual Hinduism, which is skewed towards the veneration of Hindutva and the interests of upper-caste Hindus, certain political parties have become agents of Sanskritization. The overall impact of social engineering on one's standing is up for debate. One may argue that the other side is using social alliances between upper-caste and lower-caste members in a way that creates a culturally homogenous majority.

The widespread agreement and support for his theories, conceptions, and views on Indian society among his peers and the general public is not surprising. His observations on Indian civilisation have helped students of all ages comprehend and evaluate that culture.

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