

## CBSE Class 12 Sociology

### NCERT Solutions

#### Chapter-2

#### Cultural change

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##### 1. Write a critical essay on sanskritisation.

**Ans.** The term 'sanskritisation' was coined by M.N. Srinivas. It may be defined as the process by which a 'low caste or tribe or other group takes over the customs, ritual, beliefs, ideology and style of life of a high and, in particular, a 'twice-born (dwija) caste'.

Its influence can be seen in language, literature, ideology, music, dance, drama, style of life and ritual. It is primarily a process that takes place in the Hindu space though Srinivas argued that it was visible even in sects and religious groups outside Hinduism.

Sanskritisation suggests a process whereby people want to improve their status through adoption of names and customs of culturally high-placed groups. The 'reference model' is usually financially better off. In both, the aspiration or desire to be like the higher placed group occurs only when people become wealthier. Sanskritisation as a concept has been criticised at different levels. One, it has been criticised for exaggerating social mobility or the scope of 'lower castes' to move up the social ladder. For it leads to no structural change but only positional change of some individuals. In other words inequality continues to persist though some individuals may be able to improve their positions within the unequal structure. Two, it has been pointed out that the ideology of sanskritisation accepts the ways of the 'upper caste' as superior and that of the 'lower caste' as inferior. Therefore, the desire to imitate the 'upper caste' is seen as natural and desirable. Third, 'sanskritisation' seems to justify a model that rests on inequality and exclusion. It appears to suggest that to believe in pollution and purity of groups of people is justifiable or all right. Therefore, to be able to look down on some groups just as the 'upper castes' looked down on the 'lower castes', is a mark of privilege. Discriminatory ideas become a way of life. Instead of aspiring for an equal society, the exclusion and discrimination seek to give their own meaning to their excluded status. In other words they aspire to be in a position from where they can in turn look down on other people. This reflects an essentially undemocratic vision. Fourth, since sanskritisation results in the adoption of upper caste rites and rituals it leads to practices of secluding girls and women, adopting dowry practices instead of bride-price and practising

caste discrimination against other groups, etc. Fifth, the effect of such a trend is that the key characteristics of dalit culture and society are eroded. For example the very worth of labour which 'lower castes' do is degraded and rendered 'shameful'. Identities based on the basis of work, crafts and artisanal abilities, knowledge forms of medicine, ecology, agriculture, animal husbandry, etc., are regarded useless in the industrial era.

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**2. Westernisation is often just about adoption of western attire and life style. Are there other aspects to being westernised or Is that about modernisation? Discuss.**

**Ans.** There were different kinds of westernisation. One kind refers to the emergence of a westernised sub-cultural pattern through a minority section of Indians who first came in contact with Western culture. This included the sub culture of Indian intellectuals who not only adopted many cognitive patterns, or ways of thinking, and styles of life, but supported its expansion. Many of the early 19th century reformers were of this kind. There were, therefore, small sections of people who adopted western life styles or were affected by western ways of thinking. Apart from this there has been also the general spread of Western cultural traits, such as the use of new technology, dress, food, and changes in the habits and styles of people in general. Across the country a very wide section of middle class homes have a television set, a fridge, some kind of sofa set, a dining table and chair in the living room.

Westernisation does involve the imitation of external forms of culture. It does not necessarily mean that people adopt modern values of democracy and equality. Apart from ways of life and thinking the west influenced Indian art and literature. Artists like Ravi Varma, Abanindranath Tagore, Chandu Menon and Bankimchandra Chattopadhyaya were all grappling with the colonial encounter.

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**3. Write short notes on:**

**(a) Rites and secularisation**

**(b) Caste and secularisation**

**(c) Gender and sanskritisation**

**Ans. (a) Rites and secularisation:**

- It usually means a process of decline in the influence of religion.
- Indicators of secularisation have referred to levels of involvement with religious organisations (like church attendance), the social and material influence of religious

organization, and the degree to which people hold religious beliefs.

- But the general assumption that modern societies are increasingly becoming secular may not entirely be true.
- A considerable part of ritual in India has direct reference to the pursuit of secular ends.
- Rituals have secular dimensions i.e. they provide men and women occasions for socialising with their peers and superiors.
- They get an opportunity to show off family's wealth, clothing and jewellery.
- During the last few decades in particular, the economic, political and status dimensions of ritual have become increasingly conspicuous.

### **(b) Caste and Secularisation:**

- In traditional India, caste system operated within the religious framework.
- Belief systems of purity and pollution were central to its practice. India has seen such formation of caste associations and caste based political parties. They seem to press upon the state their demands.
- Such a changed role of caste has been described as secularisation of caste.
- The traditional social system in India was organised around caste structures and caste identities. In dealing with the relationship between caste and politics, however the doctrinaire moderniser suffers from a serious xenophobia.
- Politicians mobilise caste groupings and identities in order to organise their power .... where there are other types of groups and other bases of association, politicians approach them as well. And as they everywhere change the form of such organisations, they change the form of caste as well.

### **(c) Gender and Sanskritisation:**

- Sanskritisation supports traditional way of life for women and it is more liberal for modernization or westernization for men.
- Most of the supporters of Sanskritisation support the women life within the four walls of the houses. They support or prefer the role of women as a mother, a sister and a daughter.
- They like women to follow the traditional way of marriage with the consent of parents.

**Kumud Pawade** as a student could enable her to read in the original what the texts have to say about women and the Dalits. As she proceeds with her studies, she meets with varied reactions ranging from surprise to hostility, from guarded acceptance to brutal rejection. As she says "I remember an expression I heard somewhere: "What comes by birth, but can't be cast off by dying-that is caste?"