

A Critique of Sanskritization from Dalit/Caste-Subaltern Perspective

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Abstract

Students and social scientists concerned with caste studies will agree to a socio-cultural phenomenon called Sanskritization among people of caste communities that are not recognized as belonging to castes primarily affiliated to either of the three varnas of Brahman, Kshatriya and Vaishya. What is Sanskritization? Following M. N. Srinivas, who put forward the concept of Sanskritization in *Religion and Society among the Coorges of South India* (1952) to explain upward social movement (?) among Hindu tribal groups or 'lower' caste groups imitating and gradually incorporating 'upper' caste people's social, cultural behaviour, rituals, customs, and religious practices, there exist an array of works deliberating upon this collective behavioural instance called Sanskritization (Beteille, 1969; Gould, 1961; Patwardhan, 1973; Sachchidananda, 1977; Lynch, 1974). These studies have generally accepted Sanskritization as an effective tool for cultural integration between different caste groups by ensuring movements of people across caste barriers; in other words, Sanskritization spells a common idiom of social mobility (Beteille, 1969, p. 116).

This paper does not support the view that Sanskritization has been an effective socio-cultural instrument in moving towards a society that does not swear by caste-principles. Rather, Sanskritization, a concrete social fact among the 'lower' castes people, seems to obliquely prove the productive logic of caste through the imitation of the Brahmin. Following Gramsci's conceptualisation of the necessity of a subaltern initiative in any counter-hegemony project, the paper further argues that Sanskritization is regressive to the extent that it is antithetical to any such subaltern political initiative against caste.

Keywords

Sanskritization, Dalit, Caste-Subaltern, Gramsci, Ambedkar, Brahminhood

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Introduction

Students and social scientists concerned with caste studies will agree to a socio-cultural phenomenon called Sanskritization prevalent among people of caste communities that are not recognized as belonging to castes primarily affiliated to either of the three varnas of Brahmin, Kshatriya and Vaishya. What is Sanskritization? Following M. N. Srinivas, who put forward the concept of Sanskritization in *Religion and Society among the Coorges of South India* (1952) to explain upward social movement (?) among Hindu tribal groups or caste groups (that are, by Hindu social convention/universal common sense considered as 'lower') imitating and gradually incorporating (the conventionally regarded) 'upper' caste people's social, cultural behaviour, rituals, customs, and religious practices, there exist an array of works deliberating upon this collective behavioural instance called Sanskritization (Beteille, 1969; Gould, 1961; Patwardhan, 1973; Sachchidananda, 1977; Lynch, 1974).

These studies have generally accepted Sanskritization as an effective tool for cultural integration between different caste groups ensuring movements of people across caste barriers; in other words, Sanskritization spells a common idiom of social mobility. With reference to social mobility, M. N. Srinivas in *Caste and Social Change in Modern India* (2005), a work, the first publication of which was in 1966 (a compilation of a series of invited lectures delivered by Srinivas as part of The Rabindranath Tagore Memorial Lectureship administered by the Association for Asian Studies in May 1963 at University of California, Berkeley), defines Sanskritization as the process by which a 'low' caste Hindu group or a tribal group changes its customs, rituals or ideology in the direction of the 'high' castes, and that it is accompanied by a claim to a higher position in the caste hierarchy than the position traditionally conceded to the claimant caste by the local community.

Therefore, for Srinivas, Sanskritization as a process results more than often in an upward mobility for the caste in question. And that this upward mobility is visible at the local experiential level of everyday reality, Srinivas cites evidences by drawing from many such examples from Mysore. For instance, he cites the example of peasant castes (*Okkaligas*) and shepherd castes (*kurubas*) in Mysore not accepting cooked food and water from *Marka* Brahmins despite the latter being included among Brahmins. While remaining conscious of the fact that changes, developments, advancements, whichever way it is put, brought about by the socio-cultural process of Sanskritization do not result in any structural change in the system of castes rather brings about only a positional change, Srinivas largely infers that contrary to the varna model where the position of each varna is fixed, the position of the castes in the hierarchy as it actually exists is liable to change. Srinivas observes, "The ordering of different varnas is clearly intended to support the theory of Brahminical supremacy and only partially overlaps with the actualities of caste ranking in different parts of the country" (2005, p. 4). Srinivas holds that owing to the popularity of the varna model among 'urban and educated Indians' to provide a more or less true picture of caste as an ongoing system, we tend to read caste squarely in terms of immobility and fixity when in reality there exists a gap between the varna model and the realities of the existing local hierarchy.

To this extent Srinivas cites the absurdity that Shudra as a varna status has come to attain. While Shudra as a category has been a fertile source for the recruitment of local Kshatriya and Vaishya caste, it spans such a wide cultural arch that now the varna status of Shudra has become meaningless. Therefore effectively, the varna model in a way distorts our understanding of caste in traditional society, and precludes the reading that traditional societies (read caste) did allow a certain amount of mobility. The effective argument made by Srinivas on Sanskritization is that it functions to bridge the gap between secular and ritual ranks of caste and that Sanskritization has been a major process of cultural change in Indian history and greatly facilitated by a variety of forces: technological and institutional.

This article argues a different reading of Sanskritization. Instead of looking at Sanskritization as an effective socio-cultural instrument in moving towards a society that does not swear by caste-principles, it argues that, Sanskritization, on close observation appears to foster those very basic principles on which caste perpetuates; immobility and exclusivity being its primary conditions. It takes its clue from Ambedkar's thesis on the genesis and mechanism of caste in his seminar presentation at Columbia University, New York, 1916, "Castes in India: Their Genesis, Mechanism and Development", to attempt to demonstrate this character of Sanskritization. Ambedkar points in the essay, that the emulative model of the Brahmin partly explains the origin and development of caste(s). Ambedkar argues in the paper that the three customs of 'sati', 'enforced widowhood' and 'girl marriage'—customs that according to Ambedkar were primarily intended to maintain endogamy—a characteristic feature of caste type stratification, were first raised by the Brahmin class— "A Caste is an Enclosed Class" (Ambedkar, 1989, p. 15) and that which marks one caste different from other in its early stages of development is the extent of imitation of these customs after the Brahmin class. In Ambedkar's conclusion, the existence of the said customs in other classes except the Brahmin were derivative in nature for it is the former classes' imitation of the customs, in other words imitation of the Brahmin, that led to the creation of distinct castes—different castes forming out of different or imperfect imitations (Ambedkar, 1989, p. 20). Ambedkar writes:

After what I have said regarding the role of imitation in the spread of these customs among the non-Brahmin castes, as means or as ideals, though the imitators have not been aware of it, they exist among them as derivatives; and if they are derived, there must have been prevalent one original caste that was high enough to have served as a pattern for the rest (p. 20).

Ambedkar's imitation of the ideal Brahmin theory in the mechanism of caste(s) formation— "the whole process of caste-formation in India is a process of imitation of the higher by the lower" (p. 20)—can be seen as being substantiated to some extent by M. N. Srinivas's concept of Sanskritization as a social fact indeed. Sanskritization seems to obliquely prove the productive logic of caste through the imitation of the Brahmin; as an aside, it may be mentioned here, that M. N. Srinivas referring to Polish-American anthropologist Milton Borah Singer, makes note of the fact that there isn't just one model but at least four models of Sanskritization that could be seen to exist.

Whatever may be the case, Srinivas's Sanskritization is not a non-existent reality, it is indeed a socio-cultural process (the very process that Ambedkar had observed, decades before Srinivas, to a factor in the production of empirical castes in the first place).

The article is therefore not in denial of M. N. Srinivas's sociological brilliance in giving us the concept of Sanskritization. What it argues instead is, the political efficacy of the process (of Sanskritization) in keeping the ideological order of caste alive—a central point being the essence of Brahminhood and its seductive power. Problems that are attendant upon it as far as a critique of caste, or anti-caste political commitment is concerned are brought in here. Consequently, it is argued that there is an inherent paradox in Sanskritization as a concept of social mobility; while it appears to stand for upward ascendancy, the very substance of it exposes the falsity of the concept of advancement as understood therein, and even justifies the principle of caste, a principle that Ambedkar held as informing forms of inequality.

Caste and Varna: Ambedkar and Srinivas

M. N. Srinivas' separation of the varna model from that of caste-system on grounds of empirical socio-economic reality of interactions among various castes is common to anthropological studies on caste that also insist on a separation of varna (the philosophy of *chaturvarna*) from caste—which the anthropologist understands most faithfully as a socio-economic system having little in common with the varna framework. Morton Klass in his work *Caste: The Emergence of the South Asian Social System* (1993) categorically leaves out varna from denoting the same meaning as that of caste. Varnas are not castes because they are not endogamous bodies, they are not occupationally distinct, they lack organisational structure and there is not even present any mutually acceptable definition of varna. In other words, varnas do not represent any formal structure or organisation, neither do they show any unity or leadership or control over its members (Klass, 1993, p. 89). Varna is therefore not of any practical use. Even caste for Klass who terms it as “human aggregations” isn't held as the smallest indivisible endogamous unit. Following Adrian Mayer, Klass arrives at the conclusion that caste is not an undifferentiated indivisible endogamous body or group unlike the common man or an outsider's perception to be so. “Caste is nothing but a category of sub-caste, rather than a group in its own right” (Mayer, 1970, p. 5, qtd in Klass, 1993, p. 91). Morton Klass quotes Mayer at length:

For though caste is endogamous, the smallest endogamous units are the subcastes. Again, the caste as a whole has no mechanism for settling disputes, adjusting the status of members etc. Only in relation with other castes the caste is a significant unit. For people of other castes do not, as a rule, regard caste as sum of the constituent sub-castes but all of it as an undifferentiated group. (Mayer, 1970, p. 5; qtd in Klass, 1993, p. 91)

Both 'varna' and 'caste' are terms that do not represent faithfully the empirical existence of groups who are the smallest endogamous units. Even though Mayer following G.S Ghurye for whom sub-castes formed the real sociological component otherwise called

caste, calls this smallest endogamous unit sub-caste; Klass vies for a more discreet term instead of sub-caste, for according to Klass, it is not sub- anything but rather it is the unit of endogamy, organisation, and political control. Klass terms this basic socio-political unit in the South Asian social system as ‘marriage circle’.

In structural terms, at the empirical level while this is an attempt to clarify the system of caste and how it plays out in everyday form—that is, it is in practical essence, a system of different sub-castes with their own occupational specifications and marital rules, the analysis also somewhat reveals what it argues against: that this is not how people generally think of caste. They do not regard it in terms of subcastes but rather see it as an undifferentiated whole. This tells us a lot about what human perception has to do with maintaining and distributing castes in terms of an hierarchical arrangement with some occupying ritually, socially and politically ‘low’ positions and some ritually, socially and politically ‘high’ positions.

While Morton Klass’s analysis about the smallest endogamous unit of ‘marriage-circle’ in explaining the origin of caste-system in India may be anthropologically correct, it fails to or does not choose to engage with the implications of a common man’s perception of caste as undifferentiated group that goes a long way in lending to caste system in India an overall notion of naturalness that is difficult to dispel. If we were to address notions of inequality that caste by principle and practice gives rise to among people, we cannot overlook or choose to theoretically disengage ourselves with the implication of the conclusive part of Mayer’s observation. It is to this notion or the common man’s perception of caste, besides its structural elements, whether observable at the empirical level as “sub-caste” (G.S. Ghurye, 1950; Adrian Mayer,1970) or “marriage circle” (Morton Klass, 1993) that it is argued here the final inefficacy of a varna-caste separation (M. N. Srinivas, 2005) in (an Ambedkarite-Gramscian) critique of caste. It is argued here that Sanskritization has been, among many other strategies, a soft appropriation strategy by caste dominant classes to maintain a power structure whereby sanctioning authority of the social shall always remain with these classes. Sanskritization is regressive to the extent that it is antithetical to any subaltern political initiative against caste (Gramsci, 1996).

If we go back to Srinivas’s thesis, we will see that one of the primary methodological assumptions that Srinivas makes with regard to his formulation of Sanskritization and its relation to mobility depends on his separation between the varna model and the empirical plurality of caste. This distinguishment is logically inconsistent and flawed. It seems, in Srinivasian mobility, caste is understood as merely materialistic and that the expression of caste has to do only with its material expression; that caste is what an occupation is. And therefore, with positional change (read occupation and other customs/habits) there follows a mobility. This is slightly problematic since it fails to see how caste is inseparably linked with the concept of varna. It is the varna model that enables caste to become symbolic. Had caste only been a material phenomenon, movement in terms of advancement, a more equal standing would have been possible. On the contrary, in a Sanskritized movement, one caste moves from one position to another but the previous place does not wither away in terms of its notional existence; as a consequence of advancement, the previous position does not suffer any natural

death. The conceptual/notional facticity of caste remains. This notional facticity of caste is at the core of the varna model. Srinivas's separation of varna from caste does not logically stand as it is varna that has rendered the materiality of caste into a symbolic phenomenon in the first place, hence there is a continuous unfolding of different castes or desires.

In fact, caste is born to give expression to the symbolic. Every time a new caste is born it validates the idea of the varna model, it sustains the varna theory. On the complex question of caste's relation to varna, Ambedkar offers an insightful, logically sustainable argument. Ambedkar would argue in "Annihilation of Caste" that caste and varna are inseparable; and it is precisely the logical untenability of a varna model in practical world, that we see the birth of caste. Although the two theories posit a difference, varna being a theory of worth, and caste, a theory of birth, Ambedkar asserts that in the practical domain it is logically impossible to sustain this difference other than having the system of castes operative. Reorganization of Hindu society, according to Ambedkar, on the basis of *chaturvarna* is philosophically problematic as well as logically untenable. In "Annihilation of Caste", Ambedkar argues the fact that the principle underlying *chaturvarna* is the principle of worth instead of birth as it is the case for caste, it becomes a matter of practical difficulty to classify people according to the demands of *chaturvarna*.

Ambedkar says in "Annihilation of Caste", "How are you going to compel people who have acquired higher status based on birth, without reference to their worth, to vacate their status?" (1989, p. 59) For this would mean to reduce the numerous different castes, based on birth, to the four varnas, based on worth, which is no doubt a difficult proposition. Another reason *chaturvarna* is problematic is its method of presupposing classification of people into four different classes, for this would mean a forced 'lumping of individuals into a few sharply marked off classes' (ibid., p. 60) completely obliterating the recognition that homo-sapiens are beings of infinite possibilities. The fact that the original ideal of four divisions of classes of people according to their distinct calling has already evolved into thousands of castes shows that *chaturvarna* has no other way except for denigrating into caste system.

From this analysis it follows, that caste needs to be conceptualised in terms of both the singular and the plural. Singular caste explains the symbolic/ the ideological and plural castes explains the materiality of various different castes, all interacting within a single system of castes that is varna. That is the reason that with positional change, a former caste doesn't wither away in the onslaught of the new, rather the former becomes a newly vacant space for someone 'lower' to occupy and the system of place change continues to a never-ending infinite regress.

Sanskritized Dalit contra Political Dalit

One of the most original contributions to the understanding of the complexity of caste is Ambedkar's recognition of caste as not merely an isolated unit but as that which is part of a larger system or concept. His analysis of the genesis and development of caste shows that at the heart of caste is a model that is pre-determined, pre-destined,

held on to its place by various ways—at the heart of which lies the Brahmin in its glorifying essence of Brahminhood. The Sanskritized Hindu proceeds towards becoming, or at least trying to become Brahmin and in the process inculcates the values of Brahminhood. Therefore, Srinivas's Sanskritised Hindu instead of being a manifest proof of the caste-transcended existence becomes rather a repository of the ideological body of caste/varna. This invests with the Sanskritised Hindu a political power/agency necessary to maintain the larger socio-cultural hegemony of the caste-dominant. The Sanskritized Hindu is a requisite for a stable socio-political order that ultimately believes in the perfection of the Brahmin. The Sanskritized Hindu is therefore a political resolution to the problem of lower castes' growing political struggle and their claim to a greater share of autonomous political representation/participation, for the Sanskritized Hindu offers itself as a direct antithesis to the radically polemical Ambedkarite Other. Both the process of governmentalization as well as Sanskritization of the 'low caste' contribute to a corresponding thinning out of a minimum political consciousness required to question caste in society (Guru, 2010).

A Sanskritized scheduled caste is less a political threat, is more the appropriated Other and not the radical Other who confronts caste. It is a more comfortable proposition as far as the liberal template of Hinduism is concerned. The liberal template of Hinduism is sustained to neutralize any political initiative/articulation by the non-upper caste or caste subaltern. I would like to refer to Antonio Gramsci here, his note in Notebook 25, "...the history of subaltern classes is necessarily fragmented and episodic; in the activity of these classes there is, undoubtedly, a tendency towards unification, albeit in provisional stages. This tendency, however, is continuously broken up by the actions of the dominant groups... . Subaltern groups [read Dalit¹] are always subject to the initiative of the dominant groups, even when they rise up and rebel." (qtd in Buttigieg, 2013, p. 36).

Gopal Guru in his essay "Social Justice" in *Oxford Companion to Politics* argues that Sanskritisation maintains the hierarchical social precisely because it does not strive to alter what Guru explains as the hierarchical arrangement of worth. The essential question, according to Guru, that one may raise here is whether Sanskritization allows for any ethical capacity for equal recognition. It is argued following Guru that Sanskritisation implies for the truth of caste, which otherwise, in the least, is an arbitrary concept, and at best, a socio-cultural model that in the final instance cultivates an essentialised Brahminhood.

There is another way in which Sanskritization effectively neutralizes even residual political impulses among the caste subalterns, this way is more deceptive than the way Guru discusses. This may be referred to as the principle of dissemination, whereby the dominant (read caste dominant here) has for itself "a formidable array of institutional

¹Dalit as a term is understood here as a consolidated formation of political consciousness of the 'lower-castes'/ caste subalterns against the ideology of caste; It has emerged from caste radicals' active critique of the irrational form of social organisation that is caste (Rao 2010). Therefore, Dalit is a politico-ethical result of centuries of protest, resistance, movement and cultural expression against the caste-system in the Indian subcontinent (Omvedt 1994; Zelliott 2001). Dalit is how politically conscious caste subalterns like/choose to identify themselves as/with (Tharu and Satyanarayana, 2013).

and cultural mechanisms that enable it directly and indirectly to disseminate its worldview, inculcates its values, and mould public opinion” (Buttigieg, 2013, p. 38). Sanskritization is one such cultural mechanism that inculcates in the caste subaltern a consent in the ideology of caste, so that the condition of caste subalternity is hardly recognised and the process to overcome the same gets delayed or never appears important. It is not that the excluded (caste subaltern) is absolutely excluded. Rather it is the principle of exclusion that is given to be cherished by all. So, by sanskritizing themselves, the subject becomes ‘an excluded who intends to exclude the other’. In other words, the twin principles of Brahminhood as an essentialised value, and the seductive power of the principle of exclusion itself. The apolitical is kept apolitical by consensus (a mutually agreed principle of caste/ brahminism), consent, and never by repression, coercion or control. The Gramscian method for a subaltern politics would emphasize on the need for recognition of such ideological fronts, say Sanskritization, and advocate a ‘war of position’ instead of a frontal attack against the (caste) power of the dominant (Buttigieg, 2013, p. 38).

What is proposed here is that a Sanskritized Dalit hurts the political Dalit. If Sanskritization, following Srinivas, is a cultural factor that helps bridge the gap between secular and ritual rank legitimising the role of Brahmin, it is equally true that in no way does Sanskritization cause the ritual rank of the Brahmin to disappear altogether. The castes who are “pushing and jostling in the attempt to get ahead” (Srinivas, 2005: 4), it is not merely an economic position that one is talking about but a social position, social identity, identity of the Brahmin. This in itself speaks volumes about the association of a social identity with that of the highest/ the best/ the supreme/ the divine and it goes on. Interestingly all castes are found jostling together to finally occupy the position of the Brahmin. If this be the implication, is it not so that in the process we end up privileging Brahminhood?

Sanskritization in its philosophic core can be seen as that which ultimately sustains the ritual power of the Brahmin. A radical critique of Sanskritization will therefore involve a critique against the ritual power of Brahmin: the ritual power of Brahmin is sustained/ made sustainable at the cost of ‘ritual disability of the Dalit’. The ritual-temporal power of the Brahmin enables her as “pure Untouchable” (Sarrukkai, 2012) who becomes an object of desire/aspiration exuding seductive power. The “pure Untouchable” is in contrast with the impure Untouchable (Dalit)—the object to be maintained at a distance from the pure Untouchable thereby making it an object of derision or repulsion; simultaneously instilling in them the tendency to escape caste identity, and advance in the caste social by adopting a self-imposed distancing from one’s own caste identity.

This is problematic because it works on the principle of negation, vulnerability, susceptibility—rendering it a taboo with the caste subaltern’s own identity becoming awkward, unaddressed, that which cannot be talked about in fear of identification. One’s own identity becomes a phenomenon that continues to haunt. The more a member of the oppressed caste community renders her identity invisible, the more socially acceptable she becomes, the more she can move with comfort. In a caste social therefore, a ‘low’ caste individual’s comfort is contingent upon hiding her caste

identity. Gopal Guru terms this as “compulsive Sanskritization”. With reference to the problem of Scheduled Castes’ accommodation in upper caste localities like Nipani in Karnataka and Kohlapur in Maharashtra, Gopal Guru in “Reservations and the Sanskritization of Scheduled Castes: Some Theoretical Aspects” says,

In these towns there are instances where the Scheduled Caste persons have tried to avoid identification of their castes or to hide it altogether or falsify it... the falsification of caste helps them to overcome the psychological problem of identifying themselves as Scheduled Caste. (Guru, 2014, p. 160)

The ‘compulsive Sanskritization’ comes at a political cost for the Dalit: it robs the latter of any impulse to revolt or form a collective identity of protest or aspire to political power, interfering permanently with the Gramscian political: that any revolutionary impulse belongs to the socially, culturally dominant even for causes of subaltern interests.

Sanskritization therefore effectively neutralizes the opposition which otherwise could have been engineered towards effective political difference of the caste subaltern from the caste dominant, an articulation of which would be leading to a more balanced state of affairs. An ensuing dialectic would at least bring the oppositional parties into a space of negotiation, exchange, inter-dependence. However, with Sanskritization, it is ensured that the principle of caste be dispersed and distributed among its carriers and the value hierarchised. And because the principle is distributed among all that it resists a catastrophe of any kind, which would otherwise be inevitable for the emergence of changed order, the birth of the new: casteless society/ “annihilation of caste”. On the one end of the spectrum of this hierarchical arrangement of values, you have Brahminhood/ the terrestrial version of which is a ‘true Brahmin’, and on the other end, you have the Untouchable/ removed from Brahminhood. Sanskritization is adopted so as to move towards one end from another. And in its process, effectively ruins every revolutionary potential of the dialectical.

Conclusion: Sanskritization, a caste concept

It is in this context therefore that one argues for an understanding of the process of Sanskritization in terms of a conceptual birth. Srinivas posits Sanskritization as a social fact, which it undeniably is, but here I am stretching it further to argue about Sanskritization as a conceptual fact. As a concept, Sanskritization helps sustain and in the final instance project the totality of caste. This can be understood by another point; despite caste’s practical unevenness, despite its hierarchical difference, despite what Ambedkar terms as graded inequality of caste, there is never produced a dialectical situation whereby instead of accepting to the principles of caste one would be naturally revolting. Thus, despite every condition available for a dialectical to emerge, with respect to caste, this falls flat. Rather what we find instead is Sanskritization, a constant movement towards the essence/ core of caste; formerly explained as Brahminhood: cult of exclusivity (for what else justifies the sacred thread of the male brahmin other than a claim to exclusivity?).

Sanskritization precisely because it renders the concept of dialectic ineffectual, resists the dialectic, exposes a situation which is perfectly independent of dialectic, that it is a concept, more precisely, a caste concept. By concept I mean here, the organising principle of our everyday particular chaotic perceptions as well as perceptive selves. Caste, as a matter of fact, is so complex dissipated a phenomenon (for lack of a better word) that too with marked gradations, changes, adjustments; and following Srinivas, an uneven development, is, at the same time a phenomenon that is grasped as an undying, eternal as it were, total fact held together by such enabling concepts like Sanskritization.

If Marx's principle of dialectic as a necessary means to change/ revolution were to be believed, it can be said that Sanskritization blunts every possibility of a dialectic to take shape from the given inequalities of caste. Without dialectic of any sort, there can be no hope for a politics to emerge. Let alone a radical anti-caste politics. Conversely, if Ambedkar's efforts to ameliorating the inequalities produced by caste are considered, it will be seen, that Ambedkar resists every form of Sanskritization (anachronistic use of term here, but to refute Hinduism in every possible way, to the final effort of converting into another religion may be said as his attempt at de-Sanskritization), and that his resistance was geared towards paving a society based on equality and reached through difference.

What is insisted here, is the necessity for a political reading of Sanskritization; Sanskritization is suggested here as one of the potent techniques of cultural power (this is obviously inspired by Foucault's phrasing 'techniques of power') to maintaining an apparently neutral political stance over the question of unequal sharing of worth and resources deployed not by any one source of power centre but dissipated as a collective living (cultural) principle among those claiming membership to the Hindu community. It is very naturally desired for. And naturally adopted too. It is seductive in its own way. This brings it closer to the kernel point of caste system that Ambedkar gave a glimpse of in "Castes in India": namely, Brahminhood. Ambedkar observed,

The Brahmin is a semi-god and very nearly a demi-god. He sets up a mode and moulds the rest. His prestige is unquestionable and is the fountain head of bliss and good. Can such a being, idolised by scriptures and venerated by the priest-ridden multitude, fail to project his personality on the suppliant humanity? Why, if the story be true, he is believed to be the very end of creation. Such a creature is worthy of more than mere imitation, but *at least* of imitation; and if he lives in an endogamous enclosure, should not the rest follow his example? (Ambedkar, 1989, p. 19, emphasis mine)

Soumyabrata Chaudhury in his essay "Dalit: Elements of a Sentence-to-Come" makes a further exposition of Ambedkar's theory and subsequently points to the rhetorical line of inflection as part of this cult making of Brahminhood. Following Chaudhury's analysis, it is further contended that Sanskritization is a rhetorical instrument through which the idea of Brahmin prevails and gets consummated by others. Some of the popular memes making rounds in the manner of slogan posters as an instance of the ideological power

of the idea of a Brahmin may be considered: “Brahmin is Not a Caste, It is a Brand” or “Hell Yeah I am a Brahmin and We keep Calm!!!” (keepcalm.com)

This is what may be called the cultural politics to maintaining a caste(-ist) ideology in a society. The more culturally pervasive a dominant powerful concept will be, the less politically aware the subalterns will become, and an increasing marginalisation of the subaltern bordering the farthest will take place. Sanskritization may be read as having a productivity in terms of upholding Caste. In the words of Foucault, an instrument of the power of Caste Ideology, a viable social productive apparatus (Foucault, 2002); which determines or constitutes individuals as subjects of Caste, by fashioning them into a set of behavioural codes, everyday rituals, cultural modes/ways of legitimizing interpersonal relations like marriages, rice-eating ceremony of the child, a paraphernalia of ritualistic ordeals.

Therefore, an entire system through which caste gets foregrounded on an everyday basis. A way to mould, shape, fashion, acclimatize, normalize and finally to naturalize in an irreversible manner. It is therefore not so much, in fact not at all, that M. N. Srinivas’s powerful account of the sociological phenomenon that is Sanskritization is disagreed with, but rather it is to the implications that such a process has for a caste-based society in furthering the exclusivity of different ideological signposts of caste, one being Brahminism, and the theory that Sanskritization results in integration and mobility in an otherwise divided society, that it becomes imperative to critique the process from a political subaltern’s (Dalit point of view) and analyse it as another trope in the dominant’s theoretical/ philosophical front (Gramsci, *PN2*: 52) and, consequently hold it as an object of (caste) subaltern criticism. For the implications, as often taken to be, are nowhere near mobility, fluidity, movement, or the extended idea of equality. The implications are rather these former categories’ clear opposites. Sanskritization ensures the conditions (one being the Sanskritization of the political Dalit) for the continuity, sustenance, maintenance, legitimacy and common sensical truth of the caste system.

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