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Q4(b)

How is process of tribe-caste continuum different from Sanskritization? Comment

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2016 · Anthropology GS 2 · 15 marks · Caste system in India

3.2 Caste system in India-Structure and characteristics, Varna and caste, Theories of origin of caste system, Dominant caste, Caste mobility, Future of caste system, Jajmani system. Tribe-caste continuum.

Core demand of the question

- How is process of tribe-caste continuum different from Sanskritization? Comment
- Keep the answer to a 15-mark length of about 200 words

Revision summary

The continuum maps groups between tribe and caste poles.

Sanskritisation is Srinivas's copy of high-caste Hindu style.

Movement along the continuum can also be wage, church, or law.

ST lists and FRA may hold the tribal pole despite Hindu rites.

The terms are related, not interchangeable.

Introduction

The tribe-caste continuum is a model of where a group sits between clan community and ranked jati. Sanskritisation is one cultural process that can move a group along that line.

Body

Two different tools

- **Continuum, in Ghurye, Bose, and Bailey, is a map of social types:** tribe at one pole, caste at the other.
- **Sanskritisation, in M. N. Srinivas,** is imitation of a locally high Hindu style to claim rank.
- A group can sit mid-continuum without Sanskritising, for example by taking a mine wage or a church.

How they relate

- **Sanskritisation is a common engine of movement toward the caste pole:** temple, vegetarian public, and marriage rules.
- Continuum also includes land loss, **Fifth Schedule** listing, and political ST identity, which may freeze the tribal pole even when rites look Hindu.

Comment

- Treating them as synonyms hides law. FRA claimants may Sanskritise and still need a tribal pole.

- **Elwin** feared Sanskritisation as women's loss. He still used a distinct-tribe pole, not only a continuum walk.
- **Difference:** one is a path of style; the other is a range of structures.

Flow diagram

Tribe-caste continuum -> Structural range

Sanskritisation -> Style copy

Sanskritisation -> Tribe-caste continuum

Conclusion

Sanskritisation is a cultural mobility process. The tribe-caste continuum is a structural range. The first may feed the second; it does not equal it.

Facts & figures

M. N. Srinivas

Defined Sanskritisation as ritual-style mobility, mainly among jatis.

G. S. Ghurye

Placed tribes on a Hindu-caste path, a continuum without Srinivas's term.

F. G. Bailey

Used tribe-caste as connected political economies.

FRA 2006

Shows why a legal tribal pole can survive cultural Hinduisation.

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