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Q1(a)

Elaborate Srinivas's views on religion and society among the Coorgs

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2019 · Sociology GS 2 · 10 marks · Religion and Society

Religion and Society: Religious communities in India; Problems of religious minorities.

Core demand of the question

- Elaborate Srinivas's views on **religion and society among the Coorgs**
- Keep the note to a 10-mark length

Revision summary

Srinivas studied Coorg religion as observed social structure.

The **okka** and ancestor cult knit kin and land.

Hinduism appears as graded ritual interaction, not a church of equals.

Sanskritization and local dominance already organise prestige.

The monograph founds his later **field view** of Indian society.

Introduction

M. N. Srinivas's **Religion and Society among the Coorgs** of South India treats religion as social structure, not as private belief. Among Coorgs, cult, kin, and caste make one living system.

Body

Field view of religion

- Srinivas refused an Indological India of texts alone. Coorg ritual is observed in the **okka**, the ancestral house, and the village.
- **Religion here is solidarity:** ancestor worship, festivals, and purity rules knit the joint family and rank Coorgs against neighbours.
- Structure is the network of groups. Function is what a rite does for order, as a funeral or harvest rite renews the **okka**.

Caste, Hinduism, and the Coorgs

- Coorgs appear as a locally dominant landed group whose ritual style is both distinctive and tied to wider Hindu practice.
- **Sanskritization is already in view:** prestige comes from copying a higher local model while remaining inside caste.
- Temples, priests, and pollution rules show Hinduism as graded interaction, not as one church of equal believers.

Method

- **The Coorg monograph is the seed of Srinivas's later Rampura tools:** field view, dominant caste, and change inside structure.
- A. R. Desai would still say harmony language underplays class on the land.

Flow diagram

Coorg field -> Okka ancestor cult
Okka ancestor cult -> Religion as solidarity
Religion as solidarity -> Sanskritization caste rank

Conclusion

- **For Srinivas, Coorg religion is society in ritual form:** okka, ancestor, and caste rank. The study founded a field sociology of Hinduism as lived relations, not as a book of doctrines.

Facts & figures

Okka

The Coorg patrilineal joint-family house that is the unit of ancestor cult and property.

Religion and Society among the Coorgs

Srinivas's 1952 monograph that made ritual a map of social structure.

Field view

India as lived relations, against a book view of sacred texts alone.

Sanskritization

Claiming higher rank by copying a locally prestigious ritual style while staying inside caste.

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