

1. Details of Module and its Structure

Module Detail	
Subject Name	Sociology
Paper Name	Sociology of India
Module Name/Title	Understanding modernity in India
Pre-requisites	Basic understanding of the Indian society in general and caste system in particular.
Objectives	To understand the issues and processes of social change in India
Keywords	Sanskritization, Brahminization, Dominant caste, Westernization, Modernization

Structure of Module / Syllabus of a module (Define Topic / Sub-topic of module)

2. Sanskritization	2.1 Sanskritization Versus Brahminization, 2.2 Locally Dominant Caste
3. Westernization	3.1 Modernization Versus Westernization, 3.2 Westernization and Sanskritization

2. Development Team

Role	Name	Affiliation
Principal Investigator	Sujata Patel	Professor, Department of Sociology, University of Hyderabad
Paper Coordinator	Anurekha Chari Wagh	Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, Savitribai Phule Pune University
Content Writer/Author (CW)	Chandan Kumar Sharma	Professor, Department of Sociology, Tezpur University
Content Reviewer (CR)	Anurekha Chari Wagh	Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, Savitribai Phule Pune University
Language Editor (LE)	Erika Mascarenas	Senior English Teacher, Kendriya Vidyalaya, Pune

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Introduction

2. Sanskritization

2.1 Sanskritization Versus Brahminization

2.2 Locally Dominant Caste

3. Westernization

3.1 Modernization Versus Westernization

3.2 Westernization and Sanskritization

4. Conclusion

5. Summary

1. INTRODUCTION

India is a country with considerable geographical, social and cultural diversity. This makes it indeed a challenging task to explain and theorize the multi-dimensional, diverse social realities in India. It is even more challenging to grapple with the issues and processes of social change in the country. Nevertheless, different concepts and approaches have been put forth to the study the social realities and the processes of social change in India. 'Sanskritization' and 'Westernization' are two such concepts propounded by M. N. Srinivas, the doyen of Indian sociologists to "explain some features of religious, cultural, and social change in India" (1985: 1). Both the terms, apparently opposite to each other, have generated much debates and discussions highlighting their strengths, weaknesses, and above all, interrelationship. This essay provides a general outline of these concepts, their interrelations and limitations.

2. SANSKRITIZATION

The term 'sanskritization' was first used in Srinivas's work *Religion and Society among the Coorgs of South India* (1952). Sanskritization is used to explain the process of upward mobility within the Hindu caste system. According to Srinivas, "(T)he caste system is far from a rigid system in which the position of each component caste is fixed for all time. Movement has always been possible, and especially so in the middle regions of the hierarchy. A low caste was able, in a generation or two, to rise to a higher position in the hierarchy by adopting vegetarianism and teetotalism, and by Sanskritizing its ritual and pantheon. In short, it took over, as far as possible, the customs, rites, and beliefs of the Brahmins, and the adoption of the Brahminic way of life by a low caste seems to have been frequent, though theoretically forbidden. This process has been called 'Sanskritization'...in preference to 'Brahminization', as certain Vedic rites are confined to the Brahmins and the two other 'twice-born' castes" (1952: 32).

2.1 Sanskritization Versus Brahminization

It is to be noted that Srinivas first used the term Brahminization instead of Sankritization to explain the process of social adoption of the way of life of the upper castes by the lower castes. He identified Sanskritization with imitation of the Brahminical customs and manners by the lower castes. Srinivas presumed that the Brahmins were the sole model of emulation for the sanskritizing groups. However, subsequently he abandoned the term for Sanskritization on account of a number of reasons and defined

it as “the process by which a ‘low’ Hindu caste, or tribal or other group, changes its customs, ritual, ideology, and way of life in the direction of a high, and frequently, ‘twice-born’ caste. Generally such changes are followed by a claim to a higher position in the caste hierarchy than that traditionally conceded to the claimant caste by the local community” (Srinivas 1966/77: 6).

There are several reasons which persuaded Srinivas to redefine the above process of caste mobility: Firstly, he found that “Brahminization is subsumed under the wider process of Sanskritization” (1962/1989: 42). However, he also points out that the two may be at variance with each other at times. For example, though Sanskritization necessitates renunciation of certain habits and customs on the part of the sanskritizing groups such as drinking liquor, eating beef and pork, and so on, the Brahmins in the Vedic period drank *soma*, an alcoholic drink, ate beef, and offered blood sacrifices which were given up in post-Vedic times. Though the Brahmins today, by and large, are vegetarians, there are non-vegetarian Brahmins as well. The Assamese, Bengali, Kashmiri, Maithili, Oriya and Saraswat Brahmins eat non-vegetarian food. The Brahmins are characterized by many other regional variations suggesting that they can not be treated as a homogeneous group throughout India with respect to their habits and customs. Therefore, if the term Brahminization was used it would have been necessary to specify which particular Brahmin group was used as the reference group. Besides, as the Brahmins are also undergoing various changes over time in the cultural domain it would have been further necessary to specify at which particular period of its history a particular Brahmin group is referred to as a model for Sanskritization.

Secondly, the agents of Sanskritization are not always the Brahmins. In fact, there was prohibition on the non-twice-born castes from following the customs and rites of the Brahmins, and it is not unreasonable to suppose that the Brahmins were responsible for this. On the other hand, there were non-Brahmin agents of Sanskritization as well. The Lingayats of South India, for example, have been a powerful force for Sanskritization of several low castes of Karnataka. Though founded by a Brahmin named Basava in the 12th century, the Lingayat movement was anti-Brahminical in tone and spirit drawing a large number of followers from the lower castes. In fact, the Lingayats of Mysore claim equality with Brahmins, and the more orthodox of them do not accept food cooked or handled by Brahmins (Srinivas 1962/89: 43).

Srinivas cites the example of the Smiths of South India to illustrate his point from another angle. The Smiths who call themselves Vishwakarma Brahmins, wear sacred thread and have their rituals Sanskritized. Although some of them still continue to eat non-vegetarian food and drink alcohol, the

entire community is tread as one belonging to Left-hand division of castes and “no castes belonging to the Right-hand division, including the Holeyas (Untouchables), will eat or drink water touched by them. Until recently they suffered from a number of disabilities: they were allowed to celebrate their weddings only in villages in which there was a temple to their caste-deity Kali...Normally Sanskritization enables a caste to obtain a higher position in the hierarchy. But in the case of the Smiths it seems to have resulted only in their drawing upon themselves the wrath of all the other castes” (Srinivas 1962/89: 43).

There are many other such examples. What is clear from the above is that Sanskritization as a process of social mobility cannot be explained only with the help of the Brahminical model. There can be other models (Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra) as well depending on the context. In fact, Srinivas also highlights the fact that the Brahmin claim to supremacy was contested by the Kshatriyas on various occasions. Citing G.S. Ghurye, he explains how early Jain and Buddhist literatures asserted the pre-eminent position of the Kshatriyas in the caste hierarchy (1966/77: 23-4).

Srinivas also draws on the works of anthropologists D. F. Pocock and Milton Singer to justify his contention. Pocock pointed out to the existence of a Kshatriya model of Sanskritization in addition to a Brahminical model (Srinivas 1966/77: 7-8). Milton Singer states that there exist not one or two models of Sanskritization but three if not four (Srinivas 1966/77: 8). Srinivas quotes Singer: “The local version (of Sanskrit Hinduism) may use the four *varna* labels--Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra—the defining content of these labels varies with locality and needs to be empirically determined for any particular locality. It has also been discovered that the relative prestige and rank of these different *varnas* tend to vary with locality, time and group. In many areas, e.g., the kingly or martial, life-style has a rank equal with or sometimes higher than that of the Brahmin. Groups in these areas who wish to improve their status do so by adopting some of the stigmata of the Rajput life-style, i.e., by “Rajputizing” their way of life (Sinha). Even the life-styles of the merchant and peasant have been taken as models in localities where these groups are dominant” (ibid).

Yogendra Singh theorizes this situation when he states that there are two levels of meanings which are implicit in the concept of Sanskritization. These two levels may be described as ‘historical specific’ and ‘contextual specific’ connotations of Sanskritization. He writes, “(I)n historical specific sense, Sanskritization refers to those processes in Indian history which led to changes in the status of various castes, its leadership or its cultural patterns in different periods of history. It is indicative of an endogenous source of social change in the broad historical spectrum of India. In contextual specific

sense, however, Sanskritization denotes contemporaneous processes of cultural imitation of upper castes by lower castes or subcastes, in different parts of India. The nature of Sanskritization of this type is by no means uniform as the content of cultural norms or customs being imitated may vary from Sanskritic or Hindu traditional forms to the tribal and even Islamic patterns.” (1996: 6-7)

The contextual process of Sanskritization is illustrated by various studies undertaken in different contexts throughout India. These studies show that at many places the lower castes imitate the customs of other non-Brahmin castes as mentioned above. In some exceptional cases, even the higher castes have been found imitating the tribal ways which may be described as the process of ‘tribalization’. In some other contexts, even Muslim cultural model is found to be emulated by both the upper as well as lower castes.

2.2 Locally Dominant Caste

Closely associated with Srinivas’ concept of Sanskritization is the concept locally dominant caste. It is the locally dominant caste, which by dint of its landed property, numerical strength, and high position in the local hierarchy wield significant influence in a particular area (1966/77: 10). Such a locally dominant caste (sometimes there may be more than one such caste in a locality) becomes the reference group for the marginal groups in the region. Srinivas, however, mentions that occasionally we find castes which enjoyed political and economic power but were not rated high in ritual ranking. However, even in such cases, Sanskritization occurred sooner or later as without it the claim to a higher position was not effective. Thus, the three axes of power in the caste system are the ritual, the economic, and the political ones, and the possession of power in any one sphere usually leads to the acquisition of power in the other two. This does not mean, however, that inconsistencies do not occur – when a wealthy caste is seen in low ritual position and contrarily, a caste with high ritual position is poor (1962/1989: 45).

However, it is not that there had been no obstacles in the way of the lower castes emulating the life styles of the higher castes. The locally dominant caste or the king of a region was often hostile to the process of the lower caste’s taking over of the customs and rites of the higher castes. Yet, Brahminical customs and way of life managed to spread not only among all Hindus but also among some outlying tribes (Srinivas 1962/89: 44). Srinivas says that this happened because in the hierarchically stratified Hindu society each group tries to pass for a higher group. And the best way of staking a claim to a higher position is to adopt the customs and way of life of a higher caste (ibid).

Srinivas makes it clear that Sanskritization does not automatically result in the achievement of a higher status for the group. The latter must lay a claim to belong to a particular Varna. Besides, the concerned group must alter their customs, diet, and the way of life suitably, and if there are any inconsistencies in its claim, they must explain these inconsistencies by inventing an appropriate myth. Further, the group must be content to wait an indefinite period, and during this period it must maintain a continuous pressure regarding its claims. Before a claim is accepted by other castes, usually a generation or two must pass (1962/89: 57).

It is also important to note that despite the prevalence of different models of Sanskritization depending on which caste is the locally dominant one, Srinivas holds that if the locally dominating caste is the Brahmins, the “Sanskritization process will probably be quicker and Brahminical values will spread, whereas if the dominating caste is a local Kshatriya or Vaishya caste, Sanskritization will be slower, and the values will not be Brahminical” (1962/89: 62). He even speaks of the possibility of de-Sanskritization of the imitating castes if the local dominant group is non-Sanskritic or less-Sanskritic ones (ibid).

3. WESTERNIZATION

Westernization refers to the changes brought about as a consequence of the contact with western culture, particularly the British. Srinivas first used the concept in an essay titled “A Note on Sanskritization and Westernization” in the journal *Far Eastern Quarterly* in 1956 which was subsequently included in his book, *Caste in Modern India* (1962). Though there had been other western groups such as the Portuguese, the Dutch, and the French to India who had influenced the Indian society and culture, none had the same scale of influence as the British, precisely because of the fact that the latter had ruled almost all over India for a period of two hundred years. Their rule produced radical and lasting changes in Indian society and culture. They brought with them new technology, institutions, knowledge, beliefs, and values which often went against the traditional Indian institutions, values and practices. For example, the British judicial system based on the principle of equality went directly against the traditional system of law based on status and hierarchy. According to Srinivas, Westernization in India occurred at three levels: ‘primary’, ‘secondary’, and ‘tertiary’. At the primary level, the link between the Western stimulus and the Indian response is simple and direct (1966/85: 56) which include “those who participated in Westernization process in a more immediate sense, who attended the new educational institutions, entered the professions, took up jobs in the bureaucracy, and engaged themselves in trade, commerce and industry in the big and developing towns” (ibid: 62) while

“a much larger number underwent Westernization in a secondary sense – for example, patients in the hospitals, litigants in law courts, and readers of newspapers and books in the Indian languages” (ibid). The tertiary level includes Indians belonging to the rural folk, lower castes, etc whose exposure to Westernization was remote and limited (ibid: 63-67).

3.1 Modernization Versus Westernization

Srinivas points out that ‘modernization’ is the popular term to explain the process of changes brought about in a non-Western country by contact, direct or indirect, with a Western country. In his celebrated book *The Passing of Traditional Society: Modernizing the Middle East* (1958), the US social scientist Daniel Lerner, for example, has preferred ‘modernization’ to Westernization. He argues that modernization includes a “disquieting positivist spirit” touching “public institutions as well as private aspirations”, a revolution in communications, wider economic and political participation and social mobility. Furthermore, modernization enables people to view “the social future as manipulable rather than ordained and their personal prospects in terms of achievement rather than heritage” (cited in Srinivas 1966/85: 50).

Srinivas also goes on to discuss as to why the term ‘Westernization’ is unacceptable to scholars like Lerner who finds that it is “too local a label” or “the model which is imitated may not be a Western country but Russia, Turkey, Japan, or India” (Srinivas 1966/85: 50). Another important reason for Lerner’s preference of “modernization to Westernization is that the educated people in the Middle East while wanting “the modern package” “reject the label ‘made in U.S.A.’ (or for that matter ‘made in USSR’) (Srinivas 1966/85: 50-51).

Srinivas, however, argues that it is difficult for a sociologist to be certain that a particular change is part of the process of modernization. He cites the US sociologist Robert Bellah who contends that “modernization involves the ‘rationalization of ends’ which means that the goal chosen by a society should be ‘rational’ and the subject of public discussion” (1966/85: 52). However, social goals are in the final analysis the expression of value preferences, and therefore, nonrational. The public discussion of goals is no guarantee to their rationality (ibid). Moreover, Srinivas does not find the value of humanitarianism ingrained into the concept of modernization.

According to Srinivas, unlike ‘modernization’, however, the term ‘Westernization’ is ethically neutral. As he writes, “(I)ts use does not carry the implication that it is good or bad, whereas modernization is

normally used in the sense that it is good” (1966/88: 52). But he still points out to other difficulties in Westernization. For example, not all the elements known to be part of the Western culture originated in the West. Many such elements were derived from China, India or the West Asia. Besides, the concept of ‘West’ is also not entirely homogenous. However, having acknowledged these problems, Srinivas preferred the term ‘Westernization’ which he described as “an inclusive, complex, and many-layered concept” (ibid: 52-53) taking cognizance of the intricate ways in which operates (ibid: 54-56). However, at the same time, he was conscious of the varied ways, often with opposite results (ibid: 55), in which Westernization operates. As he states, the “form and pace of Westernization...varied from one region to another, and from one section of population to another. For instance, if one group of people became Westernized in their dress, diet, manners, speech, sports and in the gadgets they used, while another absorbed Western science, knowledge, and literature remaining relatively free from Westernization in externals” (1962/89: 50-51). Considering all these, Srinivas emphasized on qualifying the term ‘Westernization’ by the prefixes ‘primary’, ‘secondary’ and ‘tertiary’ as mentioned above.

3.2 Westernization and Sanskritization

Sanskritization and Westernization share a very interesting relationship. Apparently these two processes of social change appear to be diametrically opposite to each other. However, a closer look gives a different picture of this relationship. As Srinivas says, “(T)he spread of Sanskrit theological ideas increased under British rule. The development of communications carried Sanskritization to areas previously inaccessible, and the spread of literacy carried it to groups very low in the caste hierarchy. Western technology – railways, the internal combustion engine, press, radio, and plane – has aided the spread of Sanskritization” (1962/89: 48-9). He cites the example of the tradition of *harikatha* (a traditional religious discourse of Karnataka where a priest reads and explains a religious story to his audience. Each story takes a few weeks to complete, the audience meeting for a few hours every evening. *Harikathas* may be held at any time, but important Hindu festivals are considered especially suitable for the purpose). The reach of the *harikathas* have spread much wider with the introduction of microphone for the narrator.

Similarly, Indian films have been also playing a very crucial role in the popularization of the stories from the epics and the *puranas*. Many films have also been made on the lives of saints such as Tukaram, Chaitanya, Mira, and others. Cheap and popular editions of these epics, *puranas*, etc became also widely available, thanks to the advent of the print industry (1962/89: 49). In the more modern context, the television in India has played an extraordinary role in the spread of the Sanskritic stories by broadcasting Hindu mythological soaps which have reached the nook and corner of the country. Srinivas further

emphasizes that the introduction of the Western political institution like the parliamentary democracy has also contributed to the increased Sanskritization of the country. Prohibition, a Sanskritic value, has been written into the Constitution of India (ibid).

Besides, it is seen that the castes which took the lead in undergoing Westernization was mostly from the upper echelons, particularly the Brahmins, of the traditional hierarchy. Even a cursory observation at the composition of the Indian officers, social reformers, educationists, lawyers, army men, traders, etc. right from the early colonial period testify to the fact as to how the upper castes, that is, the more Sanskritized castes, were frontrunners in seizing the opportunities offered by the colonial administration. It is also true, however, that in certain cases it appeared that the Brahmins were handicapped by some customs in the race for Westernization. For example, the Brahminic customs such as vegetarianism and teetotalism were in sharp contradiction with the English habits of eating beef and pork, drinking whisky and so on. As Srinivas writes, “while the Westernization of the Brahmins enabled the entire Hindu society to Westernize, the Brahmins themselves found some aspects of Westernization, such as the British diet, dress, and freedom from pollution, difficult to accept” (Srinivas 1962/89: 52). Nevertheless, that the Brahmins were the most Westernized caste group in India is beyond doubt and thus have been able to perpetuate their traditional hegemony.

However, Srinivas is also conscious of the conflict between Sanskritic and Western values. For example, he writes, “there appears to be a conflict between the world-view disclosed by the systematic application of scientific method to the various spheres of knowledge and the world-view of the traditional religions” (ibid). During the British rule, for example, a section of the Westernized Indian elites who hailed mainly from the upper castes, acquired customs and habits such as drinking alcoholic liquor, from the British despite the sharp contradiction of these habits with Sanskritic customs. Besides, Westernization of the Brahmins brought them away from many of their erstwhile Sanskritic habits. For example, while formerly eating used to be a ritual act when the Brahmins would wear ritually pure clothes with the eating floor purified with cowdung solution, such practices are no more in existence today. Not only that, many Western-educated Brahmins today have even discarded the sacred thread (Srinivas 1962/89: 53).

Thus, he contends, “the assumption of a simple and direct opposition between the two (Sanskritization and Westernization) and of the ultimate triumph of Westernization, I find too simple a hypothesis... considering the great complexity of the processes involved” (1962/89: 61). While in some cases, they were in conflict with each other, in others they complemented each other.

However, on the question as to whether Sanskritization of a lower caste or tribe is an essential condition prior to its Westernization, Srinivas says that though he finds empirical evidence of this being true, he is quick to add that his evidence to such a contention is limited to some non-Brahmin castes of Mysore and does not refer to any logical necessity for Sanskritization occurring prior to Westernization. In fact, he admits that it is possible that Westernization may occur without the intermediate process of Sanskritization (Srinivas 1962/89: 60). However, in this context, it is relevant to refer to Harold Gould's observation in the Sherupur village of Uttar Pradesh. Gould shows that as the lower castes began their Sanskritization backed by the democratization of the Indian society after independence and as the Brahmins and Rajputs began losing ground in the old caste hierarchy, the latter reached out in the direction of Westernization in order to obtain new sources of status and power which effectively continue to give them the feeling that they are maintaining suitable social distance with those whom they traditionally defined as low (1961: 946-47).

Indeed, rapid industrialization in the post-independence era has made this possible. Social movements among the backward castes have been anti-Brahmin in their overtones right from the very beginning. After independence, the constitutional provisions along with various affirmative actions initiated by the government in various spheres (social, economic and political) have also created conditions and opportunities for the lower castes and tribes to bypass the process of Sanskritization as a means to achieve vertical social mobility.

4. CONCLUSION

Sanskritization and Westernization have been two dominant perspectives in explaining social changes in the Indian society. However, the changes that these two concepts address are confined to the domain of culture to the exclusion of other significant political and economic processes. Thus, they offer only a partial explanation to the social changes in Indian society. Further, Sanskritization is criticized for being concerned mainly with social mobility within the Hindu society while the Indian society is a heterogeneous complex of many sects and religions. Besides, it is true that Sanskritization has resulted in changes in the status of particular castes but it has not led to changes of the caste system. That is, whatever change in mobility of a caste or a section of it has occurred, it has resulted only in *positional* changes, and not in a *structural* change. However, Srinivas himself points this out when he states, “(T)o describe the social changes occurring in modern India in terms of Sanskritization and Westernization is to describe it primarily in cultural and not structural terms” (1962/89: 55).

Further, scholars have pointed out that Sanskritization has not been universal to all parts of India. In fact, Devraj Chanana emphasizes that in Punjab culturally Sanskrit influence has not been a dominant one. Rather, he emphasizes, “for a few centuries till the third quarter of the nineteenth century Persian influence had been the dominating one in this area” (1961: 413). Indeed, this is true of many regions, especially those in the periphery of the Hindu heartland, such as the northeastern India and Kashmir. As regard to Westernization too, Chanana argues instead for a process of Indianization in Punjab which is “Westernization to a large extent in externals and the reassertion of largely Indian values, mingled with the humanitarian values of the West in matters of spirit” (ibid).

Besides, as a result of various social movements among the lower castes in the post-independence period, many of these castes are not keen to go through a process of Sanskritization. Rather there has been a strong tendency among a number of Sanskritized erstwhile tribal groups, now lower caste groups, to demand for Scheduled Tribe (as per the article 342 of the Indian Constitution) status to get the benefits of the policy of affirmative action in the spheres of education, employment and electoral politics. This ‘re-tribalization’ process has not stood in the way of their Westernization. Again, Westernization of a large section of the tribes in the northeast Indian region such as the Nagas, Khasis, Mizos, etc hardly has anything to do with Sanskritization. Similarly, the Dravidian movement in South India and the Dalit identity movement among the Scheduled Castes are informed by anti-Sanskritic ideologies. Discussing the impact of Sanskritization on the Dalits of the neighbouring Nepal, which is close to mainstream Hindu civilization of north India, a scholar argues that Sanskritization as defined and described by

Srinivas, is not occurring among them. The Nepalese Dalits do not seem to be interested in securing higher status through rise in caste hierarchy but through usurpation of political and economic power (B.K. 2008: 10).

Critiquing Srinivas's concept of Westernization, Yogendra Singh writes, "Srinivas equates Westernization with the British impact on India, but this is too narrow since after independence the impact of the Russian and American versions of modernization in India has been considerable" (1996: 12). Further he points out that "for many new elite in India as also in the new states of Asia, the Westernization has a pejorative connotation because of its association with former colonial domination of these countries by the West. It is, therefore, more value-loaded than the term modernization, which to us appears to be a better substitute" (ibid).

Nevertheless, the concepts of Sanskritization and Westernization have been very useful and influential in the explanation of social change in India. Srinivas himself was conscious of its limitations when speaking on Sanskritization he says, "(T)he usefulness of Sanskritization as a tool in the analysis of Indian society is greatly limited by the complexity of the concept as well as its looseness" (Srinivas 1962/89: 43). He also candidly expresses that it might be more useful to treat it as a bundle of concepts rather than as a single concept and that "it is only a name for a widespread social and cultural process, and our main task is to understand the nature of these processes. The moment it is discovered that the term is more a hindrance than a help in analysis, it should be discarded quickly and without regret" (ibid: 61). Similarly, he is also aware of the complexity as well as the limitations of the concept of Westernization and therefore argues for a qualified use (with the prefixes 'primary', 'secondary' and 'tertiary') of the term. In fact, many of the questions raised by the critics about these two concepts after they were first used by Srinivas in the 1950's were partially addressed by him in his *Social Change in Modern India* first published in 1966. However, he finds that the two terms are the most suitable, despite their shortcomings, to explain the social and cultural changes in the Indian society and they have indeed provided considerable insight into the vast complexities of the Indian society.

5. SUMMARY

In the above, we have discussed the two very influential concepts of Sanskritization and Westernization to explain the process of social change in India. While Sanskritization refers to the process by which a 'low' Hindu caste, or tribal or other group, changes its customs, ritual, ideology, and way of life in the direction of a high, and frequently, 'twice-born' caste, Westernization refers to the changes brought about in the Indian society as a consequence of the contact with western culture, particularly the British. Apparently, the two processes are contrary to each other. However, careful observation shows that they are closely related. While the most Sanskritized castes, beginning with the Brahmins, were the first to Westernize and lead the process of Westernization in India, Westernization on its part also helped spread the Sanskritic values, customs and texts. However, the changes that these two concepts address are confined to the domain of culture to the exclusion of other much more significant political and economic processes. Thus, they offer only a partial explanation to the social changes in Indian society. However, despite their obvious limitations, as Yogendra Singh contends, "as truth-asserting concepts they have great appropriateness and viability" (Singh 1996: 10).