

## **SOCIAL CHANGE THROUGH SANSKRITIZATION AT SHAKTIPEETHS IN INDIA**

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### **I. Introduction**

Change is inevitable in all the systems all over the world, and the Indian society is not an exception to it. India is a plural society. It is rightly characterized by its unity and diversity. A grand synthesis of cultures, religions and languages of the people belonging to different castes and communities has upheld its unity and cohesiveness. In spite of several foreign invasions, Mughal rule and the British rule, national unity and integrity have been maintained. It is this synthesis which has made India a unique mosaic of cultures.

Sanskritisation is a particular form of social change found in India. It denotes the process by which castes placed lower in the caste hierarchy seek upward mobility by emulating the rituals and practices of the upper or dominant castes. It is a process similar to passing in anthropological terms. This term was made popular by Indian sociologist M. N. Srinivas in the 1950s. In the traditional society, the occupations practised by castes, their diet, and the customs they observe determine their status in the hierarchy. Thus, practising an occupation such as tanning, butchery puts a caste in a low position. M.N. Srinivas defined sanskritization as a process by which "a low or middle 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 class by the local. According to M.N. Srinivas, Sanskritization is not just the adoption of new customs and habits, but also includes exposure to new ideas and values appearing in Sanskrit literature.

He says that the words karma, dharma, paap, maya, samsara and moksha are the most common Sanskritic theological ideas which become common in the talk of people who are sanskritized. Of the various effective platforms of Sanskritization in India, the Shaktipeethas and Durga temples are the most important ones. The glimpses at all such places witness the successful ongoing process of Sanskritization under the umbrella of which the marginalized and the members of the upper Hindu castes in India can be seen together practising the religious beliefs. Indeed, this process is bringing a revolutionary social change in India.

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## II. Research Methodology

The study is an empirical one in perfect harmony with the prescribed guidelines for a scientific research which require an absolute objectivity on the part of the researcher, and which expect him to adhere to the rules prescribed for it. The study was conducted on 500 units of information 100 each from Katyayani Shaktipeeth, Vrindavan, Pitambara Peeth, Datia, Maa Kaila Devi Temple, Karauli, Maa Vaishno Devi, Temple, Katra and Kali Mai Temple, Kolkata. For the sake of the scientific spirit of the work, observation method, both primary and secondary data and participant observation were used. The collection of the primary data was made through the interview schedule designed specifically with a sufficient number of questions on the problem covering all the possible aspects imaginable on the part of the researcher, while the secondary data were collected from the various books and journals which serve as the available literature on the theme. No doubt, the principal investigator faced several difficulties while collecting the primary data from the selected units of information at the Shaktipeeths and Durga Temples selected for the purpose, but his indefatigable efforts and his participant observation with a view to making an effective interaction with the units, eventually brought positive results, and he was successful in convincing them his purpose and in getting the required information about the problem through the questions designed for the purpose.

**Tables 1. What is Sanskritization**

Shaktipeeths & Durga Temples	a social process	another word for Sanskriti	culture of the western nations	It promotes the Indian culture	It keeps away the foreigners from the Indian values	It teaches the people the lesson of world brotherhood
Katyayani Peeth, Vrindavan	55%	5%	NIL	18%	1%	21%
Kaila Devi Temple, Karauli	64%	8%	NIL	14%	1%	13%
Pitambara Peeth, Datia	69%	4%	NIL	15%	1%	11%
Vaishno Devi Temple	61%	7%	NIL	17%	2%	13%
Kalighat Kali Temple, Kolkata	62%	6%	NIL	14%	4%	14%

## 2. Prevalence of the Process of Sanskritization all over India

Shaktipeeths & Durga Temples	Yes	No	Neutral	Ignorant
Katyayani Peeth, Vrindavan	99%	NIL	NIL	1%
Kaila Devi Temple, Karauli	97%	NIL	NIL	3%
Pitambara Peeth, Datia	96%	NIL	NIL	4%
Vaishno Devi Temple	98%	NIL	NIL	2%
Kalighat Kali Temple, Kolkata	88%	1%	1%	10%

## 3. Changes Likely to be Brought about by the Process of Sanskritization

Shaktipeeths & Durga Temples	Social and cultural upliftment	Rise in the religious status	Rise in the interaction with the members of the upper castes	Abstaining from eating meat, drinking and gambling	Rise in social harmony	Healthy personality development
Katyayani Peeth, Vrindavan	41%	2%	9%	23%	17%	8%
Kaila Devi Temple, Karauli	37%	6%	21%	9%	7%	20%
Pitambara Peeth, Datia	39%	11%	19%	12%	10%	9%
Vaishno Devi Temple	42%	14%	17%	17%	9%	1%
Kalighat Kali Temple, Kolkata	35%	13%	21%	12%	14%	5%

## 4. Points Where the Scenario of Sanskritization is Noticeable

Shaktipeeths & Durga Temples	Religious institutions	Public places	Working places	Educational Institutes	Homes	Now here	Every where
Katyayani Peeth, Vrindavan	42%	7%	21%	24%	1%	1%	4%
Kaila Devi Temple, Karauli	48%	10%	22%	16%	1%	1%	2%
Pitambara Peeth, Datia	36%	13%	21%	27%	1%	1%	1%
Vaishno Devi Temple	40%	11%	8%	38%	1%	1%	1%

Kalighat Kali Temple, Kolkata	51%	2%	6%	36%	1%	1%	3%
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### 5. Views on Temples as Points of Sanskritization

Shaktipeeths & Durga Temples	Yes	No	Neutral	Ignorant
Katyayani Peeth, Vrindavan	96%	NIL	4%	NIL
Kaila Devi Temple, Karauli	99%	NIL	1%	NIL
Pitambara Peeth, Datia	91%	NIL	8%	1%
Vaishno Devi Temple	90%	NIL	8%	2%
Kalighat Kali Temple, Kolkata	90%	NIL	9%	1%

### 6. Views on Shaktipeeths and Durga Temples as Effective Points of Sanskritization

Shaktipeeths & Durga Temples	Yes	No	Neutral	Ignorant
Katyayani Peeth, Vrindavan	99%	NIL	NIL	1%
Kaila Devi Temple, Karauli	96%	NIL	3%	1%
Pitambara Peeth, Datia	95%	NIL	2%	3%
Vaishno Devi Temple	99%	NIL	NIL	1%
Kalighat Kali Temple, Kolkata	98%	NIL	1%	1%

### 7. Ways that Witness Sanskritization in Temples

Shaktipeeths & Durga Temples	Collective worship	Forgetting the cultural differences	Reflection of different cultures	Display of one-culture
Katyayani Peeth, Vrindavan	71%	10%	8%	11%
Kaila Devi Temple, Karauli	65%	9%	24%	2%
Pitambara Peeth, Datia	78%	11%	7%	4%
Vaishno Devi Temple	72%	11%	11%	6%
Kalighat Kali Temple, Kolkata	73%	8%	14%	5%

### 8. Glimpses of Sanskritization at Shaktipeeths and Durga Temples

Shaktipeeths & Durga Temples	Collective participation in the rituals	Frequent interaction	Collective stay at the inns and hotels	Others
Katyayani Peeth, Vrindavan	88%	1%	10%	1%
Kaila Devi Temple, Karauli	85%	1%	12%	2%
Pitambara Peeth, Datia	83%	2%	13%	2%
Vaishno Devi Temple	79%	1%	16%	4%
Kalighat Kali Temple, Kolkata	76%	2%	21%	1%

### 9. Practices Adopted for the Sake of Sanskritization

Shaktipeeths & Durga Temples	Making efforts for physical purification	Passing time in meditation and worship of the goddess	Wearing fresh and clean clothes	Abstaining from drinking and eating meat	Chanting	Imitating the modes of worship from the upper caste members
Katyayani Peeth, Vrindavan	18%	21%	14%	31%	3%	13%
Kaila Devi Temple, Karauli	15%	19%	11%	35%	1%	19%
Pitambara Peeth, Datia	9%	18%	24%	41%	2%	6%
Vaishno Devi Temple	17%	18%	21%	37%	1%	6%
Kalighat Kali Temple, Kolkata	9%	10%	27%	32%	4%	18%

### 10. Change in the Names of Clans and Surnames for the Sake of Sanskritization

Shaktipeeths & Durga Temples	Yes	No	Neutral	Ignorant
Katyayani Peeth, Vrindavan	61%	32%	6%	1%
Kaila Devi Temple, Karauli	72%	21%	4%	3%
Pitambara Peeth, Datia	68%	28%	2%	2%
Vaishno Devi Temple	71%	19%	7%	3%
Kalighat Kali Temple, Kolkata	73%	10%	10%	7%

### 11. Causes of Changing the Names of the Clans

Shaktipeeths & Durga Temples	fear of the Hindu fundamentalists	fear of disreputation and disgrace	For the sake of enjoying a socially approved life	Just as a fashion
Katyayani Peeth, Vrindavan	9%	23%	67%	1%
Kaila Devi Temple, Karauli	19%	21%	56%	4%
Pitambara Peeth, Datia	5%	13%	78%	4%
Vaishno Devi Temple	10%	24%	63%	3%
Kalighat Kali Temple, Kolkata	13%	21%	64%	2%

### 12. People who are Ready to Accept and Imbibe Sanskritization

Shaktipeeths & Durga Temples	Every member of the marginalised castes	Only male members of the lower castes	Only female members of the lower castes	Nobody
Katyayani Peeth, Vrindavan	79%	12%	9%	NIL
Kaila Devi Temple, Karauli	67%	10%	23%	NIL
Pitambara Peeth, Datia	56%	21%	22%	1%
Vaishno Devi Temple	71%	11%	18%	NIL
Kalighat Kali Temple, Kolkata	57%	14%	28%	1%

### 13. Views on the Success of the Process of Sanskritization in India

Shaktipeeths & Durga Temples	Yes	No	Neutral	Ignorant
Katyayani Peeth, Vrindavan	98%	NIL	1%	1%
Kaila Devi Temple, Karauli	98%	1%	NIL	1%
Pitambara Peeth, Datia	89%	1%	3%	7%
Vaishno Devi Temple	99%	NIL	NIL	1%
Kalighat Kali Temple, Kolkata	91%	1%	6%	2%

### 14. Future of the Process of Sanskritization in India

Shaktipeeths & Durga Temples	Bright	Dark	Neutral	Ignorant
Katyayani Peeth, Vrindavan	89%	1%	7%	3%
Kaila Devi Temple, Karauli	96%	1%	1%	2%
Pitambara Peeth, Datia	96%	NIL	2%	2%
Vaishno Devi Temple	95%	2%	2%	1%
Kalighat Kali Temple, Kolkata	99%	NIL	NIL	1%

### III. Key Findings

1. 43% of the total selected units hold the idea that Drinking, abusing and gambling are the popular socio-cultural practices of the lower castes that keep them away from the members of the upper Hindu castes.
2. 91% of them hope that through the process of Sanskritization, the members of the marginalized castes can enjoy a good social status provided they abstain from drinking, gambling and other such things.
3. 62% of the total units of information believe it to be a revolutionary social process of social change. According to 55% units of information, the marginalized Hindu castes are brought closer to the religious practices of the upper Hindu Castes under this process. 35% of them believe that the adoption of the upper caste cultural and religious practices by the members of the marginalized brings good social status.
4. 85% units believe that the process of Sanskritization allows the members of both the upper Hindu castes and those of the marginalized castes to mix themselves with one another. 96% of them hope that it is helpful in the social and cultural upliftment of the members of the marginalized castes.

5. According to 38% units, the ongoing process of Sanskritization is acceptable to all, while according to 53% of them it is not accepted to all. 75% of them are bold enough to submit that it hurts the feelings of the members of the upper Hindu castes. However, 98% of them believe that as a result of this process, the members of the marginalized castes are ready to give up their bad habits. Not only this, 93% of them hold the idea that this giving up of bad habits for the sake of Sanskritization will be for a long term.
6. 96% of the total units of information selected for the purpose accept the relevance and appearance of the process of Sanskritization all over India.
7. The process of Sanskritization is likely to bring about several social changes, such as, social and cultural upliftment of the marginalized, rise in the social status, rise in the interaction with the members of the upper castes, abstaining from eating meat, drinking and gambling, rise in social harmony and a healthy personality development.
8. 93% of them hold that temples all over India are the best and most important points of Sanskritization. 72% of the units of information find the collective worship as the most effective way of Sanskritization at the temples. 97% of them mention the Shaktipeeths and Durga temples in India as the most effective points of Sanskritization.
9. Collective participation in the rituals, frequent interaction, collective stay at the inns and hotels, taking food collectively etc. serve as some of the apparent glimpses of Sanskritization at Shaktipeeths and Durga Temples in India.
10. Making efforts for physical purification, passing time in meditation and worship of the deities and the goddess Shakti in particular, wearing fresh and clean clothes, abstaining from eating and drinking, chanting and imitating the modes of worship form the members of the upper Hindu castes are some of the apparent practices adopted for the sake of Sanskritization.
11. Change in the names of clans and surnames for the sake of Sanskritization is occurring all over India according to 69% units of information. From 30% - 40% of the marginalized members have changed the names of their clans and surnames and renamed them after the names of the clans and surnames of the upper Hindu castes.