

Cultural Change and Caste Hierarchy: Revisiting M. N. Srinivas's Sanskritization

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Abstract: *This article critically examines the continuing relevance of Sanskritization in explaining cultural change within caste hierarchy in contemporary India. Originally conceptualized by M. N. Srinivas, Sanskritization highlighted the process through which lower or intermediate castes sought upward mobility by adopting the rituals and practices of higher castes. Drawing on a qualitative, theory-driven methodology based on secondary literature, this study reassesses the conceptual foundations of Sanskritization and situates it within broader structural transformations. The analysis engages with major critiques that emphasize economic inequality, state intervention, gendered power, and subaltern assertion. It further explores how democratization, reservation policies, market expansion, migration, and digital media have reshaped caste identities and mobility strategies. The article argues that while Sanskritization remains valuable for understanding symbolic and cultural dimensions of mobility, it is insufficient as a standalone framework in the present context. A multidimensional reinterpretation is proposed that integrates cultural negotiation with political participation and class mobility. By revisiting this influential concept, the study contributes to the evolving discourse on indigenous sociological theory and the changing dynamics of caste in modern India.*

Key Words: *Sanskritization, Caste Hierarchy, Cultural Change, Social Mobility, Political Mobilization, Contemporary India.*

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Introduction

The relationship between cultural change and caste hierarchy has remained one of the most enduring concerns of Indian sociology. While the caste system has often been described as rigid and hereditary, sociological scholarship has consistently shown that it contains internal mechanisms of adaptation and negotiation. Among the most influential attempts to explain such processes is the concept of Sanskritization, developed by M. N. Srinivas. By foregrounding cultural emulation as a route to status mobility, Srinivas shifted the analytical focus from static hierarchy to dynamic social change. This article revisits Sanskritization to examine whether it still offers a persuasive explanation of cultural transformation within caste hierarchy in contemporary India.

Caste in India has historically operated as a stratified system structured around hereditary status, ritual ranking, and occupational specialization. Social groups were positioned within a hierarchy informed by notions of purity and pollution, reinforced through endogamy and customary restrictions. Historical scholarship has also demonstrated that the institutionalization of caste was shaped by colonial administrative practices, which reified and codified social hierarchies in new ways.¹ Although often represented as fixed, caste has never been entirely immobile. Variations in local power, economic resources, and demographic change have shaped shifts in status over time.

It was within this context that M. N. Srinivas proposed Sanskritization as a mechanism through which lower or intermediate castes sought upward mobility by adopting the rituals, dietary codes, and lifestyle practices of higher castes.² Based on his village studies in South India, particularly among the Coorgs, Srinivas argued that caste mobility could occur without dismantling the broader hierarchical framework. He later elaborated this idea in his broader analysis of social change in India, linking ritual mobility with processes such as Westernization and modernization.³ Emerging during the postcolonial consolidation of Indian sociology, his work marked a shift toward grounded, field-based theorization rooted in indigenous categories rather than colonial administrative accounts.

Debates on caste today revolve around whether it is weakening under modern institutions or reconstituting itself in new forms. Some scholars argue that democratic politics and economic development have altered the basis of hierarchy, while others maintain that caste continues to structure everyday life, albeit differently.⁴ The rise of backward caste politics, the assertion of Dalit identities, and expanded access to education and migration have complicated earlier assumptions about ritual emulation as the primary path to mobility. Reassessing Sanskritization, therefore, becomes necessary to determine whether it remains analytically robust or requires reinterpretation.

The article first revisits the conceptual foundations of Sanskritization, then engages with major critiques and contemporary transformations, and finally proposes a revised framework for understanding cultural change and caste hierarchy in present-day India.

Research Objectives

1. To critically examine the conceptual foundations of Sanskritization as formulated by M. N. Srinivas.

2. To analyze the relationship between cultural change and caste hierarchy within the Sanskritization framework.
3. To reassess the explanatory relevance of Sanskritization in contemporary India.

Research Methodology

■ **Research Design:**

This study adopts a qualitative, interpretive, and theory-driven research design. Rather than generating primary field data, it undertakes a conceptual reassessment of Sanskritization as formulated by M. N. Srinivas. The approach is analytical and reflective, situated within the tradition of sociological theory-building. It seeks to re-examine the explanatory scope of Sanskritization by engaging closely with its original formulation⁵ and by situating it within subsequent theoretical debates on caste, hierarchy, and social change. The study is grounded in comparative literature review and aims to synthesize diverse strands of sociological scholarship.

■ **Data Sources:**

The analysis draws upon the classical writings of Srinivas, along with major scholarly critiques emerging from Indian sociology. It incorporates books, peer-reviewed journal articles, and edited volumes addressing caste, mobility, and cultural transformation. In addition, policy documents and census-based secondary materials are consulted to contextualize contemporary shifts in education, migration, and political participation.

■ **Method of Analysis:**

The study employs thematic content analysis to identify key conceptual patterns across texts. Historical contextualization is used to situate Sanskritization within postcolonial sociological developments. A comparative theoretical synthesis then evaluates its relevance alongside later interpretations of caste transformation.

■ **Justification:**

Given the article's focus on conceptual clarification rather than empirical measurement, a qualitative and literature-based methodology is most appropriate. It enables systematic reinterpretation of an established sociological framework while maintaining analytical rigor and theoretical depth.

Conceptual Foundations of Sanskritization

■ **Origin of the Concept:**

The concept of Sanskritization emerged from the ethnographic research of M. N. Srinivas during his fieldwork among the Coorgs of South India. In his detailed village study, Srinivas observed that caste hierarchy, though structured and hereditary, was not entirely static. Certain lower or intermediate caste groups sought to improve their social standing by consciously adopting the customs, rituals, and lifestyle patterns associated with higher

castes, particularly the Brahmins.⁶ This process was not imposed externally but initiated internally by aspiring groups seeking recognition and prestige within the existing social order.

Srinivas introduced the term “Sanskritization” to describe this patterned attempt at upward mobility through cultural imitation. The concept reflected his broader commitment to developing sociological categories grounded in Indian social realities rather than relying exclusively on Western theoretical models. It marked an important moment in postcolonial Indian sociology, where empirical village studies became the foundation for conceptual innovation.

- **Definition and Core Elements**

Sanskritization refers to a process by which a lower caste, tribe, or other social group changes its customs, rituals, ideology, and way of life in the direction of a higher and frequently “twice-born” caste.⁷ The aim of such transformation is to claim a higher position in the local caste hierarchy. Central to this process is the adoption of practices associated with ritual purity.

Key elements include the embrace of vegetarianism, teetotalism, and adherence to stricter dietary codes. Groups aspiring to upward mobility often renounced practices deemed impure within the Brahmanical order, such as the consumption of meat or alcohol. Temple entry claims, participation in Sanskritic rituals, and the employment of Brahmin priests also formed part of this strategy. Additionally, some groups attempted to abandon or redefine occupations considered polluting, even if complete occupational mobility was difficult to achieve.

These transformations were rarely immediate or universally accepted. Instead, they involved prolonged negotiation and required validation from other caste groups within the locality.

- **Cultural Change as Gradual Mobility**

Sanskritization conceptualizes cultural change as incremental and symbolic rather than revolutionary. It does not seek to dismantle caste hierarchy but to reposition a group within it. The process enables status mobility without necessarily altering the structural foundations of inequality. Economic resources or demographic strength could facilitate such claims, yet the recognition of higher status depended largely on cultural conformity to established norms.

Thus, mobility through Sanskritization represents symbolic negotiation within hierarchy. It illustrates how cultural practices become instruments of social aspiration while leaving the broader system of stratification intact.

- **Relation to Dominant Caste Theory**

Srinivas later connected Sanskritization to his formulation of the dominant caste concept.⁸ He argued that ritual rank alone did not determine local influence. Land ownership,

numerical strength, and political authority shaped which caste functioned as a reference group in a given village. In many contexts, aspiring groups modeled themselves not strictly on Brahmins but on the locally dominant caste, whose social and political power defined acceptable standards of prestige. This interaction between ritual hierarchy and material power highlights the embedded nature of cultural change within broader configurations of authority.

Sanskritization and Caste Hierarchy

- **Reinforcement vs. Transformation:**

A central question in evaluating Sanskritization concerns whether it fundamentally transforms caste hierarchy or subtly reinforces it. On the surface, the process appears to introduce change by enabling lower or intermediate castes to seek higher status. It suggests that hierarchy is not absolutely rigid but open to limited mobility. However, such mobility operates within the normative framework of the existing order. The aspiration is not to abolish hierarchy but to climb within it.

Cultural emulation remains embedded in hierarchical logic. By adopting the practices of higher castes, aspiring groups implicitly accept the superiority of those norms. Ritual purity, dietary discipline, and conformity to Brahmanical standards become markers of legitimacy. Rather than challenging the symbolic foundations of caste stratification, Sanskritization may therefore contribute to their reproduction. The system persists, even as particular groups reposition themselves within it. This ambivalence lies at the heart of debates surrounding the concept's critical value.

- **Cultural Capital and Symbolic Legitimacy**

Sanskritization can also be interpreted through the lens of cultural capital. The adoption of upper-caste practices functions as a strategic accumulation of symbolic resources. By reshaping ritual behaviour, dress codes, and social customs, groups seek recognition and honour within the local social field. This parallels Pierre Bourdieu's argument that distinctions in taste and lifestyle operate as markers of social differentiation.⁹ Cultural practices are not neutral; they carry encoded signals of prestige and legitimacy.

In this sense, Sanskritization represents an attempt to convert cultural conformity into symbolic authority. The process illustrates how hierarchies are maintained not only through material control but also through shared belief in the legitimacy of particular cultural standards. Recognition from other castes becomes crucial, as status claims require collective acknowledgment. The pursuit of symbolic legitimacy thus reinforces the moral grammar of hierarchy, even while enabling limited upward mobility.

- **Mobility without Equality**

Despite its capacity to generate status shifts, Sanskritization does not necessarily produce substantive equality. Structural dimensions of inequality such as access to land, education, political office, and economic capital often remain unevenly distributed. Ritual mobility may alter perceptions of rank, but it does not automatically transform the distribution of

power. As Andre Beteille¹⁰ observes, hierarchy in India has historically combined ritual ranking with material and political disparities.

This distinction highlights the limits of cultural change as an instrument of social transformation. Mobility achieved through imitation can improve local standing, yet it rarely dismantles systemic barriers. Economic and political power continue to shape opportunities in ways that cultural adjustment alone cannot resolve. Sanskritization, therefore, illuminates the dynamics of aspiration within caste society, but it also reveals the persistence of structural inequality beneath symbolic change.

Major Critiques of Sanskritization

- **Structural Critique:**

One of the most significant criticisms of Sanskritization concerns its strong emphasis on ritual transformation at the expense of structural factors. While the concept effectively captures processes of cultural emulation, critics argue that it underplays the role of economic resources, political authority, and state institutions in shaping mobility. By centering ritual purity and lifestyle change, the framework risks presenting caste mobility as primarily symbolic rather than materially grounded.

Dipankar Gupta¹¹ contends that caste cannot be understood solely through ritual hierarchy; it must also be examined as a system embedded in broader relations of power and inequality. Access to education, land, employment, and political representation often determines a group's social standing more decisively than ritual conformity. In postcolonial India, constitutional provisions, reservation policies, and electoral politics have significantly altered the terrain of mobility. A purely cultural explanation may therefore obscure the growing importance of state-mediated and class-based transformations. The structural critique thus calls for a more comprehensive approach that integrates ritual, economic, and political dimensions.

- **Dalit and Subaltern Critique**

Dalit and subaltern scholars have raised deeper normative concerns. From this perspective, Sanskritization appears less as a strategy of empowerment and more as a form of accommodation within a hierarchical order. By encouraging lower castes to imitate upper-caste practices, the process may inadvertently legitimize Brahmanical norms as the standard of social value. Emulation, in this sense, becomes submission rather than resistance.

Gail Omvedt¹² argues that Dalit movements have historically pursued dignity and equality not through imitation but through assertion and critique of caste oppression. The rise of anti-caste politics, inspired in part by B. R. Ambedkar, challenges the assumption that upward mobility must pass through cultural conformity. Assertion politics redefines identity in oppositional terms, often rejecting the symbolic universe that Sanskritization presupposes. From this standpoint, the concept may inadequately account for forms of collective mobilization that seek structural transformation rather than incremental status shifts.

- **Gendered Critique**

Feminist scholars have further observed that processes of cultural mobility frequently intensify patriarchal control. When a caste group aspires to higher status, it often emphasizes stricter regulation of women's sexuality, dress, and public conduct to align with ideals of purity and respectability. Women become carriers of caste honour, and their behaviour is closely monitored to signal conformity with upper-caste norms. Rather than expanding autonomy, Sanskritization can thus reinforce gender hierarchies within aspiring communities.¹³ Cultural mobility, in this sense, may come at the cost of heightened domestic discipline and curtailed freedoms for women.

- **Modernization and Urbanization Critique**

Finally, modernization and urbanization have complicated the explanatory power of Sanskritization. In urban contexts, anonymity, occupational diversification, and class-based interactions often weaken the salience of ritual hierarchy. Market participation and professional achievement increasingly shape status markers, sometimes independent of caste-coded practices. Colonial and postcolonial transformations have also reconfigured caste identities through state classification and administrative categorization.¹⁴ Migration disrupts village-centered social surveillance, enabling new forms of identity negotiation. As class mobility reshapes patterns of stratification, ritual emulation alone may not sufficiently explain contemporary trajectories of social change.

Contemporary Transformations in Caste

- **Education and Reservation Policies:**

Post-independence India has witnessed an unprecedented expansion of state intervention in the domain of social mobility. Constitutional safeguards, affirmative action policies, and reservations in education and public employment have reconfigured the pathways through which historically marginalized groups pursue advancement. Unlike Sanskritization, which emphasized gradual cultural emulation, reservation policies provide institutional mechanisms for mobility grounded in legal entitlement. Christophe Jaffrelot¹⁵ demonstrates how these policies facilitated the political and administrative rise of lower and intermediate castes, particularly in North India.

Education has emerged as a critical arena of transformation. Access to schooling and higher education not only enhances employment prospects but also reshapes aspirations, self-perception, and collective identity. Legal empowerment shifts the basis of status claims from ritual conformity to rights-based recognition. In this context, mobility increasingly depends on engagement with state structures rather than solely on cultural adjustment within local hierarchies.

- **Political Mobilization**

The rise of backward caste and regional political parties marks another decisive transformation. Electoral democracy has enabled numerically significant caste groups

to convert demographic strength into political influence. Rather than imitating upper-caste norms, many communities have mobilized around shared histories of exclusion and collective assertion. Identity politics reframes caste from a marker of ritual inferiority to a platform for political solidarity.

This shift challenges the earlier assumption that upward mobility requires assimilation into dominant cultural standards. Political mobilization often celebrates caste identity openly, transforming it into a resource rather than a stigma. Public discourse now includes demands for representation, dignity, and redistribution. In this climate, imitation gives way to negotiation and, at times, confrontation.

- **Market Economy and Globalization**

Economic liberalization after 1991 further altered the landscape of stratification. The expansion of private enterprise, service-sector growth, and urban labour markets introduced new criteria of status tied to income, consumption, and professional achievement. Consumer culture has created alternative markers of prestige, ranging from housing and education to lifestyle and technology. These markers do not necessarily erase caste, but they complicate its expression.

Market participation can generate forms of mobility that operate alongside, and sometimes independently of, ritual hierarchy. Economic success may allow individuals or groups to command respect in ways that do not strictly rely on Sanskritic practices. The relationship between caste and class has therefore become more layered and context-dependent.

- **Media and Digital Assertion**

The proliferation of media and digital platforms has opened new spaces for caste articulation. Social media enables communities to celebrate their histories, heroes, and symbols in highly visible ways. Online forums, digital campaigns, and community networks facilitate both pride and protest. Caste identity is increasingly performed in public arenas that transcend local boundaries.

Digital assertion differs significantly from the quiet, localized negotiation implied in Sanskritization. It is often explicit, collective, and political. Public symbolic performance through media reshapes how caste is experienced and contested. Contemporary transformations thus reveal a dynamic interplay between legal reform, political agency, economic change, and mediated visibility in reconfiguring caste hierarchy.

- **Persistence and Reconfiguration of Caste Identity**

Contrary to earlier expectations that modernization would gradually weaken caste consciousness, contemporary India demonstrates the remarkable persistence and adaptation of caste identities. While processes such as urbanization, education, migration, and economic liberalization have transformed the social landscape, they have not eliminated the significance of caste as a marker of identity and belonging. Instead, caste has been reconfigured to operate within new institutional, political, and cultural contexts.

The continuing relevance of caste is evident in the persistence of endogamous marriage practices, community associations, and caste-based social networks. Even among educated and urban populations, caste frequently influences matrimonial choices, kinship relations, and access to social capital. These patterns suggest that modernization has altered the expression of caste rather than eroding its social foundations. Contemporary caste groups increasingly organize cultural events, community conferences, and digital forums that reinforce collective identity while simultaneously engaging with modern forms of citizenship and participation.

The expansion of democratic politics has further contributed to the reconfiguration of caste identity. Rather than seeking upward mobility solely through the imitation of higher castes, many communities now emphasize the preservation and public affirmation of their distinct histories, traditions, and social contributions. Identity becomes a resource through which groups pursue recognition, representation, and access to opportunities. Consequently, caste operates not merely as a system of hierarchy but also as a framework for collective belonging and political mobilization.¹⁶

Recent scholarship argues that caste continues to shape social and economic outcomes despite the growth of market institutions and formal equality.¹⁷ Contemporary caste identity therefore reflects a complex interaction between continuity and change, where traditional affiliations coexist with new forms of social assertion and collective self-representation.¹⁸

Caste Identity and Regional Dynamics in Eastern India

The dynamics of caste transformation in Eastern India reveal important regional variations that complicate generalized interpretations of Sanskritization. Much of the classical literature on caste mobility has focused on South India and the Hindi-speaking regions of North India. However, Eastern India presents distinct historical trajectories where caste identities have evolved through different political, social, and cultural processes.

In Bihar, caste remains a highly visible factor in political mobilization and public life. The emergence of backward caste leadership and the implementation of Mandal-era reforms significantly altered traditional hierarchies by expanding opportunities for historically marginalized communities. Political participation enabled many groups to achieve recognition through democratic representation rather than through cultural imitation alone.¹⁹

West Bengal presents a different pattern. For decades, class-based politics dominated public discourse, often obscuring the role of caste in social and political life. Yet recent developments have highlighted the growing visibility of caste-based identities among communities such as the Matuas, Namasudras, and Rajbanshis. These groups increasingly articulate demands for social recognition, citizenship rights, and political representation. Such developments demonstrate that caste identities continue to influence collective action even within contexts traditionally associated with class politics.

In Odisha and Jharkhand, caste identities intersect with tribal affiliations, regional aspirations, and developmental concerns. Social stratification in these states cannot be

adequately understood through ritual hierarchy alone, as ethnic and regional factors also shape patterns of inclusion and exclusion. These regional experiences indicate that contemporary caste transformation involves diverse pathways that extend beyond the framework of Sanskritization.

The Eastern Indian context therefore illustrates that caste persists not only as a hierarchical institution but also as a basis for political participation, cultural recognition, and community mobilization. Understanding these regional variations is essential for developing a more comprehensive interpretation of caste change in contemporary India.²⁰

Reinterpreting Sanskritization in Contemporary India

- **From Ritual Emulation to Cultural Negotiation:**

In its original formulation by M. N. Srinivas, Sanskritization described a process of ritual emulation through which lower castes adopted the practices of higher castes to claim improved status.²¹ In contemporary India, however, the dynamics of cultural change appear less linear and less deferential. Rather than simply imitating dominant norms, many communities engage in strategic identity construction. Cultural symbols are selected, reinterpreted, and sometimes reinvented to serve political and social objectives.

Cultural practices have become negotiable symbols rather than fixed markers of aspiration. Dietary codes, ritual observances, and marriage practices may be adopted, modified, or publicly displayed depending on context. Identity is often asserted with confidence rather than concealed through assimilation. This shift reflects broader transformations in public discourse, where caste is debated, defended, and contested openly. The movement from imitation to negotiation suggests that mobility today involves active reinterpretation of cultural capital rather than passive conformity to hierarchical ideals.

- **Hybrid Mobility**

Contemporary caste mobility rarely operates along a single axis. Cultural change intersects with political representation and economic advancement in complex ways. Access to education, state employment, entrepreneurial opportunity, and electoral power reshapes the strategies available to caste groups. Cultural mobility may still occur, but it often accompanies political mobilization and class formation.

This hybrid character of mobility indicates the need for a multidimensional framework. A group's upward movement may involve the cultivation of symbolic respectability, participation in democratic institutions, and engagement with market networks simultaneously. These dimensions do not function independently; they reinforce or constrain one another depending on context. Any adequate reinterpretation of Sanskritization must therefore move beyond a purely ritual model and incorporate the layered realities of contemporary stratification.

■ **Theoretical Expansion**

Revisiting Sanskritization does not require abandoning the concept altogether. Instead, it calls for theoretical expansion. The framework can be integrated with processes of democratization, globalization, and class mobility to better capture current patterns of change. Democratization has shifted the basis of legitimacy from ritual status to electoral strength and constitutional rights. Globalization and market reforms have introduced new status markers tied to consumption and professional success. Class differentiation increasingly intersects with caste identity, producing complex forms of advantage and disadvantage.

A revised conceptual model would treat Sanskritization as one component within a broader matrix of mobility. Cultural emulation remains analytically relevant in certain contexts, particularly where ritual hierarchy continues to shape social interaction. However, it must be understood alongside political assertion, economic restructuring, and mediated visibility. By situating Sanskritization within this expanded framework, scholars can retain its insight into symbolic processes while acknowledging the transformative forces that redefine caste hierarchy in contemporary India.

Beyond Sanskritization: Identity Assertion and Recognition Politics

While Sanskritization remains valuable for explaining certain forms of cultural mobility, it is less effective in accounting for contemporary movements centered on identity assertion and recognition. Many marginalized communities today seek dignity and social legitimacy not through the adoption of upper-caste practices but through the public affirmation of their own histories, symbols, and cultural traditions. This shift reflects broader transformations in democratic politics, social activism, and public discourse.

The influence of Ambedkar thought has been particularly significant in encouraging forms of collective action that challenge rather than accommodate hierarchical norms. Dalit movements, backward caste organizations, and community-based initiatives increasingly emphasize equality, self-respect, and constitutional rights. In these contexts, cultural difference is celebrated rather than concealed, and identity becomes a source of empowerment rather than stigma.²²

Digital media has further amplified these processes by providing platforms for symbolic representation, historical reclamation, and collective mobilization. Online communities frequently use social media to celebrate caste heroes, commemorate historical struggles, and challenge dominant narratives. Recognition politics therefore represents a significant departure from the logic of Sanskritization, which assumed that upward mobility depended upon cultural emulation. Contemporary caste dynamics increasingly involve the assertion of distinct identities within democratic frameworks of citizenship and representation.²³

Conclusion

This article has revisited Sanskritization as a foundational concept in Indian sociology and reassessed its relevance for understanding cultural change within caste hierarchy. As formulated by M. N. Srinivas, Sanskritization illuminated the internal dynamics of caste mobility by

demonstrating that hierarchy was not entirely static but subject to negotiated shifts in ritual status.²⁴ Its strength lay in recognizing cultural emulation as a mechanism of aspiration within an unequal order. However, the analysis has shown that when treated in isolation, the concept offers a partial account of contemporary transformations. Structural inequalities, democratic politics, market expansion, and new forms of identity assertion complicate the ritual-centered model. Sanskritization remains historically significant, but its explanatory capacity is limited if detached from broader socio-economic and political processes.

The reassessment offered here contributes to ongoing efforts to critically engage with indigenous sociological concepts without discarding them prematurely. Rather than viewing Sanskritization as obsolete, the article argues for its dynamic reinterpretation. Concepts rooted in specific historical contexts must evolve alongside the societies they seek to explain. By situating Sanskritization within intersecting processes of democratization, class mobility, and globalization, this study highlights the need for theoretical flexibility. Indigenous frameworks retain analytical value when expanded and recontextualized in light of new empirical realities.

Contemporary caste transformation is characterized not only by mobility but also by the persistence and assertion of identity. Across diverse regional contexts, particularly in Eastern India, caste continues to function as a source of political representation, cultural recognition, and community solidarity. These developments suggest that any contemporary reinterpretation of Sanskritization must account for identity affirmation alongside cultural mobility.²⁵

Future research may profitably examine urban caste networks, where migration and occupational diversification reshape patterns of interaction and identity. The study of digital caste politics also warrants closer attention, as online platforms enable new forms of symbolic assertion and collective mobilization. Comparative research across South Asian contexts could further illuminate how similar hierarchies adapt under varying political and economic conditions. Such directions would deepen our understanding of caste as a dynamic social formation rather than a static remnant of tradition.

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