

CHAPTER

8

(A) *Social Change—Factors of Social Change*

(B) *Social Change in India—Sanskritization, Westernization, Modernization and Globalization*

(A) [Meaning—some important theories—factors of social change—ramifications of social change—role of education]

Introduction : The great Greek Philosopher Heraclitus unambiguously proclaimed, 'every thing is in the process of constant flow and flux.' This is true everywhere and always. The principle of 'Charaiveti' (moving on) is the basic truth of the entire universe. Change is the spirit of life. Man changes from cradle to cremation. Habits change, modes of behaviour change, attitudes change. Beliefs, ideas, ideals change. With all these changing patterns society, a system of social relationship, cannot remain unchanged. **The structure and function of society change.** There are unceasing processes of adjustment with the adaptation to varying stimuli always strewn around us. We know that social phenomena are historical phenomena "in a profounder sense than any other". Social structure is 'a nexus of present relationships'. The human beings who are always bound together in the network of social relationship, seek to maintain it. Society as a structure, is upheld from time to time. But **it changes** as the changes are wanted and caused either by nature or by the efforts of human beings. Society is subject to incessant renewal. Through time span its nature is to be understood.

Definition of Social Change : Ginsberg says, "By social change I understand a change in social structure, e.g., the size of a society, composition or balance of its parts or the types of its organisations. The term social change also includes changes in attitudes and beliefs in so far as they sustain institutions and change with them." MacIver and Page observed, 'Society exists only as a time sequence. It is becoming, not a being, a process, not a product.' For instance, the 'Suttee pratha' of Indian society, is a product as the

process created it. When the process came to an end, the product ceased to exist. Today, the conservative ideas of yester years have given place to modern and postmodern thoughts. These changing patterns seek to change the structures of society. Social change, thus implies change not only in structure but also in functions. The human beings contribute a lot to this phenomenon, though other factors beyond control, are also responsible for change in society.

Some theories regarding Social change—

(1) **Charles Darwin's theory of Biological Evolution :** There are some theories regarding social change. The first of these theories is Charles Darwin's theory of Biological Evolution. This theory refers to the developing process of an individual. This process is gradual and continuing and in and through this process the organism adapts to physical environment. The concepts of '**struggle for existence**' and '**survival of the fittest**' are closely associated with the evolutionary theory. This principle of Biological Evolution was applied by many social theorists, like, Herbert Spencer, Sumner and others, to the interpretation of social change. According to them, **Society also changes in an evolutionary process** and in that sphere, the principle of **social selection** determines the change. The units of society are the component parts of society as a whole. With the change in the units, society as a whole evolves from its simplest forms to the more complex patterns. This theory has been subject to criticism.

But Prof. MacIver has given support to such a view. According to him, social evolution is **differentiation**, which expresses itself, in social context, in terms of **division of labour, specialisation, an increase in the number and variety of functional associations** and greater diversity and refinement in the means of social communication. This is a process of continuous change with the thread of identity running within.

(2) **Marxian view :** If we want to view the phenomenon of social change from Marxian angle, we shall have to explain the philosophy of Dialectical Materialism and Historical Materialism, based upon the German Idealism, the French Socialism and the English Economic system. This theory implies the role of material production in determining the position or status of a person in his society. According to Marx, the historical evolution is to be studied in terms

of material production. Social change takes place concomitantly with the change in material production and change in the relation between the classes.

Marx believed that always a struggle goes on among three classes—the capitalist, the bourgeois and the proletariat and that struggle is based upon material production. The objective of Marxian Philosophy is to unfetter the exploited mass from the shackles of bondage in the hands of the capitalists and the bourgeois. The changing mode of class struggle brings about change in social structure and function. Marx showed that ultimately the class struggle in the capitalist society will lead to the abolition of classes and the development of classless society. So in Marxian view, social change is to be analysed in terms of economy, though Marx did not overlook other factors—cultural and social in the context of social change.

(3) **Max Weber's view** : Max Weber did not think like Marx that only economic forces bring about social change. "Weber saw that there is a direct relation between the practical ethics of a community and the character of its economic system, but he refused to accept that the latter determines the former". He held that the ethical principles and religion determine the economic system and brings about social change.

(4) **Veblen's theory** : **Veblen's theory of social change is founded upon Technological Determinism.** To explain this, we should say that a man's habits and techniques of work influence his thought. He observes, 'The way of habit is the way of thought' and 'As he (man) thinks, so he acts'. He explains social evolution as "substantially a process of mental adaptation on the part of the individuals under the stress of circumstances which will no longer tolerate habits of thought formed under and conforming to a different set of circumstances in the past." To Veblen human habits and thoughts are embodied in institutions.

(5) **Functional Analysis of Social Change** : Man has created society for the satisfaction of his physical, psychical and socio-economical needs. And for the satisfaction of all these needs men have established institutions like, family, state, school, Religion, socio-cultural organisations and so on and so forth. These human needs change in their quality and quantity and concomitantly the

Institutions change when they cannot meet all the needs. In this way the agrarian system gave way to industrial culture, and industrial system culminated into technology-based social system. Science and technology have brought forth a new era, the cybernetic age. Thus social change is always in a process of renewal and restructuring.

From all these theories, one thing is clear that social change means man's continual process of adaptation to new and newer environmental conditions and establishment of institutions of new types to meet the increasing needs and demands of human beings. This change is desired to be progressive and obviously that depends upon the quality of factors of social change.

Now the question arises : What are the factors of social change ? We should discuss these factors one by one very briefly.

Factors of Social Change :

(1) **Demographic factor :** The first factor causing social change is the Demographic factor. Demography means that branch of Anthropology pertaining to the rates of birth and death and diseases. The size and density of population determines change in social structure and function. Population and social structure are reciprocally related to each other. It is obvious that economic conditions and population rates are interdependent. An increase of population brings about poverty, illiteracy, diseases etc. For example, our India having population-explosion as one of her problems, is plagued with illiteracy, extreme poverty among masses, specially in the rural areas. The population control devices are tending to check population but those are limited to the conscious and educated people. Family planning has brought about changes in the family structure, in the relation between parents and children, in the ways and means of bringing them up. Moreover, due to advancement in medical sciences and awareness among people about health, death rate of people has become comparatively lower than before, the consequence of which is the higher rate of growth of the elderly people. This has a great impact upon society—in its structure and function. The old people in many families, specially in urban social structure, have to live lonely lives, far away from the cosy corners of their homes with their sons, daughters, grand children. So the Old Age Homes for the senior citizens and creches for children uncared for, have come into being.

(2) **Geographical factor** : Another great important factor allied with **Demography** is the country's physical factor. The geographical conditions of the country cause change. Recently we have been witnessing various physical changes of the countries afflicted tragically with natural catastrophies, like, Tsunami, earthquake, Katerina etc. These have brought about great changes in the life situations of the people concerned. The affected people suffer from tremendous constraints in various aspects of their lives. Loss of many lives is the common phenomenon in all these disasters.

The positive side prominent in these tragic occurrences is the common people's involvement in the process of alleviating the miseries of the afflicted people. The social processes like, co-operation, accommodation and expression of human behaviour towards the suffering millions reveal the social nature of the people.

(3) **Industrialisation and modernisation of society** : The third important factor of social change is the industrialisation and modernisation of society. Various industries have grown in different places of the country. Division of Labour, —the basic feature of social development has brought with it specialisation in different fields. So the appearance of specialists in multifarious occupations and vocations has created tremendous changes in the social structure and function. The phenomenon of social mobility has taken place. As a result, those people having greater capabilities belonging to the unprivileged sections of society, are getting better job opportunities. With industrialisation is allied modernisation in attitudes and mental set up. The modern people have been trying to rationalise everything. So some of the people have been fighting against the social ills, like superstition, orthodoxy, prides and prejudices, caste system and religious fundamentalism etc. But modernism has not penetrated everywhere. So the social ills, mentioned above, are still in existence.

(4) **Political factor** : Next important factor is the political factor. The politics is related to the overall administrative system of a country. The political condition and structure cause social change in structure and function of society. For example, India is a Sovereign, Socialist, Secular and Democratic Republican State. This state ensures for all its citizens, justice—social, economic and political, liberty, equality and fraternity. India has a **multi-party system**. Naturally, conflicts in ideologies are prominent. The party-

in-power exerts its influence upon socio-economic status of people. Education is always being influenced by the political aspirations of the party-in-power. Education in its objectives, contents, method, teacher's status, the nature of school is being governed by the political system, prevalent in a state. Not only educational change but also change in groups and associations are very common due to political party system. Politicisation of education is the order of the day, which has robbed educational system of its autonomy and free thinking. Moreover, political intolerance poses danger to the safety and security of the people.

(5) Urbanisation : Urbanisation, the product of Industrial development causes change in social structure and functions. Urban culture affects human life to a great extent. The growth of nuclear families, elite class of people, increasing number of educated and employed women, establishment of new types of schools, colleges and universities, new employment opportunities, the growth of training centres, old age homes and creches are the positive social and cultural outcome of urbanisation. Urbanisation has some ill effects upon society. These are like the following, imbalance among people, educational inequality, gap between rural and urban community, negligence of children in nuclear families, where both the parents are employed, artificiality, too much exposure to media, like TV, too much consumerism, air pollution, unprecedented stress and strain in life conditions, unhealthy competitive attitude among people, etc.

(6) Contributions of outstanding individuals or groups : The contributions of outstanding individuals or groups of individuals to social change cannot be ignored. In our Indian scenario, the roles of Raja Rammohon Ray, Vidyasagar, Rabindranath, Swami Vivekananda, Gandhi and others are worth-mentioning. The abolition of Suttee Pratha, Child-marriage, polygamy, unfettering women from the shackles of ignorance and ignominy, spread of mass education, fighting against social ills, secularisation of education etc. are the remarkable contributions of the great persons, mentioned above.

(7) The role of Religion : Religion plays a dominant role in the sphere of social change. India is a multi-religious state and so different religious bodies have influenced society in its structure and function. The Brahmo religious movement pioneered by Raja

Rammohaon Ray and later developed by Keshab Chandra Sen, Devendranath Tagore and others made an attempt to control the growing tendency of the Indians to be converted into Christianity. A new group appeared under the banner of Brahmo religion. The liberalisation of religious ideas, the rational approach to religion paved the way for modernism in social fabric. The Arya Samaj movement led by Dayanand Saraswati, Theosophical Society founded by Annie Besant had great impact upon men and society of India. The greatest impact upon the common people of India had been felt when Shri Ramakrishna-Vivekananda propagated the **Vedantic Socialism**. The prophet of Modern India, Shri Ramakrishna preached the ideal that various religious beliefs are the various ways to reach God who is One and Secondless. To Swami Vivekananda, the miserable, the suffering, the poor, the illiterate, the down-trodden are the sparks of Divine and to serve them is to serve God. This ideal of religious harmony was also practised and propagated by M. K. Gandhi. To him, Rama and Rahim are the same. Other than these religions, Sufism, Christianity, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, Vaishnava religion, Sakto, Saiva, Ganapatya and Saura religious groups have influenced society to a great extent. The formation of various groups, the observance of different rites and rituals, the myths, folkways, mores have been found to play their roles in society. Educational institutions like Tols, Pathshalas, Madrassahs, and Maktabs originated on the basis of religion. Now, the spread of secular culture and education has eased to some extent the tension created by religious fundamentalists. The Radhakrishnan Commission of 1948-49 proposed that the educational institutions should preach among the students the lessons of **universal religion**, like, Tolerance, Justice, Truth, Equality, Fraternity, Honesty, etc. **Religion** is derived from **Religure**—the meaning of which is unity and Religion is realisation. Social change can be made progressive if religion in its true sense can be practised among people.

(8) **The Scientific and Technological Factor** : The scientific invention and technological advancement have changed society beyond measure. The information technology has brought within the four walls of every man the treasures of knowledge about every branch of studies. Technology has annihilated the distance between a man and another. Different countries, nations have come closer to

one another. Through the intermixture of thoughts and ideas, new culture, new attitudes, values, habits are being developed. Naturally, society has undergone changes in various aspects of life. New vocations, occupations, new value-systems have changed the life-patterns of people. Educational system has been profoundly influenced by Technology. The new techniques are being used everywhere. Unprecedented specialisation in the different fields of study is the offshoot of technological advancement.

We must mention the role of education in the sphere of social change. Education as a social process, as an institution and as an instrument, is one of the most important factors of social change. Education together with all the important factors of social change can tremendously influence people's lives in society. It is education alone which can equalise all the extremes and reconcile the differences. So Educational Sociology is greatly concerned with education and its role in society in its various aspects.

[♦ *The role of education in social change has been discussed separately in this chapter*]

Ramifications of Social Change :

Following the views of Prof. Bottomore, we may say that social change may be **Cyclic** and **Linear**. The linear order may be divided into two—the **Evolutionary** and the **Deterministic**.

In the **cyclic order** of social change, the occurrences reaching the culminating point again come back to the time of commencement. Here the repetitions of the same events are found to occur. That is why, there is a saying, 'History repeats itself'. Pareto's circulation of Elite theory explains the influence of elite classes upon the mass of old order. The domination of the ruler upon the ruled is perennial. In case the ruled class attains the qualities or strength of the ruler they can possess power and become the ruler. This process goes on in a cyclic order and this process has an impact upon the social, political and economic spheres. Specially, economic prosperity determines power in society.

Linear order of Social Change : According to this theory, social change is as continuous as a line. The events of this social change are different from one another and are unique in themselves.

This **linear theory** has been interpreted differently by Auguste Comte, Marx, Hobhouse and others. According to Marx social change