

SOCIAL CHANGE

Change is the law of nature. What is today shall be different from what it would be tomorrow. Modern world is a world of rapid change. People too much change and acquire the facility of change. The social structure is also subject to change. Over a period of fifty years the government is changed. Family, religion etc., are also changed. Our understanding of the society will not be complete unless we take into consideration the changeable nature of society; however, differences emerge and discover the direction of change. So let us see what is social change and its characters.

Definition

The word 'change' denotes a difference in anything observed over some period of time. Following are some of the definitions.

- 1) **Jones:** Social change is a term used to describe variations in or modifications, of any aspect of social process, social patterns, social interaction or social organisation.
- 2) **Gillin and Gillin:** Social changes are variations from the accepted modes of life; whether due to alteration in geographical conditions, in cultural equipment, composition on the population or ideologies and whether brought about by diffusion or inventions within the group.
- 3) **Davis:** Social change is change in the relationships.

Factors influencing Social Change

Social change has occurred in all societies and in all periods of time. But the rate of change differs from society to society. In one society the rate is rapid while in another it is slow. There are various factors which determine the rate and direction of social change. Some of the factors are:

I. Biological Factors

By biological factors we mean the factors that determine the number, composition, the selection and the hereditary quality of the successive generations. Every human element in society is always changing. If we compare ourselves with our parents, we will know that we are different from them in our make-up, ideas and in most other

things. No new generation is an exact replica of the old. Each new generation is a new beginning.

The changes in population in both number and composition have effect on society. For example, in a society where the number of girls is greater than the number of male children one will find out a different system of courtship, marriage and family organisation from where the case is reverse.

II. The Physical Factors

The surface of our planet is never at rest. There are slow geographical changes as well as occasional convulsions of nature in storm, earthquakes and floods. These changes in the physical environment sometimes bring about important changes in society. The flood in India may hasten the birth of model village in place of those which have been washed off or they may lead to the construction of dams in order to prevent future floods.

III. Technological Factors

Technology affects society greatly. A variation in technology causes a variation in some institution or custom. The introduction of machine technology as a result of the discovery of the new sources energy has made such far-reaching consequences that it is often described as a '*revolution*'. Invention and discovery are significant characteristics of our age. The present age is often called the "*age of power*", the scientific age. For example mechanisation has changed not only the economic structure of society but also led to a study devaluation of old forms of social organisation and old ideologies.

a) Changes in the production technology:

Our attitudes, beliefs and traditions have crumbled before technological advance. Take the familiar example of status of women in industrial age. Industrialism has destroyed the domestic system of production, brought women from the home to the factory and the office and distinguished their earnings. It has meant a new social life for women. Changes in agricultural techniques have affected the rural community. With the invention of new agricultural tools, chemicals and fertilizers agricultural production has and thereby the standard of living of rural people raised. Fewer people needed for agriculture. Consequently many agricultural labourers shifted to cities.

b) Changes in the means of communication

The changes in the means of communication have also affected the social life greatly. However, the changes in the means of communication depend upon the production technology, for example, the newspaper and automobile are industrial products that have been made possible by modern technological developments.

The primary techniques of communication are speech and gesture, which greatly influences the intimacy and understanding between people of different societies and groups. The press has influenced entertainment, education, politics, and trade. Similarly radio, telegraph, telephone, television, etc, has influenced the business, public opinion, recreation and furthered the development of new modes of organisation.

d) Derivative Social Effects

Invention influences the institution or customs. The influence does not stop there, but continues on and on. For example, the influence of cotton gin in USA was to increase cotton process more quickly with less labour. But cotton cultivation could not be increased without more labour. So additional Negroes were brought from outside and slavery grew very rapidly. The increase in slavery was the second derivative influence of the cotton gin. The increase in slavery led to the Civil War, the third derivative influence of the cotton gin.

e) Social inventions may bring social changes

Technological invention may also give rise to social inventions. Social inventions are inventions that are not materials and not a discovery in natural science. Non-cooperation movement, boycott, representations, old age pensions, juvenile court, civil service, matrimonial bureau, rotary and other such clubs, are some of the examples of social inventions. So non-material inventions are social inventions. This social invention brings about social changes. It is quite evident.

IV. Cultural Factors

The social and cultural factors are so closely interwoven. All cultural changes involve social change. Culture is not something static. Culture gives directions to social behaviour. The Gandhism has influenced economic and social order.

Indicators of social change

1. Nutrition - Calories consumed per head, protein consumption quantity, etc.
2. Clothing - Quantity and quality of cloth used per head.
3. House - Number of houses for the population. Normally one house should be available for five members.
4. Health - Number of hospitals, beds, nurses and doctors available per 10,000 populations.
5. Education - Percentage of children going to school, literacy level, women literacy level, technical education facility available at school and colleges, etc.
6. Media exposure - Number of radio sets, TV sets, cinema seats, newspaper, etc. Per 10,000 populations.
7. Communication - Length of railways, black topped road, and transport number of vehicles, etc for 10000 population and number of post office and maximum distance for the population to walk to the post office.
8. Energy - Percentage of village and town with electricity, domestic consumption of electricity, number of pump sets in cultivation, etc.
9. Proportion of industrial workers
10. Birth and death - Decreased trend in both the birth and death is a good indicator of rate society's development.
11. Urbanization - Proportion of population living in urban area, proportion of population living in slums, etc.