The Concept of Social Change and State Intervention in India

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Abstract - Like any other society Indian society, too, has been changing. However, the paceof change increased rapidly since the advent of British rule in India. British colonial rule had a profound impact on Indian society. This change took place both in itsstructure and functioning. Then came independence and what makes the socialchange in the contemporary Indian society specially significant and noteworthy isthe fact that, to a great extent, it is planned, sponsored, directed and controlledby the state. Since the last decade or so Globalisation has entered into the economic,social-cultural, and political spheres of Indian society adding yet another dimension to social change in Indian society.
Keywords: Social Change, State Intervention, India.

Introduction - India with her long history and varied heritage is one of the traditional societies with its structure deep rooted in traditions. The Indian Society has a long history as it was divided into four categories since time immemorial and was known as "Chaturvarnasystem."[1]Before and during the Vedic period such divisions were based on merit and performance with no concept of high and low with regard to the functions and duties. However the system degenerated into various castes with the concept of:

1. High and low.
2. Touchableand untouchable.
3. Plethora of do's and don'ts.

This situation completely restricting the upward social mobility and even the horizontal social mobility crippling people's pride and self-esteem of various segments of Indian Society who were degraded in lower social strata called "Shudra" and "Atishudra" categories. A pyramidal stratified social structure with absolutely no social mobility was thus born.

Discussions: In Indian, the development of individual and development of his personality were and are totally restricted and not only the social mobility was and is adversely affected but even national unity and integration too were and are badly affected which in past resulted in the occupation of this country by various foreign forces taking advantage of fragmented Indian Society which remained non-cooperative in safeguarding of its borders due to the caste system. Unless such rigid caste based hierarchy is changed with changing times, the conflict arising out of such caste hierarchical practices would certainly go on harming the Indian society and its progress,

development, unity and integrity of the nation. Various social legislations were brought into force, few before independence and a couple of them after independence inorder to create a society which is free from caste prejudice and hatred. The caste based untouchability (touch-me-not-ism) is a stigma to Indian Society which is not known to exist anywhere in the world in the same mode, manner and form as it existed in India. Not only it divided people on caste lines but it also encouraged the concept of high and low, pious and profane which socially, economically, politically, educationally and religiously degraded lower castes, communities and tribes to such an extent that such people belonging to such lower strata could not feel that they are human beings but considered themselves as sub-human beings and at times their plight was worse than animals. Thus, the hierarchical social order based on Chaturvarna and multiplicities of numerous castes brought such evil as elaborated above.

A very strange legal structure was created in history of Indian society by various Smrutis/Samhitas to enforce unjust, unfair and unreasonable social and religious practices of this land on caste lines. The sentences / punishments / penalties for the same offence or misconduct were different for Brahmins and Shudras and other strata of the Society based on caste-hierarchy. Such unjust legal structure solidly stood till the advent of foreigners' rule in India. The Muslim or the British rulers [3]did little for effective law / legislation for social change related to abolition of caste. The independence of nation brought new hope and cheers for millions of people in India who suffered unimaginable miseries and hardships, atrocities and

highhandedness at the hands of people who were hierarchically higher in the societal pyramid of the Indian Society. Various societal social reform movements and great leaders too played a significant role in this direction.India's transition towards modernization has been a slow and continuous process. It was during the early part of the nineteenth century that the traditional social structure of India underwent some changes. Attempts were made to explain these early social changes in India through the concepts like Sanskritization and Westernization.

Sanskritization: According to M.N.Srinivas (1952), Sanskritizationis a process of cultural mobility in the traditional social society of India. It is explained as "the process by which a low caste or tribal or other group changes its customs, rituals, ideology and way of life in the direction of a high and frequently 'twice born' caste". As per the views of Srinivas, (1996) the mobility associated with Sanskritization results only in 'positional changes' in the system, but does not lead to any significant structural changes. Hence the concept serves very little purpose in understanding the contemporary social changes in the Indian society.

Westernization: With the establishment of British Raj in India, the impact of Western philosophy and science referred to as 'Westernization' introduced reason into daily habits and made Indians realize the meaninglessness of many ancient prejudices and customs. Westernization in a way changed the life patterns of Indians and created new values. The vision of the average Indian, so long closed and severely confined was enlarged and liberalized to some extent. Exposure to English literature, history and political institutions made them to adopt humanitarian outlook and promoted in them an active concern for welfare of all human beings (Kuppuswami, 1972). It brought many changes in the Indian elite ranging fromtheir speech, clothing, and food habits to certain value changes like equalitarianism and secularism. Western influence thus, has been a very important source of social change in India. However, the process failed to bring about basic changes in the masses. The process did not foster any changes in the value orientation and attitudes of the broader strata of society. Thus the changes instituted by Westernization had an elitist bias and failed to touch the broad local and grass root levels of the people (Eisenstadt, 1966). Also the changes introduced as a result of Westernization were limited only to the administrative and technical fields as against the deeper social and cultural spheres of lifq. Thus the concept of Westernization is too narrow to stand for the wider and complex processes of modernization in developing countries (Chekki, 1974).

'Social change' in its broadest sense is change in social relations of a society. In this sense, social change is an on-going phenomenon in any society. The specific meaning of social change is described by various development and modernization theorists. Changes in a small group of people such as a village community are important at the level of the group itself. However, such changes are also important at the level of the larger society. Patterns of social change at the larger society become discernible only over a long period of time unless of course the society undergoes a revolutionary change which would change both its social structure and organization. Development and modernization theories describe the long-term and large-scale changing patterns of a society.

Definitions of Social Change: According to Lundberg and others "Social Change refers to any modification in established patterns of inter-human relationship and standards of conduct."[4]The definition is very apt and properly encompasses all ingredients of the social change. The establishedpattern of inter-human relationship between Caste Hindus and Scheduled.

Castes was that of touch-me-not-ism as the same was thought to be polluting them i.e. the Caste Hindus. The social change in the above dogmatic stratification really called for modification in the changing and already changed social scenario following independence in 1947 and following coming in force the Constitution of India.

Vidya Bhushan and D.R. Sachdeva observed, "Change is the law of nature what is to-day shall be different from what it would be to-morrow. The social structure is subject to incessant change Society is an ever changing phenomenon, growing, decaying, renewing and accommodating itself to changing conditions and suffering vast modifications in the course of time.[5]The word "change" denotes a difference in anything observed over some period of time.

"Social change is a term used to describe variations in, or modifications of, any aspect of social processes, social patterns, social interaction or Social Organization." Jones.[6] According to Mazumdar, H.T. "Social change may be defined as a new fashion or mode, either modifying or replacing the old, in the life of a people, or in the operation of a Society."[7] As per Gillin&Gillin, "Social changes are variations from the accepted modes of life; whether due to alteration in geographical conditions, in cultural equipment, composition of the population, or ideologies and whether brought about by diffusion or inventions within the group."[8]As per Davis, "Social change is meant only for such alterations as occur in social Organization, that is, structure and functions of Society."[9] According to Merril&Eldredge, "Social change means that a large number of persons are engaging in activities that differ from those which they or their immediate forefathers engaged in sometime before."[10]

Modernisation: Modernisation has been a dominant theme after the second world war speciallyin nineteen fifties and sixties and a central concept in the 'sociology of development,'referring to the interactive process of economic growth and social change.

Modernisation studies typically deal with the effects of economic development ontraditional social structures and

values. The process of modernisation is related tothe industrialisation, urbanisation, high standard of living, development of civilizationand broadness of view point. Defining modernisation Eisenstadt (1966) says that"from a historical viewpoint modernisation is the process of change towards thosetypes of social, economic, and political systems which were developed in Western Europe and North America from the 17th to 19th century and after that spread over to South America. Asia, and Africa during the 19th and 20th centuries".

Let us see verybriefly as to how the contemporary Indian society is striving to adopt modernisation for economic growth and social change. On the agricultural and industrial frontsthe country's performance is not as poor as some of its critics make it out. Ourrecord in these fields is better than that of many Third World countries. But thedevelopment has been lopsided and full of regional imbalances. The distributiveaspects of economic growth and the diffusion of the benefits of modernisationappear to have received little serious thought. The growth of elitism is alarmingand it should be curbed. Rampant corruption and nepotism are the product of theprevailing state of moral decay. All possible political and administrative stepsshould be taken to arrest this trend. The cohesive bonds of society should be strengthened.

Conclusion: After going through definitions of Social change, it is pertinent to know the nature of social change. Social change is universal phenomenon as the same occurs in all societies. Society is never static. Both primitive as well as civilized society also undergoes changes.The

process of change may be fast or slow depending upon people concerned. Social change is community change as the same involves not only a singleindividual but more people are concerned with it. It is a change which occurs in the lives of many persons in entire community. The speed of social change differs from society to society. Though the same occurs in all societies, its speed differs from society to society as its speed is not uniform. As experience shows, social change in urban areas is faster than in rural areas. The speed of social change differs from age to age. The speed of social change to-day is faster than it was in medieval times. This is because factors which cause social change, do not remain uniform or even their existence may not be there. The factors like industrialization, urbanization, education etc. give impetus to social change.

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