

Education and Social Change

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Change is a continuous process. All things, ideas, civilization, culture and principles of the world are changeable. The situation that existed ten years before does not exist today and it will not be so ten years after. There will be a change in it. Change is law of life. Social means concerning society and change means deviation from existing pattern. In this sense, social change means change in the structure and functions of human society. In fact, human life is not static. It is under a constant change in the ideas, attitudes and values of an individual. This changing process brings changes in the social structure and in other special attributes also.

Key Words- Social Change, Education. Society

Let's take our own Indian society. Things and objects which we use today were never dreamt of by our forefathers. Different types of machines, gadgets, vehicles of transport and entertainment devices, which are in common use today, were not even heard a hundred years ago. Not only this, new problems and challenges are now confronting human beings in all fields of life and human mind is endeavoring to find solutions of them through researches, investigations and up to date inventions. In fact, styles of living are changing so fast today that it is difficult to keep pace with the changing ideas, beliefs, life, styles and material pursuits for more and more human welfare. This change in social structure is known as social change.

In his process of development, man makes new scientific invention and creates new ideas through imagination and because of the activity of his mind, he tries to bring to light new researches or discoveries. In this effort to adaptation to natural and social environment, he brings change. Sometimes, he faces grave dangers as a result of bringing change in nature and he brings about changes in this effort too. He falls ill from time to time and in his effort to get rid of diseases, he brings change in medicines and treatment through new discoveries. Similarly, he develops his means

by developing his culture and then extends his culture all rounds. All these efforts bring change which is brought about by man.

The process of change is eternal and universal. At some places it is visible and others it is not. It is easy to experience some, whereas some that are very slow are difficult to be understood. Man is surrounded by so many complex and different cultural and social elements that he hardly understand the changes that takes place or that will take place. In his effort of adaptation to environment, man develops new feelings, aspiration, habits and ideals and brings change in them from time to time. For bringing change in nature, he takes the help of science. For example, constructing roads by cutting mountains, making barren lands fertile, constructing bridges by checking the flow of rivers and preparation of dams and canals are some of such efforts. Similarly, he changes the breed of plants. Not only this, now man is also changing the breed of birds and animals.

Inventions have an important place in bringing social changes. Revolutionary changes have come about in social life due to inventions. There was a time when man did not know how to produce fire and he had no other means except going on foot. But as a result of inventions so many changes have come about that the entire society has now changed. To-day

distance is no problem for man .He can move on earth, air and water with speed .Inventions after inventions are taking place due to which society is changing speedily. The process of inventions will not stop ,because in order to meet the shortcoming of one ,another invention takes place .Society ,too, adopt these changes .Thus ,we see that through inventions man bring one change after the other society.

Social change is a continuous process, which may be slow or rapid; the conscious efforts of some thinkers give it a jolt sometimes. Social change implies changes in the social structure and functions of the various units which form society, for example, changes in the structure and functions of the family, the school, the laws of marriage and inheritance, labour regulations and others. Some thinkers identify social change with cultural change—which in the narrow sense refers to changes in customs, speech and literary forms, language, dress or hair styles. Changes in the structure of society take place at a much slower rate than changes in function. Cultural change is an important aspect of social change, and occurs in a series or cycles, influenced by other forms of culture.

Cultural change may be of different varieties:

(a) Changes Related to Material Culture:

These changes relate to material goods and their uses. For example, the use of car in place of a tonga, change in the use of the flush system in place of outdoor latrine, replacing of dhoti by slacks, and other form of visible changes.

(b) Changes in Non-Material Culture: Here the change in the thought and the value system, for example, the idea of simplicity in marriage ceremonies in place of three-day hospitality for the barat and hundreds of guests. Such changes may occur in relation to one's attitude towards harijan students in the school or attitude towards learning Hindi as a compulsory national language. These changes in attitude would be cultural changes.

Social change, according to Hart, may be used in a collective sense to include both cultural and social ways.

Ogburn, suggest that social and cultural change

or evolution needs a favourable environment, and this may be brought by three factors;

- i. Acculturation—Man takes his birth in a certain culture .He learns that culture by assimilating it from the earliest period .His home ,family and society transmit cultural patterns and behaviour to him .Each generation of human beings acquire culture in a similar way from the previous generation .
- ii. Diffusion – Changes in culture also come about through a diffusion or distribution of cultural traits from one culture to another. People, special children, acquire cultural traits from others .For example, smoking cigarettes, tea-drinking, wearing western dress, are results of diffusion of culture. Similarly, preference for wheat bread in southern states of India, where mostly rice was eaten formerly, and dosa has become favorite dish in the northern cities, is an example of cultural diffusion.
- iii. Ideas are important factors in bringing about social change and these may be found in inventions. Sometimes many intellectual, religious or scientific changes come about through inventions in the different fields of technology, art, agriculture and other areas. For example, the Renaissance in Europe which brought about tremendous social, cultural and intellectual change was the result of many new and explosive ideas. The Industrial Revolution whose effect shook the world in the 19th century, and brought about many useful as well as harmful results, was based on inventions in science.

After independence ,a great desire for change in social ,economic and educational conditions has been the goal in India .The Five Year Plans ,Commission ,Acts and movements for progress have been set afloat to achieve what we had hoped for ,after gaining independence .Every citizen of India looks forward at each Independence Day and Republic Day celebration ,with a glimmer of hope that the coming years may bring what he has awaited for so long .It has been pointed out by most thinkers, that education has much to do with social change and that this will lead to other

changes. Hence we may examine the relationship between education and social change here.

The relationship functions in three ways:

- (A) Education as a Condition of Social Change.
- (B) Education as an Instrument of Social Change.
- (C) Education as a Result of Social Change.

We shall examine these three types of relationships.

(A) Education as a Condition of Social Change:

The most important agent of change is education, it is expected to change the attitudes and values among people and create in them a desire for progress. Education can help in increasing contemporary knowledge and in the dissemination of information on current facts. Scientific ideas can be spread among people through education. Educational leaders, planners and politicians have laid great emphasis on the power of education to usher in social change in the country. Towards this end, there has been an expansion in education--at the school, college and university level. Teachers' colleges, technical institutes and laboratories have been established in many parts of the country. Many foreign aid programmes in education and scientific development have been operating for several years and foreign experts in science and education have come in to give assistance in their educational programmes. Refresher courses, seminars and workshops for long and short periods of days and weeks, have been held for teachers at all levels in the country. All this in the name of education for change.

A result of this tremendous surge in educational expansion and effort has been that the number of students in schools and colleges has increased tremendously. A conscious desire to go to school and to be educated has seized people not only from the upper classes, but people from the lower and poor classes now demand an education for their children. Education has enabled many children from the poorer strata of society to go ahead and to obtain a profession, followed by a job, and then a better status than their father had in his life. The

outlook of many people has changed also due to this opportunity for education.

Equality of educational opportunity also exists for those who are mentally or physically handicapped, blind, and deaf and so on. Government, local body or private aided institutions exist for them; these advantages can be availed of by all who need them. However, the number of such institutes is still limited, and enough of them have not been established, specially in the rural areas. Both the National Policy on Education of 1986, and the Ramamurti Report of 1990 emphasize the large scale expansion of facilities for education of the physically and the mentally handicapped in both rural and urban areas.

(B) Education As An Instrument of Social Change :

Any society desirous of reform and progress needs various means and aids towards this end. Such an instrument, and one of the most important, is education. Education can impart knowledge, training and skills as well as inculcate new ideas and attitudes among the young. Many of the old superstitious beliefs and obsolete values which prevent progress, can, through education, be changed in favour of enlightened ideas. Much of the backwardness and poverty of the masses, as pointed out by Gandhiji is due to illiteracy and ignorance; hence education can be the instrument of rescuing them from their plight. The Basic Scheme of Education was designed as an instrument of social change. In its objectives, curricula and approach, we discover all the elements of a dynamic plan to change. Gandhiji's ashrams at Sabarmati and Sevagram were indeed places where incredulous, suspicious and doubting visitors began to believe in the potentiality of education in bringing about change.

Parents-teacher's meetings, Open-House days and other ways of meeting adults in the neighborhood of the school are some of the ways of influencing society and bringing about social change. Several schools in different states are participating in the National Literacy Mission. Students at the secondary stage are acting as volunteer teachers to teach illiterate

people in the slums, as part of their SUPW.

(C) Education as a Result of Social Change:

If education is the result of social change, it means that social change has created a demand for education. We shall examine this by asking, what types of social changes have taken place?

Are the changes caused by political upheaval, industrialization, technological advancement, religious fervour? If their effect is a great demand for education, than the nature of education should be connected with the type of social change that occurred.

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