FACTORS OF SOCIAL CHANGE

Physical Environment and Social Change

Physical environment is the most important phenomenon which influences social life. There are slow as well as fast changes in physical environment. Disasters in the form of storms, floods, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, fire, seasonal variations etc. determine the form of social life. The prevalence of flora and fauna creates a social order based on it. Physical environment promotes and limits the growth of civilization. At poles and deserts, there will be a limited social life due to hostile climatic conditions for human living. The forces generated by the physical environment determine the form, growth and change in human society.

Some historians have expressed the view that even great civilizations of Egypt and Mesopotamia disappeared due to unfavourable physical environmental conditions. Availability of natural resources necessary for human life lead to settlement of human society around them. The depletion of natural resources after their exploitation leads to disintegration and change in human settlements. Misuse of physical environment by human beings resulted in green house effect, pollution, shortage of potable water and non-availability of land for houses in urban areas and so on.

In present day India, intensive agriculture operations resulted in green revolution and sufficiency in food production IJ~ at the cost of erosion in soil fertility and depletion of water table. Economic and technological developments led to ecological imbalance and damage to it. Physical environmental compulsions such as famines, droughts, floods, earthquakes led to human migration to distant places with a consequence of disruption to settled human life. Physical environmental compulsions effect social life by producing new ways of living and set of social relationships. It is now evident that physical environmental factors induce social change.

Demographic Factors of Social Change

Demography is the study of human population. 'Demos' is a Greek word

which means people. Demographic factors that induce social change are fertility, mortality, migration, changing age structure, sex ratio, age at marriage, patterns of marriage, child bearing age, life expectancy, use of contraceptives , levels and types of morbidity. These factors have a far reaching effect on society with the pressure to produce changes in social and political institutions.

In the developed countries of the world, the population growth is negative or . stable but in developing countries such as India it is alarmingly high. Both the trends cause social transformation. The countries where fertility and mortality Social Change: Concept is low, their standard of living is high and in the countries where it is high, and Factors Involved in Social Change their standard of living is low. The societies with high fertility rate are choked with over-population, infant and maternal mortality rate, child labour, unemployment, rural-to urban migration, shortage of services required for the sustainability of social life, family violence, marital breakdown, criminality and slums etc. In order to check high fertility rate, family welfare and planning measures were introduced. To start with, these measures were opposed and considered as irreligious, immoral and acquired social acceptance only with the passage of time. The social acceptance of family planning measures led to change in social attitudes and social values for forming a new society based on small family. Similarly, improvement in health measures, knowledge and awareness generation resulted in reduced mortality.

Another demographic factor of social change especially with reference to Indian society is the declining sex ratio. In traditional Indian society, female infanticide was a known practice due to preference for male child. The girls were considered a negative property, a burden on the family. The situation has further deteriorated in modern India with the introduction of pre-birth tests. Sex determination tests are being misused to kill the female foetus. The misuse of these tests has spread like wild fire in Indian society despite the ban on it through Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques Act, 1994 (PNDT, 1994). Declining sex ratio will bring in disastrous demographic, social, economic and even political consequences. There will be more violence

against women.

Changing age structure in all societies due to longevity and improved health measures will have its own fall out. In the past, it was young who made bulk of the population and there were relatively few old persons. Increase in the population of old persons will require more social and economic support systems. Failing health, loneliness, isolation and marginalization of old persons are creating new social problems. In nutshell, we can say that the whole social life is operationalized through demographic factors and changes in them will lead to social change.

-It is an established fact that social and economic life of human beings is integral part of each other. Economic aspect of social life is a primary feature of society. Human society, starting from hunting and gathering stage has passed through various stages to reach the present stage which is being dominated by industrial production, trade and commerce along with agriculture production and its distribution based on latest scientific techniques. Each successive stage brought with it, its own .form of social life, social relationships and social functions. Engels rightly said that "the ultimate causes of all social changes and political revolutions are to be sought not in the minds of men, in their increasing insight into the external truth and justice, but in changes in the mode of production and exchange." Elaborating the idea further Marx said, "The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society - the real foundation, on which rise legal and political super structures and to which correspond definite form of social consciousness. It indicates that economic influences are powerful and penetrating on social life." The prevailing economic system determines the social relationships and social functions. The agriculture system of production had a different type of social life as compared to industrial system of production. It has been found that countries with high per capita income tend to have lower fertility rate than those with lower incomes. Since high income is linked to industrial, technological, and educational development, this fact supports the argument that people tend to have fewer children when they are prosperous. The pool; uneducated, people living in slums and rural

areas had high fertility rate resulting in population explosion throughout the world.

In subsistence economies, people produced their own household goods, distributed and consumed them as compared to modern market economy where work is something, people carry out to earn money. It means work is not only social activity but also economic activity. In earlier times, village was considered a self sufficient unit but in market economy, total village life is dependent on outside market forces resulting in new social attitude, social values and social relationships. In the modern world, economic disruption brings with it a set of social problems.

Technological Factors of Social Change

Technological changes have converted the world into a global village and produced profound social changes. Industry, agriculture, transportation, communication, sources of energy, food processing, housing, and physical environment are influenced by technological changes. Almost all the technological developments brought about changes in social living, interaction patterns and social life.

Some of the major influences of technological factors on social life are as follows:

1) Changes in the institution of family such as from joint family system to nuclear family system; employment of females outside the 'household; change in the role and relationship of husband and wife; changes in the patterns of courtship; inter-caste and late marriage; increase in divorce rate; small family size due to the use of technological devices for birth control; reduced role of family in social control and neglect of the elderly due to changes in the social attitudes and social values.

2) Changes in the very basis of social stratification; reduced effect of caste system on employment and day-to-day living; development of individualization and decline in community life; commercialization of recreation; problems related to migration and developments of slums in urban areas; stress and strain as a result of competition and fast-paced

life; reduced role of superstitions in day-to-day life; emotional instability

and occasional economic disruption and insecurity.

SOCIAL ATTITUDES, SOCIAL VALUES AND

SOCIAL CHANGE

Social attitudes and social values are invisible though they govern tlle whole

gamut of human life in an important manner. In modern day terminology,

social values and social attitudes are software for running the affairs of human

society. Social relationships, social functioning and social behaviour are the

outcome of social attitudes and social values. Acceptance and resistance to

social change is actualized through social attitudes and social values.

Social attitude is an orientation towards a person, situation, institution or social

process that is held to be indicative of underlying values and beliefs. Social

attitude is manifested through social behaviour, social relationships, and social

functioning. MacIver and Page explained social attitudes as "subtle, complex

I and changeful modes of consciousness. They are constantly being modified

by our training, our reflection, our health, our circumstances of every sort. I When we attribute an attitude to a person, we can judge its character only by

I certain external signs - looks, gestures, words. These signs suggest to us fear,

! love or pity". MacIver and Page classified social attitudes in three types which

tend to prevent, to limit or to promote social relationships. Accordingly, they

named these attitudes as dissociative, restrictive and associative. These social

attitudes produce a feeling and social interaction reflecting "inferiority,

superiority, neutrality, association or dissociation." The detail of social attitudes

as given by MacIver and Page are as follows:-

1) Attitudes implying sense of inferiority in the subject with respect to the

object of attitude:

a) Dissociative: Dread, fear, terror, envy, rashfulness.

b) Associative: Gratitude, hero-worship, emulation.

C) Restrictive: Awe, veneration, worship, devotion, humility, submissiveness,

modesty, snobbishness.

2) Attitudes implying sense of superiority in the subject:

a) Dissociative: Disgust, Abhorrence, repugnance, scorn, contempt, disclaim, intolerance, arrogance.

b) Associative: Pity, protectiveness

C) Restrictive: Pride, patronage, tolerance, forbearance.

3) Attitudes implying neither sense of inferiority nor superiority but neutrality : 1 in the subject:

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L a) Dissociative: Hate, dislike, aversion, distrust, suspicion, spitefulness, malice, cruelty.

b) Associative: Sympathy, affection, trust, tenderness, love, friendliness, kindliness, courtesy, helpfulness.

c) Restrictive: Rivalry, competitiveness, jealousy.

MacIver and Page also expressed the view that the classification of social attitudes is just illustrative not exhaustive. "An attitude is not a static possession of the individual. It is always a change valuation."

No doubt social attitudes and social values are interlinked but still these differ from each other so far their explanation and application is concerned. Social values are ideas held by the members of society about ethical or appropriate social behaviour. Social values depict what is right or wrong, desirable or undesirable.

Cultural Lag

Cultural lag concept was introduced by American Sociologist William Fielding Ogburn during 1922. Ogburn studied the impact of technological change on culture and found that various parts of culture changed differently.

Ogburn described culture consisting of two parts; one is material and the other non-material. Material culture includes manufactured goods, factories, houses, cars- in short, all material objects, as well as inventions and technological changes. For non-material culture Ogburn used the term adaptive culture. It includes social institutions, such as family, religion, education, economic and political. The non-material culture also includes value systems based on customs, modes and folkways.

Ogburn's basic thesis is that non-material culture tends to change slower than

material culture. The reason for the rate of slow change is based on prevailing social practices being supported by religious groups, social values and social attitudes. Ogburn gave an example of family within which some adjustments . are made to material change. With the progress of industry certain manufacturing activities such as weaving, soap making and tanning etc. moved out of the household to the factory system. The factory system required more females to work outside the house. At the same time females were expected to continue to fulfil their traditional domestic responsibilities. This resulted in wide gap between the demand for female workers and the pressure on them to stay back at home. This phenomenon caught the attention of Ogburn to which he coined the term cultural lag, that is the delay between a change in the material culture and response of the adaptive culture.

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Limitations of Social Change

All available knowledge and information indicates that the material world existed I before human beings arrived the scene. Once the human beings came into existence, may be through design or chance or process of evolution, they started manipulating the physical environment for their betterment. In the process, human beings invented the instruments and started developing technology for their material and non-material progress. These developments were out of the compulsions of human beings required for their existence, continuation and making life more comfortable and happy. Human beings manipulated the I physical environment for the gratification of their needs. All these actions and interactions constructed and produced a human society which is undergoing changes since its inception. The changes, of which major part is social in nature are not without limitations like any other phenomenon. The major limitations are:

1) social change is complex in nature.

2) social change is pluralistic. I

3) social change brings social isolation in certain cases.

4) social change brings uncertainties.

5) social change in certain situations brings conflict with it.

6) sometimes, it may lead to social disintegration, and

7) it is difficult to predict the outcome of social change.