

10.SocialChange

(Meaning,Nature&Theories)

For
B.A. (Pol.Sc.(Hons.)
Degree Part-I, Paper-I

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Meaning

- The word “change” denotes a difference in anything observed over some period of time. Social change, therefore, would mean observable differences in any social phenomena over any period of time.
- In the realm of Political Science, the social change implies a transformation in the pattern, behaviour and conduct of society due to interaction of many forces, mainly Political. For e.g. The introduction of affirmative action or say reservation has produced altogether a different kind of society and its impact has been felt not only in the social relation but also influenced the nature of engagement of politics with the society.

Definitions

- **Gillin and 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."
- **Lundberg and others** "Social change refers to any modification in established patterns of inter human relationships and standards of conduct."
- **Merrill and Eldredge** "Social change means that large number of persons are engaging in activities that differ from those which they or their immediate forefathers engaged in some time before."

Nature of Social Change

Universal Phenomenon-Every society undergoes the process of social change. No society is static. The speed and extent of change may differ from society to society. Several factors impact upon to precipitate the change and that could be from technological, communication to ideological changes.

Not Uniform-Changes are inevitable but all the society can not have the similar change. For e.g. The Globalization has effected different kind of changes from rupture to reinvigoration of some of the moribund society. Social change in urban areas within a modern society is different from rural area.

Nature of Social Change

- **Community Change**-social change does not refer to individual change rather it takes into account the entire community evolution. Of course, an individual can be the change agent but its all about the community change. Social change is social and not individual.
- **Nature and Extent differnt**:Different society experience different pace of change. the speed of social change differs from age to age. The reason is that the factors which cause social change do not remain uniform with the change in times. For e.g. Industrial development before independence was different than post independence in India.

Nature of Social Change

- **Definite prediction is improbable**-i.e. It is difficult to make any prediction about the exact forms of social change. For e.g. that industrialization will increase the speed of urbanization but we cannot predict the exact forms which social relationships will assume in future.
- **Natural**-Social change is not only desirable but natural, too. Our needs keep on changing. To satisfy our desire for change and our changing needs social change becomes a necessity. The truth is that we are anxiously waiting for a change. According to Green, 'The enthusiastic response of change has become almost a way of life.'

Theories of Social Change

- Evolutionary- According to this theory, social change move as a straight line from a primitive society to a more advanced society and key is the dynamics of change. **Hegel** was the chief proponent of this school of thought wherein he gives a method of 'dialectics'. According to it a society moves on three vectors and they are these,anti-thesis and the synthesis.
- **August Comte** used the description of theological, metaphysical and positive stages as progression in the path of social change.
- **Henry Maine** described the evolution from 'status to contract' as social change.

Theories of Social Change

- Later on Marx also provide the basis as “sui generis’ i.e. The changes are inevitable and bound to occur, of course the agent of social change, unlike Hegel’s **Geist** (i.e. spirit), would be the Materialist force (matter-in-motion).
- There are other important theorist who advocate not a unilinear patten of social change but a different kind, may be cyclical or zigzag social change. Henry Maine, Durkheim, William Ogbur represent this types within the Evolutionary theory.

Theory of Social Change...

- **Vilfredo Pareto** propounded the theory that societies pass through the periods of political vigour and decline which repeat themselves in cyclical fashion. The society according to him, consists of two types of people—one, who like to follow traditional ways whom he called rentiers, and those who like to take chances for attaining their ends whom he called as Speculators.

Functionalist theory of social change

It grew mainly as a reaction against Evolutionary theory. According to this view, society as a dynamic equilibrium system of number of interrelated parts, and its indispensable concepts are equilibrium and interdependence.

- Functionalism depending upon the concept of equilibrium, as a rule, focuses on the problem of totality in model-building of social system, and functionalism depending upon the concept of interdependence does on the problem of autonomy of subsystem. Talcott Parsons is a representative of the former, and Robert K. Merton is a representative of the latter.

3 sources of Change

(P. Van den Berghe)

1. *Adjustment* to external disturbances such as a recession in world trade.
2. *Structural differentiation* in response to problems within the system, e.g., electoral reforms in response to political unrest.
3. Creative *innovations* within the system, e.g., scientific discoveries or technological advances.

Economic Theory of Social Change

- Change is the order of nature and society. It is inherent in the matter through the contradiction of forces.
- Everything which exists comes into being on the basis of material course, arises and develops in accordance with the laws of motion of matter. Things come into being, exist and cease to exist, not each independent of all other things but each in its relationship with others.
- Its typically a Marxist notion of Social Change interpreted in terms of Economic determinant.

Criticisms

- Evolutionary theory was criticised heavily on many grounds but mainly for its sweeping or over-generalisation about historical sequences, uniform stages of development and evolutionary rate of change.
- The biological evolution, from which the main ideas of social evolution were borrowed, provided somewhat clumsy and unsatisfactory answers.

Reference

- Nash, Kate & Scott, Alan, The Blackwell Companion to Political Sociology, Blackwell Publishing, 2006
- https://www.jstor.org/stable/42743523?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents