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Definition, Nature, Factors & Theories

WHAT IS SOCIAL CHANGE?

- Change is an ever-present phenomenon.
- Society is not a static phenomenon, but a dynamic entity.
- Growing, decaying, renewing and accommodating.
- Technologies expand, ideologies and values take on new components; institutional functions and structures undergo reshaping.
- A social structure is a nexus of present relationships.
- Existing social structure is influenced by many factors and forces that cause it to change.



CHANGE IN SOCIETY

- The word 'change' denotes a difference in anything observed over some period of time.
- Social change is the change in society and society is a web of social relationships.
- Social relationships are social processes, social patterns and social interactions.
- Social change may be defined as changes in the social organization, that is, the structure and functions of the society.
- Social change means human change, since men are human beings.
- To change society, as says Davis, is to change man.



DEFINING CHANGE

- Jones “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”.
- Kingsley Davis, “By Social change is meant only such alternations as occur in social organization – that is, the structure and functions of society”.
- Maclver and Page, “Social change refers to a process responsive to many types of changes; to changes man has made in condition of life; to changes in the attitudes and beliefs of men; to the changes that go beyond the human control the biological and the physical nature of things”.
- Morris Ginsberg, “By social change, I understand a change in social structure, e.g., the size of the society, the composition or the balance of its parts or the type of its organization”.



MORE DEFINITIONS

- P. Fairchild “variations or modifications in any aspects of social process, pattern or form.”
- B. Kuppuswamy: the process in which there is significant alternation in the structure and functioning of a particular social system.
- M.D. Jenson, “... as modification in ways of doing and thinking of people.”
- As H.T. Mazumdar says, “Social change may be defined as a new fashion or mode, either modifying or replacing the old, in the life of people or in the operation of a society”.



EVEN MORE...

- According to Merrill and Eldredge, “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”.
- Anderson and Parker define, “Social change involves alternations in the structure or functioning of societal forms or processes themselves”.
- According Gillin and Gillin, “Social changes are variations from the accepted modes of life; whether due to alternation in geographical conditions, in cultural equipment, composition of the population or ideologies and brought about by diffusion, or inventions within the group.



SOCIAL & CULTURAL CHANGE

- By analyzing all the definitions mentioned above, we reach at the conclusion that the two type of changes should be treated as two aspects of the same social phenomenon.
- (i) changes in the structure of society, (Social)
- (ii) changes in the values and social norms which bind the people together and help to maintain social order. (Cultural).
- But these two are inseparable
- Cultural Lag



WHAT DOES THIS VIDEO TELL US?

o <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LGU8yjjJXD8>

CHARACTERISTICS OF SOCIAL CHANGE

- SOCIAL CHANGE IS SOCIAL
- SOCIAL CHANGE IS UNIVERSAL
- SOCIAL CHANGE OCCURS IS INEVITABLE
- SOCIAL CHANGE IS CONTINUOUS
- SOCIAL CHANGE ETHICALLY NEUTRAL
- SOCIAL CHANGE IS TEMPORAL
- RATE AND TEMPO OF SOCIAL CHANGE IS UNEVEN
- DEFINITE PREDICTION OF SOCIAL CHANGE IS IMPOSSIBLE



CHARACTERISTICS (CONTD..)

- SOCIAL CHANGE INFLUENCED BY MULTIPLE FACTORS
- SOCIAL CHANGE MAY BE SMALL/LARGE-SCALE
- SHORT-TERM AND LONG-TERM CHANGE
- SOCIAL CHANGE MAY BE PEACEFUL OR VIOLENT
- SOCIAL CHANGE MAY BE PLANNED OR UNPLANNED
- SOCIAL CHANGE MAY BE ENDOGENOUS OR EXOGENOUS
- CHANGE WITHIN AND CHANGE OF THE SYSTEM



CHANGE, EVOLUTION & PROGRESS

- 'Development', 'evolution' and 'progress' have different connotations and meanings.
- Development is a special form of social change.
- It implies changes in a direction treated as desirable by the members of society.
- **L.T. Hobhouse**, in his work **Social Development** (1924) proposed a four-fold criteria of development: **increase in scale, efficiency, mutuality and freedom.**
- Contemporary sociological literature: 'development' has been used firstly, to draw a distinction between the highly industrialised developed societies, and the societies which are predominantly rural and agricultural and have relatively low levels of income, i.e. the developing societies.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

- Secondly, it refers to the process by which the developing societies are now becoming industrialised.
- The strategy may differ from one society to another depending on the socio-cultural background and political and geographical situation.
- General connotation: growth in education, agriculture, industry, etc., simultaneously.
- As such, growth as a concept is a part of the process of development.
- Without growth, there can be no development.



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

- The objectives of development are formulated in terms of specific social and economic policies.
- Prominence of 'development': rise of welfare state.
- Planned & organised process of social change so as welfare of the people may be enhanced.
- E.g., the development objectives in India have been defined as those of modernization, economic growth, self-sufficiency and equality.
- Through Five Year Plans India have been formulating sets of social, economic and physical targets for introducing changes in society.



SOCIAL EVOLUTION

- Evolution in an organism means branching out from a single amoeba into different genera and species that are caused by the process of differentiation.
- In the case of a society, as **Gisbert** puts it in **Fundamentals of Sociology**, evolutionary change means ‘branching off of a line in various directions, which again ramify indefinitely’.
- Condition of simplicity changes into situations of complexity; development of social ways and customs, norms and beliefs, and associations and institutions.



SOCIAL EVOLUTION

- Social evolution: the process by which structural reorganization is affected through time, eventually producing a form or structure which is qualitatively different from the ancestral form”.
- Societies exist in complex social environments (i.e. with natural resources and constraints) and adapt themselves to these environments.
- Early evolution theories (Comte, Spencer & Morgan) claimed that societies start out in a *primitive* state and gradually become more *civilized* over time.
- Early approaches: humankind as a single entity.
- 20th-century approaches: changes specific to individual societies. Rejection of directional change.
- In *The Selfish Gene*, Richard Dawkins wrote “there are some examples of cultural evolution in birds and monkeys, but ... it is our own species that really shows what cultural evolution can do”.

SOCIAL EVOLUTION

- Both Spencer and Comte viewed society as a kind of organism subject to the process of growth.
- From simplicity to complexity, from chaos to order, from generalisation to specialisation, from flexibility to organisation.
- Societal growth can be divided into certain stages, have their beginning and eventual end.
- Growth is in fact social progress: each newer, more-evolved society is 'better'.
- Thus progressivism became one of the basic ideas underlying the theory of social evolutionism.



AUGUSTE COMTE: LAW OF THREE STAGES

- “The father of sociology”: the law of three stages
- the **theological stage** (man sought the explanation of natural phenomena from supernatural beings);
- through a **metaphysical stage** (man sought the explanation of natural phenomena from natural forces);
- until the final **positive stage** in which all abstract and obscure forces are discarded, and natural phenomena are explained by their constant relationship.
- This evolution is forced through the **development of human mind** and increasing application of thought, reasoning and logic to the understanding of the world.

HERBERT SPENCER: MILITARY & INDUSTRIAL SOCIETY

- Argued against government intervention; society should evolve toward more individual freedom.
- Differentiated between two phases of development as regards societies' internal regulation: the 'military' and 'industrial'.
- **Military society** has the goal of conquest and defence, is centralised, economically self-sufficient, collectivistic, puts the good of group over the good of individual, uses compulsion, force and repression, and rewards loyalty, obedience and discipline.
- The **industrial society**, has a goal of production and trade, is decentralised, interconnected with other societies via economic relations, works through cooperation treats the good of individual as of the highest value, regulates the social life via voluntary relations; values independence and innovation.
- The transition process from the military to industrial society is the outcome of steady evolutionary processes within the society.

LEWIS H. MORGAN: SAVAGERY, BARBARISM & CIVILIZATION

- In his 1877 classic *Ancient Societies* differentiated between three eras: savagery, barbarism, and civilization,
- Divided by technological inventions
- fire, bow, pottery in the savage era,
- domestication of animals, agriculture, metalworking in the barbarian era
- and alphabet and writing in the civilization era.
- Morgan viewed technological progress as a force behind social progress, and held that any social change—in social institutions, organizations or ideologies—has its beginnings in technological change.

SOCIAL PROGRESS

- 'Social progress' does not mean mere development or evolution.
- Social progress connotes a value judgement made according to certain principles.
- Betterment or improvement.
- Specific indicators for measuring progress can range from economic data, technical innovations, change in the political or legal system, and questions bearing on individual life chances, such as life expectancy and risk of disease and disability.

