

XII Sociology

Chapter IX

CULTURAL CHANGE

- Cultural change is a very vast area to explore.
- It refers to changes made in cultural elements. Both, material and non-material.

This chapter looks at two related developments, both a complex product of the impact of colonial rule.

- Social reform movement in the 19th and early 20th Century
- Sanskritisation, Modernization, Secularization and Westernization

Social reform movement in the 19th and early 20th Century

- Social reform movements emerged in India in 19thC.
- Major social evils are *sati*, child marriage, widow remarriage and caste discrimination etc.
- It was a creative combination of modern ideas of western liberalism and a new look on traditional literature.

The mix of ideas

Box 2.1

- Ram Mohun Roy attacked the practice of *sati* on the basis of both appeals to humanitarian and natural rights doctrines as well as Hindu *shastras*.
- Ranade's writings entitled *The Texts of the Hindu Law on the Lawfulness of the Remarriage of Widows* and *Vedic Authorities for Widow Marriage* elaborated the *shastric* sanction for remarriage of widows.
- The content of new education was modernising and liberal. The literary content of the courses in the humanities and social sciences was drawn from the literature of the European Renaissance, Reformation and Enlightenment. Its themes were humanistic, secular and liberal.
- Sir Sayed Ahmed Khan's interpretation of Islam emphasised the validity of free enquiry (*ijtihad*) and the alleged similarities between Koranic revelations and the laws of nature discovered by modern science.
- Kandukiri Viresalingam's *The Sources of Knowledge* reflected his familiarity with *navya-nyaya* logic. At the same time he translated Julius Huxley.

Raja ram Mohan Roy	Brahma Samaj
Ranade	PrardhanaSamaj
Sir SayedAhamed Khan	Aligarh Muslim University

Sociologist **SatishSaberwal** elaborates upon the modern context by sketching three aspects of change in colonial India:

1. Modes of communication

- **New technologies** speeded up various forms of Communication
- Printing press, telegraph, and later the microphone, movement of people and goods through steamship and railways helped quick movement of new ideas.
- Social reformers from Punjab and Bengal exchanged ideas with reformers from Madras and Maharashtra.
- **Keshav Chandra Sen of Bengal** visited Madras in **1864**.
- Some of them went to other countries.

2. Forms of organisation, and

- *Modern social organisations* like the **BrahmoSamaj** in Bengal and **AryaSamaj** in Punjab were set up.
- The **All-India Muslim Ladies Conference** (*Anjuman-E-Khawwatn-E-Islam*) was founded in 1914.
- Indian reformers debated not just in public meetings but through public media like newspapers and journals.
- Translations of writings of social reformers from one Indian language to another took place.
- For instance, **Vishnu Shastri** published a Marathi translation of Vidyasagar's book in *InduPrakashin* 1868

3. The nature of ideas

- *New ideas* of liberalism and freedom,
 - New ideas of homemaking and marriage,
 - New roles for mothers and daughters,
 - New ideas of selfconscious pride in culture and tradition emerged.
 - The value of education became very important.
 - The idea of female education was debated intensely.
 - Significantly, it was the social reformer **JotibaPhule** who opened the first school for women in Pune.
 - Reformers argued that for a society to progress women have to be educated.
 - 19th century reform initiated a period of questioning, reinterpretations and both intellectual and social growth.
- **The varied social reform movements did have common themes. Yet there were also significant differences.**
 - For some the concerns were confined to the **problems that the upper caste, middle class women and men faced.**
 - For others the injustices suffered by the **discriminated castes were central questions.**
 - For some social evils had emerged because of a decline of the true spirit of Hinduism.
 - For others **caste and gender oppression** was intrinsic to the religion.
 - Muslim social reformers actively debated the meaning of **polygamy and purdah.**
 - **sati** was opposed by the **BrahmoSamaj.**
 - Orthodox members of the Hindu community in Bengal formed an organisation called '**Dharma Sabha**' for abolishing *sati*.

DIFFERENT KINDS OF SOCIAL CHANGE

SANSKRITISATION

- Coined by **M.N. Srinivas**
 - It is the process by which a '**low**' caste or tribe or other group **takes over the customs, ritual, beliefs, ideology and style of life of a high and, in particular, a 'twice-born (dwija) caste'.**
 - The impact of Sanskritisation is many-sided.
 - Its influence can be seen in language, literature, ideology, music, dance, drama, style of life and ritual.
 - Studies show that Sanskritisation is operated differently in different parts of the country.
- '**de-Sanskritisation**'

- Areas where a highly Sanskritised caste was dominant, the culture of the entire region underwent a certain amount of Sanskritisation.
- In regions where the non-Sanskritic castes were dominant, it was their influence that was stronger. This can be termed the process of '**de-Sanskritisation**'.
- **Srinivas argued that, "the Sanskritisation of a group has usually the effect of improving its position in the local caste hierarchy."**
- India there were and still are obstacles to any easy taking over of the customs of the higher castes by the lower.

Criticism of Sanskritisation

1. **It is exaggerating social mobility**
 - a. The scope of 'lower castes' to move up the social ladder.
 - b. It leads to no structural change but only positional change of some individuals.
2. **The ideology of sanskritisation accepts the ways of the 'upper caste' as superior and that of the 'lower caste' as inferior.**
 - a. Therefore, the desire to imitate the 'upper caste' is seen as natural and desirable.
3. **It justifies a model that rests on inequality and exclusion.**
 - a. Justify a model that rests on inequality and exclusion.
4. **It results in the adoption of upper caste rites and rituals** it leads to practices of secluding girls and women, adopting dowry practices instead of bride-price and practising caste discrimination against other groups
5. **The key characteristics of dalit culture and society are eroded.**

WESTERNIZATION

- **M.N. Srinivas** - "the changes brought about in Indian society and culture as a result of over 150 years of British rule, the term subsuming changes occurring at different levels, technology, institutions, ideology and values".

Different kinds of westernisation.

1. **Emergence of a westernised sub-cultural pattern** through a minority section of Indians who first came in contact with Western culture.
 2. **Small sections of people who adopted western life styles** or were affected by western ways of thinking.
 3. Westernisation does involve the **imitation of external forms of culture.**
- **West influenced Indian art and literature also.**
 - Artists like Ravi Varma, Abanindranath Tagore, Chandu Menon and Bankimchandra Chattopadhyaya were all grappling with the colonial encounter.
 - **M.N. Srinivas suggested that while 'lower castes' sought to be Sanskritised, 'upper castes' sought to be Westernised.**

MODERNISATION AND SECULARISATION

- **In the early years, modernisation referred to improvement in technology and production processes.**
- It referred to the path of development that much of west Europe or North America has taken.