

Processes of Social Change

Lesson No.	Title	Activity
18	Processes of Social Change	List the important growth story of the country since independence and figure out which of them are indicators of progress and development

Summary

Change is a fact of human life. Social change is a term used to describe variation in any respect of social processes and social interactions. The terms such as “evolution”, “progress”, “revolution” and “development” are closely associated with the concept of social change.

Structural Change and Cultural Change

- Sociologists in India have analyzed the process of social change under two broad categories- structural processes and cultural processes.
- Structural process of change is due to a transformation in the network of social relationships. Caste, kinship, family and occupational groups constitute some of the structural realities. Change in these relationships is a structural change.
- Cultural process of change primarily refers to the change in the dominant values, ideas and belief system of a given society. Sociologists in India have studied cultural change with the help of various concepts like Sanskritization, Westernization and Secularization, etc.

Characteristics of Social Change

Some of the important characteristics of social change are as follows:

1. Social change is universal.
2. Social change is not uniform.
3. Social change is deliberate.
4. The rate and duration of social change varies from society to society.
5. Social change is value neutral.

Theories of Social Change

Evolutionary Theory

- It believes that societies are like organisms, which evolve in the same manner as Darwin's notion of biological evolution that societies go through series of stages based on increasing complexity towards higher and more advanced and developed state of existence.

Cyclical Theory

- It is founded on the assumption that societies have pre-determined life cycle of birth, growth, maturity and decline

Functional Theory

- It is based on the belief that societies change but they also tend to move towards equilibrium. Any disturbance in the system is easily accommodated within the existing structure

Conflict Theory

- It believes that every pattern of action, belief and interaction tends to generate an opposing reaction. It sees unequal distribution of power and authority as the fundamental source of conflict.

Terms Associated with Social Change

- The term '**evolution**' implies a more intrinsic change not only in size but also in structure. It is a process of growth, increasing complexity and differentiation of structure and functions of society. It is an expression of continuity indicating a certain direction of change. It is unilinear in direction, i.e., from simple to complex structure and from small to large whereas change may have many directions
- Progress refers not so much to social change as to the direction which human beings deliberately give to that change. In other words, it is a change in certain direction, always towards some desired goal. Progress is usually determined in terms of material advancement, individual enhancement, greater control over human conditions of life, human happiness, order and harmony at societal level.
- Development refers to a strategy of planned social change in a direction that is considered desirable by the members of a society. It is contextual and relative in nature. Development is a composite concept as it includes progress in various other fields like trade, agriculture, industry, health, education and so on. Thus, development is a value loaded concept that takes into account the socio-cultural and economic needs of a given society, region and people.
- Revolution is a form of sudden and abrupt overthrow of the existing social order and system. It basically aims at liberating people from an oppressive system. It removes the prime cause of discontentment and thus puts an end to their social, cultural, political and economic suffering.

Evaluate Yourself

1. What do you understand by social change? List the main characteristics of social change.
2. Differentiate between progress and development.
3. Explain conflict theory with help of examples.