

Chapter-2

Cultural Change

Facts that Matter

- Cultural change refers to the change in customs, traditions, beliefs, lifestyle, behaviour etc. (We got inspired by the British clothes, etc).
- Impact of British on our culture, values, norms, basically any impact or change on the cultural side.
- Change in aspects of daily life.

Social Reformers

- During British rule, social reformers wanted to change the social system, in India.
- Changing life of women and Dalits, ridding of social evils, ensuring education for women etc.
 1. Raja Ram Mohun Roy-started Brahrno Samaj and abolished Sati Pratha.
 2. Dayanand Saraswati started Arya Samaj.
- Social reformers came during British rule and not Mughal rule because the British tried to change/shape the social system.

Modern Communication and Transport

- British brought in railways and postal system, also they made improvement in the roads.
- Postal system and railways benefit both, because the British used this to transport goods and facilitate easy movement and the Indians benefited from this as through easy transport, they could facilitate, the freedom struggle.
- Though easy travel one would move from one place to another and one would also know what was happening all over the country.

New Organisation

- Social reformers would hold debates and talk about important issues.
- Associations were set up all over the nation.
- Social reformers set up their own association in their respective states, e.g., Raja Ram Mohun Roy's Brahmo Samaj in West Bengal.
- Reformers would write in journals and newspapers.
- Reformers were well educated.

New Ideas

- When Colonial rule started we were influenced in all aspects of life.
- This changed the relationships between mothers and daughters because liberalism and freedom of thought came into being. This changed the outlook of life, relationships.
- Furniture and interior design of their houses changed with the use of sofa and dining set - and crockery.
- Social reformers debated whether women should be educated, this led to formation of associations writing in journalism, newspapers etc. e.g. Jyotiba Phule.
- there was a difference in interpretation, growth of ideas and gave them a better outlook of life.
- Ranade and Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar focused on widow remarriage, but they had different approaches to it.
- Ranade - widow remarriage, we must treat the differences accepted to Vedas. Ishwar asked men to obey them).
- Many social reformers believed on similar issues and aspects of life but they had different approaches to it.

Major Cultural Changes In India

I. Sanskritisation

- Coined by M.N. Srinivas.
- 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'.

Impact of sanskritisation

The impact of Sanskritisation is many-sided. Its influence can be seen in language, literature, ideology, music, dance, drama, style of life and ritual.

It is primarily a process that takes place within the Hindu space though Srinivas argued that it was visible even in sects and religious groups outside Hinduism. Studies of different areas, however, show that it operated differently in different parts of the country.

In those 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'.

There were other regional variations too. In Punjab culturally Sanskritic influence was never very strong. For many centuries until the third quarter of the 19th century the Persian influence was the dominant one.

Sanskritisation and groups social position

Srinivas argued that, "the Sanskritisation of a group has usually the effect of improving its position in the local caste hierarchy.

It normally presupposes either an improvement in the economic or political position of the group concerned or a higher group self-consciousness resulting from its contact with a source of the 'Great Tradition' of Hinduism such as a pilgrim centre or a monastery or a proselytising sect."

But in a highly unequal society such as India there were and still are obstacles to any easy taking over of the customs of the higher castes by the lower.

Indeed, traditionally, the dominant caste punished those low castes, which were audacious enough to attempt it. The story below captures the problem."

Criticism

Sanskritisation as a concept has been criticised at different levels.

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1. One, it has been criticised for exaggerating social mobility or the scope of 'lower castes' to move up the social ladder. For it leads to no structural change but only positional change of some individuals.
 2. it has been pointed out that the ideology of sanskritisation accepts the ways of the 'upper caste' as superior and that of the 'lower caste' as inferior. Therefore, the desire to imitate the 'upper caste' is seen as natural and desirable.
 3. 'Sanskritisation' seems to justify a model that rests on inequality and exclusion. It appears to suggest that to believe in pollution and purity of groups of people is justifiable or all right.
 4. Since sanskritisation 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, etc.
 5. The effect of such a trend is that the key characteristics of dalit culture and society are eroded. For example the very worth of labour which 'lower castes' do is degraded and rendered 'shameful'.

II. Westernisation

M.N. Srinivas defines westernisation as "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

- One kind refers to the emergence of a westernised sub-cultural pattern through a minority section of Indians who first came in contact with Western culture.
- This included the sub culture of Indian intellectuals who not only adopted many cognitive patterns, or ways of thinking, and styles of life, but supported its expansion. Many of the early 19th century reformers were of this kind.
- There were, therefore, small sections of people who adopted western life styles or were affected by western ways of thinking.
- There has been also the general spread of Western cultural traits, such as the use of new technology, dress, food, and changes in the habits and styles of people in general.
- Across the country a very wide section of middle class homes have a television set, a fridge, some kind of sofa set, a dining table and chair in the living room.

- Westernisation does involve the imitation of external forms of culture. It does not necessarily mean that people adopt modern values of democracy and equality.

Westernisation in the contemporary context

Conflicts between generations are seen as cultural conflicts resulting from westernisation.

Western Way of Thinking

- **Freedom of thought:** Social reformers tried to uplift status of dalit, women.
- **Liberty:** Individualism became Important.
- Besides change in behaviour patterns and customs etc, there was a change in art and architecture.
e.g., Raja Ravi Varma-first to paint a nuclear family. Earlier they would paint only joint families.
- Architecture-parliament buildings, houses, railway stations.

Two ways of thought

1. Western thinkers started thinking like them e.g. the way they treated women.
2. Western practices were influenced by their beliefs, food, customs, way of speaking, etc

General Conflicts between generations were always prevalent in society.

II. Modernisation

Modern thinking and ideas influence. Change in mind sets, life changes for better features:

1. Due to globalization and broader outlook, universal/cosmopolitan attitudes are replacing local ones.
2. Science and technology has replaced non-rational, emotional thinking, anything connected to religion.
3. Workplace and family were mixed together, but now work and personal life are separate. (Before entire family would work together)
4. Individual is given more importance than group. Now individuals don't want any institution and want freedom of thought, ideas etc. Nuclear family is more important and preferable than joint.
5. Achieved/Acquired status is more important than ascribed status.
6. When people pick up work and communicate with people, they associate with those who

are, associated with their achieved status (colleagues, boss etc) than with those from ascribed status.

7. Attitude of people towards the human environment and natural environment has, changed for the better as the circumstances have changed. We don't associate nature with religion. We are actually concurred with the environment.

Modernisation and Secularisation

- Our attitude towards religion has changed with modernisation. One does not attribute everything to religion.
- Modernity and Secularism (tradition) are the two sides of a coin. They go hand in hand.
- If we don't keep up all traditions we can't be part of the global village and if we don't modernise them we can't develop and grow.
- With modern ideas and thinking, the religious aspects are not given the same importance.
- Due to Sanskritisation, the tribes feel that their culture is being eroded and in order to prevent that from happening, they have community celebrations.
- To retain and maintain their identity they try to show the others not to forget it and show unity.
- The local calendar has been replaced by the English calendar. Now we are part of the global village and we have sedateness.
- Ceremonies, rituals etc have changed. Now it is community over private.
- "Village display of wealth" now that is a want for materialistic goods and so traditions have changed from what they used to be.
- It is now a status symbol and celebrations are more elaborate.
- Coming in of modern thinking and ideas by (British, modern inform movements started coming up.
- Instead of the old ideas (child marriage etc). We now have new ideas (education of girl child, etc). Now it is more towards improving status of women and dalits and not only the traditional practices.
- Now rituals and customs are less important and materialistic things are more important (celebrities dance, sing, designer clothes, catering etc).
- We take it for granted that as we are modernising we are becoming more secular.

- Religion can usually disappear from one's lives. As we are becoming more modern, we assume that the importance of religion will deteriorate. This is not true as practising dowry, honour killings still exist.

Rituals-Secular Dimension is different from Secular Goal

- Today ceremonies, celebrations are given more importance than the actual rituals.
- Materialistic goods are more important.
- Marriage ceremonies, the actual rituals are not given importance.
- Secular dimension-when you don't give importance to religion, but while doing religious practice people get to show off opportunity to socialise, communicate etc and show off.
- Secular goal social-economic aspects are given more importance than rituals (when dancing, food etc is more important)
- Now what matters most is what happened in the wedding and not the rituals.

Secularisation of Caste

- Once upon a time caste was referred to with pollution purity and the practices were important.
- Now politicians use caste for vote banks.
- Power and Authority are important for politicians and they use religion, region, caste, language, etc to get these.
- They make full use of the law for religion and caste to Indians.
- Caste system is the weakness of the Indian society.
- Caste identities have political backing .