



DR. YOGENDRA SINGH'S VIEWS ON SOCIAL AND CULTURAL CHANGE IN INDIA

Social Science

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ABSTRACT

Modernization is a composite concept. It is also an ideological concept. The models of modernization co-vary with the choice of ideologies. The composite nature of this concept renders it pervasive in the vocabulary of social sciences and evokes its kinship with concepts like development, growth, evolution and progress. In the book on Essays on Modernization in India Yogendra Singh has analyzed the varied and complex processes involved in the modernization in India, the forces released by it and their bearing on the stability, creativity and development in India as a dynamic nation and composite civilization.

KEYWORDS

Yogendra Singh is an noted Indian sociologist. He is one of the founders of the Centre for the Study of Social Systems, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India where he is a professor emeritus of Sociology. He is neither functionalist nor Marxist but he emphasizes theory in relation to context. Therefore, he relates structural-functional, structuralism, structural-historical, culturalism and Marxist Orientation and constructs in the study social stratification. He applied integrated approach for his analysis of social stratification, modernization and change in Indian society.

Yogendra Singh analyse the processes of modernization in India from a systematic sociological perspective. The Two key concepts which have been used to analyse the forces of modernisation are social structure and tradition. Tradition and modernity as heuristic concepts are easy to formulate, but to separate them at substantive level is rather difficult. The modern seldom comes to traditional society in the same form or brings about identical cultural consequences in every society that it comes in contact with. Modernisation as a process has more elasticity of form than tradition. It implies an open world-view which like science undergoes perpetual change in its value- structure and postulates.

Comparative studies on modernisation in the new states have shown that contrary to stereotyped beliefs, old traditions are not completely displaced by modernisation; what follows is an accretion and transmutation of forms similarly, tradition does not necessarily retard the process of modernisation. In India, caste associations, which are otherwise typical symbols of tradition, have increasingly been found to serve the ends of modernisation. Lloyd I. Rudolph calls this phenomenon "modernity of tradition" and conclude with Edward Shils that "modernity has entered into Indian character and society but it has done so through assimilation and not replacement. Other studies in Indian social sciences also provide evidence that traditional institutions like, joint family, kin based entrepreneurial functions continue to coexist with and support modern values and forms of social action. From the advancement of modern means old transport and communication not only the cultural diffusion of modernisation but also that traditionalism is accelerated.

These processes in the institutional realm of modernisation are also in harmony with the historical growth of this phenomenon India. The rise of the nationalistic movement, which later change into a movement for political economic and cultural modernisation was itself never bereft of the consciousness of the past tradition old India. It is fair to assume that as forces of cultural modernisation grow there will also simultaneously grow the feeling of national identity and the identification with the nation's past tradition. Cultural modernisation will under this process assume a syncretic form and persist along with traditional values. Modernity will never completely supplant tradition in India.

Social changes in tradition India

It is necessary to draw a distinction between social change and modernisation, especially to evaluate changes in the traditional society. In traditional India there were continual instances of social change without implying modernisation. These changes were from

one traditional structure to another, without, however, transcending them for a qualitatively distinctive evolutionary differentiation. The changes were initiated both through orthogenetic and heterogenetic casual sources, and related to social structure as well as culture, but these were essentially pre-modern in nature and quality.

The tradition cultural structure comprising the Little and Great traditions in India experienced many changes before the beginning of the western contact. Buddhism and Jainism emerged as protest movements against the Hindu caste system; their growth led to formation of new caste-like segmentary groups which later degenerated into castes contributing further to pluralistic tradition. These movements had their impact also on political and economic structure of Indian society. Jainism was an particularly urban movement, and both Jainism and Buddhism led to the emergence of new mercantile castes in urban centres. Orthogenetic movements also formed the bases of sikhism in north India, of Bakhti movements in north and south India, of Arya samaj and Brahma samaj during the British regime, and finally of the Gandhian movement in the contemporary in the contemporary times that culminated in India's political independence. With the partial exception of the Bakti movements in north India which projected egalitarian values and sought for a synthesis between the Hindu and Muslim traditions, all other movements were either break-away processes to establish parallel Great traditions or reiterated the established Great tradition of Hinduism..

The changes which thus occurred were confined to differentiation within the framework of traditional social structure and values; structural changes are very few, and those which took place were limited in respect of the types of roles. Mention may be made of the priestly roles and monastic organizations which emerged with the rise of Buddhism. Similar developments in religious role structures and organisations partially followed the emergence of other traditions. But these changes by no means could be called structural, since differentiation of roles was segmental and did not alter the system as a whole. The role differentiations also had an elitist character since all of them were led by members of the upper class and caste. Only a few Bhakti movements were an exception, but these were invariably reiterative rather than innovative in signification system or the caste order against which they propagated.

The Islamic tradition in India came from a heterogenetic source; its establishment by conquest introduced a complex emotional variable right from the beginning which has continued through time. Value-themes of Islam were holistic but the principle of hierarchy or caste was not accepted in theory; the idea of continuity was also less pronounced as Islam, like all religions of Semitic origin, was based on the conception of historical time; its value-theme on transcendence too was rooted in the principle of absolute monotheism. These contrasts of history and value-themes could not however, render Islam as a systematic exogenous source for radical transformation in the Indian tradition. Despite the apparent dissimilarities, the contact between the great traditions of Hinduism and Islam was only a contact between two traditional systems. Large-scale conversions to Islam during the Muslim rule in India might be said to have offered a structural outlet for

the deprived Hindu castes for social, economic and cultural mobility. But the extent to which the converts succeeded in it was always limited. Ashrafs generally maintained their social distance from these converts in matters of marriage and kinship ties; they never recognised them as their equals. The caste hierarchy continued within the convert Muslims and in most cases traditional occupations and caste rituals were also maintained. Yet, it is reasonable to believe that there must have been some advantages; being a Muslim in a political set-up where Muslim kings and chiefs were the rulers did offer security and other peripheral benefits to these groups.

These facts however, do not support the view that conversion to Islam was motivated by cultural rigidity of the caste system and its dysfunctions. Both caste and cultural deprivations did largely survive among the converts within the Islamic social structure. A stronger motivation behind conversion, therefore, might have been that of the felt structural deprivations rather than cultural deprivations of the caste system. The spirit behind conversion may not have been merely that of escape but also of innovation. However, the groups which took readily to the Islamic faith were from the lower castes for which psychological appeal of belonging to the ruling community must have been stronger apart from the material benefits they must have anticipated. The main structural deprivations here were those of power and social status, which demount rightly characterizes as an equation between power and religion. In all traditional societies where the system of stratification is closed and there are no legitimate structural means to climb up in social hierarchy, the change of faith, or of customs and rituals might offer a relatively secure means of gambling for higher status.

This is clearly revealed when we shift our analysis from the great to the little traditions. These little traditions as Redfield and Singer have maintained comprise the cultural beliefs and practices held by the folk, through oral tradition and localized adaptations of cultural roles and values of the Great tradition. Both Hinduism and Islam in India have maintained these Little traditions. Plurality of the Little traditions was preserved through caste structure and its local cultural expressions especially among the castes of lower and intermediate ranks. These castes, both Hindu and Muslim, formed their kinship and social ties of castes hardly ever extend beyond the radius of two hundred miles in any part of India; the diversity of languages and communication barriers traditionally delimited the scope of caste interaction. Thus, plural traditions of these castes formed the little traditions in India.

Two important process of change which have traditionally been active in the little traditions are those of sanskritisation and Islamization. Sanskritisation refers to the process of change from within the Hindu tradition whereas Islamization has been in response to the contact with an external tradition. Both these processes reflect a tendency among the strongly deprived groups to adopt or change their local traditions in conformity with the normative elements of a Great tradition, whether orthogenetic or heterogenetic in origin.

Modernization in India started mainly with the western contact, especially through establishment of the British rule. This contact had a special historically which brought about many far reaching changes in culture and social structure of the Indian society. Not all of them, however, could be called modernising. The basic direction of this contact was towards modernization, but in the process a variety of traditional institutions also got reinforcement. This demonstrates the weakness of assuming a neat contrariety between tradition and modernity.

However, tradition also gets reinforcement in the process; modern media of communication and transport are increasingly used for spreading ritual order and for the rational organisation of religious groups and their mode of activities and social participation. Thus, there is tendency among religious groups to organise themselves on a rational bureaucratic model, and previous fission of each new part from the parent body has now changed into strong orientation towards fusion.

Major potential sources of breakdown in the Indian process of modernisation may, in one form or another, be attributed to structural inconsistencies, such as; democratization without spread of civic culture bureaucratization without commitment to universalistic norms, rise in media participation and aspiration or expectation without proportionate increase in resources, verbalisation of a welfare

ideology without its implementation as a social policy, over-urbanisation without meaningful changes in the stratification system.

The crucial variable lies in the mobilisation of people's motivation for change and in the institutional changes necessary for co-ordinating modernisation trends.

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