

MODERNIZATION

MEANING

The term modernization “does not denote any philosophy or movement, but it only symbolizes a process of change. In fact, “Modernization” is understood as a process which indicates the adoption of the modern ways of life and values”. The term was being used previously to refer only “to change in economy and its related effect on social values and practices”. It was also described as a process that changed society, from primarily agricultural to a primarily industrial economy. As a result of the change in the economy, the society itself underwent changes in values, beliefs and norms. But, today the term is given a broader meaning.

Today, the term, ‘Modernization’ is understood as an attempt, on the part of the people, particularly those who are custom-bound, to adapt themselves to the present time, conditions, styles, and ways in general. It indicates a change in people’s food habits, dress habits, speaking styles, tastes, choices, preferences, ideas, values, recreational facilities and so on. It is also described as “social change involving the elements of science and technology”. The scientific and technological inventions have brought about remarkable changes in the whole system of social relationship and installed new ideologies in the place of traditional ones.

M.N. Srinivas, however, criticizes the concept of Modernization, according to him; it is a value-loaded term. He says that “Modernization is normally used in the sense that it is good. He, therefore, prefers to use the term ‘Westernization’ which characterizes the changes brought about in Indian society and culture as a result of over 150 years of British rule”.

Yogendra Singh, on the other hand, defends the concept of modernization. According to him, it is broader than the two processes of Sanskritization and Westernization. It is, indeed a ‘cultural universal’ and not necessarily confined to any single society. Like science, modernity is not an exclusive possession of any one ethnic or cultural group. It belongs to humanity as a whole. This does not mean that everywhere it should reveal the same pattern. It need not always take place on the model of England, Germany, France or America. It can take place on the model of Russia, India, Japan, Australia, or any other country for that matter. What is essential to modernization is this - a commitment to “scientific world view” and a belief in the humanistic and philosophical viewpoint of science on contemporary problems.

DEFINITIONS

1. According to **Daniel Lerner** “Modernization is the current term for an old process of social change whereby less developed societies acquire the characteristics common to more developed societies”.
2. **Smelser**. Modernization refers to “a complex set of changes that take place almost in every part of society as it attempts to be industrialized. Modernization involves ongoing change in a society’s economy, politics, education, traditions, and religion”.
3. **S.H. Alatas**. “Modernization is a process by which modern scientific knowledge is introduced in the society with the ultimate purpose of achieving a better and a more satisfactory life in the broadest sense of the term as accepted by the society concerned”.
4. **Rutow and Ward** (1964) the basic process in Modernization is the application of modern science to human affairs.
5. **Eisenstadt** Modernization refers to both (a) structural aspects of social organization, and (b) socio-demographic aspects of societies.
6. **Prof. Yogendra Singh** says, “Modernization symbolizes a rational attitude towards issues and their evaluation but not from particularistic point of view”.

FEATURES/CHARACTERISTICS OF MODERNIZATION

- i. **Application of technology and mechanization.** This means in other words that the people give up their old ways of living, old methods of agriculture and travelling. Previously, the majority of the people in India used to live in villages in old ways in Kuccha houses and they used to cultivate their lands through ploughs and travel by means of bullock-carts.

Now, this has been given up entirely as the people now live in well-built houses, cultivate their fields through tractors and use other modern methods of agriculture (chemical fertilizers or manure, good seeds, irrigation system and harvesting through machines).

Now the ordinary people prefer to travel by means of buses and trains but the more affluent section of the society i.e. the rich people prefer to travel by super-fast trains and aeroplanes. This means in other words that the people are using modern methods of technology and mechanization.

- ii. **Industrialization.** Previously the people used to spin cloths through spindles and live in traditional ways and use their old patterns of occupation and places of residence. When the industrialization of a country takes place, the people give up their traditional rural and agricultural economy. Its place is taken over by industrialization. New factories and mills continue to grow daily and use the latest techniques.

- iii. **Urbanization.** When the industrialization of a country takes place, then the new centres of industries develop. Consequently, the people of villages particularly the labourers migrate in large number to these new centres in the cities with the hope that they will return to their villages after making enough money but well their livelihood in the villages and agriculture cannot bear so much burden.

Moreover, it is very inconvenient for them to come and go daily from the villages to the cities as there is much rush on buses and trains and travelling is very costly. So with the growing industrialization of the country, the people in large number continue to migrate from the villages to cities and settle permanently there. This in return causes many problems in the cities, housing, and sanitation, improving methods of communication and acquiring more and more lands for manifold purposes.

- iv. **Rise in national and per-capita Income.** The agricultural economy alone cannot increase the national wealth and per-capita income as it has to support the idle members of the society also. Therefore in order to raise the national and per capita income, the old economy based on agriculture has to be supplemented by industrial growth and its income because by exporting the industrial goods the country can make huge profits.
- v. **Increase in literacy.** Another prominent feature of modernization is that all-out efforts are made by the Government and the society to wipe out illiteracy and strenuous efforts are made not only to send every child to school but the adults are also persuaded to learn three R's (reading, 'riting and 'rithmetic).

This education does not remain limited only to arts, science and commerce but also spreads to higher medical education, research, technology and crafts. Thus the avenues of higher education are made available to every person in all fields. So everybody runs after attaining higher education.

- vi. **Political participation.** When the best possible opportunities are offered to every person to attain higher education, people become enlightened. Economic development and equal distribution of wealth enable everybody to share sometime from the pressing necessity of daily wants and devote it to political participation.

Every voter begins to read the newspaper and learn something about politics. The voter ultimately becomes enlightened and votes for that party which is likely to solve economic problems and take the country to further heights unattained so far.

Therefore the political participation is made possible in a democracy through political parties, interest groups, and various other organisations. They influence the government for the welfare of citizens and equal

opportunities are made available in services to everybody irrespective of caste, colour, creed, religion, sex or such other considerations.

- vii. **Development of mass-media techniques.** The modernization brings in its wake the development of mass-media techniques. These mass-media techniques include newspapers, broadcasting, postal facilities, movies, road, rail and air services, electricity, and T.V. Through all these facilities, the citizens become enlightened and well-informed and these, in turn, enable the citizens to serve the state in a better way.
- viii. **Social mobility.** When the modernization of a country begins to take place, then the people go on migrating from the villages to cities in search of better amenities and jobs. The role of village Sarpanch becomes insignificant and is replaced in the cities by the role of the leaders of various political parties and the Unions. As the people become conscious, so they rally round that leader, who is likely to deliver the goods.
- ix. **Cultivation of national identity.** When the modernization of any country takes place, then the people begin to give up their narrow loyalties and parochial 'Considerations of caste, colour, sex or creed. Their interests become identified with 'he interests of the nation.

Modernization does not necessarily mean that the people may discard all their traditional values or cultural and political heritage. *For example*, the British are traditionally conservative but still, they have retained their old institutions like kingship and House of Lords. Though their powers have been sufficiently curtailed, yet they have been made useful institutions which could serve the growing needs of the society. Therefore the British are considered as one of the most modern nations. Similar is the case with the Japanese, the French and the Germans. We, in India, are also doing the same. Without losing our cultural or political heritage, we are adopting the latest technology and modern scientific techniques. Thus, we are marching towards modernization at a great speed.

FACTORS OF MODERNIZATION

Modernization in India started mainly with Western contact, especially through the establishment of British rule. This contact brought about many far-reaching changes in the culture and social structure of Indian society. Not all these changes could be called modernizing. The basic direction of this contact was towards modernization, but in the process, a good number of traditional institutions got strengthened.

There was, however, one important feature of Indian modernization during the British period. The growth of this process was very much selective and partial. It never encompassed the micro-structures of Indian society such as *family, caste, kin group and village community*. British people intelligently followed the policy of "least interference", especially at these micro-levels.

But at the macro-level, the components of modernization such as a universalistic legal system, expansion of Western form of education, urbanization and industrialization, the spread of new means of communication and transport and social reforms led the way in the transformation of Indian society.

Along with these, aspects of structural modernization such as rational bureaucratic systems of administration and judiciary, army and industrial bureaucracy, new classes of business elite and entrepreneurs came into being. There was the emergence of the political elite and nationalist leadership. These modernizing structures had a uniform character throughout the country.

After Independence, the modernization process in India has undergone a basic change from its colonial pattern. Discontinuity in modernization between macro-structures and micro-structures slowly disappeared. The introduction of the adult franchise and the federal parliamentary form of the political structure has carried new political values to all the sections of the population.

Planned legal reforms in Hindu marriage and inheritance laws have tremendously influenced the Hindu family system. Community development projects and the Panchayat Raj System created political awareness and participation in local-level management and the administration of justice. Caste too has undergone radical transformation making a lot of compromises with the changed conditions.

In spite of the British contact Indian society at the time of Independence has deep-rooted traditions. Still, it decided to go in the direction of modernity. There were people to support the cause of modernism and there were also people to cling to the traditional way of life. We had to strike out a balance between the two.

Thus people had to tolerate the coexistence of tradition with modernism. But, coexistence cannot last long in all the areas. Because, many a time, traditional ethos and values become irreconcilable. We were thus confronted with the practical problem of either sticking on to tradition or going on the path of modernization.

We decided to modernize our society at various levels. "What aspects of life were sought to be modernized and in what manner?" **Prof. Ram Ahuja** replies to this question in the following way "At the social level, we wanted social relations to be based on concepts like equality, human dignity, and social values which would ensure social mobility, removal of caste disabilities, amelioration of the conditions of women, and so forth. At the economic level, we wanted technological growth and distributive justice. At the cultural level, we wanted secularism, rationalism, and liberalism. At the political level, we desired representative government, democratic institutions, an achievement-oriented power-structure, and a greater voice and participation for Indians in the governance of the country. The means for agents selected for modernizing the

society were planning, education, legislation, assistance from foreign countries, adopting the policy of liberalization, and the like.”

Due to modernization, so many changes are found in India:

1. Introduction of new institutions like banking, mass media communication etc.
2. Introduction of new value systems such as equality, justice, individualism, secularism etc.
3. Acceptance of scientific innovation.
4. Increase in the standard of living.
5. Introduction of large scale industries.
6. Restructuring of the political system, i.e., the introduction of democracy.
7. Introduction of structural changes in social institutions like marriage, family, caste etc.
8. The emergence of the middle class.
9. There are some eliminative changes like the disappearance of cultural traits, behaviour pattern, values etc. For example, the abolition of feudal power.
10. There is a shifting of attitude from sacred to secular.
11. Emergence of new forms because of the synthesis of old and new elements. For example, nuclear family in structure but functioning as joint.
12. Adoption of new cultural traits such as a new election system.

CAUSES OF MODERNISATION:

What factors condition modernisation? What conditions lead to modernisation? What conditions hinder it? In exploring suitable answers to these questions sociologists look within the society to discover the various factors, groups, people and agencies and instruments that contribute to modernisation.

Modernisation is not caused by any single factor. It is the net result of a number of factors. Myron Weiner speaks of five main instruments which make modernisation possible: education, mass communication, ideology based on nationalism, charismatic leadership and coercive governmental authority.

1. Social Inequality. Education, that too higher education, pertaining to the fields of science and technology, provides the basis of modernisation. Education involves a sense of national loyalty and creates skills and attitudes essential for technological innovation. Edward Shils has also emphasised the role of education in the process of modernisation. Still, people like Arnold Anderson feel that formal education is not sufficient for teaching skills.

University education may increase the number of students with degrees without an increase in the number of people with modern skills and attitudes. By this, we cannot underscore the importance of education in national development which is believed to be associated with modernisation.

“National development depends upon a change in knowledge — what people know, skills — what people can do, and attitudes — what people can aspire and hope to get”. This is the reason why in the recent decade’s education including mass communication is given utmost importance.

2. Mass Communication. The process of modernisation hinges on the phenomenon of mass communication. The development of mass communication (including newspapers, periodicals and magazines, T.V., radio, telephone, movies, etc.) is an important means of spreading modern ideas at a faster rate.

The function of mass media is to open up to the large masses in society, new information, new thought, new attitude and new aspirations which lead them to new achievement. “The mass media is the device that can spread the requisite knowledge and attitudes quickly and widely”.

The only danger with the mass media is that if these are controlled by the government, they will spread the only one-sided view that suits their political ideology. But in democracies, however, the press is often given sufficient independence to express its views.

3. Ideology Based on Nationalism. Nationalism and democracy are very much linked with modernisation. Nationalism is connected with national awareness and political consensus. As far as the West is concerned, the democratic system came to be strengthened along with the development of nationalism. The nationalistic ideologies serve as a unifying influence in bridging social cleavages within plural societies.

They also help the political elite in changing the behaviour of the masses of people. Mass media plays a vital role in democratic societies to spread modern views, ideas, values, etc., by persuading the masses. But it is argued out that even though the political elite has a modern ideology. Their mere possession of it does not guarantee development from the modern perspective.

4. Charismatic Leadership. A Charismatic leader is in a better position to impress upon the people to adopt modern beliefs, values, practices and behaviour patterns. But the danger involved here is that this popular leader may take undue advantage of his position and use modern values, ideas etc., for his personal glorification rather than for national development.

5. Coercive Governmental Authority. A strong and stable government may adopt coercive measures to compel people to accept modern values and ways of life. It may also bring pressures on other governments and people to follow the same. The Government of America under the presidency of George Bush

(The previous President of U.S. A.) made use of various tactics and strategies to bring pressure on the underdeveloped and developing countries to follow modern ways and practices.

6. Other Factors:

To the list of factors explained above, we may add two other factors: (a) urbanisation and industrialisation; (b) a universal legal system.

(a) Urbanisation and Industrialisation. Urbanisation and industrialisation are the two interrelated processes that are assumed to be variably linked up with modernisation. These two processes can also be understood as two factors that accelerate the tempo of modernisation. ‘Urbanisation’ refers to the process of growth and expansion of cities.

Most of the modernised countries are either dominated by the cities or under the grip of the process of urbanisation. “Industrialisation” refers to the unprecedented growth and expansion of industries. It has become virtually the sine quo none of the economic and technological development.

(b) Universal Legal System. In a traditional society bound by traditional values and customs, the rate of change is relatively slow. But a society that functions on the basis of the universally accepted legal system is bound to be more ‘open’. The “rule of law” is true, one of the prerequisites of Modernisation.

The present legal system places a premium on the individual protecting his rights and assuring his freedom. This role of the legal system supports the cause of “Individualism”. The modern legal system has contributed a great deal to the scientific management of the industries.

In conclusion, modernization has profoundly reshaped Indian society, bringing about significant transformations in various dimensions such as social structures, cultural norms, and economic practices. While modernization has facilitated technological advancements and improved living standards, it has also posed challenges to traditional values and social institutions. The interplay between tradition and modernity continues to be a defining feature of Indian society, with both elements coexisting and influencing each other. Understanding this complex dynamic is crucial for addressing the socio-economic disparities and cultural tensions that arise from the modernization process. As India navigates its path towards a more modern and developed society, it is essential to critically engage with these changes, ensuring that the benefits of modernization are equitably distributed while preserving the rich cultural heritage that defines the nation's identity.