

PROCESS OF MODERNISATION IN INDIA

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

There was, however, one important feature of Indian modernisation 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 modernisation such as a universalistic legal system, expansion of Western form of education, urbanisation and industrialisation, 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 modernisation* 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 political elite and a nationalist leadership. These modernising structures had a uniform character throughout the country.

After Independence, modernisation process in India has undergone a basic change from its colonial pattern. Discontinuity in modernisation between macro-structures and micro-structures slowly disappeared. Introduction of adult franchise and federal parliamentary form of political structure have 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 administration of justice. Caste too has undergone radical transformation making 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 on 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 to go on the path of modernisation.

We decided to modernise our society at various levels. "*What aspects of life were sought to be modernised 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, achievement — oriented power-structure, and a greater voice and participation for Indians in the governance of the country. The *means for agents* selected for modernising the society were — *planning, education, legislation, assistance from foreign countries, adopting the policy of liberalisation, and the like*" — (Ref. : Ram Ahuja in his "*Indian Social System*" — Page : 427).

PROBLEMS OF MODERNISATION

Prof. Ram Ahuja speaks of *five main problems* of modernisation. They can be briefly stated below :

1. Modernisation demands that society must change in all ways at once. But such a regular and co-ordinated pattern of growth cannot be planned and materialised. *Some amount of social interest, hence, is bound to be there. Example.* Discrepancy between mass education and employment opportunities.

2. *During the period of modernisation structural changes mostly remain uneven. Example.* Industries may be modernised but religious system, family system etc., remain conservative.

3. *Modernisation of social and economic institutions may create conflicts with the traditional ways of life. Example,* trained M.B.B.S. doctors may pose a threat to the traditional medical practitioners.

4. Another problem is that, *most often roles adopted by the people are modern, but their values continue to be traditional. Example.* New Business firms and industrial establishments and, shops etc., are either opened or inaugurated as per the dictates of the traditional "*Muhurtam*".

5. Yet another problem is that there is lack of cooperation among agencies which modernise and among those institutions and systems which are already modernised. This is more or less like the problem of "*cultural lag*".

6. Finally, *though modernisation raises the aspirations of people, the social system does not provide enough chances to materialise them.* This creates frustration, disappointment and social unrest.