A Study on Social Changes among Indigenous Peoples of Hill and Valley of Manipur

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Abstract

Social change among indigenous peoples of Manipur refers to any modification in the social organization of a society in any of its social institutions or patterns of roles. It is a complex, multi-faceted, all time and universal process. Sometimes it is sudden, though often it is gradual. However, the wheel of the social change cannot be stopped. Some societies accepted social change easily while some show rigidness in acceptance. The patterns and factors of social change vary from time to time and situation to situation which can be shown in terms of the elements of time and history in relation to a given society or social phenomenon. A scientific enquiry into the specific indigenous people of Manipur reveals patterns of social change.

Keywords: Indigenous, Pattern, Scientific, Enquiry, Social

Social change is a universal phenomenon which is experienced by every society but it differs in terms of history and structure of a society. It varies in terms of its forms, rate and factors in a given situation. Hence, a subject of investigation among the social scientists. Hans Gerth (1953) define social change as "whatever may happen in the course of time to the roles, the institutions or the orders comprising a social structure, their emergence, growth and decline". According to them, society is a complex network of patterns of relationships in which all members participate in varying degree. These relationship changes and behaviours change at the same time. Individuals are traced with new situations to which they must respond. Social change means change in the social structure, i.e., the size of the society, the composition or balance of its parts or type of its organization. According to MacIver (1989), "By social change is meant changes in the social relationships the changing ways in which human beings relate to one another". Ronald (1996) defines social change in two things: (i) the change in the constitution of social entities over time, and (ii)the change in the relations among entities over time. In the middle of the 19th century, two great waves of change industrialization and the expansion of democracy and human rights in the wake. The concept of social change becomes one of the central problems of Sociology and Auguste Comte and other thinkers tried to explain cause and course of social change in terms of social evolution and revolution. According to Auguste Comte (2000), societies progressed through a series of predictable stages based on the development of

human knowledge, and constitution of new system cannot take place before the destruction of old or before the potentialities of the old mental order have been exhausted. Social change known as evolutionary theory which is more comprehensive than that of Auguste Comte based on empirical data of population growth and structural differentiation. According to him, change is a movement from an indefinite unstable homogeneity to a definite stable heterogeneity. For the concept of change is related to Ideology. Weber maintained that Calvinism made possible the emergence of capitalism by providing people in western societies with a new orientation. He further said that in focusing their attention on such values as individualism, hard working, and frugality, it paved the way for a major restructuring of economic life.

However, Karl Marx's concept of social change is different. For him, the most significant social changes are revolutionary in nature and are brought about by the struggle for supremacy between economic classes. He said that the continuing development of the productive forces in every historical stage changes the relationship between the classes and the condition of the conflict and in due course hitherto dominated class is able to overthrow the existing mode of struggle and system of relationship for establishing a new social order. The Indian Sociologist Dube (1989), in a empirical study of social change on the Industrial Revolution, analyzed the interrelationship between the growth and organization of the cotton industry and the structure of the family during the industrialization process. Social changes conflict perspective by suggesting that changes in the modern world arise out of the tension between three 'realms' of social reality which operates on different principles and moves towards different goals such as the techno-economic structure, political system and culture.

DISCUSSION

In Manipur, the process of social change has been studied and analyzed by different scholars, using different concepts and approaches, A.R. Desai (1986) applied the Marxist approaches for understanding social transformation of Indian society. Social changes among the cultural perspective of social change and made the outstanding impact on Indian

Sociology Yogendra Singh (1993) labels social change as 'Ideology' and presented a paradigm for an integrated approach to analyze social change in India. Also, untouchability and both the ideological and behavioural changes taking place on the pollution-purity matrix of interaction.

Manipur is one of the eight states in the northeastern region of India; the other states of the region are Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura. Out of the state's total area of 22,327 sq.km., the hill and valley constitutes 1813 sq.km. in the centre, i.e., about one tenth of the whole area, whereas the rest (90%) of the area consists of the hills. The state historically emerged from a small clan principality at Kangla in the heart of Imphal into a powerful kingdom. Various ethnic groups have settled in Manipur such as Meiteis, Naga, Kukis, Lois, Yaithibis, Manipuri Muslims, Mayangs and Nepalis. Among them, Meitei, Naga and Kuki and the major ethnic groups. The people in Manipur are settled in both the hills and the valley. The valley is predominantly inhabited by the Meitei and the hills by tribes whereas the Loi are settled in the valley bordering the hills.

There is found a huge number of studies on the Scheduled Castes in India after Independence. From the viewpoint of the present study these studies may be revived under the following three major classes:

(a) Studies on the Scheduled Castes in India.

(b) Studies on the Scheduled Castes in Northeast India.

(c) Studies on the Scheduled Castes in Manipur.

Under these classes the studies conducted on the Scheduled Castes in India are being taken up here for review. The study explains the socio-economic and political changes among the Lois in Manipur in comparative framework with reference to the two villages; namely, Koutruk and Leimaram. Changes in the villages are both induced as well as non-induced. To understand these changes, structural-function a perspective has been widely used in the social science researches on the Scheduled Castes. The present study has adopted this framework after a thorough examination of various theoretical frameworks.

The studies under this class are related to change in social, cultural, educational, economic and political dimensions of Scheduled Castes. Therefore the studies of this class are reviewed under these dimensions.

1. To understand the patterns/processes of social change among the Lois.

2. To know the causes and consequences of social change among the Lois.

3. To examine the planning social change and development among the Scheduled Castes in the North East.

4. To arrive at a framework explaining the social change among the weaker sections in India.

Social change refers to a significant change in social behavior or change in some larger social system. There are different theories or frameworks explaining social change.

CONCLUSION

India is a land of unity and diversity. Various racial groups settled in different parts of the country are speaking different languages, practicing different religious beliefs, making different ethnic groups and living in different socio-economic conditions. Scheduled Castes are also found to be distributed across these diversities. Much has been studied to understand the social change among the Scheduled Castes in the country. However, no full-fledges study is so far available on social change among the Scheduled Castes in Manipur. The Scheduled Castes, specially of Manipur represent quite a different version of the Scheduled Castes in India because the caste system in this part of the country is not as rigid as in the mainland. Therefore, the study of the indigenous people bring out the patterns of changes in a scheduled caste community in the periphery of Indian caste Society and highlights the differences of social change between the Indigenous people and the mainland Scheduled Castes. By this it enriches theoretically and methodologically the existing knowledge on change and development among the weaker sections in the Indigenous peoples and valley of Manipur society.

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