

Lecture on Social Change

Meaning and Characteristics

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Introduction:-

- Everything in this world, such as living-nonliving, material-nonmaterial, trees-plants, human society, and culture, is changeable. Change is the perpetual and universal law of nature and society.
- **Maclver and Page** has written that society is a continuously, changeable, complex system. It is a network of social relations and it keeps on changing every time. As of now, no such society has been observed that is not changeable.
- **Meaning and definition of social change**—Social change refers to an imminent alteration in the social order of a society. From the beginning, sociologists have considered evolution, advancement and social change—the three perceptions—to have same meaning, but in 1922, Ogburn defined the actual distinction among them. After this, these have been used excessively in sociological terminology

- **According to Maclver and Page**, “Sociology is about social relationships, the network of relationships, we call society.” In this way, Maclver and Page refers society as ‘network of social relationships’. Hence, a change occurring in social relationships is social change. Kingsley Davis opines, “By social change is meant only such alterations as occur in social organisation, that is, structure and functions of society.”
- **In view of Jenson**, “Social change may be defined as modification in the way of doing and thinking of people.” In this way Jenson includes social change inclusive of the changes in behaviour and ideas of human being
- **According to Johnson’s view point**, “In its basic sense social change means change in social structure.” Johnson has said that change in social values, organisations, communities and awards, people and their feelings and capabilities can also be termed as social change.

- **Social change may include the following facts:**
 - (1) Social change is the change in organisation of the society and its functions.
 - (2) Social change is not recognised as a personal change in an individual or change in group of individuals, but it is recognized only when majority or all people of the society accept the change in their lifestyle and thought process.
 - (3) Social change is a universal truth; hence, change occurs in every era.
 - (4) Social change is related to change in human being's social relationships

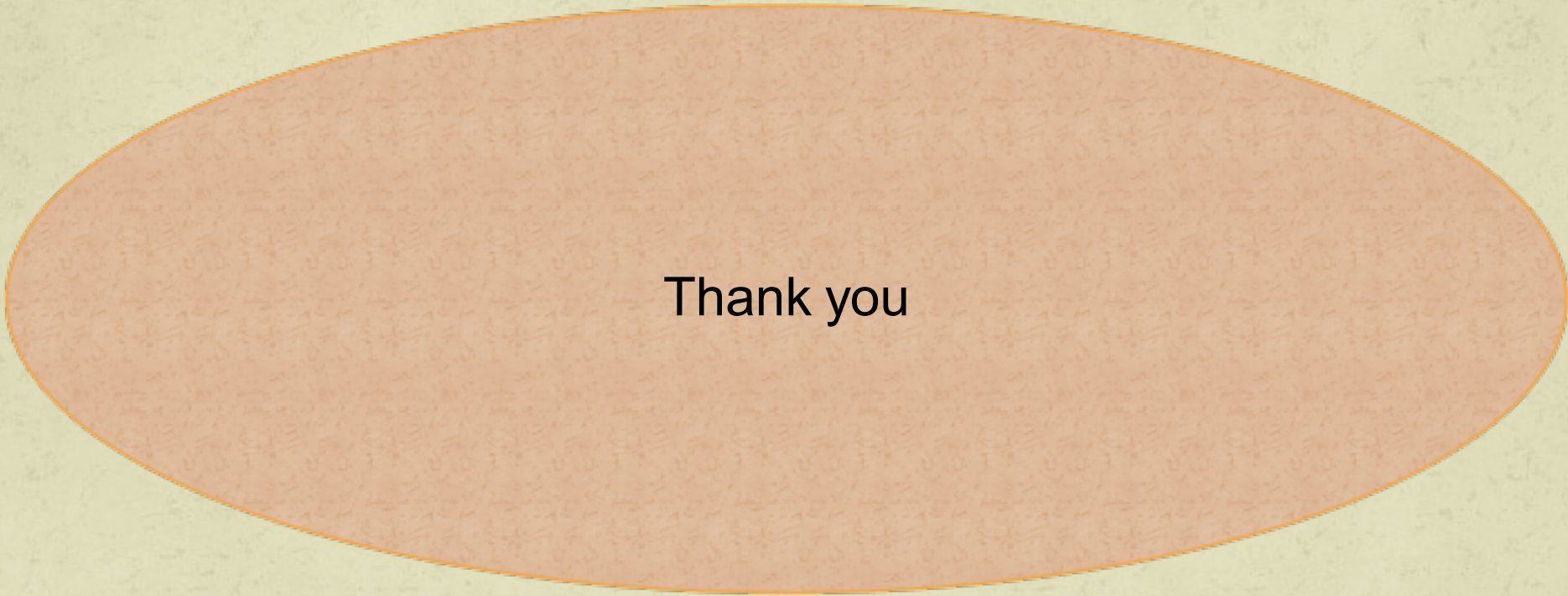
Characteristics (Nature) of Social Change

Different scholars have told many characteristics of social change, which defines the concept of social change in a more defined way. These characteristics are as follows:

1. **Social nature:** Social change is related to the change occurring in the entire society; however social change is not the only change occurring at the individual level. In other words, social change is only normalized when the change occurs within the units of the entire society, such as at caste, group, community level etc. However, change occurring in any one unit of the society is not termed as a social change
2. **Universal phenomenon:** Social change is everlasting and universally acceptable. There is no society in this world where change has not occurred. Although in different societies, the rate of change and nature might be different because no two societies are same

- **3. Natural and inevitable:** Change occurs necessarily because it is nature's perennial truth; hence, it is called a natural process. Society also keeps on changing in a natural way. Often, human nature opposes change, but still change keeps on happening because person's needs, desires, circumstances are responsible for change. For example, during primitive times, the design of the houses used to be of different types, but in modern times, when for all types of work one has to be depend on machines; naturally change occurred in types of houses, which was thought to be quite impossible.
- **Comparative and unequal speed:** Social change is observed in all societies but the rate of change is different in different the societies. In rural societies, change occurs at a very dull rate. Social change has an intimate relationship with country, period and circumstances. In other words, every country has different circumstances; hence, in every country social change also occurs at different rate, which can be known comparatively

- **5. Complex phenomenon:** Based on a comparative analysis of the occurrence of change in two societies, it is clear that a social change has occurred, but it is clearer in terms of how much and at what level the change has occurred? Its measurement is not possible. For example, today's ideas, values, traditions, customs have been different since primitive era, but it is not possible to evaluate the extent of difference because the occurrence change is qualitative in nature. Hence, the characteristic of social change is a complex phenomenon; it is not easy to understand its nature
- **Prediction impossible:** Change does occur, but what will be its direction? What will be its nature? At what place will the change occur etc is not specified. For example, the impact of technological development influenced the entire nation. Various fields, such as standard of living, arrangement of food, commutation, materialistic comfort etc are influenced by it, but it is a difficult task, if not impossible, to analyse the extent of influence of peoples' ideas, faith and values. Industrialisation and urbanisation has influenced various areas of joint families, marriage, caste practice etc, whose complete influence cannot be certainly foretold. However, only prospects can be analysed.



Thank you