

## **Yogendra Singh**

### **Methodology:**

Yogendra Singh 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.

### **Writings:**

Singh has published extensively in national and international scholarly research journals. He is also author of many books.

### **His main works are:**

1. Modernization of Indian Tradition (1973)
2. Essays on Modernization (1977)
3. Social Stratification and Social Change in India (1978)
4. Image of Man: Ideology and Theory in Indian Sociology (1984)
5. Indian Sociology: Social Conditioning and Emerging Concerns (1987)
6. Social Change in India: Crisis and Resilience (1993)
7. Culture Change in India: Identity and Globalization (2000)

### **In his studies, Singh has concentrated his focus on the following aspects of Indian society:**

1. Social stratification
2. Social change
3. Modernization
4. Indian sociology
5. Culture change

**According to Yogendra Singh, “ Tradition is a cumulative heritage of a society which permeates through all levels of social organization, for example, the value system, the social structure and the structure of personality”. According to him, Traditions means value themes, encompassed the entire social system of Indian society prior to the beginning of**

**Modernization. It was organized on four principles or value components which are as follows:**

- (1) Hierarchy,
- (2) Holism,
- (3) Karma, and
- (4) Transcendence.

These value components are found ingrained in Hindu scriptures such as Geeta, Mahabharata, Ramayana, Vedas, Puranas and Upanishads.

- (1) **Hierarchy:** Hierarchy was emerged not only in the system of caste and sub-caste stratification but also in Hindu concept of human nature, occupational life cycles (ashramas), and moral duties (Dharma). Thus, hierarchy is basically based on the value themes of ashramas and dharma. It governed the cultural structure at many points. A few of such areas where this principle may be found in manifest form are: role institutionalization and its legitimation in terms of varna and jati, the realms of goal orientation or the theory of Purushartha, the classification of levels of Charisma or guna as group and individual attributes and finally the changing cultural cycles. Hierarchy through role institutionalization and its legitimation provides the cultural counterpart of the social structure of the caste system which still persists in india. The principle of vedic hierarchy was based on functional specialization. With time caste system became rigid with notions of pollution and purity and restrictions on inter caste relations. Thus, hierarchy which was a functional principle became a religious phenomenon.

**The theory of ‘ Guna’** in Hindu cultural tradition provides a systematic formulation of the principle of Charismatic legitimation not only of the caste hierarchy but also of the order of power. According to the Bhagavadgita, the gunas (the primary qualities or modes of Nature) are three in number, sattva, rajas and tamas. They exist in all, including humans, in various degrees of concentration and combination. The highest and the most virtuous being the quality of Sattva, of brightness and virtue, associated with the sages and Brahmins. Next in hierarchy comes Rajas, the charismatic quality of passionate commitment to action, to power, the attribute of Kshatriyas and the kings. The last and lowest in hierarchy is Tamas, charismatic endowment to dullness, to profane inclinations and servitude. Sattva also implies quietude and spiritual bliss and is the characteristic endowment of Brahmins, Rajas implies strong activity orientation and is a characteristic of kshatriyas. Tamas represents dependency and ignorance and is characteristic of Shudras. Thus, the hierarchy principle of role institutionalization is reinforced by the theory Charismatic qualities.

The third major hierarchy in the hindu cultural tradition is that of values regarding goal orientation pattern. On this scale life goals have been arranged with increasing merit. They are :

- (1) Kama: Pursuit of material goals of sensory enjoyment
- (2) Artha: Pursuit of economic utilitarian obligations
- (3) Dharma: Pursuit of goals of moral obligation

- (4) Moksha: Pursuit of salvation in order to attain freedom from the chain of Birth and rebirth.

There are culturally sanctioned contexts in which each level of goal-orientation becomes dharma or moral obligations from a generalized point of view. These contexts are defined through division of Hindu life into another hierarchy of four-fold stages called ashrams. These are as follows:

- (1) **Brahamacharya Ashrama: Stage of learning and strict celibacy.**
- (2) **Grihastha Ashrama:** the perpetuation of family as well as the continuation of the group through progeny. The stage of Householders life.
- (3) **Vanaprashtha Ashrama: Stage of relative withdrawal to exclusive pursuit of moral and spiritual goal.**
- (4) **Sanyasa Ashram: Stage of complete withdrawal from affective particularistic social obligations and devotion to pursuit of spiritual values and its propagation in society.**

(2) Holism: Holism, yet another aspect of Hindu tradition, is manifested in the relationship between individual and group. The individual in Hindu society is not autonomous. He is constrained to abide by the norms and values of the society. It was the society which determined the behaviour of the individual. Holism implied a relationship between individual and group in which the former was encompassed by the latter in respect of duties and rights; what had precedence here was community or sangha and not the individual.

Holism has been a dominant value in India's caste society. In all circumstances an individual was subordinate to the caste, village and religious congregations. If the individual violated the sangha or caste and village traditions, he was subjected to severe sanctions – excommunicated, exiled and penalized. Collectivity persisted all along the line of traditional social structure, e.g., family, village community, caste and political territory or nation.

(3) Continuity or Karma: After hierarchy and holism, the third value theme of Indian society is karma or continuity. The crucial element of Hinduism is the theory of transmigration of soul: it is the theory of rebirth which explains the continuity of Hindu society. Continuity is assured by the theory of karma. The soul-Atma never dies, it always takes rebirth. It is based on the belief in eternal continuity and unity of lower and higher form. The lower form is the soul(atma) and higher form is God (Parmatma). Continuity is based on change and changelessness, creation and destruction, predestination(karma) and salvation(moksha). The principle of continuity was symbolized by principles of karma, transmigration of soul and a cyclical view of change.

(5) Transcendence: The fourth tradition of Hindu society is transcendence. According to the value of transcendence, the legitimacy of traditional values can never be challenged. Nobody can put a question mark to the hierarchy of caste system, none can challenge the superiority of collectivity. The principle of transcendence also posited that legitimation of traditional values could never be challenged on grounds of rationality derived from the non-sacred or profane scales of evaluation. It formed a super-concept contributing to integration as well as rationalization of the other value themes of the tradition.

Thus, the organization of tradition was based on these value components. According to Yogendra Singh in order to evaluate social changes in a meaningful context, it is essential to formulate some ideal-typical attributes of the Hindu traditions.

### **Modernization**

The term modernisation has been severally defined by several eminent scholars and one of them is the Indian sociologist Prof. Y. Singh who writes, "Modernisation symbolizes a rational attitude towards issues and their evaluation from universalistic, not particularistic point of view. To him, Modernisation involves diffusing scientific and technological know-how.

C.E. Black in his book 'Dynamics of Modernisation suggests modernisation as a process by which historically evolved institution are adopted to the rapidly changing function that reflect the unprecedented increase in man's knowledge, permitting control over his environment in the recent centuries that accompanies the scientific revolution.

Thus, modernisation emphasizes upon the diffusion of new standards like scientific outlook, rationalism based on reasoning, universalism, humanism, individualism, secularization, democratic liberalism and the like. Application of scientific know-how to meet human requirements is also another aspect of modernisation. From Psychological point of view, modernisation brings about changes in individuals motivation temperament attitude personality and role-perception.

### **Dimensions of modernization:**

Modernisation is multi-dimensional in character. One may categories it into social, psychological, intellectual, demographic, cultural, economic and political dimensions. Modernisation at Political level is also known as Political modernisation or Political development. Political modernisation has its own distinct features. It rejects the traditional authorities like Feudal lords, religious heads & god-heads and Traditional community leaders.

Rather it implies the emergence of a single secular rational authority in a political system to which people render habitual obedience. Political modernisation, therefore involves increasing people's participation in the political process through Business groups, interest groups, political parties, N.G.Os and voluntary organizations.

### **Modernisation has following salient features:**

- (1) A Scientific outlook.
- (2) Reasoning and rationalism
- (3) Secularization
- (4) High aspirations
- (5) Total change in attitude, norms and values,
- (6) Developed economy,
- (7) Broader national interest
- (8) Democratization
- (9) An open society.

(10) A challenging personality and finally

(11) Dynamic leadership to organize socio-economic cultural & political movement and undertake reforms.

### **Tradition and Modernity**

The only truth is that both tradition and modernity are interrelated. No society as, states earlier is either 'wholly traditional' or 'wholly modern'. By comparison either a society is more traditional or more modern. For instance, Indian society is more traditional compared to the American society. Neither of them is absolutely traditional and absolutely modern. There is always a bridging-gap between the two. Again the process of change from traditionalism to modernism is either fast or slow.

What is true of the contemporary society is that the rapid switch over from traditional to modernity is faster because of rapid industrialization, economic development and urbanization. But there are certain time-tested socio-cultural traditional rites associated with marriage and death, which have denied any faster modernization in both western and non-western countries.

Modernisation as a value-free term involves rational and scientific transformation of the socio-cultural values of institution. On the contrary westernization is a value loaded term with a restricted connotation of imitation of western culture and values.

Modernisation involves transformation towards progress democratic, socio-economic and scientific ideals. Modernisation as a process of change requires both structural and functional changes. Mutual tolerance, respect for other's views and equality among all are the essential requisites of modernity.

Modernisation does not mean elimination of all traditional and ancient values. Those ancient values are to be preserved and protected along with induction and modernity has to be intelligently solved to accommodate overall progress. Conflicts and problems are bound to arise, but a dynamic leadership with a progressive and modern outlook is required to solve these problems in time. Ultimately, the choice of proper leadership is the sole responsibility of the conscious voters.

India possesses vast cultural heritage and it is the overall responsibility of the people of India at large and the popularity elected government. No Nation, not even India, can be modernized without protection and preservation of its cultural heritage. No tradition bound society is a backward society because a few traditional elements have universal appreciation. India's policy of non-alignment is founded upon the Ancient India's traditions of Non-Violence, peace and Fraternity.

Modernisation in India is a continuous process of transformation from tradition to modernity and these has to be a synthesis of tradition and modernity in India. Not all, but a few traditions in India are partial to modernity and those traditions have to be preserved and protected. Three views describe the tradition-modernity relationship one of them is the optimistic outlook that supports faster westernization. The other view, obscurantism believes in tradition and orthodoxy which are considered to be eternal and hence not to be spared.

The third and the most balanced view between the two, is called 'Progressivism' which believes in progress towards modernity without sacrificing the least traditional elements. Only these

orthodoxy elements which prevent progressivism have to be abandoned to achieve modernity and socio-economic development quicker and in a planned manner.

In India, Progressivism implies well-planned-Socio-Economic changes for the community-welfare.

It is debatable to identify which traditional and orthodox elements in India have to be cast off and which have to be retained. Yet, the agreed view favours a synthesis of tradition and modernity.

Lastly it is relevant and wise to cast off misconception of modernity in India and to ban blindly aping the misconceived modernity and westernization. But, that has to be done through scientific outlook, tolerance and respect for others point of view and without any coercive imposition.

Hence in India, Modernity has to be belonged to coexist with rationality based tradition and cultural heritage. Modernity and Traditions are not poles apart and there has to be an agreed and well-accepted synthesis between the two in India. India has to be modernized and not westernized at the cost of the cultural past and tradition.

## **Towards an integrated paradigm of development**

### **Social Change**

Singh (1973) labels social change as 'ideology'. If the relevance of the concepts of sanskritization and westernization is not as analytical proposition but 'truth asserting concepts' as Singh has aptly characterized them – sanskritization, westernization, parochialization, universalization, little and great traditions, rural-urban dichotomy or continuum, etc. enriched the body of sociology of knowledge.

At the very beginning of re-emergence of the cognitive-historical trend, some of its proponents, who later made a significant contribution to the development of Indian sociology, were still strongly influenced by the prevailing trend of the structural-functional approach and the behaviour outlook.

As a result, their efforts to Indianize Indian sociology were hesitant and their attempt to cut across the overpowering dominance of the 'western' viewpoint was not altogether successful. A notable example in this context may be Yogendra Singh's monograph on the Modernization of Indian Tradition (1973), which was written during 1966-67. It contains many insights into the Indianization of Indian sociology.

The Trend Report on the Concepts and Theories of Social Change further substantiates it. Singh (1974) viewed that studies on social change in India have been fragmentary. These studies usually refer to isolated aspects such as caste, family, occupation, etc., and these elements themselves are usually found to have been studied in a local setting – at most at a regional level, and not for India as a whole.

However, it was by an impressionistic amalgamation of these separate factors and their placement on the axis of the twin social processes of sanskritization and westernization (or, modernization) that social change in India has predominantly been interpreted, with the 'dominant caste' serving as the lever of change.

Singh found that the process of sanskritization is not merely a positional change in the caste hierarchy but a strategy on the part of those in the lower echelons to challenge the status of those in the higher echelons by adopting their 'way of life' (Singh, 1968). To Singh (1994: 6), "The specific sense of sanskritization lies in the historicity of its meaning based on the Hindu tradition. In this respect, sanskritization is a unique historical expression on the general process of acculturation as a means of vertical mobility of groups.... We may call them 'historical specific' and 'contextual specific' connotations of sanskritization."

The Indian sociological formulations of the concept of social change find a beginning in the writings of the British and Indian scholars following the last quarter of the nineteenth century and onwards. Gradually, these concepts and formulations got differentiated and a variety of approaches emerged.

**Paradigm for an Integrated Approach  
Modernization**

<i>Sources of Changes</i>	<i>Cultural Structure</i>		<i>Social Structure</i>	
	Heterogenetic changes	Little Tradition	Great Tradition	Micro-structure
	Islamization	Secondary-Islamic Impact	Role-Differentiation	Political-Innovations
	Primary-Westernization	Secondary-Westernization or (modernization)	New-Legitimization	New Structures of Elite, Bureaucracy, Industry, etc.
Orthogenetic Changes	Sanskritization or Traditionalization	Cultural Renaissance	Pattern - Recurrence, Compulsive Migration or Population shift	Elite Circulation, Succession of Kings, Rise and Fall of Cities and Trade Centres

**Traditionalization**

**According to Singh (1973), some major concepts and approaches about social in India can be grouped as:**

- (i) sanskritization and westernization;
- (ii) little and great traditions consisting of (a) processes of parochialization and universalization, and (b) cultural performances and organization of tradition;
- (iii) multiple traditions;
- (iv) structural approach, based on (a) functional model, and (b) dialectical model; and
- (v) cognitive historical or Indological approach. Singh reviews each of them to find common grounds for a conceptual integration.

After the evaluation of these approaches, Singh finds that each one of them has advantages of its own for the study of social change, but these advantages are limited as none of them provides a comprehensive perspective on social change in India.

Therefore, a series of concepts related to social change could be integrated into a logical system on the basis of similarities in theoretical formulations. Singh presented a paradigm for an integrated approach to analyse social change in India:

The paradigm is a logical corollary of Singh's analysis about the levels at which an integrated view on social change in India can be achieved.

**According to Singh, this approach can be seen in the following theoretical perspectives:**

1. The causation of social change is to be sought both from within and without the social system or the tradition. For this we find the concepts employed by Redfield and Singer as being particularly useful and make a distinction between the heterogenetic or exogenous and orthogenetic or endogenous sources of change.
2. A distinction between cultural structure and social structure is also made to focus upon the need to observe changes at the level of these two relatively independent substantive domains. Again, following Redfield, cultural structure has further been sub-divided into the categories of the little tradition and the great tradition. Similarly, the social structure is divided to form categories of micro-structure and macro-structure.
3. These distinctions follow from the need to focus upon the contexts, through which processes of change could be evaluated in matters of spread and depth.
4. Finally, the direction of change is represented in a linear evolutionary form from 'traditionalization' toward 'modernization'. Traditionalization comprises the total range of changes governed by orthogenetic patterns in the cultural and social structures. Modernization similarly represents the net balance of changes following from heterogenetic contacts.

The causal forces, substantive domain, contexts and direction of change provide us the logical boundaries within which the more specific processes of social change in India could be observed and described. These specific processes and the relevant concepts describing them have been noted in the paradigm in each appropriate cell. Singh examines the significance of the specific concepts in course of the analysis of change pertaining to the relevant substantive domain.

For instance, in the cultural structure of India, the Islamic impact constitutes an important heterogenetic source of cultural transformation and synthesis and its significance can be seen at the levels of both of the little and great traditions. This has been followed by westernization as a major form of exogenous cultural impact on India, and its ramifications also have relevance for the little and great traditions.

The changes in social structure could also be discussed more fruitfully when a distinction is made between the macro-structures and micro-structures. The instances of macro-structures are: bureaucracy, industry, market, leadership, political parties, etc.

These consist of role relationships, which have a pan-Indian extension of boundaries. In contrast, the micro-structures, such as kinship, family, caste and sub-caste and tribe, etc., have limited boundaries for extension of role relationships and their obligations. The integrated approach, as offered by Singh through a schematic arrangement of concepts of change, has the advantage of being comprehensive as well as theoretically consistent.