UNIT 2   PROCESS OF CHANGE

Structure

2.1   INTRODUCTION

The concept of social change is a very broad one. It consists of a constellation of various processes of change in social structure, in terms of place, time, and context. Since it is so broad, it is bound to be somewhat imprecise, tentative, and value neutral. This unit discusses the meaning and components of the processes of change, change agent, and stages of change. We will analyze the processes of change with reference to the change cycle, barriers to change, and approaches to change.

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

*   explain the meaning and components of the change process;

*   discuss the concepts of change agent, stages of change and change cycle; and

*   narrate the barriers to change.

2.2   THE CHANGE PROCESS: MEANING AND COMPONENTS

In academic terms, change is considered neutral. It implies that the object to which it is applied becomes different with time. According to this view, social change suggests no law, no theory, no direction, and no continuity. The idea of continuity is introduced when we refer to social change as a process. A process means a continuous change taking place in a definite manner through the operation of forces present from the very beginning, within the situation. Examples of processes are communication, socialization, accommodation, integration, disintegration, competition, and conflict. To study a process, we observe a series of transitions between one state of being and another. A process may be up or down, forward or backward, towards progress, or regressive. Thus, process means movement from one stage to another with a definite direction. A process is both system-sustaining and system-transforming. A given social system or social structure is regenerated through some process of social change, whereas some other processes may bring about situations of malfunctioning and breakdown.

Social processes are a part of social structure, and we come across these frequently in system-sustaining and system-changing exercises.

Broadly speaking, there are two types of social change processes: (1) those that sustain the social system; and (2) those that bring about change in the system and change of the system. The first process may be termed conformity, status quo, and continuity. The latter may be called the process of cultural and structural change.

Social change is universal. Its pattern and factors may vary from time to time and from place to place. Change can be seen in terms of the elements of time and history in relation to a given society or social phenomena. Maciver and Page write in this regard: "Society exists only as a time-sequence. It is a becoming, not a being; a process and changing equilibrium of present relationships". A social structure is a nexus of present relationships. It is sustained by those members who participate in social relationships. Social change means change in social structure. Change in social values, institutions, property relations, economic pursuits, personnel and role distribution may be cited as examples of social change in modern society. Social change is always relative in terms of time, space and context. Resistance to social change is also quite a common feature as change disturbs the ongoing social order and relations.

Components of the Process of Change

Short descriptions of various components of the process of change follow.

i) **Stimuli forcing human beings to change:** personal and social aspirations for change emerge from the forces pressing towards innovation or adoption of new technology. The four stimuli for change are:

   a) Man is continually making efforts to modify the natural resources to solve problems. These are weather control (coolers, air conditioners, afforestation, etc.), production of electricity, atomic power, chemical control of pests and diseases, etc. This makes the set up of society complicated and new problems like labour management, new patterns of working, and new patterns of leadership and cooperation begin to emerge.

   b) This creates the need to utilize and adjust to the changes that we are continuously creating in our environment. Planners look ahead to adjustments and changes in our way of life. Legislators enact new laws to take account of changed conditions of living and the new resources which have become available; educators organize the specialized units of knowledge, which must be transmitted to our young people if they are engaged in these new processes of utilization and adjustment. Administrators coordinate our adjustment efforts; and all of us grapple with the problems of changing our personal goals, desires, expectations, and patterns of behaviour.

   This creates situations in which we are always required to revise our definitions about what is good health, good performance, efficiency, effective use of our resources, and, so we constantly use innovations, i.e., use of DDT was once advocated, but because of the problem of pollution and DDT's adverse effects on our health, its use has now been

banned at certain places. The problem of hippies opened the eyes of the advocates of western culture to the problems of material wealth. People have now started thinking in terms of the values in vogue in oriental countries like India.

c) The competitive process of comparing ourselves with others is another impetus towards innovations. It provides us with the motivation for progress through discovering improved or changed ways of doing thing.

d) The pain and disorganization that arises from finding that our familiar ways of behaviour no longer work in a new environment is a stimulus to change.

ii) **Problem-solving efforts of different strata of society compel change:** four types of dynamic systems: (1) The individual personality, (2) the face-to-face group, (3) the organizations, and (4) the community, are related with change in a society.

a) **Individual personality:** different personality systems have various customary ways of solving problems. Some personality systems exhibit patterns of trust, while others exhibit patterns of distrust. Some systems try to create a relationship of submissive dependence, others strive for dominance; yet others seek an extreme of dependence, or minimal contact. As internal or external conditions changes, the personality system is confronted with the challenge and often with the stark necessity of modifying its customary and stabilized patterns in order to cope more effectively with the new conditions. The desirability of improving one's performance may provide a challenge which incites one to seek help, or the pain of personal maladjustment may create a readiness for change. If a person is in a state of considerable frustration because he has recently been dressed down by his boss, or, he is subject to a conflict between some of his subordinates, for instance, his sense of social values may conflict with his need to express hostility. He may be out of mood and be harsh to his wife, or his clerk, or other subordinates, or may go out for a vigorous walk, and may organize a counter attack against the source of his frustration, or his boss. So it depends on the individual personality how he adjusts or behaves in a particular situation.

b) **Face-to-face group:** Such groups include committees, staff associations, families, work groups, clubs, etc. We can visualize the internal dynamics of these systems much more easily than the internal dynamics of individual personality systems. We can watch the interaction between sub-parts of groups. We all know of the conflicts between the chairman and members of the committees or bodies, etc. These are face-to-face group difficulties. These call for change so that the conflicts and difficulties may be solved.

c) **The organizations:** This is a larger social system which comprised the community. These are the parts of the community which have a more or less clearly defined and specialized function requiring the loyalty and labour of a group of people who are organized in a relatively systematic relationship and whose efforts are coordinated by some kind of formal leadership structure. These are business organizations, welfare agencies, educational institutions, government bureaus, religious associations,

political parties, farmers' organizations, women's associations, youth clubs, etc.

The internal process of such systems usually involves interactions among officially defined sub-parts, such as various departments of a business organization. In organizations, the relationships among sub-parts are likely to be formalized and, hence, face-to-face interactions are more feasible.

d) **The community:** This is made up of a variety of interacting sub-parts, individual citizens, informal interest groups, organized occupational or political sub-groups, economic and social strata, geographical units, political sub-divisions, etc. The stresses and strains set up by these interacting sub-parts and the necessity of maintaining community services to all constituent units have resulted in a variety of stabilized structural arrangements and problem solving procedures.

2.3 CHANGE AGENT AND ITS ROLE

A change agent is an individual who influences clients' innovation-decisions in a direction, deemed desirable by a change agency.

Seven roles can be identified for the change agent in the process of introducing an innovation in a client system. These are as follows:

a) **To develop a need for change:** a change agent often initially helps clients become aware of the need to alter their behaviour. In order to initiate the change process, the change agent points out new alternatives to existing problems, dramatizes the importance of these problems, and may convince clients that they are capable of confronting these problems. The change agent assesses clients' needs at this stage and also may help to create needs.

b) **To establish an information-exchange relationship:** once a need for change is created, a change agent must develop rapport with his or her clients. The change agent can enhance the relationship with clients by being perceived as credible, competent, and trustworthy, and by empathizing with the clients' needs and problems. Clients must accept the change agent before they will accept the innovations that he or she promotes. The innovations are judged on the basis of how the change agent is perceived.

c) **To diagnose problems:** the change agent is responsible for analyzing clients' problems to determine why existing alternatives do not meet their needs. In arriving at such diagnostic conclusions, the change agent must view the situation with empathy from the clients' perspective.

d) **To create an intent in the client to change:** after a change agent explores various avenues of action that clients might take to achieve their goals, the change agent seeks to motivate their interests in the innovation.

e) **To translate an intent to action:** A change agent seeks to influence clients' behaviour in accordance with recommendations based on the clients' needs. Interpersonal network influences from near-peers are most important at the persuasion and decision stages in the innovation decision process. The change agent can operate only indirectly here, by working with opinion leaders to activate social networks.

f) **To stabilize adoption and prevent discontinuance:** Change agents may effectively stabilize new behaviour through reinforcing messages to clients who have adopted, thus 'freezing' a new behaviour. This assistance is given when a client is at the implementation or conformation stage in the innovation decision process.

g) **To achieve a terminal relationship:** The end goal for a change agent is to develop self-renewing behaviour on the part of the clients. The change agent is to develop self-renewing behaviour on the part of the clients. The change agent should seek to put him or herself out of business by developing the clients' ability to be their own change agents. In other words, the change agent seeks to shift clients from a position of reliance on the change agent to one of self reliance.

In this section you studied about change process its meaning and components, change agent and its role. Now, answer the questions given in Check Your Progress 1.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: a) Write your answer in about 50 words

b) Check your answer with possible answers given at the end of the unit

1) Who is a change agent? What is his/her role?

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2) Select some social change of your interest in extension and write five statements that you believe represent varying degrees of agreement and disagreement towards that social change?

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2.4 THE STAGES OF CHANGE

Before you begin to make changes in your life, I would like to introduce you to a useful theory called the Stages of Change Model (SCM), which models the stages that the mind and body go through when undergoing change. The Stages of Change Model was originally developed in the late 1970's and early 1980's by James Prochaska and Carlo DiClemente at the University of Rhode Island when they were studying how smokers were able to give up their habits. The SCM model has been applied to a broad range of behaviours including weight

loss, injury prevention, overcoming alcohol, and drug problems, among others. The idea behind the SCM is that behaviour change does not happen in one step. Rather, people tend to progress through different stages on their way to successful change. Also, each of us progresses through the stages at our own rate. So expecting behaviour change by simply telling someone, for example, who is still in the 'pre-contemplation' stage that he or she must go to a certain number of meetings in a certain time period is rather naive (and perhaps counterproductive) because they are not ready to change. Each person must decide for himself or herself when a stage is completed and when it is time to move on to the next stage. Moreover, this decision must come from inside. The long term change cannot be externally imposed. In each of the stages, a person has to grapple with a different set of issues and tasks that relate to changing behaviour.

The stages of change are:

- precontemplation (not yet acknowledging that there is a problem behaviour that needs to be changed)
- contemplation (acknowledging that there is a problem, but not yet ready or sure of wanting to make a change)
- preparation/determination (getting ready to change)
- action/willpower (changing behaviour)
- maintenance (maintaining the behaviour change)
- relapse (returning to older behaviour and abandoning the new changes)

Stages of change model
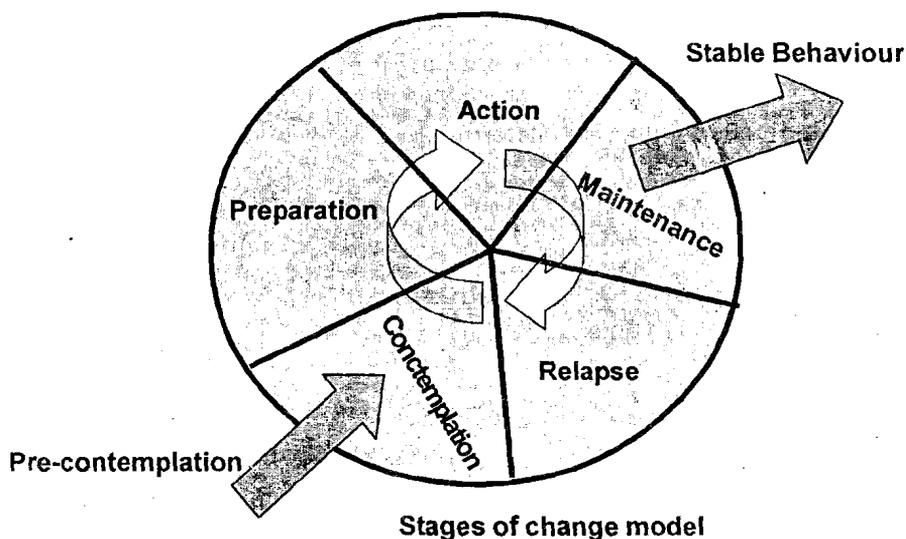
a) **Precontemplation:** in this stage, people are not thinking seriously about changing and are not interested in any kind of help. People in this stage tend to defend their current bad habit(s) and do not view it as a problem. They may be defensive in the face of other people's efforts to pressure them to quit. They do not focus their attention on quitting and tend not to discuss their bad habit with others. This stage is called 'denial'.

b) **Contemplation:** in the contemplation stage, people are more aware of the personal consequences of their bad habit and they spend time thinking about their problem. Although they are able to consider the possibility of changing, they tend to be ambivalent about it. In this stage, people are in a teeter-totter, weighing the pros and cons of quitting or modifying their behaviour. Although they think about the negative aspects of their bad habit and the positive

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associated with giving it up (or reducing), they may doubt that the long term benefits associated with quitting will outweigh the short term costs. It might take as little as a couple of weeks, or as long as a lifetime to get through the contemplation stage. In fact, some people think and think and think about giving up their bad habit and may die never having gotten beyond this stage. On the plus side, people are more open to receiving information about their bad habit, and more likely to actually use educational interventions and reflect on their own feelings and thoughts concerning their bad habit.

c) **Preparation/Determination:** in the preparation/determination stage, people have made a commitment to make a change. Their motivation for changing is reflected by statements such as: "I've got to do something about this — this is serious. Something has to change. What can I do?" This is sort of a research phase: people are now taking small steps toward cessation. They are trying to gather information (sometimes by reading things like this) about what they will need to do to change their behaviour. Or, they will call a lot of clinics, trying to find out what strategies and resources are available to help them in their attempt. Too often, people skip this stage, they try to move directly from contemplation into action and fall flat on their face because they haven't adequately researched or accepted what it is going to take to make this major lifestyle change.

d) **Action/Willpower:** this is the stage where people believe they have the ability to change their behaviour and are actively involved in taking steps to change their bad behaviour by using a variety of different techniques. This is the shortest of all the stages. The amount of time people spend in action varies. This is a stage when people most depend on their own willpower. They are making overt efforts to quit or change a behaviour, and are at the greatest risk of relapse. Mentally, they review their commitment to themselves and develop plans to deal with both personal and external pressures that may lead to slips. They may use short term rewards to sustain their motivation, and analyze their behaviour change efforts in a way that enhances their self confidence. People in this stage also tend to be open to receiving help and are also likely to seek support from others (a very important element).Hopefully, people will then move to the next stage.

e) **Maintenance:** maintenance involves being able to successfully avoid any temptations to return to the renounced bad habit. The goal of the maintenance stage is to maintain the new status quo. People in this stage tend to remind themselves of how much progress they have made. People in maintenance constantly reformulate the rules of their lives and are acquiring new skills to deal with life and avoid relapse. They are able to anticipate the situations in which a relapse could occur, and prepare coping strategies in advance. They remain aware that what they are striving for is personally worthwhile and meaningful. They are patient with themselves and recognize that it often takes a while to let go of old behaviour patterns and practice new ones until the new habits are second nature to them. Even though they may have thoughts of returning to their old bad habits, they resist the temptation and stay on track.

f) **Relapse:** along the way to permanent cessation or stable reduction of a bad habit, most people experience relapse. In fact, it is much more common to have at least one relapse than not. Relapse is often accompanied by feelings of discouragement and seeing oneself as a failure. While relapse can be

discouraging, the majority of people who quit do not follow a straight path to a life time free of self destructive habits. Rather, they cycle through the five stages several times before achieving a stable lifestyle change. Consequently, the Stages of Change Model considers relapse to be normal. In fact, relapses can be important opportunities for learning and becoming stronger. Relapsing is like falling off a horse — the best thing you can do is get right back on again. However, if you do "fall off the horse" and relapse, it is important that you do not fall back to the precontemplation or contemplation stages. Rather, restart the process again at preparation, action or even the maintenance stages.

g) **Transcendence:** eventually, if you 'maintain maintenance' long enough, you will reach a point where you will be able to work with your emotions and understand your own behaviour and view it in a new light. This is the stage of 'transcendence', a transition to a new life. In this stage, not only is your bad habit no longer an integral part of your life but to return to it would seem atypical, abnormal, even weird to you. When you reach this point in your process of change, you will know that you have transcended the old bad habits and that you are truly becoming a new "you", who no longer needs the old behaviour to sustain yourself.

2.5 THE CHANGE CYCLE

Change has always been a necessary aspect of life and work, and our world is changing more rapidly than ever. It is likely that one will have to cope with a variety of changes in the near future. The components of change cycle are:

a) Stages of Change

b) Sudden Change

c) Many cycles of change

d) The positive and negative change cycle

Your success and fulfilment - your emotional, mental, spiritual, and physical well being - depend on how well you adapt to change. People react, respond, and adjust to change in a sequence of six predictable stages. The Change Cycle model identifies the thoughts, feelings and behaviour associated with each stage of change. There is no better map to assist you in navigating through the changes.

a) **Stages of Change**

Stage 1 – **Loss to Safety:** in Stage 1, you admit to yourself that regardless of whether or not you perceive the change to be good or 'bad' there will be a sense of loss of what 'was'.

Stage 2 – **Doubt to Reality:** in this stage, you doubt the facts, doubt your doubts and struggle to find information about the change that you believe is valid. Resentment, scepticism, and blame cloud your thinking.

Stage 3 – **Discomfort to Motivation:** you will recognize Stage 3 by the discomfort it brings. The change and all it means has now become clear, and starts to settle in. Frustration and lethargy rule until possibility takes over. *The Danger Zone:* The Danger Zone represents the pivotal place where you make the choice, either to

move on to Stage 4 and discover the possibilities the change has presented, or to choose fear and return to Stage 1.

Stage 4 – **Discovery to Perspective:** Stage 4 represents the 'light at the end of the tunnel'. Perspective, anticipation, and a willingness to make decisions give a new sense of control and hope. You are optimistic about a good outcome because you have choices.

Stage 5 – **Understanding:** in Stage 5, you understand the change and are more confident, think pragmatically, and your behaviour is much more productive.

Stage 6 – **Integration:** by this time, you have regained your ability and willingness to be flexible. You have insight into the ramifications, consequences, and rewards of the change - past, present, and future.

b) **Sudden Change:** change always follows this basic process, although it may sometimes start at Step Two, with no warning. An accident or an unexpected business reversal are such changes. With sudden change there is no sense that, "Something's up!" You cannot prepare in advance, but the other steps in the change cycle remain the same. Starting at step two, you must first determine the nature of the situation. What has happened? What is the danger? What is the possibility? Once the issue can be stated, then a plan of action must be formulated and put into place. With experience and adjustment the plan is successful, and you return to a new normality.

c) **Many Cycles of Change:** if you assess your life, you will find that you are on several cycles of change at once. One cycle is at work and when you are at home there is another. These cycles are not often synchronized. Family changes, church changes, and community changes add to the complexity. In some areas, you are being led into change and in others, you are the person who is leading others into change. Emotionally one will also undergo a variety of experiences. As one goes through loss in one area of one's life in another, one is beginning to regain hope. The emotional wheels of life keep turning through the four phases of loss, suffering, hope, and happiness. Balancing all of this intricacy of change is where the real challenge of change is found.

d) **The positive and negative change cycle:** just as there is a negative cycle of emotions experienced when the change is not to the liking of the person in question, so also there is a positive cycle. Not all people experience change as a bad thing, some will benefit from the change, while others just find change in itself intriguing and exciting. The change cycle is given in figure below.
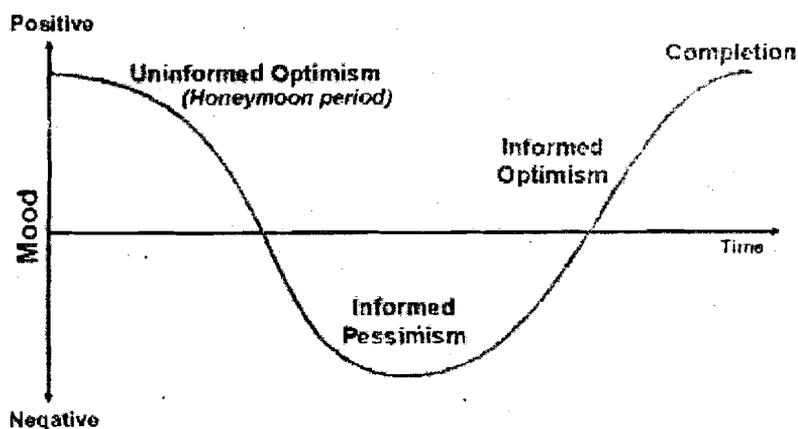
The various aspects are discussed below:

i) **Uninformed optimism:** in the first stage of positive change, people are excited and intrigued by the change. They look forward to it with eager anticipation, building a very positive and often over optimistic view, for example that it will be much easier for them to resolve all of their current issues. And, for a time after the change (sometimes sadly short), there is a 'honeymoon period', during which they are positively happy with the change.

ii) **Informed pessimism:** the honeymoon period does not last forever and the rose tinted glasses start to fade as the untidiness of reality starts to bite. The person finds that things have not all fallen into place, that other people have not magically become as cooperative as they expected, and that things are just not as easy as they had expected. This pushes them over into a period of gloom when they realize that perfection, after all, is not that easy to attain. This may evidence itself in mutterings and grumblings, but still does not reach the depths of the depression stage of negative change perception (unless the person flips into a delayed negative cycle).

iii) **Informed optimism:** before long, however, their original optimism starts to reassert itself, now tinted by a resignation to the reality of the situation. After all, things are not that bad, and a positive sense of potential begins to creep back. As they look around them and talk to other people, they make realistic plans and move forward with an informed sense of optimism.

iv) **Completion:** eventually, things reach a relatively steady platform of realistic and workable action. The person is probably happier than they were before the change started and, with their realistic vision, have the potential to reach giddier heights of happiness as they achieve more of their potential.

2.6 THE BARRIERS TO CHANGE

People naturally resist change – including those who are in dysfunctional situations. One reason is that where we are now is known. For example, we may find ourselves in a bad situation, but it is nevertheless a known situation – and many people prefer the known to the unknown. If we want people to be able to initiate and sustain change we must be aware of the barriers to change. Let us discuss the barriers to change and how to overcome the barriers to change.

a) Barriers to change

A degree of resistance is normal since change is disruptive and stressful. Moreover, a degree of scepticism can be healthy especially where there are weaknesses in the proposed changes. However, resistance will also impede the achievement of organizational objectives.

Some of the reasons for resistance to change are discussed below

Kotter and Schlesinger have identified basic causes of resistance to change. These are:

i) **Parochial self interest:** individuals are more concerned with the implications for themselves.

ii) **Misunderstanding:** communications problems and inadequate information.

iii) **Low tolerance of change:** sense of insecurity and different assessment of the situation.

iv) **Disagreement over the need for change:** disagreement over the advantages and disadvantages.

Some negative comments that are often received on proposed changes

- "My needs are already being met".

- "There is no justification for change".

- "I don't like the way they propose to do it".

- "The risks outweigh the benefits".

- "It will now be harder for me to meet my own needs".

Organisational barriers to change

- Structural inertia

- Existing power structures

- Resistance from work groups

- Failure of previous change initiatives

Individual barriers to change

- Tradition and set ways

- Loyalty to existing relationships

- Failure to accept the need for change

- Insecurity

- Preference for the existing arrangements

- Break up of work groups

- Difference in personal ambitions

- Fear of: loss of power, loss of skills, loss of income

- The unknown

- Redundancy

- Inability to perform as well in the new situation

Inappropriate change management

- Change is often resisted because of a failure in the way it is introduced

- Failure to explain the need for change

- Failure to provide information

- Failure to consult, negotiate, and offer support and training

- Lack of involvement in the process

- Failure to build trust and sense of security

- Poor employee relations

Why change should be welcomed

Change can produce positive benefits for the individual.

- Opportunities for personal change and development
- Provides a new challenge
- Reduces the boredom of work
- Opportunity to participate and shape the outcome

b) Overcoming resistance to change: Six Change Approaches

Kotter and Schlesinger set out six change approaches to deal with resistance to change:

a) **Education and Communication** - where there is a lack of information or inaccurate information and analysis, one of the best ways to overcome resistance to change is to educate people about the effort. This helps people to see logic in the change effort.

b) **Participation and Involvement** - people should be invited to participate and involve themselves in the change effort; this way they will not resist change.

c) **Facilitation and Support** - where people are resisting change due to adjustment problems, managers can head off potential resistance by being supportive of employees during difficult times.

d) **Negotiation and Agreement** - where someone or some group may lose out in a change, and where the individual or group has considerable power to resist, managers can combat resistance by offering incentives to people to change.

e) **Manipulation and Co-option** - where other tactics will not work or are too expensive, an effective way will be manipulation to co-opt the resisters. Co-option involves a patronizing gesture that brings a person into a change management planning group. This often involves selecting leaders of the resisters to participate in the change effort.

f) **Explicit and Implicit Coercion** - this is used where speed is essential and is only a last resort. Managers can explicitly and implicitly force employees into accepting change by making clear that resisting change can lead to losing jobs, firing, transferring, or not promoting employees.

In this section you studied about stages of change, change cycle and barriers to change. Now, answer the questions given in Check Your Progress 2.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: a) Write your answer in about 50 words

   b) Check your answer with possible answers given at the end of the unit

1) Talk with several of your colleagues and ask them about their individual barriers to change and compare them with the one given in this unit.

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2) Does the change agent has a role in the process of introducing an innovation in a client system?

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2.7   LET US SUM UP

In this unit, we discussed the meaning of process of change. Next, we took a closer look at components of the process of change, followed by a detailed discussion on the role of change agent in the process of change. The other three important aspects covered in this unit are the stages of change, the change cycle and the barriers to change. We also took a closer look at components of the processes of change.

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2.9   CHECK YOUR PROGRESS-POSSIBLE ANSWERS

1) Who is a change agent? What is his/her role?

Answer. A change agent is an individual who influences clients' innovation-decisions in a direction deemed desirable by a change agency. Seven roles can be identified for the change agent in the process of introducing an innovation in a client system. These are:

1) To develop a need for change.

2) To establish an information-exchange relationship.

3) To diagnose problems.

4) To create an intent in the client to change.

5) To translate an intent to action.

6) To stabilize adoption and prevent discontinuance.

7) To achieve a terminal relationship.

2) **Select some social change of your interest in extension and write five statements that you believe represent varying degrees of agreement and disagreement towards that social change.**

Answer. The introduction of high yielding varieties is the change that interests me and the degrees of agreement and disagreement towards the introduction to high yielding varieties are:

a) Improved the crop yields,

b) Local varieties vanished from the farmers' fields,

c) Poverty and hunger reduced,

d) Cost of cultivation increased,

e) Economic profits with less area

Check Your Progress 2

1) **Talk with several of your colleagues and ask them about the individual barriers to change and compare with the one given in this unit?**

Answer. To bring change in the individuals' behaviour, attitude is really a very big task. So many hurdles will come in that process. After talking to your colleagues compare their views. Refer to 2.6 also.

2) **Does the change agent has a role in the process of introducing an innovation in a client system?**

Answer. Yes, the change agent should follow each of the steps in the process of introducing an innovation in a client system. These steps are to develop a need for change, to establish an information-exchange relationship, to diagnose problems, to create an intent in the client to change, to translate an intent to action, to stabilize adoption and prevent discontinuance, to achieve a terminal relationship.