UNIT 12 SOCIAL CHANGE

Structure

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12.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this Unit, you will be able to understand:

- the concept of social change and social transformation;
- the various approaches to the understanding of social change;
- the causal factors of social change;
- the rate of social change;
- the impact of social change on human society; and
- social change and the future.
12.1 INTRODUCTION

Social change is constantly encountered in our daily lives. This is because the society we live in is itself changing all the time. The concept of social transformation is very closely linked to social change. Sometimes the two terms are used interchangeably. Sociologists have been trying to answer and explain, in main, three basic questions of social change. First, the question of whether social change is good or bad; second, the causal factors of social change; and third, the impact of social change to society. Modern sociology helps us understand and provide with explanation the complex set of changes that societies experience in the process of human history. In this unit, we shall discuss the concepts and various aspects of social change and social transformation.

12.2 CONCEPT AND MEANING OF SOCIAL CHANGE

Social change has been understood and defined in many different ways. This is due to differences in perceptions and perspective of the concept and variation in labeling weightage to the idea and nature of social change. However, it is generally agreed among sociologists that the focus in the discourse of social change is the aspect of occurrence of significant alterations in the organization and/or structure and functions of social life rather than the regular, short term, and predictable reoccurrences.

We shall attempt a working definition of social change. The definition incorporates the aspects of significant changes in the various patterns of social relationships—social processes, social patterns, action and interaction, the rules of relationships and conduct (norms), values, symbols and cultural products. The concept of social change also refers to variations over time in both the material and non-material aspects of culture. These changes take place both from within the societies (endogenous forces) and from without (exogenous forces) that is brought about by external forces.

The concept of social transformation is very closely related to that of social change. Social transformation is a relatively new term that has gained some popularity in the recent decades in the discourse of the social sciences. In fact, social transformation is a radical form of social change. It is a more abrupt change of a society and/or state, usually with a larger scale, through agents such as revolution. The concept connotes the idea of a particularly deep and far-reaching change that alters the way of life of the people within a limited span of time. Social change is on the other hand essentially concerned with minor and persistent changes in the social organization and/or social structure of a society such as changes brought about in the patterns of family, marriage, and educational institution.

In the following discussion, we shall use social change as connoting both the persistent changes (social change) and the radical and abrupt changes (social transformation) unless specific mention is made.

12.3 APPROACHES TO UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL CHANGE

There are a few main approaches to the understanding of social change and/or social transformation. They are:
1) Evolutionary theories,

2) Cyclical theories, and

3) Structural-functional and Conflict theories.

4) Synthesis of Social Change theories

12.3.1 Evolutionary Theories

Evolutionary theories of social change are conglomeration of many but interrelated theories of change. The main notion of the evolutionary theory of change is that there is a consistent direction of social change of all societies in a similar sequence of stages from the original to the final stage of development, or from a simple and 'primitive' to the more complex and advanced state. Evolutionary theory also implies that evolutionary change will culminate at reaching the final stage of development. Evolutionary theorists consider change as progress and growth. The theory can be classified into two main categories—(a) Classical evolutionary theories (b) Neo-evolutionary theories.

a) Classical Evolutionary Theories

The classical evolutionary theories have been developed by the 19th century anthropologists and sociologists. Although, approaches differ among them, there is an underlying principle of convergence of ideas that evolutionary change takes place in a unilinear and similar direction. They largely draw an analogy of the progress of animal life from the simple unicelled organisms to the most complex animal—the human being. They believe that as societies evolve and grow, the functions of its members would also become more specialized just as the development of millions of body cells to perform specific functions within an interrelated system. The main proponents of the classical theories of evolutionary change include August Comte. We shall consider some of the frameworks of classification of human evolution developed by these classical evolutionists.

August Comte (1798-1857), a French scholar, and founder of Sociology, propounded that all societies passed through three stages of growth: (i) the theological stage (dominated by the guidance and principles of spiritual wisdom); (ii) the metaphysical stage (a transitional stage where supernatural beliefs are replaced by abstract principles as socio-cultural guidelines), and (iii) the positive, or scientific stage (in which society is governed mainly by scientific laws).

Herbert Spencer (1820-1903), an English scholar, inspired by Darwin's theories of organic evolution, opined that human societies moved through a series of social evolutionary stages from smaller and simpler structures to larger and more complex structures. This theory was later known as 'Social Darwinism'. The idea of social evolution was well received and popular among the 19th century anthropological and sociological thinkers.

At about the same time, Lewis Henry Morgan a contemporary of E.B. Tylor, made great impact in America by contributing to the evolutionary schemes of thinking and research by engaging on the origin and development of family, marriage and kinship systems. He saw the development of human society in three broad stages based mainly on technological innovations: savagery, barbarism and civilization. The first two stages were divided into sub-stages which were denoted
Lower, Middle and Upper. The last stage was marked by the emergence of invention of phonetic alphabet and writing.

b) Neo-evolutionary School

Evolutionary theories were revived in the 20th century by V.Gordon Childe, Julian Steward and Leslie White. Their formulations of evolutionary theories are characterized by careful scrutiny of evidence, systematic analysis, and rigorous reasoning. To distinguish them from the classical evolutionary theorists, they have also been labeled as neo-evolutionists.

Marshall D. Sahlins and Elman Service attempted a synthesis of the theories of evolution (particularly the theories of Julian Steward and Leslie White's) by developing the concept of 'specific' and 'general' evolution. The main claim of these theories was that evolution moved simultaneously in two directions in both the biological and cultural aspects. This evolutionary process then led to progress and made new ones emerge out of the old ones. They considered these two processes as interconnected in its totality. Thus, in the former stage, it took 'specific' biological and cultural processes and then continued to give effect in the progress of successive forms of evolution which were 'general' in nature for both the resultant aspects of evolution. While the former was classified in terms of the order of descent, the latter was done in terms of the levels of development or stages. For instance, specific evolution would imply development in local cultures and its sub-units or groups of cultures in a relatively shorter period while the general cultural evolution would mean the processes of successive forms of development such as the stages of hunting and gathering, agriculture, industrial revolution, atomic age, nuclear age, etcetera. This principle could be applied to other spheres of evolution such as religion, kinship structure and so on.

12.3.2 Cyclical Theories

Cyclical theories have been concerned with the repetitious change of conditions, events, forms and/or fashions over a long period of time, although the period of recurrent phases (cycles) of change would vary. The cyclical theorists believe that societies pass through a series of stages. However, they do not consider the notion of ending in a stage of perfection but see them as a return to the stage where it began for further round in a cyclical manner.

A.L.Kroeber (1876-1960), a well-known American anthropologist, provides classical analysis of cyclical patterns of clothing-style changes of Western women. Kroeber found that clothing styles in Western societies followed certain patterns over long periods of time, and even within these patterns were observed changes in more or less regular cycles. Kroeber also discovered that the basic pattern of Western women’s dress in the medieval and modern ages spanning about a thousand years has gone through a constant remodeling without any fundamental change. Kroeber found that the general pattern included a long skirt, a narrow waist, and a top with arms and breasts partially exposed. Periodically, within this general form, there is a cyclical change. Hemlines rise and fall, the waistline moves up and down from just under the bust to the hips, and the amount of cleavage shown increases and decreases. Kroeber also discovered that women's dressing in the West repeat themselves over and over within cycles of about hundred years.
Pitirim Sorokin (1889-1968), a Russian-American sociologist, believed that all great civilizations pass through three cultural systems in a cyclical way: (i) the ideational culture—society based on faith and revelation; (ii) the idealist culture—society guided by a ‘mixed’ notion of supernatural beliefs and empiricism; and (iii) the sensate culture—society, which are guided by empirical sense perceptions. He opined that all societies need not necessarily decay but rather go through various stages by shifting from one cycle to another as the needs of the society demand.

12.3.3 Structural-functional and Conflict Theories

The structural-functional and conflict theories are generally concerned with micro and middle range theories of social change. The structural-functionalists assume that society, like the human body, is a balanced system of institutions, each of which performs a function in maintaining society. They consider 'change' as a constant that requires no explanation. They hold that changes disrupt the equilibrium of a society, until the change has been integrated into the culture. Societies accept and adopt those changes that are found useful (functional), while they reject changes that are useless (dysfunctional). They opine that when events within and without the society disrupt the equilibrium, social institutions make adjustments to restore stability. For instance, a natural calamity, a famine, an influx of immigrants or a war may disrupt the social order and compel the social institutions to make adjustments.

Case Study

Cultural lag is one term that has been often used to describe the state of disequilibrium. When an event such as a natural calamity or a war causes a strain and trauma in a society, it takes sometime for the society to understand the strain and trauma and alter its values, attitudes, and institutions to adapt to the change. This is simply because societies need to adjust to maintain and restore to a state of stability just as the human body needs to adjust its functioning to adapt to changes. Like some of the cyclical theorists (e.g., Pitirim Sorokin), the structural-functionalists do not give importance to the result of social change as good or bad in so far as equilibrium is maintained in the society.

Karl Marx was one the great exponents of conflict theories. He looked at society as composition of oppositional forces—the oppressor and the oppressed. Such notion led him to predict the revolt of the masses. He saw conflict as the stage of development and progress that would lead to a higher order.

Karl Marx was the first to introduce dialectical pattern of change to sociological analysis of change which concept had already been analyzed by the German philosopher G.W.F. Hegel. A dialectical pattern of change is neither linear nor cyclical. It assumes that new social forms emerge out of the old social forms through opposition and conflict. Karl Marx and his followers propound that a social form (the thesis) gives rise to new social form (the synthesis) due to oppositional forces and conflict (the anti-thesis) within the existing old social form. It would mean that thesis generates anti-thesis, and anti-thesis generates synthesis, and again synthesis would give rise to a new anti-thesis, which in turn generates a new synthesis and the alternate process goes on.
12.3.4 Synthesis of Social Change Theories

Most theorists today integrate the various ideas and theories of social change that have been discussed above. There are very few theorists that still hold on their own ideas and theories. There are also not many theorists which believe that social change always results in improvement or that societies inevitably decay. There is a general agreement, however, that societies change because of various factors conditioned on the society. These factors could be both within and without the society and/or planned and unplanned. Many theorists do believe that changes in societies are not necessarily good or bad. They opine that although a stable society is usually better than a chaotic and conflict-ridden society, stability would sometimes imply exploitation, oppression, and injustice.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answers.

ii) Check your answers with those given at the end of the Unit.

1) Sociology helps us to:
   a) understand the complex set of social change in the society.
   b) resist social change.
   c) promote social change in the society.

2) Evolutionary theories view social change as:
   a) decay
   b) progress
   c) anti-society

3) Cyclical theories assume that society:
   a) passes through one stage.
   b) passes through a series of stages.
   c) passes through no stage.

4) Structural-functional theories believe that society is a balanced system of institutions. (Tick the correct answer) Yes / No

5) What is social change? Answer in about two lines.

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12.4 FACTORS OF SOCIAL CHANGE

Social change is brought about by various factors. These factors are mainly responsible for the differences in the rate and nature of change in different societies and at different times. They may be broadly classified into the following categories:
1) **Biological** factors,
2) Geographic factors,
3) Technological factors, and
4) Socio-cultural factors.

### 12.4.1 Biological Factors

Biological factors may be further classified into two types—**non-human biological** factors, and **human biological** factors.

The **non-human biological** factors include plants and animals. They affect the lives of the people in varied ways. Human beings need plants and animals for survival, be it for food, cloth, medicine and other purposes in many different ways as defined by one's culture. At the same time, man also eliminates or keeps away harmful and poisonous plants and animals by any available means. Man also needs plants and animals indirectly for availing oxygen and other utilities through many processes, including photosynthesis. Besides, the biological environment also keeps on changing as one animal species gains ground at the cost of some other species in the course of struggle for existence. The struggle for existence of the species is also conditioned by geographic factors. The changes in the ecological system affect man's human lives and changes the course of his struggle for survival. But modern man has been able to overcome much of the instabilities through various means of gaining control over the environment such as domestication of species and other technological know-how.

**Human biological** factors do affect social change in two ways in main—the genetic character of a given population, and the quantity, density and composition of population. Although, the influence of genetic character has not been as important as the latter, it cannot be sidelined altogether. The intelligence level of *Homo sapiens* (human beings) from other lower animals (non-human beings) is enough indication of the capability and potential of human faculty that bears on socio-cultural development. The human genetic character plays roles in the determination of numbers, composition and selection of population on one hand and hereditary quality of the successive generations. Human beings are changing all the time. We are different from our parents in our physical make-up, intelligence and behaviours. Every individual is not identical with the other either. Nevertheless, it is the change of genetic character of the human beings, except for the process of mutation and variations in genetic combination, that determine the physical and mental make-up of human beings.

**Population** change, unlike genetic factors, is considered to be one of the most important factors of social change. Growth in population and also its composition have been affecting various aspects of socio-cultural lives. With the invention of new technologies and enhanced knowledge of health care and sanitation, the rate of death has decreased greatly over the past two centuries. The decrease in the death rate has caused an enormous increase in the size of population. Simultaneously, life expectancy and life span have also increased. Thus, population change has itself become a social change and factor of further social and cultural changes.

Migration brings about further change by creating a new environment setting after
the contact of two or more alien peoples and cultures with numerous new problems. Migration could also affect the processes of acculturation, cultural diffusion and/or social conflict. On the other hand, food productivity would not improve that fast to be able to catch up with the growing population. There is a general tendency in India that population increases faster than the food productivity or food supply. Such incompatible situation could lead to other consequences, such as, an attempt to improve food productivity by increasing the acreage under cultivation, farming technology or other sources on one hand and migration, famine, disease or war on the other. There would also be tendency for checking of population growth by possible means such as family planning among others. Thus, a population change has itself become a social change and a factor of further social and cultural changes.

12.4.2 Geographical Factors

Geographic changes have been significant factors of social change. There are several instances where social changes have been brought about by geographic factors. For instance, the complete annihilation of the inhabitants of Pompeii by volcanic eruptions, the destruction of San Francisco by earthquake and fire (in 1906), the migrations of the Irish population to the United States after the potato famine in Ireland (in the 1840s), the migrations of the inhabitants of southern United States to Southern California due to drought (in the 1930s) and so on. Natural disasters can cause both environmental and social changes. Victims of a natural disaster may be left without friends, relative, or resources besides their severe psychological trauma. They may have to abandon their community, or completely rebuild it.

Ecological change is also a major source of social change in the modern times. Many ecological changes have been induced by human beings. For instance, the size of a population of a geographic area and the manner in which the people exploit its natural resources have much to do with ecological change and social change. Over population of a region, overexploitation of a region/border area due to social and political conflict, deforestation, construction of large dams, among others, for one reason or another have caused enormous social and ecological problems in the contemporary world which are found to be even greater factors of social change than migrations and disasters.

12.4.3 Technological Factors

Technology has been considered as one of the important factors of social change. This is quite true particularly in the context of the contemporary World. This is for the fact that variation in technology affects social organization and/or structure of a society in a significant way. However, the magnitude and the rate of change could differ from one period and situation to another depending on the availability and use of technology. For instance, change was very slow in the remote past when our forefathers used crude implements such as stone tools for their day-to-day activities and survival. With the invention of modern technology, things have become very different with both good and bad effects.

The introduction of machine technology after the inventions and discoveries of advanced and sophisticated sources of energy and capabilities has brought about drastic changes. In other words, modern technologies have resulted in revolutionary change, be it industrial revolution, green revolution, technical revolution, and so
on. All these revolutions have been largely responsible for the change in the mode of production, relations of production, old forms of social organization and structure, old ideologies, attitudes, beliefs, and traditions. This is so, because man adapts to the change of material environment caused by technology. We have ample examples of such phenomena.

The invention of gun power, atom bomb, and nuclear weapons have changed the techniques of war. The opening-up of transport networks due to modern technologies have enabled people to be more mobile and accessible to other places which would otherwise be impossible in the distant past. The invention of writing and other modern communication system, such as telephones, internet, etc., have made it much easier for people to communicate with each other even in distant places. Likewise, new technologies in the area of modern medicines have also enormously improved the state of human health system and its environment.

Industrial revolution has also brought about many changes in the society. The shift from agrarian to industrial production or from feudalism to capitalism have effected social changes affecting family relations, religion, and other institutions including the state. In almost the same way, green revolution does bring about changes in the society.

While modem technology has been a great boon to man, there are also the other dark side of it. This is mainly due to change of the old ways of life and systems, destructive nature of the technologies being designed or misuse of technologies for destructive ends. For example, the perceived ill-effects of technology on the society and its social institutions can be observed in many ways. One such impact is the disintegration of community life and promotion of individualism. The abuse of modem technologies to humanity has been quite alarming indeed. We can readily cite a few human-induced disasters due to modem technologies that are very familiar to us [See Box 2].

### Case Study

**Cases of human-induced disasters due to modern technology**

The atomic bombing of Hiroshima, Japan on August 6, 1945 which killed and fatally affected the 245,000 people was a clear example of the state action of destructive nature. The Bhopal Gas Tragedy of December 3, 1984 due to pesticide leak of the Union Carbide's fertilizers plant killing thousands of people and killing many more due to chemical side-effects was an example of ill political judgment and irresponsibility. The deadly attack on the World Trade Center (WTC), New York, on September 11, 2001 killing thousands of people is an example of the act of terrorism and anti-humanity. The displacement of indigenous (Tribal) peoples in India due to construction of mega dams, such as Narmada dam (in Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, and Gujarat) Mapithel (in Thoubal) and Tipaimukh dam (in Manipur) are some of the few examples of the incidences of uprooting the lives and deprivation of rights of the indigenous peoples for survival.

### 12.4.4 Socio-cultural Factors

Socio-cultural factors have been the most important causal factors of social changes. Man is the most important player of social change. In fact, man is the originator and the main agent of socio-cultural changes. Social change has been caused by
various human activities in the form of discovery, invention, diffusion, social movements, and so on. Change is also caused by the attitudes and values of the people toward innovation in a particular society. There are also variations of attitudes of individuals within the society. Some individuals would consider the values of the society more seriously than other fellowmen and vice versa.

Societies located at world crossroads areas of greatest intercultural contact have always been centres of change. This is so because those societies in closest contact with other societies are more likely to change more rapidly through the process of diffusion. There are also other agents for intercultural contacts and diffusion such as war, trade, media, and tourism. On the other hand, isolated areas are generally centres of stability, conservatism, and resistance of change. Ethnographic evidences show that the most primitive tribes have been found among the most isolated communities.

Discoveries and inventions have contributed much to the process of social change. This truth is increasingly realised in modern times after the introduction of modern technological know-how. Discoveries and inventions are processes of innovations that can alter society. While discoveries are the act of finding something that has always existed but that was not known earlier, inventions on the other hand are devices constructed by putting two or more things together in a new way.

The discovery of America led to the massive migrations from Europe and the creation of a new state — the United States of America. The discovery of penicillin also prevented from various diseases. Again, the discovery of oil, and other minerals have also brought great social changes in the locality where it is found. In the same way, the inventions of alphabet, modern state, etc. (social inventions), automobile, telephone, etc. (material inventions) have caused enormous social changes.

Diffusion, the process of the spread of culture from group to group, has been considered as one of the main causes of social change. Diffusion takes place within societies and between societies through contact. This is why the process of diffusion becomes difficult to penetrate in a situation of isolation. Jazz, which was originated among black musicians of New Orleans diffused to other groups within the society, and then later spread to other societies as well and to different parts of the world.

Social movement is certainly one of the most important factors of social change. We can understand social movement into two different forms- one, those movements organised to create some new social forms that are usually radical and liberal in nature; and two, those movements concerned with maintaining or recreating older social forms that are generally conservative or reactionary. However, in both these cases, social change will depend much on the success of the movements and the impact it could cause to the society.

Revolutionary movement may be considered as a kind of social movement. Revolutionary movements also cause social change. The French Revolution of 1789 witnessed the rise of French democracy, rise of modern civilian army, and was a great eye-opener and model for many peoples in different parts of the world who are struggling for liberation and justice. The Russian Revolution is also another example of revolutionary change that brought an end to monarchical government and class stratification in Russia.
12.5 RATE OF SOCIAL CHANGE

The rate of change is the speed at which change occurs in time and space. The rate of change has never been the same or uniform at all times. In the remote past, change was observed to be very slow. Whereas, in the recent times, change has become relatively very fast due to various factors, such as, new technological inventions, diffusions, and social revolutions. New scientific and technological revolution through new inventions paved way for the rapid change. For instance, industrial revolution, which was a great breakthrough in the system of production and distribution of goods that has brought great and rapid change in the modern times have been largely the result of scientific and technological inventions.

Social and/or cultural revolution also contributes to the acceleration of social change aside from technological/material revolution. Revolutionary social changes are large-scale changes in the structure of a society or a state. Revolutionary changes generally mean major or complete alteration in the entire basis of structure of a society including its various social institutions, culture, ideas, and belief systems. Many revolutionary movements for socialism, democracy, nation-state/self-determination et cetera are also responsible for acceleration of social change.

However, we should keep in mind that the rates of change that are being discussed are not the same for all societies. Even within the same society, there are variations in the rate of change. For instance, changes in urban areas are observed to be faster than those in rural areas. In the same way, changes will also be faster in the societies that are more open and receptive to change.

12.6 IMPACT OF SOCIAL CHANGE

The impact of social change on human society has been a major concern for social scientists, particularly, sociologists. The impact can be understood in two levels — impact of the individual and group or society. However, there are different views among sociologists on the nature of impacts on human society.

There are many sociologists who believe that industrial society alienates individuals from one another because of the nature of the work. Karl Marx was one of the thinkers who believed that the move from agrarian to industrial societies would alienate people from their work. This, he felt, was inevitable because the goods...
produced would be owned by the factory owner, and not the worker. There are also other sociologists who think that industrial society would affect human society. Ferdinand Tonnies and Max Weber, among others, may be cited as those sociologists who subscribed to the idea that industrial society would affect human relationships, albeit in different ways.

Sociologists are also aware that modern socialisations and life styles encourage individuals to behave in a way that would be compatible with industrial life and specialised professions. The media also plays immense role in influencing the individuals to emulate and adapt to the lifestyles of the middle class.

<table>
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<th>Case Study</th>
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<td>Social change has also caused mixed effects on human life. While acknowledging the various discoveries and inventions, so also the good elements of multifarious types of development, we do experience many ill effects of such processes that have been affecting human life and its environment. For instance, industrialisation and capitalism have increased the gap between the rich and the poor. It has furthered exploitation of the working class and marginalised sections of the society. It has also paved way for emerging culture of consumerism. In the process, there has been much erosion of cultural values and social relationships. The increasing bureaucratisation and corporatisation have also added to further deprivation of common people to have access to participating in the process of democracy, development, governance, and so on.</td>
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The introduction of modern know-how and technology has also caused great problems and anxiety to human life. The heavy use of automobiles and fuels causes massive pollution and hazardous emissions. It also pollutes and damages the physical environment that man depends for survival. The acute demand for fuel and the means to meet the demand have often led to conflicts between communities and states even to the extent of war. The invention and use of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction have caused great concern to humanity. It has, in fact, caused more insecurity than ever before. The inventions of deadly weapons of mass destruction make us think as to where we are heading for- towards the end of human civilization, (the end of the world through World War II) or towards a civilization of great insecurity and uncertainties?

12.7 SOCIAL CHANGE AND THE FUTURE

One of the greatest challenges of sociologists has been the question of whether future of society can be predicted as those of some natural sciences. Many sociologists have also been attempting to predict the future in their own ways. However, sociologists have not been that successful in this effort. It is, indeed, a difficult task before the sociologists today. There are obvious reasons for this difficulty.

Multicausality of social change and complexity of social life are two of the most important factors that hinder in the prediction of future. Change is caused by a multiple number of events and the exact contours of the future are unpredictable. The combination of multiple causes and its influence on one another is rather difficult to assess and predict.

The emergence of unexpected elements be it technology, or social activities,
have caused yet another difficulty in predicting the future. Latent or unintended consequences of the past changes, is difficult to discover. Therefore, it becomes difficult to predict long term change of the society. Tempem-centrism is one of the factors for the difficulty in predicting the future. This is due to the fact that sociologists are all members of the society of one’s life time, and therefore, tend to share, in some way, the biases of the time.

Check Your Progress 3

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answers.

   ii) Check your answers with those given at the end of the Unit.

1) Is the rate of social change the same for all societies? (Tick the correct answer).
   Yes / No

2) Modern technology: (Tick the correct answer).
   a) does neither cause good nor bad things to humanity.
   b) causes only good things to humanity.
   c) also causes problems and anxiety to humanity.

3) Mention any three reasons of the difficulty in the prediction of future of human society. (Answer in about three lines.)

12.8 LET US SUM UP

Social change is a universal phenomenon that takes place in our lives. Social change is generally understood as the process of occurrence of significant alterations in the organization and/or structure and functions of social life. Social transformation is considered as a form of social change that occurs in a radical and abrupt manna.

There are various approaches for understanding social change. Evolutionary theories hold the view that all societies pass through a similar sequence of developmental stages until it culminates in some final stage. They see social change as progress and growth that is good for the society. Cyclic theories assume that societies pass through a cycle of changes- grow, reach a peak of development and then decay- and repeats the cycle again in the same pattern.

Structural-functional theories view that there is stability and order in the society, but changes do occur occasionally. Conflict theorists believe that conflict occasionally arise in societies to correct adverse social developments which outcome would be better than the old systems.

Social change is caused by various factors—biological (non-human and human), geographic, technological, and socio-cultural factors. We also find variant rates of social change depending on various conditions and situations. Sociologists are also concerned about the various impacts of change on human society. While
some impacts are commendable, there are several impacts of social change that are disturbing and destructive in nature. Then, there is also the question of whether or not social change is predictable. The answer would be yes, but to a limited extent.

12.9 KEY WORDS

Bureaucracy : A hierarchical and formally organised structural arrangement of an organization based on the division of labour, authority, written rules of conduct, and specialisation.

Capitalism : A socio-economic system where commodities are produced and owned especially by the individuals and competitively sold for profit.

Diffusion : The spread of culture traits from group to group.

Discovery : A shared human perception of an aspect of reality which already exists.

Industrial Society : A society in which goods are produced primarily through machine-factory methods of production.

Invention : A new combination or a new use of existing knowledge.

Migration : Movement of people into or out of an area.

Population Change : A change in the number of people in a society, or the characteristics of the population such as age or sex.

Progress : Social or cultural change that are considered desirable according to some set of values.

Social Change : Change in the social structure and relationships of a society which is often interchangeably used with cultural change.

Social Movement : A collective act to promote or resist change.

Tempero-centrism : The belief that one's own time, the present, or the contemporary are more important than the past or future.

12.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

1) a)
5) Social change occurs when the style of living of a community undergoes modification for better or worse. It is a term used to indicate that the pattern of culture has evolved to another stage.

**Check Your Progress 2**

1) There factors of social change are:
   a) discoveries and invention
   b) diffusion
   c) revolutionary movement

2) Yes.

**Check Your Progress 3**

1) No

2) c)

3) i) Multicausality of social change
   ii) Complexity of social life
   iii) Temporo-centrism