UNIT 6: MODERNIZATION THEORIES

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6.1 LEARNIING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to-

- understandthe modernization theories
- discuss Giddens' theory of modernity and dependency theory
- know what is modern and modernity
- understand the history of modernization theories
- comprehend the relationship between modernization and globalization

6.2 INTRODUCTION

Modernization is understood as a process which indicates the adoption of the modern ways of life. But it can be better understood with the help of its theories. In this unit we will discuss about the contribution of Anthony Giddens on modernity. Apart from discussing the theoretical concept of modernization, this unit analyses the meaning of modern and modernization. This unit also discusses the historical context of modernization theories along with the relations between modernization and globalization.

6.3 UNDERSTANDING MODERNIZATION THEORY

Modernization theory is used to explain the process of modernization within societies. It attempts to identify the social variables that contribute to social progress and development of societies and seeks to explain the process of social evolution. Modernization theory is a theory used to explain the process of modernization that a nation goes through as it transitions from a traditional society to a modern one. The theory has not been attributed to any one person; instead, its development has been linked to American social scientists in the 1950s.

Marxist have theorised the theory of modernization, as nations developed, adopting a communist approach to governing, such as eradicating private property, would end conflict, exploitation, and inequality. Economic development and social change would lead developing nations to develop into a society much like that of the Soviet Union. On the other hand, the capitalist version of modernization theorized that as nations developed, economic development and social change would lead to democracy. Many modernization theorists of the time, such as W. W. Rostow, argued that when societies transitioned from traditional societies to modern societies, they would follow a similar path. They further theorized that each developing country could be placed into a category or stage of development.

Other modernization theorist, such as Samuel Huntington, argued that social mobilization and economic development were the driving forces behind modernization. Increased social mobilization meant that individual and societal groups changed their aspirations. Increased economic development meant that the capabilities of the newly modern society would change. Huntington argued that these societal changes would inevitably lead to democratization.

Most of the classical sociologists were engaged in an analysis and critique of modern society which is clear in the works of Marx, Weber, Durkheim and Simmel. As we move into the 21st century, it is obvious that

today's world is a very different place. The issue is whether the changes in the world are modest and continuous with those associated with modernity or are so dramatic and discontinuous that the contemporary world is better described by a new term, "postmodern." The conceptual framework of social science and the historical legacy of Enlightenment rationality have been challenged by new postmodern knowledge, which contends that reason is a form of illegitimate power that marginalises and excludes cultural vocabularies that do not conform to its categories. As per Giddens, in order to understand and conceptualise contemporary society, a new sociological theory capable of grasping its complexity is required.

6.3.1 Giddens Theory of Modernity

For Giddens in order to understand and conceptualise contemporary society, we need a new sociological theory capable of grasping its complexity. He describes the modern world as a "juggernaut". Modernity in the form of a juggernaut is extremely dynamic; it is a "runway world" with great leaps in the page, scope and profoundness of change over prior systems. Giddens defines modernity in terms of four basic institutions. The first is capitalism, which is featured by commodity production, private ownership of capital and a class system derived from these characteristics. The second is industrialism, which involves the use of inanimate power sources and machinery to produce goods. The third is surveillance capacities which defined the supervision of the activities of subject populations in the political sphere. The fourth is military power, or control of the means of violence, including the industrialisation of war.

According to Giddens, modernity is given dynamism by three essential aspects:

i) **Time-space separation:** With modernization, time was standardised. In large part, social interaction does not take place at the same time and in the same place. Relationships with those who are physically

absent and increasingly distant become more and more likely. New technological measures also call for expansion of our space locale. The modern rational organisation, for example, has been able to connect the local and global in new ways. A modern company can function because it has been possible to break the time-space connection.

ii) **Disembedding of social system:** Earlier the institutions and actions of society were embedded in the local community. The condition has changed because social relations are lifted out of the local interaction context by disembedding mechanisms. Giddens distinguishes between two types of dissembedding mechanisms which contribute to the development of modern institutions. One is symbolic tokens and the other one is expert systems. Together these are called abstract systems. Money is an example of a symbolic token. It represents a value that can be later used to purchase new goods. On the other hand the most obvious expert systems involve professionals like physicians.

iii) **Reflexivity of Modern society:** According to Giddens, reflexivity, the third contributing factor in society's profound process of transformation, is of two forms. The first is general feature of all human action. The second type of reflexivity is unique to modernity. Modern society is experiencing reflexivity at both the institutional and personal levels, and this is decisive for production and change in modern system and modern forms of social organization. Giddens defines reflexivity as institutions and individuals' regular and constant use of knowledge as the conditions for society's organization and change. With the expansion of the time-space dimension, the social practices are constantly investigated and changed on the basis of newly acquired information. Today we reflect on tradition and act in accordance with it only if it can be legitimized by reflexivity.

Although we can conclude with Giddens' view that modernity's culture of incessant reflexivity creates a post-traditional social world. As modernity spreads throughout the globe, it encourages the rise of expert, abstract

systems of knowledge, represented by the social and natural sciences. These expert systems encourage constant change and reflexivity, which separates time and space from their particular context, re-embedding them in new ones. He also views new social movements, as integral to the texture of modern life.

6.3.2 Rostow's theory of modernisation development

Walt Rostow was an American economist and political theorist. According to Rostow, the term modernization theory refers to a theory which states that development in developing worlds can be attained through following the processes of development that are used by currently developed nations.It is a social economic theory which is sometimes known as the development theory. It usually highlights the positive role played by those countries that are developed in modernizing and facilitating sustainable development in those countries that are less developed and it often contrasted to dependency theory. This means that for development to occur in underdeveloped countries there is need to for developed countries to provide aid to developing countries to enable them to learn from their own progress. It looks at the state to be the central actor in bringing about modernization in societies that are backward.

Therefore, Walt Rostow postulated a five stage model of development that will be applicable to all the countries. This model was vital in the sense that it is concerned with the idea that a country is able to develop economically by focusing on the resources that are in short supply. It will enable them to expand beyond local industries to reach global market and finance the country's further development to bring about economic growth. Following are the five stages of Rostow’s model of development.

First stage: Traditional society stage

The first stage is known as the Traditional Society which is associated with the country that has not yet developed. It is important to understand that this stage of development is concerned with societies that have a pre

scientific understanding of gadgets. This means that the society and the people in such a society are in a condition of fatalism. It is also important to understand that the states as well as the farmers in traditional society are aware of various irrigation methods and the expansions in order to improve agricultural output levels. There is also a challenge in the changes of the size due to crop failures, earthquakes, and epidemics such as plague and trade fluctuations due to trade or instability.

Second stage: Economic Growth

The second stage of development or economic growth is called the pre condition for taking. For Rostow, the changes in this stage are fundamental in nature in the socio political structure and production technique. It is characterized by the massive development of mining industries, increase in capital use in agriculture, necessity of external funding and some growth in savings and investments. It also consists of certain dimensions that are associated with the transition from traditional society through different conditions to the take off phase.

It is the stage in which agriculture is commercialized and mechanized to bring about technological advancement and growth in entrepreneurship activities. The main focus of this stage is to ensure that investment levels are above 5% of the national income depending on various sectors of the economy. The agricultural activities play an important role in the process of transition or development.

Third stage: Take off

The third stage is called the take off stage of development which is sometimes called the economic take off. It is characterized by dynamic economic growth due to sharp stimulus of economic, political or technological in nature. The main focus of this stage is the aspect of self sustained growth. It is important to understand that this stage occurs whenever the sector led growth becomes common and society is driven more by economic processes than traditions. The growth or economic

progress becomes a normal trend or situation in these societies because those factors that were affecting or limiting growth are removed. There is an increase in industrialization, further leading growth in savings and investments. There is a decline in the number of employees in agriculture and there is an increase in entrepreneurship .It is also important to understand that once take off has taken place a country will take as long as fifty to one hundred years to reach maturity as was the case with the industrial revolution.

Fourth stage: Drive to maturity

The fourth stage after the take off stage is the drive to maturity which is concerned with the extension of modern technology over other sectors of the economy or society. Drive to maturity stage refers to the period when a country has affectively applied the range of modern development. It is important to understand that during this stage the economy finds its place in the international economy and those goods that were imported begin to be produced locally. In this stage growth becomes self sustaining in the sense that wealth generation activities enable further investment in value adding industry and new requirements for import are developed .It is generally an improvement on the take off whose economy focused relatively on narrow complex of industry and technology and the economy of the maturity stage extends its range into a more refined and technologically often more complex processes.

Fifth stage: High mass consumption

The Fifth and final stage is called the age of high mass consumption where the leading sectors in the society shift towards durable consumers goods and services. The consumers focus on durable goods and hardly remember the subsistence activities of other stages. It is characterized by an increase in per capita income, changes in the structure of the working force including those working in the offices or factories and an increase in the desire to benefit from the consumption fruits of a mature economy. In

this age of high mass consumption the society is able to choose between concentrating on military and security issues, on equality and welfare issues or developing luxuries for its upper class. It is important to understand that each country in this state of position chooses its own balance between these goals. There is a desire to develop an egalitarian society and that the country in this stage seeks to determine its uniqueness and the factors that are affecting it are political, geographical and cultural structures and also values present in its society.

It is therefore true to say that education has an important and direct relationship in addressing each of the five stages of modernization theory or economic development in any given society or country .This means that education plays an important role in these five stages of economic growth propounded by Walt Rostow in order to bring about desired development.

Rostows stages of economic development are very important in the sense that every society is supposed to go through all the five stages of development. These stages or transition periods happen at varying lengths from country to country and even from region to region. They are important in the sense that they foster economic self reliance for the development of all sectors to bring about modernization. Education is also considered to be a pre requisite of the development of any society.

6.4 MEANING OF THE TERMS MODERN AND MODERNIZATION

In the simplest form, the modern implies the up-to-date, a current development, or, better still, a spirit in step with its own time. The term used to characterize the stage in the history of social relations, dating roughly from the end of the 18th century, that is characterized by the democratic and industrial revolutions. Strong arguments can be made to the effect that Sociology as a discipline developed as a response to the advent and challenges of modernity. Modernity is typically contrasted with traditional

form of society, like Durkheim's contrast between mechanical and organic solidarity.

In sociology modernization is the transformation from traditional, rural and agrarian society to a secular, urban and industrial society. In fact, "Modernization" is understood as a process which indicates the adoption of the modern ways of life and values.

Today the term "Modernization" is understood as an attempt, on the part of the people, particularly those who are custom-bound, to adopt themselves to the present time, conditions, styles, and ways in general. It indicates a change in people's food habits, dress habits, speaking styles, tastes, choices, preferences, ideas, values, recreational facilities and so on. "The scientific and technological inventions have brought about remarkable changes in the whole system of social relationship and installed new ideologies in the place of traditional ones.

6.5 HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF MODERNIZATION THEORIES

Modernization theory originated from the ideas of Max Weber , which provided the basis for the Modernization paradigm developed by Talcott Parsons. The term was used to characterize the stage in the history of social relations, dating roughly from the end of the 18th century, that is characterized by the democratic and industrial revolutions. Parsons refers to a "structural differentiation which is a process may be triggered in many different ways, but which is most likely to be initiated by changes in either technology or values. The current Modernization theory originated with the ideas of Max Weber regarding the role of rationality and irrationality in the transition from traditional to modern society. Modernisation theory not only stresses the process of change, but also the responses to that change. It also looks at internal dynamics while referring to social and cultural structures and the adaptation of new technologies. The basic principles of Modernisation theory can be derived from the idea of progress, which

emerged in the 18th century Enlightenment with the idea that people themselves could develop and change their society. The French philosopher Marquis de Condorcet was involved in the origins of the theory with the idea that technological advancements and economic changes can enable changes in moral and cultural values''. Modernisation theory emerged further in the late 19th century and was especially popular among scholars in the mid-20th century. One notable advocate was Harvard sociologist Talcott Parsons whose *'Mandarins of the Future'* (2003) stressed the importance of societies remaining open to change and saw reactionary forces as restricting development. Maintaining tradition for tradition's sake was thought to be harmful to progress and development.

The Progressives in the United States in the early 20th century were avid modernisers. They believed in science, technology, expertise-and especially education-as the grand solution to society's weaknesses. Characteristics of progressivism included a favourable attitude toward urban-industrial society, belief in mankind's ability to improve the environment and conditions of life, belief in obligation to intervene in economic and social affairs, and a belief in the ability of experts and in efficiency of government intervention.

6.6 MODERNIZATION AND GLOBALIZATION

Globalization is the concept of increased trade and exchange of goods, services and ideas across international boundaries. Movements commence more easily around the world. Modernization, on the other hand, is more a term used to describe using technology to advance the actual processes of manufacturing those goods and services.

The idea of the information society can be linked to the ideas of modernization and globalization. The ideology of modernization explains how societal development must go through a series of stages, with each phase having a different technological base of production. In an information society the base would be information technology. Furthermore, in the

process of increased globalization, economies of the world have become more integrated whereby information technologies play a part in development. With modernization, it can be seen as a potential means to close the gap among nations; with globalization, it is viewed as an important component for nations to participate in the economic process.

The concept of modernization was very much tied to the idea of recreating the world in the image of America and Western European principles and culture. More recently, discussion on Globalization describe a process by which the world is becoming increasingly interconnected and unified, subject to homogeneous and uniform processes of cultural unification.



6.7 LET US SUM UP

- Modernization is understood as a process which indicates the adoption of the modern ways of life.
- Modernization attempts to identify the social variables that contribute to social progress and development of societies and seeks to explain the process of social evolution.
- Giddens theory of modernity is accepted as one of the most popular theory of modernization.
- For Giddens modern world is as a "Juggernaut", which is extremely dynamic.
- According to Giddens, modernity is given dynamism by three essential aspects:

  i) Time-space separation ii) Disembedding of social system iii) Reflexivity of Modern society.

- The term modern implies the up-to-date, a current development, or, better still, a spirit in step with its own time. The term is used to characterize the stage in the history of social relations

- According to Rostow, the term modernization theory refers to a theory which states that development in developing worlds can be attained by following the processes of development that are used by currently developed nations.

- For Rostow, there is a five stage model for development. The stages Traditional society stage, economic growth, take off, drive to maturity, high mass consumption.

- Modernization" is understood as an attempt, on the part of the people, particularly those who are custom-bound, to adopt themselves to the present time, conditions, styles, and ways in general. It indicates a change in people's food habits, dress habits, speaking styles, tastes, choices, preferences, ideas, values, recreational facilities and so on.

- Modernization is also described as "social change involving the elements of science and technology.

- Modernization theory was originated from the ideas of Max Weber which provided the basis for the modernization paradigm developed by Talcott Parsons. Parsons refers to a "structural differentiation which is a process may be triggered in many different ways, but which is most likely to be initiated by changes in either technology or values''.

- Globalization is the concept of increased trade and exchange of goods, services and ideas across international boundaries.

- Modernization is more a term used to describe using technology to advance the actual processes of manufacturing goods and services.

- The idea of the information society can be linked to the ideas of modernization and globalization. The ideology of modernization explains

how societal development must go through a series of stages, with each phase having a different technological base of production.

6.8 FURTHER READING

Scott John and Marshall Gordon, 2009, 3rd edition revised, Oxford Dictionary of sociology, Oxford University Press

Thobani Sunera, Currie .H. Dawn, 2003, *From Modernization to Globalization: Challenges and Opportunities*

Ferraro Vincent, 2008, London: Routledge, *"Dependency Theory: An Introduction,"* in The Development Economics Reader



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1. What is meant by modernisation?

Q 2. Name two theories of Modernity.

Q 3. Giddens describes the modern world as a _____. (Fill in The gap)

Q 4. What are the five stages of development, according to Walt Rostow?

Q 5. Which period is marked by the term modernity?

Q 6. Historically who originated the Modernization theory?

Q 7. What do you mean by Globalization?

Q 8. State true or false.

i) Giddens defines modernity in terms of four basic institutions.

ii) Capitalist version of modernization theorized that as nations developed, economic development and social change would lead to democracy.

iii) Education is most important for each of the stages of Rostows theory of Modernization.

iv) Modernization is understood as a process which indicates the adoption of the traditional ways of life and values.

v) Modernisation theory not only stresses upon the process of change, but also the responses to that change.

vi) The idea of the information society can be linked to the ideas of Technology.

6.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: Modernization is understood as a process which indicates the adoption of the modern ways of Life.

Ans to Q No 2: Giddens theory of Modernity and Dependency Theory.

Ans to Q No 3: Giddens describes the modern world as a Juggernaut.

Ans to Q No 4: According to Walt Rostow there are five stage models of development. They are Traditional society stage, Economic growth, take off, drive to maturity, high mass consumption stage.

Ans to Q No 5: The term Modernity was used to characterize the stage in the history of social relations, dating roughly from the end of the 18th century, that is characterized by the democratic and industrial evolutions.

Ans to Q No 6: Modernization theory originated from the ideas Max Weber, which provided the basis for the modernization paradigm developed by Talcott Parsons.

Ans to Q No 7: Globalization is the concept of increased trade and exchange of goods, services and ideas across international boundaries.

Ans to Q No 8: i) True

ii) True

iii) True

iv) False

v) True

vi) False

6.10 MODEL QUESTIONS

A) Short Questions (Answer each in about 150 words)

1. What is meant by Modernization?
2. Mention the five stages of Rostow's model of development.

B) Long Questions (Answer each question in about 300-500 words)

1. Explain Giddens' theory of Modernity.
2. Discuss the Historical context of Modernization theory.
3. How Globalization and Modernization are related to each other? Explain.

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