

INTRODUCTION

Nature of enquiry

The present enquiry is an effort to study social change in a regional community called Gujarat which emerged as a nationality and which after Independence culminated into a linguistic state in the Indian Union.

The study is an attempt to observe the nature of change which was brought about in Gujarati society during the Nineteenth Century, when, along with other parts of India, Gujarat also came under the vital impact of the British rule.

The eminent scholars who are studying different aspects of change in society, have pointed out that social change could be brought about in a society in two ways. Don Martindale, while describing the approach of the functionalistic theory of change, remarks, "Social change conceived as boundary destruction and equilibrium restoration is said to have two sources, exogenous and endogenous. An exogenous factor is one arising outside the social system, an endogenous factor is one arising internal to the social system."¹ Social change in Gujarati society in the 19th century was a change of the former variety. Gujarat under the impact of external political influence in the form of foreign domination experienced transformation. The present study therefore is also an effort to illustrate the change which a society exhibits as a result of culture contact due to political domination.

The fact that Indian society, including its various regional units, experienced a qualitative transformation under the impact of the British rule, is now generally recognised as an undisputed point. In fact

various studies are coming out, to assess the value of contact between the two countries.² Further a number of studies attempting to understand the nature of change and the type of transformation in the institutions and value systems which the Indian society experienced as a whole during the British period, are also coming out. However the studies which try to locate the changes which were experienced by different regional communities within the Indian society during the British period and evolving themselves into distinct nationalities with their own specific forms of transformations and culminating into Indian nation comprising of a complex of nationalities have hardly begun. The present study is an humble effort to contribute in this direction.

It is my humble belief that unless a close study of the changes that have taken place in the different regional communities of India (on whom the impact of the British rule has been varied and of different intensities) is made, a rich and adequate understanding of the concrete changes that have taken place in India as a whole will not be possible. Such studies of the changes that took place in communities within India, to my mind, can alone provide a framework of comprehension to properly assess the richness and complexities of forms which the Indian society developed by evolving into a multi-nationality, national community and a federal state composed of a number of linguistic states. The present enquiry is undertaken to contribute to the studies of change of such regional communities that have developed in India.

Nature of studies on different aspects of Gujarati life.

There have been a few studies examining the changes that have taken place in certain aspects of Gujarati life. Studies of certain villages, of urban settlements, of land tenures or of growth of factory

production have been done. Similarly the accounts portraying the conditions of some of the tribes and castes of Gujarat are also available. Even the studies of changes that took place in social or religious life of the people or of emergence of popularly known social and religious reform movements in Gujarat have been carried on by some scholars as well as institutions. Further a few historical sketches trying to provide the political history of Gujarat with regard to the 19th century have also emerged. In fact, some of the most comprehensive descriptive accounts of the life of Gujarat as it developed in the 19th century are given in the publications of the British Government in the forms of Census Reports, Gazetteers, and the findings of Commissions appointed by the British rulers for securing information to evoke their own policies, and to introduce changes to suit their own requirements. Thus a considerable amount of material has been accumulated with regard to Gujarati society during the 19th century. However, to the best of my knowledge, there is no single systematic sociological analysis of the change in the structure of Gujarati society and also of the institutional and cultural life of Gujarat, in the context of the total structural matrix. Further to the best of my knowledge there is no comprehensive study of the change in the structure of the Gujarati society based on certain distinct criteria adopted by eminent sociologists to scientifically observe change from one level of social system to the other is made. The present study is an effort to analyse the social change that took place in Gujarati society, on the basis of specific criteria which are well-known and which are being increasingly accepted as very fruitful indices to objectively observe the nature of transformation of ^a society from one stage to another.³

Analysis based on 'constructed types'

In sociological analysis eminent scholars have tried to provide ideal type dichotamies. McKinney and Lomms have described this approach as "One of the persistent aspects of sociological enterprise."⁴ The sociologists on the basis of fairly precise and objective criteria, have also worked out historical stage constructions. There is a significant group of indices to distinguish societies which existed prior to the Commercial-Industrial Revolution which took place between the 15th and the 18th centuries in Europe, designated as traditional or pre-modern societies from societies which emerged after the Industrial Revolution and evolved into full-fledged industrial societies or which were partially transformed under the impact of industrial societies, and known as modern or industrial societies.

The pre-modern societies are distinguished by a group of features which are as follows. In these societies, generally social contacts are primary, and tradition and ritual play a large part in the life of the individual. Kinship ties are strong and there is a predominance of custom as a regulative system. The status of an individual in society is ascriptive, and norms are sacred, other worldly and change resistant. Economic activities are carried on, on simple division of labour and are towards maintenance of self-sufficiency.⁵

The modern or industrial societies in contrast require "a structural apparatus that diverges strongly from the feudal type in its ecological, class, familial, economic, political, religious and educational aspects. The class system is a highly fluid one that emphasizes achievement rather than ascription, and social power is diffused throughout the city and society. Associated with the ill-defined class system is a

small flexible, conjugal family unit as the ideal norm. In turn these patterns are interwoven with a large-scale, rational economic structure characterized by a complexity in the division of labour far exceeding that in the feudal system and requiring highly trained specialists recruited according to universalistic criteria...the norms even religious ones, tend to be permissive rather than prescriptive."⁶

The sociologists have, of course, drawn attention to and have described the intermediate types of societies. However, "The polar type formulations, implicitly at first, but in recent years with increasing explicitness have firmly established the point ~~that~~ the continuum is a vital notion in the comparative analysis of the social phenomena."⁷

I felt that this approach of "constructed type" will prove helpful in studying objectively the changes that took place in Gujarati society and in assessing the changes that occurred in the same society, in the nineteenth century.

The present study attempts to examine how far the hypothesis usually presumed by most of the observers of Gujarati society, viz. that Gujarati society took its modern* form in the 19th century is true. This hypothesis which is also my assumption is attempted to be tested by applying the aforementioned criteria in the following manner:

It is assumed that the traditional Gujarat exhibited following characteristics:-

- i) Political sub-system was governed by principles of heredity, custom and religious sanctions.
- ii) Economic sub-system was based on predominantly self-sufficient production and customary regulations.

*The Gujarati equivalent of word 'modern' is "arvachin".

- iii) The educational sub-system was restrictive, and basically oriented to other worldly, sacred values.
- iv) Communication was limited and predominantly oral.
- v) Social sub-system was based on the principle of status which was given to individual by birth. Caste and joint family were significant social institutions.
- vi) The values were overwhelmingly other worldly, change resistant, lacking the idea of progress, non-rational and ascriptive.

In my study I have attempted to test this hypothesis.

This study is further based on certain initial sociological assumptions. They are as follows:

1) Social structure is composed of various inter-actional sub-systems. Any significant change in one of the sub-systems, it is assumed, will bring about disequilibrium not merely in other sub-systems but also generate the disequilibrium in the entire social structure.

2) It is further assumed that emergence of such disequilibrium will always result in generating ferment within the system and in striving for the establishment of new equilibrium. On these two assumptions the present study examines the changes that have been brought about in the political, economic, educational, communicational, social and cultural sub-systems of Gujarati society. I have also tried to examine the nature of change in the over-all social structure as a consequence of the above-mentioned changes in various sub-systems.

3) The present study is further based on the assumption that, as the transformation of traditional society in Gujarat was not a consequence of impulses operating within the society but was due to the impact of a foreign rule, which introduced changes in the various sub-systems to suit its own needs, the Gujarati society during the 19th century

did not basically replace the traditional society, nor did it manifest full-fledged characteristics of a modern society. It evolved a peculiar juxtaposition of a framework of modern social system, superimposing itself on the old traditional system; and therefore evolving peculiar blend of modern and traditional social system. It is further assumed that, a proper understanding of such unique transformation that took place in the 19th century Gujarat can alone provide fruitful basis to grasp the trends of development and nature of transformation that subsequently emerged in the 20th century.

Method of study

The method of study adopted here is basically analytical. This study is based primarily on the data available about the section of Gujarat that was directly under the British administration in the 19th century. We have only indirectly referred to the material pertaining to the areas which were under the Native States.

Secondly the study is basically made on the data and observations made with regard to Gujarati Hindu community. The study contains material with regard to other communities either indirectly or in connection with those aspects of life of Gujarat where a distinction between Hindu and other communities could hardly be made. This restriction in the scope of our enquiry had to be imposed because there was inadequate data available for other communities and further^{due} to the restricted time at our disposal to study all available material with regard to different religious communities in Gujarat. However, we feel that observations made in this study on the basis of data with regard to majority community would provide sufficient source material to make reliable inferences for others also.

As indicated earlier, considerable scattered literature is available on different aspects of life of Gujarat. I have drawn upon varieties of sources for collecting information. Data has been collected from the following sources.

- 1) Published and unpublished Government Records, Reports and Monographs on various aspects of 19th century Gujarat.
- 2) The Gazetteers and Castes and Tribes Studies.
- 3) Various literary creations of Gujarati writers living in that period.
- 4) Publications and Periodicals, in English and vernacular languages, giving information about 19th century Gujarat.

Along with these sources, I have also been benefitted from interviews and conversations with individuals well-versed in certain aspects of Gujarati social life.

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References

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2. Woodruff, Philip, The Men Who Ruled India - The Guardians, p.20; also refer Ram Gopal, British Rule in India, p.v; Masani, R.P., Britain in India, p.xi.
3. Becker and Boskoff, Modern Sociological Theory in Continuity and Change, pp.284-287; also refer Contemporary Sociology ed. by Joseph, S.Roucek, pp.557-576.
4. Roucek, Joseph, op. cit., p.557.
5. Foster, op. cit., pp.29-43, 65; also refer Lerner, Passing of a Traditional Society, pp. 50-51.
6. Sjoberg, Pre-Industrial City, p.12; also refer Moore, op. cit., pp.98-105.
7. Roucek, op. cit., pp.558.