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## **Perception of Modernization by College Youth in India**

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*It is customary to look upon youth and particularly educated youth as being the promoters of modernization. Apart from the fact that there may be structural constraints due to which college youth in India may not be able to fulfil the expected role as promoters of modernization, it is equally necessary to enquire into their perception of modernization.*

While in the developed countries, economic development coupled with industrial and technological development has been spread out over centuries and has been a natural process rather than a deliberately activised process, in the Third World development with its various ramifications and modernization, has come to be expected as major goal, and efforts are made to activate the processes of development and modernization. This concern for development has been necessitated by the desire to improve standards of living, to reduce poverty and to be able to control environment both natural and human.

### **The subjective meaning of modernization**

While it should be conceded that development and modernization are not synonymous yet in the Indian context the concept of development is largely used to imply a given direction, namely that of modernization. It is true that both the concepts of development and modernization have been defined in various ways by

different authorities, such as Apter, Shils, Levy, Spengler, Brabanti, Eisenstadt, Hagen, and several others. It is important to realize that the concept of modernization is multi-dimensional, incorporating economic development, technological and industrial revolutions, rationality and scientific temper, emphasis on achieved status, equality, social justice, individualism and so on. It is in the very nature of definitions of modernization, that they would represent *ideal types*.

In fact, some of the components mentioned above are not to be taken separately but as a cluster. Therefore, the concept of modernization tends to be partially derived from historical development but is more of an abstraction. In his delineation of ideal types, Weber also insisted that construction of ideal types is a methodological device but one also has to take into account the subjective meaning which is important for various actors when they perceive a situation. Therefore, in this paper, modernization as perceived by college youth in India is discussed.

### **Education and the concept of modernization**

Education is cognitive primarily and is also supposed to inculcate rationality, scientific temper as well as promote secularism, equality, distributive justice, achieved status, etc. In fact, higher education is expected to transform its recipients into persons with rational, liberal and modern outlook.

Even when one postulates a direct relationship between education and modernization, it is necessary to investigate as to whether or not education is so conceived by its recipients. Therefore, in this paper it would be useful to enquire into the goals and aims of education as well as the purpose of knowledge as it is conceived by college students. Then again, whether college education has promoted a questioning attitude towards the existing institutional structures is also another important point.

Within the institutional structure, apart from family and kinship, the system of stratification whether based on caste or class occupies an important place. What are the determinants of status? Whether status should be ascribed or achieved is another important point of enquiry. What are the views of students about equality? To what extent has education promoted rationality both in terms of beliefs and practices is a second area of enquiry. Does educa-

tion promote social sensitivity amongst students and if so, what are its manifestations? Do the students understand the concept of secularism and if so, are they in favour of secularism?

Modernization puts a premium on achievement-orientation and a high level of aspiration and manipulation of physical and social environment. Are the college students aware of this aspect of modernization? These are broadly some of the areas in respect of which students' responses are being reported and discussed <sup>1</sup>.

### **Purpose of education and knowledge**

The aim of education was conceived differently by various students. While a high proportion of the students referred to the aim of education as being *to produce a good citizen*, there was an equal number of students who mentioned that the aim of education should be to enable one *to achieve higher status and to provide economic security*.

Students also felt that knowledge should serve different purposes. Many of them felt that the purpose of knowledge was for *understanding reality*, while some felt that it was for *prestige, wealth and power*. Some others felt that it was for *controlling reality, for helping the ignorant, for its own sake*, etc.

Thus students were well aware of the fact that knowledge was to promote one's capacity to understand reality and of course, for some, it also meant an avenue to wealth, prestige and power, though some of them also looked upon knowledge as an instrument for helping the ignorant. Therefore, knowledge is valued as a cognitive instrument and is also looked upon to help in efficient handling of reality.

By and large, college youth felt that knowledge which they had acquired made them more rational and intelligent. A very high majority of the college youth were in favour of making knowledge open to all in the sense of knowledge being made available to all. Therefore, education and knowledge are looked upon with some expectation by their recipients in college. It is quite clear that education and knowledge are regarded as purposive and not only as embellishments.

<sup>1</sup> *College Youth and Modernization*, Y. B. Damle, unpublished MS 1971.

## **Social affiliation**

Modernization is generally expected to favour nuclear family types and promote democratic relationships within the family. Therefore, it would be interesting to know the thinking of college youth in respect of the kind of family in which they have been brought up and the kind of family they would like to set up for themselves.

The majority of the college youth mentioned that their fathers particularly were authoritarian and that they would like to have a democratic family when they set up one after getting married. Most of them wanted to have a small-size family and would also accord freedom to their children in respect of choice of partners, while they felt their own fathers would not like them to marry outside caste.

In view of this response, it is but natural that to the question whether they would like to marry outside their own caste, a significant majority mentioned that it would not be possible to marry outside their caste, and religion. On the other hand, they would not mind their own children doing so. As regards friendship, most of the students were in favour of friendship irrespective of considerations of caste, religion, language, nationality, etc.

Achievement-orientation and a high level of aspirations are regarded as important components of modernization. A very large majority of the college youth were in favour of everybody trying to do well in life and attain economic prosperity. They were also in favour of striving for a higher standard of living. Many students wanted to follow professions, like medicine or engineering or law or wanted to join the Indian Administrative Service.

Similarly, the majority of the students prefer mental labour to physical labour. Of course, they were in favour of every student irrespective of caste and class getting an opportunity to do well in life. It is obvious that the college youth have achievement-orientation and also evince a high level of aspirations.

## **Manipulation of physical and social environment**

Manipulation of physical and social environment is another important indicator of modernization. Students were asked to give

their opinion as to whether man would have complete control over nature, to which the majority replied that man should not be in a position to have complete control over nature. Similarly, they also felt that man should not meddle with nature.

There seemed to be an implicit faith in the order of nature coupled with an attitude of veneration and awe. In fact natural calamities were looked upon as a consequence of the wrath of God in response to the sins perpetrated by human beings.

As we shall see later on there was greater preference shown for manipulation of the social environment through appropriate social reform measures, economic planning, industrial and technological development. It was felt by the students that man-made institutions could be and should be changed but nature should be left alone. In a way it is significant that the students thought it fit to manipulate social environment so as to promote economic prosperity, new notions of equality, social justice.

### **Determinants of status**

A modernizing society is expected to emphasize achieved status and discard ascribed status. Discussion on determinants of status is combined with that pertaining to the notions of equality prevailing in the minds of college youth. In the Indian society, age, sex, family, caste, religion have all been the traditional determinants of status, while education, occupation, intelligence in fact are regarded as modern determinants of status.

We wanted to know the various responses which students gave in respect of the different determinants of status. There was a very small number of students who mentioned that status in society was determined by sex, family or religion. A slightly bigger number mentioned that caste determines status in society and an even slightly bigger number mentioned that age determines status in society. Those who mentioned age were twenty-one; caste, twelve; sex, seven; family, five; and religion, four.

On the other hand, almost half the number of students mentioned education as a determinant of status while quite a few mentioned occupation. Very few students mentioned intelligence as a determinant of status. From these responses, it is clear that most of the students gave modern responses in respect of determi-

nants of status, whereas about one-fourth gave traditional responses. It is very clear that students perceive modernization in terms of the new criteria for determining status.

Apart from knowing about the determinants of status and whether they were modern or traditional, it was felt necessary to pursue this question by asking students whether according to them everybody should be allowed to enjoy equal status in society. To this question, a very large majority of the students answered in the affirmative. Thus this confirms the impression that students opt for modern criteria of determining status and more important is the fact that they are also in favour of everyone enjoying equal status.

Apart from this general question, we wanted to know students' notions in respect of inequality between different groups on the basis of class, caste, the kind of work people perform, rural and urban living, etc. The majority of students disapprove of any inequality between different castes and were in favour of everyone being given the freedom to choose any profession and occupation irrespective of caste. They also felt that in respect of education, people belonging to different castes are treated equally and that there is a fair chance of the various castes being treated equally in urban areas, also in respect of politics, while they felt that in villages and small towns different castes are not treated equally. Therefore, they feel that in respect of secular matters various castes are being treated equally, while in respect of religious beliefs and rituals and social interaction, they are guided by traditional prejudices and that different castes are not treated equally.

### **Reduce inequalities**

Then again, the majority of the students were in favour of equality between men and women and also felt that in practice, to a certain extent, men and women were treated as equals although here again, in villages and small towns, women were not treated as equals. A very large majority of the students were in favour of women going in for higher education and of giving women freedom to pursue any career. They were also in favour of women enjoying the same amount of freedom as men.

In respect of religion, students were asked to mention whether

according to them, people belonging to different religions were treated equally, which elicited more or less an equal response from the different students who said "yes" and who said "no". Some of them also felt that their own religion was superior to that of others. Thus it is very clear that in respect of religion, students tend to labour under traditional prejudices.

Students were aware that there were disparities between rural and urban living. They also felt that such disparities should be removed and that Government's action so far had not been effective enough to do so. They also felt that rural development had been neglected and that efforts should be made to step up rural development.

Continuing the discussion of various kinds of inequalities, students mentioned that special facilities in education, employment and political representation should be given to Scheduled Castes and Tribes and other backward classes either for a specified period or even indefinitely. The majority of the students were in favour of special facilities to be given to the erstwhile deprived and disprivileged sections so that they could make up for lost opportunities and do well in life.

It is obvious, therefore, that students not only opt in favour of modern determinants of status but are equally well concerned about equality between human beings irrespective of sex, caste, rural-urban differences, etc. It is only in the case of religion that these college youth seem to be influenced by traditional notions. Although in their responses to secularism, one gets an impression that the students can separate religion from secular life.

### **Rationality and various beliefs**

Modernization is again expected to promote rationality and to dispel blind faith in super-natural forces. In discussing rationality one has to remember that rationality is never of an homogeneous nature and its extent differs from one area to another. Thus in regard to students, it was found that in the case of illness a very large majority of them would consult doctors and not priests and magicians, while the majority felt that in starting a new venture, proper praying and worshipping must be done.

Most of the students do not regard the sun and moon as gods.

Many students were not in favour of praying and worshipping by political leaders when inaugurating any productive enterprise. Most of them believed in the existence of God, offered prayers to God and felt that both God and Nature were superior to man, as well as that God's help was necessary for man's achievement. They also felt that religion was necessary due to fear and insecurity, also to ensure mental peace and solace as well as salvation of the soul.

### **In favour of a secular state**

Peculiarly enough, quite a few students felt that religion and rationality are inconsistent. Many felt that religion prevents people from indulging in wrong deeds and that morality was ensured because of the concept of sin and salvation. And yet students felt it necessary to change morality in response to the needs of the situation. Most of the students favoured the secular state in India and their concept of secular state seems to be quite variegated and yet by and large they have been able to grasp the essence of secularism. From the various responses, some of their perceptions which emerge about secularism are quoted below.

*"It is a state in which no preference is given to religion... Secularism means equality between every person, religion, caste and tribe, freedom of religion... Impartiality on government's part and individual should be freed in their own religious matters but they should not interfere in public affairs... It guarantees not only freedom of worship and consensus to all sections of the people but disowns special responsibility towards any particular creed or faith. All the prevalent religions are given the same status and importance. The State is not champion or defender of anyone of them... No religion except humanity should be taken into consideration... Hindu Kingdom, others allowed to worship their gods... Equality for all, it spoils the religious beliefs of Hindus... A state in which each religion is allowed to practise its own religion. No difference in religion. All the religions and castes treated on the same footing... Where no religion is encouraged or discouraged. Non-acceptance of the fact that religion exists. Religion should not obstruct social life... A secular state is responsible to cater to the material needs of its people and is not responsible in matters of religious or other—worldly."*

From these various definitions which are quoted, it is very clear that students have been able to clearly perceive the concept of secular state and by and large are in favour of a secular state. It was pointed out earlier that students seem to labour under traditional prejudices in respect of religion, but in terms of their understanding of secularism and particularly the nature of the secular state in India, it is very clear that they are able to demarcate the areas of religion and secular life and activity. In fact, such ability to demarcate the respective areas of religion and secularism should be regarded as an important component of modernity.

### **Interest in scientific and technological development**

Students evinced a great deal of interest in the scientific and technological development of India, felt dissatisfied with the progress made so far and were in favour of stepping up the scientific, technological and economic development of the country. Concern was expressed for the prosperity and wellbeing of the country and the people and it was felt that sustained efforts have to be made to ensure progress and prosperity.

It was also felt that everyone irrespective of caste, creed, religion, etc. should have the opportunity to share in the fruits of development. Therefore, by implication one can say that students were not in favour of traditional disparities between various sections of the population. As such, by implication again, they were in favour of bridging the gulf between the centre and the periphery.

### **No manipulations of natural environment**

It was mentioned at the outset that understanding of modernization or the various components of modernization tends to be more in terms of *ideal types*. Therefore, it would be useful to enquire into the subjective meaning attached to modernization by college youth in India. In terms of the various responses which reflect the perception of modernization by college youth in Poona, it is quite clear that they look upon education and knowledge as a prerequisite for modernization.

They are in favour of modern determinants of status and would like to effect change in favour of such determinants like

education and occupation rather than age, sex, caste, religion, family, etc. Then again, equality as a value was acceptable to the college youth and notions of social justice also seem to have been accepted though at verbal level by the college youth. But manipulation of natural environment and social environment did not evoke the same response and students seemed to feel that nature should not be tampered with, although social environment which is man-made can be and should be manipulated.

In fact, it is quite significant that these college youth would like to manipulate social and human environment including the institutional structure of society. The responses in respect of religion seem to be traditional and yet, as mentioned above, these students seem to have grasped the significance of secularism. Probably they are able to make a clearcut demarcation between the areas of religion and those of secularism.

It was reiterated by the students that technological and scientific development would ensure economic prosperity and progress which again should be shared by everyone. Therefore, one can say that some of the important components of modernization as perceived by students indicate that, at least at the cognitive and verbal level, students are aware of the importance and implications of the process of modernization and the kinds of structural changes which it envisages for various types of social institutions including family, caste, religion, state, etc.

Modernization thus is perceived in its complexities and various dimensions by college youth in India.

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### **Social origins of the Students studied**

The students studied belonged to Third Year Degree Course in Arts, Sciences and Commerce and belonged to eight different colleges in Poona, the total number of students being 300. This investigation was made in 1970-71.

*Religionwise distribution:* (167 males and 133 females). Distribution was 239 Hindus, 4 Neo-Buddhists, 11 Christians, 15 Zoroastrians and 24 from other religions. Out of these students, 265 were unmarried, 20 were married and 12 were engaged to be married.

*In terms of castes:* 139 belonged to Advanced Castes like Brahmins and C.K.P., 25 to Scheduled castes, 5 to Scheduled Tribes, 8 to Backward Castes and 93 belonged to other castes. In case of 30 students since they were either Christians or Zoroastrians, category of caste was not applicable.

*Regarding native place:* 83 belonged to villages, 43 to small towns, 28 to large towns, 135 to Cities and 11 students did not supply information on this count.

*Regarding father's education:* 14 had their father either illiterate or barely literate, 50 primary school educated, 22 middle-school educated, 88 high-school educated, 112 college educated, 2 traditionally educated and 12 did not know about father's education.

*Regarding father's occupation:* 39 were engaged in agriculture, 40 in small business, 40 were executives, 53 in ordinary administrative services, 98 Armed Forces Personnel, one in big business and 29 in several occupations.

This sample of students was chosen on the basis of random sampling and every 10th student was chosen from third year degree classes.

## Perception de la modernisation par des lycéens en Inde

Y.B. Damle

Modernisation et développement sont des concepts souvent confondus. Cependant l'idée de modernisation peut prendre différentes acceptions, ainsi que le montre une enquête faite auprès de jeunes lycéens en Inde.

L'objectif de l'éducation est compris de façon différente suivant les étudiants : former de bons citoyens ; obtenir la sécurité économique ; comprendre la réalité par soi-même ; atteindre le pouvoir et obtenir un prestige social ; aider les moins pourvus ; les connaissances devraient être accessibles à tous. Ainsi l'éducation apparaît comme un moyen et non pas comme un simple ornement de l'esprit.

La modernisation va de pair avec une démocratisation dans la vie familiale : diminution de l'autorité paternelle et libre choix de son conjoint. Pour bon nombre d'étudiants, Dieu est responsable de l'environnement physique et il n'est pas possible à l'homme d'agir pour éviter les calamités naturelles. Par contre, l'environnement social, produit de l'activité humaine, peut et doit être aménagé.

Un petit nombre estime que le statut dans la société est déterminé par le sexe, la famille ou la religion. D'autres ont mentionné la caste comme élément déterminant. Un plus grand nombre accorde la priorité à l'âge. Cependant la moitié des étudiants affirment que l'éducation est l'élément essentiel du statut social. L'idée d'être traité également, sans tenir compte des castes, de choisir librement sa profession, apparaît comme une aspiration largement partagée. L'égalité entre l'homme et la femme est également un souhait fréquemment exprimé.

Dans le domaine religieux, les étudiants en général croient qu'une religion, la leur, est supérieure aux autres. En cas de maladie, ils consulteront un médecin plutôt qu'un prêtre, mais ils réciteront les prières adéquates avant d'entreprendre une action importante. La religion limite l'insécurité et donne la paix mentale. C'est également une garantie de moralisation dans l'existence. Pourtant, la majorité de ces étudiants sont en faveur d'un Etat laïque.

Ils expriment un grand intérêt pour le développement scientifique et technologique en Inde : de cela dépend la prospérité future du pays.

On peut estimer que les plus importants composants du concept de modernisation sont correctement perçus par les étudiants, au moins au niveau cognitif et verbal ; ils sont conscients des implications du processus de modernisation et des changements structurels que cela comporte.

## **Percepción de la modernización por los alumnos de la escuela secundaria en India**

Y. B. Damle

La modernización y el desarrollo, son conceptos que a menudo se confunden. Sin embargo el concepto de modernización puede tomar diferentes aspectos como lo muestra una encuesta realizada entre los jóvenes de las escuelas secundarias en la India.

Según el estudiante, el objetivo de la educación es interpretado de manera diferente: formar buenos ciudadanos; obtener una seguridad económica; comprender la realidad por sí mismo; alcanzar el poder y ganar un prestigio social; ayudar a los desposeídos; el saber debería ser accesible a todos. De esta manera la educación se presenta como un medio y no como un simple adorno del espíritu.

La modernización va unida a una democratización de la vida familiar: disminución de la autoridad paterna y libre elección del cónyuge. Un importante número de estudiantes considera que Dios es responsable del medio ambiente físico y no le es posible al hombre una acción para evitar las calamidades naturales. En cambio el medio social, producto de la actividad humana, puede y debe ser mejorada.

Un pequeño número de estudiantes considera que la situación en la sociedad está determinada por el sexo, la familia o la religión. Otros mencionan la casta como un elemento determinante. Un mayor número da prioridad a la edad. Sin embargo la mitad de los estudiantes afirman que la educación es el elemento esencial de la condición social. La idea de ser tratado igualitariamente, sin tener en cuenta la casta, de poder elegir libremente la profesión, surge como una aspiración compartida ampliamente. La igualdad entre el hombre y la mujer es también un deseo manifestado con frecuencia.

En el dominio de la religión, los estudiantes creen en general que la propia religión es superior a las otras. En caso de enfermedad, ellos consultarán al médico y no al sacerdote, pero recitarán plegarias adecuadas antes de emprender una acción importante. La religión limita la inseguridad y otorga una paz mental. Es también una garantía de moralización en la existencia. Sin embargo la mayoría de estos estudiantes están a favor de un estado laico.

Los estudiantes manifiestan un gran interés por el desarrollo científico y tecnológico en la India: la prosperidad futura del país depende de este desarrollo.

Podemos considerar que los estudiantes han percibido correctamente los componentes más importantes del concepto de modernización, al menos desde el punto de vista verbal y cognoscitivo, ellos son conscientes del proceso de modernización y de los cambios de estructura que el mismo comporta.