

# CRITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE IN SOCIAL CHANGE

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## ABSTRACT

*Freire believed that Education is a liberating process but it cannot liberate people from their misery unless it arouses awareness in them. This process of arousing new awareness is called critical consciousness which means a campaign to increase or raise public awareness. It is a practical need in present educational and social context to bring desirable changes in society. Freire adopted 'problem posing method' for his ultimate purpose of "critical consciousness" to remove the "culture of silence" from the society not only of his age but for the future also. Critical consciousness and dialogue both are involved with teaching of adults to enable them of reading and writing in relation to arousing consciousness among them regarding their social condition. So in this paper we come to realize the importance of critical consciousness in the sphere of social change.*

**KEYWORDS:** critical consciousness, social change, culture of silence, banking education, problem posing education.

## INTRODUCTION:-

Critical consciousness is a practical need in present educational and social context. It plays an important role in promoting free and democratic culture across the world. After the end of cold war it resulted in the collapse of Berlin wall and Communist reign of Soviet Union and tremendous development of information technology brought capitalism to its full extent. After that the neo-liberalism stressed upon free game of competition and free market system in economic area. This system made ready to human beings isolated from society and in turn they became self centered and staunch utilitarian. The contemporary situation of

Freire regarding social and political scenario, compelled him to think radically for social change.

### **CRITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS:-**

Critical consciousness and dialogue are two important notions of Freire's teaching method. Critical consciousness and dialogue both are involved with teaching of adults teaching of adults to enable them of reading and writing in relation to arouse consciousness among them regarding their social condition. In his book 'Pedagogy of the Oppressed' Freire propagated the theory of Critical consciousness. The meaning of Critical consciousness is a campaign to increase or raise public awareness. He adopted 'problem posing method' for his ultimate purpose of "critical consciousness" to remove the "culture of silence" from the society not only of his age but for the future also. His book entitled as 'Education as a Practice of Freedom' contains the literacy method of Freire in detailed form. Thus the usage of this method is explained properly in his book entitled 'Pedagogy of the Oppressed'. The basic concept lies in the method of Freire that education is such type of instrument that is essentially able to bring revolutionary change in society. The method is explained with the hope that it has power to transform the society. In the contemporary Brazil of Freire, more than fifty percent people were afflicted by the 'culture of silence.' These people were illiterate and belonged to the downtrodden sector of society. Freire was hopeful that his method of teaching can uplift their condition and can remove poverty, illiteracy and inequality.

### **SOCIAL CHANGE:-**

Social change implies change in social structure and function of the various units which forms a society. Social structure includes social institutions like family, marriage systems, caste system, educational institutions, customs, manners, literacy forms, language, dress and food habits etc. The individual character, personality, common sense, culture, thinking skills, habits etc. depends upon education. Education is the fundamental method of social progress and reform. It is through education that the society can bring desirable changes and modernize itself. A sound social progress need careful planning in every aspect of life; social, cultural, economic, and political education must be planned in a manner

which is keeping with the needs and aspirations of the people as a whole. Sociologists, social psychologists, philosophers, politicians, educationists and educational planners regard education as an instrument of social change. In the words of Radha Krishnan, “Education is an agent of social change. What are simpler societies was done by the family; the religious, social and political institution has to be done by educational institution today.”

Social means concerning society and change means deviation from existing pattern. In this sense social change means change in the structure and functions of human society. In fact human life is not static. It is under a constant change in the ideas attitudes and values of an individual. This changing process brings changes in the social structure and in other social attributes also. This process may be rapid in some societies and slow in the case of others, but no society in this world can escape from the process of change and transformation.

**Sir James** has defined it and said: “Social change is a term used to describe variation in or modification of any aspects of social processes, social interaction or social organization.”

**MacIver** and **Page** exclaims: “Moreover there are springs or changes that lie deeper than either the direct or indirect results of men changing relations to his environment.”

Obviously human mind is trying to find their solutions through researches and investigations. In fact styles of living are changing so fast that it is difficult to keep pace with the changing ideas, beliefs and life styles. This change in social structure known as social change.

### **FACTORS AFFECTING SOCIAL CHANGE:-**

Social change is a continuous process. The social structure is subject to incessant change, growing, decaying, and finding, renewal, accommodating itself to very variant conditions and sufferings vast modification in the course of time.

**A) Ideas and Ideologies:** Ideas and ideologies bring a social change sometimes without social awareness of it. The ideas of liberty, equality and fraternity brought about French revolution.

**B) Voluntary Acts of Individuals:** History has given enough evidence to show that socio-cultural changes have been brought about by the personal influence of great men.

**C) Physical Environment:** Change in the physical environment occur change in the pattern of society. For example; loss of Lahore in the partition of Punjab in 1947 has given us the spectacular city of Chandigarh. Geographical and environmental factors like climate topography, availability and non- availability of resources, means of communication etc. influence the life, culture, occupation and thinking of the people living that particular area.

**D) Cultural Diffusion:** Cultural diffusion is an extremely important factor in social change. Society which remains isolated from outside contacts tends to be static, while those which readily communicate with other groups are constantly acquiring new cultural elements. Cultural diffusion has been responsible for the development of western civilization.

**E) Scientific and Technological Advancement:** Scientific and technological advancement also brings a marked social change. The process of industrialization causes a social change and facilitates the emergence of special economic culture and those together increases individual initiatives and enterprise.

**F) Mass Media:** The Mass media of communication have influenced the socio-cultural pattern. Researches in nuclear energy have inspired new dreams, aspirations and hopes if explored constructive and peaceful purposes.

**G) Economic Situation:** Social change is always conceived as an integral part of economic planning, which accelerates the economic development boosting social change. Economic development means changes in growth rate, per capita income, literacy ratio and political participation. Progressive economy creates a competitive society. A faulty economy creates new social conflicts and problems.

**H) Demographic Condition:** Broadly speaking demography is concerned with the size and structure of human population. The social structure of society is closely related with the changes in size, composition and distribution of population. The size of population is based mainly upon three factors: birth rate, death rate and migration. Changes in demographic structure, which may be caused by changes in mortality rates, will produce changes in the ratio of breadwinners to dependents. For example; large number of young soldiers died in

Europe during world war two. The number of girls and women increased over the existing number of males and this leads to sex imbalance affects the form of marriage (monogamy or polygamy).

**I) Political Situation:** The type of political leadership and individuals in power also influences the rate and direction of social change is the most powerful organization which regulates the social relationship. It has the power to legislate new laws; repeal old ones to bring social change in the society, laws regarding child marriage, widow marriage, divorce, inheritance, untouchability are some of the examples which have brought many changes in the social structure of Indian society.

**J) Psychological Situation:** Psychological factors are regarded as important elements in social change; change is the law of life. Man is by nature a lover of change. He is always trying to discover new things in every sphere of his life and is always anxious for novel experiences.

### **FACTORS RESISTING SOCIAL CHANGE:-**

Some of the factors that resist social change are mentioned here, as follows:

**A) Vested Interests:** These also resist change. Generally it has been observed that there are some old traditions and beliefs which satisfy the vested interests of a privileged section of society. Such people with vested interests resist any change because of the danger to their own interests.

**B) Cultural Inertia:** Cultural inertia is very important factor which resist social change. Cultural inertia refers to those beliefs and customs which come down to us from our forefathers and which we stick too rigidly and blindly thinking them as sacred. This conservative and narrow outlook static and averse to any change.

**C) Fear of Novelty:** According to Ogburn and Nim-Koff most of the people show a tendency to stick to traditional routine life and are therefore averse to gain anything new for fear and these new elements may not turn to be harmful and injuries to them. They are

contented with the status quo, the present state of affairs and are always praising the old traditional patterns of thinking and behavior.

**D) Degree of Isolation:** There are some people in society who refuse to come into contact with persons of other cultures. Such people resist any kind of social change. For example the backward communities and tribal group resist any outside contacts.

**E) Religioness:** Religioness feeling is also an important factor which resists social change. Due to religioness feeling people hesitate to accept new ideas to adopt.

**F) Lack of proper Education:** This also resist social change. This is the education which enables people to accept new ideas and remove orthodoxies.

### **SIGNIFICANCE OF CRITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS IN SOCIAL CHANGE:**

The significance of critical consciousness in the sphere of social change is outlined as under:

**A) Realization of Social Reality:** Critical consciousness is linked with social change. It plays important role to raise critical consciousness of illiterate people. When they become conscious they will be able to realize their condition in society. They could understand their position that where they are standing and where they should stand and for which thing they should take stands.

**B) In Removing the Culture of Silence:** The dominant system of social relation originates a culture of silence that imprints a negative silenced and suppressed self image into the oppressed. Due to consciousness, oppressed people may realize that they are afflicted with culture of silence and they become conscious about the causes behind it. To break any ill structure of society it is necessary to recognize the problem and its roots. Critical consciousness is excellent path to remove the culture of silence.

**C) Enhances Critical Awakening:** The meaning of critical consciousness itself is critical awakening. With the help of critical consciousness they will be sensitive towards their surroundings. They will understand that rather than an object they are a subject. This may lead them to analyze critically about their social structure and phenomenon.

**D) Assistance in Removing the Class Conflict:** Freire, in his book 'Pedagogy of the Oppressed' mentioned the concept of oppressed and oppressor. Oppressors belong to the dominant class and they are almost not concerned for the right and respect of the oppressed people. This leads conflict between them; sometime visible or direct and sometime invisible or indirect form. In the process of critical consciousness oppressed may recognize their rights but must not convert themselves into oppressor after achieving right and respect in the society. The realization of truth leads them to remove class conflict.

**E) In Removing Banking Concept of Education:** Attacking on contemporary education system, Freire called it, 'banking model of education'. In this system of education teacher's behavior was authoritative, they were active orators and students behave as passive listeners. Teachers pour knowledge in students as they were piggy bank. In this process teachers were free to deposit knowledge as a depositor. Students were like 'tabula rasa'. Against this system of education Freire propagated problem posing method which leads students to think critically that was very useful instrument to break the strong structure of banking education.

**F) Establishes Democratic Relationship between Teachers and Students:** In the process of critical consciousness students and teachers both will learn together. Students are free to ask questions, to react and to express their views. Thus it can be said that Freire's method was able to establish democratic relationship between the teachers and learners.

**G) Enhances Cooperative Feeling Among Oppressed and Oppressors:** In the process of critical consciousness both oppressed and oppressors are stand at same platform of seeking the root of their problem and thus the solution of their problem. This will enhance cooperative feeling among them.

**H) Promotes Unity and Integration:** Critical consciousness also promotes unity and integration among oppressed and oppressors/ teachers and students. In this method both are becoming aware of their rights and duties that lead them unite with each other.

**I) In Removing Orthodoxies and Superstitious Behavior:** Theory of Critical consciousness is based upon logic, analysis and reasoning. Doubtlessly if any concept is tested on the basis of reason and logic, the flaws of concept must be removed.

**J) Promotes Social Equality:** This theory also leads towards social equality, where all are concerned not only for their rights but also to their duties. According to Freire love to humanity is basic concept behind dialogue and critical consciousness.

**K) Promotes Economical Prosperity:** Unquestionably the issue of poverty is reduced with the help of education. Illiterate people believe and accept their poverty as their destiny. More or less they believe that they can't do anything for social change. But critical consciousnesses open their eyes and create a path for economic prosperity. Ultimately they tend to make effort for the purpose of achieving prosperity.

**L) Increases Capacity to Accept Social Change:** Critical consciousness and dialogue are key concept of Freire's pedagogy. Freire believed that educative processes as an instrument either promote domination or liberation. But unfortunately current system was promoting dominant culture of silence. In this situation struggling for their needs oppressed were compelled to don't think for liberation. But critical consciousness enables them to bring and to accept social change.

## CONCLUSION:



Thus we see that critical consciousness plays an important role to draw and to accept the desirable changes in society. It enables people to realize their social conditions and problems. A society wishing to change or modernize itself has to use a number of means, instruments, institutions, agents and agencies to achieve its desired goals. Among such means, education is perhaps the most important. Education must enable them to be a person of critically conscious and this critical consciousness motivates them to take certain useful steps towards social change.

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