

# Social Change: Characteristics and Factors

## **Meaning:**

Change is a process. Change denotes any alternation, difference or modification that takes place in a situation or in any object through time. It is the universal law of nature. It refers to the difference that exists between the past and the present situation. Change is an “on-going” process, No society remains completely static.

Society is subject to constant changes. The term social change refers to changes taking place in human society. Basically, the changes in human inter-actions and inter relations, indicate social change. Society is the network of social relationship. Hence, social change obviously implies a change in the system of social relationship. So any difference or any modification or transformation in the established pattern of human interaction and standards of conduct amounts to change.

Abolition of child marriage, inter-caste marriage, high status to Indian women is some of the important instances of social change.

## **Definitions:**

The meaning of the term “Social Change” can be better understood if we will discuss few definitions formulated by the eminent sociologists. Some of the important definitions are stated below.

Kingsley Davis, “By Social change is meant only such alterations as occur in social organizations, that is, structure and functions of society.”

Maclver and Page, “Social change refers to a process responsive to many types of changes, to changes in man-made conditions of life” to changes in the attitude and beliefs of men and to changes that go beyond the human control to the biological and physical nature of things.

Lundberg, “Social change refers to any modifications in the established patterns of inter-human relationship and standard of conduct.”

H.T. Mazumdar, “Social change may be defined as a new fashion or mode, either modifying or replacing the old, in the life of people or in the operation of society.”

Morris Ginsberg, “By social change I understand a change in social structure, i.e. the size of a society, the composition or balance of its parts or the type of its organisation.”

Gillin and Gillin, “Social changes are variations from the accepted modes of life; whether due to alternation in geographical conditions, in cultural equipments, composition of the population or ideologies whether brought about by diffusion or inventions within the group.

Alvin Toffler, “Change is the process through which future invades our life.”

M.E. Jones, “Social change is a term used to describe variations in, or modifications of, any aspect of social process, social patterns, social interaction or social organisations.”

From the above definitions it may be concluded that social change is:

(i) A process.

(ii) It is a change in social organisation, that is the structure and functions of society.

(iii) Social change means human change, which takes place in the life patterns of the people. Basically it refers to the change in social relationship.

(iv) It refers to all historical variations in human societies. It means changes in all fundamental relations of man to man. Which includes changes in political institutions, class structure, economic systems, mores and modes of living.

From the analysis of the above definitions we come to know that the phenomenon of social change is not simple but complex. It is very vast and a complicated process. It is a process in which we always face problems in its conditions, forms, limitations, direction, sources, causes as well as consequences. But it would be worthwhile to analyse the nature of social change for clear understanding. The following natures of social change are discussed below.

### **Characteristics:**

#### **(1) Change is Social:**

Social change means a change in the system of social relationship. Social relationship is understood in terms of social process, social interactions and social organizations. So in any variation of social process, social interactions and social organizations social change-takes place.

In another instance it is found that society is like an organization, which never dies. New civilizations and societies come up by replacing old societies and thereby retaining some of its elements in its change. Thus social change is different from individual change. Its cause and consequences are always social which make it social.

### **(2) Universal:**

Social change is universal. Because it is present in all societies and at all times. No society remains completely static. The society may be primitive or modern, rural or urban, simple or complex, agrarian or industrial, it is constantly undergoing change. The rate or the degree of change may vary from society to society from time to time but every society keeps on changing. A changeless society is an unreality.

### **(3) Continuous:**

Social change is a continuous process but not an intermittent process. Because the changes are neither stopped nor the societies are kept in museum to save them from change. It is an on-going process without any break. In the process of change every society grows and decays, where it finds renewal and accommodates itself to various changing conditions. The sources, direction, rate and forms of change may vary time to time but it is always continuous.

### **(4) Inevitable:**

Change is inevitable. It is the human nature that desires change and also it is his tendency to bring change and to oppose or accept change. Human wants are unlimited which always keep on changing. To satisfy these wants social change has become a necessity not only to him but also to the society.

## **(5) Temporal:**

Social change is temporal. Change in anything or any object or in a situation takes place through time. Time is the most important factor and social change denotes time-sequence. According to Maclver, “It is a becoming, not a being; a process, not a product”. Innovation of new things, modification and renovations of the existing behaviour take time.

(ii) Emigration: It refers to migration of a country.

(iii) In-migration refers to migration into a particular area.

(iv) Out-migration refers to movement out of a particular area. Thus, migrants who come from Bihar to Orissa are considered to be immigrants for Orissa and out-migrants for Bihar.

There are many factors contributing to the process of migration. They are:

(a) Development of transport and communication.

(b) Natural calamities like earthquake, flood famine etc.

(c) Absence of restrictions on social mobility.

(d) Non-availability of land and vocational opportunities etc. So the changes in population have a far-reaching effect on society. It has both positive and negative effects.

## **Positive Effects:**

(a) The growth of population has a direct bearing upon the availability and utilisation of resources.

(b) More population brings about more innovations and discoveries.

(c) It encourages rapid growth in industrialisation and urbanisation.

(d) The high birth rate and an alarming growth in population also stimulates attitude towards birth, death and family life.

(e) Due to growth of population Acts are passed by the government for the control of population. For example, in India due to rapid population growth, the government has introduced family planning programmes.

### **Negative Effects:**

(a) The growth of population has decreased the standard of living of the people in the society.

(b) The growth of population has given birth to a variety of problems like poverty, unemployment, child labor, crime, juvenile delinquency and beggary.

(c) Increase in population leads to an increase of social differentiation and division of labor.

(d) It brings destructive social conflict and disorganization in migrants line.

(e) In the societies where the female population exceeds the male population, polygamy may flourish and on the other hand, if the number of males exceeds the females, polyandry is likely to prevail.

From the above discussion we find that demography plays a significant role in the socio-economic and political transformation of society. It certainly brings drastic changes not only in the micro- structures but also in macro-structures.

## **Biological Factors:**

Social change is a complex process. It is caused by multiple factors. All factors of social change are closely related to each other. But at the same time each individual factor brings change in society in its own way.

Accordingly biological factor plays an important role in the causation of social change. An ordinarily biological factor refers to those which are concerned with the genetic constitution of the human beings.

A biological factor includes both non-human beings such as animals, birds, herbs, insects, plants etc. and human beings. Human beings use animals, birds, plants and herbs according to the direction of his own culture. At the same time human beings protect themselves from different harmful elements. If there is increase or decrease of these animals, birds, plants etc. it will bring a number of changes in human society.

Rapid decline of useful animals, birds and plants will also create a number of problems in human society and influences social change. Similarly rapid increase or decrease of population also brings a number of changes in society. Different biological process like human procreation, fertility and mortality also influence the rate of change in a society. Size, density, Migration, immigration etc. bring a number of changes in society.

Rapid population growth influences our environment causes poverty, food shortage and multiple health problems and thereby brings changes in society. Migration accelerate the process of urbanization. Urbanization creates multiple problems like slum, quality of health and life style. Increasing urbanization and declining number of useful animal and birds affects our environment.

Similarly the nature and quality of human beings in a society influences the rate of social change. Sociologist like Pareto opines that the biological evolution of mankind brings social changes. Elites in a society are determined by inherited biological instincts. Besides composition of population also influences social change.

Both age composition and sex composition are very closely related to social change. Number of population in the productive age group deeply influences the rate and speed of social change. If the number of child and unproductive or ageing population increases, a country faces a number of economic problems. If the number of ageing population decreases, the youths may be deprived of wisdom and experience which resulted in slow change.

Besides the process of natural selection, social selection also affects the rate and speed of social change. The process of natural selection works through twin alternatives like adaptation and annihilation. Here man is required to adapt to natural environment. But in social selection the forces created within human society and operating through human relationships creates situations that deeply affect the reproduction process and survival rates of population.

### **Cultural Factors:**

In sociology the word 'Culture' denotes acquired behavior which are shared by and transmitted among the members of the society. Man learns his behavior and behavior which is learnt is called culture. Singing, dancing, eating, playing belong to the category of culture.

It includes all that man has acquired in the mental and intellectual sphere of his individual and social life. It is the expression of our nature, in our



modes of living and thinking, in our everyday intercourse, in art, in literature, in recreation and enjoyment. For the clear understanding of the term 'Culture' here, it is necessary to discuss some of the important definitions of culture.

**Definitions:**

According to White, "Culture is a symbolic, continuous, cumulative and progressive process."

Malinowski defines culture, "as the handiwork of man and as the medium through which he achieves his end."

Maclver and Page defines, "Culture is the realm of styles, of values, of emotional attachments, of intellectual adventures."

In the words of Green, "Culture is the socially transmitted system of idealized ways in knowledge, practices and beliefs, along with the artifacts that knowledge and practice produce and maintain as they change in time."

Culture, as is defined by Tylor, refers to, "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society."

From the above definitions of culture, the features of culture may be summarized below. They are:

- (1) Culture is social, but not individual.
- (2) Culture is idealistic.
- (3) Culture is communicative.

- (4) Culture is an acquired quality.
- (5) Culture meets the recurring demand of mankind.
- (6) Culture has the characteristics of adaptation.
- (7) Culture has the quality of becoming integrated.

Culture plays a very significant role in social change. No culture even remains constant. It always keeps on changing. So it is treated as an important source or instrument of social change. The very nature of culture makes it dynamic. The terms like continuous, cumulative adoptive, transmissive etc. signify the elements of dynamism within the culture. Besides, there are host of other internal and external variables that interact upon the culture and cause changes within it.

Change in culture takes place by three important factors. They are discovery, invention and diffusion. A discovery may be a material item or a non material item. But any discovery brings about social change only when it is widely used. An invention generates pressure for change in different parts of social life. Diffusion is the process by which cultural traits spread from one culture to another or from one part of culture to another. It is a two-way process. Because in this process one culture gives something to the other and at the same time takes something from it.

Several sociologists have highlighted the determining role of culture effecting social change. Some of the important effects are given below. They are:

**(i) Culture gives speed and direction to social change:**

If the culture is too much conservative, then its rate of change becomes too low and vice versa. People whether accept change or not depends upon their attitudes and values which are the products of the culture.

**(ii) Culture influences the direction and character of technological change:**

Our belief and social institutions not only correspond to the changes in technology but these determine the use to which the technological inventions will be put. It is the culture that decides the purpose to which a technical invention must be put.

**(iii) Culture shapes economy and is effective towards economic growth:**

Culture not only gives direction to technology but it shapes the economy which is too much effective towards economic growth.

**(iv) It keeps the social relationship intact:**

It makes people think not of their own but also of the others. By regulating the behavior of the people and satisfying their primary drives pertaining to hunger, shelter and sex, it has been able to maintain group life.

**Concept of Cultural Lag:**

To examine the role of cultural factors in social change, it is necessary to discuss the concept of “Cultural Lag”.

W.F. Ogburn, an American sociologist introduced the concept of ‘Cultural Lag’ in his book “social change: which was published in the year 1920. The word ‘lag’ connotes crippled movement. Hence cultural lag means the flatering of one aspect of culture behind another. According to Ogburn

there are two aspects of culture. One is the material and another one is the non-material.

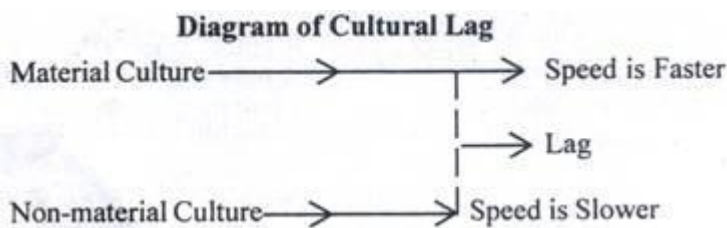
**(i) Material Culture:**

It includes those elements or things which are tangible, visible and touchable like goods, tools, machines and furnitures etc.

**(ii) Non-material Culture:**

It includes those elements which are neither tangible nor touchable rather these are experienced by men like customs, values, ideologies, religion and behavior pattern etc.

It is found that technological innovations and discoveries stimulate the material culture to a great extent. As a result, the changes are quick in material culture. But non-material culture responds very slowly to such changes in material culture. So the material culture goes ahead leaving behind the non-material culture. This is called the “cultural lag”. For example-The development in the field of industry requires a corresponding change in the system of education. The failure of education to meet the needs of modern industrial development leads to cultural lag.



**Causes of Cultural Lag:**

What is the cause of this cultural lag?

Regarding the answer we find many factors causing cultural lag.

They are:

(1) Difference in the degrees of changeability of various elements of culture.

(2) Changes in law.

(3) Man's psychological dogmatism.

### **Criticisms:**

The theory of 'cultural lag' of Ogburn is not free from the criticisms.

(a) There is no clear-cut distinction between material and non-material culture. Again, it is not necessary that non-material culture should invariably lag behind material culture.

(b) A major defect in Ogburn's theory is that he uses the "cultural lag" for expanding all gaps in the process of social change. Maclver has suggested the use of different terms for the various types of disequilibrium and conflicts, such as technological lag, technological restraint and cultural clash etc.

(c) According to the theory of cultural lag, while one thing progresses forward, another lags. Hence this word should not be used in the context of those objects which are the encouraging as well as the restraining and are similar and possess a common standard of evaluation.

(d) Finally Ogburn has not provided any standard or scale to measure the units of material and non-material culture. So it is difficult to find out whether one aspect of culture changes faster than the other or not.

In spite of the above shortcomings, the theory of "cultural lag" of Ogburn has been proved to be beneficial for understanding the cultural factors in bringing about social change.

## **Technological Factors:**

The technological factors also play important role in causing social change. Then what is technology? How it brings social change?

In the study of sociology, technology has a wider connotation. It implies an appropriate organization and systematic application of scientific knowledge to meet the human requirements. Technology is a product of utilization. When the scientific knowledge is applied to the problems of life, it becomes technology. Technology is fast growing. Modern age is the “Age of Technology”.

According to W.F. Ogburn, “Technology changes society by changing our environments to which we In turn adopt. This change is usually in the material environment and the adjustment that we make with these changes often modifies customs and social institution initiates a corresponding social change.

## **Sources of Technological Change:**

There are mainly two important sources of technological change. They are:

(i) Inventions.

(ii) Discovery.

(i) Invention denotes creation of new ways of using existing knowledge or new ways of combining existing artifacts. A single invention in technology can produce a large scale change in society. One important example of invention is the invention of automobile.

(ii) Discovery means the new way of looking at the environment. Technological innovation originates also from another source called discovery.

Example-Discovery of modern medicines is the result of discoveries in biology and partly the result of invention.

Invention and discovery are significant characteristic of our age. Apart from these two, there are three technological factors which are mainly responsible for social change.

**They are:**

(a) Technological Innovations.

(b) Changes in production technology.

(c) Changes in transportation and communication.

**(a) Technological Innovations:**

The technological innovations have brought about revolutionary changes in man's idea about the world and universe. The world is no more a mysterious creation for man because even in case of the natural calamities like flood, cyclone, earthquake and drought etc. are no more being viewed as the divine punishments against man's bad deeds. No man has been able to find out their causes. As a result of which the degree of gaining control over them has increased.

**(b) Changes in production technology:**

Invention of new agricultural tools and chemical measures has led to the gradual development of an agrarian system. Industrialization has caused a number of changes in family, status of women, mode of living of people,

religion and ideologies of people etc. It has also led to the growth of urban centers with new types of social organization.

**(c) Changes in transportation and communication:**

Rapid development in transportation and communication has greatly influenced the socio-cultural life. It has broken down the regional barriers. Due to transportation world wide trade and commerce has been possible and communication technology has increased national awakening.

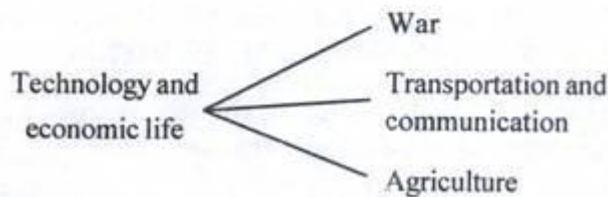
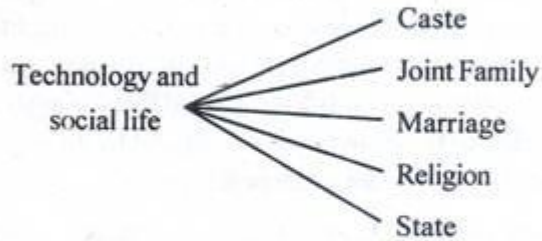
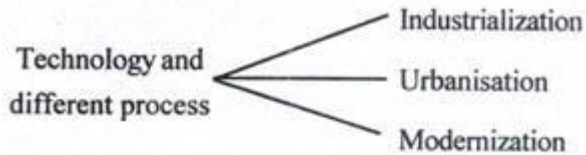
Apart from the above factors, cultural factors play significant role in bring about technological change. Customs, traditions, folkways, mores habits, conservatism etc. have resisted the technological inventions and contribute to it.

**Effects of Technology:**

No device, technological or otherwise, whether originating within a society or borrowed from outside, obviously set up a network of effects. The status of the individual is no more ascribed rather achieved. A man is judged in what he has, not what he is.

The social relation is gradually becoming superficial, temporary as well as selfish by nature. Changes in technology have resulted in some fundamental changes in social structure. The impact of technological changes may be discussed under the following broad headings.





Let us discuss one by one.

## **Technology and Different Process:**

### **(a) Industrialisation:**

Industrialisation refers to the process by which industries have been set up. It has given birth to the factory system and replaced domestic system. The invention of machines has led to the creation of big factories which employ thousands of people and where most of the work is performed automatically. It has created new social class and has improved the condition of women. It has affected the nature, character and the growth of economy.

### **(b) Urbanization:**

Industrialisation has led to urbanization. As a result of industrialisation people have started moving towards the industrial areas, the areas neither very far from the cities nor from the villages with the hope of getting employment in those industries and factories. Hence only when a large portion of inhabitants in an area comes to cities, urbanization is said to

occur. Towns like Kanpur, Jamshedpur and Ahmadabad in India owe their birth to the factories established there.

### **(c) Modernization:**

It is a process by which adoption of the modern ways of life and values take place. It has brought about remarkable changes in social relationship and installed new ideologies in the place of traditional areas. It has changed the social structure, which adds impetus to the growth of science and technology. As a result of which the rate of change increases rapidly.

### **Technology and Social Life:**

The changes in technology have changed the whole gamut of social life. It has performally altered out modes of life and thought. The different institutions which are already changed may be discussed below one by one. They are:

#### **(a) Caste:**

Due to technological changes the structure as well as the functions of caste are already changed.

- (i) The ascribed status has been replaced by achieved status.
- (ii) There is no restriction on food, water as well as social relationship.
- (iii) Marriage under caste system is no more endogamous.
- (iv) Hereditary occupational structure has been replaced by occupation based on one's own choice depending on one's own capacity, ability and talent.

**(b) Joint Family:**

Indian traditional family which was purely of joint pattern has started changing its size, structure and functions by the impact of technology.

- (i) Change in its unity and natural co-operation of its members.
- (ii) Change in the control and rub of Karta.
- (iii) Fragmentation of land or distribution of common property.
- (iv) It has lost its importance and has started disintegrating day by day.

**(c) Marriage:**

Marriage is an important institution which has been undergoing tremendous changes due to the impact of technology.

- (i) It has lost its sanctity.
- (ii) It is treated more as a civil contract than a sacred bond.
- (iii) It is becoming more and more unstable.
- (iv) The rate of divorce is increasing rapidly day by day.

**(d) Religion:**

Religion has undergone the following changes.

- (i) The role of superstition has been declined.
- (ii) People are becoming more and more secular, rational and scientific in their outlook.

(iii) Conservative or orthodox religious activities have been replaced by simple activities.

(iv) The religious toleration among the people has been destroyed.

**(e) State:**

State have undergone the following changes.

(i) State have become secular in nature.

(ii) There is a shift of functions from local government to the central government of the whole state.

(iii) Modern inventions have strengthened nationalism.

(iv) It has increased the size and power of bureaucracy.

**Technology and Economic Life:**

Technology has altered man's economic life in many ways.

**(a) War:**

The highly dangerous effect of technology is evident through war. The most spectacular invention of our age, the atomic energy, has vastly influenced our life. As an agent of war, it brought about the most appalling annihilation of people in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. As an agent of peace it may bring an unprecedented era of plenty and prosperity.

**(b) Transportation and Communication:**

Great technological advancement have contributed significantly to the field of transportation and communication. The means of transport has progressed at a surprising rate. The intermixing of people belonging to various countries led to the removal of much misunderstanding, hatred

and jealously. It has encouraged the sense of universal brotherhood. The introduction of machinery into industry, news paper, radio, television, telephone, telegraph etc. have facilitated the spread of new principles and have become propaganda machines for political parties.

### **(c) Agriculture:**

Changes in technology have led to the development of new techniques in agriculture. Agricultural production is increased due to the use of modern equipments, improved seeds in quantity and quality. Hence it has greatly affected the rural community. As India is predominantly an agricultural country, its future depends upon the progress of agriculture.

From the above analysis we come to know that with the development of technology changes in different areas are constantly increasing and these are becoming more stable.

### **Educational Factors:**

Educationists through their educational ideologies bring a change in the society. Education acts as the chief and most powerful instrument for the social change. Educational institutions, books, magazines, newspapers etc. greatly affect the social life of the people. Hence, the role of education is felt seriously to change the society in all aspects.

*he functions of education in the sphere of social change are outlines as under:*

1. **Assistance in changing attitudes.** Education helps to change the attitudes of people in favor of modern ways of life and develops attitudes, which can fight prejudice, superstitions and traditional beliefs.

2. ***Assistance in creating desire for change.*** Education creates a desire for change in a society, which is pre-requisite for any kind of change to come.

3. ***Assistance in adopting social change.*** Whenever some social change occurs, it is easily adopted by some people while others find it difficult to adjust themselves to this change. It is the function of education to assist people in adopting good changes.

4. ***Overcoming resistance to change.*** Certain factors create resistance in the way of accepting social change. Education helps in overcoming resistance. The importance of social change is convincingly explained to the people through the process of education. Education helps people in removing blind faith and prejudice and accepting something new.

5. ***Analysis in change.*** Education invests the individuals with the capacity to use his intelligence, to distinguish between the right and wrong and to establish certain ideals.

6. ***Emergence of new changes.*** Education initiates, guides and controls movements for social reform. The flood of social reform movements that was witnessed at the turn of the century was due to modern education.

7. ***Leadership in social change.*** Education in India must be able to create appropriate leadership at every level if social changes conducive to democracy are to be introduced. Able leaders can be produced only through education.

8. **National integration.** Education can prove very useful in bringing about national integration, which is the basis for unity among people, social change and ultimately the basis for strong and united country.

9. **National development.** Education is the fundamental basis of national development. National development is the all-round development of the different facets of the nation, i.e., economic, political, scientific, and social as well as of the individuals. Therefore, education is the powerful instrument of economic, political, cultural, scientific and social change.

10. **Economic prosperity.** Education is the most important factor in achieving rapid economic development and technological progress and in creating a social order founded on the value of freedom, social justice and equal opportunity. It develops physical and human resources for all sectors of economy and ultimately brings a desired change in the society.

11. **Social Legislation** The law, through legislative and administrative responses to new social conditions and ideas, as well as through judicial re-interpretations of constitution, statutes or precedents, increasingly not only articulates but sets the course for major social change. Law plays an indirect role in changing the society by changing social institutions. For years, litigation has affected social change more than anything.

India after its independence, framed laws to correct social order and prepare for being a welfare state. It aimed at achieving an exploitation free and equal society where caste did not define your opportunities, where all had an equal footing, where people lived in a closely knit society, where only your capabilities mattered and not the family you were born in. For this purpose, it enacted laws and regulations to maintain social order.

Law is the activity of subjecting human behaviour to the governance of rules. The rule of law is concerned with regulating the use of power.

Whereas society is a spontaneous order, the state is a protective agent with the monopoly role of enforcing the rules of the game. Since the monopoly on coercion belongs to the government, it is imperative that this power not be misused. In a free society each person has a recognized private sphere, a protected realm which government authority cannot encroach upon. The purpose of law is to preserve the freedom and moral agency.

## **Judiciary & Social Change**

- **Composition & Hierarchy of Courts in India**

As defined by the constitution of India, India has adopted a federal form of government, meaning that the power to pass laws is divided between the center and the states. Nevertheless, the Constitution creates an integrated judicial structure consisting of courts for the execution of both federal and state laws. The Apex Court of India is the Supreme Court in New Delhi. In the states that obey the supreme court, there are diverse high courts. The High Courts are preceded by district and subordinate courts, known in India as the lower courts. There are specific tribunals to adjudicate sector-specific claims such as labor, consumer, service matter disputes, in order to complement the working of the courts.

- **The supreme court of India**

On 28 January 1950, India's Supreme Court came into being. In colonial times, it replaced both the Federal Court of India and the



Privy Council's Judicial Committee, which were deemed apex courts. A Supreme Court with a Chief Justice and 7 judges was envisaged by the Constitution of India as it existed in 1950. The authority to raise the number of judges in the coming years has been given to the Parliament. At present, the Supreme Court's overall strength is 34 judges, including the Chief Justice as

- **High Courts**

India is composed of 24 High Courts at the rank of state and union territory. Each High Court has jurisdiction over a state, a union territory, or a collection of states and union territories.

- **District and Sub-ordinate Courts**

The courts operating below the High Courts are referred to as the lower courts. They are made up of district courts and subordinate courts. Every state is split into regions ruled by a 'District and Sessions Judge'. When he/she presides over a civil case he/she is known as a 'Sessions judge', when he/she presides over a criminal case, the judge is known as a 'District Judge.'. When she presides over a district court in a town that is classified by the state government as a metropolitan area, the district judge is sometimes called a 'Metropolitan Sessions Judge.'

