**Paper 602**

**Unit 1**

**Social Geography**

**Topic: Westernisation**

The process of Westernization of caste-system in India began with the frantic efforts of missionaries to convert as many Indians as possible into Christianity and coming of East India Company in India first to trade and later on to increase its political power in India. East India Company successfully established ‘British Imperial Rule’ in India by 1958.

British rule produced radical and lasting changes in the Indian society and culture. The British brought with them new technology, institutions, knowledge, beliefs, and values. These have become the main source of social mobility for individuals as well as groups. It is in this context, M.N. Srinivas, introduced the term “Westernisation” mainly to explain the changes that have taken place in the Indian society and culture due to Western contact through the British rule.

**Definition of Westernisation:-**

According to M.N. Srinivas, “Westernisation” refers to “the changes brought about in the Indian society and culture as a result of over 150 years of British rule and the term subsumes changes occurring at different levels – technology, institutions, ideology and values.”

**Meaning of Westernisation:-**

In comparison with Sanskritisation, Westernisation is a simplier concept. It explains the impact of Western contact (particularly of British rule) on the Indian society and culture. M.N. Srinivas used the term “Westernisation” to describe the changes that a non-western country had undergone as a result of prolonged contact with the western one. It imples, according to Srinivas, “certain value preferences”, which in turn subsumes several values, such as “humanitarianism”. It implies an active concern for the welfare of all human beings irrespective of caste, economic position, religion, age and sex.

Westernisation not only includes the introduction of new institutions, but also fundamental changes in old institutions. For example, India had schools long before the arrival of the British, but they were different from the British introduced schools. Other institutions such as army, civil service and law courts were also similarly affected.

However, the increase in Westernisation does not retard the process of Sanskritisation. Both go on simultaneously, and to some extent increase in Westernisation accelerates the process of Sanskritisation. For example, the postal facilities, railways, buses and newspaper media which are the fruits of Western impact on India render more organised religious pilgrimages, meetings, caste solidarities, etc., possible compared to the past.

**Impact of Westernisation:-**

** Opened up the doors of the knowledge** – Modern education opened up the doors of the knowledge flourished in Europe after Renaissance movement of Middle Ages. It had widened the mental horizons of Indian intelligentsia.

** Education for all** - During second half of the nineteenth century, British government in India opened the doors of education to all the sections of Indian society, irrespective of caste or creed. Still, very few amongst the general public could avail the advantages of formal modern education. Education remained confined within a small section of society.

** Highlighted evil practices** – Modern education had highlighted the evil practices and weaknesses developed into the system like rigidity and harshness of many social customs and practices prevalent at that time for the weaker sections of the society i.e. un-touch-ability and inhuman treatment to women, Sati, Polygamy, child marriage etc. etc. prevalent at that time.

** Attracted attention of social reformers** – Modern education had attracted the attention of intellectuals and social reformers towards real issues evils caused by ignorance, irrationality of mumbo-jumbo of rituals and superstitions created by some selfish people to entangle the ignorant and poor masses. They suggested remedies for social, political and economic ills of the country. They took upon themselves the responsibility to build a modern, open, plural, culturally rich, prosperous and powerful India out of a fragmented, poverty stricken, superstitious, weak, indifferent, backward and inward looking society. As a result of such efforts, it led to the abolition of Sati System and slavery. Female infanticide practice lowered to a great extent. Realization of the worth of liberty and freedom – It equipped national leaders with intellectuals tools with which they fought the oppressive British Raj. Indians realized the worth of liberty and freedom. They got exposure to the philosophies of thinkers like Locke, Mill, Roussseau, Voltaire, Spencer and Burke etc. They understood the reasons and impact of English, French, American revolutions.

**Criticisms of Westernisation:-**

 The concepts of Sanskritisation and Westernisation primarily analyse social change in “cultural” and not in “structural” terms. This denoted that these terms have limited range of application and use.

  Srinivas’s model explains the process of social change only in India which is based on the caste system. It is not useful for other societies.

 Though Srinivas claimed that the concept of Westernisation is “ethically neutral”, it is not really so. The Western model which Srinivas has eulogised has its own contradiction. Mention can be made of the facts of Western life such as racial prejudice, colour segregation and exploitive nature of the Western economy, etc. These facts contradict humanitarian ideals or rational outlook on life.

 It is also commented that the Western model which Srinivas has eulogised has its own contradiction. The western model sometimes conveys values that are contrary to the ones referred by Srinivas. In this context, mention can be made of the facts of Western life such as racial prejudice, colour segregation, and exploitative nature of Western economy, etc. These facts contradicts humanitarian ideals or rational outlook on life.

 Daniel Lerner has raised some objections to the use of Westernisation as conceived by Srinivas: a. It is too local label and the model which is imitated may not be western country; but Russia. b. One of the result of prolonged contact with the west is the rise of the elite class whose attitude towards the West is ambivalent is not invariably true. In this context, Lerner refers to the appeal of Communism in non-western countries. c. Westernisation in one area or level of behaviour does not result in Westernisation in another related area or level. d. While there is certain common elements in Westernisation, yet each represent a particular variant of a common culture and significant difference exists between one country and another.