

See discussions, stats, and author profiles for this publication at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/388860843>

Not Beyond the Modernity The Unrevealed Story of Rural Farmer

Chapter · December 2024

CITATIONS

0

READS

13

1 author:



Bhaskarjyoti Boro
Dibrugarh University

8 PUBLICATIONS 2 CITATIONS

SEE PROFILE

INDIA'S NORTHEAST

Problems, Conflicts and New Developments

Edited by

Ajay Kumar
Athokpam Marconi Singh
Dr. Narmada Hidangmayum



Bharti Publications
New Delhi- 110002 (INDIA)

Copyright © Editors

Title: India's Northeast Problems, Conflicts and New Developments

Editor: Ajay Kumar, Athokpam Marconi Singh
Dr. Narmada Hidangmayum

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted, in any form or by any means, without permission. Any person who does any unauthorised act in relation to this publication may be liable to criminal prosecution and civil claims for damages.

First Published, 2024

ISBN: 978-93-48059-02-4

Published by :

Bharti Publications

4819/24, 2nd Floor, Mathur Lane

Ansari Road, Darya Ganj, New Delhi-110002

Phone: 011-23247537

Mobile : +91-989-989-7381

E-mail : bhartipublications@gmail.com

info@bharatipublications.com

Website : www.bhartipublications.com

Printed in India : by Sagar Color Scan, Delhi

Disclaimer: The views expressed in the book are of the contributing authors and not necessarily of the publisher and editors. Contributing Author(s) themselves are responsible for their opinion or suggestion and any kind of plagiarism found in book and any related issues found with their chapter in the book.

25

Not Beyond the Modernity: The Unrevealed Story of Rural Farmers

Bhaskarjyoti Boro*

Abstract

Modernity is a dynamic process. Modernity emerged with the advancement of science and technology, industrialization, globalization, and the rise of new capitalism. Modernity has both positive and negative impact. On one hand, it is a blessing for human society, and on the other hand, it brings risks to human society and culture. New industrial market systems and technological development shape human life. While on the other hand, modernity brings a challenge to the indigenous community and culture. Lose of cultural integrities, value system, socioeconomic divisions, labour division, etc. are some of the results of modernity. The present article is an attempt by the author to illustrate how the rural traditional cultivator and society deal with both tradition and modernity. Here the author brings some theoretical concepts of modernity to understand its roots and to compare the challenged situation with the sociological module. The author also brings some shared opinions of the rural cultivators and womenfolk to illustrate modernity.

Keywords: *Modernity, capitalism, risk, culture, indigenous.*

* PHD Research Scholar, Department of Anthropology, Dibrugarh University, Dibrugarh

Introduction

Farmers are responsible for our accessibility of food .They are the driving force of economic development and nation-building. They are a significant part of great human civilization .The popular Assamese legendry singer Dr .Bhupen Hazarika sang

*"Oo mur dharitry aai
Charonote diba thai
Khetiyakor nister nai
Mati bine oxhohai"*

English translation....

*"Oh my mother earth
Give me a space on your feet
There is no escape for the farmer
Without land they are incapable"*

Through this song, Dr. Hazarika expresses appreciation for Mother Earth and also gratitude to the farmers for their trouble and dedication to agricultural production. In India, agriculture is the primary occupation of food production. A large number of Indian populations are engaged in agriculture. The traditional agricultural production methods vary depending upon the physical geographical setting and availability of resources. For example, in the north-eastern state of India, terrace and shifting cultivation are practiced in the hill areas, whereas the farmers living in the plain areas cultivate by using domesticated animals like bullocks and buffalo in ploughing. In the early prehistoric period foraging and hunting were the only ways of food production. Later on, agriculture and cultivation brought a great revolution in human life and led to the establishment of a complex social system.

From ancient times lots of ritualistic traditions, folk beliefs, and taboos have been followed in agricultural production. Different ethnic communities show different ways of agricultural tradition depending on the surrounding environmental conditions. By composing the traditions, beliefs, habits, and practices a society constructs its culture. In the early 19th century the rise of

industrialization, capitalization, and technological advancement brings a rapid transformation in human life. The dynamic process of transformation is termed 'modernity' by sociologists, social philosophers, and social scientists.

The concept of modernity emerged from the writings of Karl Polanyi in his famous book "Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origin of Our Time (1944)." Due to modernization, the level of economic, political, and social structure moves towards the capitalization systems. Capitalization leads to the emergence of social division. Capitalism depends on the productive competition market and the prices of the consumers. According to Morrison, "In each economic epoch, a given population is transformed into a class when the prevailing economic condition of existence acts to transform this group into a relatively homogenous population. For example, when agricultural workers were transformed into a mass of wage labor in the nineteenth century during the transition from feudalism to capitalism, one class was transformed into another, while this was a process that Marx referred to as the Proletarianization of labor, it had definite class consequences (Morrison, 206:55)."

In the present article, the author attempts to discuss modernity from the modern social thinker's perspective as well as a risk culture in the simple society especially focusing on traditional rural agricultural society.

Concept of modernity and the views of modern social thinkers

There is no doubt modernity has both positive and negative impacts. In a general sense modernity is understood as a dynamic transformation. When we look surroundings of our society sometimes we hear the word modern lifestyle. But what does it mean? Can we say wearing a Western dress, living in a luxury building, and consuming pricy foods mean modern? We never look at whether the same things are equally consumed by each social member or whether it is only limited to a particular section of society. Modern life includes all facilities equally enjoyed where social cohesion is maintained. But is it possible? Before discussing the above question let's discuss how sociologists view the transformation of society.

In sociology 'modernity' refers to the period of advancement of technology and socio-economic changes that emerged during 1650 up to 1950 in the European countries. Some sociologists argue that after the 1950s the post-modern period began and some argue that modernity has never ended and transformation is a dynamic process, so after the 1950s late modernity began. The emergence of modernity is still a matter of debate. On one hand, modernity brings industrialization, and economic development on the other hand modernity establishes new capitalism, social class, and economic and labour division.

Marx's concept of class and class structure is primarily based on the historical principle. In his famous book "Communist Manifesto (1848)", where he explicitly discussed the class and class structure. Classical Marxism isolates the different stages of class formation in the different historical periods. Firstly in the period of antiquity, the classes formed patrician and slave, during the feudal period class took the form of landlord and serf, the third was the period of capitalist development where capitalist and wage labourers formed a division of class. Though social division was present earlier the division of economic class is the result of modernity.

Durkheim views that the tendency of individualism in industrial development tends to make social division. From the Durkheim theoretical perspective, it is clear that individualism is a direct product of industrial society. His realistic notions demonstrate how such social division of labour lead to the loss of social cohesion.

If we bring Weber's theoretical perspective on modernity he used rationality to contrast the overall process of social action. Weber in his famous book "The Protestant Ethic and Spirit of Capitalism (1904)" looked at the influence of protestant religious doctrine on the development of capitalism. He used the term rationalization in several different contexts to view the process by which the nature of society and individual action are mastered by procedural techniques to reality. He views modernity as a rational view of thinking. While talking about social classes Weber views it as the result of the modern market situation, social action, and the antagonism and class struggle.

Modernity as a risk culture

In the industrial development and capitalist world wealth is not equally distributed. The technological advancement touched only a particular group of society which later on created a social class division. The most important aspect of a society is how innovation makes links between other social structures and social institutions. If a new technology is accepted in a particular culture and does not separate the cultural roots those technologies continue in the society and maintain the social integrity. But mostly modernity brings the opposite. Modernity brings risk to cultural norms and makes changes in structure and power. Many sociologists argue modernity is a risk factor. Ulrich Beck and Anthony Giddens critically look at the outcome of modernism and how modernism creates drastic changes in society.

The German sociologist Ulrich Beck in his book "Risk Society (1986)" describes the structural condition of industrialization. Such modern aspects not only create inequality but makes force risk and the risk society leads to creates conflict. Beck viewed that the first modernity was marked by the socio-economic conflict between labour and capital, while the second modernity was marked by cultural once between different risk cultures. If we look at the ethnic tribal society the traditional customs are very strong among the community members. Each cultural element plays a significant role in the whole culture. Modernity in the tribal culture manipulates the cultural elements. There is no doubt Westernization and globalization also play a significant role in the transformation process. But modernity creates a critical situation to establish the relation between cultural elements. Let's take a very simple example, the traditional ploughing technique like ploughing by using bullocks and buffalo is replaced by modern technology like tractors. The replacement of traditional technology reflects on the other social aspects like related beliefs of the traditional technology, such as rituals or religious practices, etc.

The sociologist Anthony Giddens attributes this by looking at the issues of modernity in human life. Giddens's work "The Consequences of Modernity (1990)" describes the initiation of modernity and how traditional ideas are challenged with

discoveries of new ideas. Giddens was mainly influenced by Marxist ideas. He emphasizes modernity as the development of capitalist society, industrialization or machine-based civilization, surveillance, and military power. He argues modernity is a risky culture by looking at the lifting of social relations from the local context and removing the social relations from the local context. Giddens also views several consequences of modernity, for example, environmental degradation due to industrialization and consolidation of political power into totalitarianism.

Technological advancement, Religion, Class, and Human mindset

Culture is dynamic. Culture changes with time and space. In the dynamic process of culture, there are many factors such as environmental, technological innovation or invention of new ideas, migration, etc. Like many other factors technological development or the invention of new ideas not only impacts a particular cultural aspect but also impacts the other linked aspects of the culture. It is well known that cultural traits are interrelated and interdependent therefore culture is a complex whole that includes all human activities and habits. The advancement of science and technology made a drastic change in human life. People are running with the modern technology to get the quick results in a short period. If we look today the rural agricultural system, the ploughing techniques are replaced by modern technology, the traditional irrigation systems are replaced, earlier cultivated crops are replaced by HYV crops, and communal activities are replaced by individual works or machines. There is no doubt the advancement of modern technology is a blessing for human life. It not only saves time but gives a high-quality result.

Let's come back to the theme of the present article. As the title of the article is "Not Beyond the Modernity: The Unrevealed Story of the Rural Farmer" here the author tries to share some stories of the traditional rural cultivators and how they respond to modernity. The author met many rural cultivators who had newly started using new technology in agricultural production. The farmers are not skilled in using the technology for successful agricultural production. On one hand, they are

adopting their traditional ideas and on the other hand, they are adopting modern technology. When we look at the tradition of the rural farmers we see it in a very complex social system. The traditions are linked with the other socio-religious aspects. If one is removed or not followed it will impact on the other link aspects. Due to adopting such modern technology, they have to break down their cultural complexity. Let's take a very simple example, in many rural areas of Assam on the day of eating new rice after the crop harvest the household member first feeds the bullocks as the bullocks are used in the agricultural practice. On the other hand "Goru Bihu" is celebrated in the name of the domesticated cattle by following lots of ritualistic traditions. In the current context due to using the machine-based technology the culture of domestication of cattle and bullocks is showing a decrease. Therefore the significance of this tradition shows diminishing day to day and such ritualistic beliefs and practices are going to be history. But many people don't want to lose their traditional customs, folk beliefs, and folk practices only because of modernity. But they are docile. To understand this condition I would like to use the term "One-sided satisfaction" of modernity. Because though modernity improves the human lifestyle to some extent modernity is unable to read the human thought process.

Once a woman shared that earlier on the day of the first transplantation they practiced a ritualistic tradition. On that day the womenfolk went to the agricultural field and planted a taro plant on the field in the name of their worshiping agricultural deities. After that practice, they proceed with crop transplantation. In the machine-based agricultural system, the traditional ritualistic practice becomes invalid. The requirement for more labour becomes limited. The machine-based technology creates a restriction on communal activities in agriculture and gives the preference for individuality.

In the modern social system class is the general characteristic. As mentioned earlier machine-based technology mostly prefers individuality. The rural cultivator who could buy the machine only that group of cultivators gets the benefit. The other group of cultivator who is unable to compete the competition with the modern market systems lose their confidence level.

The economic class division appeared when modern technology replaced the man labour. In the rural context, many rural people who cultivate by taking others' land become unemployed. Those rural people who don't have ideas of the competitive industrial market system become helpless. Due to the decline of agricultural production, today the tendency to use agricultural land for industrial purposes has been seen among many rural farmers.

In search of cultural sustainability :Coexistence with modernity

There are many studies carried out by the social science discipline on cultural change due to modernity and other related reasons. But it is a question for us whether are there any sustained solution for coexistence without losing the cultural values. In many scientific studies at the end, suggestions are given to preserve the cultural heritage, cultural values, and folk practices. But it is not clear "how" (?). We agree that there are no other ways that the rural cultivator must run with modern scientific technology. Skill or training should be provided to them to appear in the competitive productive market system. It is also very important to look into whether such modernity is a challenge in the value-based cultural complexity or not.

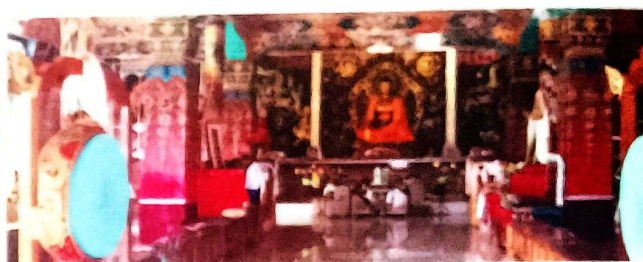
I have mentioned in the subheading the term "Cultural Sustainability". The cultural sustainability here I mean to denote how we can maintain our culture while dealing with modernity. Cultural sustainability includes the continuation of human culture like habits, beliefs, rites and rituals, morels, customs, etc. in the global and modernized era. Today we are living in a "hybrid culture". Respecting indigenous knowledge of the simple society and its application in social development helps to make equilibrium. Every responsible individual must make a balance between modernity and a value-based culture.

References:

1. Beck, Ulrich (1992). *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity* (Mark Ritter, trans.). London: Sage publication (Original work published 1986).
2. Giddens, Anthony (1990). *The Consequences of Modernity*. United Kingdom: Polity Press.

3. Morison, Ken (2006). *Marx, Durkheim, Weber: Formation of Modern Social Thought* (2nd ed.; p.55). New Delhi: Sage Publication India Pvt. Ltd.
4. Polanyi, Karl (1944). *Great Transformation: The political and economic origin of our time*. Boston: Beacon Press.
5. Marx, K. and Engels, F.(1948). *The Communist Manifesto*. London: German Worker's Educational Association.
6. Weber, Max (1904-05). *The Protestant Ethic and Spirit of Capitalism*. New York: Scribner's.

INDIA'S NORTHEAST PROBLEMS, CONFLICTS AND NEW DEVELOPMENTS



Ajay Kumar, Athokpam Marconi Singh
Dr. Narmada Hidangmayum



Bharti Publications