

20. Social Movements in Our Times

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1. Question

Here is a list of items that you can use to make a table on social movements. Find out the similarities and differences between the different movements:

The main area of focus of the movement; location; main demands; modes of protest; important leaders; the response from the state; possible impact on society;

Answer

Name of the movement	Location	Main demand	Mode of protest	Imp. Leaders	Response from state	Impact on society
Civil rights movement	America	Equal rights for black americans	Demonstrations and marches	Martin luther king	Adequate loss for equal rights passed	Inspired many countries to pass similar laws
Anti nuclear wars	Usa, ussr	Abolish all nuclear weapons	Marches and protests	Scientists all over the world	Signed start-strategic arms reduction treaty	Created awareness about the danger of nuclear projects whether for peace or war.
Greenpeace movement	Europe	Abolish underwater nuclear test	Creating awareness among people	This movement has spread all over the world	Government is focusing on promoting sustainable development	Spread over 40 countries. It has become an important ngo,
Bhopal gas tragedy	Bhopal, india	Fix responsibility about the damage	Protests and marches	Spread all over india	No such positive response	People all over the world has boycotted dow company and its products
Silent valley movement	Kerala	Stop the building of dam across 2 rivers to protect flora and fauna	Appeal in the court	All the nearby residents of western ghats, kerala	Keala high court has stopped this project	Silent valley converted into national park in 1985

2. Question

Kannaiah, Ramya and Salma have a debate. Ramya argues it is okay to restrict the freedoms etc. but ensure that people do not live in poverty. Salma argues that food alone is not important. This is equally important to have freedom of the press because there is no other way people would know if there is a violation of the dignity of people in different parts of the country. Kannayya says that how will it make a difference if press belongs to the rich and powerful people, why would they cover things that ordinary people expect. They have different expectations. Whom would you agree with and give reasons, from the context of human rights?

Answer

I do not agree with Ramya. A person should not be restricted in any way. His freedom must never be curtailed in terms of his right to speech, right to education, right to secure job and the right to be treated equally. Living in poverty cannot be the basis as to which this statement can be justified.

I agree with Salma. An individual not only requires food but other securities as well. Although food is extremely important and adequate provisions must be made for the same, freedom of the press is also important. Press creates awareness about the happenings in other parts of the world. Without, a person in one part of the country will not have access to or knowledge about the other parts.

I partially agree with Kannayya. Although in recent times, the richer sections of the society have control over the press and they usually tend to cover up the stories which might harm them, the press still remains a powerful source of voice among the people.

3. Question

What are the basic features of a social movement?

Answer

A social movement has the following features :

1. The social movement involves collective action. This collective action can take the form of a movement only when it is sustained for a longer period. It should also create an interest in a relatively large number of people.
2. A social movement is oriented towards bringing about a social change. This may be partial or total. Do the movements are usually focused on bringing a change in the values and ideologies of the existing system, it can also resist a change.
3. It requires a proper organisational framework to achieve success or at least to maintain the tempo of the movement
4. It may adopt its own technique or method to achieve the goal. Follow peaceful or conflicting, violent or nonviolent compulsive or persuasive, democratic or undemocratic means for the same.

4. Question

What is the role of ordinary individuals described in the case studies given in the chapter?

Answer

The ordinary individual plays an extremely important role in social movements. These movements are complex yet crucial to society. Different people have different roles in a social movement.

1. Some of them, focus on communicating their issues with the ruling party. They observe and analyze the mishappening and communicate it with the ruling class so that they can together work towards eradicating it.
2. Other people may focus on doing what they can to remedy the situation.
3. There are also certain people who see the problem as a power to make a change in society. They are rebellious in nature, and they can adopt any means whether violent or nonviolent to take their issues to the ruling class.
4. An individual can either assist or undermine movement depending upon how they wish to play the role. They can either generate drama and use violent methods and take a negative way of protesting, or they can choose tactics so that they can powerfully gain the upper hand in the social movement.

5. Question

How are the rights of black people in USA and Meira Paibi movements similar or different?

Answer

Social movements come into existence when a change is either forced on them or when they demand a change. The movement for rights of people in USA and Meira Pabi movements had one basic feature similar between them. They both resisted the change imposed on them.

The Civil right movement was for equal treatment of black Americans.

1. They were against the rules of segregation of black and white in school,buses and public places.
2. They were discriminated in appointment and voting right.

Martin Luther King said it is necessary to use peaceful means to achieve equality for all the people.

Meira Paibi was a movement to prevent public disorder due to alcohol abuse in the late 1970s. It soon became a movement for human rights with the massive deployment of Indian armed forces to counter the armed forces for Manipuri independence. The Indian armed forces had powers in the name of AFSPA. This led to the frequent military operation and human right violation.

6. Question

Democracies have been identified as most prominent political systems across the world. Do you think democracy has enabled to take care of all the expectations of people? Based on the examples cited in these chapters, write a short note on 'democracy and social movements.'

Answer

Social movements are based on different issue collection of individuals. They are expressed through different forms such as a voice on the street, an article in a newspaper or a petition on social media. It has a great influence on the democratically elected leaders. They can often put a check on democracy as well as create huge repercussions in the long run. Social movements have now become the basis for shaping the modern democratic life. They have become the single most important intermediary between citizens and the government.

We can also say that movements can actually replace an entire party in the future — for example, the creation of Aam Aadmi party in India. It started with the activist Anna Hazare's hunger strike in 2001. The impact of the protest was further intensified by the media coverage and social media. But the protesters realised that the ruling class is unresponsive and chose to become a formal party among themselves to fight the allegations of corruption.

However, not all social movements have struggled against democracy. Some have also become important factors in the development of democracy to a better level. Some progressive movement tends to strive for an inclusive and transparent form of decision making. If proper attention is paid to the internal and external factors that have an effect on the practices of social movements, it becomes a point of benefit for democracy.

7. Question

Discuss and find out how movements mobilise people from across the globe like in the above instance of a campaign to protest in the context of Bhopal gas tragedy.

Answer

The Bhopal Gas tragedy occurred in 1984. A poisonous gas out of the Union Carbide factory which was later purchased by the Dow company. Thousands of workers lost their lives, and many more are still suffering from the negative effects of this blast. This was the worst industrial disaster in the world. It has mobilized people across the globe to protest against this tragedy. The people have formed many movements and organizations taking steps to provide for the same. They have four major demands:

1. Proper treatment of the victims.
2. Adequate compensation for them based on the international standards as the company in question was an MNC.

3. Fix proper responsibility for the disaster on the management of the company.

4. Taking steps to avoid such disasters in the future.

Although they have succeeded in certain claims, they have a long way to go. Many victims are still suffering from its effect although a large amount of money has been spent on setting up more medical facilities in Bhopal. The compensation provided is not according to international standards. The government has failed to prosecute and punish the company for its negligence. The protest is quite difficult because the company is itself based in the USA. The people need to use International laws to fight against this problem. It has brought together the people across the globe for this movement. Many people have boycotted products made by this company. When the company sponsored Olympics in London, many people signed petition and organisations also pointed out this Alliance between the company and Olympic body was unethical.