

CHAPTER 14

Social Movements

Chapter at Glance

- Social movements have shaped the world we live in and continue to do so.
- The socialist movements world over, the civil rights movement in the United States in the 1950s and 1960s that fought for equal rights for Blacks, the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa have all changed the world in fundamental ways.
- Social movements not only change societies; they also inspire other social movements.

Features Of A Social Movement

- A social movement requires sustained collective action over time. Such action is often directed against the state and takes the form of demanding changes in state policy or practice. Spontaneous, disorganised protest cannot be called a social movement either.
- Collective action must be marked by some degree of organisation.
- This organisation may include a leadership and a structure that defines how members relate to each other, make decisions and carry them out.
- Those participating in a social movement also have shared objectives and ideologies.
- A social movement has a general orientation or way of approaching to bring about (or to prevent) change.
- These defining features are not constant. They may change over the course of a social movement's life.
- Social movements often arise with the aim of bringing about changes on a public issue, such as ensuring the right of the tribal population to use the forests or the right of displaced people to settlement and compensation.
- While social movements seek to bring in social change, counter movements sometimes arise in defence of status quo.
- There are many instances of such counter movements.

- When Raja Rammohun Roy campaigned against sati and formed the Brahmo Samaj, defenders of sati formed Dharma Sabha and petitioned the British not to legislate against sati.
- When reformers demanded education for girls, many protested that this would be disastrous for society.
- When reformers campaigned for widow remarriage, they were socially boycotted. When the so called 'lower caste' children enrolled in schools, some so called 'upper caste' children were withdrawn from the schools by their families.
- Peasant movements have often been brutally suppressed. More recently the social movements of erstwhile excluded groups like the Dalits have often invoked retaliatory action.
- Social movement activists hold meetings to mobilise people around the issues that concern them.
- Such activities help shared understanding, and also prepare for a feeling of agreement or consensus about how to pursue the collective agenda.
- Social movements also chart out campaigns that include lobbying with the government, media and other important makers of public opinion.
- Gandhi adopted novel ways such as ahimsa, satyagraha and his use of the charkha in the freedom movement.

Distinguishing Social Change And Social Movements

- Social change is continuous and ongoing.
- The broad historical processes of social change are the sum total of countless individual and collective actions gathered across time and space.
- Social movements are directed towards some specific goals. It involves long and continuous social effort and action by people.

Sociology And Social Movements

Why The Study Of Social Movements Is Important For Sociology

- From the very beginning, the discipline of sociology has been interested in social movements.
- The French Revolution was the violent culmination of several movements aimed at overthrowing the monarchy and establishing 'liberty, equality and fraternity'.
- In Britain, the industrial revolution was marked by great social upheaval.
- Poor labourers and artisans who had left the countryside to find work in the cities protested against the inhuman living conditions into which they were forced.
- Food riots in England were often suppressed by the government.
- Scholars influenced by the ideas of Karl Marx offered a different view of violent collective action. Historians like E. P. Thompson showed that the 'crowd' and the 'mob' were not made up of anarchic hooligans out to destroy society. Instead, they too had a 'moral economy'.

Theories Of Social Movements

- According to the theory of relative deprivation, social conflict arises when a social group feels that it is worse off than others around it. Such conflict is likely to result in successful collective protest.
 - This theory emphasises the role of psychological factors such as resentment and rage in inciting social movements.
 - The limitations of this theory are that while perceptions of deprivation may be a necessary condition for collective action, they are not a sufficient reason in themselves.
- Mancur Olson's book *The Logic of Collective Action* argues that a social movement is an aggregation of rational individual actors pursuing their self-interest.
 - A person will join a social movement only if s/he will gain something from it. S/he will participate only if the risks are less than the gains.
 - Olson's theory is based on the notion of the rational, utility-maximising individual.
- McCarthy and Zald's proposed resource mobilisation theory rejected Olson's assumption that social movements are made up of individuals pursuing their self-interest.
 - Instead, they argued that a social movement's success depends on its ability to mobilise resources or means of different sorts.

- If a movement can muster resources such as leadership, organisational capacity, and communication facilities, and can use them within the available political opportunity structure, it is more likely to be effective.
- It can create resources such as new symbols and identities. As numerous poor people's movements show, scarcity of resources need not be a constraint.

Types Of Social Movements

One Way Of Classifying: Reformist, Redemptive, Revolutionary

- There are different kinds of social movements. They can be classified as: (i) redemptive or transformatory; (ii) reformist; and (iii) revolutionary.
- A redemptive social movement aims to bring about a change in the personal consciousness and actions of its individual members. For instance, people in the Ezhava community in Kerala were led by Narayana Guru to change their social practices.
- Reformist social movements strive to change the existing social and political arrangements through gradual, incremental steps.
 - The 1960s movement for the reorganisation of Indian states on the basis of language and the recent Right to Information campaign are examples of reformist movements.
- Revolutionary social movements attempt to radically transform social relations, often by capturing state power.
 - The Bolshevik revolution in Russia that deposed the Tsar to create a communist state and the Naxalite movement in India that seeks to remove oppressive landlords and state officials can be described as revolutionary movements.

Interpretation of Social Movement

- It differs from one section to another.
- For instance, what was a 'mutiny' or 'rebellion' for British colonial rulers in 1857 was 'the first war of Independence' for Indian nationalists.
- A mutiny is an act of defiance against supposedly legitimate authority, i.e., the British rule.
- A struggle for independence is a challenge to the very legitimacy of British rule.
- This shows how people attach different meanings to social movements.

Another Way Of Classifying: Old And New

- Most of the twentieth century social movements were class based such as working class movements and peasant movements or anti-colonial movements.

- While anti-colonial movements united entire people into national liberation struggles, class-based movements united classes to fight for their rights.
- The most far-reaching social movements of the last century thus have been class-based or based on national liberation struggles.
- Besides bringing about the formation of communist and socialist states across the world, most notably in the Soviet Union, China, and Cuba, these movements also led to the reform of capitalism.
- The creation of welfare states that protected workers' rights and offered universal education, health care and social security in the capitalist nations of Western Europe was partly due to political pressure created by the communist and socialist movements.
- The movement against colonialism has been as influential as the movement against capitalism. Since capitalism and colonialism have usually been interlinked through forms of imperialism, social movements have simultaneously targeted both these forms of exploitation.
- That is, nationalist movements have mobilised against rule by a foreign power as well as against the dominance of foreign capital.
- The decades after the Second World War witnessed the end of empire and the formation of new nation-states as a result of nationalist movements in India, Egypt, Indonesia, and many other countries.
- Since then, another wave of social movements occurred in the 1960s and early 1970s.
- This was the time of the war in Vietnam where forces led by the United States of America were involved in a bloody conflict in the former French colony against Communist guerrillas.
- In Europe, Paris was the nucleus of a vibrant students' movement that joined workers' parties in a series of strikes protesting against the war.
- Across the Atlantic, the United States of America was experiencing a surge of social protest.
- The civil rights movement led by Martin Luther King had been followed by the Black Power movement led by Malcolm X.
- The anti-war movement was joined by tens of thousands of students who were being compulsorily drafted by the government to go and fight in Vietnam.
- The women's movement and the environmental movement also gained strength during this time of social ferment.
- It was difficult to classify the members of these so-called 'new social movements' as belonging to the same class or even nation.

Distinguishing The New Social Movement From The Old Social Movements

I. Different historical context

- That was a period when nationalist movements were overthrowing colonial powers.
- The working class movements in the capitalist west were wresting better wages, better living conditions, social security, free schooling and health security from the state.
- That was also a period when socialist movements were establishing new kinds of states and societies.
- The old social movements clearly saw reorganisation of power relations as a central goal.

II. Framing of political parties

- The old social movements functioned within the frame of political parties. The Indian National Congress led the Indian National Movement. The Communist Party of China led the Chinese Revolution.
- So the 'new' social movements were not about changing the distribution of power in society but about quality-of-life issues such as having a clean environment.

III. Role of political parties

- In the old social movements, the role of political parties was central.
- People left out by the formal political system join social movements or non-party political formations in order to put pressure on the state from outside.
- Today, the broader term of civil society is used to refer to both old social movements represented by political parties and trade unions and to new nongovernmental organisations, women's groups, environmental groups and tribal activists.

IV. Scope of movement

- The various dimensions of social change in India you would have been struck by the fact that globalisation has been re-shaping peoples' lives in industry and agriculture, culture and media.
- Often legal arrangements that are binding are international such as the regulations of the World Trade Organisation (WTO).
- Environmental and health risks, fears of nuclear warfare are global in nature. Not surprisingly therefore many of the new social movements are international in scope.

India's Case

- India has experienced a whole array of social movements involving women, peasants, Dalits, Adivasis, and others.
- Peasant movements have mobilised for better prices for their produce and protested against the removal of agricultural subsidies.
- Dalit labourers have acted collectively to ensure that they are not exploited by upper-caste landowners and moneylenders.
- The women's movement has worked on issues of gender discrimination in diverse spheres like the workplace and within the family.
- At the same time, these new social movements are not just about 'old' issues of economic inequality.
- Nor are they organised along class lines alone. Identity politics, cultural anxieties and aspirations are essential elements in creating social movements and occur in ways that are difficult to trace to class-based inequality.
- For instance, the women's movement includes urban, middle-class feminists as well as poor peasant women.
- The regional movements for separate statehood bring together different groups of people who do not share homogeneous class identities.
- In a social movement, questions of social inequality can occur alongside other, equally important, issues.

Ecological Movements

- Over the decades there has been a great deal of concern about the unchecked use of natural resources and a model of development that creates new needs that further demands greater exploitation of the already depleted natural resources.
- This model of development has also been critiqued for assuming that all sections of people will be beneficiaries of development.
- The impact of industrial pollution is yet another story.
- The Chipko Movement, an example of the ecological movement, in the Himalayan foothills is a good example of such intermingled interests and ideologies.
- According to Ramachandra Guha in his book, *Unquiet Woods*, villagers rallied together to save the oak and rhododendron forests near their villages.
- When government forest contractors came to cut down the trees, villagers, including large number

of women, stepped forward to hug the trees to prevent their being felled.

- All of them relied on the forest to get firewood, fodder and other daily necessities.
- This conflict placed the livelihood needs of poor villagers against the government's desire to generate revenues from selling timber.
- The economy of subsistence was pitted against the economy of profit.
- Along with this issue of social inequality (villagers versus a government that represented commercial, capitalist interests), the Chipko Movement also raised the issue of ecological sustainability.
- Cutting down natural forests was a form of environmental destruction that had resulted in devastating floods and landslides in the region.
- For the villagers, these 'red' and 'green' issues were interlinked. While their survival depended on the survival of the forest, they also valued the forest for its own sake as a form of ecological wealth that benefits all.
- The Chipko Movement also expressed the resentment of hill villagers against a distant government headquartered in the plains that seemed indifferent and hostile to their concerns.
- So, concerns about economy, ecology and political representation underlay the Chipko Movement.
- Trees are necessary for the conservation of environment.
- Similarly, clean water is necessary for a healthy environment. In the light of this, the Government of India has recently, through the 'Integrated Ganga Conservation Mission' (Namami Gange) and Swachh Bharat Abhiyan imitated systematic efforts to create a balance, structure and quality in India's ecology.

Class Based Movements

Peasant Movements

- Peasant movements or agrarian struggles have taken place from pre-colonial days. The movements in the period between 1858 and 1914 tended to remain localised, disjointed and confined to particular grievances.
- Bengal revolt of 1859-62 against the indigo plantation system and the 'Deccan riots' of 1857 against moneylenders.
- Later on under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi it partially linked to the Independence movement.
- Bardoli Satyagraha (1928, Surat District) a 'non-tax' campaign as part of the nationwide non-cooperation movement, a campaign of refusal to

pay land revenue and the Champaran Satyagraha (1917-18) directed against indigo plantations.

- In the 1920s, protest movements against the forest policies of the British government and local rulers arose in certain regions.

Between 1920 and 1940 Peasant Organisations Arose

- The first organisation to be founded was the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha (1929) and in 1936 the All India Kisan Sabha.
- The peasants organised by the Sabhas demanded freedom from economic exploitation for peasants, workers and all other exploited classes.
- At the time of Independence we had the two most classical cases of peasant movements, namely the Tebhaga movement (1946-7) and the Telangana movement (1946-51).
- The first was a struggle of sharecroppers in Bengal in North Bihar for two thirds share of their produce instead of the customary half.
- It had the support of the Kisan Sabha and the Communist Party of India (CPI).
- The second, directed against the feudal conditions in the princely state of Hyderabad and was led by the CPI.
- Certain issues which had dominated colonial times changed after independence.
- For land reforms, zamindari abolition, declining importance of land revenue and public credit system began to alter rural areas.
- The period after 1947 was characterised by two major social movements.
- The Naxalite struggle and the 'new farmer's movements.' The Naxalite movement started from the region of Naxalbari (1967) in Bengal.

New social Movements among Peasants

- The so called 'new farmer's movements began in the 1970s in Punjab and Tamil Nadu.
- These movements were regionally organised, were non-party, and involved farmers rather than peasants (farmers are said to be market-involved as both commodity producers and purchasers).
- The basic ideology of the movement was strongly anti-state and anti-urban.
- The focus of demands were 'price and related issues' (for example price procurement, remunerative prices, prices for agricultural inputs, taxation, non-repayment of loans).
- Novel methods of agitation were used: blocking of roads and railways, refusing politicians' and bureaucrats' entry to villages, and so on.

- It has been argued that the farmers' movements have broadened their agenda and ideology and include environment and women's issues.
- Therefore, they can be seen as a part of the worldwide 'new social movements'.

Workers' Movements

- Factory production began in India in the early part of the 1860s.
- The general pattern of trade set up by the colonial regime was one under which raw materials were procured from India and goods manufactured in the United Kingdom were marketed in the colony.
- These factories were, thus established in the port towns of Calcutta (Kolkata) and Bombay (Mumbai).
- Later factories were also set up in Madras (Chennai). Tea plantations in Assam were established as early as in 1839.
- In the early stages of colonialism, labour was very cheap as the colonial government did not regulate either wages or working conditions.
- The trade unions emerged later, workers did protest. Their actions then were, however, more spontaneous than sustained.
- In September and October 1917 there were around 30 recorded strikes. Jute workers in Calcutta struck work.
- In Madras, the workers of Buchingham and Carnatic Mills (Binny's) struck work for increased wages. Textile workers in Ahmedabad struck work for increase in wages by 50 per cent (Bhowmick 2004).

Formation of Trade Unions

- The first trade union was established in April 1918 in Madras by B.P. Wadia, a social worker and member of the Theosophical Society.
- During the same year, Mahatma Gandhi founded the Textile Labour Association (TLA).
- In 1920 the All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) was formed in Bombay.
- The AITUC was a broad-based organisation involving diverse ideologies.
- The main ideological groups were the communists led by S.A. Dange and M.N. Roy, the moderates led by M. Joshi and V.V. Giri and the nationalist movements which involved people like Lala Lajpat Rai and Jawaharlal Nehru.
- The formation of the AITUC made the colonial government more cautious in dealing with labour.
- It attempted to grant workers some concessions in order to contain unrest. In 1922 the government passed the fourth Factories Act which reduced the working day to 10 hours.

- And in 1926, the Trade Unions Act was passed, which provided for registration of trade unions and proposed some regulations.
- By the mid-1920s, the AITUC had nearly 200 unions affiliated to it and its membership stood at around 250,000.
- During the last few years of British rule the communists gained considerable control over the AITUC.
- The Indian National Congress chose to form another union called the Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC) in May 1947.
- The split in the AITUC in 1947 paved the way for further splits on the line of political parties.

Caste Based Movements

The Dalit Movement

- The word Dalit is commonly used in Marathi, Hindi, Gujarati and many other Indian languages, meaning the poor and oppressed persons.
- It was first used in the new context in Marathi by neo-Buddhist activists, the followers of Babasaheb Ambedkar in the early 1970s.
- It refers to those who have been broken, ground down by those above them in a deliberate way.
- There has not been a single, unified Dalit movement in the country now or in the past.
- Notwithstanding differences in the nature of Dalit movements and the meaning of identity, there has been a common quest for equality, self-dignity and eradication of untouchability.
- This can be seen in the Satnami Movement of the Chamars in the Chattisgarh plains in eastern MP, Adi Dharma Movement in Punjab, the Mahar Movement in Maharashtra, the socio-political mobilisation among the Jatavas of Agra and the Anti-Brahman Movement in south India.
- Dalit literature is squarely opposed to the Chaturvarna system and caste hierarchy which it considers as responsible for crushing the creativity and very existence of lower castes.

Backward Class Castes Movements

- The term 'Backward Classes' has been in use in different parts of the country since the late 19th Century.
- It began to be used more widely in Madras presidency since 1872, in the princely state of Mysore since 1918, and in Bombay presidency since 1925.
- From the 1920s, a number of organisations united around the issue of caste sprang up in different parts of the country.

- These included the United Provinces Hindu Backward Classes League, All-India Backward Classes Federation, All India Backward Classes League.
- In 1954, 88 organisations were counted working for the Backward Classes.

The Tribal Movements

- Many of the tribal movements have been largely located in the so called 'tribal belt' in middle India, such as the Santhals, Hos, Oraons, Mundas in Chota Nagpur and the Santhal Parganas.

Jharkhand

- Jharkhand is one of the newly formed states of India, carved out of south Bihar in the year 2000.
- The social movement for Jharkhand had a charismatic leader in Birsa Munda, an adivasi who led a major uprising against the British. After his death, Birsa became an important icon of the movement.
- Stories and songs about him can be found all over Jharkhand.
- The memory of Birsa's struggle was also kept alive by writing.
- Christian missionaries working in south Bihar were responsible for spreading literacy in the area. Literate adivasis began to research and write about their history and myths.
- Literate adivasis were also in a position to get government jobs so that, over time, a middle-class adivasi intellectual leadership emerged that formulated the demand for a separate state and lobbied for it in India and abroad.
- Within south Bihar, adivasis shared a common hatred of dikus - migrant traders and moneylenders who had settled in the area and grabbed its wealth, impoverishing the original residents.
- The issues against which the leaders of the movement in Jharkand agitated were:
- acquisition of land for large irrigation projects and firing ranges;
- survey and settlement operations, which were held up, camps closed down, etc.
- collection of loans, rent and cooperative dues, which were resisted;
- nationalisation of forest produce which they boycotted

The North East

- The process of state formation initiated by the Indian government following the attainment of independence generated disquieting trends in all the major hill districts in the region.

- Conscious of their distinct identity and traditional autonomy the tribes were unsure of being incorporated within the administrative machinery of Assam.
- One of the key issues that bind tribal movements from different parts of the country is the alienation of tribals from forest lands.
- In this sense ecological issues are central to tribal movement

The Women's Movement

The 19th Century Social Reform Movements And Early Women's Organisation

- The Women's India Association (WIA) (1917), All India Women's Conference (AIWC) (1926) and National Council for Women in India (NCWI) (1925) are ready names of organisations that we can mention.
- For instance, the AIWC began with the idea that 'women's welfare' and 'politics' were mutually exclusive.
- Agrarian Struggles And Revolts: Women participated along with men in struggles and revolts originating in tribal and rural areas in the colonial period. The Tebhaga movement in Bengal, the Telangana arms struggle from the erstwhile Nizam's rule, and the Warli tribal's revolt against bondage in Maharashtra are some examples.

- Post-1947: In the mid-1970s, there was a renewal of the women's movement in India. Some call it the second phase of the Indian women's movement. There was the growth of what is termed as the autonomous women's movements. The term 'autonomy' referred to the fact that they were 'autonomous' or independent from political parties as distinct from those women's organisations that had links with political parties.
- Gender identities: There has also been greater recognition that both men and women are constrained by the dominant gender identities.
- For instance, men in patriarchal societies feel they must be strong and successful. It is not, manly, to express oneself emotionally.
- A gender-just society would allow both men and women to be free.
- This of course rests on the idea that for true freedom to grow and develop, injustices of all kind have to end.
- The idea of gender-just society is based upon two important factors - educated women with multiple roles and improved sex ratio.
- The programme of the Government of India, Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao Yojana is an important effort in the actualisation of a gender-just society.

Exercise

1. **Assertion (A):** A social movement requires sustained collective action over time.
Reason (R): Spontaneous, disorganised protest cannot be called a social movement either.
(a) Both A and R is true and R is the correct explanation of A
(b) Both A and R is true and R is not the correct explanation of A
(c) A is true and R is false
(d) A is false and R is true
2. To change the existing social and political arrangements through gradual, incremental steps, is the following type of social movement -
(a) Redemptive
(b) Revivalist
(c) Reformist
(d) Revolutionary
3. The Bolshevik revolution in Russia that deposed the Tsar to create a communist state and the Naxalite movement in India that seeks to remove oppressive landlords and state officials, is the following type of social movement-
(a) Redemptive
(b) Revivalist
(c) Reformist
(d) Revolutionary
4. What was the reason behind Chipko Movement?
(a) To save the oak and rhododendron forests near the villages.
(b) To save ecology from road construction in ecological fragile area.
(c) To save environment from deforestation for industrial purpose.
(d) None of the above

5. Which of the following government's initiative seeks to create a balance, structure and quality in India's ecology?
 - (a) Namami Gange
 - (b) Swachchh Bharat Abhiyan
 - (c) Both (a) and (b)
 - (d) PM Urja Ganga Yojana
6. Which of the following statements are correct about Bardoli Satyagraha?
 - I. It was a no tax campaign.
 - II. It was part of nationwide non-cooperation movement.
 - III. Farmers refused to pay land revenue to the British revenue collector.
 - (a) I and II
 - (b) II and III
 - (c) I and III
 - (d) All of the above
7. Which of the following was the first peasant organization?
 - (a) All India Kisan Sabha
 - (b) Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha
 - (c) UP Provincial Kisan Sabha
 - (d) All India Peasant Organization
8. Choose the incorrect statement:
 - (a) Peasant organizations demanded freedom from economic exploitation.
 - (b) Telangana Movement was a struggle of sharecroppers in Bengal.
 - (c) Tebhaga Movement was supported by Kisan Sabha and the Communist Party of India (CPI).
 - (d) In 1920, protests against British government took place due to their forest policies.
9. Which of the following movement directed against the feudal conditions in the princely state of Hyderabad and was led by the CPI?
 - (a) Deccan riots
 - (b) Tebhaga Movement
 - (c) Telangana Movement
 - (d) Champaran Satyagrah
10. Which of the following are features of New Farmer's Movement after independence?
 - I. These were regionally organised, non-party and involved farmers rather than peasants.
 - II. The basic ideology of the movement was strongly anti-state and anti-urban.
 - III. The focus of demands were 'price and related issues'.
 - (a) I and II
 - (b) II and III
 - (c) I and III
 - (d) All of the above
11. Which of the following personality organized the first trade union?
 - (a) B P Wadia
 - (b) S N Dange
 - (c) M N Roy
 - (d) V V Giri
12. "A struggle to be touched" was a struggle known as -
 - (a) Anti- Untouchability movement
 - (b) Dalit movement
 - (c) Land revenue agitation
 - (d) Farmer's agitation
13. Which of the following are Dalit movements?
 - I. Satnami movement
 - II. Adi Dharma movement
 - III. Jatavas movement
 - (a) I only
 - (b) II and III
 - (c) I and II
 - (d) All of the above
14. Spread of literacy in South Bihar was seen due to following reason?
 - (a) Due to introduction of western education
 - (b) Christian missionary
 - (c) Introduction of civil services
 - (d) All of the above
15. Which of the following were the issues of agitation in Jharkhand?
 - I. Acquisition of land for large irrigation projects and firing ranges
 - II. Survey and settlement operations
 - III. Collection of loans, rent and cooperative dues
 - IV. Nationalisation of forest produce
 - (a) I, II and III
 - (b) II, III and IV
 - (c) III and IV
 - (d) All of the above
16. Arrange the following women's organization in the correct chronological order:
 - I. All India Women's Conference
 - II. National Council for Women in India
 - III. Women's India Association
 - (a) III - II - I
 - (b) I - II - III
 - (c) II - I - III
 - (d) I - III - II
17. The key issue which bind tribal movements from different parts of the country was -
 - (a) Lack of education and modernization
 - (b) Discrimination on the basis of race
 - (c) Alienation of tribals from forest lands.
 - (d) Atrocities of land lords for the land revenue