

Social Movements In India: Meaning and Features

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ABSTRACT

There is no doubt in denying the fact that in the wake of global era, we find the society conflict ridden and full of asymmetry, due to which conflict between different classes is an inevitable phenomenon. It has led to the frustration and feeling of dissatisfaction among different classes of the society. In order to fulfil their desired aims and motives, they adopt the way some social revolutions. They find that their interests are supposed to be satisfied only by these means. Various scholars have propounded different theories with the passage of time which are applicable on different situations. The significant point remains their loyalty and sincerity which play a vital role in shaping their identity.

1. Introduction

Without any shadow of doubts, the concept of a social movement is generally related to a mass movement as well as to the collective efforts of people who intend to change something, or to resist any change. The key concept pertaining to any social movement is that people interfere in the process of social change, rather than to be only spectators or passive participants in the flow of life. There is no doubt that people want to play a significant role by being proactive actors as they want to change the history. In order to fulfil their aims with some changes they want to bring in where they are living, and this is done by them by becoming a part and parcel of collective action taking place. The other thing is that people consciously act together with a sense of engagement in a common enterprise.

It is an established fact that social movements possess a considerable measure of internal order as well as of purposeful orientation. The movements are provided strength and impetus to challenge the established institutions by the organizations. No doubt, a social movement can be described more or less as a persistent and organized effort on the part of a relatively large group of people to bring about or resist change. For a collective action, the number of people taking part is not the criteria for describing any movement.

In order to execute the plan, the thing that is required the most is the need of a good leader who can sustain the movement. On the basis of it, social movements can be differentiated from the pressure groups as well as from institutional movements. In comparison to the social movements, one finds the institutional groups more organized, permanent and mainly occupation based. For this, the social movements should be spontaneous and need not to be based on some particular issues.

If we go through historical perspectives, we can find the root cause of social movements that these movements are carried to establish a new order of life. The main reason behind it is that they suffer from unrest, and derive their motive power on one hand from dissatisfaction with the current form of life, and on the other hand, they also wish and hope for a new set-up or system of living. Mass movements are carried out to mobilize people who are alienated from the going system, who have no faith and believe in the integrity of the established

order are who are ready to engage in efforts to destroy it. The greatest number of people available to mass movement will be found in those sections of society that have the fewest ties to social order.

In other words, social movements are those organized efforts on the part of excluded groups to promote or resist changes in the structures of society that involve recourse to non-institutional forms of political participation. Social movements are better defined as collective challenges which are applied for and are based on common purposes as well as special solidarities in sustained interaction with elites, opponents and authorities, rather than seeing social movements as the expressions of extremism, violence and deprivation.

In this way, in the modern era and industrialized society, these social revolutions are generally seen as the common phenomenon whether located in the first world or not. It is by means of technological advancements, urbanization, industrialization as well as ongoing democratization which have allowed people to push for some changes to carry out collectively.

So, it can be alleged that a movement is not only a representation of crowd as a crowd does not have organizational and motivational mechanism that is capable of sustaining membership through periods of inaction and waiting. On the other hand, a crowd cannot be used to get communication and coordination of activity over a stretch area like a nation or continent.

Social movements are a very recurrent feature in the modern period as well as industrialized society. There are five important factors that play a dominant role in social movements which comprise of that any social movement involves a group or collectivity having different units, parts on the basis of personal, ideological or structural ties. In Any social movement, the individuals are committed to particular causes where their pre-existing, significant social relationships to convince others to be a part and parcel of the social movements. For the success of any movement, commitment is the key factor including a separation in a significant way from the established order. New set of values as well as the emergence of changed patterns of behaviour in individuals is because of the efforts of others or one's own experience. The result of the emergence of an ideology having some codified values and goals, provides

the conceptual framework by which the goals may be interpreted.

The main reason behind the social movement is the emergence of an issue or a set of issues that affects the ideology of masses. Slowly and gradually, these issues start gaining importance and result by the participation of people with their collective efforts. Collective efforts can be differentiated from social movements on the basis of certain features. If we go through collective actions like revolts, revolution and riots, then we find some violent group outbursts. We have some collective actions unstructured like crowd and riots which are generally transitory, on the other hand, rebellion and movements are rather more structured.

2. Features of Social Movement

1. Social movements aim at creating the new social, political and economic order.
2. Most of the social movements are carried out to develop a new set of ideas.
3. There is no doubt that social movements involve collective action instead of the efforts of an individual.
4. For the success of a social movement, the sense of belongingness as well as group consciousness is a significant factor. It is inculcated through the active participation of the members.
5. Social movements may be organised or unorganized.
6. We can witness both the traits peaceful as well as violent in case of social movements.
7. The main focus of a social movement is to bring about or resist social changes in the society.
8. The tenure of a social movement is not certain. It is mainly because it may continue for a long time or it may die out soon.

3. Cause of Social Movements

Among the most prominent cause of different social movements can be included the social drift among the which is resulted from the constant change taking place in the society, particularly in the civilized societies, one finds change of behavior and values which results in cultural drift due to which there is formation of new ideas taking the shape of a social movement. Among the major drifts based on culture can be included the spread of education, democratic set-up in the society, abolition of untouchability and equal opportunities between the sexes.

Because of some frequent changes taking place in the society, Disorganization can be seen among the various groups in the society as different parts do not take place simultaneously. One part changes more frequently than the other. Also the phenomenon of industrialization there is urbanization that has resulted a lot of problems. It leads to confusion and uncertainty due to which individuals are rootless and isolated due to which a feeling develops that community leaders are indifferent towards them which becomes the root cause of their frustration and ultimately of the social movements.

In case of any injustice, the members of a particular group feel frustrated and alienated which paves the way for social movements in the society. It is because the feeling of social injustice is not confined to only an individual, but even a group may feel itself the victim of social injustice. A social system is

unjust when it is witnessed by its members and that is why, the social movements take place because of such social situations. In a country where there is stability and practice of democratic values, the chances of social movements are reduced to bare minimum.

4. Theories of Social Movements:

There are various important theories that describe the rationale of the people involved in a joint action. Various scholars and critics have interpreted these theories as per their taste, temperament and angle of perception. According to one scholar, the roots of any social movement are to be found in social misery and economic deprivation. One says that the wide spread discontentment and oppression are the main reasons of social movements. It also stated that the conditions for living in a society are becoming intolerable which encourage the people to participate in social movements.

- Mass society theory: this theory was propounded by William Kornhauser which, according to him, is impersonal, industrialized, and bureaucratized. Those people who are the victims of social isolation, they generally join movements. Through movements, they want to gain that they are deprived from. These social movements help them in filling that vacuum which is created by the drift and they search their sense of belongingness.
- Deprivation Theory: This theory emphasis on those people who are deprived of certain rights which may be money, status, privileges or justice. They join social movements in the hope of fulfilling their grievances. In this theory, we find glimpses of Karl Marx's theory who explores that excessive capitalistic exploitation which results into improvement and betterment of the working class people and who are encouraged to overthrow the despotic regime of oppressors.
- Resource Mobilization Theory: The exponents this theory express that the forces that energies and activate a social movement should be known. For that, the factors such as the availability of resources for pursuing desired goals and system of interpersonal relationship are generally preferred, and these resources are considered necessary for the success of any social movement. Among the most viable resources, money, infrastructure, communication facilities and human labour are worthy of detailed consideration.
- Structural Strain Theory: under the heading of this theory, the factors like structural conduciveness, structural strain, growth and spread of an idea, precipitating factors and lack of social control are included.
- New Social Movement Theory: The quality of life desired by people leads them to join any social movement as the economic factors do not contribute much more in this direction. Mobilization is national or international in scope. New social movements arise because of the response to the expansion of mass media and new information technology.

5. Conclusion:

In this way, after going through different aspects of social movements, we can safely and rightly conclude the fact that most of the movements are carried out because of certain aims, frustrations, disappointments and conflicts going on

between one group and other, between one class and other as well as the idea of betterment in the minds of individuals and society.

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