

SOCIAL MOVEMENT AND POLITICAL CHANGE

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Introduction

A social movement is a mass movement and a collective attempt of people to bring about a change, or to resist any change. The concept central to any social movement is that people intervene in the process of social change, rather than remaining mere spectators or passive participants in the ebb and flow of life. Social movements possess a considerable measure of internal order and purposeful orientation. It is, in fact, this organization that strengthens the movement to challenge the established institutions. 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. However, the number of persons participating is not the criteria for describing any movement as a collective action.

The movement must have a leader to guide and execute the plan of action and possess the power to sustain the movement. Social movements, however, are different from pressure groups or institutional movements. Institutional movements are highly organized, permanent, and primarily occupation-based. The movement must have a leader to guide and execute the plan of action and possess the power to sustain the movement. Social movements, however, are different from pressure groups or institutional movements. Institutional movements are highly organized, permanent, and primarily occupation-based.

Definition

A social movement is a type of group action. There is no single consensus definition of a social movement. They are large, sometimes informal, groupings of individual or organisation which focus on specific political or social issues. According to Herbert Blumer "Social movements can be viewed as collective enterprises to establish a new order of life. They have their inception in the condition of unrest, and derive their motive power on one hand from dissatisfaction with the current form of life, and on the other hand, from wishes

and hopes for a new scheme or system of living.” Dough Mcdam defined social movements as those organized efforts, on the part of excluded groups, to promote or resist changes in the structure of society that involve recourse to non-institutional forms of political participation. According to Sidney Tarrow, Rather than seeing social movements as expressions of extremism, violence, and deprivation, they are better defined as collective challenges, based on common purposes and special solidarities, in sustained interaction with elites, opponents, and authorities.

Features and Causes of Social Movement

Features:

- The sense of belonging and group consciousness is very important for a social movement. Such consciousness can be brought about through active participation of the group members.
- Social movements lead to the creation of an entirely new social, economic, and political order.
- Most of the social movements tend to develop a new set of ideas, which become obligatory for the members of the group to adopt and follow.
- It is obvious that the social movements involve collective action rather than individual action.
- Social movements may be organized or unorganized.
- Social movements may be peaceful in nature or they may also turn violent.
- The aim of a social movement is to bring about or resist social change in the society.
- The life of the social movement is not certain. This is because it may continue for a long period or it may die out soon.

Causes:

According to Vidya Bhushan, social movements do not just happen. It is social unrest which gives rise to a social movement. The social unrest may be caused by the following factors:

➤ **Cultural Drifts:**

The society undergoes constant changes. The values and behaviour are changing all the time in civilized societies. In the course of cultural drift, most people develop new ideas. To get these ideas operative in the society they organize a movement. The development of a democratic society, the emancipation of women, the spread of mass education, the removal of

untouchability, the equality of opportunity for both the sexes, and the growth of secularism are some examples of cultural drift.

➤ **Social Disorganization:**

A changing society is, to some extent, disorganized because changes in different parts of the society do not take place simultaneously. One part changes more rapidly than the other, thereby producing numerous lags. Industrialization has brought about urbanization which in turn has caused numerous social problems. Social disorganization brings confusion and uncertainty, because the old traditions no longer form a dependable guide to behaviour, and individuals become rootless. They feel isolated from society. A feeling develops that the community leaders are indifferent to their needs. Individuals feel insecure, confused, and frustrated. Confusion and frustration lead to social movements.

• **Social Injustice:**

When a group of people feel that injustice was done to them, they become frustrated and alienated. Such feeling of injustice provides fertile soil for social movements. The feeling of social injustice is not limited to the miserable poor. Any group, at any status level, may come to feel itself the victim of social injustice. The wealthy class may feel a sense of injustice when faced with urban property ceiling law—or high taxes—intended to benefit the poor. Social injustice is a subjective value judgment. A social system is unjust when it is so perceived by its members. Thus, social movements occur whenever such kind of social situation arises. In a stable and well-integrated society, the chances for social movements are very rare. It is understood that people living in such a society are contented and satisfied. In a disorganized and continuously changing society, social movements occur more frequently, as most people are dissatisfied with the existing conditions. Lack of social justice also makes people dissatisfied and paves the way for social movements. Modern society is more afflicted with social movements than the earlier societies.

Social Movements Influences Politics

Much of the scholarship on social movements rests on the assumption that they have the ability to cause at least some degree of political change. Yet, while this is a view shared by most political sociologists, many political scientists disagree. Indeed, the conventional view in the political science literature is that social movements have little influence on processes of political change. But there is another school of scholars, like Marco Giugni. According to Marco Giugni for example, social movements can exert, at best, a moderate influence on

public policy change. This argument is based on his study of the policy outcomes of the peace, ecology, and antinuclear movements in the United States between 1977 and 1995, in which he finds that movements only impact policy when they are supported by political elites and public opinion. Other scholars, however, argue that social movements are important forces behind processes of social and political change. Frank Baumgartner and Christine Mahoney, for example, claim that social movements have had enormous impacts on American politics, prompting changes in health care and environmental policies, among a host of other issues.

Political Changes of Social Movements

The political outcomes of social movements can be divided into two broad categories: direct outcomes, such as a movement-generated change in public policy, and indirect outcomes, such as changes in public opinion on a specific issue. Within these broad categories, scholars have developed more specific outcome typologies, focused primarily on policy outcomes. William Gamson's *The Strategy of Social Protest*, published in 1975, was the first study to examine the political outcomes of social movement. In his landmark study, Gamson examined 53 social movements, which he called challenging groups, in the United States between 1800 and 1945 and measured how successful each was at achieving its goals. Gamson's study showed that social movements caused at some form of political change almost half of the time.

Substantive Political Change

This is the ability of a social movement to place issues on the political agenda or influence their relevance through disruptive protest, social movements can draw the attention of policymakers to issues that were previously ignored. In their study of movements across five different issue areas in the United States, for example, Baumgartner and Mahoney find that the number of social movement organizations dedicated to a particular issue was correlated significantly with the number of congressional hearings on that issue. A movement is said to have impacted policy if it caused policymakers to adopt legislation related to its goals. Many scholars argue that movements are able to exert at least some influence on public policy. However, while some argue that social movements have a direct effect on the policymaking process, others claim that movements only have an indirect effect.

Institutional Political Change

While there is substantial scholarship on the policy and agenda setting impacts of social movements, less work has been done on their institutional outcomes. However, there is consensus that this form of political change is an important one and must be taken into account in studies of the political outcomes of social movements.

Procedural Change

Procedural change refers to a change in the relationship between a social movement and a political sub-institution, such as a political party. Some of the examples are formation of Asom Gana Parishad, DMK, AIADMK and AAP. This is the simplest form of institutional change. Although procedural change can lay the foundations for more substantial institutional change in the future.

Intra-Institutional Change

Intra-institutional change occurs when a movement alters the internal structure of a political sub-institution. This type of change is “the integration of challenging group leaders or members in positions of status or authority in the antagonist’s organizational structure.” While these outcomes are more difficult to achieve than procedural change, they are also more lasting due to the impact of path dependence. Examples of intra-institutional change include the founding of new political parties, and the extension of voting rights for previously excluded groups. For example, the American women’s movement, women’s groups were created a new political institution through an ongoing process of organizational innovation.

Non-Institutional Change

Social movements can induce forms of cultural change, or have implications for the life-course of movement participants changes, these are usually not considered to be forms of political change. Kolb, for example, explicitly excludes non-institutional change from his typology of political outcomes, arguing that changes in the political attitudes of movement participants, for example, do not constitute a political outcome.

Changes in Political Consciousness

When citizens begin to assert their rights and demand changes to the status quo, there develops “a new sense of efficacy; people who ordinarily consider themselves helpless come to believe that they have some capacity to alter their lot.”

Changes in Public Opinions

Social movements can have a powerful influence in public opinions. If a movement achieves policy gains, this achievement can “nurture new hopes and expectations” among movement participants and the citizen at large. In the case of the pay equity movement, enhanced “rights consciousness” was experienced both by movement participants and society more generally. The increased capacity and willingness to demand rights at work was experienced both by movement participants and other citizens who had witnessed the movement.

Examples of Social Movements that Influence Politics

- Some early growth of social movements was connected to broad economic and political changes in England in the mid-18th century, political representation, market capitalisation, and proletarianization.
- The first mass social movement catalysed around the controversial political John Wilkes, editor of the paper *The North Briton*, Wilkes vigorously attacked the new administration Lord Bute the peace terms that the new government accepted at the 1763 Treaty of Paris at the end of the seven year’s war. Charged seditious libel. Wilkes was arrested after the issue of a general warrant, a move that Wilkes denounced as unlawful - the lord justice eventually ruled in Wilkes favour. As a result of this, Wilkes became a figurehead to the growing movement for popular sovereignty among the middle classes - people began chanting "Wilkes and Liberty" in the streets.
- After a later period of exile brought about by further charges of libel obscenity Wilkes stood for the Parliamentary seat at Middlesex, where most of his support was located. When Wilkes was imprisoned in the king’s bench prison on 10 May 1768, a mass movement of support emerged, with large demonstrations in the streets under the slogan "No liberty, no King."
- Stripped of the right to sit in Parliament, Wilkes became an Alderman of London in 1769, and an activist group called the *Society for the Supporters of the Bill of Rights* began aggressively promoting his policies. This was the first ever sustained social movement: it involved public meetings, demonstrations, the distribution of pamphlets on an unprecedented scale and the mass petition march. However, the movement was careful not to cross the line into open rebellion; - it tried to rectify the faults in governance through appeals to existing legal precedents and was conceived of as an extra-

Parliamentary form of agitation to arrive at a consensual and constitutional arrangement. The force and influence of this social movement on the streets of London compelled the authorities to concede to the movement's demands. Wilkes was returned to Parliament, general warrants were declared as unconstitutional and press freedom was extended to the coverage parliamentary debates.

- Other social movements that emerged in the late 18th century included the British abolitionist movement against slavery (becoming one between the sugar boycott of 1791 and the second great petition drive of 1806), and possibly the upheaval surrounding the French and American Revolutions.
- From 1815, Britain after victory in the Napoleonic Wars entered a period of social upheaval characterised by the growing maturity of the use of social movements and special-interest associations.
- Chartism was the first mass movement of the growing working-class in the world. It campaigned for political reform between 1838 and 1848 with the People's Charter of 1838 as its manifesto – this called for universal suffrage and the implementation of the secret ballot, amongst other things.
- The labour movement and socialist movement of the late 19th century are seen as the prototypical social movements, leading to the formation of communist and social and democratic organisations. These tendencies were seen in poorer countries as pressure for reform continued, for example in Russia with the Russian Revolution 1905 and of 1907, resulting in the collapse of the Czarist regime around the end of the First World War.
- In 1945, Britain after victory in the Second World War entered a period of radical reform and change. In the post-war period, Feminism, Gay rights movement, peace movement, civil right movement, and environmental movement often dubbed the new social movements. They led, among other things, to the formation of green parties and organisations influenced by the new left.
- Peasant movement in India-The economic policies of British adversely affected the Indian peasants the British Govt. used to protect the landlords and money lenders. They exploited the peasants. The peasants rose in revolt against this injustice on many occasions .The peasants in Bengal formed their union and revolted against the compulsion of cultivating indigo.

- Narmada Bachao Andolan (NBA) is an Indian social movement spearheaded by native tribal (Adivasi), farmers, environmentalists and human rights activists against a number of large dam projects across river Narmada, which flows through the states of Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra. The court ruled for Andolan, affecting an immediate stoppage of work at the dam and directing the concerned states to complete the rehabilitation and replacement process
- Jan Lokpal Bill – Anti Corruption Movement by Anna Hazare, 2011 - The entire nation came together and stayed by him when anti-corruption activist Anna Hazare launched a hunger strike in New Delhi, Jantar Mantar, on 5 April 2011. The Movement resulted in the resignation from the group of ministers responsible for reviewing the draft Jan Lokpal Bill of Minister of Agriculture Sharad Pawar. It was also one of these extraordinary incidents that showed what is possible when the biggest democracy in the world wakes up and takes power.

Conclusion

Social movement is a mass movement, and collective effort to bring change in the society. It has many features like it has a leader, and collective effort, it led creation of entirely different social, Political and economic order. There could be many reasons for social movement like social injustice, social disorganisation etc. Social movement causes political change. Social movements are different from pressure group. Many scholars believe that social movements bring little change in Political decision while there are others who believe that social movements are great force behind Political decision, Political decisions are greatly affected by social movements. The outcome can be direct like policy making or indirect like change in Political consciousness or change in public view. They try to gain support and sympathy for their goal. They organise strike or disrupting government. Many political parties grow out of social movements like Green Parties, AAM Aadami Party and many others.

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