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Social Movements in India: Towards a Sociological Understanding

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ABSTRACT: The Indian society is encompassed by caste, race, religion, languages, regions etc. and these have been highly stratified. There are profoundly ingrained social and economic disparities. Despite seven decades of democracy, norms are still rigid with respect to inter-group ties, marriage, religious and ritual observance. India's past is loaded with social movements set in motion against institutional and cultural obstacles that stopped persons going in the direction they wanted. Democratic movements aim to create a social system of equal standing in general. However, counter-social movements are also present, which oppose these attempts and do whatever possible to retain the status quo. Social movements have an advanced agenda, with the aim of reforming political and social structures. The social movement initiatives are focused on the goal of restoring society. A social movement may be described as a concerted effort to change certain social ties that are formed. Movement is never an ongoing trend because it is aimed towards those very specific intolerable aspects of the activity of society under the control of a large section of the population.

KEYWORDS: social movement, India, society, democracy, agenda, trend, population, section

I. INTRODUCTION

A social movement is a mass movement and a concerted effort by people to promote change or to fight change. The central principle of all social movements is that people participate not only as observers or passive participants in the ebb and flow of life but in the process of social change.¹ By changing the direction of history people seek to become constructive players. They initiate or become part of collective action in order to achieve their goal of making a difference to the world they live in. Individuals behave in a collective enterprise knowingly with a sense of responsibility. Social movements have a large degree of internal order and purposive orientation. It is actually this organization which strengthens the movement against the institutions created. A social movement can be more or less characterized by a fairly large group of people as a continuous and concerted attempt to bring change about or to oppose it. Nevertheless, the number of people involved does not constitute a concerted effort in any campaign. The campaign must be led and executed by a leader and have the power to help the campaign. Nevertheless, social movements vary from trends or structural movements.² Highly organized, permanent and predominantly industrial organizations are movements. Spontaneous social movements do not have to be limited to problems. Social movements are generally known as new *phénomènes* and capitalist economies, whether or not situated in the "initial" nation. Industrialization and economic growth, developments in technology and continuous democracy have made it possible to collectively advocate for reform, challenging the authority of the present order. Social movements can be characterized by the common purpose of social challenges. This is a single organization that supports or opposes a transition in culture with some consistency. It consists of an infinite and evolving party of members³. Usually, the leadership of these movements is decided not by structured processes that legitimize the authority but by informal responses from participants. Many social movements occurring in India are as follows:-

II. DISCUSSION

Swadeshi Movement, 1905

The revolution that started in India's struggle for liberty centred on throwing the British Empire out of control by becoming self-sufficient Swadesh. There were many Indians joining the campaign and boycotting foreign products.



Both their imported clothes have been burned, British items boycotted and domestic goods are regenerated. This motivated people to speak against their authority and the courage to share their opinions.⁴

Satyagraha

Satyagraha was one of Indian history's most noted campaigns that peacefully brought together thousands of people. Mahatma Gandhi started the Non-Violence Movement to return the British to their country and free India from foreign rule.⁵

Chipko Movement, 1973

The Chipko movement and the Chipko Andolan, on the basis of the Gandhian ideals, saw people fighting against deforestation by embracing trees to avoid their cutting. The agitation started at the beginning of the 70s, led by Chandni Prasad Bhatt and Sunderlal Bahuguna, as a group of women contended against the tree-slicing. Their acts are spread like wildfire and the green movement has been joined by hundreds of thousands of people in India.⁶

Namantaran Andolan, 1978

The name of the Marathwada University of Aurangabad to Dr B. R. Ambedkar University was changed by the Dalit movement. This 16-year-old campaign succeeded in 1994 when Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar Marathwada University's name was accepted as a 'compromise.' There were many riots, including murders, molestation, burning houses and so on by the Dalits. The movement was subject to terrible consequences.⁷

Narmada Bachao Andolan, 1985

A large number of Adivasis, villages, environmental activists and human rights activists came together in this rally, to share their views of a great number of dams in comparison along the Narmada River. The movement included popular people and began hunger strikes to demonstrate support for this cause. The decision is pending, but the court originally ruled that the decision was in favour of Andolan and thus made an immediate halt to the work on the dam and ordered the States concerned to first complete the process of reconstruction and replacement. The court then allowed the building to continue.⁸

Anti- Mandal Agitation, 1990

Students from all over India started protesting on the 27% quota in government employment for Other Backward Classes in August 1990. VP Singh led the government to implement the recommendations made to the government in 1980 by the Mandal Commission. Although the protest began at Delhi University,²⁷ it has spread across the world to various educational institutions that have led to violent protests in many regions of the country. Students boycotted tests in many locations. This upheaval ended when on November 7, 1990, Singh withheld support for his Janata Dal Government from the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).⁹

Anti- Reservation Protest, 2006

It was a second major outcry against the system of reservations. In 2006, there were massive demonstrations at schools against the United Progressive Alliance government's legislative decision to introduce quotas for OBCs at both the public as well as private universities. The move was considered racist by students and doctors from the lowest castes. Counter-protests were organized in support of the OBC student groups' resolution.¹⁰



III. RESULTS

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 Province of Minister of Agriculture Sharad Pawar.²⁶ The program brings together many people and in many decades it has been a one-of-a-kind event. 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.¹¹

Nirbhaya Movement, 2012

One of the angry reactions from people who expressed very clearly that they have had enough was the Delhi Gang Rape 2012. After the incident, thousands of people protested around the country on the streets. The campaign has also generated a backlash in social media, where people have converted their opinion into a black dot and tens of thousands have signed a petition to condemn the incident. The central government and many states announced various measures to ensure the protection of women, taking account of the campaign.¹²

Jadavpur University Protest, 2014

On 16 September 2014, demonstrations of students at the administrative building requested an inquiry into the harassment of a female campus student. Students went on hunger strike, and a surge of demonstrations sparked amid police violence in the early hours of Sept. 17.²⁶ This ended with almost 100 students who declined to graduate in the call and the VC was burned. Demonstrations of unity with students started in India. In January 2015, the VC Abhijit Chakrabarti resigned from his post after four months of continuous agitation.¹³

FTII Agitation, 2015

Once Gajendra Chauhan was elected President of India's Film and Television Institute in June 2015, students regarded him as an issue, as Chauhan not only lacked the requisite qualifications but also had a hardliner on the right for 20 years.²⁵ Students went on an undetermined strike protesting the appointment by demonstrating in locations such as Delhi, which led to a confrontation between students and the police. In solidarity with the students of FTII, directors Anand Patwardhan and Diwakar Banerjee have also given their national awards. The students ended their demonstration after more than 150 days of agitation.¹⁴

JNU Protest, 2016

In demonstrations against the 2013 killing by Afzal Guru, a Kashmiri-secretary suspected of involvement in an assault on parliament 16 years ago, Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) erupted on 9 February 2016.²⁴ Many members of human rights thought they were faulty. There were fights between various groups of students during the demonstration. Four days after the incident, the Delhi Police arrested and booked for sedition JNU Union President Kahhiya Kumar. Two more students were later arrested, including Umar Khalid. Inquiry and action were taken at 21 students by the JNU authorities. They ranged from housekeeping to fines. The students went on an indefinite strike in retaliation. University acts were terminated by the Delhi High Court provided that students terminate the protest.¹⁵

Pro- Jallikattu Protests, Tamil Nadu 2017

The Supreme Court, after years of allegations of animal cruelty by PETA, banned the traditional bull-taming sport Jallikattu. The citizens of Tamil Nadu were not required to recognize the prohibition. Sport is the core of their cultural



identity, the protesters said. As the police attempted to evict demonstrators, the demonstration turned violent. About 2.00,000 people came out to demonstrate unity on the street near Chennai's Marina Beach.¹⁶

Jallikattu was legalized on January 23 by the Tamil Nadu government and passed a bill to amend the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960.²³

MeToo Movement

The #MeToo campaign in India expanded in 2018. Driven by a global movement against sexual harassment, women across the world opened up reports of male misconduct in power positions. In October she started filming the 2008 film "Horn Ok Please" with the actor Tanushree Dutta who accused actor Nana Patekar of sexual harassment.¹⁷

The following were a number of posts from other women sharing their experiences with the world. Female professionals called for disgraceful behaviour in the workplace, from performers, film producers to advertisement leading guns, authors, writers and politicians. There have been many kinds of allegations ranging from unwelcome attention in the workplace to sexual innuendos on the movie set.²² While some of these are still in the industry in the midst of the allegations, others managed to get the authorities clean jackets. Rumours that Patekar had a clean chit recently emerged. The 'Aashiq Banaya Aapne' actress, however, quashed the rumours. Nevertheless, Director Vikas Bahl, who was one of the leading charges, was released from all charges. Today, Reliance Entertainment's internal complaints committee set free the 'Queen' owner, accused by a Phantom film worker under the #MeToo campaign.

CAA, NRC Protest, 2019

The NRC is a registry of all Indian citizens required by 2003 amending of the Citizenship Act, of 1955 to be created. This seeks to register all legal residents of India in order to recognize and expel illegal migrants.²¹ This was introduced in 2013–2014 for the State of Assam. It will be introduced by the Government of India for the rest of the country in 2020. The protests against the Indian Citizenship Act (Amendment) that was passed on December 12, 2019, in the CAA and NRC in India and the national implementation of NRC are a series of protests. Protesters from all regions are worried that the forthcoming compilation of the Citizens' National Register could be used to bar Muslims from Indian citizenship. As of 12 January 2020, demonstrators continued to protest on the streets and several people wrote pictures condemning the act and the government.¹⁸

IV. CONCLUSION

Social movements contribute to the emergence of a radically new social, economic and political structure. The majority of social movements strive to create new ideas which are expected to be adopted and implemented by the leaders of the party. Social movements are clearly not an individual action, but collective action.²⁰ Across India, the post-independence movements of women, students, SCs, STs and peasants had a particular significance as they were deprived in the British Period of some fundamental rights and remained largely non-beneficiary of development gains. We had some hope for the upliftment of the Indian Constitution and subsequent legislative initiatives. Now they are motivated to suit the affluent sectors of Indian society.¹⁹

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