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Social Movements

SEMESTER IV

POLITICAL SCIENCE

BLOCK : 2

KRISHNA KANTA HANDIQUI STATE OPEN UNIVERSITY

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POLITICAL SCIENCE
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INTRODUCTION TO BLOCK 2

This is the second block of the first course titled "Social Movements" of the MA Fourth Semester Programme in Political Science. The block contains seven units- (Units 9- 15).

The unit nine deals with the nature and dynamics of new social movements. In this unit, discussions are made about meaning, nature, dynamics and impact of new social movements. Accordingly, the role of the peasant movements are discussed in the unit tenth. Here, meaning, nature, organization, origin and development of the peasant movement are also explained.

The eleventh unit deals with the origin and development, nature, kinds and significance of labour and trade union movements in India. In unit twelve, discussions are made on meaning and nature of various environmental movements in India namely- Narmada Bachao Andolon and Chipko movement. The significance of environmental movements in India are also discussed here.

The thirteenth unit highlights the concept of ethnicity, origin and developments of autonomy movements in Assam and factors responsible for the growth of autonomy movement in Assam including Karbi-Dimasa and Bodo movement. The fourteenth unit focusses on the issue of the meaning and nature of identity movement in Assam, origin and development of the Assam movement and its features and consequences.

The fifteenth unit deals with the emergence of women's movement in north east India, characteristics of women's movements in north east India and role of Meira Paibis and Naga Mothers' Association (NMA).

While going through the units of the block, you will find that the units are further divided into certain sections and sub-sections, wherever necessary, for your better understanding. Besides, in order to give you additional information on certain relevant topics, you will find a category called "LET US KNOW" after the sections in each unit. Another category that has been included at the end of each section of a particular unit is "CHECK YOUR PROGRESS". The purpose of this category is to help you to asses for yourself as to how thoroughly you have understood a particular section. You may then match your answers with "ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS" given at the end of each unit. The section "FURTHER READING" in each unit contains the names of a few books which you might want to consult if you are interested in learning more elaborately about the concepts discussed in a particular unit. Furthermore, the category called "POSSIBLE QUESTIONS" is intended to give you a hint of the type of questions you are likely to get in the examination.

UNIT 9: NEW SOCIAL MOVEMENT: NATURE AND DYNAMICS

UNIT STRUCTURE

9.1 Learning Objectives

9.2 Introduction

9.3 Meaning and Nature of New Social Movements

9.4 Dynamics of New Social Movements

9.5 Impact of New Social Movements

9.6 Let Us Sum Up

9.7 Further Reading

9.8 Answers to Check Your Progress

9.9 Possible Questions

9.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- know about the meaning and nature of new social movements
- explain the dynamics of new social movements
- discuss the impact of new social movements.

9.2 INTRODUCTION

A collective action or effort of a group of people can be regarded as social movement. However, there is a difference between old social movement and new social movement. As argued by Offe that new social movements are different from the old social movement because the new ones focus on the negative effects of bureaucratic capitalism, according to which the society has been left out to be a sufferer. Moreover, the old paradigm of collective action cannot address issues like feminism and environmentalism, as a result of which the social movement inherited an new nature. The main characteristics of new social movement include, social and cultural issues as the primary issues, quality of life as the prime focus, membership largely different in scope, incorporation of anti-

authoritarian multiple issues, both local and global, and the use of information and communication technology. The new social movement gradually started to bring about radical changes in the society and also in the political and economic domain especially since the end of the Second World War in 1945. These new type of social movements or the new social movements includes the gay rights movements, women's rights movements, civil rights movements, anti-nuclear and peace movements and environmental movements.

9.3 MEANING AND NATURE OF NEW SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

- **Meaning**

A social movement is basically a collective effort of individuals or group of people in order to bring up a new change in the society or to resist something in the society from changing. Social movements are deeply associated with social change. It is one of the important means through which people participate in the process of social change, rather than performing the role of mere spectators. Through social movements people become an essential part of the collective action carried out to reach certain desired goals. For this reason, social movements are also called the mass movements. It includes movements like Peasants Movements, Tribal Movements, Dalit Movements, Backward Caste/Class Movements, Women's Movements, Industrial Working Class Movements, Students' Movements, Middle Class Movements, and Human Rights and Environmental Movements.

If we briefly trace the early history of the idea of social movement we will find that the so called social movement initiative developed in the middle of 18th century England. Later on, in the late 18th century, other movements that emerged and received an worldwide attention was the French and American revolutions. Then, in late 19th century, the labour and socialist movements were witnessed by the world. Finally after the World War II that is by the year 1945, the new forms and patterns of social movements

which were different from the earlier social movements emerged. These new types of social movements or the new social movements include the gay rights movements, women's rights movements, civil rights movements, anti-nuclear and peace movements and environmental movements.

The old social movements functioned within the framework of the political parties. In other words, the political parties are the main torch bearer of those moments. For example, in India, the historical independence movement was led by the Indian National Congress which was in fact a political grouping. In China too, the Communist Party led the Chinese Revolution. Therefore, in this regard, the new social movements are not about changing the distribution of power in society but about quality of the issues associated with the lives of the people. The new social movements on the other hand are not concentrated or limited to the control or leadership of any political party rather the participation and structure has widened and the civil society has played a tremendous role acting as non-party entity who put pressure on the state from outside.

The new social movements are referred to as new because they are different from the earlier movements in terms of their goals, organization and sources of support. The old social changes deal with the changes in public policy whereas the new social movements mainly emphasize a change in the culture, identity and lifestyles. In the new social movements, the social aspect of the life of people is more emphasized rather than just the economic and political aspects. F. Parkin, one of the popular thinkers in the study of social movements elucidated that the key actors in the new social movements are also different. Here the new actors are the new middle class whereas it was the lower class which was mainly dominating the old social movements. Moreover, the new social movements and its members are disorganized and they gather support bases from different corners of the world. Lastly, the new social movements are those movements which incorporate a wide range of issues with their movements.

Therefore, the new social movements are neither just about the old problems of inequality in terms of the economic sphere alone nor they are

organized along class lines. Identity politics, cultural anxieties and aspirations are essential elements in creating social movements and occur in ways that are difficult to trace the class-based inequality. Often, these social movements unite participants across class boundaries. The women movements, for example include urban, middle-class feminists as well as poor peasants. The regional movements for separate statehood are also responsible for bringing together different groups of people who do not share homogeneous class identities.

- **Definitions**

According to *Habermas*, new social movements are resistance against the bureaucratization and monetarisation of both the public and private sphere of life. The issues which form an important part of the new social movement include issues like participation and human rights, individual self-realization, quality of life, and equal rights.

Carl Boggs, interpreted the new social movements as an attempt to rebuild a community which had been affected for being the victim of extreme urbanization and economic modernization.

Offe, argues that new social movements are different from the old social movement because the new ones focus on the negative effects of bureaucratic capitalism, according to which, the society has been left out to be a sufferer. Moreover, the old paradigm of collective action cannot address issues like feminism and environmentalism, as a result of which the social movement inherited a new nature.

Krishan Kumar observes that most of the impulsion to the new collective action or new social movements has been received from the post-modern culture. He believed that this has a very negative and reactionary angle. Moreover, it is also anti-heretical and involves itself with the principles of radical democracy.

- **Nature**

The new social movements emerged by the end of the 1960s with the changes of many movements during the period in the western world. The changes mainly involved the change in composition, strategies and

focus. The globalization brought social changes of large scale and thus as a response to this new social movements came into sight. The social movement which was in practice before the new social movement took place had mainly existed in the industrial economic period, and in the post-industrial economic period it was the dawn for new social movements. So, let us now look into the basic nature of the new social movements.

- **Social and Cultural Issues are the Primary Issues**

One of the important features of the new social movement is that this movement mainly focuses on issues of social and cultural importance. However, it does not mean that the new social movements negate the idea of indulging in political and economic issue. But, political and economic issues are only secondary for the new social movements. New social movement like youth culture movement or gay liberation movement mainly deal with issues related to their rights, lifestyles and identities. As such, *Habermas,* elucidated that new social movement is different from the earlier social movement because it comprises problem of individual self-realization and human rights. On the other hand, the old movements were involved with economic, political, and military security issues and challenges.

- **Quality of Life is the Prime Focus**

The new social movements include movements like environment movement, peace movement, women rights movement, gay rights movement and etc. So, basically if we observe the nature of such movements we will find that the prime focus of the movements was quality of life. It wanted to bring about a change in the society which may be discriminatory or where the quality of life is not equal for all. We would find that these issues are mainly prevalent in the developed and devolving countries to some extent. Such societies have rejected the large influence of bureaucratic organization and have adopted the participatory style of collective action. The new social movements as such are concerned with post-material values that are common in the post-industrial scenario. Moreover, the resources and its production and distribution and conflict arising from it are not the source of the new social movements.

- **Membership Largely Different in Scope**

Membership or its support base in the earlier social movement was mainly from the working class or lower class. Their survival and opportunity were the primary demands. But gradually, with the dawn of new social movement, the support base of the new movements also changed. There was an emergence of the new middle-class people who deals with different questions of identity which ranges from issues like class, gender, race and sexual orientations. The membership as such in the new social movement is drawn from different people belonging to different social classes. It is limited not only to the working class but also to the peripheral class of people who come into the scenario. In this regard, thinkers like Offe believed that the association of new middle class with the working class has brought a drastic change in the social movements. This is because of the higher educational level and information access capabilities of the new-middle class. New questions regarding the value of society emerged through the new social movements where all students, unemployed people, housewives and youths extended their support in large numbers.

- **Anti-Authoritarian**

The new social movements are collective actions which are regarded as anti-authoritarian. This is because they bring the new issues related to the people who are marginalized or excluded in a society to the notice of the authority. They assert their demand by the use of locally based, centred on small social groups. Moreover, they preach their demands and views with the use of wide range of loosely personal or informational networks which includes the radio, newspapers and posters. The new social movements even question the legitimacy of power institutions and establishes their own research teams in order to understand the different emerging associated problems more clearly and give new directions to the new social movements.

- **Multiple Issues Get Incorporated**

The new social movements may start with a single issue but with times it incorporates multiple issue which come along the line. For instance,

the feminist movement started as part of the demand to regain the lost status of women in the society to be renewed. Along with them, the feminist movements also dealt with different questions of women and their relation to the environment. Another example of incorporating multiple issues is that the environmental movements which are basically new social movements have also dealt with questions that include environment and development along with environment justice.

- **Both Local and Global Issues**

The new social movements may start locally with some local issues of environment and move towards more global issues like global warming. Therefore, another important nature of the new social movement is that it is concerned with issues prevalent both at the local level as well as at the global level. This also brings about a change in their consecutiveness with the population. It deals with both the local, national or international population.

- **Use of Information and Communication Technology**

The use of ICT in new social movement is responsible for two factors. One is the knowledge of the new middle class people and the second is the global perspective of such movements. The information savvy people understood the importance of applying ICT usage to the movement which in the long run would help to build global connection and create new support base for the continuation and success of the new social movements.



LET US KNOW

Social movements generally mobilize the members or participants to seek redressal of a grievance, or to struggle for specific goals and objectives. They often involve only a particular section of a population and manifest themselves only in a part of the society. Social movements refer to a sustained and continuous collective action over a long period of time. Social movements generally aim at and result in change.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.1: The new social movements are referred to as new because they are different from the earlier movements in terms of their goals, organization and sources of support. (True/False)

.....

Q.2: According to Habermas, new social movements are resistance against the bureaucratization and monetarisation of both the public and _____ sphere of life. (Fill in the blank)

Q.3: Quality of life is the prime focus of new social movement. Explain.

.....

.....

.....

Q.4: List out the main characteristics of new social movement?

.....

.....

.....

9.4 DYNAMICS OF NEW SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

The group action or collective action of the people can be regarded as social movement. The main purpose behind a social movement is always to bring about a change in the society or to resist something prevalent in the society or about to be newly introduced in the society. If we look into the modern western social movements, we would find that those movements were only possible due to the spread of education and information among the people regarding different issues of the society. Another factor which also contributed towards such movement was the increase in the mobility of the labour which was due to the modernization as well as industrialization of the 19th century.

The contemporary social movements were possible only because of the freedom of expression, economic freedom and educational freedom which was the main elements of the western societies. Most of the times,

the social movements were involved in transforming the nations into a more democratic movements, but no one can deny that the social movements actually emerged and grown only after the nations became more democratized. The social movement in the last 200 years has become the most important medium for global and popular voice of dissent.

In the subject of political science, the study of the new social movement occupies a very important position. The main difference that has been observed between the new and old social movement was that in terms of participation of people and their course of actions, the new social movement has taken a more pro-active role. As already mentioned, tracing the early history of the idea of social movement we will find that the so called social movement initiative developed in the middle of 18th century England. In the late 18th century, other movements that emerged and received an worldwide attention was the French and American revolutions.

In the late 19th century, the labour and socialist movements were witnessed by the world. Finally, after the Second World War that is by the year 1945 the new forms and patterns of social movements which were different from the earlier social movements emerged. These new types of social movements or the new social movements include the gay rights movements, women's rights movements, civil rights movements, anti-nuclear and peace movements, and environmental movements.

So, basically the developing countries experienced a tremendous social deprivation among the people. A large number of people especially children were suffering from various sorts of diseases, lack of safe drinking water, corruption, centralization of power and authoritarian leadership. This gave a new shape and directions to the idea of social movement and different interrelated issues were picked up by the new social movements and thus widening the scope of the movements.

The new movements become more distinctive in their functioning as they completely function outside the traditional party system. In the west, the new social movements were dominated by the middle-class population. It was dominated by the working class in the third world. The new social

movements have actively associated themselves in upholding the interest and asserting the demands of the disadvantaged people in society. They also transform their organizational structures which reject the hierarchical model of functioning rather these movement and organizations become horizontal in nature.

The new social movement gradually started to bring about radical changes in the society and also in the political and economic domain. They helped to spread social sensitivity and consciousness among the people of the new modern societies. They also helped to provide new developmental strategies where the poor got a satisfactory level of importance. Today, the idea of the new social movement is closely linked with idea of civil society. The movements protect the civil society from State atrocities and also they act to reform the society from within.

The new social movements have passed through different phases of mankind. In each phase and period, these movements have effectively addressed different problems associated with the society and initiated positive social changes. It has always diagnosed the problems of the society, corrected the lacunas of the society and motivated the people to bring about positive changes in the society. Urbanization, Industrialization, mass education, communication technology, and democracy were all the factors contributed to the continuation of the role of the new social movement till date.



ACTIVITY 9.1

Try to list out and figure whether the Indian society has experienced any new social movement.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.5: The main purpose behind a social movement is always to bring about a change in the society or to resist something prevalent in the society. (True/ False)

.....

Q.6: The new social movement gradually started to bring about radical changes in the society and also in the political and _____ domain. (Fill in the blank)

Q.7: Write the main reasons of the contemporary social movements.

.....

.....

.....

.....

Q.8: Name the factors for which the new social movements are continuing?

.....

.....

9.5 IMPACT OF NEW SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

The new social movement incorporated different problems that touched human lives as such making a tremendous impact on the social, political and economic domain. Though the new social movements are primarily related to issues that concern social life, still no one could deny its political and economic implications. The following are some of the impacts of the new social movements.

- **Impact on the Political Economy**

There are different elements of power politics which are actually very closely related to the economic sphere. The new social movements are involved with many issues related to the politics of production and distribution which actually have a direct impact on the economic lives of the people as well as the state.

- **Impact on People's Grievances**

The most important and remarkable impact of the new social movement is that the people and their different grievances which were earlier ignored by the government, now have received a new and effective medium of expression. The resource mobilization capacities of the new social movements are so good that different grievances are effectively

voiced by the new social movement. The authorities are no also compelled to take into account the grievance of the people. Different injustice prevalent in the society and State were considered from new perspectives through the movements and as such justice was sought.

- **Impact on Struggles at Various Levels**

Different struggles at different levels of the society are being raised by the new social movements. But, most importantly, these struggles are purely democratic in nature. The movements have been able to build an alternative paradigm of politics outside the influence of the existing state and system. The new social movements are the new platform for dissents and oppositions.

- **New Social Movement and Globalization**

The new social movements are critical to the idea of globalization. According to them, globalization is a process through which the balance in the traditional communities has been disrupted. The poor are suffering and a wide gap between the rich and poor has also been encouraging. The new social movements as such focus on the interest of the marginalized or poor and strive hard to bring back the equality and stability in the society that has been affected due to the process of globalization. It also reacts to any sort of global hegemony in the world.

- **New Social Movement and Development**

In the third world countries, the new social movements have been guiding the States by preparing an own development model where all people from all sections of the society could participate. The new social movement should always see that in the name of development the socially and politically vulnerable groups do not come under threat.



LET US KNOW

All social movements are collective actions, but all collective actions need not necessarily be social movements. A social movement may lead to, or transform itself into a revolution. A social movement may or may not be a mobilization of people against the state or system of governance, and may or may not involve violence.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.9: There are different elements of power politics which are actually very closely related to the economic sphere. (True/False)

.....

Q.10: The new social movements are the new platforms for dissents and _____. (Fill in the blank)

Q.11: Explain the impacts of new social movements on people's grievances?

.....

.....

.....



9.6 LET US SUM UP

- A social movement is basically a collective effort of individuals or groups of people in order to bring up a new change in the society or to resist something in the society from changing.
- Social movements are deeply associated with social change. It is one of the important means through which people participate in the process of social change, rather performing the role of mere spectators.
- It includes movements like Peasants Movements, Tribal Movements, Dalit Movements, Backward Caste/Class Movements, Women's Movements, Industrial Working Class Movements, Students Movements, Middle Class Movements, Human Rights and Environmental Movements.
- After the Second World War that is by the year 1945, the new forms and patterns of social movements which were different from the earlier social movements emerged.
- The main characteristics of new social movement include the following- social and cultural issues are the primary issues, quality of life is the

prime focus, membership largely different in scope, anti-authoritarian, multiple issues get incorporated, both local and global issues are involved and use of information and communication technology.

- The social movements most of the time were involved in transforming the nations into a more democratic society but no one can also deny that the social movements actually emerged and grown only after the nations became more democratized.
- The new social movement gradually started to bring about radical changes in the society and also in the political and economic domain. They helped to spread social sensitivity and consciousness among the people of the new modern societies. They also helped to provide new developmental strategies where the poor got a satisfactory level of importance.
- The idea of the new social movement is closely linked with the idea of civil society. The movements protect the civil society from State atrocities and also it acts to reform the society from within.
- The new social movement incorporated different problems that touched the human lives as such making a tremendous impact on the social, political and economic domain. Though the new social movement is primarily related to issues that concerns social life, still no one could deny its political and economic implications.
- The new social movements influence in various aspects like- impact on the political economy, impact on the people's grievances etc.



9.7 FURTHER READING

1) Jayal, N.G. (2001). *Democracy in India.* New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

2) Rao, M.S.A. (2008). *Social movements in India.* New Delhi: Manohar Publishers.

3) Shah, G. (2004). *Social movements in India.* New Delhi: Sage Publications.

9.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: True

Ans to Q No 2: Private

Ans to Q No 3: The new social movements include movements like environment movement, peace movement, women's rights movement, gay rights movement and etc. So, basically if we observe the nature of such movements we will find that the prime focus of the movements was quality of life. It wanted to bring about a change in the society which may be discriminatory or where the quality of life is not equal for all.

Ans to Q No 4: The main characteristics of new social movement include, social and cultural issues are the primary issues, quality of life is the prime focus, membership is largely different in scope, anti-authoritarian, multiple issues get incorporated, both local and global issues are involved and use of information and communication technology.

Ans to Q No 5: True

Ans to Q No 6: Economic

Ans to Q No 7: Contemporary social movements are possible only because of the freedom of expression, economic freedom and educational freedom which are the main elements of the western societies.

Ans to Q No 8: Urbanization, Industrialization, mass education, communication technology, and democracy were all the factors that contributed to the continuation of the role of the new social movement till date.

Ans to Q No 9: True

Ans to Q No 10: Oppositions

Ans to Q No 11: The most important and remarkable impact of the new social movement is that the people and their different grievances

which were earlier ignored by the government, now have received a new and effective medium of expression. The resource mobilization capacities of the new social movements are so good that different grievances are effectively voiced by the new social movement. The authorities are no also compelled to take into account the grievance of the people. Different injustice prevalent in the society and State were considered from new perspectives through the movements and as such justice was sought.



9.9 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

A) Very Short Questions

Q. 1 : In the late _____ century the labour and socialist movement were witnessed by the world. (Fill in the blank)

Q. 2: The new social movements are the collective actions which are regarded as anti-authoritarian. (True/False)

Q. 3: What is the difference between new social movement and old social movement?

B) Short Questions (Answer each question in about 150 words)

Q. 1: Describe in brief any four features of new social movements.

Q. 2: Explain the dynamics of new social movements.

Q. 3: Describe in your own words any contemporary new social movement in India.

C) Long Questions (Answer each question in about 300-500 words)

Q. 1: Explain the idea of new social movement and its impact.

Q. 2: Critically discuss the features of new social movements.

*** ***** ***

UNIT 10: PEASANT MOVEMENT IN INDIA

UNIT STRUCTURE

10.1 Learning Objectives

10.2 Introduction

10.3 Peasant Movement: Meaning

10.4 Nature and Organisation of Peasant Movement

10.5 Origin and Development of Peasant Movement in Post-Independent India

10.6 The Naxalbari Movement

10.6.1 Origin and Development of the Naxalbari Movement

10.6.2 Impact of the Naxalbari Movement

10.7 Let Us Sum Up

10.8 Further Reading

10.9 Answers to Check Your Progress

10.10 Possible Questions

10.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- understand the nature of peasant movement in Post-Independent India
- know about the different causes and factors that compelled the farmers to raise their voice against the authority
- understand the underlying causes behind the outbreak of Naxalbari Movement
- get an overview of the impact of Naxalbari movement in Indian politics.

10.2 INTRODUCTION

Agriculture and peasantry have played a vital role in the Indian society and economy. However, in case of development, it is lagging behind in comparison to other segments of the Society. India has been facing lot of

problems ranging from exploitation, poverty, landlessness, indebtedness, lack of modern equipments, deprivation in getting remunerative price of their production and even committing suicide. Under such circumstances, they have been struggling for their existence since colonial period till date. With the ushering of a new political system in 1950, it was hoped that India's independence would lead to the emancipation of peasantry from the exploitation of the Zaminders and the conditions of peasantry would improve. But, the scenario has not changed up to the expectation. They are still exploited and deprived in different quarters, resulting in the farmer's struggle in the 21st century. Keeping the above in view, the present unit attempts to explain the various aspects of peasants' movements in the post-Independent India with a special reference to the Naxalbari movement.

10.3 PEASANT MOVEMENT: MEANING

On the basis of ownership and control over land and agriculture as the means of livelihood, there are different categories of people in rural Society - such as land lords, supervisor agriculturists, owner cultivators, share croppers, tenants and landless labourers etc. Excluding the landlords, in vernacular form, they are collectively termed as kishans.

In the pre-industrial period of the middle ages when feudalism prevailed, those who were slave, serf and free tenants were collectively known as peasants.

The Cambridge dictionary defines a peasant as 'a person who owns on rents a small piece of land and grows crops, keeps animals, etc. on it. A peasant is one who has a low income, very little education, and a low social position.

Ghanashyam Shah (2004) observes, 'The term peasant is used to denote those cultivators who have homogeneous entity, with small holdings operated mainly by family labour on the one hand and on the other, it includes all those who depend on land including landless labourers as well as supervisory agriculturists.'

Kathleen Gough, (as cited in Singh, 2016) defines peasant as 'people who engage in agriculture or related production with Primitive means and

who Surrender part of their produce ……..to landlords or to agents of state.' This definition make it clear that peasants are those class of people who are Subservient to the land lords.

Rajendra Singh (as cited in Rao, M.S.A. 2016) has defined the term peasant as a class of people which excludes the erstwhile rent and revenue collecting class of rajas, talukdars and Zaminders and the class of traders and includes kisan and khetihar mazdoor which consists of-

- all the ex-tenant cultivators,
- all the Khetihar mazdoor (agriculture labourers),
- most of the village artisans and
- those former rajas, talukdars and Zaminders who had suffered a loss of land ownership or reduced their control over land with the introduction of the abolition of zamindari in 1952.

Political Scientist like Anthony Pereira has defined a peasant movement as a "Social Movement made up of peasants (small land holders or farm workers on large farms), usually inspired by the goal of improving the situation of peasants in a nation or territory."

Rajendra Singh has defined peasant movement as "a relatively organised and continuous collective action involving violence, or the threat of violence, for securing more share in the control or ownership of land and its produce and to abolish injustices which have arisen thereof."

On the basis of the above discussions, we can define the peasant as a Socio-economic group of people who are by profession engaged in agriculture or cultivation. This group consists of poor and landless tillers and agricultural labourers, middle level peasants and rich peasants excluding landlords and traders.

A peasant movement can be defined as a movement by the peasants or peasantry to achieve its desired goals from the authority. The authority mentioned here, broadly speaking may be divided into two- government and non-government authority implying the landed aristocracy such as Zaminders.

- **A PARADIGM SHIFT**

A paradigm shift however has been noticed in the study of peasant and peasants' movement since 1980's in India. From the mid 1980's, some scholars like Ghanashyam Shah (2004) have used the term 'farmer' instead of 'peasant' due to market involvement of the farmers as community producers and also due to the fact that they take the role of purchasers of inputs.

In fact, the development of agriculture during the post-independence period, more specifically following the introduction of green revolution in the mid-1960s, a new category of cultivator evolved and they are called 'rich farmers.' Thereby, the term peasants are defined as a social group who live in subsistence level and produce for their subsistence and do away with market competition. On the other hand, farmers are those people who are involved in market competition and market surplus. The struggle that these rich farmers resorted to in post independent period is characterized as 'New farmers' movement' in place of peasant movement.

10.4 NATURE AND ORGANISATION OF PEASANT MOVEMENT

The nature of peasant movement in Post-independence period can be studied in the following ways:

1. The post independent India has witnessed two types of peasants' movement one is classical (old) peasant movement and the other is new farmers' movement. The classical peasant movement like Telangana and Naxalbari Movements were started by the poor landless farmers, tenants, share croppers and agricultural labourers for their land rights, better economic conditions and higher wages etc.

   On the contrary, the new farmers' movements are performed mainly by the rich peasants although the middle and poor peasants also joined hand with them. With the introduction of Green Revolution in mid-1960's, the use of modern technology, highyeilding seeds, use of electricity and power, modern means of irrigation in agriculture, a new class in rural area emerged. They are rich peasants and named

as farmers and their movement is known as farmers' movement. Their issues are different from old peasants' movements and their demands are remunerative price for their produce, greater marketing facilities, greater subsidy, loan waiving etc.

2. In the peasant uprising in Post-independence period which are classical in nature- leadership was provided by the kishan sabhas of left wing political parties like CPI, CPI(M), and by different groups of CPI (M-L).

   But, the rich capitalist farmers' movement in the Green Revolution or Post Green Revolution period occurred through organisations like Bharatiya Kishan Union (BKU) in UP, Punjab, Haryana, the shetkari sangathan in Maharsatra and so on.

3. One of the important characteristics of peasant movement in post independent period, as cited by Rajendra Singh (2001), is the presence of civil society organisations. The agrarian contradictions now begin to be located mostly around the civil society versus the state.

4. Just after the Independence, in the classical peasant movement, the adversary group or the principal enemy were the local exploiters, the Zaminders, Jagirdars and Talukdars, in short- the landlords. But, in case of post-independence rich capitalist farmers' movement, the adversary was not located in the village or in the district. The government, either at the centre or state, was targeted for attack. So, the site of confrontation transferred from the village Zaminders to the government in power both at the centre and states.

5. Again, two types of confrontations have been noticed within the rich capitalist farmers. One is against the state and other is middle and rich peasantry versus the rural poor and the landless people, located at the bottom of the economic and power hierarchy of the society. The poor in the form of agricultural labour in rich farmers' agricultural farms had to engage in struggle for high wages for their works.

6. The nature of peasant movements in the Post-independence period can be explained in terms of method of struggle. Some used violent and armed struggle, some used Gandhian and constitutional method

to arrive at their desired goals. For example, the peasant uprising Just after the Independence against Hyderabad Nizam under the banner of CPI and CPI (M), the Naxalbari peasant movement emerged under the banner of CPI (M-L) and now under the Maoist ideology which firmly believe in violent armed revolution to break the chain of Zaminders and for their land rights.

On the other hand, the Bhoodan Movement (land gift) led by Acharya Vinoba Bhave (1951-54) was conducted on the non-violent lines of Mahatma Gandhi in which the landlords voluntarily surrendered their excess land which were distributed to the landless peasants.

Likewise, the farmers' movements under the banner of rich capitalist farmers through their association like BKU were also conducted on Gandhian and constitutional means. They resorted to the method of road blockade, rail rakho, strike, Delhi challo rally, mass demonstration etc.

These are the major observations about the peasant movement in the Post-independence period.

- **Organisation of Peasant Movement**

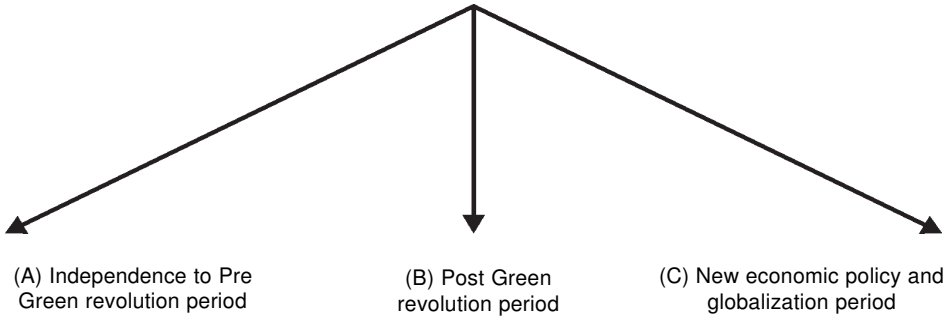
In the Post Independent period, most of the peasant organisations agitating on different issues are overtly or covertly led by different political forces. It is seen that all the communist parties such as- CPI, CPI (M), CPI (M-L) have their own peasant wings like trade union. Apart from the left wing political parties, the right wing political parties and even the regional political parties also have their own peasant wing through which they responded different problems of the peasants.

Some civil Society organisations are also functioning to mobilise the peasantry and the general people in support of some major issues related to problems of agriculture and agricultural cum rural society. For example, in the year 2000, the Kishan Mazdur Sanghrash Samittee led by Dr. Aruna Rai and the People's Union for civil liberty (PUCL) has organised a significant legal movement against the starvation of the peasantry and rural poor in Rajasthan.

In addition to these, we have noticed the presence of different farmers' organisations of their own which have played important role in post-independent peasant mobilisation. Rajya Raitha Sangha of Karnataka, Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU) of UP, Punjab, Rajasthan, Gujrat, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh etc., Shetkari Sangathana of Maharastra etc. are some of the examples.

10.5 ORGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF PEASANT MOVEMENT IN POST INDEPENDENT INDIA

For the convenience of the study of the origin and development of peasant movements or farmers' movements, whatever the name may be, we may classify the problem in three broad categories:



(A) Independence to Pre-Green Revolution Period (1947-1960):

Post-independence peasant movement originated in the heroic struggle of the Indian peasants to win over the rights over land towards the last decade of colonial rule. The peasant movement, in order to break the zamindary or permanent settlement system in Bengal; peasant upsurge in Andhra against zamindary under Nizam Sahi in Hyderabad; movement for land rights in Kashmir are some of the major instances of the struggle of the above kind. In that period, the left leadership in the peasant movement took place. Peasant movement of Telangana and Bengal was mostly led by the Kisan Sabhas organised by the undivided communist party of India. After the overthrowing of the British Raj, the new national govt. under the leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru in New Delhi had to face the situation created by the peasant unrest over the ownership right on land. To handle the

situation, the Home Ministry under the leadership of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel resorted to administrative steps to control the law and order situation that prevailed due to the conflicts between the peasant masses and local landlords. The conflict between the peasantry and the local landlords or rulers like Nizam of Hyderabad or Raja of Jammu Kashmir turned into the confrontation between the congress government of New Delhi and the peasant masses. Naturally, the domestic government had to change the earlier land policy applied by the colonial ruler. But, the rural elite, including a section of traditional land lords, put pressure to influence the government so that it could not take any radical land reform policy against the interest of big land owner and rich peasants.

In fact, the influential section of the agricultural society began to be the part of the ruling polity of the national government. In contrast to this situation, the necessity of new socio-political ideology in the peasant movement was felt. It is worth mentioning here that the leaders of the undivided communist party i.e. Rajeswar Rao of Andhra Pradesh, Harekrishna Konowar of Bengal emerged in the forefront of peasant movement of the contemporary India.

In this way, the left or anti-establishment forces mostly the communist party got the space to intervene in the scenario i.e. to lead the peasant movement towards a radical political end. The expansion of political influence of the left political movement in rural India became more and more intensive.

As a result of such movement, the government of India had to take strong reform policy in land tenure system. For example, by the first amendment of the constitution in 1951, the government of India passed the zamindary abolition act to abolish intermediaries in land tenure system and by the 4th amendment, the Government of India empowered the state legislature to implement the same. Accordingly, most of provinces had passed zamindari abolition and land ceiling legislation by 1956.

However, those steps were not up to the expectation for the peasant society. Because, taking the advantages of the loopholes in the legislation, the landlords had transferred their land in the name of their kith and kin and even in the name of their pets.

(B) Post Green Revolution to New Economic Policy (1960-1990)

The development of peasant movements in post Green revolution period can be discussed in following phases -

(1) 1960-1970

(2) 1970-1980

(3) 1980-1990

(1) **Peasant Movements In 1960-1970's**

This period is most remarkable from the point of agricultural development and peasant movement. Because, in the mid 1960's, green revolution took place. It implies the increase in crop production by the use of modern technology including artificial fertilizers, pesticides and high-yield crop varieties.

Green revolution was perhaps the first organised steps to make inroads for capitalist farming which led the agro economy to be more and more export base economic exercise. As a result, the question of domestic necessity like- sufficient food grain production was neglected, resulting in acute food crisis that took place throughout the country mostly in Bihar, Bengal, Orissa, Andhra Pradesh, and so on. Famine like situation arose throughout the entire northern India.

Under this green revolution, small peasants had to suffer. Because, in order to equip with modern technology, they required more money. And for that purpose, they had to rely on unofficial creditors and money lenders who charged exorbitant interest, often double the interest rate of banks. As such, a process of de-peasantization and class polarization took place in the country sides. At the expense of small peasants, tenants etc. the rich peasants and capitalist farmers became stronger and pushed them into the rank of the landless.

At the same time, the demand for land reform like land to the tiller had not been materialised which had created the conditions for peasant unrest and revolt. As such, the Green revolution became red revolution in this period. Depending on that situation, some radical political change took place. In 1967, the left government came into power in West Bengal with

a bold election manifesto of land reform and agro upliftment like land to all the landless. But in practice, those electoral assurances were not fulfilled. That situation had led to the historical Naxalbari peasant insurrection in West Bengal. It is to be noted that the peasant upsurge to take over the ownership of landlords' land by occupancy and possession holders, including the share cropper, was led by organised left forces. In this process, the left party, mainly CPI (M) had to face a major politico - ideological split. The communist party CPI (ML) came into being. Later on, they are known as the Maoist.

(2) Peasant Movement in 1970-1980

It was a remarkable period in the socio-political history of India. The major events of this period were-

1. Severe and overall economic crisis.
2. Impact of new political formation in the form of split of the ruling national congress into two namely congress (I) and Congress (o) in 1969.
3. Record breaking unemployment problem recreated by mixed economic planning.
4. Emergence of Janata Movement led by sarvodaya leader J.P. Narayan.
5. War with Pakistan (1971) thereby creation of Bangladesh.
6. The internal emergency declared by PM India Gandhi (1975-77) to Suppress overall socio-economic crisis.
7. For the first time, in the history of independent India, Non-Congress government came into power in 1977 after a huge mass movement against authoritarian rule.

Under the above circumstances along with all other segments of the society, the peasant or farmer community also had to consolidate their issue based movement for civil and political rights. All the socio-political forces from right reactionary to left ultras like the ideologues of Naxalbari armed peasant struggle had been compelled to come together to face the said authoritarian system of governance in the country. As a result, for the first time in the political history of Independent India, a non-congress Janata

government came into power in New Delhi. But it did not stay long. The congress, led by Indira Gandhi returned to power again.

(3) Development in 1980-1990

After coming to power, the government led by Indira Gandhi and later on by Rajiv Gandhi tried to revive the projects of green revolution. But it was failed. Frequent political changes, absence of sustainability in economic planning had resulted in the failure of tackling the crisis in the overall economy and particularly in the agrarian sector. The cost of production in agriculture had reached the peak during this period. The importance of statutory steps in fixing the price of agro products started to increase. Demands for minimum support price for all kinds of grains became more and more popular among the rich peasants. Organisation like BKU, led by rich peasants came into existence in this period. It is to be pointed out here that during that period, the rich peasants or new farmer class of the peasantry did not think to go against the government policy to fulfil their needs. But, that situation had changed. Like other section of the agrarian society, (poor and landless peasants, sharecropper) the rich peasants or a section of the capitalist farmers had also been compelled to take the path of agitation.

Throughout the whole era of post green revolution (1960-1990), we have seen the emergence of some new sub classes among the peasantry. Those were new landless recreated by farming and expansion of mining, agricultural labour in big numbers and their social identities were of dalits, OBC, minorities and Tribals. The programme of ongoing peasant movement could not address the problems of the above classes or sub classes of the peasantry. In this circumstances, the space for some new organizations on the basis of caste, community and unconventional organizations like kishan Majdur Sangharsh Samiti started to function among the peasantry.

Moreover, those classes of peasantry mentioned above became the main social base of Naxalite movement.

(C) New Economic Policy and Globalisation Period

The present period beginning from 1991 is broadly termed as the period of globalisation backed by new economic policy, liberalisation of

economy and structural- adjustment with international trade and commerce advocated by the government of India. The policy of globalisation in agriculture in India has brought the following features in the agro activities:

1. Ultra modernised mechanisation of agriculture.
2. Use of hybrid seeds, chemical fertilizers, pesticides produced mostly by foreign companies.
3. Beginning of contract farming, corporate farming, genetically modified crops etc.
4. Free market policy and import liberalisation in agricultural trade.
5. Curtailment of state backing of agricultural activities like subsidised loan.
6. Restriction on re-productions of peasant's own seeds by the system of patent right laws etc.

Under these circumstances, the farmer community faced new problems of managing the farm activities. The cost of production increased more and more. Without huge loan, it became impossible to run their production. That situation has compelled the rich and a section of middle class peasants to take loan from the banking institution and money lenders with enhanced rate of interest which led to indebtedness of the peasantry. As a result of this, thousands of farmers had to face the situation of committing suicide. Under these circumstances, nationwide peasant unrests began in the form of huge rally, road blockage, mass demonstration etc. Very often, those demonstration became violent and police had to resort to take lathi charge to firing to control the situation. In 2018, in such an agitational situation, six persons died in police firing in Madhya Pradesh.

- **Express Highway and Special Economic Zone (SEZ):**

It is to be noted here that the new industrial investment policy in the light of globalisation has moved the government to advocate some mechanisms to invite the foreign multinational companies as per their terms and conditions. For example, the construction of express and super highways along with Special Economic Zone (SEZ) Act, 2005. To construct

Express Highway and to have SEZ or industrial corridor for particular MNC or companies, the government decided to acquire thousands acres of land, displacing the agriculture and agricultural society from their native place in different areas of the country. As a result, lacs of peasants virtually become landless, jobless and even homeless. Under such circumstance, since 2006, we have seen huge resistance movement that occurred against SEZ. In 2007, we have seen the mass resistance in Singur and Nandi gram of West Bengal where agitating peasants and their supporters confronted with the armed police forces. 14 peasants died in police and para military forces' firing in the above incidents of peasants' resistance movement. Ultimately, a negotiation was made between the government of West Bengal and the agitators which abandoned the proposed SEZ.

In addition to these, due to aggressive policy of globalisation, displacement and eviction, the peasantry led the situation of unwarranted anger among the peasants community, thereby the ideology of Maoism penetrated into the peasant unrest.

It is told that the much debated globalization is the globalization of capitalism or imperialism which is concerned mainly worldwide free market economic policy. The opportunity and economic privileges' naturally go to the big investors, multinational companies and other big corporate agencies. This kind of new global economic order cannot serve the interest of even the middle class of people. In rural and agrarian society new land hungry corporate and multinational companies engaged in mining etc. became the main instrument of generating huge landlessness. The SEZ like mechanism is nothing but the systemising accommodation of multinational and corporate houses against which Nandigram like peasant upsurge took place which paved the way for some political leaders coming to power in West Bengal. Such kinds of political happenings are the result of new social mobilization of peasantry and middle class as a whole. It is not to be reiterated that this kind of class combination is the key instrument to have a new political change in the concerned state centering round the peasant movement there.

Taking the advantage of globalization and globally organized free market policy, any big investor can invest his capital in any corner of the globe. But, the workers engaged in his plant and also the peasant who transfers his valuable lands accommodate the investor cannot claim globally determined wage or price of land. In short, the richest of the rich of the first world countries, get the right and privileges to the extent of global status and the people who happens to be owner of labour resource and public infrastructure are deprived from all the rights and priorities which is enjoyed prior to globalization.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.1: What Paradigm Shift has occurred in the definition of the Peasant with the introduction of Green revolution in India?

.....

.....

Q.2: Write the full meaning of the term SEZ.

.....

Q.3: What do you mean by Green revolution and when did it take place?

.....

.....

10.6 THE NAXALBARI MOVEMENT

The Naxalbari peasant movement is one of the most remarkable incidents in the socio-political history of independent India. It is remarkable in the sense that for the first time in Independent India, the common men took arms against the government. The very name 'Naxalbari' is associated with the name of a small village 'Naxalbari' in Darjeeling District of West Bengal where a dissident group of communist party of India (Marxist) (CPIM) known as communist party of India (ML) launched an armed peasant struggle in 1967 against the atrocities of the landlords. Later on, with the

merger of various arms groups in different states like Maoist Communist Centre (MCC), People's War Groups (PWG), and the CPI (ML) rechristened as the communist party of India (Maoists). Those, who engaged in that Naxalbari movement, were known as the Naxalities. Now, they are known in different names like Naxalite, Naxalwadi, Maoist etc. In fact, though the movement was suppressed in West Bengal, it spread in almost 10 states of India namely - Bihar, Jharkhand, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Telangana, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. These Naxal effected areas are popularly known as 'Red Corridor' region.

10.6.1 Causes of the Origin of Naxalbari Movement and its Development

It is already mentioned that the Naxalbari movement originated in a small village named Naxalbari under Siliguri Sub-division of Darjeeling district of West Bengal in early 1967. In February 1967, the United Front government led by Indian National Congress with the participation of CPI (M) came into political power in West Bengal. The CPI (M) being the party of peasantry and working class had bold election manifesto of land reform like land to all the landless, land to those who till the land etc. But in practice, those assurances were not fulfilled, resulting in the peasant upsurge like Naxalbari peasant uprising and split within the party- that gave birth to CPI (ML) under the leadership of Charu Mazumdar, Kanu Sanyal, Souren Bose, Jangal Santhal etc. Their main motto was to grab the land from the landlords and re-distribute the same among the landless farmers and those who till the land.

The then population of North Bengal i.e. Darjeeling district comprised of tribal's like Oraons, Mundas and Santhals and Koch Rajbongsis. Most of them were landless and share cropper peasants. On May 24, 1967, a tribal youth share cropper having judicial order to plough was attacked and killed by the armed brand sent by the local landlords. A small police team was sent to enquire about the

incident. As they were marching to the spot, Jangal Santhal, the president of Siliguri Kishan Sabha, led a group of tribals and ambushed the police party with bows and arrows. A police Sub-Inspector was killed on that surprise attack. In retaliation to the death of that police personnel, in the very next day, the police arrived at the spot with their huge strength and fired randomly upon the peasants. Nine people were killed in that indiscriminate fire and children, women and even age old people met with several injuries.

Charu Mazumdar through his writing "Historic Eight Documents" inspired the youths which formed the basis of the Naxalite Ideology. Subsequently, the movement had spread in different parts of West Bengal. Peasant committees, were formed in every village and they were transformed into armed guards. They soon occupied land in the name of the peasant committees, and burnt all land record which had been used to cheat them of their dues, passed death sentences on oppressive landlords, formed armed bands by looting guns from the landlords, armed themselves with conventional weapons and set up a parallel administration to look after the villages with the active leadership of Charu Mazumdar and Kanu Sanyal. Most of the youths had Joined in the movement. During 70's, most of the students of schools, colleges and universities abandoned their studies and joined in the armed struggle against the landlords. Accordingly, not only the peasants, in course of time, but different segments of the society had also participated in and supported that Naxalbari movement.

Not only in West Bengal, with wide publicity through media, it was extended to different parts of India and even it had received international support. The president of China, Mao Tse-Tung declared his whole hearted support to this Naxalbari agrarian movement. But, being the ruling party CPI (M) did not show their favour to them.

The central government in Delhi had expressed deep concern on that matter and asked the West Bengal government to take necessary steps. Accordingly, the West Bengal government decided

to suppress the movement and launched operation steeplechare in the early 1970 with the active support of Army and police to suppress the revolt. As a result of this, most of the active Naxalities were killed, some were even arrested and kept in Jail. Leaders like Charu Mazumdar, Kanu Sanyal were put behind the bars. After the imprisonment of the leaders and more specially, after the death of Charu Mazumdar in Alipore Jail in Calcutta, the movement became leaderless and gradually the movement came to an end within a short span of time.

Though for the time being the Naxalbari movement came to an end, the ideology of Naxalism has attracted the attention of the poor, landless and downtrodden section of society- mostly the tribals and adivasi people who inhabited the said ' Red Corridor' region.

- **Reasons behind Naxalbari Movement**

Some of the important reasons that led to Naxalbari movement are discussed below:

1) **Defects in Land Reforms:** The main cause of the Naxalbari movement was the defects in land reforms. Though land reforms was introduced after Independence, but in practice, taking the opportunity of the loopholes of the prevailing Acts, the landlords retained their lands by transferring it to the ryots on lease basis and keeping land for their kith and kins. As a result of these, the proposed aims of the said land reforms were not materialized, i.e. land to landless, land to those who till the land remained mere slogan. Therefore, most of the poor and landless farmers and youth had joined in armed struggle led by Naxalwadi.

2) **Pathetic Economic Condition:** Frequent failure of crops and poverty that led to pathetic economic conditions of the peasants are also responsible for the Naxalbari peasant uprising. Most of the people belonging to this area are tribals, in comparison to other areas of farmers, they are poor. They have failed to feed

their growing family with their poor productivity. Under these circumstances, they thought the existing socio-political system is responsible for their miserable position and wished to replace it by a new regime with the ideologies of Mazumdar, Marx, Mao Tse Tung and the erstwhile USSR.

3) **Money Lender and Alienation of land:** The tribals and non-tribal peasants were not only exploited by the Zaminders but by the money lenders as well. In most of the cases, the tenants, the share croppers when they failed to pay in cash or kind to landlords for using their land, or failed to run their family due to poor production of their crops, they were compelled to borrow money from the money lenders. These money lenders gave them money in the form of loan with extravagant interest and kept land documents as mortgage. When they failed to repay the loan with interest, the landlords seized their lands. Thus, the tribals became alienated from land and they became landless and turned into bonded labourers in their own land. Hence, in order to get rid of the vicious circle of money landers and to be free from landlessness, most of the youth in this region joined in Naxalbari Movement.

4) **Unholy Nexus among Neta, Babu, Judiciary and Landlords:** The unholy nexus among the politicians, bureaucrats, Judiciary and Landlords is also responsible for the growth of Naxalbari movement in India. Most of the political leaders, bureaucrats and even the judiciary were pro-landlord. The lack of political will, indifferent attitude of the bureaucrats and indifference and partiality by the Judiciary towards the landless poor, made them unsatisfied with the existing socio- economic system. The frustrated youth began to feel that they had been suffering due to bourgeois control on state power and the only way to free the people was with the help of armed revolution and to build a socialist system by destroying the existing one.

5) **Government Control over Forest:** The Tribal and Adivasi communities have been living in the Nature's womb since time immemorial. They are more prone to live in forest and banjar land and engaged in shifting cultivation. But, when the state government in this region nationalized their forest land, put restrictions of access to forest lands, implemented government regulations on forest products etc., they had to suffer. Thus, the interference by the government on their life and livelihood caused deep discontentment among them and compelled them to join in armed struggle against the state.

6) **Eviction Drive in Bakshish Land:** The landlords often changed their tactics to retain the ownership over land. One of the tactics were land Bakshish to their agricultural labourers who rendered service to them. They did it when the tribal peasants launched movements against them under the banner of radical communist. But, few days back, the so called landlords asked them to return these 'Bakshish' i.e, gifted land. Then they resorted to violence to free these lands which resulted in a direct clash between the adivasis and the landlords. (as cited in Rao, C.N Sankar 2008, P-339). Such incident compelled the youths to join in Naxalbari movement.

7) **Red Corridor area and Naxalwadi:** Red corridor area is the richest region in India as it is full of minerals like iron ore and bauxite. In the name of development and extracting these minerals, the government made land acquisition drive and provided permits to different mining companies to unearth the same. As a result of these, the Adivasis who lived there had to leave that place. They were victimized by the state induced displacement. Government, forest officials, contractors, mining companies only exploited them rather than taking measures for their upliftment. Under such a situation, they were compelled to join the Naxalwadi Movement.

The small incident that occurred in Naxalbari, Siliguri, and West Bengal gradually spread in different parts of India and this is still going on. They are revolutionary communist and they believe in radical transformation of society through armed struggle.

10.6.2 Impact of the Naxalbari Movement

The Naxalbari movement has far reaching impact in the socio-political history of India. As a result of the Naxalbari movement, new developments occurred in the politics of peasants and working class movement. It can be regarded as the turning point in the Indian communist movement, because for the first time, a vertical split arose in communist ideology of India. The dissident group within the CPI (M) has lost their faith on the parliamentary leftists in power and they have gave birth to a new party on militant lines named as CPI (ML), later on they came to be known as the Maoist.

Secondly, as a result of Naxalbari movement, institutionalisation of violent method come into existence for fulfilling the demands of the peasantry. This situation ultimately created the ground for the penetration of Maoist ideologue in peasant struggle.

The enhancement of the mechanism of dominating the movement has invited the new efforts of gathering the support of civil society in the resistance movement of Naxalite or Maoist. Frequently discuss the urban Naxalite indicates the fact that growing support to this radical movement is getting its foot hold among a section of highly educated middle class intellectual. Because of which the government has been compelled to shift its operation to different urban centers like Mumbai, Hyderabad and so on. So, we may say that the theory of identifying a particular part of the country as 'red corridor' has gradually became a kind of disturbing one on the part of the government.

To a certain extent, violent peasant movement on the line of Naxalbari upsurge has created some social unrest in different corners

of the country. It has caused peace and security problem in India. The Naxalite problem is perhaps the most serious internal security challenge that the country faces today. Since its inception, attack and counter attacks are going on between the Naxalites and police and para military forces. Apart from the para military forces, the state government has used their own combating forces like Grey hounds (Andhra Pradesh), Thunderbolts (Kerela) etc. In addition to these, operation 'Green Hunt' was launched by the Government of India in 2009 against the Naxalites, and it was conducted in "Red Corridor" region of five states which caused serious setback to the Maoists and most of their cadres died.

From the side of Naxalites also serious attacks were made. Some of the famous attacks are:

- In 2010, ambush in Dantewada, chattisgarh killed 80 police men.
- In 2018, attack in sukma, dist, Chhattisgarh killed 24 policemen.
- In May 1, 2019, landmine blast at Gadchirole in Maharastra killed 15 police personnel along with a civilian etc.

While the security forces are better equipped, they often face obstacles due to local support for the Maoists and the strange terrain.

Under such situations, peace and development have collapsed in these Naxal affected states. Government efforts to develop necessary infrastructure like road construction has hindered to a great extent since the Naxalites have targeted the constructing companies and personals. Such activities on the part of the Maoist has stood as an obstacle in the path of economic development in the concerning states as no investor whether foreign or national have dared to invest there.

In fact, the destination of the Naxalites are impressive, but the ways and method they have chosen is wrong which have caused loss of human lives. The government should have realized that brute force will not put an end to the ongoing struggle. Violence solves nothing, it begets violence.

Therefore, both the parties should come closer to each other for its solution. The problem must be addressed in the roots. Instead of killing them or combating them with the use of violent method, the government should take some preventive measures like proper implementation of agrarian reforms, upliftment of the poor, education, infrastructure development, generate employment and to do more welfare activities in the Red Corridor region. Otherwise, after one is dead, another will join and the phenomenon will be continued. However, upper hand must be given to the government. Though the basic objective of the Naxalites is to help the poor and the landless yet, violence can never be an answer to find a solution in this regard. Therefore, the government has no way out but to crush them with an iron hand.

In fact, the agrarian society is the backbone of our country. Without proper handling of the problems and grievances of that segment of the society, we cannot imagine the development of our national economy. As a responsible government, we think it should come out with a pro-people and pragmatic policy to manage the agrarian society with all its seriousness.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.4: Where is Naxalbari situated? What is the immediate effect of the Naxalbari peasant movement?

.....

Q.5: What do you mean by Bakshish land? How does it relate to Naxalbari movement?

.....

.....

Q.6: What do you mean by Red corridor region of India? Why is it famous?

.....

.....



10.7 LET US SUM UP

- Peasant movement in India is not a New Phenomenon. Since the time of British East India Company to Independence and from Independence to the present, peasant movement is continuing in different parts of India.
- The Post-independence India has witnessed two types of peasant movement. One is classical peasant movement and the other is new peasant movement, known as farmers' movement which is the outcome of green revolution in India.
- During Independence and just after the Independence of India, Peasant Movement like Tebhaga peasant movement in West Bengal in 1946-47, Telengana, Hydrabad peasant struggle 1946-51, peasant movement in Kashmir were the examples of classical peasant movement in post independent period. These movements were occurred mainly against the abolition of the zamindari system and land rights.
- In the mid 1960's, the government of India launched Green revolution to meet the problem of food crisis. However, this green revolution turned into red revolution because it harmed the peasants to a great extent.
- In the 21st century also, peasants are compelled to suffer from different problems resulting in the introduction of new economic policy in 1991 and globalisation.
- Above all, the Naxalbari movement is one of the most significant incidents in the history of India. It is so significant because, for the first time in the Post Independent India, common people took to arms against the authority.



10.8 FURTHER READING

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10.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: In the post Independent period with the introduction of green revolution in mid-1960's, a paradigm shift has occurred in the definition of a peasant. In fact, the Green revolution has created a new class of cultivator, known as 'Rich farmers'. Thereby the term peasants are defined as a social group who live in subsistence level and produce for their subsistence and do away with the market competition. On the other hand, farmers are those categories which involve market competition and market surplus.

Ans to Q No 2: The full meaning of term SEZ is Special Economic Zone.

Ans to Q No 3: In the mid-1960s, Green revolution was launched by the government of India to develop and give new shape to agriculture. Simply, it implies the increase in crop production by the use of modern technologies including artificial fertilizers, pesticides and high - yield crop varieties.

Ans to Q No 4: Naxalbari is a small village that comes under Siliguri subdivision of Darjeeling district of west Bengal. The immediate output of Naxalbari peasant movement is the split within the left parties in India. In 1967, the breakaway group of the communist party of India, Marxist (CPI,M) became offended on the activities of their party comrades and formed a new party named the communist party of India, Marxist-Leninist (CPI,ML).

Ans to Q No 5: Bakshish land means gifted land. It was a new technique used by the landlords to retain land in their hands when land grab movement was launched by the tribal and Adivasi peasants under the leadership of left parties in Naxalbari areas. But, when the problem was over, the so called landlords tried to snatch the said land by way of eviction with the help of government officials. Peasants became landless and then they joined the ongoing Naxalbari movement for their land rights.

Ans to Q No 6: The Naxal affected 10 districts of India is known as "Red Corridor" region. This region is famous in India's politico-economy. It is the richest region in India as it is full of minerals like iron ore and bauxite.



10.10 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

A) Very Short Questions

Q. 1 : Why and when did the government of India launch operation Green Hunt?

Q. 2: Mention three important farmers' organization in Post independent India.

Q. 3: How does Rajendra Singh define peasant?

B) Short Questions (Answer each question in about 150 words)

Q. 1: Point out four basics differences between classical Peasant Movement and New farmers Movement.

Q. 2: Mention four important events that took place in the period 1970-80 in Indian politics.

Q. 3: When and why had the Government of India passed the Zamindari abolition act?

Q. 4: When and why was operation Steeplechase launched by the government of West Bengal?

C) Long Questions (Answer each question in about 300-500 words)

Q. 1: Define peasant movement. Explain the nature of peasant movement in Post Independent India.

Q. 2: What do mean by Green revolution? How did it affect the Indian peasants that led to peasant movement in Post Independent India?

Q. 3: What are the changes brought by the new economic policy and globalization on the Indian farmers that caused the Peasant Uprising in the 21st century?

Q. 4: What do you mean by Naxalbari Movement? Discuss why and how did the Naxalbari movement originate in West Bengal?

Q. 5: What are the factors responsible for the outbreak of Naxalbari movement in different parts of India? Point out the impacts of the Naxalbari Movement in Indian politics.

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UNIT 11: LABOUR AND TRADE UNION MOVEMENTS

UNIT STRUCTURE

11.1 Learning Objectives

11.2 Introduction

11.3 Origin and Development of Trade Union Movements

- 11.3.1. Growth of Trade Union Movement in the UK
- 11.3.2 Growth of Trade Union Movement in the USA
- 11.3.3 Growth of Trade Union Movements in the Developing World

11.4 Nature and Kinds of Trade Union Movements

11.5 Significance of Trade Union Movements

11.6 Trade Union Movements in India

- 11.6.1 Trade Union Movement in India: Historical Overview
- 11.6.2 Contemporary Challenges to the Trade Union Movements in India

11.7 Let Us Sum Up

11.8 Further Reading

11.9 Answers to Check Your Progress

11.10 Possible Questions

11.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- understand the concept of trade unions
- discuss the nature and types of trade unions
- explain the significance of trade unions
- analyse the importance trade unions in India.

11.2 INTRODUCTION

This unit introduces you to the concept of trade unions and their importance in influencing state policies. In the book *Industrial Democracy* by Sidney and Beatrice Webb, a trade union was described as a term,

which represents 'a continuous association of wage-earners for the purpose of maintaining or improving the conditions of their employment'. The Webbs essentially conceived the idea of trade unions as 'agents of a progressive revolution' in industrial relation. Issues of 'market anarchy' and 'employer despotism' needed to be controlled and regulated, and trade unions as a form of collective union through 'collective bargaining' could play an important role in this regard. Trade Unions in India have been a major part of the freedom struggle and now their numbers have magnified, and so too have their struggles. Today, there are various types of trade unions across the world and they face different set of challenges in the era of market capitalism.

11.3 ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF TRADE UNION MOVEMENTS

Richard Hyman in his book *Understanding European Trade Unionism Between market, class and society* (2001) reflects on the origins and development of trade unions in Europe. He points out that-

> Trade unions as substantial organizations were products of the industrial revolution, even though in some countries they evolved with no significant disjuncture from pre-capitalist artisanal associations. Indeed the very word *trade* union denotes a combination of workers with a common craft or skill. Initially their character and orientations reflected the circumstances of their formation: in most of Europe, brutal resistance by employers to assertions of independence and opposition on the part of the workforce, often accompanied by state repression. Such hostility in turn encouraged in trade unions militant, oppositional, sometimes explicitly anticapitalist dispositions towards employers; and radical political attitudes which – in circumstances of restricted franchise and autocratic government – were not clearly distinguishable from revolutionary

> socialism. This, not surprisingly, reinforced the antagonism of unions' opponents.[1]

The trajectory of growth of trade union movement varies from country to country and is closely linked with the socio-economic conditions of their times. The First and the Second World Wars were major events which gave a new direction and momentum to trade union movements across the globe. In the post 1945 era, there has been a proliferation of trade unions. This is largely due to the fact that technologies were changing, new industrial management styles were being adopted and social security issues were being negotiated between different contending parties. The politisation of trade unions has become a 'norm' and trade unions have openly as well as covertly supported particular parties, especially in democratic countries.

11.3.1 Growth of Trade Union Movement in the UK

The industrial revolution brought about not only economic changes, but also had a radical impact on society and politics of states across continents. The British trade unions were largely a product of the industrial revolution and the 'guilds' assumed the initial form of a union. They worked through negotiations and appeals to the Parliament. In spite of small Acts being passed from time to time, there was no improvement in condition of the workers. The Combination Acts of 1799-1800 made the condition of the workers more difficult for it prohibited any kind of discussion on the issues of employment. The first half of the nineteenth century had seen continued social unrest resulting from economic depressions and the strain of building up a great industrial system.

The Amalgamated Society of Engineers, formed in 1851, developed an organizational structure consisting of a centralized organization with district committees and collected union fees based on membership. In the 1860s, Permanent Trades Councils were set up which further consolidated the united movement. By the 1880s, socialistic ideas became more widespread and trade unionism further deepened through the inclusion of unskilled workers. The early part of the 20th century witnessed the growth of union membership in the

UK. In spite of the growing industrialization, the workers continued to languish and the public institutions too did not help the workers.

The trade union became more compact and organized during the interwar period. The membership of women into trade unions also rose substantially. The end of the Second World War gave new hope to trade unions as new ideas of 'welfare' became prominent. The World Trade Union Conference was held in London in February, 1945. Subsequently, the World Federation of Trade Unions was established to further the labour as well as social standards of workers across the Commonwealth. Since the 1970s, the trade union movement in the UK is in crises. Market economy, coupled with growing economic competition and incentivised economy, the influence of trade unions declined substantially.

11.3.2 Growth of Trade Union Movement in the USA

The early forms of labour organization in the United States were largely mutual aid societies or craft guilds that restricted entry into a craft and enforced workplace standards, as was also the case in Western Europe. It didn't raise too many hackles or cause too many hassles because craft workers were relatively few in number and most companies were small. But, industrial development in the early nineteenth century slowly widened the gap between employers and skilled workers, so the workers began to think of industrial factories as a threat to both their wages and status. The first effective national labour organization in the United States was the National Labour Union (NLU), established in Baltimore in 1866.[2] Later on, the the Knights of Labour became a mass movement with an ideology and program that united workers without regard for occupation, industry, race or gender.[3] Violence has marred the labour history of America. During the period 1877-1900, many a times, the army and national guards were called in to quell labour strikes. 1900-1932 was a period of corporatization of American economy, which started with the textile companies and gradually, it entered sectors such as railroads, coal

and telegraph. However, the outbreak of World War I changed the equilibrium between the different parties, the state not only became more interventionist but the organized labour and trade unions began to get more assertive. National War Labor Board in 1918 came into being to mediate corporate/union conflicts. In 1919, nearly, four million workers (21% of the workforce) took disruptive action in the face of employers reluctance to recognize or bargain with the unions. The National Labor Relations Act of 1935 gave most of the U.S. workers the right to join or form unions as a way for employees to bargain with their employers over pay and working conditions.[4] The Second World War saw immense contribution from the men and women engaged in factories in different parts of the world.

The end of the Second World War not only led to the collapse of the authoritarian regimes, but it also gave the trade unions a way to reorganize themselves. The idea of 'welfare state' had gained momentum in Europe and trade unions became the key players in extending labour rights as well as arguing for the need of universal suffrage. While new trade unions came into being, several others were the results of mergers between older trade unions. One of the key events during the interwar period, as part of the Treaty of Versailles, was the formation of the ILO in 1919. According to its first director, the French union leader Albert Thomas, its purpose was 'to act as co-ordinator and unifier of national trade unions, compel employers to deal with labour as equals, produce impeccable research and advice that would eliminate the possibility of anti-labour criticism, and seek to convert everybody to the need for social justice.[5]



LET US KNOW

The International Labour Organization became a UN specialized agency in1946, dealing with labour issues. Its main aims are to promote rights at work, encourage decent employment opportunities, enhance social protection and strengthen dialogue on work-related issues. In 1969, the Organization received the Nobel Peace Prize.

During the period of the Second World War, like other countries in Europe, union membership in the US also witnessed substantial growth. However, unlike in Europe, where the trade union movement gained momentum after the war, in the United States, trade unionism only declined. 'Decentralised bargaining' became the norm and more mechanization of industry ensured that the workers remain rather confined to their own domain. However, the trade union movement did support the cause of civil rights movement in America. Today, trade unions in the USA have every little impact on addressing the rights of workers and a non-unionised form of employment has become the norm.

11.3.3 Growth of Trade Union Movements in the Developing World

In other parts of the world, the trade union movement have a rich history, as they were part of the nationalist movement (India) or have been integral to the formation of government (South Africa). The Trade Union movement is witnessing a period of transformation. Democratic forces are beginning to play an important role; however, forces of globalization are beginning to dictate terms.

The relations between trade unions and the state vary from country to country. In Japan, trade unions are having a strong dependent relationship with employers. But in countries like South Korea and Taiwan, trade unions and the state authority are more closely tied up and very often espouse the cause of the state. Unlike other developing economies, trade unions in China and Vietnam, under the influence of Leninist principles, had played the dual role of supporting management as well as representing workers' interests.[6]

In the African continent, after the Second World war, trade unions took shape by the support given by the colonial powers. Often adopting the style and functioning of the British or the French model of unionism, the movement started to grow. Though the nationalist struggle soon led to disassociation with the colonial administration, trade unions

could not really have an independent entity as the authoritarian or military regimes took in many countries and the trade unions were subsumed by the state. In South Africa, the COSATU (Congress of South African Trade Unions) which was founded in 1985, has over 1.7 million members, is a very powerful unit. During the post-apartheid period, COSATU was very much engaged with the African National Congress (ANC) in the formation of the government and a substantial number of leaders were members belonging to trade unions.

Points to remember

Apartheid: It is a policy or system of segregation or discrimination on grounds of race.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.1: Who wrote the book - Understanding European Trade Unionism Between market, class and society?

.....

Q.2: What is the significance of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, UK (1851)?

.....

Q.3: When did the ILO win the Nobel Prize for Peace?

.....

Q.4: Write a short note on the growth of trade union movement in the developing countries. (within 50 words).

.....

.....

.....

11.4 NATURE AND KINDS OF TRADE UNION MOVEMENTS

- **Nature of Trade Union Movements**
  - **Legal status:** Trade union movements have acquired a legal status in most democratic countries. Trade unions have to register

themselves, submit taxes and maintain all proper records of its members. It can acquire property and have become powerful pressure groups which influence economic policies.

- **Density of Trade Unions:** The membership of trade unions varies according to the nature of industry. Large membership of trade unions helps their process of collective bargaining. Politically, they become more influential and very often the trade union members become public representatives as well.
- **Collective bargaining:** According to the ILO, the right to collective bargaining is a core labour standard. Collective bargaining helps address issues of arbitrary management, wage uncertainties and discrepancies and address issues of workers social security. However, it is a complicated issue for it creates barriers for 'others' especially those that do not belong to the same fraternity or craft. While through collective bargaining, the trade unions ensure the protection of interests of its own members and create barriers for others as it become rather self- interested in nature.
- **Voluntary nature of Trade Unions:** Such unions are a form of voluntary association. They make their own rules, have their own working constitution and have a hierarchical organizational structure as well. Financial resources of trade unions may be rather limited as they try to collect the same from annual and life membership and through voluntary donations.
- **Politicization of Trade Unions:** Most trade unions have a 'soft' affinity towards a political party. Ideologies such as Marxism and Communism, has ensured that the cause of trade unions is well incorporated into the political agenda of the Left parties in most countries. However, many trade unions also reflect their affinity towards the ruling dispensation. At times, the leaders of trade unions have also become legislators and parliamentarians as well.

- **Kinds of Trade Unions:** Trade unions are structured along various lines-

- Craft or occupation: Teachers Union
- Branch of industry: Tea Industry Unions
- White- or blue-collar workers: Lawyers Union. Bank Unions
- General unions, which include workers from various occupations and industries: AITUC
- Trade Unions are often divided territorially.
- Trade Unions with ideological underpinnings: Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh which is affiliated to the RSS.
- Public sector employees trade unions: Airport Authority of India Employees Union

11.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF TRADE UNION MOVEMENTS

Trade unions may be seen-

'primarily as economic agencies engaged in collective bargaining over routine terms and conditions of employment; as fighting organizations confronting employers in a struggle between hostile classes; or as components of the fabric of social order. In some times and places, they may be perceived in all these guises simultaneously[7].

The significance of trade unions can be seen from the identities it assumes. According to Richard Hyman, there is 'a triple tension at the heart of union identity and purpose[8]. Hyman classifies trade unions according to their ideological orientation.

- **Radical Oppositional:** Unions as 'schools of war' in a struggle between labour and capital;
- **Integrative:** Unions as 'vehicles' for raising workers' status in society and advancing social justice;
- **Business:** Trade unions are interests organisations with predominantly labour market function[9].

In simple terms, business unions focus on the market; integrative unions on society; radical-oppositional unions on class[10].

The importance of trade union also rests on the role they play in protecting the rights of laborers and workers through the process of

'collective bargaining'. W. Streeck has highlighted that trade unions try to influence the labour market from 'supply' as well as from the 'demand side'.

Labour 'supply':

- Firstly, trade unions by enabling workers to speak with a collective voice, replace individual with collective contracts and thereby correct the imbalance of power that distorts individual bargains between workers and employers. Unions furthermore control the amount of labour employers can extract from the workers, by setting and enforcing minimum wages and maximum hours.
- Secondly, unions that intervene in the supply of labor is *skill formation*.
- Third, unions often try to institutionalize rules of access to employment, based on a variety of criteria well beyond ability to do a job.
- Fourth, unions can regulate the supply of labour by limiting working time. Unions' involvement in social policy, including the administration of public unemployment insurance and labour market policies, enables them to lower the economic pressure on the workers to accept offers of employment that do not fit their skills or their economic needs, or that undercut current minimum standards of the employed workers.

Labour 'demand':

- Unions as political actors exert pressure, electoral and other, on governments for an economic policy that supports a high level of employment.
- Also to influence labour demand, the unions intervene in the organization of work.
- Trade unions were major contributors to the transformation of employment from a spot market contract to an ongoing organizational relationship, or from a contract of work to a contract of employment.
- Trade unions above all pressed for *standardization* of employment contracts, to protect workers from uncertainty, simplify collective regulation, decouple the economic situation of workers from that of their employing organization, and suspend as much as possible the competition between workers, so as to enable them to act in solidarity[11].



LET US KNOW

Collective bargaining: The term 'collective bargaining' was first used in 1891 by Beatrice Webb which was seen as a collective alternative to individual bargaining. Workers come to bargain about their right and terms of conditions with their employers, collectively. Collective bargaining may be varied and is exercised through the process of 'negotiation, joint decision-making, or joint regulation'. It is also characterized by a certain degree of strife between the workers and their management team wherein strikes, 'dharnas', picketing are adopted by workers.

In several countries, there are seats reserved for trade unions in their parliaments. e.g. Senegal. Again, in countries like France, Netherlands and Austria, trade unions play an important role in outlining the national policies and implementation of their programmes. In the European Union, trade unions are a powerful force and are able to lobby for the rights of the workers. The importance of trade unions is manifested in various ways. In Europe, union membership is on the decline and employed people are rather reluctant to be involved with the activities of the unions. In most European states, there are competing union confederations who are 'often divided on political grounds', but now ideological divisions between such unions have declined. Essentially, the strength of trade unions depends on their density and the sector of representation. In the democratic countries, they play a critical role and political parties have their own trade unions. In autocratic or communist countries, very often the trade unions are seen as institutions that legitimize state authority.

Bacarro, Benassi and Meardi have highlighted that 'as workers shift their electoral allegiance from social democratic to new populist parties with nationalist and welfare-chauvinistic agendas, unions decline in organizational terms and their influence shrinks. Yet exactly, the current difficulties of democratic polities offer trade unions an opportunity to reinvent themselves by filling widening gaps of representation, participation and legitimacy.[12] In present times, the emergence of 'service sector' as the main source of employment has definitely weakened the trade union

movement. Globalisation of economies and emergence of multinational companies have ensured that the bargaining capacities of trade unions remain rather limited. The emergence of companies like Flipkart, Amazon, Uber, and AirBnB which are not located in any particular region but are rather spread out, have created new challenges for the workers. Socialism has been largely discredited by political commentators and unionism has not proven to be an attractive narrative for the youths who now willingly adapt to new lifestyles and have been well integrated into the market economy.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.5: What is 'density of trade unions'?

.....

Q.6: What is collective bargaining?

.....

.....

Q.7: Mention any two types of trade unions?

.....

.....

11.6 TRADE UNION MOVEMENTS IN INDIA

Labour movement is a broader term and it encompasses trade union movements. Labour movements seek to promote and protect the rights of labourers and develop a spirit class-consciousness and solidarity amongst its members. While the terms 'labour movements' and 'trade union movements' seem similar, there is a subtle difference. Labour movement is 'for the workers' and trade union movement is 'by the workers'.

In India, the labour movement started in 1875 when a number of measures to improve the lot of the workers were taken by the Government, social reformers and enlightened employers, whereas, the Trade union movement was started in 1918, when the workers formed their association to improve their conditions. Essentially, a trade union movement is a movement by the workers through their trade unions or associations.

11.6.1 Trade Union Movement in India: Historical Overview

1875 to 1918: Industrialization in India also led to wide scale exploitation of women and children. With time, the condition of the workers further deteriorated. In 1875, under the leadership of Sorabji Shaparji along with other social workers , a concerted effort was taken which sought to draw the attention of the Government to the deplorable conditions of woman and child labour in the Indian industries. In 1877, in the town of Nagpur, workers of the Empress Mills observed a strike over wage rates. In 1881, the first Indian Factory Act was passed, applicable to the new factories which existed in Bombay and Calcutta and limited to the objective of preventing the employment of children below the age of nine. In 1884, under the leadership of N.M. Lokhande a memorandum was submitted to the Second Factory Commission to highlight the poor conditions of the workers. In 1890, the Bombay Mill Hand Association was formed which was the first trade union in India. N.M. Lokhande also started the workers' first newspaper, 'Dinabandhu' which sought to highlight the condition of workers and the state of prevailing economy. Subsequently, several associations came into being- The Printers' Union of Calcutta (1905), The Bombay Postal Union at Calcutta and Madras (1907),The Kamgar Hitwardhak Sabha (1909). But most of these were moderates in nature, as they did not really challenge the British Government. These associations however laid down the foundations of the trade union movement in India.

1918-1938: The interwar period witnessed the amalgamation of thoughts and activities of social workers, labour leaders and politicians in India. The labour unrest was a common phenomenon across the country.

(i) The First World War resulted in grave economic difficulties. The rising costs forced the workers to take up collective action;

(ii) The Swaraj Movement also intensified the movement,

(iii) The success of Russian Revolution 1917 also helped promote class consciousness among the workers;

(iv) The establishment of the International Labour Organisation in 1919 also sought to promote the rights and dignity of the workers.

(v) The non-cooperation movement (1920-21) led by Mahatma Gandhi during 1920-21 led to greater mobilization of workers to stand up for their rights and dignity.

During this period, under the leadership of B.P. Wadia, in 1918, The Madras Textile Labour union was formed. The formation of the All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) on 30th October, 1920 was a key event in the Trade Union movement in India. In 1926, the Trade Union Act was passed and a period of regulated trade unionism started. However, the subsequent splits of the AITUC did not help the cause of Trade Union Movement in India. The creation of bodies like All India Trade Union Federation (AITUF which was renamed Nation Trade Union Federation (NTUF), Red Trade Union Congress (RTUC), All India Railway men's Federation (AIRF) and the National Federation of Labour (NFL) reflected the fragmented nature of traded union movement in India.

1939-1947: During the Second World War, while employers were rewarded for their support to the British Government, it also promulgated The Defence of India Rule 81-A which prohibited strikes and lockouts. In 1947, the Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC) was formed which was the labour wing of the Indian National Congress.

1947 onwards: In post-independence period, the formation of several political parties and their quest to control trade unions did not help the cause of ordinary workers and labourers. They continued to be neglected and exploited from all directions. Important acts such as Factories Act 1948, and the Minimum Wages Act 1948, the Employees' State Insurance Act 1948, the Plantations Labour Act 1951 have been passed. Over the years, several important trade unions have come together to solve their differences, only to be split up subsequently.

11.6.2 Contemporary Challenges to the Trade Union Movements in India

The trade unions in India have got legal status, and are regularly consulted by the state bodies in the planning process. However, it has also been realized that such unions are increasingly getting sidelined with the adoption of new economic policies and changing industrial policies of the government. Presently, there are five major central trade unions each having a membership of above 5 lakhs and all India character- The All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC), The Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC), the Centre of Indian Trade Union (CITU), the Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS) and the Hind Mazdoor Sabha (HMS). Again, there are occupational trade unions which seek to represent only particular segments of the workers eg. The All India Bank Employees Association, National Federation of Indian Railway men, All India Mine Workers Federation etc.

The Indian labour market is very much dominated by informal labour and protecting the rights of such workers has proved to be a great challenge. 'Labour market flexibility' and 'social protection' are two of the key issues plaguing industrial relations in India. Generally, trade unions face several challenges today. Compared to the European countries, trade unions in India comprises less than 50 percent of workers. Most trade unions are rather having very limited members and seldom are able to bargain with their employers. Such unions are financially weak and their fund raising capacities are rather limited too. Political interference and their affiliation to political parties are a boon and a bane, and this has not helped trade unions bargain collectively. Political affiliation of trade unions has led to inter trade union rivalry which has jeopardised the rights of the workers. For many trade unions, important issues such as medical welfare, education and training facilities of workers and their wards too have not been attained. Trade unions have been criticized by many because they seldom address the issue of inefficiency amongst the workers. Low wages, illiteracy, migratory nature of workers have all contributed to the further

deterioration of condition of workers. Disputes between the workers and employers have become a major challenge. Mitchel, Mahy and Gahan in their work on labour relations have noted that 'the sheer volume of disputes to be dealt with by the labour courts and tribunals has led to inordinate delays at both the referral and settlement stages of the conciliation and adjudicative process. This has hurt the economy and the interests of the workers as well. Multiplicity of trade unions, duplication of work, inefficiency amongst the workers and neglect by state planning and training bodies has led to further problems for the Indian economy and for the workers themselves. Liberalisation of economy, privatization of industries including those in the public sector, and disinvestment policies of the government have resulted in growing anxiety amongst the workers. The emergence of 'Special Economic Zones', start-ups and growth of an incentivized economy has ensured that workers will not be in a position to bargain collectively as before. Contractual engagements, new pension schemes, and lack of social security will hurt the rights of workers in the coming years.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.8: What is name of the first trade union of India?

.....

Q.9: What is the full form of AITUC?

.....

Q.10: Write a brief note on trade union movement in India during 1918-1938.

.....

.....



11.7 LET US SUM UP

- The trajectory of growth of trade union movement varies from country to country and it is closely linked with the socio-economic conditions of their times.

- The British trade unions were largely a product of the industrial revolution and the 'guilds' assumed the initial form of a union.
- However, unlike in Europe, where trade union movement gained momentum after the war, in the United States, trade unionism only declined.
- Trade unions have acquired a legal status in most democratic countries. Trade unions have to register themselves, submit taxes and maintain all proper records of its members.
- Ideologies such as Marxism and Communism, has ensured that the cause of trade unions is well incorporated into the political agenda of the Left parties in most countries. However, many trade unions also reflect their affinity towards the ruling dispensation.
- The importance of trade union also rests on the role they play in protecting the rights of the laborers and workers through the process of 'collective bargaining'.
- Labour movement is 'for the workers' and trade union movement is 'by the workers'.
- N.M. Lokhande also started the workers' first newspaper, 'Dinabandhu' which sought to highlight the condition of workers and the state of the prevailing economy.
- The Indian labour market is very much dominated by informal labour and protecting the rights of such workers has proved to be a great challenge.
- Liberalisation of economy, privatization of industries including those in the public sector, and disinvestment policies of the government has resulted in the growing anxiety amongst the workers.



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11.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: Richard Hyman

Ans to Q No 2: The Amalgamated Society of Engineers, formed in 1851, developed an organizational structure consisting of a centralized organization with district committees and collected union fees based on membership.

Ans to Q No 3: 1969

Ans to Q No 4: In the developing world, the trade union movements have a rich history, as they were part of the nationalist movement (India) or have been integral to the formation of government (South Africa). The Trade Union movement is witnessing a period of transformation. Democratic forces are beginning to play an important role; however, forces of globalization are beginning to dictate terms.

Ans to Q No 5: The membership of trade unions varies according to the nature of industry. Large membership of trade unions helps their process of collective bargaining.

Ans to Q No 6: The term 'collective bargaining' was first used in 1891 by Beatrice Webb which was seen as a collective alternative to individual bargaining. Workers come to bargain about their right and terms of conditions with their employers, collectively.

Ans to Q No 7: 1. White- or blue-collar workers: Lawyers Union, Bank Unions

2. General unions, which include workers from various occupations and industries: AITUC.

Ans to Q No 8: Bombay Mill Hand Association (1890)

Ans to Q No 9: All India Trade Union Congress

Ans to Q No 10: The interwar period witnessed the amalgamation of thoughts and activities of social workers, labour leaders and politicians in India. Labour unrest was a common phenomenon across the country. The Swaraj movement intensified the trade union movement in India.



11.10 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

A) Very Short Questions

Q. 1 : The International Labour Organization received the Nobel Peace Prize in the year_____. (Fill in the blank)

Q. 2: Who used the term 'collective bargaining' for the first time?

Q. 3: State the meaning of apartheid.

B) Short Questions (Answer each question in about 150 words)

Q. 1: Write a note on the challenges to the Trade Union Movement in India in contemporary times.

Q. 2: How has globalization and privatization of economy affected the functioning of trade unions?

C) Long Questions (Answer each question in about 300-500 words)

Q. 1: Discuss the growth of trade union movement in the USA.

Q. 2: Analyse the nature of Trade Unions.

Q. 3: Discuss the significance of Trade Unions.

End Notes:

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[10]Ibid., p.124

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UNIT 12: ECOLOGICAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENTS IN INDIA: CHIPKO MOVEMENT, NARMADA BACHAO ANDOLON

UNIT STRUCTURE

12.1 Learning Objectives

12.2 Introduction

12.3 Ecological and Environmental Movements: Meaning and Nature

12.4 Various Environmental Movements in India

12.4.1 Chipko Movement

12.4.2 Narmada Bachao Andolon

12.5 Significance of Environmental Movements in India

12.6 Let Us Sum Up

12.7 Further Reading

12.8 Answers to Check Your Progress

12.9 Possible Questions

12.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- know the meaning and nature of environmental movements in India
- narrate the major environmental movements that took place in India
- describe the significance of the environmental movements in India

12.2 INTRODUCTION

Environmental movement is a social movement that involves an array of individuals, groups and coalitions that perceive a common interest in environmental protection and act to bring about changes in environmental

policies and practices. Most often environmental movement is also referred to as ecology movement, which is a movement inclusive of preservation and green politics. Environmental movement is also understood as a diverse scientific, social, and political crusade for addressing environmental concerns. Environmentalists across the globe promote the idea of sustainable management of resources and curatorship of the environment through modifications in public policy and most importantly individual conduct. The movement is balanced on ecology, health, and human rights, takes cognizance of humanity as a participant in maintaining the ecosystem. In this unit, we are going to discuss the ecological and environmental movements in India with special reference to Narmada Bachao Andolon and Chipko Movement.

12.3 ECOLOGICAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENTS: MEANING AND NATURE

Ecological and environmental movement is an international uprising, represented by many organizations, ranging from the big to grassroots organisation, based in the nooks and corners of countries across the globe. Due to its huge participation, varying and resilient principles, environmental movement is not always integrated in its objectives. The movement also incorporates a few other movements with a more precise motivation, such as the climate movement. In its broadest sense, the movement is represented by individual citizens, professionals, experts, religious enthusiasts, politicians, scientists, not-for-profit organizations, individual environmentalists and more.

Environment is derived from the French word *'Environner'* which means to encircle or surround. All the biological and non-biological entities surrounding us are included in environment. As per Environment (Protection) Act, 1986, environment includes all the physical and biological surroundings of an organism along with their interactions.

Environmental movement is a type of "social movement that involves an array of persons, groups and coalitions that observe a common interest

in environmental protection and act to bring about changes in environmental policies and practices" (Tong, Yanki 2005).

Environmentalism implies a political and ethical movement that seeks to improve and protect the quality of the natural environment through changes to environmentally harmful human activities.

Environment is thus defined as "the sum total of water, air and land and the interrelationships that exist among them and with the human beings, other living organisms and materials."

Regarding the nature of environmental movement, we may put forward the following points:

- The environment in which we are living plays a significant part in our existence. The environment comprises all the usual assets such as air water, land, forests, minerals and more.
- It is vital to reiterate that the environmental movements are a manifestation of the socio-ecological fallout of scarcely imagined development policies based on temporary criteria of exploitation. Environment crusaders have triggered micro-action strategies for the protection of natural resources and to make available the macro concept for ecological growth both at the national and regional echelons.
- The environmental movements which are also termed as the ecology movements address diverse environmental issues through socio-political and scientific movement.
- It is centered on ecology, health and human rights and advocates the sustainable management of resources and stewardship of the environment through changes in public policy and individual behaviour.
- Environmental movements are international in nature where various organisations of various countries participate with their specific interests.
- The goals of the environmental movements are not similar. It is because of their specific focus, issues, different organizational structure and beliefs etc. In other words, it includes common people, professionals, scientists, NGOs etc.

- The scope of the environmental movement is wide which include any issues related to environment and its protection.

12.4 VARIOUS ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENTS IN INDIA

The origin of the environmental movement lay in the response to increasing levels of smoke pollution in the atmosphere during the Industrial Revolution. The emergence of great factories and the concomitant immense growth in coal consumption gave rise to an unprecedented level of air pollution in industrial centers; after 1900 the large volume of industrial chemical discharges added to the growing load of untreated human waste. The environmental movement began to take shape in North America when John Muir, one of the earliest environmentalists, convinced the U.S. congress to create the Yosemite National Park to preserve the beautiful valley. Many other conservation efforts began to take place across the continent with people trying to protect the dwindling American bison population. In 1916, then President of U.S., Woodrow Wilson founded the National Park Service, which deeply supported the growing environmental movement. The environmental movement only continued to grow in the 1950s, 60s, and 70s with many influential books being published. Among these the Silent Spring (1962)' was one. Silent Spring was written by American biologist Rachel Carson. It was especially influential as it exposed the harmful and dangerous effects of the pesticide DDT. The book was so important for the environmental movement that it leads to the creation of the Environmental Protection Agency in 1970 and DDT was banned in 1972. The 1970s were greatly important for the green movement with many groups. The first Earth Day and the UN's first environmental conference also happened in the 70s. Into the 1980s, a growing awareness on global warming brought the environmental movement even more into the mainstream.

The origin of the environmental based movement in India can be traced back to the early twentieth century when people protested against the commercialisation of forest resources during the British colonial period. In India, the first environmental movement was believed to be started by Bishnoi community.

However, it was from 1970, environmental movement started in large numbers in India. Some of the movements have widened their focus from basic survival needs to ecological concerns. In modern India, two prominent environmental movements are namely, the Chipko Movement and the Narmada Bachao Andolon. A brief description of some of the prominent environmental movements in India and detail description of Chipko movement and Narmada Bachao Andolon are given below:

- **Bishnoi Movement**

  As said above, the first environmental movement was believed to be started by Bishnoi community in India. This movement took place in the 1700s, at Khejarli, Marwar region, in the Rajasthan state. The leader of the movement was Amrita Devi who was supported by other Bishnoi villagers of Khejarli and neighboring villages. The aim of the Bishnoi uprising was to protect sanctified trees from being mowed down by the king's soldiers who were clearing space for making a new palace.

  Bishnoi is a religious sect found in the Western Thar Desert and northern states of India. This religious sect was founded by Guru Maharaj Jambaji in 1485 AD in the Marwar (Jodhpur) desert region. Jambaji recognised the importance of trees and banned cutting down of trees. This community carries the ideology of Jambaji, therefore worship nature. The Bishnoi movement was led by Amrita Devi in 1731. The movement erupted as a protest against the native king Ajit Singh of Jodhpur who ordered to take away the trees from the forest region near the village of Khejarli, where Bishnoi villagers fostered an abundance of khejri (acacia) trees, for construction of a palace. Around 363 villagers sacrificed their lives to protect the forest by clinging to them. Later, the king apologised for the incident and declared the region as protected area.

- **Jungle Bachao Andolon**

  The Jungle Bachao Andolon took place in the 1980s in the Singhbhum district of Bihar. The Jungle Bachao Andolon was led by tribals of

Singhbhum of Bihar, as an opposition against the government's resolution to substitute the natural Sal forest with high priced Teak. Many called this movement as "Greed Game Political Populism". Far along this movement picked momentum in Jharkhand and Orissa.

- **Appiko Movement**

  The Appiko movement took place in 1983 in the Uttara Kannada and Shimoga districts of the Karnataka State.

  The greatest strength of the Appiko movement lies in the fact that it was being neither motivated by a persona nor was it ever officially institutionalised. Nonetheless, it did have an initiator in Pandurang Hegde who helped to kick start the movement in 1983. The Appiko movement rose against the clear-cutting and commercialization of natural forest which had begun to disintegrate the ancient livelihood system. Many consider the Appiko movement to be the southern form of the Chipko movement. The Appiko Movement was commonly known as "Appiko Chaluvali". The locals hugged the trees which were to be chopped by contractors of the forest division. The Appiko movement made use of varied techniques to raise consciousness. Some such methods were organising foot marches in the central part of the forest, making presentations using slide shows, folk dance presentations to communicate about the movement, street plays and more. The second focus of the Appiko movement was to work for the promotion afforestation on stripped lands. The movement at a later stage also focused on the balanced usage of ecosphere by familiarizing the people about alternative energy resources so that the pressure on the forest can be reduced. The movement became a huge success and managed to stop the project of the forest department.

- **Tehri Dam Conflict**

  The Tehri Dam conflict of the 1990s was located at the Bhagirathi River near Tehri in Uttarakhand. Sundarlal Bahuguna was the leader of the Tehri Dam Conflict which rose in protest was against the

dislodgment of town populations and environmental concern of the weak bionetwork. Tehri dam fascinated national attention in the 1980s and the 1990s. The main oppositions include, seismic sensitivity of the area, submergence of forest parts along with Tehri town and more. In spite of the backing from other noteable leaders like Sunderlal Bahuguna, the movement was unsuccessful to gather enough widespread support at national as well as global levels.

- **Save Silent Valley Movement**

  This movement was started in the year 1978 in the area of silent valley which is an evergreen tropical forest in the Palakkad district of Kerala. It was led by the Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishad (KSSP) an NGO, and the poet-activist Sughathakumari to protect the Silent Valley.

  This movement took place against the proposed hydroelectric dam project by the Kerala State Electricity Board (KSEB) across the Kunthipuzha River which runs through Silent Valley. Due to the pressure from several corners, in January, 1981, Indira Gandhi made a declaration of protecting the Valley. But, in June, 1983, under the chairmanship of Prof. M. G. K. Menon Commission the Centre re-examined the proposed project. However, it was abandoned in November, 1983 and in 1985, former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi inaugurated the Silent Valley National Park formally.

12.4.1 Chipko Movement

The Chipko movement took place in 1973, in the Chamoli district and later at Tehri-Garhwal district of Uttarakhand. The Chipko movement was led by Sundarlal Bahuguna, Sudesha Devi, Govind Singh Rawat, Bachni Devi, Gaura Devi, Chandi Prasad Bhatt, Shamsher Singh Bisht, Dhoom Singh Negi and Ghanasyam Raturi.

The primary objective of the movement was to safeguard the trees that grew on the Himalayan inclines from the machetes of contractors of the woodland. Sundarlal Bahuguna educated the villagers by educating them about the significance of trees in the

ecosystem which prevents the erosion of soil, cause rains and delivers pure air. Following which the women of Advani village of Tehri-Garhwal secured the sacred yarn around trunks of trees and they embraced the trees, henceforth it was called 'Chipko Movement' or 'hug the tree movement'. The key mandate of the people in these demonstrations was that the paybacks of the forests (especially the right to fodder) should be given to the local residents. The Chipko movement gathered impetus in 1978 when the women confronted police firings and other afflicts. The then state Chief Minister, Hemwati Nandan Bahuguna established a commission to investigate the issue, which ultimately ruled in favor of the villagers. Chipko Movement became a landmark point in the history of eco-development battles in the area and across the globe.

Destruction of livelihood of poor through exploitation of natural resources by the rulers or the dominant class, faulty developmental policies of the government which threat the basic survival needs of the poor, damage to environment are some of the vital reasons of the emergence of environmental movements in India. Several forest based environmental movements have been recorded in the post-independent India. Chipko is one major movement among such protest movements. This movement is based upon the implications of state management of forest resource on the peoples' livelihood opportunities and the issue of exploitation of the local communities by dominant section of the society. Details of the Chipko movement will follow in the next section.

The Chipko movement originated in Uttarakhand region of India. It is a mountainous region with noticeably high mountains ranging from 1000 ft. to 25000 ft. above the mean sea level. Himalayas had rich forests, which had long been central to the livelihood strategies of the mountain people. Terrace agriculture and animal husbandry constituted the dominant economic activity of the people. The forests provided essential inputs like leaf manure for farming, grazing and

fodder for cattle, and fuel and foodstuff for household consumption; thereby meeting the basic subsistence needs of the local public.

The Chipko movement began to protect the Himalayan forests from destruction. Many protests were organised against the colonial forest policy during the early decades of the twentieth century. The forest policy of both colonial and independent India was adverse to the livelihood opportunities of the people. Even with the collapse of the colonial structure the policy, the pattern of resource use by the state continued along the colonial lines. The design of the 1952 Forest Policy followed the outlines of the Forest Policy of 1894, thereby reinforcing the state's right to exclusive control over forest resources and their management. The Forest Department resorted to the monoculture plantation of Chir Pine at the cost of far more productive trees for local agro-forestry. The commercial exploitation of forest by outside entrepreneurs with government approval resulted in indiscriminate felling of trees with devastating ecological consequences. The main demand of the local people in these protests was to entitle the benefits of the forests, especially the right to fodder, to local people.

Studies show that in early 1973, the forest department allotted ash trees to a private company. This incident provoked the Dasholi Gram Swarajya Sangha (DGSS) a local cooperative organisation to fight against this injustice through lying down in front of timber trucks and burning resin and timber depots as was done in the quit India movement. As leaders of the movement were the ardent follower of Gandhian thought of non-violence, they did not support of earlier act of protest. It is reported that the strategy of 'embracing' the trees in the forest to prevent tree from being felled by the contractors was thought of by Chandi Prasad Bhatt, one of the leaders, in a meeting in the Mandai on April 1st 1973. The name of the Movement, that is, 'Chipko' comes from the word 'embrace' in Hindi. With its success, the movement was spread to other neighboring areas and popularly known as Chipko movement.

The contribution of Sunderlal Bahuguna, another prominent leader of Chipko movement, is also significant. He brought the movement to prominence through a trans-Himalayan march of about 5000 km during 1981-83 to gather support from the villagers. The march ended with a meeting with then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi who later passed legislation to protect some areas of the Himalayan forest. Bahuguna coined the Chipko's slogan "Ecology is permanent economy." Chipko Movement is largely influenced by the above mentioned Bishnoi Movement.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.1: What is environmental movement?

.....

Q.2: When did the first environmental movements start?

.....

Q.3: When and where did Chipko Movement take place?

.....

Q.4: Fill in the blanks :

a)The Chipko movement originated in the ……. region.

b)The Chipko comes from the word '…….' In Hindi.

Q.5: How does the Chipko movement depict the Gandhian ideology of non-violence? (in 50 words)

.....

.....

.....

12.4.2 Narmada Bachao Andolon

The Narmada Bachao Andolon took place in 1984 in the Narmada River, which flows through the states of Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra.

Medha Patker, Baba Amte, supported by adivasis, farmers, environmentalists and human rights activists became the leaders of

the Narmada Bachao Andolon. The objective of the Narmada Bachao Andolon was a social movement challenging the construction of a large dams across the Narmada River. The movement first began as a demonstration for not providing proper rehabilitation and relocation for the people who have been expatriated owing to the construction of Sardar Sarovar Dam. Later on, the movement shifted its attention on the conservation of the environment and the ecologies of the valley. Campaigners also called for the reduction in the height of the dam to 88 m from the projected height of 130m. As a fallout of this movement World Bank pulled out from the project. The environmental dispute was taken into court and in October 2000, the Supreme Court pronounced a ruling allowing the construction of the Sardar Sarovar Dam with a clause that height of the dam could be elevated to 90 m. By contrast the height was much higher than the 88 m which anti-dam campaigners had demanded, but it is certainly lesser than the proposed height of 130 m. The project is now mainly sponsored by the state governments and market loans. The project is projected to be completely ready by 2025.

The Narmada Basin covers an area of approximately 94, 500 square kilometers between the Vindhya and the Satpura ranges in Central India. It is the site of the Narmada Valley Development Project (NVDP), an ambitious project that seeks to harness the river Narmada that flows through the three states of Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Gujarat, which envisages that thirty big dams; one hundred and thirty-five medium dams, and three thousand small dams will be constructed on the Narmada river and its forty-one tributaries. However, the Narmada basin has such characteristic that has led the people to oppose the project envisaged by the state. This is because between gorges flanked by densely forested basaltic hills, the 1312 kilometers long Narmada Valley contains large alluvial plains in Madhya Pradesh. To the West, the Narmada River meanders through Gujarat widening into a 25-kilometer long estuary as it flows into the Gulf of Cambay. More than 22 million people live in the valley and several tribal groups,

particularly Bhils and Gonds occupy the forested uplands. The project is estimated to affect over 2.5 lakh of people. The Sardar Sarovar Project (SSP) and the Narmada Sagar Project (NSP) are the two biggest dams to be constructed in the Narmada River, and the SSP alone will submerge 245 villages: 19 in Gujarat, 33 in Maharashtra, and 193 in Madhya Pradesh. Thus these two projects have remained controversial owing to their large-scale displacement and problems of humane rehabilitation. This has resulted in the emergence of a protest movement unique of its kind called the 'Narmada Bachao Andolon'.

The movement has drawn upon a multiplicity of discourses for protests such as displacement risks and resettlement provisions; environmental impact and sustainability issues; financial implications of the project; forceful evictions and violations of civil liberties; issues pertaining to river valley planning and management; implications of western growth model, and alternative development and appropriate 'technology, among many others. The movement uses various tools of protest such as Satyagraha (political action based on truth and non-violence as coined by Gandhi), Jal Samarpan (sacrificial drowning in the rivers), Rasta Roko (road blockade at strategic points), Gaon Bandhi (refusing the entry of government officials in to the villages), demonstrations and rallies, hunger strikes and blockade of projects.

The Narmada Bachao Andolon has successfully brought to public domain the hitherto closed and protected discourse on mega development projects, thereby opening new vistas for environmental movements. The protest also has pointed out the necessity to address the shortcomings in institutional frameworks governing big developmental projects.

In the environmental realm, the Narmada Bachao Andolon is involved in a struggle to protect local ecological resources like forests and rivers. In the economic realm, it articulates a conflict over access to productive natural resources like forests, land and water that are under threat of exploitation by the three riparian states and the

transnational corporations. In the cultural front, it articulates to protect the identities and solidarities of the communities affected by the project which are grounded around issues of kinship, neighbourhood and the everyday social interactions. Hence, the movement involves interplay of various socio-political, economic and environmental variables at different levels. This movement provides a challenging and a unique opportunity for a social scientist to comprehend its dynamic and transformative character and its consequent implications to public policy and the society.

12.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENTS IN INDIA

The environment in which we are living plays a significant part in our existence. The environment comprises all the usual assets such like air water, land, forests, minerals and more. It is the responsibility of the individuals to safeguard the natural resources. Conversely, owing to certain reason or the other, there is a lot of misappropriation of these natural resources, in the form of land dilapidation, water pollution, air pollution, soil erosion and deforestation. All these dynamics lead to worsening of our environment. There are occurrences where people have repealed and embraced non-violent action movements for guarding their environment.

A well-known fact is that environmental and public health is a continuing struggle within India. The first steps towards environmental movement in India was taken in the year 1964 by Dasholi Gram Swarajya Sangh, which was a labour cooperative founded by Chandi Prasad Bhatt. It was inaugurated by SuchetaKriplani and established on a land bequeathed by Shyma Devi. This enterprise was ultimately followed up with the Chipko movement starting in 1973.

The most unadorned single event reinforcing the environment movement was the Bhopal gas leak of 3 December 1984. An estimated 40 tons of methyl isocyanate was leaked, instantaneously killing 2,259 people and eventually affecting 7,00,000 people of the area.

In contemporary India one can witness an almost unobstructed exploitation of resources because of the enticement of new consumerist way of life. The balance of nature is disturbed. This has steered numerous conflicts in the society.

It is vital to reiterate that the environmental movements are a manifestation of the socio-ecological upshot of scarcely imagined development policies based on temporary criteria of exploitation. The movements disclose how the resource-intensive stresses of development have innate tendencies of ecological devastation and economic dispossession.

Environment crusaders have triggered micro-action strategies for the protection of natural resources and to make available the macro concept for ecological growth both at the national and regional echelons. In the past five decades resource utilization has taken place at an extraordinary level. Rigorous, agricultural and industrial creations have flagged the way for proliferation in demands for the resources which has ensued into struggles over natural resources.

Note that, these conflicts take a more serious turn when the industrial establishments consuming the resources face encounters from communities, whose subsistence is reliant on these resources and are endangered by obliteration and over use of the resources. Such struggles, which are founded on the worsening condition of the natural resources, are leading to environmental uprisings of different intensities in different parts of India.



12.7 LET US SUM UP

- Environmental movement is a social movement that involves an array of individuals, groups and coalitions that perceive a common interest in environmental protection.
- Most often environmental movement is also referred to as ecology

movement, which is a movement inclusive of preservation and green politics.

- The scope of the environmental movement is wide which include any issues related to environment and its protection.
- The origin of the environmental based movement in India can be traced back to the early twentieth century when people protested against the commercialisation of forest resources during the British colonial period.
- In India, the first environmental movement was believed to be started by Bishnoi community. This movement took place in the 1700s, at Khejarli, Marwar region, in the Rajasthan state. However, it was from 1970, environmental movement started in large numbers in India.
- The Chipko movement took place in 1973, in the Chamoli district and later at Tehri-Garhwal district of Uttarakhand. The primary objective of the movement was to safeguard the trees that grew on the Himalayan inclines from the machetes of contractors of the woodland.
- The Narmada Bachao Andolon took place in 1984 in the Narmada River, which flows through the states of Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra.
- The objective of the Narmada Bachao Andolon was a social movement challenging the construction of a large dams across the Narmada River.



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12.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: Environmental movement is as a social or political movement, for the preservation of environment or developing the environment for the future generations.

Ans to Q No 2: 1973, Chamoli district and later at Tehri-Garhwal district of Uttarakhand.

Ans to Q No 3: Initial interest in the environment was a facet of the Romantic Movement in the early 19th century. And systematic efforts began in 1870s, in response to industrialization.

Ans to Q No 4: a) Uttarakhand b) Embrace

Ans to Q No 5: The strategy of embracing trees is said to have been agreed to after a deliberation which had to decide a method of resisting the axe-men from the felling of trees in the forests keeping in consonance with the Gandhian ideology of non-violence as the entire programme was being espoused by the Savodaya workers. Thus the name 'Chipko' was derived from the consensual strategy of clinging on to the trees as a non-violent direct action.



12.10 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

A) Very Short Questions

Q. 1 : What do you understand by the term environmental movement?

Q. 2: The ---------- movement originated in Uttarakhand region of India. (Fill in the blank)

Q. 3: Mention the main objective of the Chipko Movement.

Q. 4: The Narmada Bachao Andolon took place in the year ----------. (Fill in the blank)

B) Short Questions (Answer each question in about 150 words)

Q 1: What are factors related to environmental movement?

Q 2: What are the parameters that denotes the term 'environment'? Elaborate

Q 3: Write a short note on various environmental movements in India.

Q 4: Explain the significance of the environmental movements in India.

C) Long Questions (Answer within 300-500 words)

Q 1: Explain the Chipko Movement.

Q 2: Explain the Narmada Bachao Movement.

Q 3: Describe the overall consequences of the Chipko and the Narmada Bachao Movement in India.

Q 4: Write a small history of environmental movements in the World and in India.

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UNIT 13: AUTONOMY MOVEMENTS IN ASSAM: KARBI-DIMASA AND BODO MOVEMENTS

UNIT STRUCTURE

13.1 Learning Objectives

13.2 Introduction

13.3 Concept of Ethnicity

13.4 Origin and Developments of Autonomy Movements in Assam

13.5 Factors Responsible for the Growth of Autonomy Movement in Assam

13.6 Karbi-Dimasa Movement

13.7 Bodo Movement

13.8 Let Us Sum Up

13.9 Further Reading

13.10 Answers to Check Your Progress

13.11 Possible Questions

13.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- know about the concept of ethnicity
- explain the origin and developments of autonomy movements in Assam
- discuss the factors responsible for the growth of autonomy movements in Assam
- describe the Karbi Dimasa Movement and Bodo Movement.

13.2 INTRODUCTION

Autonomy movements are the movements which are carried out by people and which emerge from issues related with ethnicity. Ethnicity refers to the self- consciousness of a group of people who share among them similar cultural and national traditions, language, religion, clothing, cuisine

and social background. However, one must understand that the ethnic groups are different from each other. Each group has its own sort of problems and issues. In Assam too, there is the presence of a large number of ethnic groups. This has caught the attention of the centre at different periods in the past and it still continues. The presence ethnic groups in the region has led to developments of different autonomy movements in the State. The Karbi-Dimasa and Bodo movements are important events in the history of Assam. This chapter is therefore concerned about dealing with the issues in-depth.

13.3 CONCEPT OF ETHNICITY

- **Meaning**

The word ethnicity actually signifies a race. However, there is still a difference between race and ethnicity. It does not have a strict racial connotation, as race is something which is based on physical similarities among people. Ethnicity refers to the self- consciousness of a group of people who share among them similar cultural, national traditions, language, religion, clothing, cuisine and social background. These groups are referred to as ethnic groups. Race is more or less biological in nature whereas ethnicity is cultural. Ethnicity is a concept which deals with a similar way of life or shared culture. For example, Han Chinese is the largest ethnic group in the world. Moreover, there are also many small indigenous groups spread across different nations. This groups share the same social traits among themselves or within their community.

Ethnicity is one of such important ideas which is responsible for social cohesion. However, different conflicts arise also due to ethnicity related issues. Generally, the ethnic people ensure that their identity is always preserved and protected from the other groups or people. This often leads to a variety of conflicts in the society, especially between the minor ethnic groups and the mainstream. Moreover, there are also evidences in which one group tries to end the existence of another group in the name of protecting their own identity. This problem is known as ethnic cleansing.

This is the reason why many thinkers and scholars have viewed the concept of ethnicity as something negative in nature. On the other hand, ethnicity has a positive view too. It gives a proper identity to a group of people, which makes it easier to reach out to those people.

One must not confuse the ideas of ethnicity with nationality. Nationality is all about citizenship and many ethnic communities can reside within a nation, each different from one another. That means there are nations which are ethnically heterogeneous in nature. Examples are United States, Philippines, Australia, and Panama. Moreover, there are also nations with homogenous ethnic groups like China, Germany, Finland, and Egypt. Many countries like Nigeria, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka experienced various sort of ethnic problems in the past as well as present. India is also facing different challenges related to ethnicity which have surfaced in the form of autonomous movements in various states. As such, the concept of ethnicity occupies an important position in the study of politics and society of a region.

- **Definitions**

According to *Wsevolod W. Isajiw*, ethnicity is a concept which deals with four main approaches. Ethnicity is conceived as a primordial phenomenon as per the first approach; ethnicity is conceived as an epiphenomenon; ethnicity is conceived as a situational phenomenon, and ethnicity is conceived as a purely subjective phenomenon.

Banton considers ethnicity as a rational choice option of an individual under any situation.

Bell and *Ross* elucidated ethnicity as actions of a particular group which deal with the mobilization of the resources with an aim to put or assert pressure on the political system in order to allocate goods with the interest of ensuring benefits of the members of the group.

Okamura and *Nagata* seek to explain the concept of ethnicity as the flexible activities of the ethnic identity which involves itself in organizing the basic meaning of the social relationships within the requirements of variously structured social situations.

According to the *Cambridge Dictionary,* ethnicity is a distinct group of people who have the same origins of race and culture.

The *Merriam Webster Dictionary* has elucidated ethnicity as the affiliation of the people to a particular ethnic group.

- **Characteristics**

  The ethnic groups are not identical with each other. That means there are differences in terms of culture, belief, traditions among the ethnic groups. But, more or less their basic characteristics are similar. The following are some of the characteristics that have been identified.

- **Ascriptive Identities**

  Ascriptive identities like language, caste, region, religion, and etc are the core elements of ethnicity or an ethnic group. The main cause of conflict between the ethnic groups is the inequality of power sharing among the groups.

- **Relative Deprivation**

  The ethnic groups are believed to suffer from relative deprivation. This is because most of the ethnic groups are minorities in a State due to their population size. Moreover, they are the groups who are confined in a fixed territory. This makes them appear distinct.

- **Ethnic Movements**

  Ethnicity gives birth to ethic movements whenever the ethnic people are deprived of the developmental process of the State. Moreover, unequal development is also another reason for the ethnic people to join movements to assert their claims.

- **Political Interest**

  The ethnic group is also an important element of political interest. For instance, ethnicity in Indian politics plays a major role in grassroots dissent and can ascertain political future of the country. Moreover, they themselves (the ethnic groups) take an active part in interest group politics.

- **Dynamic**

  Ethnicity is not a static concept. It is dynamic in nature especially in terms of their identity and boundary. Their identity and boundary also changes with the changing circumstances.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.1: Ascriptive identities like language, caste, region, religion etc. are the core elements of ethnicity. (True/False)

.....

Q.2: Ethnicity gives birth to _____ movements. (Fill in the blank)

Q.3: Define Ethnicity.

.....

.....

.....

.....

Q.4: Briefly explain the characteristics of ethnicity?

.....

.....

.....

.....

13.4 ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENTS OF AUTONOMY MOVEMENTS IN ASSAM

Assam is a very important state of North-East India both in terms of geography and history. The state of Assam is purely a multi-religion, language and ethnic society. The presence of a large number of ethnic people in the region has caught the attention of the centre at different periods in the past and it still continues. The presence of the ethnicity in the region has led to developments of different autonomy movements in the State. Before going to the central topic of discussion let us understand in brief the historical background of the State.

In August 15, 1947, India achieved her Independence. But, the Independence of the Nation was at the cost of Partition. The Partition of the Indian State actually bifurcated the territory creating two sovereign nations, India and Pakistan. This resulted in restructuring of the boundaries

of most of the states of India too. One of such restructuring also took vehemently in Assam. The process of partition transferred two district of Sylhet to Pakistan. The Chittagong Hill Tract also went to Pakistan. After the drawing of the final boundary, the story did not end there. The complex ethnicity of the region led to the birth of new forms of ethnic discontent against the Indian State. One of such popular discontents was the growth of the autonomy movements in Assam. These are the movements through which different particular ethnic groups demanded special privileges and autonomy for themselves which ranges from different social, economic and political protections up to the demands for separate statehood.

The centre of the ethnic discontent was the ethnic group of people who were then living in the hill areas of colonial Assam. To note here, all hill tribal areas and the people were not originally the part of Assam. At different periods, the hill tribes were brought under the colonial control. During the British rule, there was a policy of exclusion which was practiced with those people. They were kept aloof from the plain people. This policy of segregation in the colonial Assam introduced by the Britishers, gave birth to the problem of ethnicity which later was passed to the post-colonial period leading to the demands for separation from the Indian colony. The Britishers considered the tribals as primitive community. They differentiated them under categories like excluded or backward or partially excluded. There were introduction of several laws by the British administration to keep the tribals aloof. This includes laws like District Act of 1884, Frontiers Trait Regulation Act of 1880, Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation Act, Section 52 A of the Government of India Act, 1919 through which the Governor General in Council was empowered to declare any territory to be a backward tract and pass any legislative act in the areas concerned. However, with times and expansion of Christianity and English education led to the emergence of a middle class among those hill tribes which understood the core realities of the policies and thus they demanded autonomy for the community people and establishment of a separate identity was raised.

At the time of Independence, the new Indian government gave serious considerations to end the deadlock between the mainstream and the tribal

people. Under the chairmanship of *Gopinath Bardoloi,* the then Assam Premier, a sub-committee was established. The committee visited the tribal areas and understood the sensitivity of their problems and issues. As such, the committee recommended the creation of District Council (under the Six-Schedule of the Indian Constitution). It was envisaged that the District Council will deliver them autonomy in their local administration and politics. The sixth schedule therefore came into existence (Sixth Schedules were discussed and passed by Constituent Assembly between September 5-7, 1949) in order to address the ethnic discontent in the newly independent India.

The tribal autonomy which was introduced in the form of District Council created with the provisions of the sixth schedule of the constitution however did not for a long time address discontent among the ethnic tribes. In 1960, the Assam Legislative Assembly passed the Official Language Bill through which Assamese was made an official language in Assam but the same did not gone well with the hill or ethnic people. It widened the gap between the plain and hill people. As a result, in August 21, 1960 the All People Hill Leaders Conference (APHLC) demanded the creation of a separate hill state of Assam. Though the central government at the time tried their level best to contain the problem, but all their efforts failed and in 1960, Nagaland was created as a separate state. It was followed by creation of Meghalaya in 1972, Mizoram in 1986 and North-East Frontier Tract (NEFT) was renamed as Arunachal Pradesh. This was how Assam stood divided.

The problem of ethnic discontent was not only limited to the hill people but also among the plain people. The plain tribes also demanded autonomy in similar fashion like the hill tribes. Among the plain tribes, it was the *Bodo* people who were prominent. There were also some other plain tribes which also demanded autonomy. They were the *Tiwas, Rabhas, Missings, Deuris, and Sonowals Kacharis.* If we look into the colonial history of Assam, we will not find any stance of autonomy or ethnic discontent among the plain tribes. Later on, with the emergence of a new middle class, many prominent plain tribal leaders became politically mature and conscious. Moreover, the Migration of Muslim peasants from East Bengal and their settlement in the tribal areas were the cause of the starting of discontent. In 1933, finally

the Plains Tribal League (PTL) was formed to raise the socio-economic problems of their community. They demanded certain political, social and economic equality but separate statehood was not in their list of demand. It is to be noted here that after the introduction of the sixth schedule in the Independent India, the plain tribes were excluded from its provisions.

In 1967, the newly formed Plains Tribal Council of Assam demanded a separate political arrangement for the plain tribal people of Assam. They wanted to have a separate state named '*Udayachal'* which would encompass the plain tribal areas of the Northern parts of Goalpara, Kamrup, Darrang, Lakhimpur and Sibsagar districts. However, the demand did not become a reality. At the same time, a new demand for the creation of Bodoland by dividing Assam in equal proportion was started by the All Bodo Student Union (ABSU) and Bodo Sahitya Sabha, which subsequently also saw a violent uprising. Later on, the Bodoland Autonomous Council came into existence and finally the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) was formed (in the year 2003) under the sixth schedule of the constitution of India, which includes the districts of Kokrajhar, Chirang, Udalguri, and Baksa.



ACTIVITY 13.1

Try to list out and figure the major social changes that took place as a result of development of autonomy movements in Assam.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.5: The tribal autonomy introduced in the form of District Council was created with the provisions of the sixth schedule of the constitution. (True/False)

.....

Q.6: In _____ finally the Plains Tribal League (PTL) was formed to raise the socio-economic problems of their community. (Fill in the blank)

Q.7: Nagaland was created a separate state in the year _____.

(Fill in the blank)

Q.8: Write the demand regarding *Udayachal*?

.....

.....

.....

13.5 FACTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE GROWTH OF AUTONOMY MOVEMENT IN ASSAM

There are different factors that are responsible for the growth of autonomy movements in Assam. This factors range from social to economic and political issues. Let us understand it under the following headings.

- **History**

  The first migration of people which took place in the region was that of the tribals. In fact they are the original inhabitants of the region. This is the primary claim on the basis of which the tribals sought autonomy. Moreover, it has been observed that the tribes are generally concentrated over a particular geographical area. They are not scattered in nature. The concentration in fixed area for a period of time enable them to mobilise their community and assert their demands and highlight their grievances.

- **Inspiration from Other Movements**

  It has been observed that the tribal movements got inspired from one other movements. For instance, the Assam Movement paved the way to the Bodo Movement. This is also the reason behind the rise of most of the autonomy movements which are similar in nature. If any autonomous tribal movement is able to achieve their demands, then automatically, it provides a guiding framework for other movements to follow its footprints.

- **Plain Tribes**

  Under the sixth schedule, autonomy is being provided to the tribals of North-East India. The vision behind the implementation of

the sixth schedule was to attain the goals of integrating the nation and its people. But, one of the major reasons for discontentment of the sixth schedule was that the plain tribes were not incorporated under the provision. This however, led to the emergence for new demands for autonomy by the plain tribes. The first tribe to raise such demand were the *Bodos* and later the *Tiwas, Rabhas,* and *Missings.* As such, the provisions of the sixth schedule of the Indian constitution also responsible for the entire circumstances.

- **Middle Class**

Originally the tribal people were not so educated or learned. But gradually, with times, a section of the tribal people got access to education and knowledge of the world. This newly educated people in the community were the new middle class. They were by now aware of their conditions and sufferings. As a result, a discontent arose among the tribal people. Most of the people associated themselves with the social movements asserting their demands for self-development and upliftment. The tribal people also understood that the solution to the problems of their lives lies in the autonomy and new and separate political arrangements. Moreover, the plain tribes of Assam, though merged with the Assamese culture, some of them tried to maintain their uniqueness and thus were much conscious of identity and self-determination. This led to the emergence of the numerous autonomous movements and the middle class actively participated in it.

- **Tribal Pressure Groups**

There has also been the presence of different tribal pressure groups especially among the plain tribes which was another important factor responsible for the growth of autonomy movement in Assam. In 1933, the Plains Tribals League was formed. The land issue was vehemently pursued by the particular plain tribal organization. There was the birth of another organization named

the Tribal Sangha in 1954. The main agenda of the Tribal Sangha was the tribal autonmy question. Later on, the Plains Tribal Council was formed which paved the way for a separate statehood.

- **Socio-Economic Conditions**

  The tribal people were economically not that sound. They were mostly poor and were associated with the agricultural sector. But, the lack of a profitable market and communication system thwarted their developments. As a result, they remained underdeveloped and deprived. Moreover, land problems also emerged. The government failed to protect the tribal lands from outsiders (non-tribals). In some cases, the government themselves allotted the tribal lands to others in the name of development. In terms of employment, they too faced discrimination. The conflict even started between the plain and hill tribes. Gradually, many of the tribal people started losing faith in the system of governance and they felt that unless and until they get autonomy and protection, development of their people and region is not possible.

- **Language Policy**

  As already mentioned above, in 1960, the Assam Legislative Assembly passed the Official Language Bill through which Assamese was made an official language in Assam. But this did not go well with the hill or ethnic people. It widened the gap between the plain and hill people. As a result, in August 21, 1960, the All People Hill Leaders Conference (APHLC) demanded for the creation of a separate hill state of Assam. Though the central government at the time tried their level best to contain the problem but all their efforts failed and in 1960, Nagaland was created as a separate state. It was followed by the creation of Meghalaya in 1972, Mizoram in 1986 and North-East Frontier Tract (NEFT) which was renamed as Arunachal Pradesh. This was how Assam stood divided.



LET US KNOW

The Autonomous Councils are given varying degrees of autonomy within the State Legislature. In Assam, there are 3 Autonomous Councils under the Sixth-Schedule of the Indian Constitution. The 3 Autonomous Councils are Bodoland Territorial Council, Dima Hasao Autonomous District Council and Karbi Anglong Autonomous District Council.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.9: Language policy was not a factor for the growth of autonomy movement in Assam. (True/False)

.....

Q.10: Write briefly about how one autonomy movement led to another movement.

.....

.....

.....

Q.11: What are the different factors which contributed to the growth of autonomy movement in Assam?

.....

.....

.....

13.6 KARBI-DIMASA MOVEMENT

The sixth schedule of the Indian constitution led to the emergence of the autonomous councils in Assam in some parts. But, the provisions were not that effective to contain the discontent which was caused due to the inadequacies of the councils in uplifting the lives of the people and addressing their grievances. This led to the Karbi-Dimasa autonomy movement which went through different developments in course of time even leading to violent militancy.

Under the sixth schedule, Karbi Anglong has been an autonomous distinct. In 1995, the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) came into existence. Karbi Anglong is one of the largest districts in Assam and a home to a large number of ethnic people. The ethnic population comprises the *Karbis, Kukis, Dimasas, Rengma Nagas, Bodos, Hmars, Garos, Tiwas,* and *Man (Tai Speaking).* The entire region has for a long time in the past witnessed different ethnic conflicts. The location of the district lies in the central Assam. East Karbi Anglong (EKA) and West Karbi Anglong (WKA) are the two divided regions. The administrative headquarters of Karbi Anglong is located at Diphu. (in East Karbi Anglong).

Karbi Anglong has been the most backward regions in Assam. There were corruptions and the people have been the victim of the ineffectiveness of the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC). The KAAC failed to address the local issues of the Karbi Tribe and did not bring any upliftment in the political, cultural and linguistic identity. Moreover, there has been inequality in terms of government allocation of funds. All these factors thwarted the development of the region. Moreover, the non-Karbis of the region were also not satisfied with the overall government functioning.

In 1960, the Assam Legislative Assembly passed the Official Language Bill through which Assamese was made an official language in Assam. But, it did not go well with the hill or ethnic people. It widened the gap between the plain and hill people. As a result, in August 21, 1960 the All People Hill Leaders Conference (APHLC) demanded for the creation of a separate hill state of Assam. In 1979, Karbi Anglong People's Conference (KAPC) also demanded the need for a separate state for the hilly population of Assam. Gradually, the movement also took a violent turn when two militant groups, Karbi National Volunteers (KNV) and Karbi People's Force (KPF) raised their demand for separate statehood.

The demand for a separate state hood was also raised during 1960s by the Dimasa people. The Dimasa people are basically the inhabitants of the North-Cachar Hills Autonomous District Council, Karbi Anglong Autonomous District Council, Cachar District, Nagaon District of Assam and the Dhansiri region of Nagaland State. From a very long time, the

Dimasa people were unhappy with the governance and felt deprived in many sectors. There were also various clashes that took place between the Dimasa and Karbi people. The existing district of Dima Hasao which was earlier popular as the North Cachar Hills District actually came into existences as a part of ancient Kamarupa. The demand for more and more autonomy and various other associated causes also led to violent clash in 2003 between the *Hmars* and the Dimasas in 2003 and in 2005 between the Karbis and the Dimasas. The relationship between the ethnic groups of both the North Cachar Hills and Karbi Anglong District deteriorated and suffered since then.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.12: In 1960, the Assam Legislative Assembly passed the Official Language Bill through which Assamese was made an official language in Assam. (True/False)

.....

Q.13: The demand for a separate state hood was also raised during the period of 1960s also by the _____people. (Fill in the blank)

13.7 BODO MOVEMENT

Bodoland is an area located in the north bank of the Brahmaputra River in the State of Assam. Currently, the map of Bodoland includes the Bodoland Territorial Autonomous Districts (BTAD), including districts of Kokrajhar, Baksa, Chirang and Udalguri. The Bodos has remained for centuries as a backward class, as farmers or weavers. Cultural assimilation with Assamese was not productive. Following India's Independence, the Bodos were given opportunities to take the advantages of Scheduled Tribe status. This process has led to the creation of tribal belts and blocks.

In the early 1960s, the Plain Tribal Council of Assam (PTCA), a political party representing the Bodos and other plain tribes of Assam realized that the tribal belts and blocks are gradually being acquired by the rich landlords

and the new immigrants through illegal means. Moreover, the Bodos had little or no access to economic aid that was given by the Central government. Finally, in 1967, PTCA demanded a Union Territory called Udayachal to carve out of Assam. Udyachal would comprise those areas of tribal belts and blocks. But the demand was not materialized. By 1970, it became clear that Bodos had little influence in the Indian political system. Moreover, in Assam, the Bodos were neglected. The financial packages meant for the them were diverted and misused.

In 1987, All Bodo Students Union (ABSU) became very conscious about decades of neglect and jointly with the Bodo political parties demanded separate state, named Bodoland. This was the beginning of the Bodo Movement. The official Bodo Movement for an independent Sate of Bodoland started on March 2, 1987 under the leadership of Upendranath Brahma of the ABSU. The ABSU also created a political organization i.e. the Bodo People Action Committee (BPAC) to spread the movement. The ABSU/BPAC movement began with the slogan divide Assam into 50-50. In the mid-1980's, armed struggle also was led which stressed on the cleansing of the non-Bodos along the north bank of Brahmaputra. When the attempts made by All Assam Students' Union (AASU) to drive out illegal migrants (1979-85) was slowing down, the demand for separate Bodoland was gaining momentum.

In 1993, the ABSU/BPAC leadership ended with the Bodo Accord and creation of Bodoland Autonomous Council initiated. But the accord soon collapsed due to the split between ABSU and political parties. In the late 90s, the Bodoland movement came under the control of the extremist groups like Bodoland Liberation Tiger Force (BLTF) and National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB). Violence at various intervals started. In 2003, the Bodoland Territory Council (BTC) Accord was signed to end the one and half decade long Bodo Movement. BTAD was established, with districts Kokrajhar, Baksa, Chirang and Udalguri. But, even today, such demands for separate statehood exist and protests takes place accordingly.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.14: In 1993, the ABSU/BPAC leadership of the movement ended with the Bodo Accord and the creation of Bodoland Autonomous Council initiated. (True/False)

.....

Q.15: The official Bodo Movement for an independent Sate of Bodoland started on March 2, 1987 under the leadership of _____of the ABSU. (Fill in the blank)



13.8 LET US SUM UP

- Ethnicity refers to the self- consciousness of a group of people who share among them similar cultural, national traditions, language, religion, clothing, cuisine and social background. These groups are referred as ethnic groups.
- One must not confuse the ideas of ethnicity with nationality. Nationality is all about citizenship and many ethnic communities can reside within a nation, each different from one another.
- The ethnic groups are not identical with each other. That means there are differences in terms of culture, belief, traditions between the ethnic groups. But, more or less their basic characteristics are similar.
- Assam is a very important state of North-East India both in terms of geography and history. The state of Assam is purely a multi-religion, language and ethnic society.
- The presence of a large number of ethnic people in the region has caught the attention of the centre at different periods in the past and it still continues. The presence of the ethnicity in the region has led to the developments of different autonomy movements in the State.
- There are different factors that are responsible for the growth of autonomy movements in Assam. This factors range from social to

economic to political issues. They are History, Inspiration from other Movements, Plain Tribes, Middle Class, Tribal Pressure Groups, Socio-Economic Conditions and Language Policy.



13.9 FURTHER READING

1) Dutta, N. (2012). *Questions of identity in Assam.* New Delhi: Sage Publications.
2) Hussain, M. (1993). The Assam movement: class, ideology, and identity. Delhi: Manak Publications.
3) Talukdar, M. (2017). *Assam after Independence.* Guwahati: Nanda Talukdar Foundations.



13.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: True

Ans to Q No 2: Ethic

Ans to Q No 3: According to *Wsevolod W. Isajiw*, ethnicity is a concept which deals with four main approaches. Ethnicity is conceived as a primordial phenomenon as per the first approach, next, ethnicity is conceived as an epiphenomenon, third, ethnicity conceived as a situational phenomenon, and last, ethnicity conceived as a purely a subjective phenomenon.

Ans to Q No 4: Some of the characteristics of ethnicity are:

Ascriptive identities like language, caste, region, religion, and etc are the core elements of ethnicity or an ethnic group. The main cause of conflict between the ethnic groups is the inequality of power sharing among the groups.

The ethnic groups are believed to suffer from relative deprivation. This is because most of the ethnic groups are minorities in a

State due to their population size. Moreover, they are the groups who are confined to a fixed territory and are mobilized socially. This makes them appear distinct.

Ethnicity gives birth to ethic movements whenever the ethnic people are deprived of the developmental process of the State. Moreover, unequal development is also another reason for the ethnic people to join movements to assert their claims.

The ethnic group is also an important element of political interest. For instance, ethnicity in Indian politics play a major role in grassroots dissent and can even ascertain political future of the country. Moreover, they themselves (the ethnic groups) take an active part in interest group politics.

Ethnicity is not a static concept. It is dynamic in nature especially in terms of their identity and boundary. Their identity and boundary also change with the changing circumstances.

Ans to Q No 5: True

Ans to Q No 6: 1933

Ans to Q No 7: 1960

Ans to Q No 8: In 1967, the newly formed Plains Tribal Council of Assam demanded a separate political arrangement for the plain tribal people of Assam. They wanted to have a separate state named as '*Udayachal'* which would encompass the plain tribal areas of northern parts of Goalpara, Kamrup, Darrang, Lakhimpur and Sibsagar. However, the demand did not become a reality.

Ans to Q No 9: False

Ans to Q No 10: It has been observed that one tribal movements got inspired from other movement. For instance, the Assam Movement paved the way to the Bodo Movement. This is also the reason for which most of the autonomy movements are similar in nature. If any autonomous tribal movement is able to achieve their demands, then automatically, it provides a guiding framework for the other movements to follow its footprints.

Ans to Q No 11: The different factors are History, Inspiration from Other Movements, Plain Tribes, Middle Class, Tribal Pressure Groups, Socio-Economic Conditions, and Language Policy.

Ans to Q No 12: True

Ans to Q No 13: Dimasa

Ans to Q No 14: True

Ans to Q No 15: Upendranath Brahma



13.11 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

A) Very Short Questions

Q. 1 : Under the sixth schedule, autonomy is being provided to the tribals of _____India. (Fill in the blank)

Q. 2: The ethnic groups are believed to suffer from relative deprivation. (True/False)

Q. 3: What is ethnicity according to Bell and Ross?

B) Short Questions (Answer each question in about 150 words)

Q. 1: Describe in brief the Bodo Movement.

Q. 2: Explain the Karbi-Dimasa Movement.

C) Long Questions (Answer each question in about 300-500 words)

Q. 1: Explain the origin and developments of autonomy movements in Assam.

Q. 2: Discuss the factors responsible for the growth of autonomy movements in Assam.

Q. 3: Describe in your own words the problems associated with the autonomy movements in Assam.

*** ***** ***

UNIT 14: IDENTITY MOVEMENT IN ASSAM: ASSAM MOVEMENT

UNIT STRUCTURE

14.1 Learning Objectives

14.2 Introduction

14.3 Meaning and Nature of Identity Movement in Assam

14.4 Origin and Development of the Assam Movement

14.5 Features of the Assam Movement

14.6 Consequences of the Assam Movement

14.7 Let Us Sum Up

14.8 Further Reading

14.9 Answers to Check Your Progress

14.10 Possible Questions

14.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to;

- know about the meaning and nature of identity movements in Assam
- explain the origin and development of the Assam movement in Assam
- discuss the features of the Assam movement
- understand the consequences of the Assam movement .

14.2 INTRODUCTION

Identity politics generally denotes the type of politics that takes place on the basis of identity. The anti-foreigner movement or Assam Movement that started in mid- 1979-1985 was certainly one of the biggest identity movements in the political history of Assam. The movement which sparked out of the political chaos and vacant Lok Sabha seat of Mangaldoi which proved the theory of growth of influx in Assam. While preparing the voter list for the election, the first flag was raised over inclusion of 45,000 doubtful

citizens in the electoral roll of that constituency. Subsequently, under the active public participation, the entire nation witnessed a massive popular movement. The Assam Movement is not at all an isolated event. It had made significant impact in the entire nation. More importantly, the Assam Movement was responsible for shaping the politics of Assam for the next subsequent years. It had also provided new debates on the issue of illegal residents of Bangladesh occupying different regions of Assam. This chapter will therefore highlight the events and implications of the identity movement of Assam.

14.3 MEANING AND NATURE OF IDENTITY MOVEMENT IN ASSAM

- **Meaning**

The term 'identity' literally refers to the idea of who a person is or what he/she is. It is something which provides a tag to the people so that they could be easily noticed or identified. Since human being became conscious of their existence in this world and became aware of their capabilities, they started identifying themselves more precisely. This identity, gradually with times, occupied a significant position in the domain of politics. Identity politics thus took its course. This identity politics encompasses questions of religion, gender, race, ethnicity, social, cultural or any other identity. Once people started identifying themselves in certain social or other categories, identity politics starts. It is not a narrow approach. In fact, it is much wider than traditional party politics. It gets itself associated with other people or groups of people sharing the same identity and together asserting their rights of which they are deprived of. This process as a result gives birth to different social movements which by now are known as the identity movements especially shaped and carried out in order to preserve and protect respective identity questions of a people.

Identity movements are also social movements. But, identity movements generally emerge with the assumption of the deprivation of a

certain group in the mainstream and the fear of losing their identity which motivate them to unite and move towards the movement for reclaiming their identity. For example, the identity movement of the Assamese people in the 70s, was a reaction against the illegal migration that took place from Bangladesh. Another prominent example of identity movement is the gay movement or the feminist movement in the west which asserted the rights and opportunities for their community. As such, identity movements are the movements against injustice of a particular social group. Through the identity movements, which have a history of emergence in the second half of the twentieth century, more political freedom for the marginalized groups and sometimes even demands for the right to self-determination emerged.

- **Nature**

Identity politics generally denotes the type of politics that takes place on basis of identity because of which it is also known as identity-based politics. Identity based politics is a phrase that occupies an important position in the social sciences and humanities. In the domain, it is used to describe the use of the category of identity as the main tool to establish political claims. Identity politics is also used to promote political ideologies and to direct political actions. This happens with the prevalence of inequality and injustice among the people. Identity politics helps in asserting group uniqueness and acquiring power and recognition.

Another important characteristic of identity politics is that it has been always a platform for those people who are oppressed and suffering for a long time. It emerges with the raising of consciousness and collective action among the oppressed. The continuing and active suffering of the people under a society where there exist systemic social inequities is the first step towards the politics of identity. The politics on identity helps in articulating the sufferings and oppressions. Identity politics therefore involves tensions and struggles over the right to equality and fair treatment in the society.

The phrase identity politics has gained momentum in the second half of the twentieth century. This was due to the emergence of various

social movements and their diversities. The women's movement, lesbian and gay movement, African American movement and their development etc. contributed to the shaping of the question on identity. Moreover, the nationalist and post-colonial movements are also responsible. Throughout these movements, the question on sameness and differences occupied the central theme in the identity movements. Later, in the twenty-first century with the development of other spheres of human life, the identity movement also intensified with a raising awareness and knowledge among the people.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.1: This identity politics encompass questions of religion, gender, race, ethnicity, social, cultural or any other identity. (True/False)

.....

Q.2: Identity politics generally denotes the type of politics that takes place on the basis of _____. (Fill in the blank)

Q.3: What do you understand by the term identity politics?

.....

.....

Q.4: 'The phrase of identity politics has gained momentum in the second half of the twentieth century'. Elucidate.

.....

.....

.....

14.4 ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE ASSAM MOVEMENT

The unrest in Assam was initially a result of fear among the Assamese people of losing their identity and culture following the influx of a large number of Bengali Muslims from the erstwhile East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) in search of land and employment, a practice which has been

continuing since much before the Partition, when the over-populated province of Bengal began settling its indigent inhabitants in the sparsely-populated Assam. In the mid-1979, there was beginning of the students' movement against the foreigners which actually became the most read political history in Assam. Let us now understand the origin and development of the Assam movement in our discussion below.

The Assam Movement or the anti-foreigner movement took place between the years 1979 to 1985. However, the increase in the number of foreigners spread a fear psychosis in Assam that this population from Bangladesh is a severe threat to the identity of the indigenous inherited rights of the inhabitants since the Independence. It was in October 1946 when the region saw the first influx of Hindu refugees in considerable number following the Noakhali riots. There were large scale migrations from Bangladesh (then East Pakistan) to Assam between 1948 and 1971. The Assam movement took a concrete form with the vacancy that was created in the seat of Mangaldoi Lok Sabha constituency with the death of the incumbent Hiralal Patwari in 1978. Before the time of preparation of by-election for that particular seat, it was observed that the number of voters had drastically increased. It was apprehended that there were actually presence of voters who were basically not of Indian origin (foreigners). This resulted in the demand for postponement of the election by All Assam Students Union (AASU) until the foreigners are detected and deported. This is the issue which developed the Assam movement that finally lasted till six long years.

The voter list which was prepared for the by-election alleged to have included 45, 000 of doubtful citizens to the electoral list of that constituency. The Mangaldai Students Union managed to get access to the voter list of 1967 and 1977. They alleged that there were foreigners whose names were not in the first voter list of 1967, but in the second list of 1977, they were included. The Mangaldai students union opposed the holding of the election. The two main persons who were responsible for the detection of the presence of foreigners was *Hiranya Kumar*

Bhattacharjee, then DIG of Assam Police and *Premkanta Mahanta,* then Superintendent of Police. These two personas were in fact also known as the key founders of the Assam Agitation. They were the ones who met the Mangaldai students' leaders and urged them to file objections. The objections were heard on the basis of the Form 6, and this was the time, when uproar started with the summoning of those 45, 000 people before the Magistrate.

The All Assam Student Union stepped in and together with the leaders of Mangaldai student body took up the issue more seriously and went forward to make it a state-wide campaign against the foreigners. The situation became tensed with the declaration of dates for fiiling nomination papers for the seventh Lok Sabha election. The AASU demanded that until and unless the names of illegal immigrant are removed from electoral roll, there shall be no election. On 27 November 1979, the AASU and the All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad (AAGSP) came together under one platform and asked all educational institutes be closed as a mark for the protest. Moreover, there was picketing in almost all the offices of the state as well as central government. There was mass picketing in the polling offices, in order to prevent any candidate from filing nomination papers. There was also state wide bandh declared in the last day of nomination. There was curfew deployed over the main areas of Assam including Guwahati.

The Illegal Migrants (Determination by Tribunals) Act was passed by the Indian parliament and implemented in Assam. But, due to severe criticism, the act finally led to the dissolution of the act in 2005 by Supreme Court of India. Finally, the movement came to an end with the signing of the Assam Accord by then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in 1985. There was also the emergence of the first regional party of Assam the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) which won the 1985 elections. There were 855 martyrs who died fighting for the cause of preserving the identity of Assamese people during the course of the people's movement of Assam.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.5: The Illegal Migrants (Determination by Tribunals) Act was passed by Indian parliament and implemented in Entire India except Jammu and Kashmir. (True/False)

.....

Q.6: On_____, the AASU and the All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad (AAGSP) came together under one platform and asked all educational institute be closed as a mark for the protest. (Fill in the blank)

Q.7: Which is the main event that paved way for the Assam Movement.?

.....

.....

14.5 FEATURES OF ASSAM MOVEMENT

The Assam Movement (1979-85) was a popular movement in Assam. It was a movement where thousands of people voluntarily participated for the cause. Moreover, this movement also gave a special credit to the student union of Assam i.e. the AASU for being able to mobilize the people from all corners of the State and leading the movement from the forefront. The Assam movement always provides a critical understanding to the situations in Modern Assam. Some main features of the movement such as the role of the AASU, the principles of the movement, two theories that emerged during the course of the movement and the intervention of the RSS and changing dynamics are to be discussed in some details.

- **Against Foreigners**

The first feature of the Assam Movement is that the movement was basically against the illegal immigrants of Assam. The Illegal immigrants are those people who have been residing in India without official permission. The largest groups of such people are the Bangladeshis. From time to time, different reports have claimed the presence of illegal immigrants which

act as a threat to the demographic and political identity of the Assamese people. Therefore, the anti-foreigner movement or Assam Movement that started in mid- 1979-1985 was certainly one of the biggest milestones of the political history of Assam. The movement which sparked out of the political chaos and vacant Lok Sabha seat of Mangaldoi proved the theory of growth of influx in Assam. While preparing the voter list for the election, the first flag was raised over the inclusion of 45,000 doubtful citizens in the electoral roll of that constituency.

- **Non-Violence versus Violence**

Another notable feature of the Assam Movement is that though the movement started with the principles of non-violence, but at some occasions, violence was observed. On November 6th, 1979 a mass Satyagraha was organized in the Judges Field. After this, the entire course of agitation started. Satyagraha was also observed from November 12th to 17th that year and from November 19th to 21st, besides picketing in the government offices. The movement, led by All Assam Students Union (AASU) and the All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad (AAGSP), demanded the Indian government to identify and expel those immigrants and to put efforts to protect and provide the constitutional, legislative and administrative safeguards to the indigenous Assamese people. The articulation of the movement was largely peaceful but incidents like Nellie massacre (1983) and Khoirabari massacre (1983) were points when the movement went extreme violent. The Nellie massacre claimed lives of 2,191 people officially and Khoirabari massacre claimed almost 100 to 500 lives.

- **Two Emerging Theories**

There have always been two theories in respect of the nature and reasons of the Assam Movement. The first theory views the Assam Movement as an outcome of the fear of the indigenous people being transformed into minority in their own land due to the heavy influx of the foreigners. This was the generally accepted theory which took an extreme form in the rise of the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA). On the

other hand, the second theory has emerged from the people associated or belonging to the left ideology of politics. According to them, there was an expansion of the leftist ideology in the State of Assam during that time and to prevent its spread in other states of the North-Eastern region of India, the Assam movement was a pre-planned strategy. Since, the leftists have a strong hold in Bengal and Tripura, the advocates of the theory argue that the rise of left politics in Assam was negated because it believed that the left ideology would take the region further close to China. Therefore, in the name of foreigners' movement, the left ideology and its spread was thwarted and crushed.

- **Advent of the RSS**

This has been another significant development which took place during the Assam movement. The advent of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh in Assam during the Assam agitation began with the arrival of then secretary of RSS, Rajendra Singh and the regional organizer of the North-East India, K.S. Sudarshan. They entered the scene while there was a debate on the issue of linguistic hatred towards others in Assam. Their intervention started a new discourse which added a religious dimension to the ongoing protest against the foreigners. Now, there was an emergence of a section of leaders who wanted to shift the movement against the religious minorities i.e. the Muslim Bangladeshis. Therefore, to sum up we could say that the popular Assam movement which was linguistic in nature at the beginning also saw shifting positions at times with focus on religion due to the active role of the Janasangh and RSS.

- **The AASU**

One of the important mouth pieces of the people of Assam is the All Assam Students' Union. The entire Assam Movement was led by different leaders of AASU who transformed it into a peoples' movement. The people of Assam came under the banner of AASU and fought against the illegal migrants in order to protect their identity. The AASU has also played an important role in signing of the Assam Accord. The AASU began to raise the voices against the inclusion of illegal immigrants in the voter list and

mobilized the people to participate in their programmes in large numbers. While there were preparations for the Lok Sabha election, the AASU demanded the identification and deportation of Bangladeshi people from Assam and then to hold the elections. They had even warned the political parties not to contest election of otherwise to face strict consequences. The All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad (AAGSP) was formed by the AASU in August 1979 which included the AASU, Assam Sahitya Sabha, and Purbanchaliya Lok Parishad. Later on, the Jatiyatabadi Dal, Asom Yubak Samaj and Young Lawyers Forum also joined the Gana Parishad. Massive Satyagrahas were also observed by the AASU. For six long years, the AASU has remained in the forefront runner of the Assam Agitation, which not only led the movement but also shaped Assam's future politics.



LET US KNOW

Clause 6 of the historic Assam Accord states: "Constitutional, legislative and administrative safeguards, as may be appropriate, shall be provided to protect, preserve and promote the cultural, social, linguistic identity and heritage of the Assamese people".



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.8: The people of Assam came under the banner of AASU and fought against the illegal migrants in order to protect their identity. (True/False)

.....

Q.9: The All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad (AAGSP) was formed by the AASU in _____. (Fill in the blank)

Q.10: What happened with the advent of RSS into the Assam Movement?

.....

.....

.....

14.6 CONSEQUENCES OF THE ASSAM MOVEMENT

The Assam Movement is not at all an isolated event. It had made significant impact in the entire nation. More importantly, the Assam Movement was responsible for shaping the politics of Assam for the subsequent years. It had also provided new debates on the issue of illegal residents of Bangladesh occupying the regions of Assam. Let, us try to understand the consequences of the Assam Movement.

- **Assam Accord**

The first immediate consequence of the Assam Movement is the Assam Accord. The Assam Accord was a Memorandum of Settlement (MoS) which was signed in the year 1985, on 15th August, between the representatives of the Government of India and the leaders of the Assam Agitation. The six year long Assam Movement came to an end with the signing of the Accord which is basically some agreements made by the two parties in terms of the foreigners issue in Assam. The Accord led to the dissolution of the protest and violence but the clauses which are there in the Accord have not been implemented fully till date. Foreigners Issue, Constitutional, Legislative & Administrative safeguards, Economic Development, Security of International Border, Prevention of Encroachment of Government lands, Restricting acquisition of immovable property by the foreigners and Registration of births and deaths are some of the important clauses under Assam Accord.

- **Emergence of the Hardliners**

Another important development that took place in the eve of the Assam Agitation was that there was the emergence of a militant outfit out of the movement i.e. the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA). The ULFA raised an armed struggle to achieve the objectives of raising their grievances against the foreigners. Moreover, the organization also demanded a separate state of Assam. The organization was therefore banned in the year 1990, as being declared as a terrorist organization.

- **New Face of Regionalism**

The Assam Movement also led to the emergence of regionalism in Assam in the form of the regional party the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP). The identity question of the Assamese people has always remained the dominant factor of regionalism in Assam. This has led to the formation of the AGP in the year 1985 with the end of the Assam Agitation. Therefore, the party itself is a product of the Assam movement. The leaders of the Assam movement got massive understanding of their ground realities of the region. They felt the need of a regional party which would be able to cater to their demands and fulfill their needs. The regionalist feelings of the Assamese people during the Assam movement and the formation of the AGP carved a new chapter in the history of Assam. The AGP was committed to aggressively pursuing the goal to solve the problem of foreigners in Assam.

- **Loss of Lives**

The Assam movement has also some darker sides. Although it was claimed that the Assam movement was a non-violent dissent but still no one could deny the outbreak of violence. We have glaring examples of the Nellie violence that caught the attention of many people. The period of election during 1983 elections was really very disturbing. There were also ethnic clashes which took place at Gohpur. Violence erupted during the clashes between the protesters and government authorities. Even some agitators also targeted left parties workers during the movement. A government record reveals that there were 3, 023 people who were killed in poll related violence in 1983.

- **The IMDT Act**

The Assam movement resulted in The Illegal Migrants (Determination by Tribunal) (IMDT) Act in the year 1983. To set up tribunals for determination of the question whether a person is or is not an illegal migrant, the government of India passed an Ordinance on October 15, 1983. This subsequently led to the IMDT Act which was introduced and passed in the Parliament on December 12, 1983. The act was applicable only in Assam.

Initially, the act was assumed to be the deterrent for the foreigners but soon the act fell into different controversies and emerged as a saviour rather than a deterrent to the foreigners. However, the act was later struct down by the Supreme Court in the year 2005, in the verdict of the case of Sarbananda Sonowal v. Union of India. The fact is that the IMDT Act did not serve the real cause.

- **Cutoff Date Controversy**

The Assam movement however also led to a controversy with regard to the cutoff date. There were indifferences which erupted among the leaders of the Assam Movement on the cutoff date of foreigners' detection. The movement leaders supported the year 1951 as the base year whereas the central government wanted 1971 as the base year. However, the central government brought down the cutoff date to year 1965. But, again in mid-1983, a senior bureaucrat of the Government of India offered some suggestions in order to solve the problems and subsequently put forwarded March 24, 1971 as the base year.

- **Educational losses and an uncertain future**

The Assam movement did hamper the educational atmosphere in the State to a large extent. Many of the youngsters were also disappointed by the ongoing movement and their educational losses. In the year 1980, not a single board or university examination was held. Even after the year 1980, many students started moving out to other states for higher education due to the prevailing tension conditions of the state of Assam. There were also apprehensions of an uncertain future of Assam during the course and the end of movement started. The failure of the IMDT act, the unreachable goals of the Accord within a time frame, the failure of the AGP leadership to give a proper shape to the state of Assam and etc, all these factors contributed towards a future which is still struggling hard to reach at an end to the problems of foreigners and preserving the identity of Assam and its people.



LET US KNOW

The Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2016 is the Bill which amends the Citizenship Act, 1955 to make illegal migrants who are Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan, eligible for citizenship.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.11: The ULFA raised an armed struggle to achieve the objectives of raising their grievances against the foreigners. (True/False)

.....

Q.12: The leaders of the movement supported _____ years as the base year whereas the central government wanted _____ year as the base year. (Fill in the blanks)

Q.13: What is the IMDT Act?

.....

.....



14.7 LET US SUM UP

- The term 'identity' literally refers to the idea of who a person is or what he/she is. It is something which provides a tag to the people so that they could be easily noticed or identified. This identity gradually with times occupied a significant position in the domain of politics. Identity politics thus took its course.
- Identity movements are also social movements. They generally emerge with the assumption of the deprivation of a certain group in the mainstream and the fear of losing their identity which motivate them to unite and move towards the movement for reclaiming their identity.

- Identity politics generally denotes the type of to politics that takes place on the basis of identity. For this, it is also known as the identity-based politics.
- Identity based politics is a phrase that occupies an important position in the social sciences and humanities. Identity politics is also used to promote political ideologies and to direct political actions.
- The unrest in Assam was initially a result of fear of the Assamese people losing their identity and culture with the influx of a large number of Bengali Muslims from the erstwhile East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) in search of land and employment.
- In the mid-1979 there was beginning of the students' movement against the foreigners which actually became the most read political history in Assam.
- The Assam Movement (1979-85) was a popular movement in Assam. It was a movement in the region where thousands of people voluntarily participated for the cause. The Assam movement always provides a critical understanding to the situations in Modern Assam.
- The Assam Movement is not at all an isolated event. It had made significant impact in the entire nation.
- More importantly, the Assam Movement was responsible for shaping the politics of Assam for the subsequent years. It had also provided new debates on the issue of illegal residents of Bangladesh occupying the regions of Assam.



14.8 FURTHER READING

1) Dutta, N. (2012). *Questions of identity in Assam.* New Delhi: Sage Publications.
2) Hussain, M. (1993). The Assam movement: class, ideology, and identity. Delhi: Manak Publications.
3) Talukdar, M. (2017). *Assam after Independence.* Guwahati: Nanda Talukdar Foundations.



14.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: True

Ans to Q No 2: Identity

Ans to Q No 3: Identity movements are also a social movements. It generally emerges with the assumption of deprivation of a certain group in the mainstream and fear of losing their identity which motivate them to unite and move towards the movement for reclaiming their identity. For example, the identity movement of the Assamese people in the 70s, was a reaction against the illegal migration that took place from Bangladesh.

Ans to Q No 4: The phrase identity politics has gained momentum in the second half of the twentieth century. This was due to the emergence of social movement and their diversities. The women's movement, lesbian and gay movement, African American movement and their development all contributed to the shaping of the question on identity. Moreover, the nationalist and post colonist movement are also responsible. Throughout this movement the question on sameness and differences occupied the central theme in the identity movements. Later, in the twenty-first century, with the development of other spheres of human life, the identity movement also intensified with a raising awareness and knowledge among the people.

Ans to Q No 5: False

Ans to Q No 6: 27th November 1979

Ans to Q No 7: The Assam movement took a concrete form with the vacancy that was created in the seat of Mangaldoi Lok Sabha Constituency with the death of the incumbent Hiralal Patwari in 1978.

Ans to Q No 8: True

Ans to Q No 9: August 1979

Ans to Q No 10: The advent of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh in Assam during the Assam agitation began with the arrival of then secretary of RSS, Rajendra Singh and the regional organizer of the North-East India, K.S. Sudarshan. They entered the scene while there was a debate on the issue of linguistic hatred towards others in Assam. Their intervention started a new discourse which added a religious dimension to the ongoing protest against the foreigners. Now, there was an emergence of a section of the leaders who wanted to shift the movement against the religious minorities i.e. the Muslim Bangladeshis.

Ans to Q No 11: True

Ans to Q No 12: 1951 and 1971

Ans to Q No 13: The Assam movement resulted in The Illegal Migrants (Determination by Tribunal) (IMDT) Act in the year 1983. To set up tribunals for determination of the question whether a person is or is not an illegal migrant, the government of India passed an Ordinance on October 15, 1983. This subsequently led to the IMDT Act which was introduced and passed in the Parliament on December 12, 1983. The act was applicable only in Assam.



14.10 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

A) Very Short Questions

Q. 1 : The Assam Movement also led to the emergence of regionalism in Assam in the form of the regional party the _____. (Fill in the blank)

Q. 2: The identity movement also intensified with a raising awareness and knowledge among the people. (True/False)

B) Short Questions (Answer each question in about 150 words)

Q. 1: Describe in brief the issue of identity movement in Assam.

Q. 2: Explain the origin and development of the Assam Agitation.

Q. 3: Describe in your own words whether the Assam movement was a successful movement against foreigners or a failed one?

C) Long Questions (Answer each question in about 300-500 words)

Q. 1: Explain the term Assam Movement. How did it emerge?

Q. 2: Discuss the consequences of the Assam Movement.

Q. 3: What is Assam Accord? Discuss with a reference to its various pros and cons.

*** ***** ***

UNIT 15: WOMEN'S MOVEMENT IN NORTHEAST INDIA: MEIRA PAIBIS, NAGA MOTHERS' ASSOCIATION

UNIT STRUCTURE

15.1 Learning Objectives

15.2 Introduction

15.3 Emergence of Women's Movement in North East India

15.4 Characteristics of Women's Movements in North East India

15.5 Role of Meira Paibis and Naga Mothers' Association (NMA)

15.6 Let Us Sum Up

15.7 Further Reading

15.8 Answers to Check Your Progress

15.9 Possible Questions

15.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- discuss women's Movement in North East India
- explain role of Meira Paibis in shaping society and politics in the state of Manipur
- explain role of Naga Mothers' Association (NMA) in shaping society and politics in the state of Nagaland.

15.2 INTRODUCTION

This unit introduces you to the importance of women's movements in Northeast India. Comprising of eight states (Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Mizoram, Meghalaya, Tripura, and Sikkim), the region of Northeast India is an amalgamation of cultures and is a treasure trove of history. The presence of numerous ethnic groups, dense biodiversity and rich heritage, this region continues to mesmerize one and all. However, this region continues to face peculiar challenges. While the societies in Northeast India do treat women with high regard and women occupy important

positions in individual households, there is very little presence of women in public institutions. The visibility of women continues to be low in spite of their contribution to freedom movement. Again, Northeast India is a region where students' movements as well as environmental movements have gained momentum. Women have been active players in these movements. But when it comes to popular representation, there are very few women legislators in the Assemblies of Northeast India. Many tribal communities have traditional councils; here too women do not get their due recognition. Essentially, determining the status of women in Northeast India continues to be a complex issue. The visibility of women in the 'private' and 'public' domain continue to grow in the opposite directions. In such conditions, women's movements in Northeast India have brought back the issue of contribution of women to society and politics in the states of Northeast India. Ethnic tensions, insurgency, social evils still continue to plague this region and women's movements across the eight states of the Northeast India have taken it as a challenge to address these issues.

15.3 EMERGENCE OF WOMEN'S MOVEMENT IN NORTH EAST INDIA

Mangala Subramaniam in her article *The Indian Women's Movement* (2004) writes:

> The Indian women's movement illustrates the intersection of a multitude of interests: caste, class, ethnicity, religion, and region (rural/urban). The movement currently faces a host of challenges to the efforts to define social change for women, build solidarity, and create new waves of activism in the complex circumstances of the twenty-first century.[1]

Perhaps, the contribution of women to society and politics in the states of Northeast India, as well as the complex nature of challenges they encounter, cannot be discounted or undermined by any stretch of imagination. Women's movements in Northeast India have only gained

momentum and its impact can be felt in different aspects of the society. Women have been at the forefront in addressing issues of alcoholism, drug abuse, peace building and reconciliation in the states of Northeast India. While they were an integral part of India's freedom struggle; as this region emerges from the shadow of violence and insurgency, they have provided 'space' for negotiations between contending parties and have proven to be important tools for reconciliation.

Assam:

Women were an integral part of India's freedom struggle. But a new direction and momentum came in the 1970s when civil liberties movement became stronger. The emergency period of 1975-77 also witnessed the growing political activism amongst women across India and in Assam as well. The declaration of International Women's Year in 1975 by the UNO gave a major boost to women's aspiration and brought into focus issues of their social and political empowerment. Women organizations like *Assam Pradeshik Mahila Samiti* were already making the presence felt. It further boosted the growth of other such organisations like the *All Assam Lekhika Samaroh*. This organization played a key role in putting forward the issue of violence and discrimination against women. Magazines such as *Ardha Akash, Sachetana , Lekhika Aideus Jonaki Bat* also came into circulation where topics of rape, dowry, insurgency etc. were put into spotlight.

The anti-foreigners movement in 1983 also saw the vigorous involvement of women. In 1984, the All Assam Convention of Women's Coordinating Committee was held to discuss the issue of anti-foreigners movement in Assam. There was also the growth of ethnic women movement organisations like Karbi Nimso Chinto Achui. The Bhamuka rape case in Kokrajhar witnessed major agitations led by women. But it is very clear, women movements in Assam lack identity. While women organisations have focused on certain key issues like violence, rape and other social evils, there has not been any sustained movement 'against' or 'for' the ruling establishment. Women's organisations are largely small. Those with large numbers are ususally affiliated to some political party. The anti-

foreigner's movement witnessed spontaneous involvement of women, however, in post Assam Accord, they were completely sidelined in the formation of the government.

Arunachal Pradesh:

Declared a state on 20 February, 1987, is known for its natural beauty and is home to over 26 major tribes.

> **Political History of Arunachal Pradesh**: In 1954, North East Frontier Agency (NEFA), replaced the former name North East Frontier Tracts. Constitutionally a part of Assam, the NEFA administration was not fully integrated with that of Assam. It was administered directly by the Governor of Assam, as a representative of the President of India. The Legislative Assembly of Assam could not enact laws for NEFA. In order to intensify the developmental efforts, NEFA was made a Union Territory in 1972 and if named Arunachal Pradesh. The Union Territory became the 24th State of India in 1987.Source: *Arunachal Pradesh, Human Development Report, 2005*, Department of Planning Government of Arunachal Pradesh, 2006. p.12

Since tribal customs and traditions are dominant in Arunachal Pradesh, the presence of a primitive mode of production, has ensured that women in general do not enjoy the same privileges like those of men. However, the rise of female literacy has led to major changes in the way the Arunachali society perceives women. Now the women of Arunachal Pradesh are seen as extremely mobile and are now challenging the dominant practices that are prevalent in their societies. One of the earliest organisations was the Arunachal Women's Welfare Association which was established in 1979. Looking into the issues of craft adult education centres and women empowerment, this organization has become more visible with the passage of time. However social customs such as 'bride price' and polygamy are still very prevalent. Customary laws have not helped the cause of women to a large extent. Structural inequalities have created barriers to the process of empowerment of women in Arunachal Pradesh. In most cases, women do not inherit parental property and they are largely marginalized in traditional community based institutions or village councils. Instead of a three tier system, following the adoption of a two tier PRI system in 2018, there is a general expectation amongst all the sections of the society that substantial progress in the field of women empowerment will be achieved very shortly.

Meghalaya:

The state of Meghalaya has a matrilineal society rather than a matriarchal society. Compared to other states of India, women occupy an important position in the society. There are several important women's associations such as the Mothers' Union, Ka Seng Longkmie Laitumkhrah etc. who have worked tireless for empowering women in Meghalaya. Largely based on the principles of Christianity, they have strongly advocated the need for strong moral character of children and the need for their education.

Matrilineal society: 'Three characteristics of matrilinearity exist in present-day matrilineal societies. These are descend through the mother (family name through the mother), matrilocal residence system (husband lives in wife's house), and the inheritance of ancestral property by a daughter. These three characteristics are strongly prevalent among the Khasi, Garo, and Jaintia tribes in Meghalaya, which makes them matrilineal societies.'Source: Bhutia, Y., & Liarakou, G. (2018). *Gender and nature in the matrilineal society of Meghalaya, India: Searching for ecofeminist perspectives. The Journal of Environmental Education, 49(4), 328–335.* doi:10.1080/00958964.2017.1407283, p.2.

Mizoram:

The late 1950s was a period of turmoil in Mizoram. State violence and growth of insurgency had begun to take toll on the Mizo society and women were often the victims of such violent conflict. The Mizo society is patriarchal and this has created certain barriers for the empowerment of women in Mizoram. But this does not mean that women have been docile in Mizoram. Ropuiliani, a Mizo chieftain led the Mizoram Resistance Movement against the British in 1872. But today the reality is that women are highly under-represented in all political institutions and key decision making bodies in the state.

The Mizo Hmeichhe Insuihkhawm Pawl (MHIP) which now is an apex body representing several local women's groups, has pushed forward the need for reforms of those laws which severely undermine the status of women in Mizoram. It was created in 1974. With the logo of 'hmui', a charkha, that symbolises Mizo women's creativity and sense of self-reliance and a spirit of 'binding', the MHIP has extensively questioned patriarchal norms of the society. Under the pressure from various corners, The Mizo Marriage, Divorce and Inheritance of Property Bill 2013 was passed by the Mizoram Assembly in 2014.

Manipur:

Composed of two distinct geo-ethnic parts, the state of Manipur is facing challenges from all directions. The tribals groups dominate the hilly region, whereas the Imphal valley is dominated by the non-tribal Meities. Manipur has a long history of resistance and often violence has taken a heavy toll in the society and economy of the state. Women have become the victims. State repression and repressive laws such as the AFSPA have further undermined the rights of the people. Famous for its two *Nupilans* (Female's warfare), women have now become important tools of peace building and reconciliation. In the post-independence period, since the 1980s, Manipur has seen the growth of insurgency and this has especially become a challenge for all. Groups like the Meira Paiboas (women torch bearers) and the Naga Women's Union of Manipur have come to the forefront to address the issue of peace and promote reconciliation between the different warring factions.

Tripura:

Formation of the State of Tripura: 'Tripura was a princely State whose dynasty of tribal kings stretching back to antiquity. After the rule by the Khilji dynasty was established in Bengal in 1240, Tripura became a tributary State to the rulers of Bengal. Later, the East India Company extracted a tribute on the accession of every new prince, sending him a deed of acknowledgment and robe of honour in return. After 1857, there was no treaty between the British government and the rulers of Hill Tipperah (as the British then called Tripura) but the Rajas paid a succession duty to the Government (Hunter 1873: 461). After India became independent, on 15 October 1949, the Regent Maharani of Tripura acceded to the Indian Union as a 'C' category State. Tripura became a Union Territory in November 1956. A popularly elected ministry was formed in Tripura in July 1963 and since then the State has had a government elected on the basis of universal adult franchise. Tripura attained full Statehood on 21st January, 1972.

Source: Tripura Human Development Report, Government of Tripura, 2007, p.3

Tribal groups constitute 31.1% of the population in Tripura. Though patrilineal, women play an important economic role amongst the tribal communities. Though mostly Hindus, they continue to maintain their own traditions and customs. Tripura has witnessed important demographic changes and immigration of East Bengal has affected the society in different ways. Social tensions have now come to the forefront.

Ghosh and Chudhury write-

Under demographic compulsion, rural natives and particularly women face lives of excessive hardship, poverty and unemployment. In the traditional subsistence economy of the tribals, gender disparity was a marginal possibility, although they mostly followed the Hindu tradition of patriarchy. But today, development has contributed to heightened disparities along gender, class and space lines.[2]

Historically, women of Tripura have raised their voices against the 'Titun system' or bonded labour activities. The women of Tripura have made their presence felt through organisations like Tripura Rajya Nari Samity and the Tripura Gana Mukti Parishad. However, in current terms, women continue to have negligible presence in the state assembly. Statistically, there is a high voter turn-out amongst women in Tripura. Female literacy rate is 96.79 percent and sex ratio is 961 females per 1000 males. It indicates that the women in Tripura are relatively in a better position when compared to other states of the country.

Nagaland:

The state of Nagaland is encountering challenges from all directions. Nationalist aspirations coupled with the growing fratricidal clashes have hurt the Naga society and more so affected the women in numerous ways. Consisting of 40 sub-groups, the Naga population is found in four states- Assam, Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland. Although the impact of Christianity and education has affected the Naga society, it still continues to encourage community participation and in spite of being patriarchal in nature, women in some tribes occupy higher status to that of men. However, the growth of insurgency and the different fractions amongst the different groups have not brought peace to the region.

There are several organisations in Nagaland which have made their mark in empowering the women and have strengthened their resolve to bring peace to this region. Naga Mothers' Association is acting as a bridge between the different warring camps. They are protesting against the AFSPA, raising their voice against drug abuse and alcoholism that have crept into their society.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.1: In which year did Arunachal Pradesh become a state?

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Q.2: What is the full form of NEFA?

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Q.3: What is Nupilan?

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Q.4: Write a short note on the Mizo Hmeichhe Insuihkhawm Pawl. (within 50 words).

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15.4 CHARACTERISTICS OF WOMEN'S MOVEMENTS IN NORTH EAST INDIA

Several key features emerge when we seek to understand women's movements in Northeast India. Though not all movements operate similarly or work towards common goals, the pertinent thing that emerges is that women of Northeast India are willing to take an extra step forward in order to achieve sustainable peace. Women face challenges because they are not a coherent group, but that does not undermine their contribution towards this region.

- **Rich heritage to resistance movements:** Women as individuals and as part of a greater community have set a strong tradition towards state resistance. In the state of Assam, Kanaklata Baruah was a part of *Quit India Movement* and fought fearlessly against the British. Chandraprabha Saikiani was the founder of Assam Pradeshik Mahila Samiti in 1926. She actively participated in the Non-Cooperation Movement . In 1930, **Bhogeswari Phukanani** took part in the Civil Disobedience Movement. In other states too, several women have fearlessly fought the British rule in India. Rani Gaidinliu of Nagaland, led a revolt against British rule in India. In Manipur, the two 'Nupilans' or females' warfare (1904 and 1939) also reflects the rich heritage to state resistance.
- **Social Issues:** Women's organisations have been at the forefront of addressing social evils. Alcoholism, drug addiction, gambling etc. are major challenges for the youths of this region. Women organisations have resorted to picketing and bandhs to protest against social evils. Child abuse as well as child labour have been brought into focus by these organisations through the conduct of street plays, dramas and books. The 'Nisha Bandhi' campaign has also be pushed forward by the women of Manipur. Women's organisations are seeking to achieve equality in the private domain which includes issues of access to parental property and its inheritance and the right to religion.
- **Peace building and negotiations**: The women's organisations in the states of North east india have made a sustained effort in bringing peace to the region. Insurgency and state repression have taken a toll on all parties concerned. Women's organizations like the NWUM have acted as mediators between the warring factions. Peace building has been a slow process, but organisations have started pressuring the state and non-state bodies to resolve disputes in a peaceful manner. Likewise, the All Tribal Women's Organization (ATWO) of Manipur has sought to look into the interests of the displaced persons and those injured in conflict. Likewise, Mamoni Raisom Goswami, has played a key role in mediation between mediated for peace between the United

Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) and the Government of India. But, there are certain inherent problems. Joyati Bhattacharjee notes "Women are accepted as 'healers' or 'pacifiers' but not as one important when they attempt to play a more decisive role and endeavour to link the question of peace with the basic concept of democracy."[3]

- **Sporadic nature of activism:** While there are several women's organisations seeking to address the question of empowerment of women, the activism on their part has been sporadic rather than sustained. A 'movement' implies sustained pressure on the authorities and other parties concerned. But very often women's organisations are dealing with social issues only to fizzle out later. While women are part of numerous students' unions and civil society organisations, their activism is rather intermittent.
- **Low political representation:** Women in general vote in large numbers, during assembly or Lok Sabha elections. It indicates a healthy trend of empowerment. However, though procedural equality has been established, substantial progress is yet to be achieved. In four states of Northeast India, women electorate outnumber men; Arunachal Pradesh (women 401,596, men 392,566), Manipur (women 990,960, men 939,926), Meghalaya (women 956,135, men 936,579), Mizoram (women 402,408, men 381.991. However, the number of women at the decision making level, is rather low. There are only three women MPs from the region of Northeast India in the 2019 Lok Sabha. Till date, no woman has been elected to the Nagaland state assembly.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.5: Write a brief note on women's representation from Northeast India in Lok sabha.

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Q.6: Who founded the Assam Pradeshik Mahila Samiti ?

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Q.7: Write a brief note on Mamoni Raisom Goswami.

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15.5 ROLE OF MEIRA PAIBIS AND NAGA MOTHERS' ASSOCIATION (NMA)

15.5.1 Role of Meira Paibis

Situated along the India-Myanmar border, the state of Manipur is besieged with social and political problems. Insurgency, state extremism and inter-community tensions have crippled the economy. Protests against the AFSPA and the presence of over thirty insurgent groups have proven to be a challenge for all. Furthermore, the demand for 'Nagalim' has only led to further complexities.

Historically, Manipur has witnessed the role of women in challenging the dominant authority. The British annexed Manipur in 1891 by virtue of the '*Doctrine of Lapse*'. Manipur has witnessed two *Nupilans* or 'female's warfare' in 1904 and 1939. So the role of women in leading resistance movements is well documented.



LET US KNOW

Doctrine of Lapse: It was a formula widely followed by Lord Dalhousie, Governor-General of India (1848–56), to deal with questions of succession to Hindu Indian states. According to this doctrine, if the ruler did not have a legal male heir; it would be annexed by the company. It led to annexation of several Indian states.

The name 'Meira Paibis' is rather symbolic, meaning 'women torchbearers' became popular in Manipur, for they stood up against injustices. It emerged in the 1970s to protest against social evils. Though informal as an organization, it started to grow in each locality to fight alcoholism, drug abuse and sexual violence in Manipur valley. The All Manipur Women Social Reformation and Development Society formed in 1976, also known as the Nupi Samaj or the Women's Society, was one such organised group by the Meira Paibas in Manipur. It played a key role in organizing and mobilizing the 'Nisha Bandhis' or anti-liquor campaign in various parts of Manipur. It was around 1980 when incidence of forced disappearance and arbitrary arrests as well as killings by the security forces started. The Meira Paibos gained significant ground when it protested against the brutalities of the army and the paramilitary committed at Patsoi. In addition to the All Manipur Women Social Reformation and Development Society, there are other Meira Paibi organisations as well, such as Poirei Leimaro, Kanglamei and the Meekhol.

Discussing the notion of 'political motherhood', Panchali Ray highlights that 'the members of the Meira Paibis operate within a benevolent patriarchy, and draw their strength and legitimacy as mothers from sacred and religious traditions to take on roles of crusaders and peacemakers in a conflict zone'.[4] The Meira Paibias have assumed the role of a 'watchdog of civil rights violations at the community level, initiating and engaging in campaigns against rights violations, such as arbitrary detention, cordon and search operations, and torture, committed by the security personnel of the federal government of India'.[5] Through street demonstrations, distribution of pamphlets, the Meira Paibas have engaged in tackling social evils like gambling, controlling alcoholism, checking price rise, promoting welfare programmes for women and children and at times engaged with negotiations with the government in order to bring about peace in Manipur. The 2004 'naked protests' by the Meira Paibis in Imphal

against army atrocities has been one of the strongest show of protest by the women.



LET US KNOW

AFSPA: Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (**AFSPA**), passed on September 11, 1958, is an act of the Parliament of India that grant special powers to the Indian Armed Forces to maintain public order in "disturbed areas". It is contentious because it prohibits any legal action against the armed forces in case of any wrongful action.

The significance of the Meira Paibis is well encapsulated by M. Basnet in her article Disrobed and dissenting bodies of the Meira Paibi: Postcolonial counterpublic activism (2019, wherein the movement 'represents postcolonial counterpublic status on three levels:

(1) Marginalization of the entire region by the Indian democracy;

(2) The brutality and human rights violations which receive very little coverage by mainstream media; and

(3) Sexual violence by the army, a state institution.[6]

For their contribution to society, in 2013, along with the Naga Mothers' Association, the Meira Paibi was co-awarded the 'Social Impact Awards: Lifetime Contribution' by the Times of India. 28 May is observed as the 'Meira Paibi Day'.

15.5.2 Role of Naga Mothers' Association (NMA)

The conflict in Nagaland has affected its society and politics in different ways. The Indo-Naga Peace process has gained momentum, but the scars of violent conflict have been felt by all sections of the Naga society and especially by the women of Nagaland. Women have been the victim of violent conflict, often perpetrated by state as well as non-state bodies. The culture of violence and the search for 'peace' has led to women of Nagaland to reframe their identities to

that of being 'arbitrator' of conflict.[7] This is not a new role, but this role has been well performed and has prevented antagonism between different tribal groups in Nagaland. Insurgency in Nagaland and draconian state laws have compelled the women of Nagaland to reconsolidate themselves and direct their effort towards promotion of peace and reconciliation of differences between different parties.

The Shillong Accord of 1975 led to major intra group rivalry in Nagaland further causing major divisions in the Naga society. It was in 1979, to protest against the rape of a women, the Angami Women's Welfare Association organised a strong movement for the removal of the BSF from their village. Subsequently, along with such atrocities committed by state forces, women also have mobilised themselves to eradicate social evils like alcoholism and drug abuse. During the 1980s, the Naga movement only became more violent and insurgency further crippled the state economy and greater fissures in the society.

The early 1980s witnessed the decline of the influence of NNC and the emergence of NSCN. But during this phase, women not only started mobilising themselves against being victimised, they also started protesting against all kinds of violence. In 1984, the Naga Mothers Association was established in Kohima which aimed to eradicate social evils. Neidomo Angami , who was the General Secretary of the NMA from 1984-94 stressed the need to eradicate violence and facilitate peace in Nagaland. The significance of the NMA was that it was a 'endogenous force' which emerged to challenge the violence which was prevalent in Nagaland; it started campaigning and extending support to other grassroots organisations in Nagaland. In 1988, the split in the NSCN to NSCN-K and NSCM-IM reconfirmed the need for such a body which would bring together warring parties and facilitate peace in the long run. Such insurgent groups were primarily led by men and invariably the victims were mostly women. Essentially, the NMA sought to keep the 'channels of communication'[8] open between different insurgent groups.

The NMA has projected itself as a symbol of peace. It has sought to motivate common people to speak up against violence and other social evils. It has received widespread support from the Naga civil society. Furthermore, it has undertaken workshops and training programme for women. At the political level, they are trying to reconcile the differences between the different insurgent groups. Furthermore, the NMA has supported the call for ceasefire of milirat operations and protested against the AFSPA as well as started mobilisation wherein children were prevented to join any such militant group. Through the campaign 'shed no more blood', in 1994, the NMA launched a peace team, that encouraged 'people to people dialogue'.

Though politically, the NMA have been sidelined; The Naga Village Councils seldom have recognised the role of NMA in peace building process in the state of Nagaland. However, the presence of NMA has ensured that there is more 'space' for dialogues between the different contending parties.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.8: What is the full form of AFSPA?

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Q.9: Who started the campaign "Shed no blood".

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Q.10: Explain the "Doctrine of Lapse" (within 50 words).

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15.6 LET US SUM UP

- While the societies in Northeast India do treat women with high regard and women occupy important positions in individual households, there is very little presence of women in the public institutions.
- The status of women in Northeast India continues to be a complex issue. The visibility of women in the 'private' and 'public' domains continues to grow in opposite directions.
- The anti-foreigners movement in 1983 also saw the vigorous involvement of women. In 1984, the All Assam Convention of Women's Coordinating Committee was held to discuss the issue of anti-foreigners movement in Assam.
- Customary laws have not helped the cause of women to a large extent. Structural inequalities have created barriers to the process of empowerment of women in Arunachal Pradesh.
- There are several important women's associations such as the Mothers' Union, Ka Seng Longkmie Laitumkhrah etc. who have worked tirelessly for empowering the women in Meghalaya. Largely based on principles of Christianity, they have strongly advocated the need for strong moral character of children and the need for their education.
- Famous for its two Nupilans (Female's warfare), women of Manipur have now become important tools of peace building and reconciliation.
- Though not all movements operate similarly or work towards common goals, the pertinent thing that emerges is that women of Northeast India are willing to take an extra step forward in order to achieve sustainable peace.
- The Meira Paibis have assumed the role of a 'watchdog of civil rights violations at the community level.
- The NMA has supported the call for ceasefire of militant operations

and protested against the AFSPA and started mobilisation wherein the children were prevented to join any such militant groups.



15.7 FURTHER READING

1) Ashild, K. (2018). *Women, peace and security in Northeast India.* New Delhi: Zubaan Books.
2) Deka, M. (2013). *Women's agency and social change: Assam and beyond*. India: Sage India.
3) Gassah, L.S. (2008). *Women empowerment movement in North-East India.* New Delhi: Omsons Publications.
4) Karna, M.N. (1998). *Social movements in Northeast India.* New Delhi: Indus Publishing Company.
5) Mandal, R.K. and Minto, E. (2010). *Women in North East India.* New Delhi: Mittal Publications.



15.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: 1987

Ans to Q No 2: Northeast Frontier Agency

Ans to Q No 3: It refers to female's warfare in Manipur (1904 and 1939).

Ans to Q No 4: The Mizo Hmeichhe Insuihkhawm Pawl (MHIP) is the apex body representing several local women's groups, has pushed forward the need for reforms of those laws which severely undermine the status of women in Mizoram.

Ans to Q No 5: Women in general vote in large numbers, assembly or Lok Sabha. Though procedural equality has been established, substantial progress is yet to be achieved. In four states of Northeast India, women electorates outnumber men but the number of women at the decision making level, is rather low. There are only three women MPs from the region of Northeast

India in the 2019 Lok Sabha. Till date, no woman has been elected to the Nagaland state assembly.

Ans to Q No 6: Chandraprabha Saikiani

Ans to Q No 7: Indira Goswami (14 November 1942-29 November 2011) also known as Mamoni Raisom Goswami is a Jnanpith award winning Assamese editor, poet, professor, scholar and writer. She was involved in the peace making process between the ULFA-government.

Ans to Q No 8: Armed Forces Special Powers Act

Ans to Q No 9: Naga Mothers' Association

Ans to Q No 10: It was a formula widely followed by Lord Dalhousie, Governor-General of India (1848-56), to deal with questions of succession to Hindu Indian states. According to this doctrine, if the ruler did not have a legal male heir; it would be annexed by the company. Subsequently, it led to annexation of several Indian states.



15.9 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

A) Very Short Questions

Q. 1 : Who are the Meira Paibis?

Q. 2: State the meaning of AFSPA.

Q. 3: Write two characteristics of Women's' Movements in North East India.

B) Short Questions (Answer each question in about 150 words)

Q. 1: Write a brief note on the contribution of women from Assam to India's Freedom movement.

Q. 2: Briefly explain the contribution of women's movements in addressing issues of peace and reconciliation in Northeast India.

Q. 3: Write a brief note on the Naga Mothers' Association.

C) Long Questions (Answer each question in about 300-500 words)

Q. 1: Discuss the characteristics of women's movements in Northeast India.

Q. 2: Analyse the contributions of women's movements in the state of Manipur.

Q. 3: Discuss the role and contribution of the Naga Mother's Association in Nagaland.

End Notes:

[1]Mangala Subramaniam, 'The Indian Women's Movement', Contemporary Sociology, Vol. 33, No. 6 (Nov., 2004), p.638

[2]Biswajit Ghosh, Tanima Choudhuri, 'Gender, Space and Development: Tribal Women in Tripura', Economic and political weekly , April 16, 2011 vol xlvi no 16, p.78

[3]Joyati Bhattacharya, 'Conflict and Peace Building: A Study of Women Organizations of Northeast India' , 12th PARIS International Conference on Marketing, Education, Humanities & Social Sciences (MEHSS-18) Sept. 17-19, 2018 , p.69

[4]Panchali Ray, 'Political motherhood and a spectacular resistance: (Re) examining the Kangla Fort Protest', Manipur, South Asian History and Culture, 2018, DOI: 10.1080/19472498.2018.1535543, p.2

[5]Vandana Singh , 'The Role of Women in Peace-building with reference to Manipur state of India' , p.350

[6]M. Basnet, 'Disrobed and dissenting bodies of the Meira Paibi: Postcolonial counterpublic activism' Communication and the Public, 4(3), 2019, doi:10.1177/2057047319871022 ,p.240

[7]Soumitra Patra and Samita Manna, 'Integrative Reconciliation: Mothers in the Naga Movement', Economic and Political Weekly,Vol.323, No.10 (March 8-14, 2008) ,p.21

[8]Ibid. p. 21.

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- **Book**

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Course Code: .....

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City Office: Housefed Complex, Guwahati-781006

Learner's Feedback on Course

Dear Learner,

Regarding the course as mentioned above, we would like to know your opinions and comments so as to improve the quality of self learning materials in future. Please respond to the following statements by ticking the number you feel most reflect your opinion. After completion of the additional comments, please detach the page and send/mail the same to us at the address given below.

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1) Approximately how many hours did you spend for studying the units in the course? ☐☐☐

2) Please give your opinions (by ✓ mark) to the following items based on your reading of the block:

Sl. No.	Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I)	The SLMs of the course fulfil the learning objectives set out in the beginning of each unit					
II)	The units of the SLM could satisfy my academic needs and expectations					
III)	The Unit writers have excellent knowledge about the course contents					
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V)	Ample opportunity for participation in the activities provided in the units					
VI)	Used enough Illustrations (Diagrams, tables etc.) for conceptual clarity					
VII)	Quality of content is engaging, relevant, and up-to-date					
VIII)	The self check questions are very helpful					
IX)	The Possible/model questions and the answers to check my progress have benefited me a lot					

Additional Comments: *(Please feel free to provide your open comments)*

1) Which aspects of the SLM, according to you, worked well?

.....

.....

2) What sort of changes/improvements do you feel KKHSOU could implement to improve the overall quality of the SLM?

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Thank you for taking the time to complete this form.