UNIT 1: SOCIAL MOVEMENTS : AN INTRODUCTION

UNIT STRUCTURE

1.1 Learning Objectives

1.2 Introduction

1.3 Meaning and Stages of Social Movement

1.4 Characteristics of Social Movement

1.5 Typology of Social Movement

1.6 Social Movement and Social Change

1.7 Let Us Sum Up

1.8 Further Reading

1.9 Answer to Check Your Progress

1.10 Model Questions

1.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

- Conceptualize the meaning and stages of a social movement
- Understand the features of social movement
- Figure out the types of social movement
- Know the relationship between social movement and social change.

1.2 INTRODUCTION

Social movements are a major force in the world. Sociologists try to analyse social movements that help us to understand both past and present societies, as well as to understand the changes and trends that may play out in the future. Social movements can be described as collective attempts to promote or resist change in society. In this unit, we shall know in details about social movement, it's definition, characteristics, etc.

1.3 MEANING AND STAGES OF SOCIAL MOVEMENT

Social movements can be thought of as organized yet informal social entities that are engaged in an extra-institutional conflict that is oriented towards a goal. These goals can be either aimed at a specific and narrow policy or be more broadly aimed at cultural change.

Social movements aim to bring change in any public issue. According to Anthony Giddens (2012) social movement is a collective attempt to secure a common goal through action outside the sphere of established institutions. Charles Tilly (1978) defines it as a series of contentious performances, display and campaigns by which ordinary people make a collective claim on others. John D McCarthy defines a social movement as a set of opinions and beliefs in a population which represents preferences for changing some elements of the social structure and/or reward distribution of a society, i.e. social movements are defined as nothing more than preference structures directed towards social change. Wilson (1973) defined social movements as a conscious, collective and organized attempt to bring about or resist large-scale change in the social order. A social movement is a collective action by the people which is directed towards changing of norms, values, and social relationships. They are purposeful, organized groups striving to work towards a common goal. According to Touraine (1992), the important functions of social movements are as follows:

- Mediation- Social movement gives people a chance to participate and express their ideas and play an active role in the process of social change.
- Pressure- Social movement stimulates the formation of organized groups that work in plans and policies that are implemented.

The following account highlights the important stages of a social movement.

One of the earliest scholars to study social movement processes was Herbert Blumer (1957). He identified four stages of social movements' lifecycle.

- Emergence,
- Coalescence,
- Bureaucratization, and
- Decline.

Stage 1: Emergence

The first stage of the social movement life cycle is known as the emergence, or, as described by Blumer, the "social ferment" stage. Within this stage, social movements are very preliminary and there is little to no organization. Potential movement participants may be unhappy with some policy or some social condition, but they have not taken any action to redress their grievances, or if they have, it is most likely individual action rather than collective action.

Stage 2: Coalescence

At this stage in the life cycle, social movements have over-come some obstacles which many never overcome. Often, social unrest or discontent passes without any organized system or wide-spread mobilization. For example, people in a community may complain to each other about a general injustice, but they do not come together to act on those complaints and the social movement does not progress to the next level. Coalescence or the "popular stage," is characterized by a more clearly defined sense of discontent.

Stage 3: Bureaucratization

The third stage is known as bureaucratization. This stage, defined by Blumer as "formalization," is characterized by higher levels of the organization and coalition-based strategies. In this stage, social movements have had some success in that they have raised awareness to a degree that a coordinated strategy is necessary across all of the Social Movement Organisations (SMO). Similarly, SMOs will come to rely on staff persons

with specialized knowledge that can run the day-to-day operations of the organization and carry out movement goals. Social movements in this stage can no longer just rely on mass rallies or inspirational leaders to progress towards their goals and build constituencies; they must rely on trained staff to carry out the functions of organizations. In this phase, their political power is greater than in the previous stages in that they may have more regular access to political elites. For example- The gay rights movement is an example of a movement that has passed through this stage. The gay rights movement moved from agitation and demonstrations to having many formal organizations that now work toward the goals of the gay rights movement.

Stage 4: Decline

Finally, the last stage in the social movement life cycle is a decline, or "institutionalization." The decline does not necessarily mean failure for social movements though. Instead, Miller (1999) argues, there are four ways in which social movements can decline:

- Repression,
- Co-optation,
- Success, and
- Failure

a. Repression

The first way social movements can decline is through repression. Repression occurs when authorities, or agents acting on behalf of the authorities, use measures (sometimes violent) to control or destroy a social movement.

b. Co-optation

Movements can also decline, if their organizations are highly dependent on centralized authority or charismatic leadership, through co-optation. Co-optation occurs when movement leaders come to associate with authorities or moving targets more than with the social movement constituents.

c. Success

Not all social movements end in defeat through repression or co-optation; some decline because they are unsuccessful. Smaller, localized

movements with very specific goals often have a better chance at outright success.

d. Failures

Social movements sometimes fail due to some unwanted reasons.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q1. What is meant by social movement?

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Q2. Who has given the four stages of a social movement? Mention the stages.

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Q3. Why is it necessary to study social movement?

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1.4 CHARACTERISTICS OF SOCIAL MOVEMENT

Social movement not only changes our societies but it also inspires other social movements to struggle for their rights. Some of its characteristics are as follows:

i. Sustained collective action- A social movement requires sustained collective action over time. Such action is often directed against the state and takes the form of demanding changes in state policy or practice. Spontaneous, disorganized protest cannot be called a social movement.

ii. Clear objectives and ideologies- Those participating in a social movement also have shared objectives and ideologies. Ideologies are an important component of a social movement.

iii. Organisation- Collective action must be marked by some degree of organisation. This organisation may include leadership and a

structure that defines how members relate to each other, make decisions and carry them out.

iv. Distinct mode of protest- There is a distinct mode of protest of every social movement. For example- abolition of Sati has a different mode of protest, whereas the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) community rights movement has its way of protesting.

v. Defined structure- Social movement involves sustained collective mobilization through either informal or formal organizations.

vi. Aims to bring change: Social movements are key forces of social change in the modern world. Generally, it is oriented towards a change of the existing system of relationship, values and norms.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q4. What are two important elements in forming an organisation?

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Q5. What is the full form of LGBT?

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1.5 TYPOLOGY OF SOCIAL MOVEMENT

There is no single standard typology to classify social movements. As various scholars focus on different aspects of a social movement, different schemes of classification emerge. Hence social movements can be classified in terms of several dimensions. They can be classified as:

- Redemptive or transformative: A redemptive social movement aims to bring about a change in the personal consciousness and actions of its members. For instance, people in the Ezhava community in Kerala were led by Narayana Guru to change their social practices.
- Reformist: Reformist social movements strive to change the existing social and political arrangements through gradual, incremental

steps. The 1960s movement for the reorganization of Indian states based on language and the recent Right to Information campaign are examples of reformist movements.

- Revolutionary: Revolutionary social movements attempt to radically transform social relations, often by capturing state power. The Naxalite movement in India that seeks to remove oppressive landlords and state officials can be described as revolutionary movements. Social movement may shift over time such that it starts with, say, revolutionary objectives and becomes reformist. A movement may start from a phase of mass mobilization and collective protest to become more institutionalized.
- Resistance: Resistance movement is to resist the change that has already taken place in the society, for example, backward class movement. When this movement was initiated many people of upper castes opposed it.
- Utopian: The utopian movement seeks to create an ideal social system which can only be found in imagination and not in reality, for example- a socialist state.
- Migratory: Migratory movement occurs when a large number of people leave one country and settle at some other countries.
- New social movement: New social movements are those movements that occur in the western world after the post-industrial economy. These movements mainly talk about human rights issues, such as gay rights etc.

1.6 SOCIAL MOVEMENT AND SOCIAL CHANGE

Social movements are related to social change, although it cannot be said that it is the essential condition of social change. Rather, they operate through interpersonal factors and forces. Social change that results from a movement are reflected in the changes in the position, and through the impact on the society. Social movements are the products of social structure, for example, a structural change occurs when there is a complete

change of social system, such as the transformation of the capitalist to the socialist state. There are three levels of structural change through which the relationship could be understood - reform, transformation and revolution. Reform movements are identified with partial changes in the value system, for example, reformation in the education system. Various reforms were made to assure women's education. For example, Wood's Dispatch 1854. Transformation movement aims at bringing middle-level structural changes in the traditional distribution of power such as the abolition of untouchability in 1950, thereby attacking the monopoly of upper caste in society.

Revolution is identified with radical changes in the totality of social and cultural system and is often associated with violence and conflict. Revolutionary movements are characterized by class conflict and associated with political parties and operated based on ideology and programme of action.

Social change may affect the characteristics of social conflict and collective action in different ways. It may facilitate the emergence of social groups with a specific structural location and potential specific interests. Thus the social movement is organized collective activities to bring change or resist change in an existing group or society. These keep changing and its effects are seen in a certain aspect of society. Whereas social change is a continuous process and its effects may be an economic, social, political or cultural aspect of society.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q6. What is the three-level of structural change?

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Q7. Write two differences between social change and social movement.

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1.7 LET US SUM UP

- A social movement is a collective endeavour to promote change in any direction and by means. It requires a minimal degree of organization; it may range from partial to highly institutionalized and bureaucratic movement.
- According to Touraine, the important functions of social movements are as follows: Mediation- Social movement gives people a chance to participate and express his ideas and play an active role in the process of social change and Pressure- Social movement stimulates the formation of organized groups that work in plans and policies that are implemented.
- There are four stages of social movements. One of the earliest scholars to study social movement processes was Herbert Blumer, who identified four stages of social move-ments' lifecycle: Emergence, Coalescence, Bureaucratization, and Decline.
- Social movement not only changes our societies but it also inspires other social movements to struggle for their rights.
- Some of the characteristics of social movements are as follows: Sustained collective action, Clear objectives and ideologies, Organisation, Distinct mode of protest, Defined structure, Aims of bringing about change.
- Social movement can be classified as: Redemptive or transformative; Reformist, Revolutionary, Resistance, Utopian, Migratory.



1.8 FURTHER READING

1) Rao, M.S.A.2002. Social Movements in India: Studies in peasant, Tribal and Women's Movement. Manohar Publishers and Distributors.

2) Shah, Ghanshyam. 2004. Social Movements n India: A Review of Literature. Sage Publication.

1.9 ANSWER TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: Social movement is a collective attempt to secure a common goal through action outside the sphere of established institutions. It aims to bring change in any public issues.

Ans to Q No 2: Herbert Blumer identified four stages of social move-ments' lifecycle. These are as follows:

- Emergence,
- Coalescence,
- Bureaucratization, and
- Decline

Ans to Q No 3: Social movements are important to study because it gives people a chance to participate and express his ideas and play an active role in the process of social change. It also stimulates the formation of organized groups that work in plans and policies that are implemented.

Ans to Q No 4: The two important elements in forming an organisation are structure and leadership.

Ans to Q No 5: LGBT stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender.

Ans to Q No 6: The three-level of structural change are reform, transformation and revolution.

Ans to Q No 7: The difference between social movements and social change are as follows:

Sl no.	Social movement	Social change
1.	a social movement is organized collective activities to bring change or resist change in an existing group or society	Social change involves alteration of the social order of a society. It may include changes in social institutions or social relations
2.	These keep changing and its effects are seen in a certain aspect of society	Social change is a continuous process and its effects may be an economic, social, political or cultural aspect of society.

1.10 MODEL QUESTIONS

Short Questions (Answer each question within 150 words)

Q1. Who worked for the people in the Ezhava community in Kerala to change their social practices?

Q2. What is meant by Womens Movement? Give examples.

Q3. Who has given the ways of declination of Social movement?

Long Questions (Answer each question within 300-500 words)

Q1. Discuss the features of Social Movement.

Q2. What are the different types of Social Movements? Illustrate with examples.

Q3. State the reason behind declination of Social Movement.