Introduction:
Contemporary society has been witnessing collective mobilizations of:
- people’s action groups; protest movements;
- resistance concerned with land rights;
- environmental issues;
- women’s rights;
- peace initiatives;
- response to consumerism;
- lifestyle choices and many other issues.
Against this backdrop, there have been many studies on social movements during the last five decades by social scientists generally and sociologists in particular. Why and how do social movements emerge? How are they analysed? What are the sociological approaches to the study of social movements?

Sociology, principal aims at studying the structure of social systems and its institutions, the perceived processes of change triggered by a combination of endogenous factors and external conditions, and the resulting outcomes, intended or unintended. One of the major issues has been the study of social movements. Historically, social movements as a field of study within Sociology and the social sciences remain a late entrant.

Concept:
- Conceptualizing the term ‘social movement’ has been a difficult task.

- Protests, collective actions, agitations, resistances and rebellions, collective mobilizations of all varieties have generally been described as social movements.

- There is no single definition of social movement nor a single method for studying them nor any consensus on particular types of questions that need to be addressed.

- Heberle (1951) regards the belief system that underlies social mobilizations as an expression of collective will of the participants. It is the conscious volition of individuals acting collectively that brings about the embodiment of ideologies in social movements.

- Wilkinson (1971) provides a working concept which could be adequately described and related to empirical phenomena by the combined, and often collaborative, efforts of historians, political scientists, sociologists, social anthropologists and psychologists.

- Social movement is a deliberate collective endeavor to promote change by any means, not excluding violence, subversion and revolution or rebellion into ‘crudest’ defiance by... and it must involve a minimal degree of organization though this may range from a loose, informal or partial level of organization to the highly institutionalized and bureaucratic movement and the corporate group (Wilkinson 1971: 27).

- Wilkinson’s definition of movement spells out a collective action through legal means they exist within the hierarchy of institutions as well as various extra-institutional collective actions.

- Wilkinson (1971: 27) argues that ‘social movements have a commitment towards bringing about change and the raison d’être of its organisation have been focused upon the conceptualisation, historically, normative commitment to the movement aims or beliefs against participation of followers or members...’

Categorization:
- Sociologists and Anthropologists who have studied movements in their own or other societies have labelled them as:
  - ‘political/social’;
  - ‘messianic’;
  - ‘nativist’;
  - ‘revitalisation’

The second defining criteria of social movements refers to the ‘means’ employed to attain their goals.

This is followed by the criteria of spatial and societal scope of the movement.

Finally, there is the substantive aspect of content (whether religious or secular, etc.).
Classification of Social Movements

- Herbert Blumer (1969) classifies movements into three major categories, namely general social movements, specific social movements and expressive social movements.

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<th>General Social Movements</th>
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<th>Expressive Social Movements</th>
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<td>Movement focused on collective action.</td>
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- Ralph H. Turner and Lewis M. Killian (1957) have also classified movements into three types: value-oriented, power-oriented and participation-oriented.

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<td>Movement gains support primarily from the conviction for social change.</td>
<td>Movement are directed towards contestation of power and their accumulation.</td>
<td>Movement seeks membership and gratification mainly through self-expression.</td>
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Approaches to the Study of Social Movements:

- David Aberle (1966) in his study of America's Navaho Indian classified movements as transformational, reformative, redemptive and alternative movements.

- Neil J. Smelser (1959) attempts to integrate his typology of social movements with the general theory of collective action from a Durkheimian perspective. The primary assumption of collective action is followed by the normative, the de anomalous, and the aggregate functions of collective behavior. Empirically, he puts emphasis on the growth and spread of generalized belief, the structuring strains produced within the social system and the adaptive mechanisms by which these are met and resolved or not resolved.

Features

- Movements and collective actions are characterized by some continuity and minimum degree of organization (Heberle, 1957; Turner and Killian, 1957; Wilkinson, 1971; Wilson, 1973).
- With the sustained action and same level of organizational structure, the collectivities involved in social movements usually adopt non-institutionalized means to achieve the goal (Smelser, 1962; Wilson, 1973).
- Consistent with research on social movements, studies on contemporary social movements have focused on the organizational aspect, collective action and consequent changes in the social structure.


- Historical: Focuses on the career of movements and characteristics of participants and their motivation.
- Psychological: Examines the effects of rewards and disadvantages of participants.
- Sociological: Proposes a theory of society within which collective actions take place.

Oommen has traced the historical evolution of theories of social movements from classical theorists: Durkheim, Weber and Marx. Though, they did not propose specifically any theory of social movements, their sociology is premised on collective actions in the analysis of society.

Durkheim in his The Division of Labour in Society (1893) and later in Elementary Forms of Religious Life (1912), posits a theory of collective action and the kind of solidarity that produced and approved forms of collective action.

Weber had conceptualized the theory of social change with the notion of ‘realizations of ends’ where two opposing forces of decision are the authority of rationality and the power of charisma.

Oommen’s understanding of social change as more systematic, Marx took into account the class-action of anti-apparatchik groups (Oommen 2010: 2-4).
Partha N Mukherji

Partha N. Mukherji deals with a number of fundamental issues. Are all collective/social mobilisations to be regarded as social movements?

- To qualify as a social movement of one kind or another, structurally, the three essential aspects are: social conflict, social-collective mobilisation and social change in their interrelation. Simply, none of these constitute social movement.
- Collective mobilisation against AIDS, or for Pulse Polio, or engaging in disaster management or community development are laudable social activities, but they are not social movements. They may be better designated as campaigns for public good.
- Conflict, structure and change constitute the core of the theoretical orientation for the study of social movements. The presence of an ideology, the need for an organisational base and leadership are necessary conditions that accompany the core conditions (Mukherji 2010: 126-27).

M. S. A Rao

M. S. A Rao (1978) was the first sociologist who attempted to put together the studies of social movements by various scholars in his two edited volumes.

- Rao argues that sociologists and social anthropologists have been preoccupied with the concept of social structure at various levels of abstraction. Generally, social movements deal with a range of social phenomena that include all that can be observed while studying the process.
- If we consider a social movement to be an organized effort on the part of a collectivity, involving social mobilization based on an ideology for bringing about changes (either partial or total) in the social system, then we have to view social process as consisting of interrelated activities, interactions and events guided by an ideology directed towards social and cultural changes.
- The character of social movements as an instrument of social change is quite different from an initiative or spontaneous process of mobility and change. While the latter centers on agreement, the former is focused on protest of one kind or the other. Following from this, the latter emphasizes on contradiction and conflict.

D N Dhanagare

D N Dhanagare (2007) is of the view that historical method has a comparatively greater scope among sociologists. Reviewing contributions of various sociologists, Dhanagare finds that Partha N Mukherji, M. S. A Rao, Partha Basu Mukherji, M. S. A. Rao, Rajendra Desai, Ananda Singh, Hira Singh, Ram Chandra Chaudhary, and P. K. Chatterjee are among the sociologists who contributed much to the study of social movements. However, conventional movements attracted more attention of the scholars than some new social movements (Dhanagare and John 1990).

- Dhanagare’s contribution to the theoretical discourse on peasant movement in India lies in his study of the agrarian transformation. Peasant movement is not limited to the peasant movement in India. Based on the study of intellectuals, Dhanagare identifies the militant character of the movement that is central to the study of social movements. He also identifies the important role of intellectuals in the movement.
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- The conceptual issues deal with social movement’s definition (typification) and implications for social order.
- Rao (1979) identifies the conceptual issues as classification, genesis, ideology and identity, organization and leadership, internal dynamics, routinization and social consequences.
- Collective mobilization, ideology and orientation to change are important. According to Rao, explanation relating to social movements lies in the theory of relative deprivation and reference group behavior. He questions the validity of strain theory or rationalization theory as providing adequate explanation of social movements. The organization comprises aspects of recruitment, commitment and leadership.
- As far as Rao is concerned, a movement may bring about social change either in the form of reformative, transformative or revolutionary. Corresponding to these three outcomes one can classify social movements as reformative, transformative or revolutionary.

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- Social movements seeking changes within the system are quasi-social movements.
- Social movements seeking changes in the system by altering or replacing the existing structure(s) are transformative social movements.
- Those that reject existing structural(s) and replace them with alternative (one(s)) could be termed reconstitutive social movements.
- The movement of Dhanagare’s interest is transformative movements.

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Telangana movements (1930s) and Telangana movement (1946) were expected on the basis of peasant rebellions. Telangana movement was spearheaded by CPI-controlled Kasu Sabha (Bengal) while the base of the movements consisted of the sharecroppers (mawarps). Leaders came from the middle peasants (goddars). After an initial success, the movement faded out. Here again there were serious limitations for the class hegemony and class struggle.

The Telangana movement in 1946 was also led by the communists. The social base of the movement was common people who were the leading Communists rallied the support of the middle peasants, tenants, sharecroppers and landless labourers against the big absentee landlords, jagirdars and zamindars. The interests of such a mixed category were not only divergent but conflicting. The class alliance was weak and the poor peasants started seizing the land of rich persons who spearheaded the movement. The latter got alarmed and diverted the alliance. This split was visible in the ranks of the Telangana communist leadership and ultimately the revolution was withdrawn.

Professor Dhanagare characterizes the 1931 Doobagh Rebellion as an expression of long standing agrarian discontent which was converted into the religious and ethnic identity of the Doobagh. However, the evidence that professor Dhanagare himself presents and the evidence from Kefiai lalbaad and other evidence produced by Ranad v. moti (depth realities) of Kerala, Delhi; orient Longens, IIFL/IN(55) indicator that it was more a communal misadventure in which the Muslim elite made use of the frustrations of Muslim tenants and landowners against the Hindus in general and their landlords and priests in particular.

Rajendra Singh

Rajendra Singh (2001) broadly divides the theoretical tradition of movement studies into two classical, one classical and (ii) ‘new’ social movements. The classical tradition includes studies mostly related to collective behavior of crowds, riots and rebel groups especially studied by Western social psychologists and historians. The neo-classical tradition refers to the tradition of ‘old’ social movement studies mainly after 1950s dominated particularly by Marxists and functionalists.

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European and American scholars propounded the ‘new’ social movement theory, popularly known as NSM.

New Social Movement

The new social movement theory has focused on the social movements space until the period of new social movements in the late 1960s and the early 1970s. However, even at that time many scholars started referring to the working class movements to include others.

Yogendra Singh

Yogendra Singh (1986) argues that most studies on social movements have not only made substantive contributions by providing information on specific movements, their structure and process, but have also tried to clarify conceptual problems relating to classification and raised questions on causality and validity. The two key concepts, which were introduced in sociological analysis of movement studies, are those of ‘historicity’ and the ‘dialectic of social processes’.
social movement organisation

There are two types of social movement organisation: professional and charismatic. In order to achieve their goals, resources take the form of labour, money, premises, transport and legitimacy. Professional social movement organisations appeal for support from supporters and sympathisers who may not benefit directly from the success of movements. They are known as conscience adherents. Classical social movement organisations rely on resources for beneficiaries, who support the movement's goals in the expectation that they will benefit from its success.

Tarrow (1994) defines social movements as “collective challenges by people with common purposes and solidarity in sustained interaction with elites, opponents and authorities. Collective action is not triggered by an increase in the availability of resources but changes in the political opportunity structure.”

Major Empirical Contributions: There have been many studies in social movement in India and in general in sociologists in particular during the last six decades.

- A. R. Desai (1954) was the first sociologist who contributed to the study of social movements from the Marxist perspective.
- Stephen Fuchs has studied mestic tribal movements during 1960s.
- During the 1970s, empirical studies of agrarian, tribal, revolutionary and religious movements were initiated by Indian sociologists, especially Partha Rash Bhattacharya, T. K. Oswalt, T. K. Oswalt, R. A. Rao and Rajendra Singh.
- Partha Rash Bhattacharya's (1987) comparative study of famous Hathras peasant movement and Serva Satha Movement of Bihar reveals collectivist mobilisation as an important aspect of modern social movements. In the 1980s, T. K. Oswalt argued that Naxalite or the Maoist-inspired social movements for structural-reformative revolutionary changes that have taken place almost exclusively in remote, backward, mostly tribal, less-communicable areas of the country are the very regions where the responsible role of the democratic state has been neglected, leaving feudal enclaves to persist and prosper outside the domain of governance of the state.

- Rajendra Singh (1990) examined the relationship between power structures, cultural and economic systems and peasant revolt in India, from a historical perspective and which is known as land grab movement. His focus is both on contribution and changes in the structure of domination as well as on the emergent counter-ideologies in the process.
- Both Fuchs and Desai introduced the role of values and ideologies as pre-structural elements in the triggering process of social movements.
- A. S. Gane (1989) discussed the ideologies, leadership and nature of protest during two phases of non-Brahmin movements in Maharasthra. His main focus was on the interface between social structure and process of social movement.
- K. L. Sharma (1985) in his study of peasant movements of Rajasthan has used an historico-anthropological perspective. Sharma argues that peasant movements were carried out largely by various organization like Marwar, Hijra, Sabra and Lahri Lahri, different “moderates” Rajputana Sangh Shree Sabha, Sewa Sangh that were engaged in welfare activities simultaneously with the task of political awakening of the peasant masses.
References:


