

(CHAPTER-17) POPULAR MOVEMENTS IN INDIA/ RISE OF NEW MOVEMENTS IN INDIA

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After studying this lesson you must be able to understand

1. Chipko movement and Narmada Andolan movements as environment/ ecological movement.
2. How farmers of India demanded their rights.
3. Understand how women of India faced problems in Indian society and how they started movements for safeguarding their rights.
4. Understand cast movements in India.

PEASANT OR FARMERS

In the 1970's diverse social groups like Farmers, Dalits, students, women felt that democratic politics did not address their needs and aspirations and demands therefore they come together under the banner of various social organizations to voice their demands. These assertions marked the rise of popular or new social movements in Indian politics.

TELEGHANA MOVEMENT

There have been a number of peasants revolt in independent India. The Telaghana peasant movement started in Mid 1946 and continued till October of 1951. This movement engulfed the whole of the teleghana region of Hyderabad and adjoining Districts of Andrapradesh. It has been regarded as most revolutionary of all movements in India. The objective of the movement was broad one and was concerned with whole of the peasantry against illegal and excessive extraction by the rural feudal Aristocracy. The most important demand was that all peasant debt should be written off. The second stage of the movement began when in order to counter the oppression done by feudal Aristocracy the peasants' lead armed struggle. In September 1948 Indian troops took over the state and moved against the communists in teleghana.

NAXALBARI MOVEMENT

The Naxalbari peasant uprising that occurred in the Northern part of west Bengal is the last major uprising India has witnessed. It took place in post colonial India and was led by a faction of (CPIM). The most prominent leaders were Kanu Sanyal and Chru Majumdar. It erupted in the foot hills of Himalayan in West Bengal in a place called NAXALBARI. It is in this region that peasants' movement took a militant form or turn. The Agrarian revolt arose in the month of April 1967 and continued till June 1967. The leader of the movement demanded specified ten tasks.

The land which was not used and tilled by peasants themselves was to redistributed, peasants burnt all legal deeds and documents, unequal agreements between money lender and peasants were to declared null and void. Hoarded rice be distributed among peasants. All Jotedars be tried and sentenced to death. Ho argued the peasants to arm themselves with traditional weapons. But the movement comes halt when West Bengal police entered the region and swept the area.

NEW FARMERS MOVEMENT

In contemporary India some prominent movements of farmers are:- one led by Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU) AND Shetkari Sangathan (SS). Agrarian Struggles of the Eighties is one such example where better of farmers protested against the policies of the state.

The BKU was originally formed on August 13 -1978 in Naryana under the guidance of Charan Singh and the Shetkari Sangathan has its origin in the late 70's and the founder leader was

Sharhad Joshi of Maharashtra. In January 1988 around twenty thousand farmers had gathered at the city of Meerut in Uttar Pradesh. They were protesting against the Govt decision to increase electricity rates. The farmers camped for about three weeks outside the District collectors office until their demands were fulfilled. This agitation was seen as great power of farmer cultivators. The agitation members were of the Bharatiya Kisan Union and Organization of farmers from Western Uttar Pradesh and Haryana Region. Activities conducted by BKU to pressurize the State for accepting its demands include rallies, demonstration, sit-ins and Jail Bhrota agitations. The BKU demanded higher govt. floor prices for sugar cane and wheat, abolition of restriction on interstate movement of farm produce, guaranteed supply of electricity at reasonable rates, waiving of repayment due on loans to farmer and the provision of govt. pension for farmers.

Similar demands were made by other farmers organization in the country. Shetkari Sangathan of Maharashtra declared the farmers movement as war of Bharat against forces of India. Both farmers organizations attacked the policies of economic liberalization and thus pressure rose on the Govt. to fulfill the needs and demands of the farmers.

CHIPKO MOVEMENT

Chipko movement was started in 26th March 1974 spontaneously in two or three villages of Uttarakhand at that time Uttarakhand was the part of Uttar Pradesh in an effort to save areas of trees and forests from cutting by forest contractors. In Hindi Chipko literally means stick and people started sticking/ Hugging to trees when it was being cut. One of Sunderlal Bahuguna's notable contribution to that cause and environmentalism in general was his creation of Chipko's Slogan "Ecology is Permanent Economy". The Chipko movement was thus a movement that practiced method of satyagraha where both male and female activists from Uttarakhand played important role in protecting and preserving natural forests from deforestation. According to Ram Chander Guha in his Book "Unquiet Woods" Villagers rallied together to save the Oak and rhododendron forests near their villages. When government contractors came to cut down the trees, villagers including large numbers of women, stepped forward to hug the trees to prevent their being felled. The livelihood of villagers was on the natural resources. This movement raised the issue of ecological sustainability, so concern about economy, ecology and political representation underlay the Chipko movement. Women's active participation in the Chipko Movement was a very novel aspect of the movement. The movement achieved a victory when the government issued a ban on felling of trees in the Himachal region until green cover was fully restored.

NARMADA, BACHO, ANDOLAN

Narmada Bacho Andolan (NBA) is an Indian Social Movement spearheaded by native tribal farmers, environmentalists and human rights activists against a number of large dam projects across river Narmada which flows through the State of Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra. Sardar Sarovar Dam in Gujarat is one of the biggest Dams on the River. Its advocates say that it would benefit huge areas of Gujarat and three adjoining states in terms of availability of drinking water, water for irrigation, generation of electricity and increase of agricultural production. In the process of construction of dams 245 villages from these states were expected to get submerged. It required relocation and proper rehabilitation of the project. Affected people were first raised by local activists groups. It was around 1988-89 that the issues crystallized under the banner of the NBA a loose collective of local voluntary Organization.

The mode of campaign under NBA includes court actions, Hunger strikes and gatherings supported from notable and art personalities. The Narmada, Bacho and Andolan with its leading spokes persons Medha Patkar and Babu Amte. Narmada Bacho and Andolan, a movement to save

Narmada, opposed to the construction of these dams and questioned the nature of ongoing development projects in the country. The movement demanded proper and just rehabilitation of all those who were affected by this project. The movement also questioned the nature of decision making process that go in the making of Mega-dams. Narmada Bacho Andolan insisted that local communities must have say in such decisions and they should have effected control over natural resources like water, land and forests. The movement also asked why in democracy should some people be made to sacrifice for benefiting others. All these considerations led the NBA to shift from its initial demand for rehabilitation to its position of total opposition to dam.

Thus Narmada Bacho and Andolan continued a sustained agitation for more than twenty years. It used every available democratic strategy to put forward its demand. These included appeals to the judiciary, mobilization of support at international level, public rallies in support of movement and revival of the forests of satyagraha. In 2003, the govt. formulated National rehabilitation policy and this is a major achievement of NBA.

WOMENS MOVEMENT IN INDIA

Women's movement is a set of movements aimed at defining, establishing and defending equal political, economic and social rights and equal opportunities for women in India. It is the pursuit of women's rights within the society of India. Feminist in India seek gender equality, right to work for equal wages, right to equal access to health and education, equal political rights. India feminists have also fought against cultural issues within India's patriarchal society such as inherent law.

The history of feminism in India can be divided into three phases:-The first phase beginning in the mid nineteenth century initiated when male European colonists began to speak out against social evils of sati. The second phase nineteen fifteen to till India's independence, when Gandhi incorporated women's movement in quite India movement and Independent women's organization began to immerge and finally the third phase post independence which has focused fair treatment of women at home after marriage, in the work and right to political parity. Neera Desai observed that women's movement is the organized effort to achieve a common goal of equality and liberation of women and it presupposes sensitivities to crucial issues effecting women's life. On the basis Paradigm "Gail omvedit classifies women's movement into two types, first women's equality movements and second women's liberation movement.

The first two decades after India's independence were full of optimism. The overall feeling was that as far as women's issue are concerned the problem is to make dejure equality into de-facto equality. As the result the special marriage 1954, the Hindu marriage and divorce act 1955, adoption act 1956. All India women's conference still continues to exist. In 1924 all India women's conference was established however, there are two more national organizing of women i.e National federation of India which was formed in 1954 and all India democratic women's association formed in 1981. Thus all women's organization work for the welfare and development in India.

In short, women's movements highlight the problems faced by women in India's societies as well as in state. They play important role for social transformation. This organization work for gender equality, liberty and justice. The needs aspiration interests and demands of women are expressed through these movements.

DALIT MOVEMENT/ DALIT PANTHERAS/ CAST MOVEMENT IN INDIA

The word Dalits encompass the communities known as untouchables and tribals who are officially known schedule casts and schedule tribes. The term is an ancient Marathi Word that may be defined as ground or broken into pieces. In Indian society the clearly indicates for backward and lower casts.

By the early 1970's the first generation Dalit graduates began to assert themselves various platforms. Dalit panthers a militant organization of Dalit youth was formed in Maharashtra in 1972. In post independence period Dalit groups are mainly fighting against perpetual cast based inequalities and material injustice that the Dalit faced inspite of constructional guarantee of equality and justice. Effective implementation of reservation and other such policies of social justice was one their prominent demands.

Activities of Dalit panthers mostly centered around fighting increasing atrocities on Dalits and various parts of State. As a result of sustains agitation on the part of Dalit panthers along with other likeminded organization where started. The larger ideological agenda was destroy the cast based inequality and injustice and to built an organization of all oppressed section like the landless poor peasants and urban industrial workers along with Dalits. Therefore Dalit panthers resorted to mass action assertion of Dalit rights to conclude, it is evident that cast movements stood against exploitation discrimination, domination and oppression. Thus they were in favour of cast based equality, liberty and justice.

LESSONS FROM POPULAR MOVEMENTS

The history of popular movements helps us to understand the nature of democratic politics. The popular movements are neither sporadic in nature nor are these a problem these movements helped rectify some problems in the party politics and are integral part of democratic politics. These movements insured effective representation diverse groups and their demands. This reduced the possibility of deep social conflict and disaffection of these groups from democracy.

Popular movements are not only about rallies and protests. They involve a gradual process of coming together of people with similar problems, similar demands and similar expectations but these movements also about making people aware about their rights. Such popular movements thus contributed expansion of democracy rather than causing disruptions. Critics of these movements often argue that collective actions like strikes, sit-ins and rallies disrupt the functioning of govt.

Thus by understanding these movements we understand that different sections of society , aspiration, interests and demands that must be taking into consideration while making national policies and decisions in democratic institutions.

Learning Outcomes:-

1. What do you understand by Chipko movement?
2. Write a short note on farmers movement in India?
3. What was Narmada Bacho Andolan?
4. Write a short note on women's movement in India?
5. What was Dalit Panthares Movement?