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## **UNIT 3 CLASSIFICATION OF SOCIAL MOVEMENTS INCLUDING NEW SOCIAL MOVEMENTS**

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### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

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Classification is a way of selecting and arranging facts/data. It is a way to give meaning to one's observations. There is no the way of classifying any social phenomenon, process or group of people. Social movements also do not have the only one way of classification. No classification is sacrosanct and universal acceptable by all the scholars and activists. Classification is related to theoretical framework and the question that one wants to understand? Same movement can be classified in several ways depending upon the focus of the study. For instance a collective struggle of people raising issue of pollution can be called environment movement and also human rights movement or middle class movement or reformist movement or new social movement. In this unit we shall explain some of the typologies of the movements as used by different scholars and underlying rationale for such taxonomy.

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### **3.2 REFORM, REBELLION AND REVOLUTION**

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Generally those who follow Marxist framework examine social movements in terms of their potentialities for revolutionary transformation in society. They characterise the movements in reference to not only of the participants and leaders' ideology as well as their immediate and long term objectives but also the scholars' own expectations from social movements. In this framework the movements are classified on the basis of what they attain or likely to attain and the objectives of the collective action against the political system. According to this theoretical perspective social movements are of three types: revolt or rebellion, reform, and revolution. Revolt or rebellion protests against the political system or regime and may also make attempts to change in the authority – government and/or ruling elite/ rulers. But it does not question nor it aims at changing the political system. In short, the movement is against the regime rather than the system. A revolt is a challenge to political authority, aimed at overthrowing the government. A rebellion is an attack on existing authority without any intention of seizing state power to change the system.

The social movement which aims at bringing certain changes in the system and not transforming the system completely is called reformist movement. Such movements question the functioning of political institutions and build pressure on the government

to introduce certain changes in their structure and procedures. While doing so they do not question the political system as a whole; nor do they relate a political institution with the larger political structure. In other words they focus on reforming a particular part of an institution or the system. For example, the movement that primarily aims at changing election rules and procedures does not relate elections with the economic structure and power relationship in society. In that sense it is reformist movement. Or, various social reform movements try to reform certain customs like child marriage or dowry, norms such as animal sacrifice, untouchability; or social arrangements such as hierarchical order in status and social mobility rather than challenging the whole social order based on pollution and purity around the principles of inequality. When women's movements struggle to have reservation for women in the parliament it is reformist movement aiming at changing the representation system. Reform does not challenge the political system per se. It attempts to bring about changes in the relations between the parts of the system in order to make it more efficient, responsive and workable.

In a revolution, a section or sections of society launch an organised struggle to overthrow not only the established government and regime but also the socio-economic structure which sustains it, and replace the structure by an alternative social order. For instance the Naxalite movement is not only challenging the particular government but aims at over-throwing the state which is feudal/semi-feudal and desires to establish communist state. Or the dalit movement aims at transforming social order based on caste system and desires to create egalitarian social system. In the same way when women movement challenges patriarchy in society and attempts its abolition then it becomes revolutionary movement.

Nature of social movements often overlaps. Many movements undergo change in the course of time. Some apparently reformist movements may take revolutionary course; and some which begin with revolutionary agenda become reformist also. All social movements do not necessarily begin with clear objectives in terms of the maintenance or the transformation of the system. They often get shaped in the process through the leaders, participants and ideology.

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### **3.3 NEW SOCIAL MOVEMENTS**

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The classification based on Marxist theoretical framework focusing on class structure of the participants, with ultimate objectives to overthrow the present state aiming at bringing total change in production relation is considered as 'old' social movement. They are also called classical movements. These movements, it is argued, primarily focus on the state power and on class consciousness of the participants. The examples of the peasant or working class movement against the feudal/semi-feudal economic structure fall in this category.

As against this, some of the recent movements particularly in and after the 1960s in Europe such as peace movement, ecological movement, women's movement etc. are called 'new' social movement. In India the movements around the issue of identity – dalit, adivasi, women, human rights, environment etc. are also labeled as the 'new' social movement. In one sense they are called 'new' social movements because they have raised the issues related to identity and autonomy which are non-class issues and

do not confront with the state. They are the new forms of social movements. However, it is simplistic to say that in the past people did not raise and struggled for identity and autonomy. For instance the Birsa Munda movement in Chhota Nagpur during the 1830s was the struggle to resist the intervention of the British state in their life. It was the movement to protect their autonomy. According to K.S. Singh (1966) the movement aimed at the “liquidation of the racial enemies, the Dikus, European missionaries and officials and the native Christians. The Mundas would recover their ‘lost kingdom’. There will be enough to eat, no famine, the people will live together in love”. So it is not correct to say in the past people did not struggle for identity and autonomy. In fact as Andre Gunder Frank and Marta Fuentes (2002) argue that the ‘classical’ working class movements are the product of the 19<sup>th</sup> century industrial society. “On the other hand, peasant, localist community, ethnic/nationalist, religious, and even feminist/ women’s movements have existed for centuries and even millennia in many parts of the world (2002).” Therefore the ‘old’ and ‘new’ are not related to time. They differ in their features.

The scholars who reject the framework of the classical or Marxist framework identify the following characteristics of the ‘new’ social movements.

- 1) The New Social Movements (NSM) are not directing their collective action to state power. They are concerned with individual and collective morality. Andre Gunder Frank and Marta Fuentes find that NSMs “share the force of morality and a sense of (in)justice in individual motivation, and the force of social mobilisation in developing social power. Individual membership or participation and motivation in all sorts of social movements contain a strong moral component and defensive concern with justice in the social and world order. (2002).”
- 2) The new social movements are not class-based. They are multi-class. In fact, they do not subscribe to the theory that society is divided on class line and the classes are antagonistic. The new social movements are either ethnic or nationalist and plural. Women’s movement is an example. Gail Omvedt treats the contemporary farmers’ movement as ‘new’ and non-class movement. It is a movement of small and poor as well as middle and rich farmers. These movements, she argues also have support of agriculture labourers. It also has support of shopkeepers and also of high and low castes. She argues,
 

“ideologies of the farmers’ movement thus provided a clear challenge to Marxism that limited its analysis only to capital-labour struggles as defined within a realm of commodity exchange; they looked to a wider arena of capital accumulation and economic exploitation taking into account factors other than class defined in the narrow sense, and in many ways their thrust coincided with that of the developing environmental movements (1993).”
- 3) The new social movements are confined to and concern with civil society. According to the proponents of NSM “civil society is getting diminished; its social space is suffering a shrinkage and the ‘social’ of the civil society is eroded by the controlling ability of the state. The expansion of the state, in the contemporary setting, coincides with the expansion of the market. State and market are seen as two institutions making inroads into all aspects of the citizen’s life. Under the combined impact of the forces of the state and the market, society grows helpless. Consequently, the

NSMs raise the issue of the 'self-defense' of the community and society against the increasing expansion of the state apparatuses: agencies of surveillance and social control.(Singh 2001)".

- 4) NSMs are not around economic issues of land, wages or property. They are primarily concerned with self- identity and autonomy of an individual and community against the state, market and social institutions. Therefore, dalit movement for dignity and adivasis movement for their autonomy are treated as NSM.
- 5) NSMs are not concerned for the benefit of one class or group. They are concerned for the good of every one irrespective of class. Environmental movement in that sense according to some scholars, is NSM as it does not raise the issue of a particular class.
- 6) For some NSMs are grassroots or micro movements and do not have to capture state power on their agenda. They are democratic in their organisational structure. According to Jean Cohen NSMs raise issue which emerge from society rather than form state and economy. They are concerned with democratisation in day to day life. They focus on communication and identity. According to Rajendra Singh "the aim of NSM is to recognise the relations between state, society and the economy, and to create a public space in which democratic discourse on autonomy and freedom of the individual and collectivities, their identities and orientations could be discussed and examined. In its many expressions, the NSMs generally confine themselves to social action with a spirit of what Cohen calls 'self limiting radicalism' (2001)".

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### **3.4 ISSUE-BASED MOVEMENTS**

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Some of those who follow structure-function approach classify social movements on the basis of issues around which people are mobilised. People do get mobilised around number of issues from local and immediate to systemic and long term. They vary from time to time and from society to society. Some times the issue-based classification treat different issue separately. Sometimes issues are conceptualised in theoretical framework such as developmental, livelihood, human Right issues or political, economic, cultural and social issues; or local, regional and national issues. Classification of the issues depends upon scholars' perspective. For instance the movement of the dam-affected people can be called as 'rehabilitation' movement of dam-affected people and it can also be called as anti-development movement or human right movement.

Similarly, struggles of the forest-dwellers can be classified into : forest movement, civil rights or livelihood movement or movement for common resources.

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### **3.5 CLASSIFICATION BY SOCIAL CATEGORIES**

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Those who follow Marxist frame work often classify social movements on the basis of classes such as peasant movement or rich peasant movement, working class movement or middle class movement and so on. Those who follow cultural or community framework divide movements on the basis of community such as ethnic movement, western movements, black movement, dalit movement etc. Sometimes social categories are divided by region such urban and rural. Movements may also be classified on economic

as well as ethnic categories and also by issues together. Some others classify movements on the basis of the participants, such as peasants, tribals, students, women, dalits, etc. In many cases the participants and issues go together.

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### **3.6 SUMMARY**

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Classification is a tool for analysis. It is closely related with theoretical framework. Hence classification of social movements vary from scholar to scholar depending upon his/her analytical framework. Important guide for classification is: what do you want to find out? Or what is your purpose of classification. Now a days social movements are classified into (1) old or classical and (2) new. The former falls into Marxist framework. It is based on the objectives and class characters of the participants. New social movements are those which are of non-class and around the issues of identity and autonomy. Movements are also classified by issues and/ social class of the participants.

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### **3.7 EXERCISES**

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- 1) “No classification of social movements is sacrosanct” Explain.
- 2) Discuss the difference between reform and revolutionary movement.
- 3) Why ‘new’ social movements are called ‘new’?
- 4) What are the main features of ‘new’ social movements?
- 5) Give some examples of issue-based movements.
- 6) Give examples of classification based on social classes.