M.A.H.R-601

Social Movements in India and Human Rights

Master of Arts in Human Rights

Uttarakhand Open University

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Unit 1 Definitions and Characteristics of Social Movements

Unit Structure

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Introduction

Social movements are collective, organized efforts by marginalized or aggrieved groups to challenge power structures and demand social change. In the realm of human rights, they have been very important in dismantling apartheid system, advancing gender equality, and combating climate injustice.

In India, social movements have played an equally significant role in influencing political, social, economic, and cultural change. The Indian freedom struggle, peasant movements, labour movements, Dalit movements, women's movements, environmental campaigns, and recent protests such as the Farmers' Protest (2020–21) demonstrate how collective action has contributed to policy reforms and social transformation. Undoubtedly the emergence of social media and digital communication, social movements have become increasingly decentralized, interconnected, and capable of mobilizing support across geographical boundaries. Despite their diversity, all social movements share certain common features. They are based on organized collective action, arise from shared grievances or aspirations, pursue identifiable goals, and attempt to influence social, political, economic, or cultural change.

This unit explores their definitions, characteristics, and distinctions from related phenomena. Understanding these elements equips human rights scholars and practitioners to assess movements' efficacy in enforcing rights.

1.1 Objectives

After reading this unit, students will be able to

- Define social movements and articulate their core characteristics in the context of human rights advocacy.
- Distinguish social movements from interest groups and revolutions, with reference to real-world human rights campaigns.
- Analyze contemporary human rights struggles, such as anti-discrimination or environmental justice movements.
- Evaluate the significance of social movements in promoting human rights in democratic societies

1.3 Concept and Definition of Social Movements

A social movement is generally understood as a collective and organized effort by individuals or groups seeking to bring about, resist, or reverse social, political, economic, or cultural change. Unlike spontaneous protests or isolated incidents of public unrest, social movements involve

sustained collective action directed towards achieving specific objectives. They are often driven by shared grievances, common identities, or aspirations for justice, equality, and social transformation.

Social movements emerge when individuals recognize that their concerns cannot be effectively addressed through existing institutional mechanisms alone. Consequently, they organize themselves to influence public opinion, governmental policies, institutional practices, or societal values. Moreover, depending on their objectives, social movements may seek to introduce reforms, protect existing rights, resist unpopular policies, or fundamentally transform social structures.

The nature of social movements has evolved considerably with the time. Earlier movements were largely centered on economic exploitation, labour rights, and political representation, whereas contemporary movements increasingly focus on environmental issues, gender equality, human rights, identity politics, digital rights, etc. This evolution reflects broader transformations in society, economy, and political institutions. Although methods and objectives differ across contexts, social movements share a common commitment to collective action aimed at influencing the direction of social change.

The concept of social movements has been interpreted differently by various scholars depending on their theoretical perspectives. While some emphasize collective action, others focus on organization, shared `identity, or political opportunities. Together, these definitions provide a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. Some of the key definitions are mentioned below:

Key Definitions

Herbert Blumer (1951) : "collective enterprises to establish a new order of life." Blumer viewed social movements as organized attempts to transform existing social arrangements and create alternative patterns of social life. His definition highlights their transformative character.

Charles Tilly (2004): Describes social movements as "sustained campaigns of claim-making interacting with opponents and audiences," emphasizing public performances like protests to assert rights claims.

Sidney Tarrow (1994): Views them as "collective challenges by people with common purposes and solidarity, in sustained interaction with elites, opponents, and audiences," particularly relevant to human rights where movements target state violations.

Anthony Giddens (2009): He defines social movements as collective attempts to pursue shared interests or achieve common goals through action outside established institutional channels. His definition distinguishes social movements from conventional political institutions by emphasizing extra-institutional participation.

These definitions underscore intentionality, collective identity, and extra-institutional action, distinguishing movements from routine politics.

1.3.1 Social Movements and Collective Behaviour

Social movements are often confused with other forms of collective behaviour such as crowds, riots, panics, or fads. While both involve groups of people acting collectively, they differ significantly in their nature and objectives. Collective behaviour is generally spontaneous, temporary, and loosely organized. It often arises in response to immediate situations and may disappear as quickly as it emerges. Riots, stampedes, rumours, and panics are examples of collective behaviour.

Social movements, in contrast, are sustained, organized, and goal oriented. They possess leadership, shared objectives, collective identity, and long term strategies. Their activities are extended beyond immediate reactions and aim to influence policies, institutions, or social norms. Consequently, social movements represent a more structured and enduring form of collective action than ordinary collective behaviour.

1.4 Evolution of Social Movements in India

The way social movements have developed in India is a reflection of how society, politics, the economy, and culture are evolving. The colonial and early post-colonial eras saw the emergence of India's first social movements. These groups, sometimes known as Old Social groups (OSMs), were mainly focused on political rights and economic redistribution. They were centred on topics including political representation, fair pay, employment rights, and land reforms. mostly motivated by class strife, especially between labourers and industrial employers or peasants and landlords, and organised by official organisations including political parties, trade unions, and peasant groups. Some major examples of historical or traditional social movements are Agrarian revolts against colonial exploitation, Peasant movements demanding land redistribution, Early nationalist mobilizations against British colonial rule etc.

The Shift to New Social Movements

India's social mobilization has changed by the late 20th century due to fast industrialization, urbanization, globalization, democratic growth, and increased educational attainment. Many new movements, are no longer exclusively focused on class or economic concerns. Rather, they are focused on issues related to human rights, gender equality, environmental preservation, identity, dignity, and quality of life. The idea of New Social Movements (NSMs) emerged as a result of this change. Many people-oriented movements that addressed issues beyond economic redistribution emerged in India during the 1970s and 1980s. New Social Movements Pay attention to human rights, identity, culture, and dignity and are more concerned for social justice and environmental sustainability. In these movements we often see the involvement from

professionals, urban middle classes, women, students, tribal people, and environmentalists.

Major New Social Movements in India

1. The Chipko Movement: One of India's first and most significant environmental campaigns was the Chipko Movement in Uttarakhand during the 1970s. To stop commercial logging, the villagers embraced trees under the leadership of rural women like Gaura Devi and Bachni Devi. The movement addressed women's reliance on forest resources, environmental protection, and local livelihoods in addition to its goal of protecting forests. It integrated ecological issues with gender justice, community involvement, and cultural identity, that's why this movement serves as a link between traditional and contemporary social movements.

2. The Narmada Bachao Andolan (NBA): This was started in 1985, and it opposed the building of massive dams on the Narmada River because of worries about the destruction of the environment and the uprooting of nearby villages. Tribal groups, farmers, environmentalists, human rights campaigners, and metropolitan intellectuals were all pulled together by the movement. In contrast to conventional class based movements, the NBA focused on Justice for the environment, Development that is sustainable, Resettlement and rehabilitation, Rights of the community and Human dignity.

3. Anti-CAA Protests (2019–20): After the Citizenship Amendment Act, 2019 was passed, there were protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA). Protesters claimed that by adding religion as a criterion for citizenship, the Act, when combined with the projected National Register of Citizens (NRC), undermined India's secular and constitutional values. There were nonviolent protests all around the nation, but the most well-known representation of the campaign was the Shaheen Bagh sit-in in Delhi. The demonstration, which was mostly led by women, especially Muslim women, focused on democratic rights, equality, secularism, and constitutional ideals. Through nonviolent protest and public involvement, the movement demonstrated how marginalized communities could successfully organize.

4. Farmers' Protests (2020–21): Millions of farmers from Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, and Haryana demonstrated against three agricultural legislation, calling for protection from corporatization and minimum support prices. The laws were repealed in 2021 as a result of the mostly nonviolent struggle.

5. Environmental and Climate Movements: Climate change, ecological preservation, sustainable development, and environmental justice are the main concerns of social movements in modern India. Campaigns run by young people has increased public awareness of climate change, air pollution, biodiversity loss, and unsustainable development methods. To demand stricter environmental regulations and increased governmental responsibility, these groups mostly depend on scientific data, public awareness campaigns, online activism, and nonviolent

protests. They stand for the younger generations' increasing concern for intergenerational justice and environmental sustainability.

6. Digital Movements and Social Media Activism: Social movements in India have changed as a result of the quick development of digital technology and social media. Online platforms like Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and X (previously Twitter) have grown in importance as instruments for public participation, awareness raising, and mobilization. Issues like sexual harassment, caste discrimination, and environmental conservation have entered national and international public consciousness with the campaigns like #MeTooIndia, #DalitLivesMatter, and #SaveAarey. Rapid information transmission, citizen participation, and the amplification of marginalized voices are all made possible by these digital movements. Digital activism is an essential component of modern new social movements because, despite being mostly online, it frequently supports offline demonstrations, legal lobbying, and policy discussions.

1.5 Characteristics of Social Movements

Collective Action and Shared Grievance: Collectively perceived injustices, inequalities, or rights breaches that impact a specific community or social group give rise to social movements. They constitute coordinated reactions to common complaints like caste discrimination, gender inequality, racial injustice, environmental degradation, or denial of Indigenous land rights, rather than isolated individual issues. Acknowledging shared oppressive experiences strengthens participants' bonds and inspires concerted attempts to bring about social and political change.

Sustained and Organized Effort: In contrast to unplanned protests, riots, or isolated demonstrations, social movements entail long term, coordinated activity. In order to maintain advocacy in the realm of shifting political conditions, they establish formal or informal organizational structures, leadership, communication networks, and strategic planning. For instance, for a number of years, India's Right to Information movement persisted in its campaigns, public awareness campaigns, and legal activism, which ultimately resulted in the passage of the Right to Information Act, 2005.

Ideology and Collective Identity: The existence of a common ideology or value system that offers guidance, legitimacy, and purpose is a distinguishing feature of social movements. Participants can better understand social issues, pinpoint the root causes of injustice, and visualise desirable social change with the aid of a specific ideological framework. At the same time, movements foster a sense of togetherness among participants through common experiences, goals, or ideals. For example, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights' (UDHR) Preamble, which upholds the concept of "human dignity," has served as a unifying basis for LGBTQ+ rights movements around the world, fostering solidarity and group action.

Adaptive and Dynamic Nature: Social movements are not static, they are dynamic in nature. In reaction to changing political, social, and technical circumstances, they constantly modify their objectives, tactics, leadership structures, and communication methods. Movements frequently exhibit incredible persistence by creating novel means of mobilization, even in the face of obstacles including internal conflicts, resource limitations, and official persecution.

Leadership and Organizational Coordination: Leadership plays an important role in providing direction, maintaining unity, and coordinating the activities of social movements. Effective leaders articulate the movement's objectives, mobilize public support, negotiate with authorities, and inspire collective participation. Traditional social movements often revolved around charismatic leaders. Contemporary movements, however, increasingly emphasize shared or decentralized leadership, allowing multiple organizations and community leaders to participate in decision-making.

Multi Level and Transnational Scope: Despite the fact that many social movements are rooted in local issues and community based struggles, their influence often transcends national borders through transnational advocacy networks, international organizations, and digital communication technologies. Local campaigns can garner support from civil society organizations, international media attention, and global solidarity, increasing pressure on governments to adhere to international human rights standards. Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International frequently work with grassroots movements to amplify local concerns in international human rights forums.

These features make social movements resilient vehicles for human rights enforcement.

1.6 Distinction Between Social Movements, Interest Groups, and Revolutions

Clarifying these boundaries is crucial for human rights analysis, as misclassification affects strategic support.

Social Movements vs. Interest Groups

The main areas of distinction between social movements and interest groups are their goals, strategies, and organizational structure. Interest groups are officially recognized organizations with specified memberships, paid employees, professional leadership, and steady funding. They typically use institutional channels including lobbying, litigation, policy advocacy, and interaction with politicians, regulatory bodies, and courts to accomplish certain policy goals, such as labor rights, taxation, or industry restrictions. Their main goal is to directly influence decision-makers in the current political system.

Social movements, on the other hand, are grassroots, decentralized networks that depend more on loose coalitions, voluntary activism, and widespread participation than on official organizational structures. By tackling topics like human rights, environmental justice, gender

equality, and civil rights, they aim to bring about more significant social, political, or cultural change. In order to mobilize public opinion, garner media attention, and put pressure on governments and other authorities to comply with their demands, social movements use public demonstrations, protests, boycotts, sit-ins, and civil disobedience in addition to formal methods.

Social Movements vs. Revolutions

Social movements are coordinated, long term group initiatives that use advocacy and public participation to either support or oppose social change. By influencing policy, increasing awareness, and mobilizing public opinion, they usually aim to bring about improvements within the current political and social structure. Notable examples include the Indian Independence Movement, led by Mahatma Gandhi through the philosophy of Satyagraha (nonviolent resistance); the Civil Rights Movement, led by Martin Luther King Jr. to end racial segregation in the United States; and contemporary environmental movements advocating climate action and sustainable development.

In contrast, a revolution is a swift and profound shift that topples the current political system and results in significant adjustments to the institutions, economy, and social structure of the state. Revolutions, as opposed to social movements, aim to overthrow rather than modify the current system. The Russian Revolution, which ended Tsarist control and created the first communist state in history, and the French Revolution, which abolished the monarchy and feudal system in favour of republican ideals of liberty, equality, and fraternity, are notable instances.

1.7 Significance of Social Movements in a Democratic Society

Social movements are indispensable for the functioning of a democratic society. While democratic institutions such as legislatures, political parties, and courts provide formal mechanisms for addressing public concerns, they may not always adequately represent the interests of marginalized or disadvantaged groups. Social movements bridge this gap by enabling citizens to articulate grievances, influence public policy, and demand greater accountability from the state. In this sense, they deepen democracy by expanding opportunities for participation beyond electoral politics.

One of the most significant contributions of social movements is that they give voice to marginalized communities. Groups that have historically faced exclusion due to caste, class, gender, ethnicity, disability, or religion often find it difficult to secure representation through conventional political channels. Social movements create platforms through which these communities can collectively express their concerns and advocate for equal rights and opportunities. In India, Dalit movements, tribal movements, women's movements, and disability rights campaigns have significantly contributed to greater social inclusion and policy reforms.

Social movements also play an important role in protecting and promoting human rights. Many rights that are today recognized as fundamental were secured through sustained collective action. Campaigns against untouchability, child labour, bonded labour, gender-based violence, and environmental degradation have strengthened both legal protections and public awareness.

Another important function of social movements is their ability to influence public policy. Through public campaigns, advocacy, litigation, media engagement, and negotiations with governments, social movements often bring neglected issues onto the national policy agenda. For example The Farmers' Protest (2020–21) ultimately resulted in the repeal of the three controversial farm laws, illustrating the capacity of peaceful collective action to shape public policy.

Furthermore, social movements act as mechanisms of social accountability by monitoring governmental actions and demanding transparency. They expose corruption, challenge abuse of power, and encourage greater responsiveness from public institutions. This watchdog role has become increasingly important in contemporary democracies where citizens expect greater openness and accountability from governments.

1.8 Social Movements in Contemporary Time

The character of social movements has undergone significant transformation during the twenty first century. Globalization, technological innovation, urbanization, and increasing interconnectedness have altered both the issues around which movements emerge and the methods they use. One of the most significant developments is the rise of digital activism. The widespread availability of smartphones, internet connectivity, and social networking platforms has transformed communication between activists and supporters. Social media platforms such as X (formerly Twitter), Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, and YouTube enable movements to disseminate information rapidly, organize events, mobilize volunteers, and reach national as well as international audiences. Digital technologies have also reduced the cost of organizing collective action. Online petitions, crowdfunding, webinars, virtual campaigns, and hashtag activism allow movements to coordinate activities across geographical boundaries. Campaigns such as #MeTooIndia, #DalitLivesMatter, #SaveAarey, and youth-led climate campaigns illustrate how online activism complements traditional forms of protest.

Another emerging trend is the growing importance of identity based movements. While earlier movements primarily emphasized economic redistribution, contemporary movements increasingly focus on issues related to identity, dignity, recognition, and inclusion. Gender rights, LGBTQ+ rights, disability rights, indigenous rights, and minority rights have become central concerns of many social movements worldwide.

Environmental movements have likewise expanded considerably. Growing public concern regarding climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution, and sustainable development has given

rise to numerous campaigns advocating ecological conservation. We are witnessing an increased collaboration between local and global movements. Contemporary movements frequently build transnational networks, enabling activists from different countries to exchange ideas, share resources, and coordinate campaigns. Issues such as climate change, labour rights, gender equality, digital privacy, and human rights increasingly transcend national boundaries, making international cooperation an important feature of modern social movements.

1.9 Challenges Faced By Contemporary Social Movements

Despite their growing influence, social movements face numerous challenges.

State repression and legal restrictions : One of the foremost challenges is state repression and legal restrictions. In many countries, governments regulate public demonstrations through legal frameworks that may restrict protests, public assemblies, or funding for civil society organizations. Excessive use of force, arrests, surveillance, and restrictions on digital communication can affect the functioning of social movements.

Resource constraints : Another challenge is resource constraints. Many grassroots movements operate with limited financial resources, inadequate organizational infrastructure, and dependence on voluntary participation. Sustaining long-term campaigns therefore becomes difficult, particularly when movements receive limited institutional support.

Internal Fragmentation: Social movements also face the problem of internal fragmentation. Differences regarding leadership, ideology, organizational strategy, or policy priorities may weaken unity and reduce the effectiveness of collective action. Maintaining cohesion while accommodating diversity remains a continuing challenge.

Spread of misinformation: The rapid spread of misinformation and disinformation through digital platforms presents another significant concern. False information may distort the objectives of movements, generate public confusion, or undermine their credibility. Consequently, movements increasingly invest in fact-checking, transparent communication, and responsible digital engagement.

Finally, contemporary movements must balance the advantages of online activism with the necessity of sustained grassroots engagement. While digital campaigns can generate widespread visibility, meaningful social change generally requires continuous community participation, institutional dialogue, and long-term organizational commitment.

1.10 Summary

Social movements are organized and sustained forms of collective action aimed at promoting, resisting, or reversing social change. They differ from spontaneous collective behaviour because they possess shared objectives, organizational structures, collective identity, and long term strategies. Major characteristics of social movements include collective action, shared grievances, common ideology, organization, leadership, continuity, resource mobilization, and the pursuit of social change. Contemporary social movements increasingly emphasize human rights, environmental sustainability, gender equality, and identity while utilizing digital technologies for communication and mobilization. In democratic societies, they strengthen public participation, promote accountability, influence policy-making, and contribute significantly to social justice and democratic governance.

As India continues to experience rapid social, economic, and technological transformation, social movements are likely to remain vital mechanisms for democratic participation, policy innovation, and the realization of constitutional values. Understanding their definitions and characteristics therefore provides an important foundation for studying their evolution, theories, and impact on Indian society.

1.11 Glossary

Social Movement: A sustained collective effort to bring about or resist social, political, economic, or cultural change.

Collective Identity: A shared sense of belonging and common purpose among members of a group or movement.

Civil Society: The sphere of voluntary organizations and citizen groups operating independently of the state and the market.

Resource Mobilization: The process of acquiring and organizing resources needed to support a social movement.

Digital Activism: The use of digital technologies and online platforms to advocate for social or political causes.

Human Rights: Universal and inalienable rights and freedoms inherent to every human being.

Environmental Movement: A collective effort to protect the environment and promote sustainable development.

Identity Politics: Political mobilization based on shared social identities such as caste, gender, ethnicity, religion, or sexuality.

1.12 SAQs (Short Answer Questions)

1.Define a social movement and explain any two of its essential characteristics.

2.Differentiate between social movements and collective behaviour.

3.Discuss any two major characteristics of social movements.

4.Distinguish between a social movement and an interest group.

5.Identify any two major challenges faced by contemporary social movements.

1.13 MCQs (Multiple Choice Questions)

1. Which of the following is the most essential feature of a social movement?

A) Temporary public excitement

B) Collective and sustained action for social change

C) Individual protest

D) Electoral competition

2. Which of the following best distinguishes collective behaviour from a social movement?

A) Collective behaviour is always organized.

B) Social movements are sustained and goal-oriented.

C) Collective behaviour always seeks policy change.

D) Social movements are always spontaneous.

3. Interest groups primarily seek to:

A) Overthrow the political system

B) Promote cultural festivals

C) Influence public policy in favour of specific interests

D) Replace democratic institutions

4. Which of the following is a major function of social movements in a democracy?

A) Eliminate elections

B) Restrict public participation

C) Promote citizen participation and accountability

D) Replace the judiciary

5. Which of the following is a major challenge for contemporary social movements?

A) Universal public support

B) Unlimited financial resources

C) Misinformation and digital surveillance

D) Complete political neutrality

Answers: 1.B 2. B 3.C 4.C 5.C

1.14 True/ False

1. Social movements are generally sustained forms of collective action.

2. Collective behaviour is always organized and long-term in nature.

3. Interest groups primarily focus on influencing public policy for specific interests.

4. Social movements have no role in strengthening democratic participation.

5. Contemporary social movements increasingly use digital platforms for mobilization and advocacy.

Answers: 1.T 2. F 3.T 4. F 5.T

1.15 Terminal/ Model Questions

1. Explain the concept and definitions of social movements. Discuss the relationship between social movements and collective behaviour.

2. Trace the evolution of social movements in India, highlighting the major phases of their development.

3. Discuss the characteristics of social movements and explain their significance in a democratic society.

4. Differentiate between social movements, interest groups, and revolution with suitable examples.

5. Examine the nature of social movements in contemporary times and critically analyse the major challenges they face.

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Unit-2 Theories of Social Movements

Unit Structure

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2.4.4 Resource Mobilization Theory

2.4.5 Political Process Theory

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2.9 SAQs (Short answer questions)

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2.11 True/ False

2.12 Terminal/ Model Questions

2.13 References/ Suggested Reading

2.1 Introduction

Social movements are the organized group efforts with the goal of bringing about social, political, economic, or cultural change. They emerge when people come together to confront problems like prejudice, exploitation, injustice, and inequality. Social movements have had a significant impact on public opinion, governmental policies, and social reforms, all of which have shaped societies. The causes of collective action are the focus of traditional theories including relative deprivation theory, mass society theory, and collective behaviour theory on the other hand Organization, leadership, and political opportunities are highlighted by contemporary theories like resource mobilization theory and political process theory. Some theories also emphasize the significance of identity, culture, ideology, and communication, such as new social movement theory and framing theory.

In general, studying social movements and theories related improves our comprehension of democratic engagement, social transformation, and the fight for equity and justice. It shows that social movements are significant forces that impact public awareness, the creation of policies, and the changing of society in addition to being responses to social issues.

2.2 Objectives

After studying this unit, learners will be able to:

- Understand the major theories of social movements.
- Examine contemporary approaches to social movements.
- Analyze the role of resources, leadership, ideology, and organization in movements.
- Apply social movement theories to Indian society and contemporary issues.
- Evaluate the role of social movements in social change and democracy.

2.3 Importance of theory in understanding social movements

Social theory is the crucial analytical lens that converts descriptive historical narratives into rigorous sociological investigation in the academic study of collective activity. Theory enables us to find recurrent patterns and causal mechanisms across many cultural and chronological contexts, as opposed to seeing demonstrations as isolated or illogical outbursts. Theory helps academics go beyond the "what" of a movement to examine the "why" and "how," enabling a fuller comprehension of the connection between personal agency and more significant social institutions by offering an organized framework. A postgraduate student can apply results from one particular struggle like the labor movements of the 20th century to current digital or environmental activism thanks to this theoretical foundation.

Explaining the prerequisites for a movement's emergence and sustainability is one of theory's main purposes. Political Process Theory, for example, moves the emphasis to the external environment, arguing that movements are most successful when "political opportunities" like elite divides or a relaxation of governmental repression become available. On the other hand, Resource Mobilization Theory downplays members' psychological complaints in favour of concentrating on the practical needs of dissent, such as obtaining resources, labour, and media coverage. These viewpoints guarantee that social movements are examined as planned, strategic phenomena rather than as merely unplanned manifestations of unhappiness.

Theory is also essential for comprehending the symbolic and cultural aspects of collective action. We can examine how movement leaders articulate grievances, create meaning, and inspire involvement by matching their objectives with the public's values by using the notion of framing. Because it emphasizes how current battles frequently center around identity, lifestyle, and human rights rather than just economic or class-based demands, New Social Movement (NSM) Theory has proven especially pertinent in the modern day. In the end, using these various theoretical stances enables a thorough analysis of power relations, exposing the ways in which marginalized people oppose hegemonic systems in order to negotiate social change.

2.4 Major theories of social movements

2.4.1 Mass society theory

By emphasizing the consequences of social isolation and decreased community relationships, mass society theory explains social movements. It makes the case that people who are cut off from robust social networks are more susceptible to influence by extremist groups. The 1930s 1950s saw the rise of the theory, which was influenced by worries about communism and fascism.

The concept has been applied in various ideological contexts. Conservative intellectuals believed that industrialization was causing traditional institutions like the family and community to disappear in mass society. On the other hand, radical thinkers contended that massive bureaucracies and popular culture serve to appease the populace and uphold the status quo. Subsequently, the Chicago School defined "masses" as sizable, faceless, loosely organized groupings that interact infrequently and are therefore more susceptible to manipulation. According to C. Wright Mills, the transition of contemporary civilizations from active publics to passive masses raised the possibility of totalitarianism and elite dominance.

In The Politics of Mass Society (1959), William Kornhauser provided the most methodical explanation. He maintained that the demise of intermediate social groupings results in the emergence of mass society, which is composed of powerful elites and isolated individuals. According to Kornhauser, In a system like this robust intermediary groups that protect both citizens and elites and guarantee steady and reasonable political involvement are essential to

functioning democracies. Later studies, however, refuted these assertions. According to studies, those who are socially isolated are actually less likely to become involved in social movements. Rather, those who already have strong social relationships are more likely to participate. Because of this, mass society theory is today regarded by many academics as essentially discredited, despite its continued influence in public and journalistic discourse.

2.4.2 Structural Strain Theory

Neil Smelser introduced the structural strain hypothesis in 1965. According to the notion, any emerging social movement need six elements in order to flourish. These six elements include: people in a society encounter a problem of some kind (deprivation); people in that society acknowledge that the problem exists; an ideology that claims to be a solution to the problem develops and spreads its influence; an event or events occur that transform this emerging movement into a legitimate social movement; society (and its government) is open to change for the movement to be effective (if not, the movement might die out); and resource mobilization occurs as the movement progresses.

The origins and development of the American civil rights movement can be explained by the structural strain theory. Black people and some white people in the nation began to realize in the 1960s that the country's then-current status of racial discrimination could not continue.

Slowly, discontent was spreading through intermittent boycotts and protests. But the iconic Rosa Parks bus incident was what really sparked the civil rights movement. The judicial-legal revolution that would permanently alter American society was made possible by that incident, which also served as the impetus that turned the nascent civil rights movement into a genuinely national phenomenon. It should be mentioned that both the Kennedy and Johnson administrations were open to these developments and did not attempt to suppress the emerging movement as it was gradually expanding. Therefore, the structural strain theory does offer a suitable analytical framework that can aid in our comprehension of the beginnings and subsequent expansion of the American civil rights movement.

2.4.3 Deprivation Theory

According to the proponents of the deprivation theory, Some social movements arise when specific individuals or groups within a society believe they are denied access to a particular resource, good, or service. Absolute deprivation and relative deprivation were the two branches of the deprivation theory camp. Proponents of absolute deprivation ignored the impacted group's social standing in order to address their complaints. Conversely, proponents of relative deprivation believed that a group in a society was at a disadvantage in comparison to another group.

It appears that the deprivation theory offers a compelling explanation for the emergence of certain social movements. It does, however, have one significant drawback that is hard to justify. It doesn't explain why deprivation doesn't always spark the emergence of a social movement. This raises the possibility that, although the presence of a deprivation might be a prerequisite for the emergence of a social movement, it might not be a sufficient one. In other words, in order for a social movement to emerge, deprivation must coexist with other elements.

Despite the above mentioned challenges, it appears that the deprivation theory could offer a partial explanation for the emergence of a social movement. One could argue, for example, that the feminist movement emerged in the 1960s because, up until then, women were "deprived" by society of opportunities and rights that were exclusively granted to men. Similarly one may contend that non-white people were "deprived" of fundamental rights and privileges that their white counterparts enjoyed prior to the U.S. civil rights movement. Once more, we must remember that deprivation of fundamental rights and opportunities was one of the factors that led to the emergence of the two aforementioned movements; we must also search for other factors that worked in tandem with deprivation to give rise to those two movements.

2.4.4 Resource Mobilization Theory

According to the resource mobilization theory, the emergence of a social movement depends on the availability of appropriate resources. One of this theory's many benefits is that it provides a compelling explanation for why, in some circumstances, certain grievances might result in a successful social movement, while in other circumstances, the same kinds of complaints would not.

This theory's strong "materialist" orientation, which prioritizes the existence of suitable resources particularly money in understanding the emergence of social movements, is one of its main objections. Some social movements have emerged despite a lack of resources, particularly financial ones. Even with some unbeatable challenges, this theory does offer a convincing explanation for why certain social movements have been able to expand at an exponential rate. One well known example of this kind is the American civil rights movement. In order to start and spread the movement, its leaders most notably Martin Luther King Jr. and his associates in the Southern Christian Leadership Conference were able to enlist the help of thousands of followers, many of whom were sympathetic white people.

As implied by their name, these "new" social movements often use the Internet for their mobilizing efforts, including chat rooms, bulletin boards, email, and listservs. Starr (2000) focuses in particular on the comparative achievements and global appeal of the environmental and anti-WTO movements to the use of contemporary telecommunications technologies to unite people across geographical and international barriers.

2.4.5 Political Process Theory

According to political process theory, social movements are a subset of political movements since their beginnings can be linked to the availability of political chances. More specifically, this idea compares the social movement under consideration to the state, or the authority of the ruling government. A social movement is likely to fail if the government has a firmly established position and is prone to oppressive actions. On the other hand, any social movement that emerges has a good chance of developing and thriving if the government is weak or more accepting of dissenting behaviour.

The political process theory, which emphasizes the significance of political conditions and associated political opportunities (or lack thereof) in determining the odds of success for a nascent social movement, would not be problematic for many social movement theorists. This theory's main critique is that it places too much emphasis on political situations while ignoring cultural elements that could be powerful enough to lessen their impact.

2.4.6 New Social Movements Theory

The 1960s saw the emergence of the new social movement theories, mostly in various West European nations. The shortcomings of traditional Marxist theories for examining collective action gave rise to these views. The conventional Marxist paradigm of examining collective action primarily from an economic standpoint is abandoned by new social movement theories . Rather, these theories focus on various political, ideological, and cultural drivers of collective behaviour.

In order to comprehend the causes of collective action, NSMT also focuses on new definers of collective identity, such as ethnicity, gender, and sexuality. Naturally, socioeconomic class was the main determinant of collective identity in traditional Marxism. The philosophical writings of continental philosophers like Alain Touraine and Jurgen Habermas are often the foundation of NSMT. In postmodern civilizations, where a large portion of the workforce is educated, skilled, white collar, and employed in service industries, these theorists attempt to develop theories that can explain the behaviour of these societies. In contrast to workers in the "modern" society of the past who had to deal with concerns related to exploitation by the ruling classes, workers in a postmodern society strive fundamentally to preserve a balance between life and work.

Additionally, NSMT operates within an ideological framework that is characterized by concerns about individual rights in relation to the state's authority over its citizens. According to NSMT, this conflict between state and individual rights takes place against a backdrop of postmodern social values based on a desire for self actualization, community, and personal fulfillment. In summary, NSMT focuses on issues related to life-work balance that affect individual citizens, whereas traditional social movement theories primarily addressed issues related to the exploitation of one societal class by another.

One of the main criticisms of NSMT is that it tends to minimize the tensions that exist between different socioeconomic strata in society, even in postmodern societies. Another critique is that, despite the fact that these movements are obviously quite different kinds of social movements, NSMT tends to treat movements like the environmental movement, the anti-globalization movement, and the women's rights movement as belonging to the same type. Therefore, classifying these various movements into a single group could be a pointless endeavour.

2.4.7 Framing Theory

The goal of social movement framing theory is to comprehend how social movements and their participants construct and employ meaning, or how ideas and events are framed. This meaning work has emerged as a crucial method for comprehending and analyzing social movements. According to Benford & Snow (2000), "framing processes have come to be regarded as a central dynamic in understanding the character and course of social movements, alongside resource mobilization and political opportunity processes". Erving Goffman's work is where the concept of frame analysis originated (1974). According to Goffman, people organise and comprehend their surroundings by framing their experiences.

Framing works similarly to how a picture frame highlights certain elements while excluding others. People use framing to make sense of the world in light of their social standing and past experiences. Every social encounter is interpreted through a frame of reference in which individuals respond according to how they interpret the circumstances and the individuals they are dealing with. Collective action frames are used in social movement studies to unite individuals and motivate them to take action.

Diagnostic framing

The process of recognizing a social or political issue and placing blame or responsibility for it is known as diagnostic framing. This part provides answers to the following queries: What is the issue? And who bears the blame? Movements help the public to develop a common perception of injustice or grievance through diagnostic framing. A social movement tackling economic inequality, for instance, can present the problem as the consequence of unfair government regulations, corporate exploitation, or unbalanced resource distribution. Movements influence people's perceptions of social situations and persuade them that the problem is urgent and unfair by pinpointing its root cause.

Prognostic Framing

The goal of prognostic framing is to offer tactics and answers to deal with the recognized issue. It provides an answer to the query: What ought to be done? A movement must give a plan of action that offers hope for change after diagnosing the problem. Policy changes, demonstrations, public awareness campaigns, legal action, and community mobilization are examples of this kind of framing. To address climate-related issues, an environmental movement can include more

stringent environmental laws, the use of renewable energy, or public involvement in conservation initiatives. Outlining strategies and techniques that supporters should use is another aspect of prognostic framing.

Motivational Framing

Motivational framing offers the moral rationale and emotional appeal that persuade people to take part in group activities. It provides a response to the query, "Why should people act now?" By encouraging urgency, dedication, and unity among supporters, this element serves as a call to action. Slogans, speeches, symbols, and poignant stories are all used by movements to inspire involvement. For instance, in order to encourage individuals to participate in demonstrations or lobbying activities, civil rights campaigns frequently highlight principles like justice, equality, freedom, and human dignity. Motivational framing is important since it is frequently insufficient to mobilize individuals to identify a problem and offer solutions. People must also have a strong emotional connection to the cause and think that their involvement will have an impact.

2.5 Contemporary and integrative approaches to social movements

The evolving character of collective action in contemporary societies is the main emphasis of contemporary approaches to social movements. These methods emphasize the significance of social networks, globalization, identity, culture, and communication technology in forming social movements, in contrast to classical theories that primarily focused on structural elements and economic complaints. Like Network Theory uses links and linkages between people and groups to explain social movements. Social networks facilitate the dissemination of knowledge, participant mobilization, and interpersonal solidarity. Movement mobilization frequently involves the involvement of online communities, organizations, student organizations, and family ties. The use of social media and digital platforms for political and social mobilisation is known as "digital activism." Rapid communication, online marketing, and worldwide engagement are made possible by platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. However, problems like false information and shallow online engagement can also affect digital activism.

Along with this global social movements tackling issues like gender equality, human rights, and climate change have emerged as a result of globalization, which has strengthened interconnections between societies. We often see International activists and organizations collaborate in transnational movements, which function across national borders. These movements encourage international cooperation and group efforts to address common issues. Global organizations that advocate environmental protection, human rights, and policy reforms, like the United Nations and international NGOs, have an impact on social movements. However, some groups accuse these organizations of encouraging neoliberal policies and inequality.

There can be seen an Intersectionality in contemporary social movements, which describes how experiences of discrimination and injustice are shaped by the interactions of several identities, including caste, class, gender, ethnicity, and religion. It highlights the fact that a single identity

category cannot adequately explain social difficulties. People's experiences of societal injustices vary depending on how their numerous identities connect. In India, social possibilities and experiences are frequently influenced by a combination of caste, class, and gender.

In present time, ensuring that marginalized people participate in social movements is the main goal of inclusive mobilization. Diversity, representation, and equitable participation in group battles are being encouraged more and more by contemporary movements.

2.6 Implementation of Theories: Indian Context

Social movement theories can be better understood by applying them to actual national and international movements. These ideas describe the emergence, mobilization of support, and impact on social and political transformation of collective action. If we talk about Utilization in the Indian Setting, Social movement theories in India aid in the explanation of movements centered on democratic rights, social justice, caste equality, and environmental preservation. These movements rely heavily on elements like communal identity, political possibilities, leadership, and resource mobilization.

In Uttarakhand, the Chipko Movement began as a protest against deforestation in the 1970s. In order to stop commercial logging, villagers, particularly women, hugged trees. The movement's emphasis on local identity, environmental preservation, and community involvement reflects the ideas of Resource Mobilization Theory and New Social Movement Theory.

Similarly, In India, social justice movements focus on topics including labour rights, gender equality, caste discrimination, and tribal rights. Movements motivated by women's rights and Dalit activism highlight the value of inclusive mobilization, collective consciousness, and identity. These movements demonstrate how important intersectionality and political process theory are to comprehending the fight for representation and equality.

2.7 Summary

Social movements, which arise from group efforts to address social issues and injustices, are significant drivers of social change. The reasons, organization, mobilization, and influence of movements are all explained by a variety of ideas. While modern and contemporary theories place more emphasis on resources, political possibilities, identity, culture, and communication, classical theories concentrate on social unrest and complaints.

Social movements have had a big impact on democratic participation, social fairness, and policy changes in India. Understanding how group activity promotes social change and the growth of a more democratic and equal society is made easier by studying social movement theories.

2.8 Glossary

Theory: A systematic framework of concepts and ideas used to explain and understand social phenomena.

Social Movement Theory: A body of concepts and explanations that examines the emergence, organization, dynamics, and outcomes of social movements.

Structural Strain Theory: A theory that argues social movements arise from tensions or strains within the social structure.

Deprivation Theory: A theory suggesting that perceived deprivation or inequality motivates individuals to participate in collective action.

Relative Deprivation: The perception that one is disadvantaged compared to others, often leading to dissatisfaction and protest.

Resource Mobilization Theory: A theory emphasizing that the success of social movements depends on the effective mobilization and use of resources such as money, leadership, organization, and networks.

Political Process Theory: A theory that explains social movements in terms of political opportunities, organizational strength, and collective action.

New Social Movements Theory: A theory focusing on contemporary movements centered on identity, culture, quality of life, and environmental concerns rather than purely economic issues.

Framing Theory: A theory that examines how social movements construct and communicate meanings to attract support and mobilize participants.

Collective Identity: A shared sense of belonging and common purpose among participants in a social movement.

2.9 SAQs (Short Answer Questions)

1. Explain the importance of theory in understanding social movements.

2. What are the main assumptions of the Mass Society Theory?

3. Briefly explain the concept of Resource Mobilization Theory.

4. What is meant by Framing Theory in the study of social movements?

5. How are social movement theories relevant to understanding movements in the Indian context?

2.10 MCQs (Multiple Choice Questions)

1. Which theory argues that social movements emerge due to individuals' isolation and weakening of traditional social bonds?

A) Political Process Theory

B) Resource Mobilization Theory

C) Mass Society Theory

D) Framing Theory

2. Structural Strain Theory primarily explains social movements as a result of:

A) Political competition

B) Social tensions and structural imbalances

C) Economic globalization

D) Technological innovation

3. According to Resource Mobilization Theory, the success of a social movement largely depends on:

A) Availability and effective use of resources

B) Emotional reactions of participants

C) Religious beliefs

D) Population growth

4. Political Process Theory emphasizes the importance of:

A) Cultural traditions alone

B) Political opportunities and state structures

C) Individual personality traits

D) Technological development only

5. Framing Theory focuses on:

A) Economic inequalities

B) Industrial development

C) Electoral politics

D) How movements construct and communicate meanings

Answers: 1.C 2.B 3.A 4.B 5.D

2.11 True/ False

1. Deprivation Theory argues that perceptions of deprivation can motivate collective action.

2. New Social Movements Theory mainly focuses on class struggle as the only basis of social movements.

3. Resource Mobilization Theory emphasizes organization, leadership, and resources in explaining social movements.

4. Political Process Theory ignores the role of political opportunities in the emergence of social movements.

5. Contemporary approaches to social movements often integrate insights from multiple theoretical perspectives.

Answers: 1.T 2.F 3.T 4.F 5.T

2.12 Terminal/ Model Questions

1. Discuss the importance of theoretical perspectives in understanding the emergence, development, and outcomes of social movements.

2. Critically examine the major theories of social movements, including Mass Society Theory, Structural Strain Theory, and Deprivation Theory.

3. Explain the Resource Mobilization Theory and Political Process Theory. How do these theories contribute to the study of social movements?

4. Discuss the New Social Movements Theory and Framing Theory. Highlight their relevance in analysing contemporary social movements.

5. Evaluate the application of major social movement theories in the Indian context with suitable examples.

12.13 References/ Suggested Reading

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UNIT–3: RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Unit Structure

3.1 Introduction

3.2 Objectives

3.3 Types of Social Movements

3.4. Understanding Social Movements From Human Rights Perspective

3.5 Relationship Between Social Movements and Human Rights

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3.1 Introduction

The relationship between social movements and human rights constitutes a central theme in the study of society, democracy, and social change. Human rights represent universally recognized moral and legal claims essential for human dignity, equality, and freedom. However, these rights have rarely been realized without sustained collective struggle. Social movements emerge as organized expressions of dissent when existing social, political, and economic structures fail to protect or recognize the rights of individuals and groups.

Social movements act as dynamic agents that translate human rights ideals into lived realities. They highlight systemic injustices, mobilize marginalized populations, and compel states and institutions to acknowledge and enforce rights. From civil liberties and political participation to social, economic, cultural, and environmental rights, social movements have played a decisive role in shaping the human rights landscape.

3.2 Objectives

After reading this unit you will be able to

- Explain the idea and scope of human rights
- Understand social movements from a Human Rights perspective
- Analyze the relationship between social movements and human rights
- Examine the role of social movements in the evolution of human rights
- Develop a critical understanding of rights based struggles in society

3.3 Types of Social Movements

- **Reformative movements:** These movements focus on legal, constitutional, electoral and panel reforms. The best example of this movement is women's suffrage movement, the movement for women to gain the right to vote. They merely wanted to have equal voting rights, the same as men.
- **Revolutionary movements:** They seek to completely change or replace the entire social structure often with a new ideology y. They aim at reconstructing the entire social order. They challenge the existing norms and propose a new scheme of values. The best examples is The French Revolution and The Russian Revolution.
- **Resistance movements:** These movements arise when people are dissatisfied with certain aspects of change and seek to recapture old values. For example RSS(Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh).

- **Identity based movements:** These movements are originated around shared identities, experiences, and grievances of a particular group. These movements often focus on issues of representation, recognition and empowerment of marginalized people or group.

3.4 Understanding Social Movements from a Human Rights Perspective

Social movements are organized forms of collective action that seek to influence social, political, economic, or cultural change. From a human rights perspective, they represent organized efforts to challenge injustice, eliminate discrimination, and promote equality and dignity. While governments bear the primary responsibility for protecting human rights, social movements perform an equally important role by identifying rights violations, mobilizing public opinion, advocating policy reforms, and ensuring accountability. They function as bridges between citizens and institutions, enabling marginalized communities to participate more effectively in democratic governance.

Many social movements emerge precisely because individuals experience systematic denial of their rights. When legal remedies, political institutions, or administrative mechanisms fail to provide adequate protection, affected communities often resort to collective mobilization. Thus, human rights concern frequently become the foundation upon which social movements are organized. For example, movements against caste discrimination seek equality and dignity; women's movements demand freedom from violence and equal opportunities; environmental movements advocate the right to a clean and healthy environment; tribal movements defend rights over land, forests, and natural resources; while disability rights movements emphasize accessibility, inclusion, and equal participation.

Therefore, social movements should not merely be viewed as protests against injustice. They are democratic processes through which societies negotiate, redefine, and expand the meaning of human rights.

3.5 Relationship between Social Movements and Human Rights

Human rights and social movements have a conceptual and practical relationship: social movements are the main means by which human rights are asserted, upheld, and extended, while human rights provide the normative basis.

3.5.1 Conceptual Link between Social Movements and Human Rights

From a conceptual standpoint, social movements and human rights are interconnected. Human rights articulate universal standards of justice and dignity, while social movements emerge from concrete experiences of inequality, oppression, and exclusion. When individuals encounter systematic denial of rights, collective action becomes a means of asserting those rights. Human

rights are transformed from abstract principles into social demands rooted in everyday realities by social movements, which also challenge dominant power structures and highlight inconsistencies between social practices and constitutional promises.

The study of the relationship between social movements and human rights is of utmost importance for understanding social change and the pursuit of justice. Social movements have historically been the primary drivers of change, playing a crucial role in the expansion and protection of human rights. They emerge in response to oppression, inequality, and injustice, and actively challenge discriminatory practices embedded in social, political, and economic systems.

Social movements identify existing injustices and demand the recognition of new rights. In contemporary times, movements advocating for LGBTQ+ rights, Indigenous rights, environmental rights, women's rights, and racial equality illustrate how collective action brings neglected issues into public and political discourse. These movements mobilize people, raise awareness, influence public opinion, and pressure states and institutions to adopt progressive reforms.

On the other hand, the human rights framework provides social movements with a powerful language, moral authority, and legal legitimacy. Human rights principles help articulate demands in universal terms, making struggles more visible and credible at national and international levels. International human rights laws, conventions, and institutions strengthen movements by offering legal mechanisms, accountability, and global solidarity.

Thus, social movements and human rights are deeply complementary to each other. While social movements fight for the recognition, expansion, and enforcement of rights, the human rights framework empowers these movements by legitimizing their claims and providing tools for advocacy and protection. Together, they play a vital role in promoting dignity, equality, and justice, and are essential for building a just and equitable society.

3.5.2 Social Movements as Instruments of Rights Assertion

Social movements are essential tools for claiming and defending human rights, especially for underrepresented and voiceless populations. Access to formal legal systems is restricted by caste, class, gender, and ethnicity in many civilizations. Alternative venues for engagement and resistance are produced by social movements. Social movements play a crucial role in identifying and addressing the abuse of rights in society. Through grassroots monitoring, they document violations and bring attention to injustices that often go unnoticed. These movements mobilize public opinion by using various methods such as awareness campaigns, social media outreach, protests, rallies, and educational programs.

In addition to raising awareness, social movements hold the state and other authorities accountable. They exert public pressure through collective action and advocacy, and they also

use legal mechanisms such as litigation to challenge rights violations. By engaging with courts, policymakers, and administrative bodies, social movements seek justice for affected groups.

Furthermore, social movements focus on achieving long-term change by advocating for legal and policy reforms. Their efforts contribute to strengthening democratic processes, promoting accountability, and ensuring the protection and expansion of human rights. In doing so, they transform human rights from abstract rights into legally binding social demands.

3.5.3 Human Rights as the Ideological Foundation of Social Movements

The ideological and moral foundation that directs the goals and tactics of social movements is provided by human rights. Movements can transcend local circumstances and link them with global battles thanks to the moral legitimacy and universal appeal provided by the language of rights. Human rights serve as a crucial normative and ideological foundation for modern social movements. They provide moral legitimacy, a universal language, and a set of shared principles that enable movements to challenge unjust power structures and advocate for social justice.

1. Universality and Inalienability of Human Rights: At the core of the human rights framework lies the belief that all human beings possess inherent rights, regardless of caste, class, gender, religion, ethnicity, or nationality. These rights are not granted by the state but are inherent and inalienable, existing simply by virtue of being human. This understanding allows social movements to contest state authority when governments deny or violate these rights. Example: Dalit movements in India invoke the right to equality and dignity (Articles 14–17 of the Indian Constitution and UDHR) to challenge caste-based discrimination and The anti-apartheid movement in South Africa framed racial segregation as a violation of universal human rights.

2. Human Rights as a Source of Legitimacy for Social Movements: By grounding their demands in human rights principles, social movements gain moral and legal legitimacy. Framing struggles in terms of rights—such as the right to life, dignity, equality, and freedom—transforms social grievances into universally recognized claims, making them harder for authorities to dismiss as merely political or ideological demands. Example: The Civil Rights Movement in the United States framed racial segregation as a violation of basic human rights such as equality before law and freedom from discrimination and Women's movements worldwide use human rights norms to demand gender equality, reproductive rights, and freedom from violence (CEDAW).

3. Empowerment of Marginalized and Oppressed Groups: The human rights framework empowers marginalized and oppressed groups by providing them with a recognized vocabulary to articulate injustice. It enables individuals and communities to identify violations, assert their entitlements, and demand accountability, thereby transforming victims into rights-bearing agents. Example: Indigenous movements in Latin America use international human rights standards to demand land rights and cultural autonomy.

4. Internationalization of Local Struggles: Local activists facing repression within their own countries often invoke international human rights instruments to seek support beyond national boundaries. By appealing to global institutions, international courts, and transnational advocacy networks, movements can internationalize domestic issues, drawing global attention to local injustices. Example: Human rights activists in Myanmar have approached the UN Human Rights Council regarding violations against ethnic minorities.

5. Pressure on States through Global Norms: International scrutiny generated through human rights advocacy creates external pressure on governments to comply with global norms and standards. States, concerned about their international reputation and diplomatic relations, may be compelled to reform policies, enact legal changes, or address violations.

6. Human Rights as a Tool for Social Transformation: Overall, human rights function not only as legal standards but also as tools of resistance and social transformation. They connect local struggles to global moral frameworks, strengthen collective action, and contribute to the advancement of justice, equality, and democratic values. Example: The LGBTQ+ rights movement has relied on human rights principles of dignity and non-discrimination to achieve decriminalization and marriage equality in several countries.

For social movements, human rights therefore function as both a normative compass and a mobilizing ideology.

3.6 Role of Social Movements in the Evolution of Human Rights

Human rights are socially and historically formed. Prolonged social movements that questioned exclusive notions of justice and citizenship have had a significant impact on their development. Numerous social movements have arisen throughout history to oppose oppressive behaviors, inequality, and injustice in society. These movements have been vital in advancing justice, equality, and dignity, which has greatly aided in the advancement and defense of human rights. When specific groups' demands and rights are not met by the current social, political, or economic structures, social movements frequently result, forcing people to seek change as a group.

The close relationship between social movements and human rights is amply demonstrated by social justice movements. These movements contribute to the expansion of human rights and its practical application by challenging unfair laws, customs, and power structures. In addition to increasing awareness, movements pertaining to women's rights, labor rights, environmental justice, and civil rights have resulted in legislative and regulatory changes that safeguard fundamental human rights.

Human rights and social movements have a complex and lengthy history in India. Numerous social movements have emerged in India with the goal of eliminating social ills such economic exploitation, gender inequity, caste prejudice, and untouchability. Human rights in the nation

have been strengthened by social reformer-led reform movements, anti-colonial fights, Dalit movements, tribal movements, women's movements, and labor movements.

By promoting social equality, political representation, and economic justice, these movements have significantly altered society. In order to protect the rights of vulnerable and marginalized people, numerous laws, regulations, and constitutional provisions were enacted. Thus, by advancing and defending human rights, social movements in India have been instrumental in creating a more equitable and inclusive society.

3.6.1 Historical Contribution of Social Movements to Human Rights

In the past, social movements rather than governmental generosity have led to significant improvements in human rights. These movements challenged the bad practices and contributed to create a just society. Classic examples of such social movements include the civil rights campaigns, women's suffrage, Labor Movement, workers' rights recognition etc.

Civil Rights Movements: The Civil Rights Movement was a mid-20th-century struggle for social justice that attempted to secure equal rights for Black Americans under U.S. law. The movement, which had its roots in decades of resistance to racial oppression and slavery, was led by individuals like Malcolm X, Rosa Parks, and Martin Luther King Jr. Major legislative victories, such as the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and the Civil Rights Act of 1964, were attained by activists through nonviolent protest, civil disobedience, and legal action.

Women Suffrage Movement: The women's suffrage movement began in the mid-19th century and formally emerged with the 1848 Seneca Falls Convention in New York. It was a decades-long global struggle aimed at securing the right to vote and expanding political rights for women. The campaign was led by notable activists such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Sojourner Truth.

Labor Movement: This movement was emerged as a global response to industrial exploitation, fighting for fair wages, safety and fix working hours. In 19^{th} century it began as a response to the industrial revolution's harsh conditions but later on in 20th century it focused on securing welfare, public services and income distribution.

Anti-aparthied Movement: This movement was started in South Africa for the right to equality and to eliminate discrimination among population. This movement existed South Africa from 1948- 1994. This movement was a global effort and got supported by various anti- racist groups, activists, and governments, which ultimately ended the legal apartheid in 1994.

3.6.2 Role of International Human Rights Instruments

The relationship between social movements and human rights has been significantly strengthened by the development of international human rights law. While social movements

generate demands for justice, international human rights instruments provide legal and moral standards against which state actions can be evaluated.

The adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) by the United Nations in 1948 marked a turning point in the global recognition of human rights. The Declaration affirmed that all individuals are entitled to equal dignity, freedom, and rights regardless of race, religion, nationality, or gender. Social movements frequently invoke these international standards while advocating policy reforms, challenging discriminatory practices, or seeking judicial intervention. International human rights norms therefore provide movements with additional legitimacy and strengthen their ability to hold governments accountable.

India, as a signatory to several international human rights treaties, has incorporated many of these principles into constitutional jurisprudence and public policy. Courts increasingly refer to international human rights standards while interpreting constitutional rights, thereby reinforcing the connection between domestic social movements and global human rights frameworks.

3.6.3 Civil Society Organizations and Human Rights Advocacy

Civil society organizations constitute an important bridge between social movements and state institutions. They facilitate public participation, conduct research, provide legal assistance, document human rights violations, and advocate policy reforms. In India, organizations working on issues relating to women's rights, child rights, disability rights, environmental protection, tribal welfare, legal aid, and labour rights have substantially strengthened democratic governance. These organizations frequently collaborate with local communities, academic institutions, journalists, lawyers, and international agencies to generate evidence-based advocacy.

Many successful social movements have evolved through partnerships between grassroots organizations and civil society networks. Such collaborations combine local knowledge with legal expertise, policy analysis, media outreach, and institutional engagement, thereby increasing the effectiveness of collective action.

3.6.4 Digital Activism and Human Rights

The rapid expansion of digital communication technologies has fundamentally transformed the relationship between social movements and human rights. Internet connectivity, smartphones, and social media platforms have enabled citizens to organize collective action more rapidly than ever before. Digital activism allows movements to disseminate information, mobilize volunteers, coordinate protests, document human rights violations, and build national as well as international solidarity. Online campaigns have significantly increased public awareness regarding gender violence, caste discrimination, environmental degradation, mental health, disability rights, and democratic accountability.

In India, campaigns such as **#MeTooIndia, #DalitLivesMatter, #SaveAarey**, and numerous disaster relief initiatives illustrate the growing importance of digital platforms in promoting civic engagement. Digital media has also enabled marginalized voices to bypass traditional gatekeepers and communicate directly with wider audiences.

However, digital activism also presents important challenges. The spread of misinformation, online hate speech, digital surveillance, cyber harassment, algorithmic bias, and restrictions on internet access may undermine democratic participation. Consequently, contemporary human rights movements increasingly advocate not only freedom of expression but also digital privacy, data protection, and responsible governance of emerging technologies.

3.7 Human Rights Based Social Movements in India

India offers numerous examples of social movements that have fundamentally transformed the country's human rights landscape. For example The Indian Freedom Movement established the principles of liberty, equality, democratic participation, and self-determination that later became embedded in the Constitution. Similarly The Dalit Movement challenged caste oppression and secured constitutional safeguards against discrimination. The Women's Movement contributed significantly to legal reforms concerning dowry, domestic violence, workplace harassment, inheritance rights, political participation, and gender equality.

The Right to Information Movement strengthened democratic accountability, while the Right to Food Campaign reinforced the state's obligation to ensure food security. More recently, the Farmers' Protest (2020–21) highlighted issues relating to livelihood, democratic participation, and policy consultation. Although centered on agricultural legislation, the movement also emphasized broader constitutional values including peaceful protest, freedom of association, and participatory governance.

Collectively, these movements illustrate that the protection of human rights in India has been shaped not only by constitutional provisions and judicial decisions but also by sustained collective action undertaken by ordinary citizens.

3.8 Contemporary Challenges to Rights Based Mobilization

In the present era, rights based social movements operate in a landscape where traditional advocacy faces multiple challenges, including shrinking democratic spaces, criminalization of dissent, neoliberal economic policies, and digital surveillance. In present the international framework that traditionally supported rights based mobilization is facing a historic funding shortfall. Global development aid has seen a significant drop, forcing many NGO’s to shut down or pivot away from “rights advocacy” towards “service delivery” to survive.

Presently there is a global trend of closing the door on civil society through administrative and legal hurdles. Over 130 countries have adopted several of laws that restrict NGO’s from

receiving international funding. This is often framed as a defence of national sovereignty but functions to bankrupt local human rights groups.

Despite these constraints, social movements remain indispensable for defending existing human rights, mobilizing collective actions to challenge system inequalities, influence public policy and hold government accountable and responsible.

3.9 Summary

The relationship between social movements and human rights is foundational to understanding social change. Human rights provide the moral and legal framework, while social movements give them substance through collective struggle. Together, they ensure that human rights remain living, evolving principles rather than static declarations. Social movements thus continue to be the most vital force in the realization, protection, and expansion of human rights in society.

3.10 Glossary

Rights-Based Approach: An approach that integrates human rights principles into policies, programmes, and collective action.

Rights Assertion: The collective process of claiming, defending, or demanding the recognition and protection of rights.

Collective Action: Coordinated efforts by individuals or groups to achieve common social or political objectives.

Civil Society Organization (CSO): A non-governmental, voluntary organization that works to promote public welfare, democratic participation, and human rights.

Human Rights Advocacy: Activities undertaken to promote, protect, and advance the recognition and implementation of human rights.

International Human Rights Instruments: International treaties, conventions, declarations, and covenants that establish and protect human rights standards.

Digital Activism: The use of digital technologies and online platforms to promote, defend, and advocate for human rights and social justice.

Human Rights Mobilization: The process of organizing individuals and communities to collectively advocate for the protection and realization of human rights.

Rights-Based Mobilization: Collective action organized around the promotion, protection, or realization of human rights.

Digital Surveillance: The monitoring of individuals' digital activities by governments or other entities, which may affect freedom of expression, privacy, and civic participation.

3.11 SAQs (Short Answer Questions)

1. Define rights-based social movements and explain their significance.

2. Distinguish between Reformative and Revolutionary Movements?

3. Briefly explain the conceptual link between social movements and human rights.

4. How do social movements function as instruments of rights assertion?

5. Explain the role of civil society organizations in promoting human rights.

3.12 MCQs (Multiple Choice Questions)

1. Which of these is a 'Reformative' social movement?

A) A movement to overthrow a government

B) A movement to gain the right to vote for women

C) A movement seeking total spiritual transformation

D) A movement to return to traditional farming

2. The link between social movements and human rights is "symbiotic" because:

A) They are exactly the same thing

B) Movements help create rights, and rights protect movements

C) Movements always fail without legal help

D) Human rights are only for individuals, not groups

3. Which of the following plays an important role in promoting human rights through advocacy and public awareness?

A) Central banks

B) Civil society organizations

C) Private corporations

D) Stock exchanges

4. Digital activism mainly refers to:

A) Conducting elections electronically

B) Using digital technologies to mobilize support and advocate for rights

C) Developing computer software

D) Online banking activities

5. Which of the following is a contemporary challenge to rights-based mobilization?

A) Universal public participation

B) Equal access to digital technologies

C) Misinformation and online surveillance

D) Unlimited organizational resources

Answers: 1.B 2. B 3.B 4. B 5.C

3.13 True/ False

1. Social movements are always violent in nature.

2. Human rights can provide a common language for global solidarity.

3. A "Redemptive" movement aims for total change in the individual rather than the whole society.

4. Social movements have played no role in the creation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

5. The "state" is often the target of social movement demands for rights.

Answers: 1. F 2. T 3. T 4. F 5. T

3.14 Terminal/ Model Questions

1. Explain the relationship between social movements and human rights. Discuss the conceptual link between the two.

2. Examine how social movements act as instruments of rights assertion and how human rights serve as their ideological foundation.

3. Discuss the historical contribution of social movements to the evolution of human rights. Explain the role of international human rights instruments in this process.

4. Evaluate the role of civil society organizations and digital activism in advancing human rights and supporting social movements.

5. Discuss the major human rights-based social movements in India and critically analyse the contemporary challenges to rights-based mobilization.

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Unit – 4

Dalit Movements

Unit Structure

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4.1 INTRODUCTION

The 19th and 20th centuries can be considered the most important for the awareness among lower-caste people. When people started speaking out against caste discrimination, they also raised their voice against untouchability and other forms of discrimination and demanded their human rights. The Dalit movement began as a protest aimed at bringing social and political change to the lives of Dalits in India. For many centuries, Dalits were unfairly treated and severely oppressed by the upper-caste people. The most important feature of this movement was that, initially, the 'Dalit movement', which we sometimes call the 'Lower Caste Movements', was started by upper-caste people who condemned the discriminatory caste system and were eager to raise awareness in society against these oppressions. Slowly and gradually, many lower-caste scholars, Sri Narayan Guru, Jotirao Govindrao Phule, Ramaswamy Naiker (Periyar), Dr B. R. Ambedkar and many others joined it and contributed to their own welfare. Thus, the Dalit movement of the 19th and 20th centuries and thereafter is so significant for the upliftment of lower-caste people.

4.2 OBJECTIVES

After studying this unit, students will be able to:

- Understand the meaning of 'Dalit' and the people of the oppressed caste in India;
- Historical background of the emergence of the caste system and caste oppression;
- Role and significance of the Dalit leaders and their organisations;
- Impact of the Dalit movements on the whole society in India; and
- Various anti-caste movements during the colonial period and post-independence period

4.3 DALIT MOVEMENTS

Before understanding the Dalit movements in India, we should first understand who Dalits are. In traditional Hindu society, people were divided into four main groups (Varnas)-Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Shudras. Those who were not considered in these groups were considered "untouchables" and were subjected to severe social exclusion, such as denial of entry into temples, restricted access to education, and segregation in everyday life. These communities are referred to as Dalits.We should also understand how the caste system originated in India, and due to this, discrimination started within the society. Due to this discrimination, the people of the upper caste became privileged, and these upper caste people imposed numerous restrictions on the lower caste (Dalits). And through these restrictions, their human rights were also stripped away. Therefore, during the 19th and 20th centuries, many lower caste people raised their voices against these caste oppressions. The Dalit movement is the struggle of marginalised castes in India to achieve equality, dignity, and freedom from caste discrimination.

4.3.1 Historical background of the origin of the Caste system and its impact

It is believed that during the Vedic period, society was divided into different groups known as 'Varna'. According to scholars, the Sanskrit word 'Varna' has two meanings: one refers to colour and the other to occupation. In the beginning, or during the early Vedic period, we believe that people of early Vedic society were divided by their occupation (Varna). Initially, society was divided into four Varnas- Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Shudras. In this 'Chaturvarna' (four-varna) system, Brahmins occupied the highest position, followed by Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Shudras at the lowest. Inits initial phase, there was no discrimination in society based oncaste, creed, or religion. As discussed earlier, in the early Vedic period, social divisions were mainly based on occupation and were relatively flexible. However, over time, these divisions transformed into a rigid, oppressive, and discriminatory caste system. Within this oppressive caste system, the Shudras, also known as Dalits, were kept on the lowest rank andwere mainly expected to serve the upper three varnas.

There were several causes which were responsible for the development of this caste system.It developed due to a combination of social, economic, and political factors. For example, occupational groups became hereditary, making social divisions rigid. Social factors such as Inter-Varna marriages led to the emergence of new groups or castes (Jatis), which further increased social complexity. Similarly, foreign invasions also made it more complex. As foreign invaders settled in India, they were absorbed into the social structure and assigned a place inthe caste hierarchy. At the same time, scholars authorised legitimacy to social divisions, while practices such as endogamy and the idea of purity and pollution further strengthened the boundaries between groups. Thus, multiple social, economic and political factors together led to the formation of the caste system.

Like this, in this caste system, people of the upper castes considered themselves privileged, and the people of lower castes were non-privileged. Over time, the caste system became detrimental to the country, leading to disastrous consequences.

4.3.2 Early Challenges to the Caste System

Although in the ancient period, some great scholars and philosophers raised their voices against caste discrimination, they achieved limited success.We have evidence thatVedic texts such as the Brihadaranyaka and Chhandogya Upanishads emphasised the equality of all individuals. Great philosophers like Gautam Buddha and Mahavir also preached against caste discrimination and advocate dsocial equality or the equality of all people. However, despite achieving limited success, they could not bring major changes in society, and caste prejudice continues almost unchanged. During the medieval period, many Bhakti saints, such as Ramanuja, Ramananda, Kabir, Nanak, Dadu, Saina, and Raidas, also opposed the discriminatory caste system and firmly

advocated for equality. However, despite their efforts, they could not completely remove the unfair caste system, and caste-based prejudice persisted in society.

4.3.3 Struggle against Caste Inequality in Modern India (19th and 20thCenturies)

During the British period in India, social and religious reform movements were initiated in the 19th and 20th centuries. The great philosopher and social reformer Raja Rammohan Roy is considered the pioneer of the Indian Renaissance.After that, many reformers like Debendranath Tagore, Keshab Chandra Sen, Swami Dayanad saraswati, Gandhiji and manyother scholars and reformers made significant efforts towards social reform. Swami Vivekananda was also one of the most remarkable scholars and saints who realised India's miserable condition, and according to him, there are two great evils in India: poor treatment given to women and the subjugation of Dalits through caste restrictions. Throughout his lifetime, he preached against these evils and made enormous efforts to create public awareness against these practices. Gandhi ji always advocated that any form of untouchability is an inhuman institution, and we should remove it from society. Along with addressing various ill practices, these reformers also encouraged people to stand against the oppressive and discriminatory caste system. An important feature of this struggle was that many of the scholars who raised their voices against such inequalities themselves belonged to the upper caste. Although these efforts contributed to creating awareness and initiating change, they were not sufficient to completely eradicate deep-rooted caste prejudices from society.

4.3.4 Role of Important Dalit leaders and organisations and their Impact (First half of the 20th century)

As upper caste scholars raised their voices against the oppressive caste system, similarly, non-Brahmin or lower caste scholars organised themselves against the Brahmin dominance and the unfriendly caste system. These lower caste movements started in every part of India, irrespective of region. We can divide the Dalit movement into two broad categories: during the British era and the post-independence era. During the British period, many great leaders from the Dalit community, such asSri Narayan Guru, E. V. Ramaswamy Naicker, Mahatma Jyotirao Phule, and Dr B. R. Ambedkar, led various social reform movements for the welfare of the oppressed classes.

I. Ramaswamy Naicker and the Justice Party

Atthe beginning of the 20thcentury, in 1917, P. Tyagraj and T. M. Nair established the first Non-Brahmanical organisation known as the 'South Indian Liberal Federation, which was later renamed the 'Justice Party. After some time, E. V. Ramaswamy Naicker, popularly known as '*Periyar'*, joined it and became the President of the Justice Party. Periyar strongly attacked caste-based oppression and the religious justification of inequality. He launched the campaign against

the Brahmanical dominance in the Hindu religion and ridiculed Hindu gods and goddesses. Sometimes, he and his followers used provocative methods such as breaking idols and showing disrespect to religious symbols to challenge caste inequality. He also opposed the imposition of Hindi on the Dravidians and eventually led the ideological transformation in the Dravidian movement. Later on, Naicker's follower and friend C. N. Annadurai carried further the Dravidian movement. In 1944, the Justice Party was renamed 'Dravidian Federation' and again in 1949 renamed to 'Dravida Munetra Kazhagam'. In the 1967 General election, the DMK party formed the first DMK government in Tamil Nadu.

Impact

Thus, the Justice Party was founded in 1917 and was one of the earliest organised political movements representing non- Brahmin interests. It worked to reduce Brahmin dominance in administration and politics. The Justice Party encouraged dignity, rationalism, and self-respect among lower caste people. But the Justice Party mainly represented non-Brahmin elites; therefore, Dalit concerns were sometimes secondary. Periyar's strong criticism of religion alienated some sections of society. B. R. Ambedkar, although equally critical of caste and Hindu social order, did not fully agree with such methods. Ambedkar believed that insulting religion or religious symbols would not bring social change. He focused on intellectual critique and legal reforms.

II. Jyotirao Phule and Savitribai Phule

Jyotirao Phule and his wife, Savitribai Phule, were also the earliest reformers in India who strongly opposed caste discrimination and Brahmanical dominance. Both criticised the prejudiced caste system and considered it a tool of oppression. Savitribai Phule was a pioneering woman educator and social reformer, and she and her husband Jyotirao Phule believed that education is the most powerful means of social change. Both of them worked for the upliftment of Dalits, women, and other marginalised groups and challenged traditional restrictions. In 1873, Jyotirao founded the 'Satyashodhak Samaj' (Truth Seeking Society) to liberate the weaker sections of society.They promoted rational thinking, social equality, and rejected the caste-based hierarchy. Jyotirao was elected as a member of the Poona Municipal Committee in 1876, and in 1888, Jyotirao was honoured with the title 'Mahatma'.

Impact

Jyotirao Phule and his wife challenged the discriminatory caste system. They opened new opportunities for Dalits and women. They established several schools for orphanages,lower-caste children and worked for women of all castes.

III. Narayan Guru and the SNDP (Sri Narayana Dharma ParipalanaYogam)

In Kerala, an eminent leader of the Ezhava caste (the untouchable caste), Sri Narayan Guru, founded the SNDP (Sri Narayana Dharma ParipalanaYogam). He was a prominent spiritual

leader and social reformer of Kerala. He played an important role in challenging caste-based discrimination in India. He strongly opposed the prejudiced caste system and worked for the upliftment of the depressed classes of society. He and his organisation, 'Sri Nrayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam', made a significant contribution towards the upliftment of the depressed classes. He worked for the promotion of social equality, education and economic advancement for the oppressed classes. Through his famous message, "One Caste, One Religion, One God for Humankind", Narayan Guru emphasised universal brotherhood and social harmony.

Impact

The SNDP played a significant role in establishing schools and temples open to all and nurtured a spirit of self-respect among the lower-caste people.

IV. Dr B. R. Ambedkar

Dr Ambedkar was born on 14 April 1891, in Mhow (Madhya Pradesh), India, in a Mahar (untouchable) Hindu caste. He was a jurist, economist, social reformer and politician. Among all the great leaders who have emerged in Dalit politics, Ambedkar has exerted the greatest influence. In fact, he played a decisive and transformative role in the upliftment of the depressed classes (Dalits) in India. He always emphasised that social equality, education, and political power were essential for the emancipation of the oppressed. He worked meticulously to secure civil rights and dignity for the depressed classes.

In 1924, Dr Ambedkar founded an organisation in Bombay (Mumbai), called 'Bahishkrit Hitkarini Sabha', for the upliftment of the untouchables. He led many significant movements, such as the 'Mahad Satyagrah' in 1927, which asserted the right of untouchables to access water from public wells. In 1930, he led the 'Temple Entry Movement', which sought the civic rights of the untouchables to enter Hindu temples. Ambedkar advocated for the representation of the depressed classes in legislative bodies and government services. He also demanded separate electorates for the depressed classes during the Round Table Conferences, which reflected his concern for ensuring political rights for Dalits. In 1932, the British government accepted his demand for separate electorates for the depressed classes. This disappointed Gandhiji, and to oppose the separate electorates, he started a fast unto death. Subsequently, an agreement was signed between Dr Ambedkar and Gandhiji, known as the 'Poona Pact'. As a result of this agreement, seats were reserved and increased for Dalits in the Central Legislature and the Provincial Assemblies.

His most remarkable contribution was as the Chairman of the Drafting Committee of the Indian Constitution. He ensured the inclusion of provisions that guarantee equality before the law, the prohibition of discrimination, and the abolition of untouchability under Article 17. His vision laid the foundation for a more just and inclusive society.

Impact

Dr Ambedkar's role in the upliftment of the depressed classes was all-inclusive and revolutionary. He not only challenged the oppressive caste discrimination but also created an institutional mechanism to ensure justice, equality, and human dignity for marginalised communities in India. The entire nation will remain indebted to him for his immense contribution. All in all, it can be said that all these leaders strove for the human rights of Dalit people and were, to some extent, successful as well.

4.3.5 Role of Important Dalit leaders and organisations and their Impact (Second half of the 20th century) or Post-Independence Dalit Movements

I. B. R. Ambedkar and his Buddhist Dalit Movement

After Independence, Dr Ambedkar once again dedicated himself wholeheartedly to the upliftment of the oppressed classes. He became India's first Law Minister and was appointed as Chairman of the Constitution Drafting Committee. He was fully aware of the discrimination within society and the presence of untouchability. Therefore, he tried his best to eradicate these evil practices. While fulfilling his responsibilities towards the Constitution, Dr Ambedkar incorporated provisions within to address the civil rights of Dalits, as well as to eradicate prevailing social inequalities and untouchability, thereby ensuring the protection of the interests and rights of Dalit people. He fought for various economic and social rights for women and Dalits.

When he realised that inequality and untouchability could not be so easily eradicated from Hinduism, he advocated for conversion to Buddhism. Till this period, Ambedkar was convinced that Buddhism possessed a moral doctrine against caste discrimination.In 1955, he founded the 'Bhartiya Buddha Mahasabha', and in 1956, he and his wife converted to Buddhism. He then proceeded to convert his supporters, and lakhs of his followers converted to Buddhism. We have ample evidence indicating that after this incident, many people left Hinduism and embraced Buddhism, and in some instances, Dalits joined other religions as well due to caste-based inequality.

II. Dalit Panthers Movements

The Dalit movement emerged in 1972 in Maharashtra. It represented a more radical and militant phase of the Dalit movement. The Dalit Panther movement was largely influenced by the Black Panther movement in the United States of America. The Dalit Panther Movement was founded by Namdeo Dhasal, J. V. Pawar, and Arun Kamble in Bombay (now Mumbai), Maharashtra. It strongly opposed caste-based violence and social discrimination, and it adopted a radical and militant approach against these inequalities. It also played a vital role in determining Dalit literature and cultural expression, giving voice to anger, identity, and resistance. Although the

organisation became divided within a few years over ideological issues, it succeeded in organising and energising the depressed class youth.

Unfortunately, like the Black Panther Party (BPP), they did not havea clear ideology to guide youth in achieving their aims. Although they adopted some of the positive features of the BPP-such as self-defence, organising people at a large scale, and spreading their message effectively, they also picked up its weaknesses. Their thinking became rigid, and they failed to build a strong economic base for their organisation. At times, disruptive elements became part of the movement. Their leadership became prone to corruption, and due to all these various shortcomings, the Dalit Panther Movement lost its significance.

III. Contribution of Kanshi Ramand Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP)

In Northern India, the Dalit movement took shape under the able leadership of Kanshi Ram. He wanted to establish an organisation comprising oppressed and exploited people. In 1976, he founded the Backwards and Minority Communities Employees Federation (BAMSEF). BAMCEF was not a political party but a social and intellectual organisation. The purpose of this organisation was to create awareness, build unity, and develop a sense of responsibility among educated employees so they could contribute to social change. The main motto of this organisation was to 'Educate-Organise and Agitate' the oppressed castes. In 1981, he established the 'Dalit Shoshit Samaj Sangharsh Samiti', which addressed various rights at the grassroots level. In 1984, it transformed into the Bahujan SamajParty.

The Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP)was founded by Kanshiram on the birth anniversary of Dr B. R. Ambedkar to represent Dalits and other marginalised groups of India. It marked a decisive shift towards electoral empowerment. Kanshi Ram and his party (BSP) strategically mobilised not only the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled tribes, but also Other Backwards Castes (OBC) and minorities under the broader concept of "Bahujan". This approach transformed Dalit politics into a powerful force, particularly in Uttar Pradesh. Kanshi Ram aimed to gain political power as a means of empowering marginalised communities. He was partially successful in his efforts, especially during the late 1980s and 1990s,when his party, the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), began to achieve electoral success or some political power in North India, particularly in Uttar Pradesh.

In simple terms, Kanshi Ram sought political power to bring social change, and he succeeded to a considerable extent by using electoral politics to strengthen Dalit identity and restore their sense of dignity and self-respect in North India.

IV. Contribution of Mayawati

The Dalit movement or Dalit politics got a breakthrough when its famous leader, Mayawati, became the most trusted associate of Kanshi Ram. Very soon, she emerged as the most popular leader in Dalit politics and in 1995, she became the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh. It was really a historic movement when, for the first time, a Dalit woman became the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, India's most populous state. Although her early governments were often short-lived due to coalition politics, they symbolised a significant shift in power structures, where marginalised communities began to assert themselves politically.

The most significant moment came in 2007, when the Bahujan Samaj Party, under Mayawati's leadership, secured a full majority in Uttar Pradesh. This victory was not based solely on Dalit votes; in fact, as in this election, the Bahujan Samaj Party applied a unique strategy called social engineering. In this social engineering, Mayawati and her political party included alliances with Brahmins and other upper castes.

Under the leadership of Mayawati, the government took several decisions in the interest of the weaker sections. Overall, the role of Kanshi Ram and Mayawati, along with the BSP, represents a crucial phase in the Dalit movement where the struggle shifted from social reform to political assertion and state power. Their success not only helped in gaining political representation but also contributed significantly to the restoration of self-respect, identity, and human rights consciousness among Dalits, particularly in North India.

4.4 Summary

The Dalit movement has played a significant role in transforming the traditional hierarchy of Indian society by promoting democratic values such as liberty, equality, and social justice. It sturdily opposed untouchability and caste-based discrimination and demanded proper reservations and political representation. Through these movements, Dalits entered mainstream politics and administrative structures, gaining visibility and authority. The Dalit movement also challenged dominant cultural and social narratives and, to some extent, helped enhance the political, moral, and social status of oppressed castes.

However, despite its remarkable achievements, the movement, especially after the 1990s, became largely centred on power politics and reservations. Moreover, the movement has often been led by the urban, educated Dalit middle class, with specific castes such as Mahars in Maharashtra and Jatavs in Uttar Pradesh playing dominant roles in different regions. Overall, the Dalit movement succeeded in bringing caste-based exploitation into national focus, but its impact on broader socio-economic transformation has remained slightly limited.

4.5 Glossary

Awareness : The process of making people conscious of social injustices and inequalities.

Caste Prejudice : Deep-rooted, undesirable attitudes and beliefs about individuals based on caste.

Caste System : A hierarchical social structure based on birth that leads to inequality.

Dalit : A term used for the oppressed communities.

Dalit Movement: Efforts aimed at ending caste discrimination and ensuring equality and dignity.

Discrimination: Unfair treatment of individuals or groups based on caste, religion, gender, or other social identities.

Equality: The state in which all individuals have the same rights, opportunities, and status in society.

Oppressed Classes: A term used historically to refer to socially and economically marginalised communities.

Social Change: Transformation in social structure and values aimed at creating a more just and equal society.

Social Justice: The principle of ensuring equality, fairness, and rights for all individuals, especially those who are marginalised.

Social Reform Movements: Organised efforts by social reformers or political leaders to challenge and change discriminatory social practices, especially caste-based inequalities.

Untouchability: A practice within the caste system in which certain people are considered impure and excluded from social, political, religious, and economic life.

4.6 SAQs (Short Answer Questions)

1. What do you understand by the term ‘Dalit movement’?
2. What do you know about the Dalit Panthers Movement?
3. Discuss the contribution of Mahatma Jyotirao Phule to the upliftment of Dalits.
4. What role did education play in the Dalit movement?
5. How did the Indian Constitution address the issues of Dalits?
6.

4.7 True/ False

1. The Dalit movement aims to achieve equality and social justice. (True)
2. B. R. Ambedkar played a significant role in the upliftment of Dalits. (True)
3. The Indian Constitution does not provide any safeguards for Dalits. (False)
4. Social movements play an important role in promoting human rights. (True)
5. The Dalit movements have eliminated caste discrimination in India. (False)
6. The Caste system promoted equality among all sections of society. (True)

4.8 Terminal/ Model Questions

1. Critically examine the origin and development of the Dalit movement in India.
2. Discuss the role of B. R. Ambedkar in shaping the Dalit movement and promoting human rights.
3. Analyse the contributions of social reformers like Sri Narayan Guru and Jyotirao Phule in the upliftment of Dalits.
4. Evaluate the impact of the Dalit movement on Indian society and its role in promoting equality and social justice.
5. Examine the significance of the Bahujan Samaj Party in shaping the modern Dalit movement.

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Unit - 5

Gender and Social Movements: Feminist movements and Gender justice, Women's rights as human rights, LGBTQA Issues

Unit Structure

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5.1 Introduction

If we examine Indian history closely, we find that the journey of women within it has traversed through various phases of ups and downs. Available evidence indicates that womenin the Vedic age enjoyed considerable religious, social, and political rights; however, these rights were gradually curtailed, eventually culminating in a period when women were regarded as completely subordinate to men. This subordinate status of women persisted for centuries; indeed, it was during the entire medieval period that their status suffered its most significant decline.

It may be argued that the period extending from the post-Gupta era up to approximately the first quarter of the 20th century was extremely disgraceful regarding the status of women; throughout this entire epoch, let alone their other political, economic, and social rights, not even their fundamental human rights were given any consideration.

However, beginning roughly in the early 20th century, individuals associated with Christian missionaries, Indian intellectuals, and social reformers expressed deep concern regarding the extremely dire condition of women. Consequently, during this initial phase, successful movements were launched against various harmful social practices directed at women, leading to modest improvements in their condition. Then, gradually, intellectuals and women began to demand their other religious, social, political, and economic rights. This process spanned a considerable period, lasting for more than a century. Nevertheless, it cannot be said that women have attained complete freedom in the present time; yet, it is certainly true that their position is significantly better compared to that of ancient and medieval times. In this topic, we will endeavour to explore the various movements undertaken for the emancipation of women and the realisation of their rights.

5.2 Objectives

After undergoing this unit, students will be able to:

- Analyse the idea of gender justice and its importance;
- Understand the position of women in different phases and the historical development of feminist movements;
- To understand women's rights as an integral part of human rights and evaluate the progress of Women's Empowerment in Contemporary India, and
- Awareness of LGBTQA- identities, rights, and challenges in contemporary society.

5.3 Feminist Movements and Gender Justice, and Women's rights as human rights

Before understanding feminist movements, gender justice, and the idea of women's rights and human rights, it is important to understand the position of women in past epochs. Because without knowing their position in that era, it is difficult to understand how their roles, rights, and opportunities have evolved, and how various social movements have contributed to their empowerment. Therefore, in order to understand women's empowerment and feminism in the modern era, we must briefly examine the condition of women during the ancient and medieval periods.

5.3.1 Position of Women in the Ancient Period

It is believed that during the early Vedic period, women's position was satisfactory. We know that Indian society is primarily patriarchal, although matriarchal societies can be observed in certain places; however, their numbers are negligible, and Indian society remains predominantly patriarchal. A patriarchal society is a society in which men hold key power and dominate in roles of leadership, authority, and control over resources. Women and other genders are placed in subordinate positions. Therefore, in a patriarchal society, men have greater decision-making power in household affairs, better access to education, and more influence in political and economic spheres. In Indian society, patriarchy is deeply rooted in cultural traditions, laws, and everyday practices that decide how gender roles are defined and maintained.

Despite this, we have evidence indicating that women in the Vedic era enjoyed not only religious and social rights but also, to some extent, political and economic rights. In the earliest Vedic political assemblies, such as the 'Sabha' and the 'Samiti', women were active members. A similar description is found in another Vedic text, the 'Taittiriya Brahnana', stating that three out of the twelve 'Ratnis' (Royal dignitaries) of that time were women. Although this figure is significantly lower compared to that of men, it can still be considered satisfactory. During this period, women had the right to education, and the age of marriage was generally 16 years. The ill practice of 'Sati' and the custom of the 'veil' were almost unknown.

But there is no doubt that by the later Vedic era, various restrictions were imposed upon them. During the first few centuries of the Common Era, these restrictions became increasingly severe, causing their condition to deteriorate.

There is no doubt that Vedic society was patriarchal in nature, wherein men possessed significantly greater rights than women. During the early phase of the Vedic period, women enjoyed a considerable degree of personal liberty; furthermore, they were accorded religious, social, and political rights, even though to a limited extent. However, over time, due to a variety of political, socio-religious, and economic factors, as well as other causes such as external invasions, extensive restrictions were imposed upon women, leading to a gradual deterioration of their status.

5.3.2 Position of Women in the Pre-medieval and Medieval Period

It is very difficult to analyse the position of women in medieval times, because most of the available literature of this period was written by court historians and composed in Persian. This period was marked by political instability in India due to repeated invasions by the Arabs and Turks, many of whom later established new ruling dynasties in the Indian subcontinent. Therefore, there was complete chaos in India due to these barbaric invasions. The focus of Court historians was mainly on kings and elites; they were least bothered about ordinary women.

The medieval period brought many political, social and economic changes in India. And due to these changes, Indians faced many troubles in every sphere of life. These changes affected the position of women badly, whose condition had already deteriorated. During this period, numerous social evil practices, such as the practice of Sati, child marriage, and the 'Purdah' (covering face) system, became widespread, whereas these practices had been less prevalent in earlier times. In other words, it is not that these practices were entirely unknown here previously; rather, they witnessed a widespread proliferation during the medieval era. Furthermore, some new social evils- such as the practice of 'Jauhar' (in which women collectively immolated themselves to avoid capture, enslavement, or dishonour at the hands of invading armies) started this time only.

During this period, the condition of women, which was already deplorable, deteriorated even further. People belonging to royal families and the wealthy in India indeed practised polygamy since ancient times. But throughout the entire medieval era, women came to be regarded merely as objects of gratification. The number of women in harems (private places of rulers or elites, where women, such as wives, concubines, and female relatives, lived under restricted access) of emperors and the nobility often contained hundreds or even thousands of women, further worsening the condition of women. The autocratic class present in India also began to emulate this practice. The lack of education was another factor which was responsible for the deterioration of women's condition.

Although various saints of the Bhakti movement made some efforts for the upliftment of women and people belonging to marginalised sections of society. Their endeavours failed to yield any significant success. The status of women remained exactly as it was. In conclusion. It can be inferred that the condition of women during the medieval period was extremely deplorable.

5.3.3 Position of Women and women's movement in the Colonial/British Period

In 1707, the Mughal emperor, Aurangzeb, died, and within two decades the Mughal Empire began to collapse. During the mid-eighteenth century, a new power emerged in India that gradually established its supremacy over much of the Indian subcontinent. This power was known as the British East India Company. When they established colonial rule over the Indian

subcontinent, Indians witnessed a lot of changes in political, administrative, socio-religious, economic, and every sphere of life.They not only transformed our entire political, administrative, economic, and other systems, but also completely overhauled our educational system; this new educational system and Western ideas exerted an influence on Indians. There is no doubt that whatever they did, they did it because of their own requirements. Still, we Indians were the beneficiaries. This modern education and Western ideas created an intelligentsia, which was also responsible for the pioneering of socio-religious reforms.

In this topic, we will discuss how they positively influenced the condition of Indian women. When they established their rule in India, they gradually affected the socio-religious life of Indians. In this process, they enacted several laws which changed the condition of Indian women to some extent. And how these reforms help eduplift Indian women and later became the basis for feminist movements in India. Here, we will have to understand that they had not come here as emancipator of Indian women. The British intervened in the socio-religious lives of the local people and endeavoured to eradicate various harmful practices against women by enacting specific laws. While it is difficult to state with absolute certainty why they did so, the following potential reasons may be considered responsible:

1. It is possible that, motivated by a humanitarian ideal, they sought to put an end to various harmful practices prevailing against the local population and women.
2. Possibly, by doing so, they aimed to expand their socio-religious and political base in the region.
3. The propagation of Christianity could also have been a contributing factor.
4. It is possible that all of the aforementioned reasons collectively played a role in this endeavour.

Whatever the reasons may have been, they gradually eradicated numerous prevalent social evils by enacting laws.The most remarkable aspect of these initial reform movements launched in support of women was started by Indian men. Raja Rammohan Roy is regarded as a pioneer of the Indian Renaissance, initiating the first phase of social reforms by raising awareness against the inhumane practice of ‘Sati’ (widow immolation); consequently, in 1929, Governor General Lord William Bentick enacted Regulation-17 to abolish it. Thus, during the British rule, efforts were made to eradicate various social evils, such as Sati, child marriage, and slavery, by enacting laws. Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar spearheaded a campaign against the prohibition of widow remarriage, leading to the enactment of the law in 1856. By this act, the British government granted the freedom to remarry widows. Continuing this trajectory, various laws were subsequently enacted at different times to combat child marriage: notably, through the tireless efforts of Dr Har Vilas Sharda, a law was once again enacted in 1929, fixing the minimum marriageable age for boys and girls at 18 and 15 years respectively. Simultaneously, scholars and the contemporary government also paid attention towards women’s education.

Social reform movements and modern education played a crucial role in the upliftment of women’s condition. Due to these factors, at the beginning of the 20th century, women started

participating in political activities. Initially, the number of women's participation was not so high, but as they gained awareness, it increased. From the Swadeshi movement of 1905 to the Quit India movement of 1942, their achievements were so remarkable. During this phase, many women joined national movements and established some women'sorganisations such as the 'Women's Indian Association' (1917), the'National Council of Women in India' (1920), and the All India Women's Conference (1927). Sarla Devi, Annie Besant, Sarojini Naidu, Kamla Devi Chattopadhyaya, Dr Muttu Lakshmi Reddy, and Pandita Rama Bai are a few names who contributed to the national movement and to the upliftment of Indian women. In 1921, Indian women were granted limited voting rights. The Government of India Act 1935 expanded the franchise to more women, though it was still limited by qualifications like literacy and property. The Constitution of India provided universal suffrage and removed all gender-based restrictions.

Therefore, social reform movements, modern education and laws made by the colonial government all these factors played an important role in the emancipation of Indian women. It is not that the implementation of these laws brought about an immediate improvement in the inferior condition of women; it took a long time- indeed, this process is still ongoing today, but one thing is certain: it undoubtedly generated awareness within society. As a result of these various factors, the condition of women improved significantly. Subsequently, these ideas fostered an awakening among women, and as a result of this awakening and modern education, awareness gradually emerged among women; they began contributing to the upliftment of society across various spheres-political, social, and economic. In the next phase of this process, they demanded other various rights for themselves. These developments can be viewed as feminist movements.

One other important aspect that deserves discussion while investigating the position of women in India is the condition of Muslim women. We rarely address the oppressive practices faced by Muslim women. In Indian Muslim society, various inhumane practices have been practised against women's rights and dignity for many centuries. Practices such as the Purdah system, Polygamy, Triple Talaq (Talaq-e-Biddat), Halala, Mutah Marriage (contractual marriage), Misuse of Mehar, etc. have made the lives of Muslim women miserable, and they have been facing these problems for centuries. Although some Muslim scholars such as Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, and others made some efforts for the upliftment of Muslim women, they only opposed the purdah system, polygamy and easy divorce. They also paid some attention towards the promotion of Western education among Indian Muslims. Practices such as triple talaq, misuse of halala, the purdah system, and other customs are deeply rooted. The colonial government made no effort to eliminate these problems, and they remain the same today.

5.3.4 Feminist Movements and Gender Justice in the Post-Colonial Period and in the Contemporary Period

To understand this, we must briefly know feminism, women's empowerment and gender justice. In reality, feminism, gender justice, and women's empowerment are deeply interrelated. Feminism provides the theoretical basis for equality, gender justice creates fair structures, and empowerment provides tools for autonomy, collectively challenging patriarchy to foster a just society.

Feminism

The word feminism is derived from the French word '*feminisme*' and seems to have been popularised in the 1890s. Feminism is an array of social, political, and cultural movements and ideologies that aim to create equal political, economic, personal, and social rights for all genders. In simple words, it is the belief that women should have the same rights, power and opportunities as men in society. To achieve this, women started movements that came to be known as feminism. Therefore, itis a movement against male dominance and the subordination of women in a patriarchal society, and focuses on ensuring women have the same opportunities and rights as men.

Gender Justice

The concept of gender justice requires us to distinguish it clearly from biological sex. Biological sex refers to the physical and biological differences between males and females, such as chromosomes, hormones, and reproductive organs, which are determined at birth. Gender, on the other hand, is a social and cultural concept. It includes the roles, behaviours, expectations, and identities that society assigns to individuals based on whether they are perceived as male, female, or otherwise. Gender justice is about guaranteeing fair and equal conduct for all genders by dismantling discriminatory customs, laws and social structures, ensuring rights are applied equally.

Women Empowerment

As we have examined women's position from the Vedic period until independence. During these centuries, women faced many ups and downs. Women's participation in India's freedom struggle deepened their consciousness of their roles and rights in independent India. After independence, legislators paid enormous attention to the empowerment of Indian women; Several bills, such as the Marriage Act of 1954 and the Hindu Code bill of 1955-56,were enacted in favour of women. These bills settled the issues of marriage, divorce, succession, guardianship and adoption. The Hindu Marriage Act made polygamy illegal and monogamy legal among all Hindus, and conferred equal rights of divorce to both men and women. It fixed the marriage age at 21 years for boys and at 18 years for girls, and also made child marriage punishable. The Hindu Succession Act of 1956, The Hindu Minority and Guardianship Act, 1961, The Maternity Benefits Act, 1961, The Dowry Protection Act, 1961, and other acts were enacted to protect women in India. Thus, the Constitution of India guarantees Women's equality with men.

Some special provisions were made in the Constitution of India to secure equality of sexes and non-discrimination, which are:

- The State shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth. (Article 15)
- Equality before law and equal protection of law. (Article 14)
- Equality of opportunity in public employment. (Article 16)
- Humane conditions of work and maternity relief for women.
- To ensure women's participation in public life, the Constitution reserves not less than one-third of the seats for women in Panchayats and Municipalities, including one-third of the positions of chairpersons in these local bodies. (Article 243 D and 243 T)

Further, to strengthen the position of women, some other Acts were enacted, such as the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act of 1986, which prohibits illegal traffic for sexual exploitation. The Domestic Violence Act, 2005, protects women against domestic violence. The Sexual Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act of 2013 protects against sexual harassment of women in the workplace.

Thus, the Constitution of India not only guarantees equality to women but also makes their dignity and empowerment a matter of national responsibility. All these provisions were made to strengthen women's role in governance and decision-making at the grassroots level. In this way, after a prolonged struggle, Indian women could get numerous legal rights; however, within a patriarchal society, their social status could not become as robust as had been expected. Therefore, Indian women began to raise stronger demands for women's empowerment and gender justice.

In 1971, the Government of India set up the Committee on the Status of Women in India (CSWI), which submitted its report, '*Towards Equality*', in 1974. It was the first comprehensive post-independence review of the condition of women in India. This report challenged the common belief that women's condition had improved after Independence simply because the Constitution had granted them equal rights. This report showed that the reality ofIndian women's constitutional equality had not brought real equality to women. Although women had legal rights on paper, in everyday life, they continued to face discrimination in almost every sphere. The report showed that women continued to lag in education, employment, health, and political participation, and that their social and economic condition had worsened even after Independence.

One of the most alarming findings of the report was the declining sex ratio. The number of women in comparison to men was decreasing, which echoed deep social discrimination against girls and women. The report also pointed out that women's work was largely ignored, as they work in agriculture, household, and informal labour, which is rarely counted. The report also highlighted the poor female literacy rate, especially in rural and semi-urban areas, and many girls were forced to leave school at an early age. The report discussed that gender inequality is deeply rooted in society because, from childhood, people are taught to think differently about men and women. It suggested that education might help achieve equality, but only if schools and universities made serious and continuous efforts. To address this, the government encouraged

universities to start Women's studies programmes and include women's issues in teaching and research. In politics, too, women remained largely absent from positions of power and decision-making.

It is believed that the '*Towards Equality*' report transformed the way women's issues were understood in India. Before this report, women's problems were mostly seen as welfare issues. The report changed this perspective by showing that women were not merely beneficiaries of welfare, but equal citizens whose rights were being denied. The report had extensive consequences. It revived public discussion on women's rights in India and brought women's issues into academic, social, and political debate. It is believed that, after this report, women's movements became more organised, more political, and more focused on equality, justice, and rights.

This culminated in the anti-price-rise movement of 1973, which emerged as a united front of women from political parties such as CPI (M), the Socialist Party, and the Congress, along with many non-political women. The political parties mobilised women to achieve their own political gain. The outcome of this movement was the formation of the 'National Federation of Indian Women' (NFIW) by the Communist Party of India. Another major development during the late 1970s and 1980s was that Indian women began raising many other issues, such as wife beating, bride burning, dowry deaths, domestic violence, and sexual harassment. Women's labour movements also became stronger during this period. One important example is SEWA (Self-Employed Women's Association), which was established in Gujarat and worked for women's rights in the informal sector, demanding their economic rights, fair wages, and dignity for working women. In many Indian states, women also led anti-liquor movements. They protested against alcoholism because it often led to domestic violence, poverty, and the breakdown of family life. In this way, women fought not only for their legal rights but also against the various social problems affecting their lives.

Women also played an important role in environmental movements such as the Chipko movement in Uttarakhand. In this movement, village women came together to protect the jungles (forests) from commercial exploitation. Although it was primarily an environmental protest, it also became an important sample of women's collective awareness, action, and resistance. During the 1980s and 1990s, women's groups in India began to raise stronger demands for equality not only in society but also within the legal and political system. They questioned discriminatory personal laws related to marriage, divorce, inheritance, and family rights, and they also demanded more political representation for women. These movements reasoned that women could not achieve real equality unless they had an equal voice in decision-making, both inside the family and in public institutions.

In this regard, one of the most noteworthy outcomes was the 73rd and 74th Constitutional amendments (1992-93), which reserved one-third of seats for women in Panchayati Raj Institutions and Urban Local Bodies. It was a notable step because, for the first time, women

were given constitutionally guaranteed space in grassroots democracy. It brought lakhs of women into public life and created a new generation of women leaders at the local level.

It was a beginning, slowly and gradually, the demand for women's political representation continued to grow in the following decades. Women's organisations, feminist scholars, and political activists argued that similar representation should be extended to State Assemblies and national assemblies. As we have discussed, till the 1990s, women had achieved many rights, but they still could not achieve true equality, and it was realised that this could not be achieved unless they got equal participation in politics. As a result of this growing pressure, the 'Women's Reservation Bill' was first introduced in Parliament in 1996. It seeks to reserve 33 per cent of seats for women in the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies, but for many years, the bill could not become law due to political differences and a lack of consensus. After a long struggle of nearly three decades, Parliament finally passed the Women's Reservation Bill in September 2023. It is officially known as the 'Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam' or the 'Constitution (106th Amendment) Act, 2023'. Its main aim is to ensure that women get a stronger voice in politics and a fair share in democratic governance. Although the 'Nari Shakti Adhiniyam, 2023', which grants women a 33% reservation in the National Assembly and various State Legislative assemblies, has been passed, a provision was added at the time of its enactment stating that the Act would come into force only from 2029. If this entire arrangement is examined closely, two important facts emerge: first, women constitute nearly 50% of the population and are expected to remain satisfied with merely 33% reservation; and second, even today, women continue tobe dependent on men for their rights.

5.4 LGBTQA Issues

LGBTQA issues in India have emerged as an important subject in present-day discussions on gender, human rights, and social justice. The term 'LGBTQA' stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Asexual persons whose sexual orientation, gender identity, or emotional identity differs from the heterosexual and is gender norms that have long dominated society. In recent years, 'LGBTQA' issues have become an important part of discussions in India, because they help us to understand how gender and sexuality are shaped by society, law, culture, and power.

5.4.1 An Introduction to Diverse Sexualities and Genders

LGBTQA is not only a group of individuals; it represents communities whose lives and experiences challenge conservative concepts of gender and sexuality. It is a group of people who have been facing exclusion, discrimination, and invisibility for centuries. These identities fall outside the rigid framework that recognises only two genders, male and female, and accepts heterosexuality as a natural norm.

- Lesbians refer to women who are emotionally or sexually attracted to women.
- Gay usually refers to men who are emotionally or sexually attracted to men, though it is also used more broadly.
- Bisexual refers to people who are attracted to more than one gender.
- Transgender refers to those whose gender identity differs from the sex assigned to them at birth.
- Queer is a broader term used by people whose sexual or gender identities do not fit into fixed categories.
- Asexual refers to people who experience little or no sexual attraction.

These characteristics challenge the traditional belief that society is naturally divided only into male/female and heterosexual roles.

5.4.2 LGBTQA and human rights

LGBTQA issues are fundamentally issues of human rights. Every individual, irrespective of gender identity or sexual orientation, has the right to dignity, equality, privacy, and freedom. Like all citizens, LGBTQA persons are also entitled to all these basic human rights. But LGBTQA persons in India have often been denied these rights in everyday life. LGBTQA individuals often face systemic challenges, including social stigma, family rejection, and widespread discrimination in society. These issues frequently manifest as violence, psychological harassment, and abuse, as well as exclusion from inheritance, marriage, and family rights. Family rejection remains one of the most common forms of oppression, often forcing individuals into silence, concealment, or unwanted heterosexual marriages. In such circumstances, LGBTQA rights must be understood as human rights necessary for ensuring dignity and equal citizenship.

5.4.3 Legal Developments in India

The legal recognition of LGBTQA rights in India has developed gradually through judicial intervention and constitutional interpretation.

A landmark moment came in 2014, when the Supreme Court in the NALSA v. Union of India judgement recognised transgender persons as a “third gender” and affirmed their constitutional rights to equality, dignity, and self-identification.

Another landmark development came in 2018, when the Supreme Court in Navtej Singh Johar v. Union of India decriminalised all consensual sex among adults, including homosexual sex.

In 2019, the Indian Parliament passed the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, which was intended to prohibit discrimination against transgender persons. However, the Act has been

criticised by activists for its limitations, especially regarding self-identification, implementation, and social discrimination.

In 2023, the Supreme Court considered the issue of same-sex marriage in Suprivo v. Union of India. Although the Court did not legalise same-sex marriage, it acknowledged the rights and dignity of queer persons and emphasised that discrimination based on sexual orientation is unconstitutional.

5.4.4 Social Realities in Contemporary India

Despite several important legal progresses, the social condition of LGBTQA persons is unsatisfactory. They continue to face prejudice from family, society, religious institutions, and even state authorities. LGBTQA persons often face isolation, ridicule, and exclusion from an early age. The transgender community also faces the same discrimination and severe marginalization. Thus, one of the central challenges in contemporary India is the gap between constitutional rights and lived reality.

5.5 Summary

After going through this unit, we can understand the condition of women in the ancient, medieval and modern periods and how their status changed across these phases. In fact, modern times also had various phases. In the initial phase, women got some basic human rights, and various social evils and oppressive practices against them were challenged and removed. In the second phase, with the spread of education, they gained awareness and intellectual confidence, and they demanded more rights and gender-based discrimination in society. As time passed, they demanded more rights, greater power, and equal status with men in society. Although according to the Indian constitution, Indian women have been granted many rights and equal status in society, real equality is still absent in a patriarchal society. Therefore, to achieve true equality, women will have to continue their struggle.

5.6 Glossary

Discrimination – Unfair behaviour of a person or group based on gender, caste, class, or religion. Or other identities.

Domestic Violence – Violence or exploitation faced by women within the home, including physical, emotional, verbal, sexual, and economic abuse.

Empowerment – The process of gaining various rights, power, resources, and the ability to make decisions about one’s own life.

Equality – A condition in which all people are treated impartially and given the same rights, opportunities, and respect.

Feminism –The belief and movement that women should have equal rights, opportunities, and status with men in society.

Gender –Socially created roles, duties, and expectations assigned to men and women by society.

Gender Discrimination –Unequal treatment of individuals based on their gender.

Gender Equality –A state in which men and women enjoy equal rights, responsibilities, opportunities, and respect in all areas of life.

Patriarchy –A social system in which men hold superior power and authority in the family and society.

Representation –The participation of women in political, social, and institutional spaces.

Reservation – A policy of reserving a fixed number of seats or positions for marginalised groups, including women, to ensure participation and equality.

Sex –The Biological, physiological, and anatomical characteristics that distinguish males, females, and intersex individuals.

Social Reform – Changes introduced in society to remove injustice, inequality, and oppressive practices.

Women's Movement – Collective efforts and struggles by women to achieve equality, dignity, rights, and justice.

Women's Empowerment –The process of enabling women to gain independence, rights, and control over their own lives.

5.7 SAQs (Short Answer Questions)

Q 1. What do you understand by the term women's empowerment?

Q 2. Explain the meaning of gender inequality in brief.

Q 3. Discuss the importance of the 'Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, 2023' in short.

Q 4. Describe the position of women in ancient India.

Q 5. Describe the position of women in medieval India.

5.8 True/ False

Q 1. Women enjoyed a comparatively respected position in early Vedic society. (True)**Q 2.** During the medieval period, practices like purdah, child marriages, and polygamy declined women's status. (True)

Q 3. Women's empowerment only means the political rights of women. (False)

Q 4. Gender inequality means equal opportunities for both men and women. (False)

Q 5. The 'Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, 2023', provides 50% reservation for women in Parliament and State Legislative Assemblies. (False)

5.9 Terminal/ Model Questions

Q 1. Discuss the meaning and importance of women's empowerment in modern India.

Q 2. Analyse the role of education, law, and social reform movements in improving the condition of women in India.

Q 3. Examine the condition of women in ancient and medieval India.

Q 4. Critically analyse the women's movements in the post-independence period.

Q 5. How did the status of women decline during the medieval period in India?

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Unit - 6

Environmental and Indigenous Movements: Environmental justice and Climate activism, Indigenous peoples' movements and land rights, Case studies: Chipko, Standing Rock, Amazon activism, etc.

Unit Structure

6.1 Introduction
6.2 Objectives
6.3 Environmental Rights
6.4 Environmental Justice
6.5 Climate Activism
6.6 Indigenous Peoples' Land Rights and Ecological Knowledge
6.6.1 Case Study 1: Chipko Movement
6.6.2 Case Study 2: Standing Rock Movement
6.6.3 Case Study 3: Amazon activism
6.7 Comparative Analysis of Environmental and Indigenous Movements
6.8 Summary
6.9 Glossary
6.10 SAQs (Short Answer Questions)
6.11 True/ False
6.12 Terminal/ Model Questions
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6.1 Introduction: Meaning of Environment and Environmental Issues

Before understanding environmental rights, it is essential to comprehend what constitutes the environment, as well as its utility and significance for us. 'Environment' refers to the entire surroundings in which humans, animals, birds, plants, and all forms of life exist and interact with one another; it encompasses both natural and human-made elements. In its broadest sense, the environment includes land, sunlight, air, water, forests, rivers, mountains, and other physical and biological elements that sustain life on Earth. It also includes the social, cultural, and economic conditions within which human life evolves. Thus, 'environment' is generally understood as everything that surrounds us and influences our existence. It is not limited solely to nature; rather, it encompasses the complex interplay between living organisms and their physical surroundings. Human life depends profoundly on the environment for food, water, shelter, health, and livelihood. Thus, the environment is not something distinct from human society; it is in itself the very foundation of life and civilisation.

From the perspective of Indian society, the environment has always held special significance in both material and cultural terms. According to Indian philosophy, all living beings, non-living things, and the environment share a close and reciprocal relationship, and we ought to conserve and nurture them all.

Therefore, today, the environment is viewed not merely as a natural system but as a living and dynamic relationship between ecology, society, and human existence. The relationship between human beings and the environment has always been mutually dependent. In ancient times, the relationship between human beings and the environment was balanced. But today, due to industrialisation, urbanisation, deforestation, and large-scale exploitation of natural resources, that balance has been disrupted. As a result, problems such as deforestation, pollution, loss of biodiversity, ecological degradation, and climate change have emerged.

Therefore, to overcome environmental problems, it is essential that appropriate measures be taken for the conservation and enhancement of the environment. In this regard, while governments have endeavoured to protect the environment through legal measures, citizens have also taken steps towards its conservation through various environmental movements.

In this unit, we will discuss all these points.

6.2 Objectives

After reading this unit, students will be able to:

- Understand the meaning of environment, the relationship between humans and the environment, rights and justice
- analyse climate activism as a global ecological movement
- observe Indigenous peoples' struggle in relation to land rights and ecological knowledge

- ❖ evaluate the significance of the Chipko movement, Standing Rock, and Amazon activism

6.3 Environmental Rights

In academic discussions, the environment is often understood in two broad senses: the natural environment and the human environment. The natural environment includes all elements that occur naturally, for example, land, rivers, forests, mountains, soil, vegetation, climate, wildlife, and ecosystems. These form the ecological basis of life. On the other hand, the human environment includes the political, social, cultural, and economic structures created by human beings, such as settlements, institutions, industries, roads, laws, and the system of production. These two dimensions are interconnected and continuously influence one another.

As we have discussed earlier, the relationship between human beings and the environment has always been close and mutually dependent. In ancient times, this relationship was relatively balanced. However, with industrialisation, fast technological advancement, urbanisation, and large-scale exploitation of natural resources, the balance between human society and nature has gradually been disrupted. Today, it seems we have failed to save our environment. We have been facing an unprecedented crisis marked by environmental degradation. In the present time, the environment is viewed not only as a natural system but also as a shared resource, a site of conflict, and an issue closely connected with rights and justice.

In the contemporary world, environmental issues are no longer understood only as problems of nature, forests, rivers, or climate. In fact, they are seen as issues of justice, rights, and survival. Environmental issues such as pollution, deforestation, climate change, mining, and catastrophic exploitation of resources affect humans in several ways. The burden of environmental demolition is borne most heavily by the poor, the marginalised communities, peasants, women, and indigenous communities. Therefore, environmental issues must be studied not only in ecological terms but also in relation to social inequality, political power, and human rights.

From the perspective of Indians, this relationship between environment and justice is especially significant. In India, water, land, forests, and natural resources are closely connected with livelihood, culture, and everyday life. A large section of the population depends directly on nature for survival. Rural communities, tribal communities and forest-dependent people rely on common natural resources for food, fuel, shelter, and employment. Therefore, whenever forests are cut, rivers are dammed, or land is acquired in the name of development, these communities suffer the most and face severe consequences. Environmental destruction in India is not only an ecological crisis but also a crisis of livelihood, social justice, and human dignity.

Therefore, environmental rights have today emerged as a crucial point of modern social and political thought. The Right to life cannot be separated from the rights to clean air, safe water, healthy land, and sustainable livelihood. Consequently, environmental movements across the world have challenged the belief that development should be measured solely in terms of

industrial growth, profitability, and infrastructure. According to them, development must also be evaluated based on justice, ecological balance, and human well-being. This shift has positioned environmental struggles as a central element within the discourse of right and justice.

6.4 Environmental Justice

Environmental justice refers to the fair and equitable distribution of environmental benefits and environmental burdens. It means that all people should have equal access to clean air, water, forests, and healthy surroundings, and nobody should bear a disproportionate share of environmental harm. But, in reality, environmental harm is often imposed on those who are socially and economically weak, while the benefits of development are enjoyed by the powerful. Thus, environmental justice is concerned with both ecology and equality.

In India as well, environmental justice holds particular significance, as most environmental conflicts are linked to land acquisition, mining, dams, industrial pollution, and forest control. A crucial point is that while most projects are implemented in the name of development and the welfare of the poor, they often result in the displacement of the poor themselves, while the benefits largely accrue to the urban elite. This unequal distribution of benefits has given rise to environmental conflicts and movements, and has simultaneously fostered the framework of environmental justice. It has also cultivated the understanding that ecological degradation is not merely a scientific problem, but also a political and social issue shaped by power dynamics.

Thus, this environmental exploitation has also broadened the concept of environmental justice and rights. Environmental justice encompasses not only the right to a healthy environment but also the rights to livelihood, participation, dignity, and equitable access to natural resources. Therefore, it integrates environmental conservation with democracy, social equality, and human rights. In Countries like India, where millions of people depend directly on land, water, and forests, environmental justice is indispensable for both social policy and sustainable development. It also affirms the principles of social justice and the right to equality, and to live with dignity.

6.5 Climate activism

Climate activism is one of the most significant methods of environmental politics in the contemporary period. It has emerged in response to climate change, global warming, biodiversity loss, and ecological degradation. Climate activism refers to the organised activities undertaken by individuals and various environmental organisations to mitigate the adverse effects caused by different forms of pollution and to protect the environment. Through climate activism, efforts are made to foster the conservation and enhancement of the environment by raising public awareness regarding environmental issues. Climate activism involves advocating for policy changes that favour environmental preservation and adopting practises designed to ensure a safer and more robust environment for the future.

In the 21st century, climate activism stands as one of the most significant forms of environmental politics. It represents a positive stride towards addressing climate change, global warming, biodiversity loss, and ecological imbalances. Through protests and public awareness campaigns, climate activism exerts pressure on the government, often in opposition to the environmental degradation caused by unregulated and unplanned development, to act responsibly and to formulate policies that minimise environmental damage while facilitating conservation efforts. Furthermore, these movements advocate for a greater emphasis on the concept of sustainable development as a means to mitigate environmental harm.

For a country like India, climate activism holds particular relevance, as India faces severe environmental challenges stemming from climate change, including erratic monsoon, heat waves, floods, glacial retreat, droughts, and air pollution. These shifts directly impact agriculture, food security, migration patterns, and public health. Therefore, climate activism in India should be understood not merely as a global movement, but also as a struggle intertwined with everyday life, rural sensibilities, and developmental inequality.

6.6 Indigenous Peoples' Land Rights and Ecological Knowledge

Indigenous peoples' movements are among the most significant rights-based movements in the modern world. These movements are not only about the environment in a narrow sense; they are also struggles waged for land, identity, autonomy, and survival. For indigenous people, land is not merely property or an economic resource; rather, it serves as the foundation of their culture, spirituality, memories, livelihoods, and collective existence. Consequently, many conflicts over land are also struggles to preserve their identity and dignity. Throughout the world, indigenous communities have, from time to time, made significant contributions to environmental protection through such movements.

In India, too, such movements embrace immense relevance, as indigenous communities, forest-dwelling communities, and, to a certain extent, rural communities have maintained intimate connections with the land, forests, rivers, and biodiversity since ancient times. Their ecological knowledge is not merely technical, but is deeply experiential. It is often described as 'Traditional Ecological Knowledge', knowledge that has emerged through their close interaction with nature and has been passed down through generations, subsequently evolving into wisdom that is so important to the entire region and its communities. Such knowledge encompasses practices related to forest utilisation, water conservation, seed preservation, medicinal plants, and sustainable agriculture, among others.

Indigenous peoples' movements become particularly critical when unplanned state policies, such as mining, the construction of large dams, industrial expansion, and commercial exploitation, pose a threat not only to the economic and socio-religious interests of indigenous communities but also to the lifestyles that serve to safeguard the regional ecosystem. In doing so, these movements challenge the dominant models of development that are often adopted without due

regard for environmental concerns. Thus, such movements often propose alternative ideas, based on ecological balance, community rights, and sustainable coexistence with nature, which are of immense significance.

6.6.1 Case Study 1: Chipko Movement

The Chipko Movement is regarded as one of the most noteworthy environmental movements in modern India. It is considered a milestone in the history of grassroots struggles for environmental preservation. It began in 1973 in Chamoli district in the Garhwal Himalayan region of present-day Uttarakhand, India. It was a protest against the extensive exploitation of forest resources by commercial contractors. The immediate cause of this movement was a decision by the state government to allocate forest land to external contractors for commercial logging, while imposing restrictions on local villagers accessing the forests for their daily necessities. This sparked widespread resentment among local people, as they were completely dependent on the forests for their essential needs, such as fuel, fodder, and timber for their houses. Apart from this, they were deeply conscious about the need to conserve and nurture the environment. Under these circumstances, the local people were left with no alternative but to launch a protest movement. The conflict between unplanned commercial development and the subsistence needs of the local population captured the attention of people across India, and the Chipko movement emerged as one of the earliest examples of environmental justice in the country.

The Chipko movement gained immense popularity because the villagers, particularly the women, adopted a unique and non-violent method of protest: they would physically embrace the trees to prevent them from being felled. The word ‘Chipko’ literally means “to stick” or “to embrace”, and this act became the defining identity of the movement. The most celebrated incident occurred in 1974 in the village of Rani, near Joshimath, Uttarakhand, where a group of women, led by Gaura Devi, confronted forest contractors; by standing around the trees and embracing them, and in this way, they successfully prevented the contractors from carrying out the logging operations. Gaura Devi emerged as one of the most iconic figures of the movement and became a source of inspiration for the other local women. Her capable leadership also demonstrated that women possess a profound understanding of environmental conservation, alongside their deep reliance on forest resources.

The movement was also associated with numerous other key activists and thinkers who helped shape its ideological and organisational path. One of the organisers, Chandi Prasad Bhatt, played a pivotal role in mobilising rural communities through the ‘Dasholi Gram Swarajya Mandal’, a local cooperative institution that promoted forest-based self-reliance. Bhatt emphasised Gandhian principles of community participation, sustainable resource utilisation, and rural development. Another prominent person was Sunderlal Bahuguna, who emerged as the movement’s most recognisable national face. Bahuguna linked the Cipko movement to broader

environmental issues and popularised the message of environmental conservation through his campaign, speeches, and extensive foot marches across the Himalayan region. He drew attention to the connection between deforestation, soil erosion, flooding, and ecological imbalance, thereby elevating the Chipko movement from a localised protest to a comprehensive environmental philosophy.

The Chipko movement is also considered significant because it sought not only to save trees but also to challenge prevailing notions of development. The movement argued that forests should not be viewed merely as commercial resources for timber extraction; rather, they are indispensable for maintaining ecological equilibrium and sustaining the livelihoods of local populations. The movement also highlighted the profound interconnections between women, the environment, and the preservation of life, a theme that subsequently inspired eco-feminist interpretations, particularly through the writings of Vandana Shiva.

Thus, the Chipko movement was not merely a protest against deforestation, but also a comprehensive critique of exploitative development models and the centralised control over natural resources. It conclusively demonstrated that environmental protection must be inseparably linked with community rights, indigenous knowledge, and social justice. The legacy of the Chipko movement remains profoundly influential to this day, both within India and beyond its borders. It inspired numerous subsequent environmental struggles, such as Karnataka's Appiko Movement, anti-dam protests, and the forest rights campaign conducted across India. For all Indians, the Chipko movement remains a pivotal example, teaching us how environmental concerns are intimately intertwined with participation. Today, it is remembered not merely as a movement launched to save trees, but as a movement dedicated to safeguarding the balance between life, community, biodiversity, and the environment.

6.6.2 Case Study 2: Standing Rock Movement

The Standing Rock Movement emerged in 2016 in the United States as one of the most influential Indigenous-led environmental movements in recent history. It began in response to the construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL), a major pipeline planned to transport crude oil across several American states. The Standing Rock Sioux Tribe opposed the project because the pipeline threatened their main water source, the Missouri River, and also passed through land considered sacred by the tribe. The movement quickly gained attention because it brought together concerns of environmental justice, Indigenous sovereignty, treaty rights, and ecological survival.

The slogan "Water is Life" became the moral and political centre of the movement. For the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe and the other Indigenous communities, water was not merely a natural resource but a sacred source of life, culture, and continuity. Therefore, the movement was not only a protest against a pipeline; it was a defence of land, water, spirituality, and Indigenous

rights. Protesters designated themselves not as demonstrators but as “Water Protectors”, emphasising their role as guardians of life and nature.

Several indigenous leaders and activists played important roles in shaping the Standing Rock Movement. Dave Archambault II, then chairman of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, brought the issue into national and international discussion. LaDonna Brave Bull Allard, a Standing Rock historian and activist, was one of the earliest figures to establish resistance camps and mobilise Indigenous people. Youth activists, women, and spiritual leaders all played a crucial role in raising awareness in favour of this movement. The movement gained global visibility through digital activism and the hashtag #**NoDAPL**, which transformed a local Indigenous movement into an international campaign. Social media helped circulate images, testimonies, and reports of state repression, drawing support from environmental groups, human rights activists, and Indigenous communities across the world. Thousands of supporters joined the Standing Rock Movement and made it one of the largest gatherings of Indigenous people in history.

The significance of the Standing Rock Movement lies in its powerful articulation of the relationship between ecology, sovereignty, and justice. It showed that environmental conflicts are often inseparable from colonial histories and struggles over indigenous land and self-determination. This movement reveals how Indigenous communities across the world resist state-backed development projects that threaten their land, water, and way of life. It remains a landmark movement in the history of Indigenous environmental justice.

6.6.3 Case Study 3: Amazon activism

Amazon activism refers to the collective struggles of Indigenous communities, environmental protectors, and local people in Latin America to protect the Amazon rainforest from ecological ruin. The Amazon Forest is one of the most important ecological regions in the world, and it is vital to global biodiversity. It is home to millions of people, including numerous Indigenous communities whose lives and cultures are deeply connected to the forest. In recent decades, however, the Amazon has come under severe threat from deforestation, mining, oil extraction, cattle ranching, and agribusiness expansion. These pressures have made the region one of the most important sites of contemporary environmental conflict.

At the heart of Amazon activism lies the struggle for forest justice. Forest justice means recognising that forests are not empty spaces available for exploitation, but living ecological systems that sustain both human and non-human life. For Indigenous people, the Amazon forests are not just natural resources; they are home, sacred landscapes, and a source of livelihood and identity. For them, the destruction of forests is not only an ecological problem but also a violation of their rights and survival.

Several indigenous leaders and environmentalists have become symbols of Amazon activism. Chico Mendes, though he was not an Indigenous person, became one of the most influential people against deforestation in Brazil and was assassinated in 1988 for his activism. Sonia

Guajajara, an indigenous leader of the region, has become an important activist for land rights and environmental justice. Leaders such as Nemonte Nenquimo, of Ecuador, is one another person who have drawn global attention to the struggle against oil extraction and the defence of the Indigenous territories. Amazon activism is so important because it reveals that the destruction of forests is not only a local or national issue but a global ecological crisis. The Amazon forests play a critical role in absorbing carbon, regulating rainfall, and sustaining biodiversity, which makes it a matter of global concern. Yet the burden of this destruction is borne first and most directly by Indigenous peoples. But it is simultaneously a struggle for Indigenous survival and for the ecological future of the world.

For us, Amazon activism provides an important comparative perspective on forest politics and ecological justice. Like the Chipko movements in India, the Standing Rock Movement in America, and the Amazon activism show that forests are key to livelihood, culture, and survival. At the same time, it expands this understanding by showing how local struggles over forests are deeply connected with global climate change and environmental justice. Amazon activism, therefore, helps us to understand that forest protection is not merely about conservation; it is about rights, justice, and the future of life on earth.

6.7 Comparative Analysis of Environmental and Indigenous Movements

The movements discussed in this unit arethe Chipko Movement,the Standing Rock Movement,andthe Amazon activism, which emerged in different regions, yet they share important common features. All three movements connect ecology with justice, rights, and survival. In each case, local people resisted the destruction of nature because their lives, livelihoods, and identities were linked with land, forests, and water. All these movements paid proper attention towards biodiversity, climate justice, and resistance to extractive capitalism. These movements also show us that environmental struggles are never only about nature; they are also struggles over power, identity, development, and justice.

6.8 Summary

Environmental and Indigenous movements have become some of the most significant struggles of the modern world because they redefine the meaning of justice in ecological terms. These movements show that environmental movements cannot be separated from questions of rights, livelihood, dignity, and equality. These movements challenge development models based solely on extraction, profit, and industrial expansion, and they propose alternative visions rooted in sustainability, community, and justice. They also show that local struggles, whether in the Himalayas, North America, or the Amazon, carry global significance. Environmental justice is therefore not only about saving nature; it is about defending life, rights, and the future of the planet.

6.9 Glossary

Biodiversity: The variety of living organisms, including plants, animals, and microorganisms, within a particular ecosystem or on the earth as a whole.

Climate Activism: Collective action and campaigns aimed at addressing climate change and demanding environmental responsibility from governments, corporations, and international institutions.

Climate Justice: The awareness that climate change is not only an environmental matter but also a social and political issue because its effects are experienced unequally by different communities and nations.

Conservation: The protection and careful management of natural resources, forests, wildlife, and ecosystems to maintain ecological balance.

Deforestation: The large-scale removal or destruction of forests often leads to ecological imbalance, soil erosion, and biodiversity.

Ecological Balance: A stable relationship between living organisms and their environment that allows ecosystems to function sustainably.

Ecology: The study of the relationship between living organisms and their natural resources.

Environment: The total surroundings in which living beings exist, including natural elements such as land, water, air, forests, climate, and human-made social and cultural conditions.

Environment Justice: The principle that all people should have equal access to a healthy environment and should not bear unequal environmental burdens because of social or economic inequality.

Forest Justice: The rights of Indigenous and forest-dependent communities over forests and forest resources for livelihood, culture, and traditional use.

Global Warming: The gradual increase in the Earth's average temperature is caused by greenhouse gas emissions.

Indigenous people: Communities with historical and cultural ties to a particular region that maintain distinct traditions, identities, and relationships with nature.

Livelihood: The means through which people secure the necessities of life, such as food, shelter, and income.

#NoDAPL: A social media campaign and protest movement opposing the Dakota Access Pipeline and supporting Indigenous rights and environmental justice.

Social Justice: The principle of fairness and equality in the distribution of rights, opportunities, and resources within society.

Sustainable Development: Development that meets present needs without harming the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK): Knowledge about nature and ecological systems was developed by Indigenous and local communities through long historical experience and observation.

Water Protectors: A term used by activists in the Standing Rock movement to describe themselves as defender of water, land, and the ecological system.

6.10 SAQs (Short Answer Questions)

Q1. What do you understand by environmental justice?

Q2. Explain the concept of climate activism.

Q3. What was the main objective of the Chipko Movement?

Q4. What are Indigenous peoples' movements?

Q5. What is meant by the slogan "Water is Life" in the Standing Rock Movement?

6.11 True/ False

1. Environmental justice refers to the equal distribution of environmental benefits and burdens. (True)

2. Climate activism is concerned only with protecting wildlife. (False)

3.The Chipko Movement began in the state of Rajasthan. (False)

4. Gaura Devi played an important role in the Chipko Movement. (True)

5.Deforestation has no impact on climate change. (False)

6.12 Terminal/ Model Questions

Q1. Discuss the relationship between environment, rights, and justice in the contemporary world.

Q2. Explain the meaning and scope of environmental justice with suitable examples.

Q3. Examine the origin, objectives, and significance of the Chipko Movement.

Q4. Analyse the Standing Rock Movement as an example of Indigenous environmental resistance.

Q5. Analyse climate activism as a global ecological movement.

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Unit – 7

Political Movements related to Human Rights – Right to Information Movement, Anna Hazare's Anti-Corruption Movement, and Right to Vote/NOTA, etc. Linguistic agitation

Unit Structure

7.1 Introduction

7.2 Objectives

7.3 Political Movements related to Human Rights

7.4 Human Rights in India

7.4.1 Right to Information Movement and Right to Information Act, 2005

7.4.2 Anna Hazare's Anti-Corruption Movement

7.4.3 Right to Vote/NOTA

7.4.4 Linguistic agitation

7.5 Summary

7.6 Glossary

7.7 SAQs (Short Answer Questions)

7.8 True/ False

7.9 Terminal/ Model Questions

7.10 References

7.11 Suggested Readings

7.1 Introduction: Human Rights

In any civilised society or nation, the existence of human rights and freedoms is the primary hallmark of its advanced civilisation. Human rights are the elementary rights and freedoms that belong to each individual just because they are human beings. These basic rights are essential for living a life with dignity, equality, liberty, and justice. Without these rights, any discussion of human equality, liberty, security, and dignity would become meaningless. In the absence of human rights, anarchy arises in society. Therefore, to avoid this situation, people must possess adequate human rights.

These rights have also been discussed in ancient Indian philosophy.Ancient Indian thinkers and philosophers showed deep concern for the well-being of human dignity and the welfare of all human beings since the Vedic period. The ancient Indian philosophers associated the foundation of human rights with the ancient concept of 'Dharma',which emphasised duty, moral responsibility, justice, and righteous conduct in society. In reality, in Indian philosophy, human rights were also an integral part of 'Dharma', that is,'Duties'. Ancient Indian thinkers like Kautilya were also deeply concerned about human rights; therefore, he penned in his famous book 'Arthashastra' that the objective of the State is not merely to manage religion, wealth, and the welfare of the people, but also to build a society free from discrimination based on colour, creed, and caste. Further, he asserts that the happiness of rulers lies in the happiness of the common people. The well-being of rulers does not consist in what they themselves find gratifying, but rather in what is good for the common people. Thus, in ancient philosophy, the concept of human rights was deeply intertwined with the concept of 'Dharma' and duty. However, with the passage of time, various changes took place within society, and society became divided primarily into two classes- a privileged class and a lower class, rendering concepts such as equality, liberty, and dignity meaningless for the lower classes.

For centuries, Indian society has remained deeply affected by various forms of discrimination based on caste, religion, gender, and social status. We know that under British colonial rule, we were not only subjected to political domination and economic exploitation but were also denied many civil and democratic rights. As we have already discussed, at the same time, Indian society continued to suffer many social evils such as untouchability, caste discrimination, gender inequality, and religious orthodoxy. However, during the last quarter of the 19th and in the early 20th century, particularly under British rule, several enlightened reformers, national leaders, and social thinkers began to challenge this unjust discrimination based on religion, caste, gender, colour, etc., and advocated for human rights of all individuals.

Although the colonial rulers certainly spoke of concepts such as liberty, equality, fraternity, and dignity, the reality was that throughout this entire period, British citizens themselves constituted a privileged class, while imposing various political, social, and economic restrictions upon the local inhabitants. India gained independence in 1947, and then the 'Constituent Assembly' incorporated human rights into the Indian Constitution.

7.2 Objectives

After completion of this unit, students will be able to:

- Understand the meaning and significance of human rights in India.
- Analyse the emergence and development of the Right to Information (RTI) movement and its significance.
- Analyse Anna Hazare's Anti-Corruption movement and its impact on Indian politics.
- Understand the concept of electoral rights, the Right to Vote and the concept of NOTA (None of the Above) in the Indian electoral system.
- Analyse the nature and cause of linguistic agitations in India and their relation to cultural identity and democratic rights.

7.3 Political Movements related to Human Rights

As we have already discussed, that Human Rights are essential for living a life with dignity, equality, liberty, and justice. These rights include civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights, such as the right to life, equality before the law, the right to education, the right to religion, and protection against exploitation. These rights are universal and apply to all individuals irrespective of caste, class, gender, religion, language, or nationality.

The concept of human rights existed even in various ancient civilisations and religions; however, the contemporary concept of human rights developed robustly after the Second World War, particularly after the establishment of the United Nations in 1945. The UN Charter contains many provisions for the promotion of human rights and essential freedoms in the Preamble and in its various articles.

7.4 Human Rights in India

We know that under British colonial rule, we were subjected to political domination and severe social, cultural and economic exploitation, and colonial rulers denied many civil and democratic rights to Indians. As we have already discussed, at the same time, Indian society had prevailed many social evils such as untouchability, caste discrimination, gender inequality, and religious orthodoxy. However, during the last quarter of the 19th and in the early 20th century, particularly under British rule, several enlightened reformers, national leaders, and social thinkers began to challenge this unjust discrimination based on religion, caste, gender, colour, etc., and advocated for human rights of all individuals. They also demanded political freedom from colonial rule and started the National Movement against the imperial rulers.

The Indian National Movement further strengthened the idea of human rights in India. To achieve independence, we launched several national movements, such as the Non-Cooperation

Movement, the Civil Disobedience Movement, and the Quit India Movement, which were not only for political independence but also movements for civil liberties, equality, democratic rights, and human dignity. Through these political movements, Indian leaders demanded freedom from colonial rule and advocated the principles of equality, dignity, and human well-being. These scholars demanded the removal of all social and economic discrimination that existed in society. They raised their voices against oppression and worked for the protection of the rights of all individuals irrespective of caste, creed, colour, and gender.

Therefore, the Indian National Movement further strengthened the idea of human rights in India. During the Indian National movement, Indian leaders demanded not only political freedom from imperial rule but also liberties, equality, social justice, and democratic rights for the people. Thus, the freedom movement became closely associated with the ideals of human dignity, liberty, and the removal of social and economic discrimination.

India gained independence in 1947, and India's national leaders faced the challenge of transforming a newly liberated nation into a sovereign democratic nation. They established the democratic rule in India. When India became a democratic country, the most important objective was the protection of citizens' basic rights. To realise this, the'Constituent Assembly',a distinguished body of thinkers and legal experts, undertook the responsibility for drafting the Constitution of India. After nearly three years of rigorous debate, the Constituent Assembly completed this herculean task of framing the Constitution of India. Today, it is considered a living testament to the nation. The Constitution of India recognises these rights of the people and shows deep concern towards them by incorporating the principles of justice, liberty, equality, and fraternity as the foundation of the Indian democratic system. The Constituent Assembly ensured that the Constitution would act as a permanent guardian of the people's interests. The Indian Constitution guarantees several basic rights to its citizens, such as the Right to Equality, Right to Freedom, the Right against Exploitation, Freedom of Religion, Cultural and Educational Rights and Constitutional remedies, thereby providing constitutional protection to human rights in India.

The Indian Constitution bridges the gap between universal human rights and the laws of the land by ensuring them as Fundamental Rights in Part III. These rights are essential for the personal, moral, and spiritual development of every citizen. They include the Right to Equality, which forbids discrimination, and the Right to Freedom, which prohibits exploitation and protects religious and cultural identities. Many more provisions have been added to the Indian Constitution for the welfare of citizens.

The most significant feature of the Indian Constitution is the Right to Constitutional Remedies under Article 32. Dr Ambedkar termed this article as the "Heart and Soul of the Constitution" because, due to this provision, fundamental rights are "justiciable", which means they are enforceable in a court of law. This provision empowers Indian citizens to approach the Supreme Court directly when their rights are being violated, ensuring that the government remains accountable and that human rights in India are never reduced to mere words on paper.Thus, the Indian Constitution provides many safeguards for the protection of human rights through

Fundamental Rights, Directive Principles of State Policy, and democratic institutions. Still, many sections of the Indian society face inequality, discrimination, corruption, poverty, and, to some extent, denial of justice. To eliminate these injustices, numerous social and political movements, such as the Anti-Corruption Movement and the Right to Information movement, have emerged in the contemporary period. In all these movements, a large number of people participated and gained recognition across the country. As a result, the government of India enacted several acts, such as the Right to Information Act, 2005, and the Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013. Naturally, these Acts strengthened the people's rights in contemporary India.

7.4.1 Right to Information Movement and Right to Information Act, 2005

We all know that the 'Right to Information Act, 2005' was passed in June 2005, and it came into force in October 2005. More than 20 years have passed since this Act came into force; however, its history is also extremely fascinating. The reality is that this Act resulted from a grassroots mass movement that lasted several decades.

This movement began in 1987, when a group of labourers in Rajasthan were refused payment for the work they had performed; when they asked the reason, they were told their work was unsatisfactory.This was the reason for this popular mass movement. In protest against this injustice, activists such as Aruna Roy, Shankar Singh, and Nikhil Dey formed the 'Majdoor Kisan Shakti Sangthan' (MKSS). This organisation demanded that the government make the official records (bills and other documents) of public works available to the public, particularly in cases where the work executed was deemed unsatisfactory. When government officials refused to release those documents, the people managed to obtain information from the official records through other means, thereby exposing the corruption involved in the project, especially instances of forged signatures, misappropriated materials, and fraudulent bills.

As news of this scam spread to a wider audience, more and more people joined it, and the movement eventually assumed a broad and widespread mass movement. People raised popular slogans, such as 'We will know, we will live' and 'Our money, our account'; these slogans achieved immense popularity. These slogans served as a powerful symbol of the belief that people are entitled to the Right to Information, asserting that this right is inextricably linked to their fundamental right to Life. The movement gained such momentum that numerous other social activists and organisations rallied to its support; together, they established the 'National Campaign for People's Right to Information' (NCPRI).

Under pressure from these movements, the governments of various states, such as Rajasthan, Delhi, Maharashtra, and a few other states, enacted the Right to Information lawswithin their respective states; however, these laws were extremely weak. In 2002, yieldingto the pressure of mass movements, the Central government enacted the Freedom of Information Act, 2002; this, too, was extremely weak. Finally, under the severe pressure of all these movements, the 'Right to Information Act, 2005' (RTI Act, 2005) was enacted and came into force in the same year 2005.

In this way, through a prolonged grassroots struggle, labourers in the rural areas of Rajasthan succeeded in securing the enactment of a law that strengthens democracy and empowers citizens.

Right to Information Act, 2005

The enactment of the Right to Information Act, 2005, was really a significant moment for all, as it granted Indian citizens the freedom to obtain information from any public or government authority. However, the information sought under this Act must not pertain to defence, national security, or personal matters. The implementation of this Act increased transparency in government functioning to some extent and ensured accountability of government officials. Before the enactment of this law, citizens had no right to access any information related to files, decisions, or the time taken to complete a task, or the expenditure incurred on such work. With the enactment of this Act in 2005, every citizen was granted the right to obtain information concerning government files, decisions, government expenditure, and similar matters.

The Right to Information Act, 2005, introduced transparency in government operations, which led to a reduction in corruption, misuse of public funds and time to some extent. Furthermore, this legislation ensured accountability in government departments and their associated officials to the public. By granting the public the right to question government officials, inspect documents, and obtain copies thereof, this law not only ensured government accountability but also strengthened democracy.

(i) Structure

The government of India constituted Information Commissions at the Central and State levels to ensure compliance with the Right to Information Act, 2005, and to ensure a transparent and accountable administration. These commissions are statutory bodies.

Central Information Commission (CIC)

Under Section 12 of the RTI Act, 2005, a Central Information Commission was constituted on October 12, 2005. The Central Information Commission (CIC) comprises a Chief Information Commissioner and a maximum of ten Commissioners, who are appointed by the President of India upon the recommendation of a selection committee. This committee is constituted as follows:

Members of the Committee

The Prime Minister (Chairperson), the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, and a Cabinet Minister nominated by the Prime Minister. Its jurisdiction encompasses all Central Public Authorities.

State Information Commission (SIC)

Under section 15 of the RTI Act, 2005, a State Information Commission (SIC) was constituted in every state. The State Information Commission comprises a Chief State Commissioner and a

maximum of ten State Information Commissioners, who are appointed by the Governor upon the recommendation of a Selection Committee.

This Committee is constituted as follows:

Members of the Committee

The Chief Minister (Chairperson), the Leader of the Opposition in the Legislative Assembly, and a Cabinet Minister nominated by the Chief Minister. Its jurisdiction encompasses all public authorities falling under the purview of the State Government.

District-level Structure

At the district level, no separate commission is constituted under the RTI Act, 2005. To obtain information at the district level, citizens may contact the concerned department; however, if the information is not received from the concerned department within a particular time (maximum 30 Days), an application for the relevant information may be submitted to the District Information Officer (DPIO). If a citizen is dissatisfied with the information received from the District Information Officer (DPIO), they may apply for the relevant information to the First Appellate Authority (FAA) appointed within the district. If the individual remains dissatisfied even after this, they may file an appeal with the State Information Commission (SIC).

(ii)Eligibility Criteria for Members

The eligibility criteria for membership in the Central or State Information Commission stipulate that members must be eminent persons possessing extensive knowledge in the fields of law, science and technology, social service, management, journalism, mass communication, or administration. The tenure of office is five years or the age of 65 years (whichever occurs earlier), and members are not eligible for reappointment.

Thus, this framework was implemented in October 2005, and it applies to all public authorities across the country. This incorporates all government institutions, established under the Constitution, established by an Act of Parliament, a State Legislature, or by a notification or order issued by the appropriate government.

(iii)Exemption from Publication or Disclosure of Information

Although the government has brought almost all government institutions and bodies under the ambit of the Right to Information Act, 2005, Section 8 of the Act grants exemption from the disclosure of information to certain organisations, including specific intelligence units and security agencies. Under this provision, exemption applies to any information the disclosure of which would: endanger the sovereignty, integrity, and security of the country; adversely affect the strategic, scientific, or economic interests of the nation; impair India’s relations with any foreign state; be likely to incite the commission of an offense; constitute a breach of the

privileges of Parliament or a State Legislature; be expressly prohibited from publication by any court or tribunal; or be likely to constitute contempt of court.

Furthermore, information of commercial confidence, trade secrets, intellectual property, information received in confidence from a foreign government, Cabinet documents, information that would impede the process of investigation or the apprehension/prosecution of offenders, personal information, or any information the disclosure of which would be likely to endanger the life or physical safety of any person, all such matters are exempted from disclosure under Section 8 of the Right to Information Act, 2005.

(iv)Other Provisions

to Information Act, 2005, provisions exist to penalise any officer or employee who delays providing information, furnishes incomplete or incorrect details, or engages in any such misconduct.

According to the provisions of this Act, information must be provided within 30 days of receiving an application; however, information concerning life or liberty must be furnished within 48 hours.

In 2019, the RTI Act, 2005, was amended as the "Right to Information (Amendment) Act, 2019". This amendment modified the terms and conditions of service for Information Commissioners (ICs) at both the Central and State levels. Consequently, the Central Government was empowered to determine the service conditions, salaries, allowances, and other terms of service for Information Commissioners.

In 2023, the Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act, 2023, amended section 8(1)(j) of the RTI Act, thereby exempting all personal information from disclosure.

Conclusion

Thus, the Right to Information Act not only provides citizens with the opportunity to participate in the democratic process but also grants them the right to access information regarding government operations, policies, and decisions. This has fostered transparency within the governance system, a prerequisite for accountable governance.

Although the enactment of the RTI Act, 2005, enabled citizens to access information regarding administrative and governmental activities, and indeed, thanks to this law, various scandals ranging from the MANREGA (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act), now renamed as VB-G RAM G (Viksit Bharat-Guarantee for Rojgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) Act, 2025), irregularities to the Commonwealth Games scam were exposed. It would be incorrect to assume that corruption has been eradicated following its implementation. It has been observed that these commissions take an excessive amount of time to dispose of cases. According to a report from June 2024, more than four lakhs appeals and complaints are currently pending across India's Information Commissions. Thus, this law, enacted to combat corruption, is today confronting several serious problems and challenges. Therefore, if we wish to keep this

Act effective, it is imperative to address these issues and challenges with the utmost urgency; only then can we ensure citizens' rights while simultaneously maintaining transparency across various government departments.

7.4.2 Anna Hazare's Anti-Corruption Movement

In 2011, an extensive mass movement against corruption was launched. This movement was directed by the famous Gandhian leader and social reformer Anna Hazare (real name: Kisan Baburao Hazare). Anna Hazare was born on June 15, 1937, into a poor family in the village of Bhingar, located in the Ahmednagar district of Maharashtra. Anna joined the Indian Army as a truck driver in 1963 and also participated in the Indo-Pakistani War of 1965. After retirement from the army, he dedicated himself to social service and settled in a village named Ralegan Siddhi in the Ahmed Nagar district in Maharashtra, India. In those days, this village suffered from severe shortages of electricity and water, making life extremely difficult for its residents. Anna promoted water conservation, tree plantation, and organic farming in the village, and gradually, the villagers also began to extend their support and cooperation. To address the electricity shortage in the village, Anna facilitated the installation of solar energy systems and biogas plants. He donated his own land for the construction of a children's hostel in the village. Thus, through all these initiatives, he transformed this underprivileged village into a self-sufficient community.

In 1991, Anna launched an anti-corruption campaign against corrupt ministers within the Maharashtra government. During this campaign, he accused some ministers of amassing assets disproportionate to their income and organized a widespread movement, including a hunger strike, to demand their dismissal from office. Many people supported the movement, and ultimately, the Maharashtra government was forced to yield to Anna's agitation and accept the resignations of the corrupt ministers. Anna was also associated with the Right to Information movement, and in 2003, he again started a hunger strike for the same cause. This fast, which lasted several days, gathered widespread public support, and later that same year, the State Government was obliged to amend its Right to Information legislation. As we know, during those days, a nationwide mass movement against the Right to Information was carried out across the nation, culminating in the Government of India enacting the 'Right to Information Act, 2005', on October 12, 2005.

(i) The Lokpal Bill Movement and its outcome

The anti-corruption movement of2011 was a significant mass movement led by Anna Hazare. It was a time when new scandals were surfacing in the country almost every day, including the 2G spectrum scam, the Commonwealth Games scam, the Coal Block Allocation scam, the Adarsh Housing Society scam, and many others. All these scams had crippled the nation's economy. Certain ministers and high officials inside the government were involved in these scams, and the

public had become utterly fed up with them. The public wanted the establishment of an independent agency capable of taking impartial action against corruption involving ministers, politicians, and high officials holding high offices, as the existing institutions had proven completely ineffective in curbing these widespread scandals.

In these circumstances, people demanded the revival of the concept of the 'Lokpal' (Ombudsman), which had been conceived in the late 1960s. In 1968, a bill was introduced in the then Lok Sabha but failed to pass; subsequently, almost the same bill was introduced approximately eleven times at various intervals, yet it could not be enacted due to a lack of political will. The various scandals that occurred between 2004 and 2010 once again drew the public's attention toward the Lokpal Bill, under the leadership of Anna Hazare, to launch a massive mass movement. The principal objective of this movement was the enactment of the 'Jan Lokpal Bill' (Citizens' Ombudsman Bill), with the aim of bringing individuals holding high offices within the country under the investigative purview of the Lokpal, thereby curbing the rampant corruption plaguing the nation.

Thus, in 2011, under the leadership of Ana Hazare, thousands of people gathered at Delhi Ramlila Maidan to participate in this anti-corruption movement. Once again, using Gandhian methods, Anna initiated a protest to press his demand, specifically, the enactment of a robust Lokpal Bill, and commenced a fast unto death. This hunger strike, which lasted for 12 days, gathered widespread support from the people of the country; under the people's pressure, the then government was compelled to yield. Several prominent figures, including Arvind Kejriwal, Manish Sisodia, Kiran Bedi, Prashant Bhushan, and many others, played a decisive role in supporting Anna Hazare, and they also submitted a proposed draft of the 'Jan Lokpal Bill' to the central government for this purpose. Although the government initially did not show any interest in the matter and tried to curb the movement, later, under the pressure of widespread public support, the government led by Dr Manmohan Singh assured to pass the 'Jan Lokpal bill'. In 2013, the "Lokpal and Lokayukt Act, 2013" was passed, which was the culmination of this massive public movement. However, the "Lokpal and Lokayukt Act" enacted by the government proved to be extremely poor, a stark contrast to the proposed 'Jan Lokpal Bill'.

Under the "Lokpal and Lokayukt Act, 2013" passed by the government, the Lokpal cannot initiate direct action on corruption cases based solely on complaints filed by the general public. In matters involving Members of Parliament (MPs), ordinary citizens are required to submit their complaints to the Chairperson of the Rajya Sabha or the Speaker of the Lok Sabha.As for matters concerning members of the Cabinet, the final decision rests with the Prime Minister. This stands in direct opposition to the demands raised during the public movement, which had insisted that the Lokpal should not require permission from any authority to initiate an investigation. Thus, the "Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act" passed by the then government ultimately proved to be nothing more than a sham enacted in the name of the 'JanLokpal Bill'.

Conclusion

Anna Hazare's Lokpal movement was one of the significant movements in the history of Indian democracy. It gave national-level expression to public anger against corruption and demanded greater transparency and accountability in governance. Although the Jan Lokpal Bill was not passed in its original form, the movement compelled the government to introduce reforms, leading to the enactment of the "Lokpal and Lokayukt Act, 2013".

One of the greatest achievements of the movement was that it encouraged ordinary citizens to participate actively in democratic processes. Thus, the Lokpal movement was not only an anti-corruption campaign but also a symbol of democratic participation and civic consciousness.

7.4.3 Right to Vote/NOTA

In a democratic system, the 'right to vote'holds enormous significance. The right to vote is the basis of democracy, as it empowers people to elect the government according to their choice. In India, every citizen has the right to participate in this democratic process; furthermore, it is the duty of every citizen to exercise this right to strengthen the democratic framework.

Before 1947, India was under British colonial rule, and therefore, the democratic system of that period cannot be characterised as democratic. However, there is no doubt that during British administration, some important foundations of modern democracy – such as legislative institutions, elections, and political participation- began to develop in India. After independence, the framers of the constitution granted the right to vote to all citizens of the country, without any discrimination of caste, creed, race, religion, gender, education, income, etc. Article 326 of the Indian Constitution confers the right to vote upon every Indian citizen who is not disqualified under the provisions of the Indian Constitution or any other law. Therefore, every citizen who has attained the age of 18 years has the right to vote. Earlier, the minimum voting age in India was 21 years; later, in 1988, it was reduced from 21 to 18 years.

The Election Commission of India (ECI) is an independent constitutional body that is responsible for conducting free and fair elections in India. It was established in 1950 and is responsible for conducting elections to the Lok Sabha, Rajya Sabha, State Legislative Assemblies, and the offices of the President and Vice President. The ECI was established on 25 January 1950; therefore, 25 January is celebrated as the National Voters Day.

NOTA

The full form of 'NOTA' is 'None of the Above'; it is an option provided to voters by the Constitution of India. If voters feel that all representatives/candidates in their constituency (such as for Parliament, Legislative Assemblies, etc.) are ineligible, they can reject all candidates by using this option (NOTA). Before the implementation of NOTA, if voters did not cast a vote for any candidate, they were required to utilise Rule 49-O of the election rules. However, under this procedure, voters were compelled to reveal their identity. Therefore, to safeguard the privacy of

voters and their freedom of expression, an organisation named the 'People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL)' filed a petition in the Supreme Court. Consequently, in 2013, the Supreme Court directed the Election Commission of India (ECI) to make the NOTA option available in elections for the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies. Subsequently, in 2013, NOTA was utilised for the first time during the assembly elections held in Chhattisgarh, Delhi, Madhya Pradesh, Mizoram, and Rajasthan, thereby marking the beginning of the use of this option. Through this option, voters can participate in the democratic process and express their dissatisfaction with all the available candidates.

However, even if NOTA receives the highest number of votes in a particular constituency, the election is not considered invalid; instead, the candidate who secures the highest number of votes excluding NOTA is declared the winner. Therefore, this option can be regarded merely as a symbolic means for the public to express their discontent.

7.4.4 Linguistic agitation

India is a vast and diverse country in terms of its geographical area and population; it is also very rich in its linguistic and cultural heritage. The popular saying, "The taste of water changes every mile, and the dialect changes every four miles,"beautifully reflects the linguistic diversity in India. The Constitution of India recognised 22 languages under the 8th Schedule, which comprises the list of official languages of the country. In the original Constitution, only 14 languages were listed. However, many other regional languages and dialects, such as Garhwali, Kumauni, Rajasthani, Bhojpuri, and several others, continue to demand constitutional recognition.

Because of this linguistic diversity, language-related movements and agitations have emerged at different times in various parts of the country. These movements were closely connected with regional identity, cultural preservation, and democratic rights. India's multilingual character has also made the question of a single national language highly sensitive and complex. Consequently, even today, India does not have any officially declared national language, though Hindi and English continue to function as the principal official languages of the Union government.

Throughout India, two primary linguistic traditions have historically prevailed. One is Sanskrit, a language that was generally spoken across all of North India, dating back to the Vedic era, and which, to some extent, came to be spoken in South India as well. Almost all the languages of North India, including Hindi, Bengali, Marathi, Gujarati, Punjabi, Kashmiri, Odia, and Assamese, are believed to have originated from Sanskrit. Urdu, a language that emerged in the medieval period, also evolved through the synthesis of Persian and Arabic vocabulary within the framework of Hindi. In South India, Dravidian languages, such as Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, and Malayalam, have been spoken since ancient times. For various reasons, ranging from the assertion of cultural and regional identities or administrative convenience to, frequently, the

reorganisation of states on linguistic lines, linguistic movements have periodically taken place in India.

(ii) Major Linguistic Movements

During the British era, the use of Hindi gradually increased, especially from the latter half of the nineteenth century, and by the mid-twentieth century, it had become widely used in North India. Many famous writers and poets, such as Bhartendu Harishchandra, Mahavir Prasad Dwivedi, Maithili Sharan Gupt, and Munshi Premchand, played a significant role in the resurgence of the Hindi language. During the British rule, specifically under Lord Bentinck, local languages began to be used in administration and courts because Hindi was spoken by the population. English became the working language in the High Courts and higher government institutions. Earlier, Persian had become the administrative language during the Delhi Sultanate and Mughal periods. The Use of the Persian language became popular during the period of the Delhi Sultanate and the Mughal period. However, during the colonial rule, many people challenged the dominance of Urdu and Persian, because these languages were spoken by a limited section of society and were seen as imposed languages in the region.

Similarly, in the 1960s, large-scale protests erupted in Tamil Nadu against the imposition of Hindi Language. People in South India feared that designating Hindi as the official language would threaten regional languages and culture. As a result of these protests, the Central Government decided to continue the use of English alongside Hindi for official purposes.

(iii) Linguistic Movements for the Reorganisation of States on a Linguistic Basis

Although the demand for the reorganisation of states on a linguistic basis had emerged even during the colonial period, it assumed an intense form following independence. In 1952, Potti Sriramulu of Andhra Pradesh demanded a separate state for Telugu-speaking people; initially, this demand was rejected. Then, Sriramulu embarked on a fast unto death; he passed away after a hunger strike lasting approximately 58 days. His death triggered widespread violence and protests, compelling the Government of India to create the first state based on linguistic lines, Andhra Pradesh, in October 1953. In 1956, a three-member commission was constituted to address the demand for the reorganisation of the state on a linguistic basis. Fazal Ali served as the Chairman, while Pandit Hridayanatha Kunjaru and Sardar K. M. Pannikkar served as its members.

Later on, Marathi-speaking people began demanding a separate region for themselves- ‘Maharashtra’, while Gujarati-speaking people demanded a separate state for themselves, Gujarat; consequently, in 1961, Bombay was divided into the two states of Gujarat and Maharashtra. Similarly, Nagaland was created in 1962, and Haryana was carved out of Punjab in 1966. Continuing this process, several other states were formed in 2000- including Uttaranchal (now Uttarakhand) from Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand from Bihar, and Chhattisgarh from Madhya

Pradesh. All these states were created only after various mass movements. Currently, India comprises 28 states and 8 Union territories.

Conclusion

Thus, it can be concluded that, alongside other factors, language emerged as a primary catalyst for the creation of various states. And linguistic agitations in India were not merely language-based protests; they were movements connected with identity, dignity, equality, and democratic rights. At the same time, they also highlighted the challenge of maintaining national unity while respecting regional aspirations. Although the formation of states driven by linguistic movements was not inherently wrong, these very movements have, in some measure, prevented us from reaching a consensus on designating a single official language for the country, even after nearly 80 years of independence. While all regional languages deserve respect, and appropriate efforts must be undertaken for their development and propagation, it is equally imperative to ensure that, in doing so, we do not inadvertently create obstacles for the nation on linguistic grounds.

7.5 Summary

Political movements play an important role in protecting human rights, consolidating democracy, and ensuring accountability in society. In India, several movements related to transparency, anti-corruption, voting rights, and linguistic identity have significantly influenced democratic development and people's awareness.

The Right to Information (RTI) Movement demanded transparency in governance and led to the enactment of the RTI Act, 2005, which empowered citizens to question government authorities and strengthened democratic participation.

Another important movement was Anna’s anti-corruption movement of 2011. This movement raised a strong voice against corruption and demanded the enactment of a strong Jan Lokpal Bill to combat corruption. The movement gained massive support from the public and created nationwide awareness for the removal of corruption.

The Right to vote is one of the most important democratic rights in India. The introduction of NOTA (None of the Above) in 2013 empowered voters to reject all contestants if they did not find any of them suitable. This right strengthened the democratic participation and freedom of expression.

Similarly, linguistic agitations in India emerged to save regional languages, cultural identity, and linguistic rights. These movements influenced India’s language policy and promoted cultural diversity. Together, these movements demonstrate the importance of people’s participation, democratic agitation, transparency, equality, and cultural rights in the protection of human rights in India.

7.6 Glossary

1. **Anti-Corruption Movement:** A peaceful protest against corruption aimed at promoting honesty and accountability in governance.
2. **Constitutional Rights:** Rights guaranteed and protected by the Constitution.
3. **Cultural Identity:** A sense of belonging to a particular culture, language, or tradition.
4. **Democracy:** A system of government in which people elect their representatives through voting.
5. **Freedom of Expression:** The right to express opinions, ideas, and beliefs freely.
6. **Human Rights :** Basic rights and freedoms that belong to every individual, such as equality, freedom, justice, and dignity.
7. **Jan Lokpal Bill:** A proposed anti-corruption bill demands an independent institution to investigate corruption cases.
8. **Lokpal:** An anti-corruption ombudsman at the central level to investigate complaints against officials.
9. **Lokayukta:** A state-level anti-corruption authority similar to Lokpal.
10. **Political Movements:** A collective effort by people to bring political or social change through protests, campaigns, or public participation.
11. **Right to Information (RTI):** A legal right that allows citizens to obtain information from public authorities to ensure transparency and accountability.
12. **NOTA (None of the Above):** An option in the election process allowing voters to reject all contesting candidates.
13. **Linguistic Agitation:** Movements based on language identity and demands for linguistic recognition or rights.
14. **Universal Adult Franchise:** The right of all adult citizens to vote irrespective of caste, creed, colour, religion, gender, or wealth.

7.7 SAQs (Short Answers Questions)

Q1. What is the Right to Information (RTI) Movement?

Q2. What was the main objective of Anna Hazare's Anti-Corruption Movement?

Q3. Explain the term 'NOTA' in brief.

Q4. What is the significance of the States Reorganisation Act, 1956?

Q5. What do you mean by the Lokpal Bill?

7.8 True/ False

Q1. The Right to Information Act was passed in 2010. (False)

Q2. The Right to Information Movement aimed to increase transparency and accountability in governance. (True)

Q3.NOTA allows voters to reject all contesting candidates. (True)

Q4. The State Reorganisation Act was passed in 1956. (True)

Q5. Human rights movements in India have no connection with democracy. (False)

7.9 Terminal/ Model Questions

Q1. Discuss the origin, development, and significance of the Right to Information movement in India.

Q2. Explain the major features and impact of Anna Hazare's Anti-Corruption Movement of 2011.

Q3. Explain the significance of the Right to Vote in Indian Democracy. How does it strengthen human rights?

Q4. What is NOTA? Discuss its importance and limitations in the Indian electoral system.

Q5. Analyse the relationship between political movements and human rights in contemporary India.

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Unit- 8

DIGITAL ACTIVISM AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Unit Structure

8.1 Introduction

8.2 Objectives

8.3 Meaning and Scope of Digital Activism

8.3.1 The Three Main Discussions of Digital Activism

8.3.2. Digital Activism vs. Traditional Activism:

8.3.3. Important Aspects of Digital Activism

8.3.4. Forms of Digital Activism:

8.4. Role of Social Media in Mobilization

8.4.1 The Four Pillars of Social Media Mobilization

8.5 Role of Hashtag in Digital Activism

8.5.1 Hashtag Serves Five Primary Roles

8.6 Global Awareness Through Digital Activism

8.6.1 Significant Examples of Global Awareness

8.7 Challenge of Digital Activism

8.8 The Impact of Digital Activism on Human Rights

8.8.1 Positive Impacts

8.8.2 Negative Impacts

8.9 Summary

8.10 Glossary

8.11 SAQs (Short Answer Questions)

8.12 True/ False

8.13 Terminal/ Modal Questions

8.14 References

8.15 Suggested Readings

8.1. Introduction

In modern times, digital technology and the internet have brought unprecedented changes to society. Today, we live in an era where any common citizen can launch a major social movement with the help of a mobile phone and the internet. Before the advent of digital activism, exposing crimes or injustices required large social organizations, prominent leaders, and extensive resources. The digital revolution has completely changed this system. Now, whether it is a woman from a remote village or an ordinary person, they can reach the entire world through social media as needed. Today, people are no longer limited to just the events happening around them; They can raise their voices on social change, reforms, and issues concerning humanity and human rights by connecting globally through digital media. This process is known as "digital activism". Therefore, we can say that digital activism means using the internet, social media, mobile applications, and other digital platforms to raise awareness about social, political, and human rights issues, organize people, and bring about change in the system.

Understanding digital activism is particularly important from the perspective of human rights protection, as it has become an extremely important medium for civic participation in today's society. It is not limited to online activities alone; Rather, it is a hybrid of both online and offline activities, as we often see movements that start on social media sometimes take the form of real-life demonstrations or mass movements.

Social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram have provided a convenient way for people to connect and express their opinions. The role of social media is no longer limited to sharing information; it has become a focal point for people to unite. Social media platforms have bridged geographical distances between people, enabling global support to be mobilized in moments against human rights violations occurring anywhere in the world. Digital platforms have become a voice for victims of issues where traditional media remains silent or governments pressure them to conceal injustice. Today, online campaigns and hashtags have become powerful tools, such as #Me-too and # and movements such as Black Lives Matter. This process plays a crucial role in shaping public opinion, as digital platforms have the capacity to elevate local issues to a global stage. Thus, digital activism increases global awareness and plays a significant role in creating pressure for policy change on an international level.

However, whilst digital activism has many positive aspects, it is also accompanied by serious challenges. On many occasions, social media can also spread misinformation and disinformation, which can confuse people and undermine the credibility of movements. Furthermore, it often comes to light that governments or large technology companies can also monitor people's online activities, such as online posts, messages, and locations, leading to issues like surveillance and data control. When people realize that their activities are being monitored, they may be afraid to

express their thoughts openly. This undermines their freedom of expression and can reduce the effectiveness of digital activism.

On many occasions, in special circumstances, governments have to take measures such as shutting down the internet, controlling social media or removing certain content, which can suppress public voices. Such incidents, along with surveillance and data control, restrict digital freedom and pose a challenge to human rights.

8.2. Objectives:

- Students who complete this unit will be capable of:
- Understand the concept of digital activism and what it entails.
- Understand the role of social media in mobilization.
- Analyse the importance of online campaigns and hashtags.
- Understand global awareness through digital activism.
- Identify obstacles such as disinformation and surveillance.
- Examine the impact of digital activism on human rights.

8.3. Meaning and Scope of Digital Activism

According to Veigh (2003), digital activism is the use of digital media and online platforms to bring about social, political or economic change. Its purpose is to empower individuals and communities, facilitate the rapid dissemination of information, build online communities and organise collective action across geographical boundaries.

Thus, digital activism is a process in which digital media is used to bring about social, political, and economic change. It is a modern extension of traditional civic activism. Its purpose is to empower individuals and communities, facilitate the dissemination of information, and promote the participation of online communities by removing the barrier of geographical boundaries for organisations.

Digital activism is also known as cyber-activism or online activism, in which citizens leverage online platforms to raise their voices, debate, shape public opinion, and organise protests. This digital activism encompasses filing online e-petitions, running blog and social media campaigns to raise awareness, and even engaging in more radical activities, such as hacktivism.

8.3.1 The Three Main Dimensions of Digital Activism:

First- Awareness and Advocacy: Rapidly spreading information and raising awareness so that as many people as possible can gain a deeper understanding of the issue and become sensitized to it.

Second- Organisation and Mobilisation: Building an online community and inspiring people to work together.

Third- Direct Action: Applying direct pressure on the system through cyber-protests, online petitions, and hacktivism, compelling it to effect change.

8.3.2. Digital Activism vs. Traditional Activism:

It is important to understand that digital activism does not oppose traditional movements but rather works alongside them. Both seek to address human rights and socio-political issues, increase awareness, and effect good change; yet, their approaches, media, and effects are different.

In order to support people's demands, traditional activism typically necessitates physical presence, long-term organisational structures, carefully considered methods, and well-defined leadership arrangements. On the other hand, digital activism uses social media and the internet to make it simple for people to voice their thoughts and take part in different campaigns from the comfort of their own homes.

A key feature of traditional activism is the direct participation of people, which makes movements more influential and visible; for example, large-scale demonstrations immediately attract the attention of the government, the administration and the media. Howard and Hussein (2013) and Tufekci (2017) have emphasized that social media has profoundly transformed the nature of political movements. In contrast, issues raised through digital activism often remain confined primarily to online platforms.

Nevertheless, the most defining characteristics of digital activism are its rapid pace and global reach; any issue can quickly go viral, garnering support at national and international levels. In contrast, the dissemination of information in traditional activism is relatively slow and is often confined to the local or national level.

8.3.3. Important Aspects of Digital Activism

- Global Reach: Any local issue can become a topic of discussion on a global scale.
- Quick Speed: In a matter of seconds, millions of people can access information.
- Low Cost: Only a digital device and an internet connection are required.
- Inclusivity: Opportunities for participation are open to all sections of society.
- Many-to-Many Communication: It is not one-way communication; every individual is both a source and a recipient of information.
- Decentralised Leadership: There is no single central leader; instead, each participant acts as a leader themselves.

8.3.4. Forms of Digital Activism:

Digital activism manifests itself in many forms and contributes to social change in various ways. For example, online petitions are an important medium through which millions of people sign in support of a particular demand, thereby putting pressure on the government. Additionally, social media campaigns play a key role in popularising an issue on platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Through blogging, in-depth analysis, and personal experiences are shared, which raises awareness among people and allows them to understand a subject more deeply. Similarly, hashtag movements are a significant form of digital activism, through which a digital movement is organised around a particular hashtag. In this process, people connect with one another based on a common theme and collectively raise their voices.

Example: Digital Activism in India

#NirbhayaCase became popular on social media after the Nirbhaya incident in 2012. Strict anti-rape legislation was eventually passed in Parliament after millions of people signed online petitions and protested in the streets. This is the most significant example of traditional and internet activism in India.

8.4. Role of Social Media in Mobilization

Social media has emerged as an extremely important and influential tool for digital activism. Its most prominent feature is its capacity for instant communication, which makes it highly effective. It is such a powerful medium through which people can be organised very quickly organise. In the present day, platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube have become not merely tools for communication, but active forums for social and political movements.

We can better understand the potential of social media through Manuel Castells' (2015) concept of the ‘network society’. According to Castells, information and technology have fundamentally transformed the structure of modern society. Today's society is network-based, where the internet and social media have connected people into a vast network. People use networking to voice their opinions on a variety of topics and to encourage others to engage. This technique encourages people to actively participate and make important contributions rather than simply receiving information.

Thus, social media is vital to the coordination of movements and the spread of information. People can use it to arrange online campaigns, express their discontent, and organise protests, as

well as get information about other events. This demonstrates the democratic change of information and its quick distribution.

Social media has transformed into a digital public space in which geographical boundaries are nearly eliminated. This is especially important for populations whose voices are often ignored in the mainstream media. During this social mobilisation process, people from various locations form a collective identity based on similar interests and concerns.

Crucially, social media has significantly reduced the cost of involvement. Physical presence is no longer required to engage with a modern issue; individuals can also participate effectively through digital means, such as signing an online petition or sharing their thoughts.

8.4.1. The Four Pillars of Social Media Mobilization

(I) Communication:

The most important role of social media is observed in the world of communication; it has completely transformed the communication process. Previously, the flow of information was one way —for instance, from newspapers to the public, or from television to viewers. Now, however, it has evolved into a two-way and "many-to-many" form of communication, wherein every individual acts as both a sender and a receiver of information. Social media today plays a crucial role in spreading awareness about any social problem, political issue, environmental crisis, or human rights violation through posts, videos, and live streams. Additionally, social media provides alternative communication channels through which people can express their independent opinions apart from the mainstream media. This becomes especially important in societies where the mainstream media is under government control. Thus, it creates a fast and effective communication process that encourages people to think, react, and actively engage on various issues. Therefore, it can be said that social media has made communication faster, more democratic, and more influential.

Example: Egypt's Arab Spring (2011)

During the 2011 Egyptian Revolution, protesters demanding the resignation of President Hosni Mubarak in Egypt made extensive use of social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. Digital movements, viral videos, and hashtags speedily influenced public opinion and openly tested government censorship (Howard and Hussein, 2013).

(II)Networking

Social media is not only a means of sharing information; it is also a powerful tool for connecting people and building a strong network. It plays a significant role in the development of networks worldwide. Previously, movements were narrowed to the local level, but now, through digital platforms, people from various countries can easily connect. Activists can share their ideas on

the same platform, nurturing mutual understanding and cooperation. As a result, a sense of unity is reinforced across the globe, and people begin to work together towards a common goal.

According to Loader et al. (2014), digital networking fosters a sense of common identity and collectivism among people. This means that people from many countries might work together to campaign for a specific cause. For example, people from all over the world come together to discuss and express support for topics like #Climate Change or #Human Rights.

Networking is crucial because it allows people to share resources and information more easily. Activists exchange experiences, learn new techniques from one another, and build their movements. This process not only broadens movements but also improves their organization, effectiveness, and long-term viability.

(III) Organisation:

Movement planning is now easier and more adaptable because of social media. As previously said, people may now easily organise campaigns through digital means, whereas previous movements required a significant amount of strategy, money, and leadership.

W. Lance Bennett and Alexandra Segerberg (2012) have termed this the “logic of connective action”—where individuals, without any rigid organisational framework, become part of a larger movement through their personal expression.

The "bottom-up" approach has also been reinforced by digital channels. Digital movements are less dependent on a big organization or a well-known leader than conventional movements, which needed centralised leadership and hierarchical membership structures. Anyone can now start on a modest scale and grow to be an important, active participant in a larger movement. Consequently, the organization becomes decentralized; rather than revolving around a single central hub, the movement is propelled forward through the collective efforts of numerous interconnected nodes.

Through social media, people determine the dates and times for protests, conduct online meetings and discussions, formulate strategies, utilize crowd funding to raise funds, and coordinate among groups across various cities. For instance, in several major movements—such as the Arab Spring—social media played a pivotal role in mobilizing people.

Example: them #MeToo Movement (2017)

In just one day, over 4.7 million people joined the #MeToo campaign in 2017 when Alyssa Milano debuted the hashtag on Twitter. Without a central organization, this movement expanded all across the world. As a result, anti-sexual harassment legislation underwent substantial changes in numerous nations.

(IV)Participation:

Social media has rendered people's social and political participation significantly easier, more accessible, and more expansive. Previously, participating in movements depended on factors such as education, economic status, and access to resources; however, people can now register their participation digitally from the comfort of their own homes.

Participation occurs at several levels. The first level is "Basic Participation"—liking, sharing, and commenting. The second level is 'Active Participation' – where people create posts or videos and use hashtags. The third level is 'Leadership Participation', in which an individual leads online campaigns and inspires others.

However, Evgeny Morozov (2011) has warned, through the concept of 'slacktivism' or 'clicktivism,' that people often limit themselves to simply liking and sharing and fall short of taking real, concrete action.

However, because it allows an increasing number of individuals to voice their thoughts, this process of involvement improves democracy. Even though some academics see it as "clicktivism," where involvement is limited to online activities, it nevertheless contributes significantly to awareness-raising.

8.5. Role of Hashtag in Activism

In the world of digital activism, the hashtag has emerged as an extremely important and influential tool. It is a special type of keyword preceded by the '#' symbol.

It functions as a digital label and is more than just a word. People may access and comprehend information about a topic more easily when they use a hashtag in their post since it links to other posts on the same subject.

8.5.1. Hashtags serve five primary roles:

(I). Rapid Spread of Messages

The ability of hashtags to spread any message at a very quick speed is their biggest benefit. When a large number of users use the same hashtag, thousands or even hundreds of thousands of postings are linked together in a digital network.

According to Manuel Castells (2015), this 'viral communication' is capable of generating rapid awareness and response in society. As a result, any problem can quickly become 'viral.' When people discuss a social injustice occurrence using a common hashtag, for instance, the issue quickly spreads to a larger audience and many people start interacting with it.

As a result, digital platforms not only make it easier for knowledge to spread quickly but also motivate people to actively participate and respond right away. Thus, hashtags provide momentum to any movement.

(II). Creating Visibility and Trends

Hashtags provide increased visibility to any issue. When a hashtag is used extensively, it begins "trending" on social media. To be "trending" signifies that the subject is currently the most widely discussed topic during that specific period.

When a hashtag trends, three significant events typically occur: First—more people view and engage with the subject; Second—the media begins to cover the story, thereby reaching an even wider audience; Third—the attention of the government and policymakers is drawn to the issue, compelling them to respond. Thus, hashtags function not merely as a medium for information but also as an "Agenda-Setting Tool."

In this way, hashtags can transform a minor issue into a major and significant one. For example, local incidents are frequently elevated to the status of national or international issues through the use of hashtags.

(III). Connecting People Globally

Hashtags serve to connect people on a shared platform. People from different countries, linguistic backgrounds and cultures can connect with one another and express their views through a single hashtag.

Globally, this promotes a feeling of harmony and shared identity. This technique is consistent with Jürgen Habermas's concept of the ‘public sphere,’ which is a venue where people can freely and equally discuss social and political issues. This public sphere now has a digital and worldwide form thanks to social media.

By connecting people, digital platforms foster collaboration and shared action. Thus, hashtags serve not only as a means of connecting people but also as a way to organise them towards a public purpose.

(IV). Giving Identity to Movements

Hashtags give any movement a distinct identity. When a movement is linked to a particular hashtag, people may quickly identify it and build a distinct mental image of it.

As a result, a hashtag serves as a symbol, giving the movement as a whole a name and identity. People will find it easier to understand and connect to the movement as an outcome.

Furthermore, hashtags are important for maintaining the continuity of a movement because users can use the same hashtag to revisit the topic on occasion.

(V). Shaping Public Opinion and Exerting Policy Pressure:

Hashtag campaigns don't just raise awareness; they also shape public opinion and apply pressure to governments and institutions to implement policy changes. When millions of people unite around a demand, it becomes very difficult for the political system to ignore it.This process helps to give any social or political issue widespread recognition and to unite people.

For example, if someone uses hashtags such as #Education or #Human Rights, all posts related to that topic begin to appear in one organised place. In this way, hashtags play a crucial role in organising social media content and categorising information into various categories.

The most prominent feature of hashtags is that they help to disseminate any message extremely quickly. When a hashtag related to a particular issue starts to trend, it reaches millions of people and attracts the attention of both the media and the government. Thus, Hashtags not only provide any activist movement with widespread visibility but also give it a distinctive identity. For example, in various social movements, people have effectively used hashtags to share their personal experiences and garner broad public support.

Furthermore, hashtags serve to connect people on a shared platform. People from different locations express their views and forge a collective identity through a single hashtag. According to W. Lance Bennett and Alexandra Segerberg (2012), hashtags are a highly potent medium for 'connective action,' transforming individual expression into collective mobilisation.

A powerful social voice is shaped when millions of people use the same hashtag to convey their personal narratives. Thus, hashtags are not simply a medium for disseminating information, but also an effective tool for organising people around a common purpose.

One major aspect of hashtag activism is that it raises awareness of topics that may not otherwise receive adequate attention or coverage in the mainstream media. Ordinary people can utilise this platform to advocate for social justice and express themselves on a global scale.

However, it also has its limitations—for instance, people sometimes confine themselves solely to online support, a phenomenon known as "clicktivism." Nevertheless, the hashtag is an effective tool for contemporary digital activism that is essential for increasing awareness, fostering connections, and igniting social change.

Hashtag	**Year**	**Origen of Country**	**Issue**	**Result**
				Harvey Weinstein

#MeToo	2017	USA → Global	Sexual Harassment	convicted; Legal reforms
#BlackLivesMatter	2013/2020	USA	Racial Justice	Police reform policies; Global solidarity
#NirbhayaCase	2012	India	Anti-Rape	Criminal Law Amendment Act 2013
#FarmersProtest	2020-21	India	India Farm Laws	Repeal of the three laws
#ArabSpring	2010-12	Middle East	Anti-Dictatorship	Change of power in Tunisia and Egypt
#FridaysForFuture	2018	Sweden → Global	Climate Crisis	Movements in 150+ countries
#EndSARS	2020	Nigeria	Police Brutality	SARS Unit Disbanded

8.6 Global Awareness Through Digital Activism

In today's world, digital activism has almost removed geographical boundaries. Previously, social or political events occurring in a particular country or region were confined to that area; But now, through the internet and social media, these events spread instantly on a global scale. Digital platforms have transformed the world into a 'global village,' where an issue originating in one place can easily reach other parts of the world. Thus, digital activism plays a significant role in raising global awareness.

According to Loader et al. (2014), digital platforms have transformed the flow of information from 'top-down' model to a 'bottom-up' model. Previously, deciding which news was important was in the hands of governments and major media organisations, but now ordinary citizens are also playing an active role in this process. A mobile video recorded by an ordinary person often goes viral even faster than a national news report.

The primary way digital activism generates awareness is through the rapid dissemination of information. Via social media, details of any event, injustice, or issue can spread across the globe in a matter of moments. People share information through posts, videos, live streams, and news

links, enabling more and more people to become aware of the issue. This rapid communication process encourages people to respond directly and engage in discussion.

Organising global support for regional problems is another important component. Digital platforms give people all over the world the chance to speak out in favour of a cause when a social issue or human rights violation takes place in a nation. This gives the issue global recognition and increases pressure on the relevant governments or organisations to take action. Various studies make it clear that digital activism strengthens a sense of collective unity and shared responsibility by connecting people.

The third important aspect is the ability to attract media attention. When an issue becomes a subject of widespread discussion or starts to 'trend' on social media, the mainstream media also begins to focus on it. This ensures that more people are aware of the problem and puts more pressure on the government to find a solution. Governments are frequently forced to alter policy or take decisive action as a result of the issues brought up on social media.

People from all around the world raise their voices in favour of the problem when, for example, films or information regarding human rights violations in a nation are published on social media. Furthermore, international organisations, the media, and civil society groups also become involved in this process, advancing global support to the issue and firming up the demand for justice.

Thus, digital activism is not just a medium for spreading information, but has emerged as an effective tool for transforming local problems into global issues and accelerating the process of social change.

8.6.1. Significant Examples of Global Awareness

- Rohingya genocide (Myanmar): The United Nations called for action after images and videos posted on social media attracted the attention of the global community.
- Mahsa Amini protests (Iran, 2022): In support of women's rights, the #Mahsa Amini hashtag became viral, sparking rallies all around the world.
- Hong Kong protests: Through social media sites like Telegram and Twitter, activists garnered support from around the world and made their cause well-known.
- Indian farmers' protest (India, 2020–21): #Farmers Protest became a global trend, receiving praise and reactions from international leaders and organisations.

8.7. Challenge of Digital Activism

Digital activism has created new opportunities for social and political change, but it also presents several important obstacles. These difficulties may lessen its influence and occasionally have adverse effects. Thus, it is just as important to comprehend these difficulties as it is to acknowledge their possible advantages.

(I)Misinformation and Disinformation

Misinformation (i.e. false information spread unintentionally) and disinformation (deliberately spread misleading information) pose serious challenges to digital activism. Information on social media spreads at an extremely rapid pace, but there is no guarantee that everything shared is true. Often, people share news without verification, which fuels the spread of ‘fake news.’

Misleading information on social media can influence people's thinking and decision-making processes, swaying their opinions in the wrong direction. For example, misleading information about a specific movement might cause confusion and damage trust in that movement.

Thus, misinformation and disinformation pose a severe danger to the credibility of digital action since they not only weaken genuine causes but also cause uncertainty and division in society.

(II)Surveillance

A significant challenge facing digital activism is surveillance—that is, the continuous monitoring of online activities. Governments and various organisations often keep an eye on people's activities on the internet and social media platforms.

Many governments attempt to limit free expression by monitoring and controlling the internet. This not only violates people's privacy but also directly threatens their freedom of expression. For instance, in some places, activists face legal action or punishment solely for their online posts. Consequently, an atmosphere of fear deters people from expressing their views openly.

Thus, surveillance arises as a significant barrier to digital activism, potentially limiting free and effective participation.

(III)Political Polarization and Echo Chambers:

In his book #Republic, Cass Sunstein (2018) explains the concepts of ‘echo chambers’ and ‘filter bubbles’ in detail. Echo chambers are online environments in which people are essentially exposed to perspectives and information that support their pre-existing ideas. Filter bubbles, on the other hand, occur when social media algorithms curate material based on user preferences.

Pablo Barberá A 2015 study by Pablo Barberá on Twitter users uncovered that discourse between people with different political ideologies was very limited—most discussions took place within like-minded groups. This advises that social media often promotes polarisation rather than open and diverse discussion.

(IV) Slacktivism / Clicktivism

Slacktivism is a situation in which people show their support primarily online but do not conduct any meaningful actions in real life. For example, it is simple to ‘like’ or ‘share’ a post, whereas working for a cause on the ground is relatively more challenging.

This type of participation is considered ‘low-effort participation,’ which has limited impact. As a result, a movement may remain limited to the online domain, failing to effect genuine societal change.

Although slacktivism can be useful for raising awareness, limiting people's engagement to the digital domain reduces the movement's overall effectiveness.

(V). Mind Influencers / Alters

In today's environment, digital platforms and social media are highly influential in shaping people's attitudes. They are known as 'mind influencers' because of their ability to impact people's thinking, opinions, and decision-making processes. The constant flow of information, posts, videos, and popular topics on social media has a significant impact on an individual's psychological state. Although this influence is often positive—such as raising awareness of social issues—it can also be negative, particularly when misleading or one-sided information steers people's thinking in the wrong direction.

Various parties and institutions use digital media to communicate messages and content aimed at influencing public opinion. This technique has the potential to change people's behaviour and social views. For example, if a person is constantly exposed to the same type of information about a specific political issue, their thinking gradually begins to align with that viewpoint.

Thus, social media has become more than just a source of information; it has evolved into a powerful medium that forms people's thoughts and perspectives.

(VI) . Cyber bullying / Trolling

Cyber bullying and trolling have developed as major issues in the digital world, particularly on social media platforms. Cyber bullying is the enduring harassment, humiliation, or threatening of someone online, while trolling is the deliberate provoking, mocking, or making unfavourable comments about someone.

With greater freedom of expression on social media, there has been an increase in such negative activities, which have a significant influence on an individual's mental health and self-esteem.

People frequently create fake identities to harass others, making it harder to identify those responsible.

Cyber bullying has an especially negative impact on children and adolescents, who may experience mental stress, anxiety, and depression. Furthermore, it inhibits freedom of expression, because people may be afraid to voice their thoughts publicly.

Thus, cyber bullying and trolling provide a substantial barrier to digital activism and the beneficial use of social media—a challenge that must be addressed by increased awareness, digital ethics, and effective legislation.

8.8 The Impact of Digital Activism On Human Rights

Digital activism has caused substantial developments in the field of human rights. It has evolved as a strong platform for exposing human rights breaches while also strengthening the fight for justice and equality by bringing people together. However, its impact is not limited to the beneficial; certain negative elements emerge.

8.8.1. Positive Impacts

(I). Increased Accountability:

The most major benefit of digital activism is improved accountability. When information concerning human rights breaches is made public via social media, governments and groups face increased pressure to act. Citizens can use digital channels to demand answers from the government and hold politicians accountable.

(II). Legal Reforms:

Digital activism also promotes legal reform. When an idea receives overwhelming public support, governments are forced to change existing laws. Numerous social movements have effectively used online campaigns to reform policies and laws.

(III). A Voice for Marginalised Groups:

Another significant benefit is that it allows underprivileged and vulnerable parts of society to have their say. Those whose voices have previously gone unheard in society or by the mainstream media can now share their stories and challenges via digital platforms. This encourages social fairness and equality.

(IV). Immediate Humanitarian Aid:

Furthermore, internet activism plays an important role in giving instant humanitarian relief in emergency situations. During a tragedy or crisis, people can use social media to rapidly request help and receive it. Thus, internet platforms provide a lifeline during times of distress.

8.8.2. Negative Impacts

(I). Promotion of violence against minorities:

Although digital activism has many benefits, there are some drawbacks as well. Its occasional use to instigate violence against minority groups is cause for great worry. False or controversial information about societal tensions and conflicts might spread as a result of social media's capacity to instigate violent behaviour.

(II). Threat to Activists' Safety:

Another substantial negative impact is perceived as a threat to the safety of activists. In many nations, governments or powerful groups monitor digital activists' actions and try to frighten them. This impacts both their liberty and their safety. In some circumstances, a person risks legal action or persecution as a result of their online activity.

(III).Compassion Fatigue:

Another significant issue is 'compassion fatigue.' When people are constantly exposed to societal issues and tragic incidents on social media, their sensitivity quickly declines. As a result, their

ability to empathize and react is diminished, potentially leading to a decline in genuine support and help.

As a result, internet activism is an excellent tool for safeguarding and improving human rights; it also increases accountability, promotes legislative changes, and provides a voice for socially excluded groups. However, it has certain bad consequences, including the promotion of violence, a threat to activists' safety, and a decrease in empathy.

As a result, it is critical that digital activism be practiced with accountability and ethics in order to optimize its beneficial impacts while minimizing its negative implications.

8.9. Summary

This chapter clearly highlights the decisive role of digital activism in protecting human rights in the current digital age. It demonstrates how the internet, social media and modern digital technologies have completely transformed the traditional forms of social and political activism. Whereas previously the struggle for human rights was largely confined to grassroots movements, digital platforms have now provided ordinary people with an unprecedented opportunity to amplify their voices on a global scale. In this way, digital activism has made public participation more accessible, rapid and potent.

This chapter places special emphasis on the distinctive role of social media. Social media is not only a medium for the rapid dissemination of information, but it is also a powerful tool for organising the public, which inspires active participation in movements. Through it, 'many-to-many communication' has been made possible, in which every individual has become not just a recipient of information, but its creator as well. The use of the hashtag (#) has given movements a new identity and ideological direction, making it simple to turn any local issue into part of a global discourse.

This chapter highlights the contribution of digital activism to creating “many-to-many communication. Digital platforms have effectively eliminated geographical boundaries, making it possible for an issue from a single location to become part of a global conversation.

This text clearly presents the role of digital activism in the context of human rights in the current digital age. It explains how the internet, social media and other digital technologies have transformed the nature of social and political activism. Whereas previously the struggle for human rights was largely confined to street-based movements, digital platforms have now provided people with the opportunity to raise their voices on a much wider scale. In this way, digital activism has made participation simpler, faster and more effective.

The role of social media is particularly highlighted. Social media is not only a medium for the rapid dissemination of information, but it is also a powerful tool for connecting and organising people, thereby promoting active participation in movements. Through the concept of “many-to-many communication”, each individual becomes not just a consumer of information, but also a

creator. The use of hashtags has given movements a new identity and direction, enabling any issue to be spread rapidly on a global scale.

Furthermore, the process by which digital activism promotes global awareness is also explained. Digital platforms have effectively reduced geographical boundaries, enabling an issue originating in one location to become a subject of worldwide discussion. This brings international support to local issues and increases pressure on governments and organisations to take action.

Presenting a balanced perspective, it also highlights the negative aspects of digital activism. Challenges such as misinformation, surveillance, cyber bullying, slacktivism and the digital divide affect its effectiveness and often pose risks to human rights. For example, misleading information can exacerbate social tensions, while excessive surveillance can limit freedom of expression.

Overall, it is clear that digital activism is a powerful means of protecting and promoting human rights. However, its success depends on how responsibly and ethically it is used. If its positive aspects are strengthened and its challenges effectively addressed, it can prove extremely effective in reinforcing democratic values and establishing social justice.

8.10. Glossary

Digital Activism: The use of the internet and social media to promote social, political, or human rights causes and bring about change.

Social Media: Online platforms (such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram) where people share information and connect with others.

Hashtag (#): A keyword preceded by the "#" symbol used to categorize and link posts related to a specific topic.

Online Petition: A digital method of collecting signatures to support a particular cause or demand.

Viral Communication: The rapid spread of information to a large number of people in a short time.

Connective Action: A form of participation where individuals join movements through personal expression without a rigid organizational structure.

Public Sphere: A space where individuals openly discuss social and political issues.

Misinformation: False or inaccurate information spread unintentionally.

Disinformation: Deliberately false or misleading information spread with intent.

Surveillance: Monitoring of individuals' online activities by governments or organizations.

Cyberbullying: Repeated harassment, humiliation, or threats directed at someone through online platforms.

Trolling: Posting provocative or offensive comments online to upset or provoke others.

Slacktivism: Showing support for a cause through low-effort online actions like likes or shares, without real-world involvement.

Filter Bubble: A situation where algorithms show users content based on their preferences, limiting exposure to diverse viewpoints.

Compassion Fatigue: A decrease in empathy due to constant exposure to distressing news and events.

Digital Divide: The gap between those who have access to digital technologies and those who do not.

Global Awareness: The spread of knowledge and understanding of issues at a worldwide level.

Human Rights: Basic rights and freedoms that belong to every individual, such as equality, dignity, and freedom.

8.11 SAQs (Short Answer Questions)

1. What is digital activism, and how does it differ from traditional activism?
2. How do hashtags help in organizing digital movements?
3. What is the role of social media in spreading awareness about human rights issues?
4. Explain the concept of "connective action."
5. What is meant by "compassion fatigue" in the context of digital activism?

8.12 True/ False

1. Digital activism only works at the local level. — **False**
2. Hashtags help in categorizing and connecting posts on social media. — **True**
3. Slacktivism involves strong offline participation. — **False**
4. Social media can increase global awareness about social issues. — **True**
5. Compassion fatigue increases sensitivity towards social problems. — **False**

8.13. Terminal/ Model Question

1. Discuss the role of digital activism in promoting human rights in the modern world.
2. Analyse the advantages and challenges of digital activism with suitable examples.
3. Explain how social media acts as a powerful tool for mobilization and global awareness.
4. Critically examine the impact of misinformation and surveillance on digital activism.
5. Evaluate the positive and negative effects of digital activism on society.

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Unit - 9

ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETIES

Unit Structure

9.1 Introduction

9.2 Objectives

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9.1. Introduction

Civil society is that part of society which is separate from the state (government) and the market (business/private sector). It includes organisations, groups, and institutions that highlight people's problems, needs, and interests, such as non-governmental organisations, social movements, self-help groups, religious institutions, and other various social organisations.

Therefore, civil society is a platform where people come together to discuss social problems, find solutions, and motivate the government to fulfill its responsibilities. It gives people the opportunity to move beyond being merely "governed" and become "active citizens."The concept of civil society is based on the idea that social development cannot depend only on the government or the market—public participation is essential. Therefore, civil society is an impotent means of strengthening democracy and bringing about social change.

Civil society is often called the "third sector" because it lies between the state and the market. The first sector belongs to the government, which makes laws and runs administration. The second sector belongs to the market, which works for profit. Meanwhile, the third sector—civil society—neither works for profit nor is fully controlled by the government. Civil society works for the benefit of the community. It acts as a bridge between the government and the people. For example, if the government is unable to provide proper education or healthcare in a region, NGOs and other organizations work there to fill the gap. It also raises its voice against market failures such as exploitation, inequality, and environmental degradation. In this way, it helps maintain balance in society and ensures that development benefits everyone, not just a privileged few.

The most important feature of civil society is that people's participation is completely voluntary. Anyone can join an organisation or movement by choice. People participate not out of compulsion, but because of their sense of responsibility and awareness towards society. For example, someone may join an NGO to protect the environment, or a women's group works together to fight for their rights. Voluntary participation increases social awareness, responsibility, and activism among people. Civil society is based not only on individual efforts but also on collective efforts. People join together to understand problems and work collectively for solutions. For example, movements like farmers' protests, women's movements, or environmental campaigns are examples of collective action. When people raise their voice together, their impact is stronger, and the government is forced to listen. Thus, the principle of "unity is strength" is very important to civil society. The main objective of civil society is to promote the public good. It works for thepoor, marginalized, and weaker sections of society, protecting their rights. Civil society plays a vital role in education, health, women's empowerment, environmental protection, and human rights, etc. Although some organisations sometimes focus only on specific groups, the overall objectives of civil society are to promote equality, justice, and development in society. In a democracy, civil society plays a very important role. It ensures that democracy is not limited to elections but involves continuous public participation.

Civil society acts as a watchdog over the government. It exposes corruption, opposes wrong policies, and holds the government accountable. It also establishes a dialogue between citizens and the government, making policies more effective. Civil society raises awareness among the people and educates them about their rights and duties, it encouraging people to become responsible citizens. It promotes social justice and equality by protecting the rights of vulnerable groups—such as women, children, Dalits, and tribals. Ultimately, civil society strengthens democracy because it provides people with opportunities for active participation and makes governance more transparent, accountable, and participatory.

According to the World Bank, civil society refers to the wide array of non-governmental and non-profit organizations that have a presence in public life, expressing the interests and values of their members based on ethical, cultural, political, scientific, religious, or philanthropic considerations.

9.2. Objectives

After studying this unit, students will be able to:

- Understand the meaning, concept, and characteristics of Civil Society.
- Explain the relationship between the State, Market, and Civil Society, and the role of the "third sector."
- Describe the types, functions, and importance of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and NGOs.
- Analyse the relationships between the State and Civil Society—repression, co-optation, and negotiation.

Evaluate the role of Civil Society in democracy, social justice, and inclusive development, and its current challenges

9.3. Importance in India

In a large and diverse country like India, CSOs and NGOs play a very important role. Due to high social and economic inequalities, their need becomes even greater.

First, they promote social justice. They raise their voice against discrimination, exploitation, and inequality, and protect the rights of weaker sections.

Second, they contribute to rural and urban development. In many rural areas of India, government services are not fully accessible, so NGOs help in education, health, sanitation, and

employment. In urban areas too, these organisations work for poor and deprived people and try to improve their living standards.

Third, they strengthen democracy and citizen participation. Civil society raises awareness, informs them about their rights and duties, and encourages participation in governance. They monitor government policies, expose corruption, and hold the government accountable. Thus, they make democracy more transparent, participatory, and effective.

Finally, CSOs and NGOs act as a bridge between society and government. They convey people's problems, needs, and demands to the government, and help deliver government schemes to the people. Therefore, these organisations are essential for inclusive development, social justice, and strengthening democracy in India.

CSOs and NGOs are an important pillar for social development. They not only highlight problems but also actively work to solve them. They maintain a balance between the state and society and strengthen democracy. Therefore, their role will become even more important in the future.

9.3.1. Historical Evolution of Civil Society in India

Civil society in India has evolved through several phases:

Pre-Independence Era: Organisations such as Brahmo Samaj, Arya Samaj, and the Aligarh Movement advocated social reform and education. The Indian National Congress began as a civil platform for political discussion and debate. Mahatma Gandhi's Satyagraha represented one of the most powerful expressions of voluntary public participation and moral struggle against colonial rule.

Post-Independence (1947–1990): Following independence, civil society focused its energies toward nation-building through literacy drives, public health campaigns, and rural upliftment efforts. During the Emergency period (1975–77), civil society organisations bravely stood in defence of press freedom and fundamental human rights. The 1980s witnessed a significant expansion of community health programs and mass literacy initiatives across the country.

Liberalisation Era (1990s onwards): The beginning of economic liberalisation increased and diversified the role of civil society organizations. Important movements such as the Chipko Movement, Narmada Bachao Andolan, and the Right to Information campaign brought public attention to important issues like environmental protection and good governance. In recent times, digital activism and the use of social media have changed the way people come together and organize for collective action.

9.4. Role of State and Non- state actors

9.4.1 Role of the State

The state is the most important institution in society because it is responsible for the smooth functioning and management of the entire society. Its primary function is to make policies and implement them. The government formulates various policies to address issues like unemployment, poverty, lack of education, and poor health facilities. For example, education policies, welfare schemes for the poor, and agricultural schemes for farmers. Implementation is equally important for the administrative system functions.

The second important role of the state is welfare and development. In Morden time, the state is called a "welfare state" because its aim is not only to govern but also to improve people's living standards. The government provides basic facilities such as education, healthcare, employment, housing, and social security. These include government hospitals, schools, schemes like MGNREGA, and pension programs. Through these schemes, the government helps poor and marginalized groups and promotes equality and justice.

Another important function of the state is regulating civil society activities. NGOs and other organisations must work under rules and laws. The government ensures that these organisations work with transparency and honesty and that there is no misuse or wrongdoing. For this, various laws exist regarding NGO registration and funding.

The most crucial role of the state is to maintain law and order in society and protect citizens' rights. Without peace in society, development is impossible. Therefore, the state ensures security and justice through the police, army, and judiciary. It protects citizens' fundamental rights such as the right to life, freedom of expression, and equality. Thus, the state provides stability, security, and development, ensuring organised and peaceful living.

9.4.2. Role of Non-state Actors

Non-state actors are organisations and groups that work outside the government. These include NGOs, community groups, activists, and social movements. Together, they aim to bring positive change in society. Their most important role is to raise awareness and highlight people's problems. Many people are unaware of their rights or government policies. In such a situation, NGOs and social workers educate and make people aware of their rights and government policies. NGOs and social activists raise awareness about issues like women's rights, child labour, environmental protection, and human rights. Non-state actors also play a major role in service delivery. Often, the government cannot reach every area effectively to deliver its services, especially in rural or remote regions. In these situations, NGOs provide healthcare (like medical camps), education (free schools), environmental protection (tree plantation drives), and women's empowerment programs. They reach out of those places where government systems are weak.

Another important role of non-state actors is that they act as a bridge between citizens and the government. They communicate people's needs, problems, and demands to the government and

also help in spreading awareness about government schemes among people. They also monitor government policies. If policies are not implemented properly or problem arises, these organisations communicate with the government and try to find solutions. In this way, they strengthen democracy by making the government accountable and increasing citizen participation. Both the state and non-state actors play vital roles in society's development. The state ensures order, security, and development, while non-state actors support society by highlighting problems, spreading awareness, and providing services. Together, through balance and cooperation, they help build a strong, democratic, and developed society.

9.5. Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and NGOs

9.5.1.Civil Society organization (CSOs)

Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) are an important part of society that operate independently of the state (government) and the market (business sector), and encourage the common interests of people. These organisations are voluntary, non-profit, and autonomous, and their primary objective is to bring improvement, justice, and development in society. CSOs are highly diverse, as they include small local groups as well as large national and international organisations. These organisations increase people's participation in society, raise awareness, and help make the government more accountable.

CSOs are considered a broad category that includes many types of organisations. The most prominent among them are NGOs, which carry out an organized way for social service and development work. Apart from this, Self-Help Groups (SHGs) are also part of CSOs, working to economically empower women, especially in rural areas. These groups promote self-reliance through savings, credit, and small businesses. Similarly, Trade Unions protect workers' rights and struggle for better wages, working conditions, and social security. Community-Based Organisations (CBOs) operate at the local level and play an important role in solving village or neighbourhood problems- such as water, sanitation, education, and health.

Thus, CSOs organize diverse sections of society and strive to improve their standard of living. They go beyond simply providing services, but also promote social change and democratic participation.

9.5.2 Non- Governmental Organisation (NGOs)

Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) are the most important and active part of civil society. These organisations work independently of the government, and their primary objective is to promote social welfare, not profit-making. NGOs work in different fields such as education, health, environment, human rights, and women's empowerment, and assist vulnerable sections of society.

NGOs have several features:

- They are voluntary, meaning people join them voluntarily.
- They are non-profit, meaning their purpose is not to earn money but to serve society.
- They are independent, but sometimes they also collaborate with the government.
- They are flexible, allowing them to adapt to rapidly changing situations and reach areas where government systems may not fully reach.

NGOs can be classified into different types based on their work. Development NGOs work for the overall development of society, such as poverty alleviation, improving education, providing health services, and rural development. Rights-Based NGOs work to protect people's rights, such as human rights, women's rights, and children's rights. They also criticize government policies and demand reforms. Environmental NGOs work on issues such as forest conservation, environmental protection, climate change, and pollution control.

The functions of NGOs are also wide-ranging and important. They provide welfare services such as education, health, and employment facilities. They engage in policy advocacy, meaning they try to influence government policies and bring people's issues to the government. They empower vulnerable sections of society, like women, Dalits, tribals, and the poor, and make them aware of their rights. Thus, NGOs are an important means of bringing positive change in society.

9.6. State- Civil Society Relations

The relationship between the state and civil society is an important foundation of any democratic system. The state's function is to make laws, maintain order, and implement policies, while civil society presents people's interests, rights, and problems. The relationship between the two is not always the same; it changes according to situations. Sometimes the relation is cooperative, and sometimes it is conflictual. On the one hand, Civil society participates in government policies, while on the other hand, it also criticizes the government to make it accountable. Thus, a balance between the two, the state and civil society, is necessary for a strong democracy.

The relationship between the two is mainly seen in three forms: Repression, Co-optation, and Negotiation.

9.6.1. Repression

Repression is a situation; this occurs when the state controls or restricts the activities of civil society. This happens when the government believes that civil society or its organisation may challenge its policies, decisions, or power. In such cases, the state may use strict laws, monitoring, limiting freedom of expression, or suppressing protests.

In a situation of repression, the government uses its power to ensure that no group or organisation becomes more active against its policies so that people cannot express their views freely, and civil society loses its independence. Dissent is an important element of democracy, but repression suppresses it. As a result, social dialogue weakens, and public discontent

increases. Sometimes control is necessary in some situations to maintain law and order, but excessive control harms democratic values and citizens' rights.

9.6.2. Co- Optation

Co-optation is a situation where the state influences civil society organisations and establishes cooperation with them, but not fully independently. The government encourages NGOs to work according to its programs, plans, and policies. In this case, there is no direct conflict between civil society and the state; there is cooperation. NGOs help in implementing government schemes, accelerating development progress, and enhancing the accessibility of services for the public. This can be a positive phenomenon because it improves coordination between society and government.

However, excessive influence reduces independence. NGOs may refrain from criticizing the government. As a result, they may fail to fully perform their role of raising people's voices and ensuring accountability. Thus, co-optation should be balanced—there should be cooperation, but also independence.

9.6.3. Negotiation

Negotiation is considered the most positive and democratic form of relationship. In this, both sides solve problems through communication, discussion, and cooperation. Civil society presents people's needs and demands of the people, and the government makes or improves policies accordingly. This strengthens democracy and increases participation.

Through negotiation, both work together in areas like education, health, environment, and social welfare. Disputes are also resolved through discussion, which maintains peace and stability. This is considered the ideal relationship because it is based on mutual understanding and cooperation. The relationship between the state and civil society appears in three forms: repression, co-optation, and negotiation. Repression weakens democracy, co-optation is useful when balanced, and negotiation is the most appropriate form.

For a healthy society, balanced, transparent, and cooperative relations between the state and civil society to strengthen justice, development, and democracy.

9.7. Contemporary Challenges and Issues

Today, CSOs and NGOs face several challenges due to changing social, political, and economic conditions. These include funding problems, legal pressure, maintaining autonomy and accountability, and challenges related to digital activism.

1. Funding Constraints

NGOs face a lack of financial resources. They depend on donations, grants, and government or foreign support. Strict rules on foreign funding and changing donor priorities make funding difficult. This affects their programs, staff, and services to the weaker sections.

2. Legal and Regulatory Pressures

NGOs must follow laws related to registration, funding, and reporting. Sometimes rules become too strict. Governments may also use laws to control criticism, which affects freedom and independent functioning.

3. Balancing Autonomy and Accountability

NGOs must remain independent while being accountable. Too much government support reduces independence, while a lack of accountability reduces credibility. So, balance is necessary.

4. Digital Activism

Digital platforms help spread awareness and increase participation. But challenges include fake news, misinformation, trolling, data security, and the digital divide.

9.8. Summary

Civil society is a key pillar of democracy. It helps people express their needs and rights, ensures transparency, and makes government accountable. The relationship between state and civil society can be conflictual (repression), cooperative (negotiation), or strategic (co-optation). A balanced relationship is necessary for democracy.

Inclusive development requires cooperation, transparency, and participation. A strong state–civil society relationship leads to a strong democracy and society.

9.9. Glossary

1. Civil Society – A social space where people voluntarily work for their interests.
2. State – A political institution that governs and maintains order.
3. Non-State Actors – Individuals or groups working outside the government.
4. CSOs – Organisations working for public welfare and development.
5. NGO – Non-government, non-profit organization.
6. SHG – Small groups (especially women) promoting self-reliance.
7. Trade Union – Organization protecting workers' rights.
8. CBO – Local organization solving community problems.

9. Public Good – Services for the benefit of all.
10. Voluntary Participation – Participation by choice.
11. Collective Action – Working together for a goal.
12. Repression – State control over civil society.
13. Co-optation – State influence over civil society.
14. Negotiation – Dialogue and cooperation.
15. Advocacy – Supporting a cause.
16. Accountability – Responsibility for actions.
17. Autonomy – Independence in decision-making.
18. Digital Activism – Online social and political action.
19. Inclusive Development – Development for all sections.
20. Democracy – A system where people govern through representatives.

9.10 SAQs (Short Answer Questions)

1. What is meant by Civil Society?
2. Explain the role of NGOs in social development.
3. What is the difference between State and Non-State Actors?
4. Define Repression in the context of state–civil society relations.
5. What is Digital Activism?

9.11 True/ False

1. Civil Society operates only under government control. False
2. NGOs are non-profit organizations. True
3. Repression refers to cooperation between the state and civil society. False
4. Digital activism uses online platforms to raise awareness. True
5. Civil Society has no role in democracy. False

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UNIT- 10

CONTRIBUTION OF CIVIL REFORM

Unit Structure

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10.13 SAQs

10.14 True/ False

10.15 Terminal/ Model Questions

10.16 References

10.17 Suggested Readings

10.1. INTRODUCTION

Indian society during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was affected by numerous social, religious, and cultural inequalities. Because of these inequalities, human rights were widely violated. Women were denied education and freedom, while Dalits and lower classes faced social exclusion, untouchability, and discrimination. Practices such as the caste system and untouchability were against human dignity and the rights of equality of the individual. Social evils like the practice of Sati, child marriage, the dowry system, and religious superstitions also affected the fundamental human rights of people, such as the right to life, liberty, and dignity. In such a situation, social reform movements emerged with the primary objective of removing these social evils and establishing human rights in society.

These reform movements attempted to establish the principles of equality, justice, and freedom in society. Organizations such as the Brahmo Samaj, Arya Samaj, Prarthana Samaj, Satyashodhak Samaj, and Self-Respect Movement fought against caste discrimination, gender inequality, and social injustice. These movements encouraged the spread of education because education was considered the foundation for achieving human rights. Efforts such as women's education, widow remarriage, and opposition to child marriage strengthened women's rights to life and dignity. Similarly, the efforts made for the upliftment of Dalits and the deprived sections strengthened social equality and justice.

Leaders like Mahatma Gandhi gave these reform movements a comprehensive human rights perspective. Through the principles of non-violence, truth, equality, and religious harmony, he established that every individual has the right to live with dignity and freedom. He did not limit social reform only to laws but transformed it into a mass movement. During this awakening, people from all sections of society became aware of human rights.

Thus, social reform movements not only introduced the concept of human rights in Indian society theoretically but also helped in putting this concept into practice in Indian society. This unit examines these movements from the perspective of how they laid the foundation of human rights in modern India and led society towards a more just, equal, and humane direction.

10.2 OBJECTIVES:

After studying this unit, learners will be able to:

- To understand the meaning and background of social and religious reform movements in India.
- To study the role of major reform movements in promoting human rights and social equality.
- To explain the contribution of social and religious reform movements towards women's rights, caste equality, education, social justice, and democratic values in Indian society.

- To understand the method, achievements and limitations of social reform movements in modern India.

10.3 MEANING OF SOCIAL REFORM

Social reform refers to planned efforts made to remove social evils, inequalities, and unjust practices from society in order to establish a just and progressive social system. In Indian society, reformers worked to eliminate problems such as the practice of Sati, child marriage, caste discrimination, and gender inequality. They tried to bring social change in society based on reason, education, and humanity. In this context, the statement of Raja Ram Mohan Roy's view that*"Social reform must be based on reason and humanity"*is significant. This shows that reform is not only about changing traditions, but also making them rational and humane.

From a sociological perspective, social reform is also considered a part of the process of social change. According to M. N. Srinivas, *"Social change is a process through which significant alterations occur in social structure."* Thus, social reform can be understood as a comprehensive social change that helps society move towards equality, justice, and human welfare.

10.4 SCOPE OF SOCIAL REFORMS:

The scope of the social reform movements of the nineteenth century was very broad. These movements were not limited only to religious reforms but were also deeply connected with social, educational, and moral changes in society. One of the most important aims of these movements was Women's Emancipation. Reformers focused especially on women's education, widow remarriage, and the removal of social evils such as child marriage. These efforts strengthened women's rights to life, education, and dignity. Social reformers clearly believed that human rights could not be fully established unless women received equal opportunities and respect in society.

In the same way, these movements tried to remove deep-rooted social evils such as the caste system and untouchability. Caste discrimination was against the basic principles of human rights—Equality and Justice. Therefore, reformers challenged caste-based discrimination and worked to develop a sense of equality in society. Different reform movements also worked for the social, educational, and religious rights of Dalits and marginalized communities.

Another important aspect of social reform movements was the spread of education and awareness. Reformers believed that society could change only through education and that people could become aware of their rights through learning. For this reason, they established schools, colleges, and other educational institutions and encouraged women and lower classes to receive education. Education not only empowered people but also made them aware of their rights, which strengthened the development of human rights.

Religious reform was also an important part of these movements. Reformers opposed superstition, orthodoxy, and priest dominance in society. Instead, they promoted rational thinking, monotheism, and morality. They explained that the real purpose of religion is human

welfare and not social exploitation. In this way, religious reforms strengthened Freedom of Thought and Freedom of Religion.

Finally, it becomes clear that social and religious reforms were closely connected with each other. To remove social evils, changes in religious ideas were necessary, and without religious reforms, social equality could not be achieved. Therefore, these movements worked together to establish the basic principles of human rights—Equality, Freedom, Dignity, and Justice—in Indian society.

10.3. METHORDS OF SOCIAL REFORM

During the nineteenth century, many efforts and experiments were adopted to make social reform movements more effective. The main aim of these movements was to eradicate prevailing social evils and establish the fundamental principles of human rights such as equality, freedom, dignity, and justice. These reformers understood that society could not be changed only through ideas; efforts at various levels were also necessary to achieve them. Keeping ideas in mind, social reformers developed various methods and strategies.

The first approach was reform from within society. Under this approach, reformers used different possible medium to spread awareness among the people, such as discussions, writings, speeches, and debates. In this way, they tried to create social consciousness among the people and encourage them to think critically about social problems. They believed that if individuals themself understood their own mistakes and weakness within society, then the change would become more lasting and effective. To this end, reformers like Raja Rammohan Roy and Vidyasagar built public opinion against the practice of Sati, child marriage, and caste discrimination through magazines, books, and public discussions. This method reflects the human rights principle that values a person's freedom of thought and expression.

The second important approach was to bring about social change through legislation. Some reformers believed that social awareness alone was not enough, but that laws were also necessary to remove social evils. Therefore, they appealed to the then British government to enact laws against the practice of Sati, child marriage, and widow remarriage. As a result of these efforts, the enactment of important laws such as the Abolition of Sati Act (1829) and the Widow Remarriage Act (1856) was passed. Thus, efforts were made to establish justice and equality in society through legislation, and also to lay the foundation for the development of modern human rights in India.

The third approach was reform through social work. Social reformers did not limit themselves to ideas or legislation but worked at the grassroots level. They established schools, ashrams, women's institutions, and social service organizations that provided education, health, and rehabilitation facilities. For example, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar not only supported widow remarriage but also made tireless efforts to implement it. Similarly, other social organizations, such as the Arya Samaj and the Ramakrishna Mission, worked to reform society through social work. This approach demonstrates the practical implementation of human rights.

The fourth highly effective method was reform led by individual example. Some reformers set an example for society by transforming their own lives, and they practiced what they preached. For example, several reformers encouraged society by marrying widows and by providing education to their daughters. This action deeply influenced people and accelerated the process of social reform.

Ultimately, all these methods together provide a significant direction to society and played an important role in bringing about wide social change. Thus, social reformers, in various ways, not only challenged social evils but also prepared the way for establishing the basic values of human rights, like equality, freedom, dignity, and justice. Thus, it becomes clear that social reform was not simply a process of social change, but it was a collective and multi-faceted effort, which made the development of human rights in modern India.

10.4. BACKGROUND OF SOCIAL REFORM IN COLONIAL INDIA:

Social reform movements in colonial India emerged during the nineteenth century, which is also known as the period of the Indian Renaissance. British rule revealed many weaknesses and social evils in Indian society and highlighted the need for reform. During this period, an educated middle class emerged and played an important role in leading social and religious reform movements.

These movements were not only efforts for social change but also responses to the challenges created by colonial rule. This view is linked with the theory of Antonio Gramsci, who stated that *"Civil society is the arena where cultural and ideological hegemony is established."* During colonial rule, ideological conflicts emerged in Indian society, which encouraged the growth of reform movements.

Thus, social reform movements develop as a result of both internal social problems and external colonial influences.

10.4.1. IMPACT OF COLONIAL RULE AND WESTERN IDEAS:

British rule and Western thought deeply influenced Indian society. The spread of English education, science, rationalism, and humanistic values inspired Indians to re-evaluate their traditions and social practices. Western ideas emphasized the values of equality, freedom, and a scientific outlook towards life.

In this context, the concept of Jürgen Habermas's is highly relevant; he stated that*"The public sphere is a domain of social life where public opinion is formed through rational discussion"*. During the colonial period,the growth of education and communication helped in the development of a new public sphere in which people started openly discussing various social issues.

At the same time, according to Karl Marx, *"Civil society is the sphere of material life where economic relations and class structures are formed."* Colonial rule changed the economic and social structure of India, leading to the rise of new social classes and giving momentum to reform movements.

10.5. NEED FOR REFORM

Indian society had many social evils, which created the need for reform. The condition of women was extremely poor because they were denied education and basic rights. Practices such as Sati, child marriage, the purdah system, and the difficult condition of widows reflected the inhuman nature of society at that time. In addition, the caste system and untouchability divided society and created inequality.

To solve these problems, reformers promoted the principles of equality and justice. B. R. Ambedkar stated that *"Social democracy means a way of life which recognizes liberty, equality, and fraternity."* This idea became an important foundation of social reform. Similarly, Swami Vivekananda said that *"Social service is the highest form of worship."* This shows that social services and social reform are closely connected with each other.

10.6. SOCIAL REFORM ASA RESPONSE TO INTERNAL AND EXTERNALFACTORS:

Social reform movements were the result of both the internal weaknesses of Indian society and external colonial influences. On one hand, social evils and inequalities within society demanded reform, while on the other hand, Western ideas and colonial rule accelerated the process of change. In this context, the statement of Alexis de Tocqueville that*"Associations in civil society are essential for the functioning of democracy"*is very relevant. Social reform movements united people together and played an important role in promoting democratic encouragement in society.

Furthermore, according to the United Nations, *"Civil society includes all voluntary organizations that represent the interests and values of citizens."* In this way, social reform movements can also be seen as a form of active civil society thatspreads awareness and encourages social change. Social reform movements were a major turning point in the history of Indian society. They aimed to free society from superstition, inequality, and various social evils, and guided it towards modernity, rational thinking, and equality. The ideas of scholars and reformers regarding freedom, equality, reason, and social justice played a major role in giving Indian society a new direction.

10.6.1. RELIGIOUS AND SOCIAL REFORM MOVEMENT AND THEDEVELOPMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS:

Nineteenth-century India was deeply affected by social inequalities, religious orthodoxy, and inhuman social practices. The condition of women was very poor, while Dalits and lower classes

faced social discrimination and exclusion. Basic rights such as education and freedom were available only to a limited section of society. During this period, different social and religious reform movements played an important role in creating awareness, removing social evils, and promoting the basic principles of human rights—equality, freedom, dignity, and justice. These movements were not limited only to social reform; they also laid the foundation for the idea and structure of human rights in modern India.

10.8.1.1.BRAHMO SAMAJ AND HUMAN RIGHTS

The Brahmo Samaj was founded in 1828 by Raja Ram Mohan Roy. It is considered one of the earliest phases of the Indian Renaissance. The main aim of this movement was to remove religious superstitions and social evils from society. Raja Ram Mohan Roy strongly opposed the practice of Sati, an inhuman custom in which women were forced to burn themselves after the death of their husbands. His opposition to this practice strengthened women's Right to Life and Right to Dignity.

He also raised his voice against child marriage and the lack of education among women. He encouraged women's education so that women could become self-reliant and aware of their rights. The Brahmo Samaj promoted monotheism and rational thinking, which supported Freedom of Religion and Freedom of Thought. The movement clearly emphasized that all human beings are equal and that every form of discrimination is against human rights.

10.8.1.2. ARYA SAMAJ AND HUMAN RIGHTS

The Arya Samaj was founded in 1875 by Swami Dayanand Saraswati. This movement gave a new direction to social and educational reforms in Indian society. Based on the teachings of the Vedas, the Arya Samaj promoted equality, education, and morality in society. It opposed social evils such as the caste system and untouchability, which were against the human rights principles of Equality and a discrimination-free society.

The Arya Samaj gave special importance to women's rights. It strongly opposed child marriage, encouraged widow remarriage, and highlighted the importance of women's education. As a result, women gained more respect and better opportunities for equality in society. In addition, the Arya Samaj established Gurukuls and several educational institutions to spread education among all sections of society. This contributed to the spread of the Right to Education. Thus, the movement played an important role in strengthening the social and educational aspects of human rights.

10..8.1.3 PRARTHNA SAMAJ AND HUMAN RIGHTS

The PrarthanaSamaj was established in 1867 by Atmaram Pandurang and was later promoted by Mahadev Govind Ranade and other reformers. The primary aim of this movement was to promote social reforms rather than religious rituals and ceremonies. The PrarthanaSamaj strongly supported the removal of caste discrimination, encouraging women's education, and the acceptance of widow remarriage.

This movement was based on the belief that all individuals are equal and deserve equal opportunities. It helped strengthen the values of Social Justice and Equality in society. By supporting women's education and widow remarriage, the movement made an important contribution to the social and economic empowerment of women. In this way, it strengthened the human rights principle that every person has the right to live with dignity and respect.

10.8.1.4 OVERALL CONTRIBUTION OF THESE REFORM MOVEMENTS OF HUMAN RIGHTS

When viewed as a whole, social reform movements such as the Brahmo Samaj, Arya Samaj, and Prarthana Samaj played a major role in strengthening the foundation of human rights in Indian society. These movements challenged the existing social structure of that time, which was based on caste discrimination, gender inequality, and religious orthodoxy. They clearly stated that all human beings are equal by birth and deserve equal opportunities, respect, rights, dignity, and freedom.

In particular, these movements worked for the upliftment of women by promoting women's education, supporting widow remarriage, and opposing child marriage. Such efforts and reforms strengthened women's rights to life, dignity, freedom, and a better life. Similarly, by criticizing the caste system and untouchability, these reform movements made valuable contributions toward building a more equal and discrimination- free society.

In addition, these reform movements played an important role in promoting education as a fundamental right of every individual. Through the spread of education, people became more aware of their rights and responsibilities. These movements opposed religious superstitions and harmful customs while encouraging rational thinking and a scientific outlook. This strengthened people's freedom of thought and expression.

Thus, these reform movements not only brought social change but also established the basic principles of human rights—equality, freedom, justice, and dignity—in Indian society. For this reason, these movements are considered the foundation of the development of human rights in modern India.

10.8.2 REFORMERS FOR SOCIAL EQUALITY AND LOWER CASTES

During the nineteenth century, caste discrimination and social inequality were deeply rooted in Indian society. Lower castes and deprived sections were denied education, respect, and equal opportunities, which was against the basic principles of human rights—equality, dignity, and freedom. During this period, the Satyashodhak Samaj, founded by Jyotirao Phule and Savitribai Phule, made an important contribution towards social equality and the development of human rights.

The main aim of this movement was to free lower castes and oppressed groups from social injustice and discrimination. Jyotirao Phule strongly opposed caste-based exploitation and

emphasized that every person should receive equal rights. He believed that education was the most effective tool for bringing social change and established schools for girls and marginalized communities. Savitribai Phule, who is regarded as one of the first female teachers in India, played a pioneering role in educating women and Dalits. In this way, the Satyashodhak Samaj strengthened the principles of the Right to Education, Equality, and Social Justice, and laid an important foundation for the expansion of human rights in India.

Similarly, the Self-Respect Movement in South India, started in 1925 by Periyar E. V. Ramasamy, also made a major contribution to the development of human rights. The main objective of this movement was to oppose the caste system and Brahminical dominance in society. Periyar believed that all individuals are equal and that any system based on social hierarchy violates human rights.

He gave special attention to improving the condition of women and supported their rights related to education, property, and marriage. The movement opposed practices such as child marriage, the dowry system, and patriarchy, while promoting women's freedom and equality. At the same time, the Self-Respect Movement worked for the social, religious, and political rights of Dalits and backward classes, which helped in developing a sense of equality and self-respect in society.

The overall impact of these movements was that they increased awareness about human rights in Indian society and strengthened the idea of social justice. The Satyashodhak Samaj and the Self-Respect Movement clearly established that genuine democracy and human rights cannot exist unless weaker and marginalized sections of society receive equal rights and respect. These movements not only challenged social evils and discriminatory practices but also presented the vision of a society where every person has the right to live with equality, freedom, and dignity.

10.8.3 WOMEN REFORMERS AND THEIR CONTRIBUTION

During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, women in Indian society faced a very weakand disadvantaged position. Women were deprived of rights related to education, healthcare, property rights, and the freedom to make independent decisions, which violated the basic human rights principles of equality, dignity, and freedom. At such a time, several women reformers came forward to highlight women's problems and actively worked for the protection and promotion of women's rights.

Among these reformers, Pandita Ramabai occupied a special place. She works for the rehabilitation and education of widows and abandoned women. She established ashrams and educational institutions for women, helping them become independent and self- sufficient. Her efforts promoted women's Right to Education and Right to Dignity.

Ramabai Ranade focused on the economic empowerment of women through education and vocational training. She believed that, along with education, skill development was also essential for women's self-reliance. As a result, her efforts created employment opportunities for women and gained a stronger position in society. This reflected the human rights principle of Equal Opportunity.

Anandibai Joshi, one of the earliest female doctors of India, made remarkable contribution to improving women's healthcare. During that period, medical facilities for women were very limited, and many women felt uncomfortable discussing their health problems with male doctors. Anandibai Joshi's achievements opened new opportunities for women to access medical care and helped strengthen the right to health.

Similarly, Francesca Sorabji established schools for girls and actively promoted the importance of female education in society. Her efforts empowered girls through education and prepared them for equal participation in social life.

The contribution of all these women reformers is highly significant because they actively took part in the process of social transformation. They proved that women are not only subjects of reform but also active participants in bringing change. Through their work in the fields of education, healthcare, self-reliance, and equality, they strengthened women's human rights and social position. In this way, these women reformers enriched the concept of human rights in Indian society and made an important contribution to social change and women's empowerment.

10.8.3.1 ROLE OF WOMEN LEADERS

During the social reform movements of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the role of women was not limited to being supportive or passive participants; they also played active leadership roles and made significant contributions to the growth of human rights. In this context, the example of Maharani Sethu Lakshmi Bayi of Travancore is highly important. During her rule, she encouraged educational and administrative reforms and strengthened the values of equality and justice in society.

She established institutions for women's education, expanded schools for girls, and created opportunities for higher education for women. Along with this, through various administrative reforms, she encouraged equal opportunities to all sections of society. Her efforts aimed to ensure equal rights to people of all castes and classes in public places, institutions, and social spaces. These efforts strengthened the principles of social equality and human rights.

Similarly, women from different regions of India, including Bihar, Odisha, and Assam, also played an active role in social reform movements. Women from these regions contributed greatly to the spread of education, supporting the Swadeshi Movement and creating social awareness among people. These women raised their voices against social evils, illiteracy, and inequality, while inspiring society towards self-reliance and progress. Through the Swadeshi Movement, they encouraged economic independence and self-respect, which are closely connected to economic and social dimensionsof human rights.

One of the most important outcomes of these efforts was that women moved beyond their traditional passive roles and emerged as leaders in society. They were no longer only subjects of reform but became active contributors to social transformation. This transformation not only

improved the position of women but also strengthened human rights values of equality, freedom, and dignity in society. Thus, the women's leadership and regional contributions guided Indian society towards a more just, equal, and democratic social order.

10.8.4 MAHATMA GANDHI AND SOCIAL REFORM

Mahatma Gandhi made a deep and lasting contribution to the social reform movements of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, which was very wide and influential. He connected social reform with the principles of human rights and turned it into a people's movement. Gandhi believed that true social transformation was possible only when every individual, including women, Dalits, or other marginalized groups, received equal rights, dignity, and respect.

He considered women as "equal partners" in society and encouraged them to participate actively in public life. This strengthened women's rights to equality and participation. Gandhi strongly opposed social evils such as the dowry system, child marriage, and caste discrimination, and considered them harmful to human dignity, equality, and freedom.

One of the greatest strengths of Gandhi was that his approach was not limited only to reform; he strongly focused on empowerment. He believed that lasting social change could be achieved by creating awareness about rights and making people self-reliant. He adopted Satyagraha and non-violence as his main methods, which became moral and peaceful approaches to protect human rights.

The racial discrimination experienced by Gandhi in South Africa motivated him to begin his struggle for human rights. His struggle for justice began there and later grew into a major movement in India. He worked continuously for the protection of Indians' rights and worked to establish the principles of equality, human dignity, and justice.

Gandhi also launched major campaigns against untouchability and caste-based discrimination. Through the "Harijan Movement," he tried to provide social dignity and respect to Dalits. He believed that all human beings are equal and that every form of discrimination is a violation of human rights.

He promoted the values of *"Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam"* (the world is one family) and *"Sarva Dharma Sambhava"* (equal respect for all religions). Through these ideas, he supported world brotherhood, tolerance, and a society based on human dignity. His own life became an example of the idea that a person should work not only for their own rights but also for the protection of the rights of others.

The most important contribution of Gandhi was that he gave social reform movements an all-India character and ensured mass participation in them. He united different regions, classes, and communities and transformed social reform into a people's movement. In this way, Gandhi made the idea of human rights practical rather than only theoretical and guided Indian society towards equality, freedom, justice, and dignity.

10.7. IMPACT AND SIGNIFICANCE

Social reform movements had a wide and profound impact on Indian society, especially in the development of human rights. One of the most notable impacts of these movements was the improvement of the status of women through the advancement of the values of equality, dignity, and social justice. As a result, women's education was encouraged, and social evils such as child marriage, female infanticide, and sati were discouraged. Widow remarriage gained social acceptance, which strengthened women's right to life, dignity, equality, and freedom.

In addition, these movements significantly contributed to the spread of education and awareness. Schools and educational institutions were established throughout India, connecting various sections of society, especially women and the lower classes, with education. These reform movements led to the development of modern values such as equality, freedom, justice, tolerance, and human dignity. The struggle against the caste system and untouchability not only strengthened social equality but also laid the foundation for democratic values. Thus, these movements played a crucial role in strengthening democracy and social justice in Indian society.

Ultimately, it can be said that social reform movements not only eliminated the evils of society but these movements also gave rise to modernization and national awakening in India, and also made people aware of their rights and led them towards a society where equality, freedom, and human dignity are paramount.

10.8. LIMITATIONS OF SOCIAL REFORM MOVEMENTS

So far, we have learned that social reform movements attempted to bring about significant changes in Indian society. However, these movements also faced some clear limitations that prevented their widespread impact. The most prominent limitation was that these movements remained largely confined to the urban and educated upper classes. Most reformers came from middle-class or upper-class backgrounds and were also highly educated, so their ideas were most influential among those within that class. These movements' reach to the uneducated and extremely backward classes in rural areas was extremely limited, preventing these reforms from having a widespread impact on society. Compared to urban society, these movements had a relatively smaller impact on rural society. The majority of India's population lived in villages, where traditional beliefs and social orthodoxies were deeply rooted. The ideas and efforts of reformers were more influential in the cities and slow to reach rural regions; thus, problems like the caste system, child marriage, and gender inequality continued in the villages for a long time.

At the same time, these movements were partially dependent on colonial rule. Many reformers expected the British government to introduce laws to eliminate social evils. Although these laws were essential for social reform, some sections of society viewed them as foreign interference

and opposed them. This made it clear that making laws alone was not enough; social acceptance was equally essential for successful reform. Many social reform movements lacked public participation. For a long time, these movements often remained limited to certain groups or organizations and failed to actively engage the large population. As a result, the progress of social change remained slow, and many reforms were confined to the level of ideas and discussions.

Another limitation was that some social and religious reform movements contained elements of cultural revivalism. The leaders associated with these movements placed great emphasis on reviving the greatness and glory of India's ancient culture, religious texts, and traditions. This aimed to create a sense of self-respect and cultural awareness in Indian society, but this sometimes created difficulties in maintaining a balance between modernity and tradition. At the same time, many other contemporary movements want to embrace modern values such as education, science, reason, and equality, while movements influenced by cultural revivalism aimed to preserve ancient traditions and religious beliefs. As a result, differences often arose between modern reformist ideas and traditional cultural values.

Although social reform movements had certain limitations, these limitations do not reduce their importance. They started the process of change in Indian society, and the path was prepared for the establishment of modern human rights values such as equality, freedom, dignity, and justice. Therefore, it can be concluded that despite some practical limitations, these movements helped to Indian society to achieve many important social achievements in Indian society.

10.9. CONCLUSION

The social and religious reform movements of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries played a major role in the reshaping of Indian society. These movements were not limited to eliminating social evils; they also worked to establish the fundamental principles of human rights like equality, freedom, dignity, and social justice. Different movements such as the Brahmo Samaj, Arya Samaj, Prarthana Samaj, Satyashodhak Samaj, Self-Respect Movement, along with the efforts of various social thinkers, challenged the inequalities, superstitions, and discriminatory practices, and laid the foundation for a more just and progressive society.

One of the most important contributions of these movements was the effort to bring women, Dalits, and marginalized sections into the mainstream of society. Efforts such as women's education, support for widow remarriage, opposition to child marriage, the fight against female foeticide, and the expansion of health services strengthened women's rights. Similarly, the struggle against the caste system and untouchability helped to promote social equality and human dignity. The spread of education also made people more aware of their rights and responsibilities, enabling them to become active participants in the process of social change.

However, these reform movements also had certain limitations, such as their influence being largely limited to the urban and educated classes and having a relatively limited impact on rural

areas. Despite these limitations, these movements initiated a process of transformation in Indian society and laid the foundation for the creation of modern India.

Most importantly, these reform movements fostered modernization and national awakening in India. They moved beyond conservative beliefs and helped develop a sense of unity, awareness, and sensitivity to rights. This awareness later contributed to the independence movement and the establishment of a democratic system in the country.

Finally, it can be said that social reform movements and their leaders have left a deep and lasting impact not only in their own time but also in contemporary society. The values established by them, such as equality, education, freedom, and social justice, continue to remain the foundation of Indian democracy and human rights. Therefore, these movements are considered the foundation for the development of human rights and an important pillar in the construction of modern Indian society.

10.10. GLOSSARY:

Social Reform – The process of improving society by removing social evils, inequalities, and unjust practices.

Human Rights – Basic rights and freedoms that belong to every individual, such as equality, dignity, and freedom.

Equality – The principle that all people should be treated fairly and equally without discrimination.

Freedom – The right of individuals to think, speak, and live freely.

Dignity – The respect and honour that every human being deserves.

Social Justice – A condition in which all people receive equal rights, opportunities, and fair treatment in society.

Modernization – The process of adopting modern ideas, education, science, and progressive values.

National Awakening – The growth of national consciousness, unity, and patriotism among people.

Social Evil – Harmful social customs and practices that negatively affect individuals and society.

Sati System – An old practice in which a widow was forced to sacrifice her life on her husband's funeral pyre.

Female Infanticide – The practice of killing female infants after birth.

Caste System – A social system that divides people into different groups based on birth and occupation.

Untouchability – A discriminatory practice in which certain groups were treated as socially inferior and excluded from society.

Gender Equality – Equal rights, opportunities, and treatment for both men and women.

Women Empowerment – The process of providing women with equal rights, education, opportunities, and decision-making power.

Reform through Legislation – Bringing social change through laws and legal measures.

Reform through Social Work – Improving society through practical welfare activities such as education, healthcare, and rehabilitation.

Cultural Revivalism – Efforts to revive and preserve ancient culture, traditions, and religious values.

Orthodox Beliefs – Traditional beliefs and practices that strongly resist change and modern ideas.

Social Awareness – Understanding social issues, rights, duties, and responsibilities in society.

Marginalized Groups – Sections of society that are socially, economically, or politically disadvantaged.

Democracy – A system of government in which people have the right to participate in decision-making and choose their leaders.

Brahmo Samaj – A social and religious reform movement founded by Raja Ram Mohan Roy to oppose social evils and promote modern ideas.

Arya Samaj – A reform movement founded by Swami Dayanand Saraswati to promote social equality and Vedic values.

PrarthanaSamaj – A reform organization that worked for social equality and women's upliftment.

SatyashodhakSamaj – A reform movement founded by Jyotirao Phule for the rights of lower castes and women.

Self-Respect Movement – A movement started by Periyar E. V. Ramasamy against caste discrimination and social inequality.

10.13 SAQs (Short Answer Questions)

1. What is meant by social reform?
2. Explain the importance of women's education in social reform movements.
3. What were the main objectives of the Brahmo Samaj?
4. How did social reform movements contribute to the development of human rights in India?

5. What is the meaning of cultural revivalism?

10.14 True/ False

1. Social reform movements promoted equality and social justice. — **True**
2. Child marriage was encouraged by social reformers. — **False**
3. Arya Samaj worked for social reform and education. — **True**
4. Social reform movements had an equal impact on both urban and rural society. — **False**
5. Education played an important role in spreading social awareness. — **True**

10.15 Terminal/ Model Questions

1. Discuss the role of nineteenth-century social reform movements in the development of human rights in India.
2. Explain the major contributions of social reformers toward women's upliftment in Indian society.
3. Analyse the impact of social and religious reform movements on Indian society.
4. Discuss the limitations of social reform movements in India.
5. Explain how social reform movements contributed to modernization and national awakening in India.

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UNIT – 11 Government and Courts Response for Social Movements

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11.1 INTRODUCTION

A social movement is a collective step taken by society or a group of people in the society, to bring about or resist change in society. It mostly arises when individuals share a common

grievance, ideology or aspiration, and mobilize to influence social norms, public opinion, or government policy. Social movements are a vital feature of democratic societies. They provide a platform for citizens to unite and express dissent, demand rights, and seek reforms when existing institutions or government fail to address their concerns. Social Movements involve mass mobilization, shared ideology, and a challenge to authorities, often using protests or advocacy to bring about, or prevent, structural change. Unlike spontaneous protests, social movements are usually organized and goal-oriented, often involving leadership, strategies, and public engagement. Historically, social movements have played a great transformative role across the world. For instance, the Indian Independence Movement mobilized millions against colonial rule, the Civil Rights Movement fought against racial discrimination and segregation. These movements demonstrate and established how collective action can reshape laws, institutions, and social values. In essence, social movements act as a bridge between the people and the state. While some movements lead to significant reforms, others may also face resistance or suppression, but all contribute to shaping the social and legal fabric of society. Social Movements involve mass mobilization, shared ideology, and a challenge to authorities, often using protests or advocacy to bring about, or prevent, structural change.

Key Characteristics of the Social Movements-

- Collective Action: Mass or Group participation and support.
- Sustained Effort: Not just a temporary crowd, but committed organization.
- Goal-Oriented: Focused on specific goal for social, political, or economic changes.
- Challenges Authority: Often challenges existing social norms, laws, policies, or power structures.

Major Social Movements in India- Indian social movements have evolved from reforms to political and ecological challenges.

a. **19th Century Reform Movements**: Aimed to fight againstt social evils, promoting women's education and opposing Sati.
- Brahmo Samaj (1828): Led by Raja Ram Mohan Roy, focused on religious and social reform and Arya Samaj (1875): Promoted Vedic values and education.

b. **Freedom Movement of India**: A nationwide movement to end British rule, focusing on Swadeshi).

c. **Environmental Movements:** Focused on ecological conservation and sustainable development.

    1. Chipko Movement (1970s):
    2. Narmada Bachao Andolan (NBA):

d. **Peasant and Tribal Movements**: Demands for land rights, better prices, and against displacement.

e. **Anti-Corruption Movement (2011)**: Rallies led by Anna Hazare for a stronger ombudsman, drawing massive urban middle-class support

11.2 OBJECTIVES

The Objectives of the present unit is to provide information and knowledge regarding Major Social Movements in India and the responses or the handling of various Movements by the Government and further the interference by judiciary and its verdicts.

11.3 KINDS OF SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

Social movements are combined efforts to promote or resist social change, Main types include **reformative** (for partial change in society, e.g., suffrage), **revolutionary** (radical societal change, e.g., revolutions), **alternative** (limited, individual change), and **redemptive** (total, individual change).

11.3.1 Types of Social Movements

- Reformative Movements **:** Seek to change specific aspects of social structure rather than the entire system. Examples include the women's rights movement, environmental movements, or labor movements.
- Revolutionary Movements :

  Aim to completely change the existing social system, culture, or government. Historical examples are the French Revolution and the Russian Revolution.
- Alternative Movements**:** particular goal, personal changes in individual behaviors or attitudes. For example, a group promoting recycling or "Mothers Against Drunk Driving" (MADD).
- Redemptive Movements**:** Focus on radical, total change within individuals, often with religious or spiritual components, like personal transformation movements.
- Resistance Movements**:** Aim to resist social changes that are already occurring. They often seek to restore their traditional values or a past social order, such as anti-modernization efforts.
- Expressive Movements**:** Mainly focus on changing individuals' lives or emotions, often found in movements emphasizing self-help, therapy or spirituality.

11.4 SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IN INDIA HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The roots of social movements in India can be traced from the 19th century when reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, and Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar initiated struggles against social evils such as sati, child marriage, and caste discrimination. The Indian freedom movement

itself was one of the largest social movements in world history, mobilizing millions for independence.

- ✓ 1828: Raja Ram Mohan Roy founded the Brahmo Samaj to fight social evils and promote rationalism.
- ✓ 1873: Jyotiba Phule established the Satyashodhak Samaj to fight caste oppression.
- ✓ 1920s-1947: Mahatma Gandhi's movements such as the Non-Cooperation, and Quit India Movements united people against colonial rule.

11.4.1 Social Movements in India Post-Independence:

After 1947, social movements shifted focus from independence to democracy, equality, and welfare.

- ✓ Land Reform Movements: Focused on redistribution of land and rights for landless laborers.
- ✓ Anti-Caste Movements: Dr. Ambedkar's and Kanshi Ram's activism laid the foundation for Dalit political assertion.
- ✓ Women's Liberation: Post-1970s feminist activism changed gender discourse.
- ✓ Tribal Rights Movements: The Forest Rights Act, 2006, emerged from sustained tribal struggles for their rights.
- ✓ Environmental Justice: Narmada Bachao Andolan influenced the global environmental justice movement.

11.4.2 New Social Movements in India:

The major movements in the recent times had a great influence on the large population of the India and world for various issues of the contemporary times are:

- ✓ Farmers' Protests (2020-21): Millions of farmers from north protested against three agricultural laws, demanding minimum support prices and protection from corporatization. The movement was mostly peaceful and resulted in the repeal of the laws in 2021.
- ✓ Anti-CAA Protests (2019-20): A group of citizens protested against the Citizenship Amendment Act, alleging it violated secular principles. The Shaheen Bagh sit-in was a symbol of democratic resistance led by women against CAA.
- ✓ Environmental and Climate Movements: Youth-led initiatives for growing awareness of climate change and ecological degradation.
- ✓ Digital Movements and Social Media Activism: Social media has amplified social justice movements. Hashtags like #MeTooIndia, #DalitLivesMatter, and #SaveAarey have mobilized national and global support for social causes.

11.4.3 Social Movements in India Legal and Constitutional Framework

The Legal and Constitutional Framework Supporting Social Movements are:

- Article 19(1)(a) and 19(1)(b): Guarantee freedom of speech and peaceful assembly.
- Article 21: Protects right to life and dignity, establishing the basis for social rights.
- Article 17: Abolishes untouchability, strengthening Dalit and anti-caste movements.
- Right to Information Act (2005): Empowered citizens to demand transparency by availing required information.
- Environmental Laws: The Environment (Protection) Act, 1986, supports environmental movements.

11.5. SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND GOVERNMENTS RELATIONSHIP

In the broader prospect social movements are essentially movements around issues and causes that require action of the state or its authorities or simply, government agencies. All social movements involve issues that require policy or legislative action and this is only at the level of government. The main purpose of any social movement is to create pressure on the government for making desired changes. Therefore, the inevitable connection between social movements and government and its agencies is well established from the very outset.

Social movements and governments share a dynamic and often complex relationship. At its base, a social movement is a combined effort by people to bring about or resist social, political, cultural or economic change, while the government is the formal authority responsible for governance, law-making, and maintaining its order.

11.5.1 Nature of Relationship:

The relationship between social movements and governments is not fixed—it can be cooperative, conflicting, or transformative. Governments may respond positively to movements and incorporate their demands into policy (e.g., welfare reforms, environmental protections) it may be termed as cooperative. Secondly when movements challenge authority or existing power structures, governments may resist, suppress, or regulate them, it becomes conflicting and in some cases, sustained movements can fundamentally reshape governance systems or political regimes.

11.6. SOCIAL MOVEMENTS SHAPING MODERN INDIA

Social movements in India have played an important role in driving social, economic, and political reforms. These movements, representing diverse groups and issues, have raised awareness, shaped policies, and influenced governance to foster inclusivity and justice. How

different social movements have contributed to key policy areas in modern India can be understood as-

✓ Caste and Social Justice Policies-

India's social justice framework, especially concerning caste-based affirmative action, is outcome of social movements led by marginalized communities. The Dalit and backward class movements have fought for representation; dignity and equality eventually build pressure upon the state to institutionalize affirmative action in education and employment. The Constitution of India is having provisions for reservations for Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), and Other Backward Classes (OBCs), aiming to remove inequalities and enable equal opportunities. Landmark movements, such as the Ambedkarite movement, boost up Dalits against discrimination and played a vital role in securing these rights. This didn't just impact government policy; it created a lasting foundation for ongoing caste-based social justice advocacy.

✓ Labor and Economic Policies

Indian labor movements have played a vital role in advancing worker rights, especially within the industrial and informal sectors. As the nation's economy expanded, unions successfully campaigned for legal safeguards against exploitation and unfair pay. This pressure led to landmark legislation such as the Factories Act (1948) and the Payment of Gratuity Act (1972), which secured workplace safety and retirement benefits. By securing minimum wage laws through persistent protest and negotiation, these movements proved that organized action is essential for legislative progress.

✓ Environmental Laws

By prioritizing ecological health and community rights over unchecked industrialization, India's environmental movements have fundamentally reshaped national law. The Chipko Movement's tree-hugging tactics in the 70s and the Narmada Bachao Andolan's resistance against large-scale displacement underscored the human and environmental costs of top-down development. These grassroots actions directly influenced the enactment of the **Environment Protection Act (1986)** and revisions to the **Wildlife Protection Act (1972)**, highlighting how people-led campaigns can force legislative reform.

✓ Women's Rights Legislation

By challenging traditional norms and demanding equal rights, India's women's movements have been the driving force behind essential protective legislation. Advocacy groups were central to securing the **Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (2005)** and the **Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act (2013)**. The widespread demand for justice following the 2012 Nirbhaya case also led to the **Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013**, which significantly toughened punishments for sexual violence. Ultimately, these reforms illustrate the power of sustained activism in reshaping the nation's legal landscape to uphold women's dignity.

11.7. THE RESPONSE OF THE GOVERNMENT FOR SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IN INDIA-

India's government deals with social movements in different ways, usually either by changing laws or using the police. Many past movements helped make new rules for the country, but lately, the government has been focusing more on security and tighter controls. Some of the movements in last few years can be taken for the purpose of study to find out the response of the government.

- Government Response to Social Movements in India (2020–2026)-

The Indian government's approach to social movements is a multifaceted strategy that typically alternates between legislative reform and law enforcement measures. While many movements have historically shaped national policies, recent years have seen an increasing shift toward stricter regulatory and security-based responses.

1. Legislative Reform and Institutional Responses

The government often responds to sustained public pressure by enacting new laws or forming committees to study grievances.

- Policy Successes and Reversals: Major movements have led to the creation of the Right to Information Act (2005) and the Forest Rights Act (2006). More recently, the government repealed three contentious farm laws in 2021 after a year-long protest, demonstrating the power of collective action.
- Committee Formation: For ongoing issues like the Farmers' Protests (2024–2025), the government proposed 5-year procurement plans for specific crops and formed committees to discuss Minimum Support Price (MSP) guarantees.
- Social Inclusion: In response to LGBTQ+ and marginalized group advocacy, the government has introduced rules for the welfare of transgender persons (2020) and has updated criminal laws—like the Bhartiya Nyaya Sanhita—to be more "victim-centric" regarding crimes against women.

2. Security and Enforcement Measures

When movements are perceived as threats to public order or national security, authorities often employ rigorous security-focused tactics.

- Physical and Digital Containment: Measures include heavy barricading with cement blocks and barbed wire, the use of drones and tear gas, and the invocation of Section 144 (updated under the BNSS) to prohibit public assembly.
- Internet Shutdowns: India leads globally in government-mandated internet blackouts, particularly in regions like Jammu and Kashmir and during active protests, to curb the coordination of demonstrations.

- National Security Laws: The Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) is frequently used to detain activists. These laws often have high bars for bail, leading to prolonged detentions for those involved in movements like the anti-CAA protests.

3. Regulatory Restrictions on Civil Society

The government has tightened the legal environment for non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and digital platforms.

- Foreign Funding (FCRA): Authorities have cancelled the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA) licenses of thousands of NGOs, effectively limiting their ability to operate or influence policy through foreign support.
- Digital Regulation: New IT rules allow for the blocking of social media accounts (e.g., on X/formerly Twitter) to prevent the spread of what the government deems "misleading content" that could create unrest.

4. Direct Counter-Insurgency

For radical movements like Left-Wing Extremism (Naxalism), the government maintains a "zero-tolerance" policy. The Ministry of Home Affairs has resolved to completely eradicate these threats by March 31, 2026, through a mix of military operations and socio-economic transformation in "Legacy and Thrust" districts.

5. Notable Movement-Specific Responses

Movement	Government Actions
Farmers' Protest (2024–25)	**Mass barricading** at Shambhu border; proposals for **5-year MSP plans** for pulses and maize; use of tear gas and internet suspensions.
Anti-CAA Protests	Use of **UAPA** for detentions; implementation of CAA rules in 2024 despite continued resistance; **internet blackouts** in protest hubs.
Student Protests (2024)	Large-scale mobilization in places like **Prayagraj** regarding exam fairness resulted in increased institutional accountability and social media attention.
Environmental Movements	Growing influence on the **Environment Protection Act** and awareness through youth-led initiatives like **Fridays for Future**.

11.8. THE COURTS RESPONSE TO SOCIAL MOVEMENTS-

The response of the Indian judiciary to social movements is characterized by a dynamic, sometimes contradictory, interplay between proactive judicial activism—which has strengthened fundamental rights—and judicial restraint, which often prioritizes state "law and order". This evolving approach has seen the courts transition from a passive interpreter of law to an active guardian of constitutional values, primarily through the innovative mechanism of Public Interest Litigation (PIL).

8.1 Proactive Judicial Activism and PIL

- The judiciary has, in many instances, provided a vital platform for social movements to turn grassroots activism into legal reforms.
- Expansion of PIL: Initiated in the late 1970s, PIL relaxed the traditional rule of locus standi, allowing social activists and public-spirited individuals to approach courts on behalf of the poor, unorganized consumers, and the marginalized.
- Fundamental Rights expansion: PIL has helped read new rights into Article 21 (Right to Life), including the right to a clean environment, livelihood, and free legal aid.
- Key Social Justice Wins: Landmark cases include Vishaka v. State of Rajasthan (guidelines against sexual harassment), the environmental cases by M.C. Mehta, and Bandhua Mukti Morcha v. Union of India for bonded labourers.
- Decriminalization: The judiciary has taken proactive steps in decriminalizing LGBTQ+ rights (Navtej Singh Johar v. Union of India).

8.1.1 Judicial Restraint and State Power

Conversely, the courts have frequently shown restraint, particularly in matters involving political questions or when the state raises security and "law and order" concerns.

Political Questions: Courts often refuse to interfere in matters of political consequence, such as the use of Article 356 (President's Rule), as seen in S.R. Bommai v. Union of India.

Law and Order Over Protest: In various scenarios, the courts have prioritized state surveillance and security, causing concerns about the erosion of privacy and rights, such as in the Pegasus Surveillance Case (2021).

Rising Tension: Recent trends suggest a growing conflict where the judiciary is accused of both overreach (encroaching on executive functions) and inaction, causing a "confused and intimidating" landscape for activists.

8.2 JUDICIAL ACTIVISM AND PIL AS A TOOL FOR MOVEMENTS

- Expansion of Rights (Article 21): The Supreme Court has interpreted the right to life to include socio-economic rights—clean environment, education, and shelter—driven by environmental (e.g., Narmada Bachao Andolan) and labor movements.
- Public Interest Litigation (PIL): PIL developed as a mechanism to allow social action groups and individuals to bring issues of marginalized communities before the court, bypassing strict procedural technicalities (S.P. Gupta v. Union of India).
- Legal Reforms: Movements against atrocities (Dalit and women's rights) directly influenced laws like the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act and the Domestic Violence Act, 2005.
- Landmark Judgments: Decriminalization of Section 377 (LGBTQ+ rights), the Vishaka Guidelines on sexual harassment, and the abolition of Triple Talaq are direct responses to social movements.

8.2.1 Balancing Protest and State Authority

- The "Safety Valve" Perspective: Courts have acknowledged that protest is crucial to democracy, calling it a "safety valve" for public discontent. They have protected the right to assemble and protest, acknowledging it as part of free speech under Article 19(1)(a).
- Limits on Protests: Courts have maintained that while protest is allowed, it cannot paralyze civic life or hold the state to ransom. Rulings have occasionally limited protest spaces (e.g., in the Shaheen Bagh case), citing public inconvenience.
- Internet Shutdowns: Regarding protests like those against the CAA or in Jammu & Kashmir, the Court ruled that indefinite internet bans are illegal, though it did not immediately order restoration, leaving that to the state.

8.2.1.1. Judicial Responses to Recent Mass Protests

- Farmers' Protests (2020-2021): The Supreme Court stayed the implementation of the three farm laws and established a panel to talk to stakeholders, facilitating a legal resolution to street protest.
- Anti-CAA/NRC Protests: The judiciary has faced criticism for a perceived slow approach in addressing the crackdown on protestors and for upholding "public order" over civil liberties in certain cases.
- Bail in Protest Cases: The courts have faced difficulty balancing the stringent anti-terror law (UAPA) with individual liberties, resulting in some activists being denied bail for prolonged periods, while some cases show a push for stricter scrutiny of evidence.

8.3 Key Challenges and Criticisms

- Judicial Overreach: Critics argue that courts sometimes cross into the domain of the executive and legislature by making policy decisions (e.g., in environmental matters).
- Implementation Gaps: Often, favorable judgments (such as those for slum-dwellers in Ajay Maken v. Union of India) are not effectively implemented on the ground.

- Pro-State Stance: Some legal analysts argue that particularly in recent years, the courts have sometimes echoed the executive's stance, leading to a "chilling effect" on dissent and limiting the efficacy of some movements.

Indian courts serve as a key mediator that supports marginalized advocacy, even as they shift between advancing social change and reinforcing state control.

11.9. SUMMARY

Social movements are a vital feature of democratic societies. They provide a platform for citizens to unite and express dissent, demand rights, and seek reforms when existing institutions or government fail to address their concerns. These movements demonstrate and established how collective action can reshape laws, institutions, and social values. In essence, social movements act as a bridge between the people and the state. While some movements lead to significant reforms, others may also face resistance or suppression, but all contribute to shaping the social and legal fabric of society. Social movements are combined efforts to promote or resist social change, Main types include **reformative, revolutionary, alternative** and **redemptive** The roots of social movements in India can be traced from the 19th century when reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, and Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar initiated struggles against social evils such as sati, child marriage, and caste discrimination. The major movements in the recent times had a great influence on the large population of the India and world for various issues of the contemporary times are Farmers' Protests Anti-CAA Protests Environmental and Climate Movements Digital Movements and Social Media Activism Social movements and governments share a dynamic and often complex relationship. At its base, a social movement is a combined effort by people to bring about or resist social, political, cultural or economic change, while the government is the formal authority responsible for governance, law-making, and maintaining its order.

Social movements in India have played an important role in driving social, economic, and political reforms. These movements, representing diverse groups and issues, have raised awareness, shaped policies, and influenced governance to foster inclusivity and justice. India's government deals with social movements in different ways, usually either by changing laws or using the police. Many past movements helped make new rules for the country, but lately, the government has been focusing more on security and tighter controls. The response of the Indian judiciary to social movements is characterized by a dynamic, sometimes contradictory, interplay between proactive judicial activism—which has strengthened fundamental rights—and judicial restraint, which often prioritizes state "law and order". This evolving approach has seen the courts transition from a passive interpreter of law to an active guardian of constitutional values, primarily through the innovative mechanism of Public Interest Litigation (PIL).

11.10. GLOSSARY-

1. **Grievance-** something that you think is unfair and that you want to complain or protest about

2. **Mobilization-** Mobilization is the act of organizing, assembling, and preparing resources, people, or troops for a specific purpose or action, often for war or emergencies
3. **Reformative-** something designed to improve, correct, or rehabilitate a person's behavior, a system, or an institution.
4. Revolutionary- connected with or supporting political revolution
5. **Alternative**- one of two or more things that you can choose between
6. **Redemptive-** . It implies a saving or reforming quality, often used to describe acts, love, or power that improves a difficult situation.
7. **Campaigned-** to take part in a planned series of activities in order to make something happen or to prevent something
8. **LGBTQ+ -** LGBTQ+ is an acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (or questioning), acting as an umbrella term for diverse sexual orientations and gender identities. The "+" signifies inclusion of other identities like intersex, asexual, and pansexual. It is used to represent a community sharing experiences of non-heteronormative identity.

11.11. SAQs (SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS)

1. What are the Key Characteristics of the Social Movements?
2. Write any two kinds of social movements.
3. What are the Constitutional provisions supporting social movements in India ? Write any three.
4. Write short note on Judicial Responses to Recent Mass Protests in India ?
5. Write a short note on the response of the government for social movements in India?

11.12. TRUE AND FALSE

1. Social Movement is an individual action- (T/F)
2. Quit India Movements united people against colonial rule- (T/F)
3. The Supreme Court stayed the implementation of the three farm laws and established a panel to talk to stakeholders, facilitating a legal resolution to street protest (T/F)
4. Nirbhaya case also led to the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013- (T/F)
5. PIL has not expanded fundamental rights- (T/F)

11.13. TERMINAL QUESTIONS-

1.Write a note on different types of Social Movements.

2. Brief note on new social movements in India.

3. Elaborate the statement Judicial Activism and PIL as a tool for movements.

4. What is the the response of the government for social movements in India?

5. How social movements shaping modern India

11.14. SUGGESTED READINGS-

a. https://ebooks.inflibnet.ac.in/soc14/chapter/social-movements-governance-and-government/

b. https://mobilizingideas.wordpress.com/2013/02/18/the-courts-and-social-movements-two-literatures-and-two-methodologies/

c. https://aud.delhi.gov.in/social-movements

d. https://books.google.co.in/books/about/Contemporary_Social_Movements_in_India.html?id=0u7ZAAAAMAAJ&redir_esc=y

e. https://www.mea.gov.in/images/attach/amb/volume_01.pdf

ANSWERS:

Short Answers- 1 (Refer 1); 2 (Refer 3); 3 (Refer 4.3); 4 (Refer 8.2.1.1); 5. (Refer 7)

Terminal Questions-

1- (3.1); 2(4.2); 3(8.2); 4 (7); 5(6)

True and False-

11.5(F); 2(T); 3 (T); 4(T); 5 (F)

UNIT – 12 EMERGING SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IN INDIA

Unit Structure

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12.5.1 THE 2020–2021 MOVEMENT:
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12.12. TRUE AND FALSE

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12.1 INTRODUCTION

We often assume that the rights we enjoy just happened to exist. It is important to recall the struggles of the past, which made these rights possible. Social movements are organized collective efforts by groups of people aiming to bring about or resist change in society. In India, social movements have historically played a transformative role—from the freedom struggle to post-independence mobilizations around land reforms, caste justice, and environmental protection. Many nationalist movements around the world, in Asia, Africa and Americas that put an end to colonial rule. The socialist movements world over, the civil rights movement in the United States in the 1950s and 1960s that fought for equal rights for Blacks, the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa have all changed the world in fundamental ways. The Right to Vote Universal adult franchise is one of the foremost rights guaranteed by the Indian Constitution. It means that we cannot be governed by anyone other than the people we have ourselves elected and selected to represent us. This right is a radical departure from the days of colonial rule when ordinary people were compelled to submit to the authority of colonial officers who represented the interests of the British Crown. Even in Britain, not everyone was allowed to vote. Voting rights were limited to property-owning men. The Chartism was a social movement for parliamentary representation in England. In 1839, more than 1.25 million people signed the People's Charter asking for universal male suffrage, voting by ballot, and the right to stand for elections without owning property. In 1842, the movement managed to collect 3.25 million signatures, a huge number for a tiny country. In recent years, India has witnessed a new wave of emerging social movements shaped by globalization, digital technology, identity politics, environmental crises, and changing state-society relations. These movements differ significantly from earlier ones in terms of leadership, organization, strategies, and issues. They are often decentralized, media-driven, intersectional, and rights-based. The contemporary phase is marked by mass protests, digital activism, identity assertions, and transnational linkages, making Indian social movements more dynamic and complex than ever before.

12.2 OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the present unit is to study and get information about recent and ongoing movements e.g., farmers' protests, anti CAA protests along with emerging human rights issues and movement strategies. The chapter would include features of social movements comprising

nature of emerging social movements in India. It is tried to cover all the aspects in brief regarding both the aforesaid movements.

12.3 FEATURES OF A SOCIAL MOVEMENT

A social movement requires sustained collective and united action over time. Such action is mostly 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. Collective action must be marked by some degree of organization. This organization may include a leadership with a structure that defines how members relate to each other, make decisions and carry them out. A social movement has a general orientation or way of approaching to bring about (or to prevent) change. Key features of Social movement can be understood as follows-

- ✓ Social movements often arise with the aim of bringing about changes on a public issue, such as ensuring the right of the tribal population to use the forests or the right of displaced people to settlement and compensation.
- ✓ Peasant movements have often been brutally suppressed. More recently the social movements of erstwhile excluded groups, like the Dalits, have often invoked retaliatory action. Likewise proposals for extending reservation in educational institutions have led to counter movements opposing them.
- ✓ Social movements cannot change society easily. Since it goes against both entrenched interests and values, there is bound to be opposition and resistance. But over a period of time changes do take place.
- ✓ Social movements also develop distinct modes of protest. This could be candle and torch light processions, use of black cloth, street theatres, songs, poetry. Gandhi adopted novel ways such as ahimsa, satyagraha and his use of the charkha in the freedom movement.

12.3.1 NATURE OF EMERGING SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IN INDIA

Emerging social movements in India exhibit several distinctive characteristics:

- ✓ Shift from Class to Identity

Earlier movements were largely class-based (peasants, workers). Now, movements increasingly revolve around identity (religion, gender, caste, region) and rights.

- ✓ (b) Issue-based Mobilization

  Movements today are often centered on specific issues rather than long-term ideological programs—e.g., citizenship rights, environmental protection, gender justice.

- ✓ (c) Decentralized Leadership

  Unlike earlier movements led by charismatic leaders, many new movements are leaderless or collectively led.

- ✓ (d) Role of Digital Media

  Social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Twitter, and Instagram have transformed mobilization, communication, and narrative-building.

- ✓ (e) Intersectionality

  Movements increasingly recognize the overlapping nature of oppression—linking caste, gender, class, and environment.

12.4. MAJOR EMERGING SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IN INDIA

12.4.1 ANTI-CAA/NRC MOVEMENT

The protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) marked a significant moment in contemporary Indian politics. The anti-CAA movement is a widespread, largely grassroots protest in India opposing the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019 (CAA), which grants fast-tracked citizenship to non-Muslim refugees from Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, alongside fears of a national NRC. Protesters cite concerns that the law violates India's secular constitution, discriminates against Muslims, and threatens the Assam Accord. The law was criticized for being discriminatory, particularly against Muslims. It triggered nationwide protests involving students, civil society, and minority groups The Shaheen Bagh protest, led primarily by women, became a symbol of peaceful resistance

12.4.1.1 KEY ASPECTS OF THE ANTI-CAA MOVEMENT:

- Origin and Nature: Initiated in December 2019, protests began in Assam due to concerns over indigenous identity and immigration, later becoming a nationwide movement driven by students (e.g., Jamia Millia Islamia, AMU) and civil society.
- Shaheen Bagh: The protest in Shaheen Bagh, Delhi, became a prominent, long-term sit-in led by women, symbolizing peaceful, decentralized resistance.
- Core Objections: Critics argue the CAA, paired with the proposed National Register of Citizens (NRC), could be used to marginalize or render Indian Muslims stateless.
- Diverse Motivations: Protests in the Northeast focused on the influx of foreigners and violation of the 1985 Assam Accord, while elsewhere, the focus was on the exclusion of Muslims, secularism, and equality.
- Resistance Methods: Methods included peaceful sit-ins, marches, reading the Preamble of the Constitution, and digital activism.
- Outcome and Current Status: While the initial, massive 2019-2020 protests were interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic, minor protests have resurfaced following the notification of CAA rules in 2024, particularly in Assam.

12.4.2 CURRENT STATUS AND LEGAL DEVELOPMENTS (2026)

- Supreme Court Hearings: A final hearing for over 200 petitions challenging the constitutional validity of the CAA is scheduled to begin on May 5, 2026. A three-judge bench led by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant is expected to conclude arguments by May 12, 2026.
- Implementation Ongoing: Since the notification of the Citizenship (Amendment) Rules, 2024, the government has been granting citizenship to non-Muslim migrants from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and Pakistan. By early 2025, officials reported that thousands had received citizenship, though the Ministry of Home Affairs has not released exact public data on total beneficiaries.
- Expansion of Cut-off Date: In September 2025, the central government reportedly issued an order extending the cut-off for legalizing the stay of certain foreigners to December 31, 2024, shifting from the original 2014 deadline. This triggered a new wave of protests in Assam.

12.4.3 IMPACT OF THE MOVEMENT

The anti-CAA movement has had profound social, legal, and political impacts, reshaping India's internal discourse on citizenship and secularism while drawing significant global attention.

1. Social and Communal Impact

- Deepened Polarization: The movement intensified ideological and religious divides across India. While many saw it as a fight to "Save the Constitution," it also led to communal friction, culminating in the 2020 Northeast Delhi riots, which resulted in 53 deaths and extensive property damage.
- New Identity Politics: The movement spurred a "Muslim-centric" political assertion, particularly among youth and women, moving away from traditional party-led advocacy toward unapologetic public displays of religious and constitutional identity.
- Shaheen Bagh Model: The months-long sit-in by women at Shaheen Bagh became a global symbol of peaceful, decentralized resistance, inspiring similar "occupy" style protests across the country.

2. Legal and Constitutional Impact

- Overburdened Judiciary: Over 230 petitions were filed in the Supreme Court challenging the CAA's constitutionality, primarily under Article 14 (Right to Equality).
- Ongoing Legal Battles: As of early 2026, the Supreme Court is actively hearing these challenges, including fresh applications seeking to stay the Citizenship Amendment Rules, 2024, which operationalized the Act.
- Precedent for Federal Friction: States like Kerala, West Bengal, and Rajasthan passed legislative resolutions against the CAA, marking a significant moment where state governments openly challenged a central law on constitutional grounds.

3. Political and Regional Impact

- Northeastern Autonomy: Intense protests in the Northeast forced the central government to exempt Sixth Schedule tribal areas and states requiring an Inner Line Permit (ILP) from the CAA's implementation.

- Electoral Influence: The movement reshaped regional alliances; for instance, the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) in Assam faced internal factionalism and briefly withdrew from the NDA alliance due to the Act's unpopularity with its voter base.
- Democratic Norms: Critics and international watchdogs, including Amnesty International and the UN, have argued that the state's response—including internet shutdowns, arbitrary detentions, and the use of the UAPA (anti-terror law) against activists—has significantly strained India's democratic and secular reputation.

4. International and Geopolitical Impact

- Diplomatic Friction: The Act strained relations with Bangladesh, which officially downplayed claims of systemic persecution, and Pakistan, which used the law to criticize India's human rights record.
- Global Censure: Organizations like the OIC and various Western lawmakers expressed concerns over the exclusion of Muslims, while the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights even sought to intervene in the Indian Supreme Court case.
- Brought international attention to human rights concerns.

12.5. FARMERS' MOVEMENTS (2020–2021 AND 2024–ONGOING)

One of the largest social movements in recent Indian history. Triggered by three farm laws perceived as harmful to farmers' interests Massive mobilization across states, especially Punjab and Haryana continued in 2024 with renewed demands such as MSP guarantees and debt waivers. The Indian farmers' movements represent a massive collective assertion of agrarian rights, beginning with the historic 2020–2021 protests and continuing with a second major wave from February 2024. While the initial movement succeeded in forcing the repeal of three controversial laws, the 2024 agitation focuses on securing legal guarantees for financial protections, such as the Minimum Support Price (MSP).

12.5.1 THE 2020–2021 MOVEMENT:

This year-long agitation was a reaction to three farm acts passed in September 2020 that sought to deregulate agricultural markets.

- Contested Laws: Protesters feared the Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce Act, Price Assurance Act, and Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act would dismantle the state-regulated mandi system and leave them vulnerable to corporate interests.
- Key Events: Tens of thousands of farmers from Punjab, Haryana, and Uttar Pradesh camped at Delhi borders (Singhu, Tikri, and Ghazipur). Significant events included a nationwide general strike in November 2020 and a tractor parade on Republic Day 2021 that turned violent at the Red Fort.
- Outcome: After 11 rounds of inconclusive talks and over 700 reported fatalities, Prime Minister Modi announced the repeal of all three laws in November 2021. The protests officially ended in December 2021.

12.5.2 THE 2024–ONGOING MOVEMENT: "DELHI CHALO 2.0"

Starting on February 13, 2024, farmers returned to the roads, alleging the government had unfulfilled promises from the 2021 settlement.

- **Primary Demands:**
  - ✓ Legal Guarantee for MSP: Enacting a law to ensure a guaranteed minimum price for all 23 crops based on the Swaminathan Commission's C2+50% formula (cost of production plus 50% profit).
  - ✓ Financial Relief: Full debt waivers for farmers and laborers, and a monthly pension of ₹10,000 for those over 60 years old.
  - ✓ Justice & Compensation: Punishment for the perpetrators of the 2021 Lakhimpur Kheri violence and compensation for families of those who died in the previous protests.
  - ✓ Other Requests: Withdrawal from the World Trade Organization (WTO), scrapping the Electricity Amendment Bill 2020, and increasing MGNREGA work to 200 days at a ₹700 daily wage.
- **Current Status:**

  Protesters have been primarily held at the Shambhu and Khanauri borders between Punjab and Haryana due to massive barricades and police use of tear gas and drones. Negotiations remain largely deadlocked despite multiple rounds of talks between union leaders and central ministers.

12.5.3 KEY FEATURES OF THE MOVEMENT-

The farmers' movements in India (2020–2021 and 2024–ongoing) are defined by their unprecedented scale, sophisticated logistical organization, and a shift from defensive to proactive policy demands.

1. Distinctive Organizational Structure

- Logistical Ingenuity: Protesters transformed Delhi's border highways into semi-permanent townships with communal kitchens (langars), mobile charging stations, makeshift schools, libraries, and medical clinics.
- Funding & Resource Mobilization: Sustained through decentralized village contributions and support from the international diaspora, with villages providing steady inflows of food, fuel, and funding.
- Unified Fronts: While the 2020–21 movement was spearheaded by the Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM), the 2024 wave is primarily led by SKM (Non-Political) and the Kisan Mazdoor Morcha (KMM).

2. Shift in Demands and Strategy

- From Repeal to Reform: The first phase (2020–21) focused on a defensive goal—repealing three specific laws perceived as "anti-farmer". The 2024 movement is more proactive, demanding a permanent legal framework for a Minimum Support Price (MSP) for all 23 crops based on the Swaminathan Commission's C2+50% formula.
- Broadened Agenda: Beyond crop prices, current demands include full debt waivers, monthly pensions (₹10,000 for those over 60), and withdrawing from the World Trade Organization (WTO) to protect domestic agriculture.

3. Tactical & Digital Evolution

- Digital Resistance: Use of specialized social media cells to counter misinformation, documented in platforms like Kisan Ekta Morcha and alternative newspapers like Trolley Times.

- State Interaction: Protests in 2024 faced a more fortified response, with authorities using multi-layered barricades (concrete blocks, iron nails), drones for tear gas, and internet shutdowns at border points like Shambhu and Khanauri.
- Symbolic Protest: Extensive use of tractors not just for transport, but as mobile shelters and symbols of agrarian autonomy, alongside traditional methods like Rail Roko (stopping trains).

4. Social Inclusivity and Identity

- Breaking Stereotypes: A significant feature has been the active leadership and participation of women, who organized their own "Women Farmers' Parliaments" to address land rights and gender-specific agrarian issues.
- Caste and Class Solidarity: Efforts to bridge traditional divides, bringing together landowning peasants, Dalit agricultural laborers, and industrial workers under a shared "Annadata" (food provider) identity.

12.6. SOME OF THE MOVEMENTS IN BRIEF

Some of the movements have been produced here in brief which would render information regarding various movements

12.6.1 Women's Movements and Gender Justice

Recent years have seen renewed feminist mobilization:

(a) Anti-rape protests (e.g., Hathras case)

Demand for justice and accountability and focus on caste and gender intersection

(b) Women in broader movements

Active participation in anti-CAA and farmers' protests and Women's leadership highlighted as a defining feature

(c) Workplace and digital feminism

#MeToo movement in India and advocacy against workplace harassment

12.6.2 Environmental Movements

Environmental activism has expanded significantly:

(a) Anti-development protests- Against mining, deforestation, and industrial projects

(b) Climate justice movements- Youth-led activism inspired by global climate discourse

(c) Local struggles- Forest rights movements by tribal communities

12.7. EMERGING HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES AND MOVEMENT STRATIGIES

Emerging social movements in India are closely linked to evolving human rights concerns: Human rights organizations like Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International have documented several critical issues:

- Excessive Use of Force: Security forces have deployed tear gas via drones—a first in India—and used rubber bullets and water cannons against peaceful assemblies at border points like Shambhu.
- Digital Authoritarianism: Authorities have frequently used internet shutdowns in Haryana and Punjab to prevent coordination, while social media platform X reported complying with government orders to suspend accounts linked to the protest.
- Right to Life and Liberty: Multiple fatalities have been reported, including the high-profile death of 21-year-old Shubhkaran Singh. Protesters also allege unlawful detentions and "terrorist-like" treatment by state forces.
- Right to Peaceful Assembly: The fortification of Delhi’s borders with concrete blocks, spikes, and iron nails is viewed by critics as a physical barrier to the democratic right to march and protest.

12.7.1 EVOLVING MOVEMENT STRATEGIES

Farmers have adapted their tactics to bypass heavy state resistance:

- Technological Counter-Measures: To defend against drones, protesters used kites and sling-shots to intercept them. They also utilized soaked jute bags to neutralize tear gas canisters immediately upon landing.

- Modified Machinery: Farmers brought heavy machinery, such as bulldozers and hydraulic cranes, to push through multi-layered barricades. Tractors were modified into hardened shelters to withstand water cannons.
- Information Warfare: A robust digital presence is maintained to document police action in real-time, helping to counter government narratives that often label the movement as "politically motivated" or "foreign-funded".
- Broadening Coalitions: The movement has increasingly joined forces with trade unions, linking agrarian demands for MSP with industrial labor issues like the repeal of new labor codes

12.8. CONCLUSION

The conclusions of the anti-CAA and farmers' movements differ sharply in their policy outcomes, though both were historically significant for their scale and duration.

✓ **Farmers' Movement (2020–2021)**

- The first phase of the farmers' movement is widely considered a major success for the protesters.
- Result: After a year-long standoff, Prime Minister Modi announced the repeal of all three farm laws on November 19, 2021.
- Official End: Protesters formally suspended their agitation on December 11, 2021, after the government provided written assurances on other issues, including the withdrawal of police cases and compensation for the families of deceased protesters.
- Legacy: While the laws were repealed, the core demand for a legal guarantee of Minimum Support Price (MSP) remained unresolved, leading directly to the ongoing 2024–2025 protests.

✓ **Anti-CAA Movement (2019–2020)**

- The anti-CAA protests concluded without the law being repealed, but they were halted primarily by external circumstances.
- Result: The movement did not result in a repeal of the Citizenship Amendment Act. The government maintained that the law was constitutionally valid.
- Official End: Massive sit-ins, most notably at Shaheen Bagh, were forced to wind up in March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown.
- Current Status: The law was officially operationalised in March 2024 after the Ministry of Home Affairs notified the rules. The first citizenship certificates under the CAA were issued in May 2024.

Emerging social movements in India reflect a vibrant yet contested democracy. They highlight growing awareness of rights, increased participation of marginalized groups, and the transformative role of technology. At the same time, these movements face challenges from state responses, internal fragmentation, and evolving political dynamics. Overall, the trajectory of social movements in India suggests a shift toward:

- Rights-based activism
- Intersectional struggles
- Digital and decentralized mobilization

These movements will continue to shape India's democratic future by redefining the relationship between citizens and the state.

12.9. SUMMARY

Social movements are organized collective efforts by groups of people aiming to bring about or resist change in society. In India, social movements have historically played a transformative role—from the freedom struggle to post-independence mobilizations around land reforms, caste justice, and environmental protection. In recent years, India has witnessed a new wave of emerging social movements shaped by globalization, digital technology, identity politics, environmental crises, and changing state-society relations. These movements differ significantly from earlier ones in terms of leadership, organization, strategies, and issues. A social movement requires sustained collective and united action over time. Such action is mostly 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. The protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) marked a significant moment in contemporary Indian politics. The anti-CAA movement is a widespread, largely grassroots protest in India opposing the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019 (CAA), which grants fast-tracked citizenship to non-Muslim refugees from Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, alongside fears of a national NRC. The law was criticized for being discriminatory, particularly against Muslims. It triggered nationwide protests involving students, civil society, and minority groups The Shaheen Bagh protest, led primarily by women, became a symbol of peaceful resistance. One of the largest social movements in recent Indian history. Triggered by three farm laws perceived as harmful to farmers' interests Massive mobilization across states, especially Punjab and Haryana continued in 2024 with

renewed demands such as MSP guarantees and debt waivers. This year-long agitation was a reaction to three farm acts passed in September 2020 that sought to deregulate agricultural markets. After 11 rounds of inconclusive talks and over 700 reported fatalities, Prime Minister Modi announced the repeal of all three laws in November 2021. The protests officially ended in December 2021. Starting on February 13, 2024, farmers returned to the roads, alleging the government had unfulfilled promises from the 2021 settlement. Protesters have been primarily held at the Shambhu and Khanauri borders between Punjab and Haryana due to massive barricades and police use of tear gas and drones. Negotiations remain largely deadlocked despite multiple rounds of talks between union leaders and central ministers. Emerging social movements in India are closely linked to evolving human rights concerns: Human rights organizations like Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International have documented several critical issues The conclusions of the anti-CAA and farmers' movements differ sharply in their policy outcomes, though both were historically significant for their scale and duration. Emerging social movements in India reflect a vibrant yet contested democracy. They highlight growing awareness of rights, increased participation of marginalized groups, and the transformative role of technology. At the same time, these movements face challenges from state responses, internal fragmentation, and evolving political dynamics. Overall, the trajectory of social movements in India suggests a shift toward Rights-based activism, Intersectional struggles and Digital and decentralized mobilization.

12.10. GLOSSARY

1. **Colonial rule-** Colonial rule is a system where a powerful foreign nation takes direct political, economic, and social control over another territory (colony), governing it for the benefit of the colonizer.

2. **Citizenship-** the state of being a citizen of a particular country.

3. **Mobilization-** Mobilization is the act of assembling, organizing, and preparing resources (people, troops, or materials) for a specific purpose, commonly for war, emergency response, or collective action.

4. **Peasant movement -** A peasant movement is a collective action, uprising, or organized struggle by farmers and rural workers to protest unfair conditions such as high taxation, land dispossession, oppressive landlordism, and economic exploitation.

5. **Minimum Support Price (MSP)-** Minimum Support Price (MSP) is a government-determined price guaranteed to farmers for their crops, irrespective of market conditions.

12.11 SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS

1. Write few words about anti- CAA movement.

2. What is the current status of CAA movement?

3. What do you understand by Minimum Support Price (MSP)?

4. Write any three demands of Farmer's Protest 2024.

5. What are the emerging Human Rights issues in movements?

1 (Refer 4.1); 2 (4.2); 3(10); 4(5.2) and 5(7).

12.12 TRUE AND FALSE

1. Social Movements can change Society easily (T/F)

2. Shaheen Bagh Protest was related to Farmer's Protest (T/F)

3. The hearing of CAA matter is pending (T/F)

4. There are legal impacts of the Social Movements (T/F)

5. Delhi Chalo 2.0 is related to Farmers Protest (T/F)

1. (F); 2. (F); 3.(T); 4. (T) and 5.(T)

12.13 TERMINAL QUESTIONS

1. What are the Features of a Social Movement?
2. Write Key aspects of the Anti-CAA movement.
3. What was the impact of the Anti- CAA movement?
4. Write a brief note on Farmer's Protest 2020-21.

1 (Refer 2); 2 (4.1.1); 3(4.3); 4(5.1) and 5(7.1).

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12.15 SUGGESTED READINGS

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UNIT 13 CHALLENGES TO HUMAN RIGHTS MOVEMENTS

Unit Structure

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13.1 INTRODUCTION

The human rights movement is a global, non-governmental activist effort focused on protecting basic rights, resisting oppression, and promoting social justice. Centered on the principles of universality and human dignity, the movement advocates for rights regardless of nationality, gender, or background, often targeting colonialism, racism, and inequality. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) is a milestone document in the history of human rights. Drafted by representatives with different legal and cultural backgrounds from all regions of the world, the Declaration was proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in Paris on 10 December 1948. Historical and modern movements include women's suffrage, anti-apartheid, the Civil Rights movement, Black Lives Matter, and LGBTQ+ rights. Began with a focus on civil/political rights (preventing torture, freeing prisoners of conscience) but has expanded to economic, social, and cultural rights, including women's and children's rights. The movement has diverse roots, including specific regional movements, such as the growth of civil liberties movements in India following the 1970s emergency rule. Human rights movements face critical challenges including shrinking democratic spaces, state-sponsored repression, systemic discrimination, and impunity for violations. Key obstacles also involve the rise of authoritarianism, lack of political will, poor implementation of laws, and economic inequalities that disproportionately affect vulnerable communities. Governments worldwide are increasingly restricting freedom of association, assembly, and expression, hindering the ability of activists to work. Situations of war, terrorism, and instability result in rampant abuse of rights and the collapse of protective institutions. In developing countries, poverty and a lack of resources inhibit the fulfillment of fundamental rights. The digital space poses issues regarding surveillance, misinformation, and the rapid spread of hate speech.

13.2 OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this unit are to study about the challenges those are faced in the Human Rights Movements, which would include authoritarianism, populism and shrinking civic space. Human rights defenders and risks, balancing local cultures and universal rights.

13.3 CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND OF HUMAN RIGHTS MOVEMENTS

Human Rights movements are collective efforts aimed at promoting and protecting rights recognized under constitutional and international framework such as:

- Constitution of India
- Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Human rights movements are organized, non-governmental efforts to protect, secure and promote rights for all individuals, stemming from principles of dignity, equality, and natural law. The foundation of Human Rights may be considered as follows-

- ✓ Historically, human rights grew from the idea that certain rights are universal, inherent, and derived from nature or a higher power, rather than granted by governments.
- ✓ Philosophers like John Locke pushed the concept of inalienable rights—life, liberty, and property—which later influenced modern constitutions and the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR).
- ✓ Movements are anchored in inalienability, indivisibility, and equality, universality, asserting that all people possess these rights everywhere.
- ✓ World War II propelled human rights onto the global stage, leading to the creation of the United Nations Charter and making the protection of fundamental freedoms a central global obligation.

13.3.1 EVOLUTION OF THE MOVEMENTS

The evolution of human rights may be traced from following few reasons as follows-

- ✓ Initially concentrated on civil and political rights, such as the right to a fair trial, freedom from torture, natural justice and freedom of speech.
- ✓ Movements expanded to include economic, social, and cultural rights, as well as specific protections for children, women, refugees, and LGBTQ+ groups.
- ✓ Modern movements often operate globally, utilizing Amnesty International and Human Rights watch to pressure governments through reports, advocacy, and direct action.
- ✓ Early movements aimed to limit the power of rulers over their subjects, fostering the development of democratic principles.
- ✓ While modernized in the West, notions of duty, dignity, and justice exist in ancient traditions globally, including the Babylonian Code of Hammurabi, Hindu Vedas, and Greco-Roman traditions.
- ✓ Movements in various countries often align with anti-colonialism and democratization, such as the Indian freedom movement's fight for self-rule and equality.

13.4 MAJOR CHALLENGES TO HUMAN RIGHTS MOVEMENTS

Today, human rights movements face challenges—from the global resurgence of authoritarianism and the shrinkage of democratic spaces to emerging threats from digital

surveillance and climate-driven catastrophes. These obstacles often create hurdles, making it increasingly difficult for activists to operate safely or effectively.

1. Authoritarianism & Democratic Backsliding

The most significant global threat is the rise of authoritarian practices, even within established democracies.

- ✓ Autocratic regimes increasingly use "mock compliance," participating in international bodies like the UN Human Rights Council only to weaken them from within and block scrutiny.
- ✓ Countries like China and Russia collaborate to promote "alternative" narratives that prioritize state sovereignty and economic development over individual civil and political rights.
- ✓ Many states have introduced restrictive laws (e.g., "foreign agent" or anti-NGO laws) that cut off international funding and stigmatize activists as tools of foreign powers.

2. Shrinking Civic Space & Repression

The environment for activism is becoming more hostile worldwide. Some of the reasons are-

- ✓ Human rights defenders (HRDs), journalists, and environmental activists face escalating risks of arbitrary arrest, torture, and assassination.
- ✓ Authoritarian states now target exiled critics far beyond their own borders through surveillance, kidnapping, and even physical violence.
- ✓ Women human rights defenders (WHRDs) are uniquely targeted with misogynistic attacks, gender-based violence, and smear campaigns intended to silence them.

3. Technological & Digital Challenges

While technology can aid movements, it has also become a powerful tool for suppression. Technology many times is used as a suppression tool of movements as-

- ✓ Pervasive use of spyware, facial recognition, and biometrics allows governments to monitor and trap activists with unprecedented precision.
- ✓ AI-powered tools, such as those used in hiring or predictive policing, can entrench and amplify racial and gender-based discrimination.
- ✓ New laws ostensibly aimed at "fake news" or "counter-terrorism" are frequently used to silence peaceful dissent and block access to information.

4. Global Crises & Resource Strain

Changing global crises are diverting attention and resources away from rights protection causing challenges to human rights movements

- ✓ Climate change is worsening displacement and conflict, disproportionately affecting vulnerable populations whose rights to life, food, and water are at stake.
- ✓ The number of armed conflicts has more than doubled in the last 15 years, leading to "dehumanization" and the systematic disregard of international humanitarian law.

- ✓ Multilateral organizations like the UN are facing severe funding crises as member states withhold contributions, hindering their ability to monitor and respond to abuses.

13.4.1 SOME OTHER CHALLENGES

There are some other challenges which either derails or delays to achieve goal within limited time frame and may be summarized as-

a. State Repression and Legal Restrictions- One of the significant challenges is the restrictive role of the state by use of stringent laws such as-

- Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act
- National Security Act

These laws are sometimes invoked to suppress dissent, detain activist, and curb protests.

b. Judicial Limitations and Delayed Justice-

Although courts are guardians of rights, movements often face:

- Delay in adjudication
- Procedural complexities
- Limited enforcement of judgments

For instance, landmark rulings like Menaka Gandhi v. Union of India expanded rights, but implementation remains inconsistent.

c. Lack of Awareness and Illiteracy- In many regions, especially rural areas:

- People are unaware of their rights
- Social hierarchies discourage assertion of rights
- Marginalized communities lack access to education

These reasons results that human rights violations remain unreported or normalized.

d. Socio-Cultural Barriers- Deep-rooted social norms pose serious obstacles as-

- Caste-based discrimination
- Patriarchal values
- Religious conservatism

Movements addressing issues like gender equality or caste justice often face backlash from conservative groups.

e. Fragmentation within Movements- Human rights movements sometimes suffer from:

- Ideological differences
- Leadership conflicts
- Lack of coordination

This fragmentation weakens collective bargaining power and reduces impact and is a challenge in movement.

f. Media Bias and Misinformation- Media plays a key role in shaping public opinion, but sometimes adverse role is also played using media platforms.

- Coverage may be biased or selective
- Activists may be portrayed negatively
- Misinformation spreads quickly via social media

Negative publication delegitimize of genuine movements.

13.5 CASE STUDIES OF HUMAN RIGHTS CHALLENGES IN INDIA

Human rights movements in India, rooted in constitutional values of justice and equality, face significant challenges from systemic discrimination, caste violence, and state repression. Key challenges include protection of vulnerable groups (Dalits, tribal groups), freedom of expression violations, and impunity for security forces. Despite, civil society efforts, the movement are hindered by slow judicial processes and socio-political inequalities.

- ✓ Despite constitutional protections championed by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, Dalits face widespread discrimination, forced degrading labor, and abuse. Movements struggle against entrenched caste hierarchies.
- ✓ The Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan (MKSS) spearheaded a, successful campaign linking livelihood struggles with rights advocacy, highlighting the power of ordinary citizens to fight corruption and demanding the Right to Information.
- ✓ In states like Odisha, industrial expansion has led to the displacement of tribals, causing massive rights violations, loss of livelihood, and poor rehabilitation, according to this study on rural poor tribals.
- ✓ Human Rights Watch reports that activists, journalists, and protestors often face harassment, arrests under anti-terror laws (UAPA), and violence, particularly in conflict-affected regions like Jammu and Kashmir.
- ✓ Women's rights activists struggle against entrenched patriarchy, including violence by khap panchayats and systemic challenges in accessing justice, such as the 2015 Uttar Pradesh Dalit rape case.

Core Challenges to Human Rights Advocacy

- ✓ Allegations of torture and custodial deaths persist, with laws like AFSPA in conflict areas (J&K, Northeast) creating accountability gaps.
- ✓ A backlog of cases makes it difficult for marginalized communities to achieve timely justice.
- ✓ Increased scrutiny on civil society organizations and media has hindered activism.

India's human rights movement is robust yet faces monumental challenges, requiring stronger enforcement of legal protections and a shift in socio-political attitudes to ensure the rights of all citizens.

13.6 STRATEGIES TO OVERCOME CHALLENGES

Overcoming the challenges of human rights movements requires a multifaceted, adaptive approach that combines grassroots organizing, legal action, and strategic communication to combat systemic oppression and shrinking civic space.

13.6.1 LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONAL REFORMS-

To overcome systemic challenges, human rights movements advocate for the following legal and institutional reforms to ensure protection, accountability, and operational sustainability.

1. Strengthening National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs)

A primary institutional reform involves ensuring NHRIs (such as National Human Rights Commissions) comply with the Paris Principles, the international standard for independent and effective human rights bodies.

- ✓ Reforming the selection and appointment processes to be merit-based, transparent, and free from political interference.
- ✓ Amending laws that require NHRIs to use seconded police or government officials for investigations, which can create a perceived or real conflict of interest when investigating state-linked abuses.
- ✓ Moving beyond advisory powers to make NHRI recommendations legally binding on state authorities to increase accountability.

2. Dedicated Laws for Human Rights Defenders (HRDs)

- ✓ Explicitly defining "Human Rights Defender" in national law to provide them with specific legal standing and protections against transnational repression and smear campaigns.
- ✓ Establishing state-funded units—such as Colombia's National Protection Unit (NPU)—tasked with providing physical security, secure communication tools, and emergency relocation for activists at risk.
- ✓ Ensuring laws protect the right of NGOs to receive funding, including from international sources, by reforming restrictive administrative and reporting requirements.

3. Judicial and Legal System Overhauls

Movements seek to reform the broader legal landscape to prevent the "weaponization" of the law against dissent.

- ✓ Repealing or amending colonial-era or overly broad laws related to sedition, defamation, and national security that are often misused to suppress activists and journalists.

- ✓ Implementing judicial reforms such as fast-track courts for human rights cases to address severe backlogs that deny timely justice to victims.
- ✓ Broadening the rules of locus standi (the right to bring a case) to allow social action groups to file lawsuits on behalf of marginalized individuals who cannot afford legal representation.

4. Modernizing Global and Regional Accountability

In 2025–2026, institutional reforms are focusing on making international systems more resilient to global "liquidity crises" and shifting geopolitics.

- ✓ Encouraging local and national governments to use human rights-based budgeting to ensure public funds are transparently allocated to social equity and dignity.
- ✓ Strengthening regional mechanisms, such as the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, to address rights violations that cross borders, such as climate displacement or digital surveillance.
- ✓ Urging institutions like the UN Human Rights Council to create frameworks for algorithmic fairness and digital privacy to protect activists from tech-driven surveillance.

13.6.2 AWARENESS AND EDUCATION

Awareness and education strategies for human rights are evolving to address modern challenges like digital disinformation, climate change, and systemic polarization.

1. Human Rights Education (HRE) Models

Current HRE strategies often utilize three distinct models to tailor awareness to different audiences:

- ✓ Focuses on the general public to foster a global human rights culture by integrating basic rights, environmental awareness, and consumer rights into public values.
- ✓ Targets professionals (lawyers, journalists, police) using legal and political approaches, such as training on court cases, transparency, and the right to information.
- ✓ Specifically designed for vulnerable populations and victims of abuse to empower them psychologically and sociologically to reclaim their dignity.

2. Countering Disinformation and Digital Literacy

With the rise of generative AI, movements are prioritizing "digital civic literacy" to protect the integrity of human rights narratives.

- ✓ Programs like those mentioned in the UNESCO guide on hate speech teach learners to distinguish between legitimate free speech and harmful incitement.
- ✓ Training users to verify information by checking multiple independent sources and using technical tools (e.g., reverse image search) to detect deepfakes and AI-generated propaganda.
- ✓ Using interactive games and simulations to let learners experience and apply manipulative strategies in a safe environment, making them more resilient to real-world disinformation.

3. Institutional Curricular Reforms

Governments and international bodies are embedding human rights directly into formal education systems:

- ✓ The UN's World Programme for Human Rights Education (2025–2029) is currently focusing on youth, with specific emphasis on climate change, gender equality, and digital technologies.
- ✓ Policies like India's National Education Policy (NEP) 2024 are making HRE a foundational, interdisciplinary component in schools and higher education.
- ✓ Prioritizing specialized workshops for educators to move beyond "teaching about" rights to creating rights-respecting learning environments.

13.6.3 STRENGTHENING CIVIL SOCIETY

Strengthening civil society is a critical strategy for human rights movements focusing on resilience, narrative control, and proactive coalition-building to counter shrinking civic space and transnational anti-rights movements.

1. Building Resilience and Protection

As governments and anti-rights actors increasingly coordinate across borders, civil society is shifting from reactive to proactive resilience strategies.

- ✓ Networks are expanding rapid response support and security tools to protect human rights defenders from physical and digital reprisals.
- ✓ Civil society is treating digital justice as a core pillar, investing in secure digital infrastructure and encrypted communication to mitigate surveillance risks.
- ✓ Movements are creating "quiet rooms"—dedicated spaces for long-term strategic rebuilding and collective imagination, away from the immediate pressure of crisis response.

2. Narrative and Strategic Communication

Movements are moving beyond "activist circles" to engage the broader public and reframe human rights as practical everyday tools.

- ✓ Rather than preaching to the choir, organizations are using language that connects rights to shared values like fairness, dignity, and security to win over skeptical or indifferent audiences.
- ✓ Civil society is developing value-based narratives that emphasize "what we stand for" rather than just "what we stand against," helping to reclaim the public discourse from populist actors.
- ✓ Highlighting rights as daily necessities—such as a living wage, digital privacy, and affordable housing—to make international standards relatable at a local level.

3. Coalition Building and Solidarity

New forms of alliances are bridging traditional divides between sectors to increase collective influence.

- ✓ Modern strategies involve partnering with non-traditional allies, including the private sector, youth leaders, content creators, and professional groups like medical and legal experts.
- ✓ Building Global South-led alliances that are better suited to resist anti-rights agendas in a changing global order.
- ✓ International NGOs are adopting partnership principles based on equitability, recognizing local civil society as the most legitimate voice for their communities and prioritizing their leadership.

13.7 SUMMARY

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) is a milestone document in the history of human rights. Drafted by representatives with different legal and cultural backgrounds from all regions of the world, the Declaration was proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in Paris on 10 December 1948. Historical and modern movements include women's suffrage, anti-apartheid, the Civil Rights movement, Black Lives Matter, and LGBTQ+ rights. Began with a focus on civil/political rights (preventing torture, freeing prisoners of conscience) but has expanded to economic, social, and cultural rights, including women's and children's rights. Governments worldwide are increasingly restricting freedom of association, assembly, and expression, hindering the ability of activists to work. Situations of war, terrorism, and instability result in rampant abuse of rights and the collapse of protective institutions. In developing countries, poverty and a lack of resources inhibit the fulfillment of fundamental rights. Human Rights movements are collective efforts aimed at promoting and protecting rights recognized under constitutional and international framework such as Human rights movements are organized, non-governmental efforts to protect, secure and promote rights for all individuals, stemming from principles of dignity, equality, and natural law. Historically, human rights grew from the idea that certain rights are universal, inherent, and derived from nature or a higher power, rather than granted by governments. World War II propelled human rights onto the global stage, leading to the creation of the United Nations Charter and making the protection of fundamental freedoms a central global obligation.

The evolution of human rights may be traced from following few reasons Initially concentrated on civil and political rights, such as the right to a fair trial, freedom from torture, natural justice and freedom of speech. Movements expanded to include economic, social, and cultural rights, as well as specific protections for children, women, refugees, and LGBTQ+ groups. Early movements aimed to limit the power of rulers over their subjects, fostering the development of

democratic principles. Today, human rights movements face challenges—from the global resurgence of authoritarianism and the shrinkage of democratic spaces to emerging threats from digital surveillance and climate-driven catastrophes. The most significant global threat is the rise of authoritarian practices, even within established democracies. The environment for activism is becoming more hostile worldwide. Human rights defenders (HRDs), journalists, and environmental activists face escalating risks of arbitrary arrest, torture, and assassination. Authoritarian states now target exiled critics far beyond their own borders through surveillance, kidnapping, and even physical violence. Human rights movements in India, rooted in constitutional values of justice and equality, face significant challenges from systemic discrimination, caste violence, and state repression. Key challenges include protection of vulnerable groups (Dalits, tribal groups), freedom of expression violations, and impunity for security forces. Despite, civil society efforts, the movement are hindered by slow judicial processes and socio-political inequalities. Overcoming the challenges of human rights movements requires a multifaceted, adaptive approach that combines grassroots organizing, legal action, and strategic communication to combat systemic oppression and shrinking civic space.

13.8 GLOSSARY

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) is a milestone document adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 10 December 1948 in Paris. It established, for the first time, a common standard of fundamental human rights to be universally protected for all people, regardless of race, gender, religion, or nationality.

Authoritarianism- Authoritarianism is a form of government or social organization characterized by strong central power, limited political freedoms, and strict obedience to authority.

Democratic Backsliding - Democratic backsliding, or autocratization, is the state-led, gradual weakening of democratic institutions, norms, and civil liberties in a country.

Shrinking Civic Space - Shrinking civic space refers to the decreasing freedom for individuals and civil society organizations to organize, debate, and engage in public life due to government restrictions, repression, or intimidation.

Digital Literacy- Digital literacy is the ability to confidently and critically find, evaluate, create, and communicate information using technology, encompassing both technical and cognitive skills.

13.9 SAQs (SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS)

1. Write two foundation background of Human Rights movements.

2. Write any three reasons causing evolution of the human rights movements.

3. What are the features of authoritarianism and democratic backsliding?

4. Write any Five challenges to Human Rights Movements.

5. What are the core challenges to Human Rights Advocacy?

Answers- 1 (Refer 3); 2(3.1); 3(4); 4(4.1); and 5(5).

13.10 TRUE AND FALSE

1. Human Rights movements are individual efforts- (T/F)
2. Human Rights movements are governmental efforts (T/F)
3. Dedicated Laws for Human Rights Defenders is may be a strategy to overcome Human Rights movements challenges (T/F)
4. Media Bias and Misinformation is also a challenge to Human Rights movements (T/F)
5. Caste-based discrimination is a socio cultural barrier (T/F)

Answers 1(F); 2(F); 3(T); 4(T) and 5(T).

13.11 TERMINAL QUESTIONS

1. Write a note on Major challenges to Human Rights movements.

2. Briefly write about 5 cases which may be considered as challenges to them in India for Human Rights movements.

3. How can legal and institutional reforms overcome systematic challenges?

4. Write a note on awareness and education as a strategy to overcome Human Rights challenges.

5. Write a brief note on challenges of Human Rights movements considering all aspects.

Answers- 1 (Refer 4); 2(5); 3(6.1); 4(6.2); and 5(4.1).

13.12 REFERENCES

https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights

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https://www.humanrights.com/course/lesson/background-of-human-rights/the-background-of-human-rights.html

https://www.drishtiias.com/blog/evolution%20of%20human%20rights

https://www.sociologyjournal.in/assets/archives/2022/vol4issue1/7022.pdf

13.13 SUGGESTED READINGS

1. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights
2. On Human Rights by James Griffin
3. Ants among Elephants by Sujatha Gidla
4. Annihilation of Caste by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar