

Social Movement in India

Heena

Abstract

Social movement researchers have been interested in how forms of collective action advance social change. This entry presents four main research traditions that study the ways in which social movements aim to achieve their mission, namely by mobilizing resources, taking advantage of political opportunities, framing issues in advantageous ways, and engaging in discursive hegemonic struggle. Examining these research traditions highlights not only the connection between social movement theory and strategic communication, but also offers a number of future avenues for research that might reveal insights into how organizations can go beyond narrow issues of self-interest and communicate purposively to advance their mission and change social reality.

Keywords: Schedule Tribes, Peasantry, Dictatorship, Democracy, Social Movement, India

Introduction

A Social movement is a loosely organized effort by a large group of people to achieve a particular goal, typically a social or political one. This may be to carry out, resist or undo a social change. It is a type of group action and may involve individuals, organizations or both. Definitions of the term are slightly varied. Social movements have been described as “organizational structures and strategies that may empower oppressed populations to mount and advantaged elites”. They represent a method of social change from the bottom without nations. Political science and sociology have developed a variety of theories and empirical research on social movements. For example, some research in political science highlights the relation between popular movements and the formation of new political parties as well as discussing the function of social movements in relation to agenda setting and influence on politics. Sociologists distinguish between several types of social movement examine things such as scope, type of change, method of work range, and time frame. Some scholars have argued that modern western social movements became possible through education (the wider dissemination of literature) and increased mobility of labor due to the industrialization and urbanization of 19th century societies. It is sometimes argued that the freedom of expression, education and relative economic independence prevalent in the modern western culture are responsible for the unprecedented number and scope of various contemporary social movements. Many of the social movements of the last hundred years grew up. Social movements have been and continue to be closely connected with democratic political systems occasionally. Social movements have been involved in democratizing nations, but more often they have flourished after democratization. Over the past 200 years, they have become part of a popular and global expression of dissent. Modern movements often use technology and the internet to mobilize people globally. Adapting to communication trends is a common theme among successful movements.

Features of a Social Movement

People may damage a bus and attack its driver when the bus has run over a child. This is an isolated incident of protest. Since it flares up and down it is not a social movement. A social movement requires sustained collective action over time. Such action is often directed against the state and takes the form of demanding changes in state policy or practice. Spontaneous, disorganized protest cannot be called a social movement either. Collective action must be marked by some degree of organization. This organization may include a leadership and a structure that defines how members relate to each other, make decisions and carry them out. Those participating in a social movement has a general orientation or way of approaching to bring about (or to prevent) change. These defining features are not constant. They may change over the course of a social movements life. Social movement 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. Think of other issues that social movements have taken up in the past and present. While social movements seek to bring in social change, counter movements sometimes arise in defense of status quo. There are many instances of such counter movements. When Raja Ram Mohan Roy campaigned against 'sati' and formed the 'Brahmo Samaj', defenders of sati formed 'Dharma Sabha' and petitioned the British not to legislate against sati. When reforms demanded education for girls, many protested that this would be disastrous for society. When reformers campaigned for widow remarriage, they were socially boycotted. When the so called 'lower caste' children enrolled in schools, some so called 'upper caste' children were withdrawn from the schools by their families. 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. While protest is the most visible form of collective action, a social movement also acts in other, equally important, ways, social movement activists hold meetings to mobilise people around the issues that concern them. Such activities help shared understanding and also prepare for a feeling of agreement or consensus about how to pursue the collective agenda. Social movements also chart out campaigns that include lobbying with the public opinion.

Social Movements in India

Peasant Movements

After five decades of independence, nearly 63% of the population still depends on agriculture for its livelihood, though industrial growth is significant. The agrarian structure has undergone a change from a feudal and semi-feudal structure to a capitalist one. Agricultural production has increasingly become market oriented since the 1960s. Non-farm economic activities have expanded in the rural areas. In the process, not only has the rural-urban divide become blurred, but the nature of peasant society in terms of composition, classes/strata and consciousness has undergone considerable changes. Those who depend on agriculture are differentiated in terms of their relationship with the ownership of land, such as, absentee landlords, supervisory agriculturists, owner cultivators, sharecroppers, tenants and landless labourers. In local parlance they are known as 'kisans' or 'khetuts'. Thanks to the influence of western scholarship, kisan is often translated as 'peasant' in the academic literature published in English. The

term ‘peasant’ is ambiguous and used differently by different authors or variously by the same, author in different studies. On the one hand, it is used for those agriculturists who are homogeneous, with small holdings operated mainly by family labour, and on the other hand, it includes all those who depend on land including landless labourers, as well as supervisory agriculturists. To dub together agricultural labourers and the peasantry raises some problems. An agricultural labourer in contemporary India is generally no longer tied down to the same master, as was the case during the colonial and pre-colonial periods in pre-capitalist agriculture. In capitalist agriculture, a vast majority of the labourers are not attached or bonded. The process of proletarianisation of agricultural labourers has accelerated during the last few decades, and they are more dependent on ‘wage labour while losing the extra-economic relations with their employers (old or new) which govern the conditions of their work and life. But where do we place small and marginal farmers who also work as agricultural labourers? And what about those agricultural labourers who have not become proletarian? It would be not only cumbersome but also mechanical and an oversimplification to treat agricultural labourers of the colonial period as peasants and those of the post-independence period as the proletariat. Moreover, as this monograph is concerned with mobilization, labourers are mobilized along with other peasants in many agrarian struggles. Irfan Habib argues that the history of agricultural labourers remains a part of peasant history. Most of the studies so far treat them as part of the peasantry. We use the term ‘peasantry’ in a broad sense, for convenience rather than out of conviction, to cover a large number of studies. In fact, our preference is to avoid the term ‘peasant’, which is not very useful in the analysis of agrarian relationships in the subcontinent. From the mid-1980s some scholars have begun to use the category ‘farmer’ instead of ‘peasant’. The former are being distinguished by their market involvement as community producers and also as purchasers of inputs (Byres, 1994). Most of the studies on peasant movements in India have been published after the mid-1970s. The Chinese revolution and the series of agrarian movements in Latin American countries led western political sociologists and anthropologists to initiate studies on peasant movements (Wolf, 1966). At home such intellectual stimulation on the one hand and the Naxalite movement in the late 1960s on the other provided an impetus to Indian scholars to study various peasant movements. Barrington Moore Jr., in his celebrated work *Social Origins of Dictatorship, and Democracy* Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World (1967) questions the revolutionary potential of the Indian peasantry. He observes that the landed upper classes and the peasants played an important role in the bourgeois revolutions leading to capitalist societies in England and France, the abortive bourgeois revolutions leading to fascism in Germany and Italy, and the peasant revolutions leading to communism in Russia and China. But peasant rebellions in pre-modern India were relatively rare and completely ineffective and where modernization impoverished the peasants at least as much as in China and over as long a period of time.

Tribal Movements

The Scheduled Tribes (STs) constitute 8% of the total population of the country. In 2001, their number was around 820 lakh persons. They can be divided into two categories: (1) frontier tribes; and (2) non-frontier tribes. The former are inhabitants of the north-east frontier states — Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura. Except Assam, all the other states are landlocked between Assam and India’s neighbours — Burma, China and Bangladesh. They, therefore, occupy a special position in the sphere of national politics. They constitute 11% of the tribal population. The non-

frontier tribes, constituting 89% of the total tribal population, are distributed among most of the states, though they are concentrated in large numbers in Madhya Pradesh (23%), Orissa (22%), Rajasthan (12%), Bihar (8%), Gujarat (14%), Dadra Nagar Haveli (79%) and the Lakshadweep Islands (94%). The STs are known as tribes, adivasis, and aboriginals or as autochthonous. Social scientists have not examined the term 'tribe' in the Indian context rigorously. They have largely followed government categorisation (Shah, 1984; Sengupta, 1988). Article 366(25) of the constitution has defined 'Scheduled Tribes' as "such tribes or tribal communities or parts or groups within such tribes or tribal communities as are deemed under article 342 to be Scheduled Tribes for the purpose of this constitution". By the Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order, 1950, issued by the president in exercise of the powers conferred by Clause (1) of the Article 342 of the constitution of India, 212 tribes have been declared to be Scheduled Tribes. 'Isolation, backwardness and cultural distinctiveness', of a social group, though undefined in legal and sociological terms, have guided the state for inclusion to a community in the 'schedule'. Later, by an-act of Parliament, some other groups were also included in the 'schedule'. Tribals are ethnic groups. Different tribes have their own cultures — dialects, life styles, social structures, rituals, values, etc. — differing somewhat from those of the dominant non-tribal peasant social groups. At the same time, most of them are settled agriculturists-and social differentiations have developed among them. Their agrarian problems were and are, to some extent, the same as those of other non-tribal peasants. Studies are now available to show how the tribals have, in course of time, become peasants. Many scholars treat tribal movements as peasant movements. Peasant leaders like Ranga and Sahajanand Saraswati described tribals as aboriginal kisans. K.S. Singh joins issue with these scholars and political activists. He argues, "such an approach tends to gloss over the diversities of tribal social formations of which tribal movements are a part, both being structurally related" (1985: 119). Because of the concentration of the tribals in certain areas, their social and political organisation and relative isolation from the 'mainstream', their leadership pattern and modus operandi of political mobilization may differ from those of other peasants. Some of the champions of Hindutva ideology consider tribals as vanvasis or forest-dweller caste-Hindus. There seem to be less socio-economic differentiations within a tribe than are seen among caste-Hindu peasants; and their 'community consciousness' is strong. Singh argues, "while the peasant movements tend to remain purely agrarian as peasants lived off land, the tribal movements were both agrarian and forest based, because the tribals' dependence on forests was as crucial as their dependence on land". There was also the ethnic factor. The tribal revolts were directed against zamindars, moneylenders and petty government officials not because they exploited them but also because they were aliens (1986: 166). John MacDougall, in two studies (1977, 1978) on the Sardar and Kherwar movements in Bihar between 1858 and 1898, shows that the nature of movements varies 'as the consequence of variations in the peasantisation of adivasi society'. When and how have the movements of the tribals taken the form of peasant movements? What are the striking features of tribal movements which differentiate them from the peasants? In what manner, if any, were tribal movements linked with peasant movements during the colonial and post-colonial period? K.S. Singh and MacDougall attempt to explore these questions, but more rigorous efforts are needed to answer them. Raghavaiah (1971) lists 70 tribal revolts from 1778 to 1971. He also gives the chronology of these revolts. A survey of tribal movements conducted by the Anthropological Survey of India identified 36 ongoing tribal movements in India in 1976. As early as 1945, Man in India brought out 'A Rebellion Number', presenting four papers on various tribal revolts. The editorial of the number remarks: "These

revolts have been neither numerous nor gravely frequent, yet there is scarcely any major tribe in middle or eastern India which at some time in the last one hundred and fifty years has not resorted to this gesture of despair”. The publication did not cover tribal revolts in the north-east frontier region.

Dalit Movements

The Scheduled Castes (SCs) are known as harijans, i.e., children of God — a term coined by Mahatma Gandhi in 1933. The harijan nomenclature is considered pejorative by some leaders of the castes. They prefer to be called dalit, i.e., the oppressed (Guru, 2001a). Occupying the lowest rank in the Hindu caste system, they are called avarna, those whose place is outside the chaturvarna system. They are also known as perial, panchama, atishudra, antyaja or namashudra in different parts of the country. Their touch, and sometimes their shadows and even their voices are believed to pollute caste Hindus. Legally they are no longer untouchables, though in practice many of them still bear that stigma. The SCs constitute 16% of India’s population. They numbered around 1,680 lakh in 2001. 36% of them are workers. Among the workers, 48% are agricultural labourers. Many of them are engaged in traditional occupations, such as, flaying, scavenging. The SCs are scattered all over the country, though their number is insignificant in the predominantly tribal states of the north-east frontier. They are not concentrated in very large numbers in particular districts or talukas either. On the whole, the studies on the dalit or SC socio-political condition are many but there are only a few systematic empirically sound studies on their movements. The Mahar movement of Maharashtra has been projected, more often than not, as an all-India movement. Of course, Dr. Ambedkar, Mahar by caste, was an all-India leader. While bargaining with the British and the caste-Hindus he represented all the dalit of the country. But his role in mobilizing the SCs outside Maharashtra is not so far well-documented. There is no full-fledged study or even an anthology giving information about various SC movements in different parts of the country of the colonial and postcolonial period. Two papers, one by Gail Omvedt and Bharat Patankar (1979), and the other by Ghanshyam Shah (1980), give an overview of the dalit liberation or anti untouchability movements in India. The former deals with the colonial period, whereas the latter looks at both the colonial and the post-colonial periods. Many books dealing with the SCs do give a chapter on harijan movements in a particular region or in the country as historical antecedents. As they are not studies on the movements per se, the data given therein is sketchy, though useful. A few of them are worth mentioning. The study by Verba, Ahmed and Bhatt (1972), on the Blacks and the harijans, gives a comparative picture of the movements of these communities in the USA and India. As far as the harijan movement is concerned, the study is confined mainly to Dr. Ambedkar’s movement in Maharashtra. Ghanshyam Shah (1975) writes a chapter in his study, entitled Politics of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, on comparative harijan movements in Maharashtra and Gujarat, to show why the harijan movement in Gujarat was less militant than that of Maharashtra.

Backward Caste/Class Movements

It is difficult to give any precise acceptable definition of caste. The task becomes all the more difficult when we try to define ‘backward castes’. Most of the scholars consider all the castes other than the dwija (the twice-born who have the right to wear the sacred thread) backward castes. But there are several castes in different parts of the country which are not dwija (though many of them aspire to achieve dwija status), and yet they do not consider themselves backward castes. They enjoy control over economic

resources and political power. They struggle for power among themselves or against the Brahmins, and hence they cannot be considered deprived groups. The Brahmins and the Kayasthas of Bihar (Gha, 1977; Das, 1983), the Jats of Rajasthan (Sisson, 1969), and the Patidars of Gujarat, organised and mobilised themselves for asserting their political power. Their mobilisation was aimed at consolidating their social status (Bose, 1985). They can also be considered upper castes/classes. The rest of the castes are considered 'backward castes'. But all the backward castes do not enjoy a uniform socio-economic status. In his study on the backward caste movements, M.S.A. Rao (1979) divides non-upper castes/classes into three categories. The uppermost category of the backward castes consists mostly of landowners. There are several such castes in different parts of the country, such as the Jats, the Ahirs, the Gujjars in Punjab, the Marathas in Maharashtra, the Vellalas in Madras, the Kammas, the Kapus and the Reddis in Andhra Pradesh, the Vokkaligas and the Bants in Karnataka. Ranking below them are tenant cultivators, artisans and other service castes. They include the Ahirs and the Kahars in Bihar, the Kolis in Gujarat and the Vaddars in south India. They are considered caste-Hindus, above the pollution line. They have not enjoyed political power in the recent past. Most of them are smelt or marginal farmers, tenants, or agricultural labourers. They were under the economic and political control of the landowning castes. The latter often extorted forced labour from the former as domestic servants and palanquin-bearers, and expected several customary payments (free gifts) on various festivals' (Rao, 1979: 4). At the bottom are the untouchable castes who are designated Scheduled Castes under the constitution of India. The socio-economic conditions of most of the Scheduled Castes and other backward castes are qualitatively different, though some of the non-upper-caste movements, known as anti-Brahmin movements, included untouchables. Most of the studies on the untouchables' movements do not include the movements of the other backward castes. However, M.S.A. Rao includes the untouchables in other 'backward castes'. Christophe Jaffrelot (2003) also clubs dalits and 'other backward castes' together as low castes. For the purpose of this essay, we exclude the Scheduled Castes from the backward caste and treat them separately. The Kaka Kalelkar Commission, appointed by the Government of India, identified more than 3,000 castes or communities as 'other backward castes' (OBCs) in 1956. The Mandal Commission (1980) calculated that 52% of the population including non-Hindus constitute 'Other Backward Castes'. Besides, a number of state governments appointed commissions for identifying those castes which can be called socially and educationally backward castes/classes. Almost all the commissions except the Rane Commission in Gujarat (1983) used social, educational and economic criteria for identifying 'backwardness'. We are concerned here with the movements of some of these castes. There are a number of studies on movements launched by different castes for improving their caste status. Many of them aimed at social reform and did not enter the political arena to struggle for power. In this essay we do not deal with the studies which are primarily concerned with social mobility. However, the studies on political movements of the OBCs are very few. Most of these studies are confined to non-Brahmin movements in south India. M.S.A. Rao (1979) classifies backward-caste movements in India into four types on the basis of structural cleavages and manifest conflicts. The first type is that of the movements led by upper non-Brahmin castes such as the Vellalas, the Reddis and the Kammas of old Madras Presidency, the Vokkaligas and the Lingayats of Mysore, and the Marathas of Maharashtra. Ramaswamy Naikar of Tamil Nadu launched the 'Self Respect' movement in Madras in the late 1920s to perform marriage ceremonies without Brahmin priests. The non-Brahmin movements in Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu raised cultural issues. The leaders of non-Brahmin movements attacked caste and condemned it as

a tool of Brahmin oppression (Hardgrave, 1965). These are known as non-Brahmin movements against the Brahmins. Such movements are not found in north India because the Brahmins were generally backward with regard to modern education and government employment (Rao, 1979: 11). The second type of backward class movements hinge on the cleavages within the non-Brahmin castes, mainly led by intermediate and low castes such as the Ahirs and the Kurmis in Bihar, the Noniyas in Punjab, the Kolis in Gujarat, and the Malis in Maharashtra. The movements by the depressed classes or untouchables against upper and other backward castes are the third type of backward caste movements. The fourth type is that of the tribal movements. We have treated the third and the fourth types of movements separately. Gail Omvedt (1976) argues that the non-Brahmin movement in Maharashtra included both an elite-based conservative trend and a more genuine mass-based radicalism. It attained conservative goals, but radical goals have not been attained. The Maharashtrian Brahmin intelligentsia, though still dominant in educational and cultural institutions, has been swept from political power by a rich peasant non-Brahmin elite, with strong roots in the villages and with an institutional basis in rural cooperatives and educational societies. The Rudolphs (1984) consider the backward classes (castes) of the northern, western and upper-southern states 'bullock capitalists'. In the last two decades, they argue, The mobilisation of bullock capitalists as an economic class has been reinforced by the simultaneous mobilisation as a status order of the 'other backward classes', a euphemism for castes who by their own and the state's reckoning are socially 'depressed' or 'backward'. This layering of status and class interest enhances the political significance of both.

Women's Movements

The International Women's Decade, 1975-85, has provided an impetus to the growth of social science literature on women in general — their status in society — and issues related to gender-based discrimination and inequality in particular. Gender studies are now on the priority agenda of the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) and the University Grants Commission (UGC). A number of important universities have Centers for Women's Studies. A research institute focusing on women, the Centre for Women's Development Studies was established with the support of ICSSR in 1980, There is also a full-fledged academic journal focusing on gender studies. A survey of literature by Malvika Karlekar (2000) on 'Women's Studies and Women's Development', sponsored by ICSSR covers the studies up to 1990. It is a valuable document for further research in the field. By now, we also have a few compilations including an annotated bibliography on women's studies (Vyas and Singh, 1993). Social science literature on various aspects of gender has increased considerably during the 1980s and 1990s. Many monographs and essays use the term 'movement' in a broader sense in their titles dealing with women writings, discourse, issues affecting women's position in socio-economic spheres, rather than confining themselves to mobilisation and collective action by women. Women's studies and women's movements are often used synonymously. Of course, both are closely related and the former includes the latter but the focus of the present essay, as we have discussed in Chapter I, limited to a review of the literature on women's collective actions. For that purpose, research-based monographs on women's movements in India are relatively few. Most of them are at an exploratory stage. Except for a few, many of the studies are anecdotal, impressionistic and polemical for action — prescription for action — written by feminist activists in journalistic style. For activists involved in feminist movements, feminism is not merely a discourse to be analysed, but 'a method of bringing about social change'.

Whether one argues that the discourse and methodology — strategies, tactics and programmes — for social change are inseparable or not, the increasing literature certainly provides valuable theoretical and philosophical articulation and empirical data, posing relevant questions and hypotheses for in-depth studies on the social system in general and women's position therein, in particular. Some theoretical studies are also available, but more often than not, it is felt that they deal mainly with issues raised by western scholars. Even if this is so, this should not belittle the importance of such studies. Western influence, after all, affects all spheres of our life. This is more so in the era of globalisation. Moreover, 'women's resistance to male domination', as we understand it today, was the product of western education. British, women took the initiative in forming women's organisations and defining their objectives! Women's liberation movements in India are believed to be largely influenced by women's movements in the west, which emphasise the 'universality' of gender oppression and therefore 'universal sisterhood' of women. This has been questioned by many intellectuals. It is argued that feminism as a movement is rooted in the specific 'national history and culture.

Industrial Working Class Movements

Modern powered industries, based on western technology, came to India in the mid-1950s of the nineteenth century. Railways were constructed around Bombay and Calcutta; the former linked Bombay and Baroda in Gujarat and the latter Calcutta and Raniganj, the coal mining centre. The first textile mill started production in Bombay in 1855. Almost simultaneously, a jute factory was established in Calcutta. Industrialisation was mainly confined to cotton and jute industries till the beginning of the twentieth century. Large-scale tea plantation also began during this period, but the workers employed therein were generally treated as non-industrial workers. The cotton textile industry expanded in Bombay and spread out to other centres such as Ahmedabad in Gujarat, Sholapur and Nagpur in Maharashtra, and Kanpur in Uttar Pradesh. In 1914, there were 264 cotton mills employing 2,60,000 workers. In Bengal, 60 jute mills employed 2,00,000 workers in 1912. By 1914 the railways employed about 6,00,000 persons. The iron and steel industry at Jamshedpur, which began in 1911, was a major landmark in industrial development, though it did not employ a large workforce. Besides this, by 1910, about 1,50,000 workers were employed in mines, and 7,00,000 were employed in plantations. According to the survey of industries there were 281 lakh workers employed in private and public sector industries in 1999. This covers both urban and rural areas and includes those employed in plantations, mining, construction, utilities, transportation and communication (Handbook of Industrial Policy and Statistics, 2001). The non-agricultural workforce is generally classified by economists, sociologists and planners into two sectors — organised and unorganised, or formal and informal. There is no precise definition of the 'unorganised' or 'informal' sector. For some it is confined to the 'small-scale industry' and for others it implies all wage earners, including agriculture labourers, other than the workers employed in large factories. It is also debatable what should be called 'small industry'. Generally, the number of workers, their condition and capital are used as criteria—whether a worker is protected by laws in security and wages — to determine whether the industry is small-scale or a large one. Here the condition of the worker is generally examined in relation to wages, security and such other protection, as are covered by the Factory Act, and not in relation to the working class organisation and consciousness. In this sense, according to Mark Homstrom, the social anthropologist, the 'small-scale sector' is a post-independence phenomenon. Before 1947, there were many small firms, mainly in engineering, which

served and supplied the cotton and jute mills and other big factories, but no clear line between workshops and factories. Big firms were bound by the Factory Acts in matters like health and safety, and were more likely to have unions, but their workers were often no better paid and no more secure than those in small workshops. Labour earned its market price, which was low, and could be laid off at any time (1985: 76). It is difficult for us to accept Homstrom's contention that the worker employed at the Tata Iron and Steel Company (TISCO) was not better paid and less secure than the worker employed in a small firm in an urban area, or the bidi worker in rural areas, before independence. The advantage that the former had might be because of the union. But what facilitated the textile industry or TISCO workers to form unions? Why could they and not small-firm workers launch collective struggles and bargain effectively with the employers? One may raise such issues but that is beside the point as far as the focus of the present chapter is concerned as we are confined to the available literature. An important point is that studies on the struggles of workers employed in the unorganised sector are few and far between (Jaffrey, 1981; Kannan, 1988). The unorganised workers are those who are employed in small-scale industry and other wage earners in non-farm activities. There are also the so-called 'self-employed' workers like vendors, coolies, petty shopkeepers, repairers of vehicles, gadgets, etc., artisans, and so on. Their proportion of the urban workers is very large. Theoretically, we would like to include agricultural labourers and forest workers in this category, but for convenience we have included their struggles under those waged by the peasantry and the tribals. The workers in the organised sector can be divided into white-collar workers and blue-collar workers. This division is more artificial than real as far as their placement in employment structures of the market, working conditions, mobility, workers' organisations; their struggles and consciousness are concerned. Urban sectors are not compartmentalised and workers move from one sector to another (Bremner, 1976, 1996; Chandavarkar, 1985, 1994, 1998). Moreover, their struggles for their rights are not confined to the work-place only. They get involved in collective action as slum or pavement dwellers, commuters, migrants, dalits, etc., against the police, municipal authorities, slum-lords, and many other powerful groups and centres of authority. However, the body of literature so far on movements of the urban poor is scanty; hence we have not dealt with them here. Struggles led and dominated by the urban middle class have been separately discussed. Similarly, the movements around the issues of industrial pollution and urban environment have been treated elsewhere. This chapter is primarily concerned with struggles of blue-collar workers in organised and unorganised industrial sectors primarily on economic issues. Political scientists have kept this field almost untouched, though labour politics and 'consciousness' of the working class are their domain of interest. Sociologists have recently explored this area by developing the discipline of industrial sociology. But on the whole, studies on 'industry' and the 'working class' have been largely confined to so called industrial development from the narrow point of view of traditional economists in terms of gross value, price, investment and production. V.D. Kennedy rightly argues that economics has been lukewarm to the "study of unionism and industrial relations both because it is an applied, institutional subject area and because it calls for empirical work in the field, a mode of study which has been neglected by the Indian social sciences" (1966: 3). The field is mainly dominated by psychologists, trade unionists, social workers and management experts. The psychologists and management experts specialising in organisational behaviour are interested in commitment and motivation at the individual level. They hardly ever address themselves to the phenomenon of 'class' or 'community'. They are concerned with influencing social workers. While studying industrial relations, the chief concern of the

academic social workers, E.A. Ramaswamy argues, is to prepare material for the ‘training of personnel and labour officers. Much of what passes for research in industrial relations is indeed written for use in training courses. These textbooks have uncritically accepted outdated clichés, and sought to raise them to the status of established truth (1978a: 2). Therefore, it is natural for them to call the struggles of the workers ‘deviant’ and ‘aberrant’. However, historians have explored this area as a part of labour history; and a few well researched studies are now available. The framework of the studies in the 1980s and before has been confined to ‘industrial workers’ whereas with a paradigm shift in the social sciences to locate labour not only as an economic category but also a social and cultural entity, the studies in the 1990s have begun to focus on the urban poor. A compilation of documents by A.R. Desai, Puneekar and Varickayil (1989) on the condition and struggles of the workers of mines, plantations and factories covering 1850 to 1920 is a valuable source book for labour historians. There are, of course, a number of studies published in the 1960s and 1970s with the broad title ‘Working Class Movements’, but they are mainly confined to the growth and activities of trade unions rather than collective mobilisation for direct action by industrial workers (Sharma, 1963; Mathur, 1964; Karnik, 1966; Rcvri, 1972; Sen, 1977; Bhowrnik, 1998). One may argue that the participation of workers in trade union activities is a form of mobilisation to meet their demands. But such a framework restricts our vision to unionised struggles and Leaves out the vast area of struggles by urban workers without the initiative and/or support of unions. In fact, a number of strikes in Bombay, Kanpur, Ahrnedabad, Nagpur, Coimbatore and Calcutta in the late nineteenth century and during the 1920s and 1930s were ‘without the initiative of any effective trade union’ (Chandavarkar, 1998: 75). Since this perspective has dominated labour history we have few studies focusing on the wider spectrum of urban/industrial labourers’ movements. As far as this essay is concerned, we do not concentrate on the so-called ‘trade union movement’ per se. We shall take this movement into account in relation to strikes and those struggles waged by other methods. Like other sections of society, industrial workers, of both organised and unorganised sectors, resort to various types of collective actions such as strikes, satyagrahas, hunger strikes, bandhs and hartals (general strike), gheraos, demonstrations, mass casual leave, work to rule, cutting off the supply of electricity, etc. (Kannappan and Saran, 1967). Striking is one of the commonest methods widely used by workers to secure their demands. Broadly speaking, a strike means collective stoppage of work by a group of workers. Satyagrahas and hunger strikes may not necessarily involve stoppage of work. These methods were introduced by Gandhi. There is no full-fledged study on workers’ hunger strikes, bandhs or demonstrations. There is no effort to examine why workers take casual leave or follow the method of work to rule, rather than go on strike. Are these a prelude to a strike? It is assumed that these programmes are often, though not always, a part of strikes, hence scholars have not paid special attention to them.

Students’ Movements

For this essay, we confine our attention to students in colleges and universities. College education began in India in the 1850s. There were 2-4 lakh students attending college in 1946-47. Their number has increased fifteen fold during the last three-and-a-half decades. In 1996-97, 67.5 lakh students were enrolled in the undergraduate, graduate and diploma courses conducted by universities and other institutions. A large number of students participated in the freedom movement at various stages. According to a report of the government’s Sedition Committee in 1918, 68 out of the 186 arrested in

Bengal between 1907 and 1917 for revolutionary crimes were students; another 16 were teachers in schools and colleges. Besides participating in the freedom struggle, they launched agitations of their own against university and college authorities, as well as the government. Similar agitations have continued in the post independence period also. However, except the student movement in Assam in the 1980s, the students' movement has been dormant after the Emergency, the late 1970s. Reasons for such a scenario are not seriously probed into by social scientists. There were large-scale disturbances in Lucknow University and Banaras Hindu University in 1953 and 1958, respectively. Police firings on students took place in several cities such as Gwalior, Indore, Calcutta, Allahabad and Jaipur during the 1950s. Such events were repeated in almost all states in subsequent decades. The literature on student unrest or agitations, or what is called 'student indiscipline', is vast. Most of the write-ups have appeared in newspapers and popular periodicals and are of a journalistic nature. We have ignored them in this essay. Historians have not explored this area. A majority of the studies have been carried out by social-psychologists, educationists, journalists, and sociologists. A few political scientists have also explored this area. Though a number of case studies on different students' agitations in the post-independence period are available, there is no comprehensive study or anthology which offers an all-India picture dealing with different types of students' agitations. We do not have any in-depth historical account of student movements in India. There are a few booklets written by activists which give an account of student movements in the pre-independence period (Chandra, 1938; Reddy, 1947). They are sketchy and superficial. Myron Weiner (1963) and Philip Altbach (1968a), give brief accounts of the students' agitations during the British period. They give interesting information but they too are scanty and brief. Vishwa Yuvak Kendra (1973) has given a list of major students' disturbances between 1947 and 1970. It provides a useful chronology.

Middle Class Movements

The middle class is placed between labour and capital. It neither directly owns the means of production that pumps out the surplus generated by wage labour power, nor does it, by its own labour, produce the surplus which has use and exchange value. Broadly speaking, this class consists of the petty bourgeoisie and the white-collar workers. The former are either self-employed or involved in the distribution of commodities and the latter are non-manual office workers, supervisors and professionals. Thus, in terms of occupation, shopkeepers, salesmen, brokers, government and non-government office-workers, writers, teachers, and self-employed professionals, such as engineers, pleaders, doctors, etc., constitute the middle class. Most of these occupations require at least some degree of formal education. This middle class is primarily a product of capitalist development and the expansion of the functions of the state in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Though the petty bourgeoisie and managers did exist in pre-capitalist society, they constituted a tiny class. Industrial development and expansion of markets require not only a larger managerial class than earlier, but also impel the state to shoulder the responsibilities of monitoring market competition and resolving the contradictions of capitalist development. This includes formation and implementation of welfare programmes to minimise tension in society. For carrying out these functions, the state also requires a managerial class. Formal education contributes to the expansion of this class. It is difficult to estimate the size of this class in contemporary India. It is certainly very large. According to the calculations made by Ranjit Sahu (1986), the number of white-collar employees is larger than that of industrial workers. A large majority of the members of the

middle class belong to the upper and middle castes. While scanning literature on the subject, one is disappointed at the absence of studies on middle-class movements per se, whereas one finds studies on peasant, working-class or tribal movements. This is not because the middle-class movements are few in number, nor because scholars have an aversion towards the middle class. They do take cognisance of the role of the middle class in various movements. But these movements are primarily analysed in terms of the issues that they raise, such as social reform movements, the nationalist movement, human rights movements, ecology movements, and so on. Or, these movements are called ‘mass movements’, as the issues are not class specific, nor affecting mainly the middle class. The issues are posed as societal problems. The leaders of such movements, who belong to the middle class, mobilise other classes for support. In this section, I shall deal with the studies on those movements in which I believe the middle class played a prominent role as initiators, and those where a majority of the participants belong to the middle class. Though students also belong to this class, we have dealt with their movements separately. British rule established and introduced a capitalist economy, a new administrative system and English education in the early nineteenth century. Consequently, a tiny educated class emerged in urban areas (Desai, 1957; Mishra, 1978). The members of this class were upper-caste Hindus. Muslims were, for a variety of reasons late in availing of an English education (Seal, 1968). A few individuals in different parts of the country not only raised questions but also revolted against certain customs and traditions of the Hindu social system. These individuals, known as social and religious reformers, were all those who were advocates of alterations in social customs which would involve a break with traditionally accepted patterns; they were those who, convinced themselves that altered ways of thinking and behaving were positive values, sought to convince others to modify or entirely transform their ways of life.

Conclusion

In looking across all of the movements and the social movement builders high-lighted in the article, it is apparent that the social movements created were less about the organization interested in creating a movement, and more about individuals seeing an opportunity to bring people together for a common goal. That through opportunities such a social media, organizing techniques, and grassroots efforts, social movement builders strive to maintain the core foundation of the movement and purpose throughout - that the movement itself is just an organized entity that represents so many who feel empowered through a common voice and action together. Here is what is apparent from people who were a part of this article, through interviews, time spent, and analysis. Social movements need threads of connection points today. These threads are connectors, progress and interest between online and offline worlds.

References

1. Maritrayee Chaudhuri. 1994. The Indian Women’s Movement: Reforms and Revival. Radiant Publishers, New Delhi.
2. Wikipedia.