

SUMMARY SHEET



Social Movements





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1 Introduction

A great many students and office-workers around the world go to **work only for five or six days**. And rest on the weekends. Yet very few people who relax on their day off realize that this holiday is the outcome of a long struggle by workers. **That the workday should not exceed eight hours, that men and women should be paid equally for doing the same work**, that workers are entitled to social security and pension – these and many other rights were gained through social movements. **Social movements have shaped the world we live in and continue to do so.**

- 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. The 19th century social reform movements, of the struggles against caste and gender discrimination and of the nationalist movement in India brought us independence from colonial rule in 1947.
- It is also evident with the many nationalist movements around the world in Asia and 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 has all changed the world in fundamental ways.

- Social movements not only change societies. They also inspire other social movements. It is evident from how the Indian national movement shaped the making of the Indian Constitution. And how in turn the Indian Constitution played a major role in bringing about social change.

2 Understanding Social Movements

Social movements are any **broad social alliances** of people who are connected through their **shared interests in blocking or affecting (moving) social change**. Social movements **do not have to be formally organized**. Multiple alliances may work separately for **common causes** and still be considered as a social movement.

- **Social movements** are **conscious, concerted, and sustained efforts by ordinary people** to change some aspects of their society by **using extra-institutional means**. They are more conscious and organized than fads and fashions. They **last longer than a single protest or riot**.
- There is more to them than formal organizations, although such organizations usually play a part. They are composed mainly of **ordinary people** as opposed to army officers, politicians, or economic elites. They **need not be explicitly political**, but many are.
- Social movements are one of the principal social forms through which **collectivities give voice to their grievance, concerns about rights, welfare, well-being of themselves and others** by engaging in various types of collective action, such as **protesting** in the streets, **riots**.
- Social movements have long functioned as an important **vehicle for articulating and pressing a collectivity's interests and claims**.

Concept Check

Q. Social movement is defined as

- (a) a great effort by one person to fight against the government
- (b) a great effort by one person to bring about or impede social change
- (c) an organized effort by a large number of people to fight against the government
- (d) an organized effort by a large number of people to bring about or impede social change
- (e) none of the above

Answer: D

Having understood what are social movements and their context, let us now discuss the features of social movements.

2.1 Features of Social Movement

1. **Distinct from Social Protest:** 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 dies 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.
2. **Structured thought Process:** Collective action must be marked by some degree of **organization**. This organisation may include a **leadership** and a **structure** that defines how members relate to each other, make decisions, and carry them out.
3. **Objective of Change:** Those participating in a social movement also have **shared objectives** and **ideologies**. 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 movement's life.

- 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**.
4. **Opposition to Social Change:** 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 **defence of status quo**. There are many instances of such counter movements.
- When **Raja Rammohun 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 **reformers 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.
5. **Manifestation of Social Movement:** 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 mobilize 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 government**, media and other important makers of public opinion.
 - 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. Recall the innovative modes of protest such as picketing and the defying of the colonial ban on producing salt.

Main features of social movements are as follows:

1. The **sense of belonging and group consciousness** is very important for a social movement. Such consciousness can be brought about through active participation of the group members.
2. Social movements lead to the creation of an **entirely new social, economic, and political order**.
3. Most of the social movements tend to develop a **new set of ideas**, which become obligatory for the members of the group to adopt and follow.
4. It is obvious that the social movements **involve collective action** rather than individual action.
5. Social movements may be **organized or unorganized**.
6. Social movements may be **peaceful** in nature, or they may also turn **violent**.
7. The aim of a social movement is to **bring about or resist social change** in the society.
8. The **life of the social movement is not certain**. This is because it may continue for a long period, or it may die out soon.

Concept Check

Q. Which of the following would likely increase the likelihood of successful actions aimed at bringing about change?

- (a) Unified organizational leadership
- (b) New methods of communication

- (c) Pre-existing grievances in the citizenry
- (d) Ideological coherence among those demanding change
- (e) All of the above

Answer: E

Having understood social movements and its features, let us now learn the causes of Social Movements.

2.2 Causes of Social Movements

The social unrest may be caused by the following factors

2.2.1 Cultural Drifts

- The society undergoes constant changes. The **values and behavior are changing** all the time in civilized societies. In the course of cultural drift, most **people develop new ideas**. To **get these ideas operative** in the society they **organize a movement**.
- **Examples:** The development of a **democratic society**, the **emancipation of women**, the spread of **mass education**, the **removal of untouchability**, the **equality of opportunity** for both the sexes, and the **growth of secularism** are some examples of cultural drift.

2.2.2 Social Disorganization

- A **changing society** is, to some extent, **disorganized** because changes in different parts of the society do not take place simultaneously. **One-part changes more rapidly** than the other, thereby producing **numerous lags**.
- **Industrialization** has brought about **urbanization** which in turn has caused **numerous social problems**. Social disorganization brings **confusion** and **uncertainty**, because the **old traditions no longer form a dependable guide** to behavior, and **individuals** become **rootless**. They feel **isolated** from society.
- A **feeling** develops that the **community leaders are indifferent** to their needs. Individuals feel **insecure, confused, and frustrated**. Confusion and frustration lead to **social movements**.

2.2.3 Social Injustice

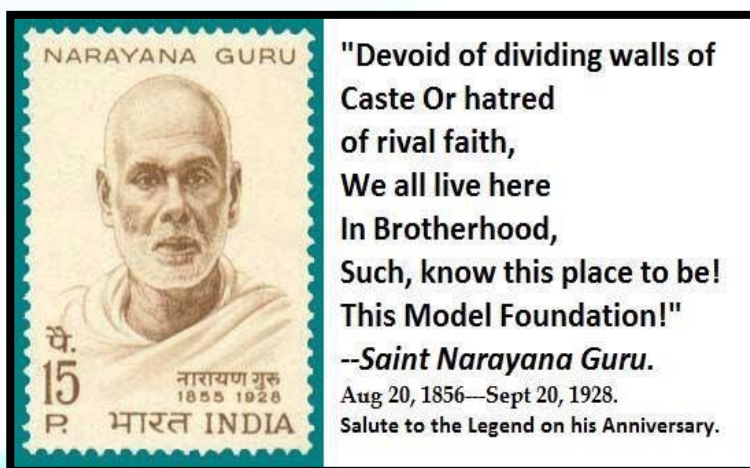
1. When a **group of people feel that injustice was done** to them, they become **frustrated** and **alienated**. Such feeling of injustice provides **fertile soil for social movements**. The feeling of social injustice is not limited to the miserable poor.
2. Any group, at any status level, may come to feel itself the victim of social injustice. The wealthy class may feel a sense of injustice when faced with urban property ceiling law—or high taxes—intended to benefit the poor. Social injustice is a **subjective value judgment**.
3. A social system is unjust when it is so perceived by its members. Thus, social movements occur whenever such kind of social situation arises.
4. In a **stable and well-integrated society**, the **chances for social movements are very rare**. It is understood that **people** living in such a society are **contented** and **satisfied**.
5. In a **disorganized and continuously changing society**, **social movements occur more frequently**, as most people are dissatisfied with the existing conditions.
6. **Lack of social justice** also makes **people dissatisfied** and paves the way for social movements. Modern society is more afflicted with social movements than the earlier societies.

2.3 Classification of Social Movements

There are different kinds of social movements. They can be classified as:

- (i) Redemptive or transformatory
- (ii) Reformist and
- (iii) Revolutionary.

1. A **Redemptive social movement** aims to bring about a **change in the personal consciousness and actions** of its individual members. For instance, people in the **Ezhava community in Kerala** were led by **Narayana Guru** to change their social practices.
2. **Reformist social movements** strive to **change the existing social and political arrangements** through gradual, incremental steps. The **1960s movement for the reorganisation of Indian states on the basis of language** and the recent **Right to Information campaign** are examples of reformist movements.
3. **Revolutionary social movements** attempt to **radically transform social relations**, often by capturing state power. The **Bolshevik revolution in Russia** that deposed the Tsar to create a communist state and the **Naxalite movement in India** that seeks to remove oppressive landlords and state officials can be described as revolutionary movements.



- As you might discover when you try to classify a social movement in terms of this typology, most movements have a mix of redemptive, reformist and revolutionary elements. Or the orientation of a social movement may shift over time such that it starts off with, say, revolutionary objectives and becomes reformist.
- A movement may start from a phase of mass mobilisation and collective protest to become more institutionalised. Social scientists who study the life cycles of social movements call this a move towards '**social movement organisations**.'

There are Few other forms of movement which are offshoot of the above three forms.

1. **Resistance Movement:** A resistance movement can be described as a movement that arises not only for the purpose of instituting change, but also to **block change or to eliminate a previously instituted change**.
 - Revolutionary movements arise as **people are dissatisfied** and feel that the pace of social change is very slow, whereas resistance movements occur when people consider that the **change is rapid**. The **movement against Hindi of Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam** is a typical example of resistance movement.
2. **Revivalist Movement:** A revivalist movement seeks to take the **system back to its original pristine purity**. Most of the movements try to involve people in the political process and bring about political awareness among the people. Some movements aim at bringing about a change in the lives of certain sections of society, such as the downtrodden as well as women.

How a social movement is perceived, and classified is always a matter of interpretation. It differs from one section to another. For instance, what was a '**mutiny**' or '**rebellion**' for **British colonial rulers in 1857** was '**the first war of Independence**' for Indian nationalists.

A mutiny is an act of defiance against legitimate authority, i.e., the British rule. A struggle for independence is a challenge to the very legitimacy of British rule. This shows how people attach different meanings to social movements.

Concept Check

Q. Movement against the adoption of Hindi language witnessed in parts of South India is an example of

- (a) Redemptive social movement
- (b) Reformist social movement

- (c) Revolutionary social movement
- (d) Resistance social movement
- (e) Revivalist social movement

Answer: D

3 Social Movements in India

3.1 Ecological Movements

Introduction: For much of the modern period the greatest emphasis has been laid on **development**. Over the decades there has been a great deal of concern about the unchecked use of natural resources and a model of development that creates new needs that further demands greater exploitation of the already depleted natural resources.

- **This model of development has also been critiqued for assuming that all sections of people will be beneficiaries of development.** Thus, big dams displace people from their homes and sources of livelihood. Industries displace agriculturalists from their homes and livelihood.
- The impact of industrial pollution is yet another story. Here we take just one example of an ecological movement to examine the many issues that are interlinked in an ecological movement.

3.1.1 Chipko Movement

Overview: The Chipko movement, an example of the ecological movement, **in the Himalayan foothills** is a good example of such intermingled interests and ideologies.

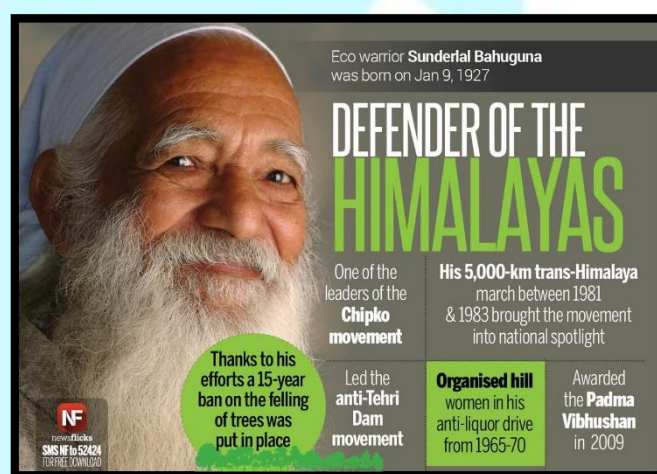
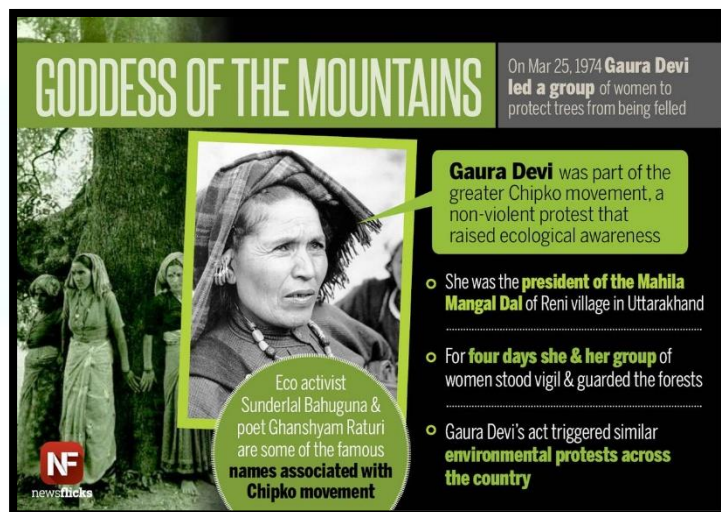
1. According to **Ramachandra Guha** in his book **Unquiet Woods**, villagers rallied together to save the oak and rhododendron forests near their villages.
2. When government forest contractors came to cut down the trees, villagers, including large numbers of women, stepped forward to hug the trees to prevent their being felled.
3. **At stake was the question of villagers' subsistence.** All of them relied on the forest to get firewood, fodder, and other daily necessities. This conflict placed the livelihood needs of poor villagers against the government's desire to generate revenues from selling timber.
4. **The economy of subsistence was pitted against the economy of profit.** Along with this issue of social inequality (villagers versus a government that represented commercial, capitalist interests), the Chipko movement also raised the issue of ecological sustainability.
5. **Cutting down natural forests was a form of environmental destruction that had resulted in devastating floods and landslides in the region.**
6. For the villagers, these 'red' and 'green' issues were inter-linked. While their survival depended on the survival of the forest, they also valued the forest for its own sake as a form of ecological wealth that benefits all.
7. In addition, *the Chipko movement also expressed the resentment of hill villagers against a distant government headquartered in the plains* that seemed indifferent and hostile to their concerns. So, concerns about economy, ecology and political representation underlay the Chipko movement.

Let us now take a deeper look into the Chipko movement and understand Narmada Bachao Andolan movement which is other ecological movement.

Details of the Movement: The Chipko Andolan or the Chipko movement is a movement that practiced methods of Satyagraha where both male and female activists from Uttarakhand played vital roles, including **Gaura Devi, Suraksha Devi, Sudesha Devi, Bachni Devi, and Chandi Prasad Bhatt, Virushka Devi** and others.

1. **Seed of the movement:** The movement began in **two or three villages of Uttarakhand** when the forest department refused permission to the villagers to fell **ash trees** for **making agricultural tools**.
2. **Trigger for the movement:** The **forest department allotted the same patch of land to a sports manufacturer for commercial use.**

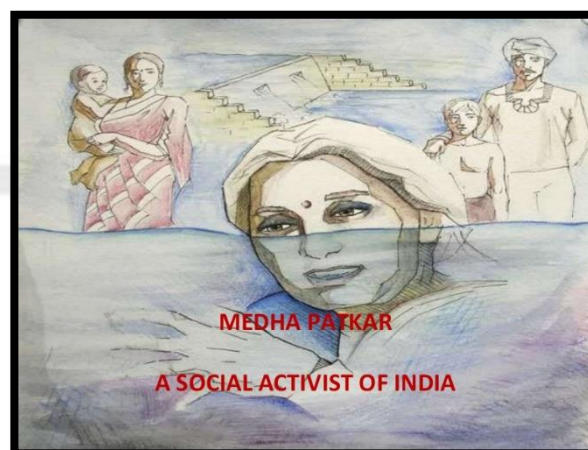
- This enraged the villagers and they protested against the move of the government.
 - The struggle soon spread across many parts of the Uttarakhand region.
 - Larger issues of ecological and economic exploitation of the region were raised.
3. **Demand of the villagers:** The villagers demanded that **no forest-exploiting contracts should be given to outsiders** and local communities should have **effective control over natural resources like land, water and forests**.
- They wanted the **government to provide low-cost materials to small industries** and ensure **development of the region without disturbing the ecological balance**. The movement took up **economic issues of landless forest workers** and asked for **guarantees of minimum wage**.
4. **Women's active participation in the Chipko agitation:** It was a **very novel aspect of the movement**. The **forest contractors of the region usually doubled up as suppliers of alcohol to men**.
- Women held sustained agitations against the habit of **alcoholism** and broadened the agenda of the movement to cover other social issues.
5. **Achievements of the movement:** It achieved a victory when the **government issued a ban on felling of trees in the Himalayan regions for fifteen years**, until the green cover was fully restored.
- But more than that, the Chipko movement, which started over a single issue, became a **symbol of many such popular movements emerging in different parts of the country** during the 1970s and later.



3.1.2 Narmada Bachao Andolan

Background

1. **Protest: Social movement (tribal people, adivasis, farmers, environmentalists, and human rights activists)** against the **Sardar Sarovar Dam** being built across the **Narmada River, Gujarat, India**.
2. **Huge cost of the project:** Displacement of **2,50,000 people** from their land in **three states (Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, and Maharashtra)** and **loss of agricultural land and forest** (approx. 37,000 hectares).
3. **Focus of the movement** - Saving the trees and the fauna, rehabilitation of the poor people living around the area.
4. **Genesis of the Movement:** It started in **1985** when the World Bank lent India \$450 million for the Sardar Sarovar project. Movement started by a social worker named **Medha Patkar**.



- As leader and co-founder of **Narmada Bachao Andolan (Save Narmada Movement)**, she has been spearheading the movement against the building of the Sardar Sarovar Dam on the Narmada River in Gujarat, **giving particular attention to the rehabilitation of the poor** who are being displaced by the project.

Approach

1. **Multipronged approach:** The success of the NBA campaign resulted from its **innovative strategies of resistance** that operated simultaneously at the **grassroots, national, and international level**.
 - While the NBA originally employed “**Gandhian methods**” such as **peaceful marches and protests**, after a high-profile hunger fast in 1991 failed, the NBA announced a “**noncooperation movement**” in the **Narmada valley**.
 - Strategies include **legal challenges, demonstration, civil-disobedience, and other non-violent tactics**.
2. **Objectives of the movement:** This movement **campaigned against the payment of taxes** and sought to **deny entry to the villages to all government officials**, except teachers and doctors.
3. **International Support:** Large-scale protests at home were complemented by international interventions abroad.
 - **Lori Udall**, then with the **Environmental Defense Fund**, led the **international campaign** against the Sardar Sarovar dam and implemented a multi-pronged strategy of public pressure, organizing, media outreach, and lobbying.
4. **Narmada International Action Committee**— It consisted of NGOs from India, the United States, Canada, Europe, Australia, and Japan—lobbied against the Narmada Project in several investing countries which helped focus international and national attention on the Narmada issue.

Outcomes

1. **Multifarious achievements:** Apart from bringing the **dam-displacement issue** to national and international attention, the NBA has **succeeded in bringing women out of homes** to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with their menfolk at the forefront of resistance.
 - The NBA has **succeeded in uniting people** across the language divide of the three affected States.
2. **Morse Commission:** The **World Bank** announced in **June 1991** that it would commission a team of independent experts, known as the **Morse Commission**, to reexamine the Sardar Sarovar Project.
 - **The Commission’s independent review had two aims:**
 - I. To assess steps taken to resettle those affected by the Sardar Sarovar dam, and
 - II. To assess the efficacy of measures aimed at diminishing the project’s environmental impact.
3. **Redefining Development:** The NBA’s influence in the social and economic areas in re-defining development in the face of rampant and destructive corporate-driven industrialisation has been proportionately large.

3.1.3 Beej Bachao Andolan

Beej Bachao Andolan (“Save the Seeds Movement”) has been working in the **Indian state of Uttarakhand** since the 1980s to restore traditional, agroecological farming knowledge, practices, and seed diversity – all of which have been disappearing since the start of the “Green Revolution” in the 1960s.

The movement is led by activist and farmer **Vijay Jardhari**, who joined together with local farmers from villages across the state’s Himalayan foothills to collect and conserve some 350 varieties of rice and 220 varieties of kidney beans, as well as lesser numbers of wheat, barley, cowpea and lentil varieties. They



have also documented and brought back into practice ingenious and sustainable techniques like *baranaja*, a system of intercropping and rotation of 12 staple crops.

3.2 Class Based Movements

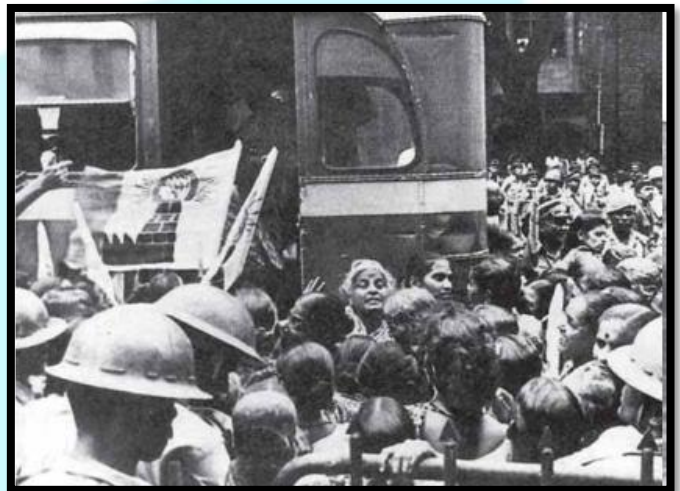
3.2.1 Peasant Movements

1. **Nature of Peasant Movements:** Peasant movements or **agrarian struggles** have taken place from pre-colonial days. The movements in the period between 1858 and 1914 tended to remain localised, disjointed and confined to particular grievances.
2. **Examples:** Well-known are the **Bengal revolt of 1859-62 against the indigo plantation system** and the **'Deccan riots' of 1857 against moneylenders**. Some of these issues continued into the following period, and under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi became partially linked to the Independence movement.
3. **Became part of National freedom struggle:** For instance, the **Bardoli Satyagraha (1928, Surat District)** a **'non-tax' campaign** as part of the nationwide noncooperative movement, a campaign of refusal to pay land revenue and the **Champaran Satyagraha (1917-18) directed against indigo plantations**.
 - In the 1920s, protest movements against the forest policies of the British government and local rulers arose in certain regions.
4. **Growth of Peasant organisations:** Between 1920 and 1940 peasant organisations arose. The first organisation to be founded was the **Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha (1929)** and in **1936 the All-India Kisan Sabha**.
 - The peasants organised by the Sabha's **demand freedom from economic exploitation** for peasants, workers and all other exploited classes.
 - At the time of Independence, we had *the two most classical cases of peasant movements*, namely the **Tebhaga movement (1946-47)** and the **Telangana movement (1946-51)**.
 - **Tebhaga Movement-** It was a struggle of sharecroppers in Bengal in North Bihar for two thirds share of their produce instead of the customary half. It had the support of the Kisan Sabha and the Communist Party of India (CPI).
 - **Telangana movement-** It was directed against the feudal conditions in the princely state of Hyderabad and *was led by the CPI*.
5. **Change in Nature of movements Post-Independence:** Certain issues which had dominated colonial times changed after independence.
 - For land reforms, zamindari abolition, declining importance of land revenue and public credit system began to alter rural areas.
 - The period after 1947 was characterized by two major social movements. **The Naxalite struggle** and the **'new farmer's movements.'**
 - The Naxalite movement started from the region of Naxalbari (1967) in Bengal, which is discussed in the subsequent section.
 - Many of the agrarian problems persist in contemporary India. The Naxal movement is a growing force even today.
6. **New Farmer's Movements:** The so called **'new farmer's movements began in the 1970s in Punjab and Tamil Nadu**.
 - These movements were **regionally organised, were non-party**, and involved farmers rather than peasants. (*Farmers are said to be market-involved as both commodity producers and purchasers*)
 - **The basic ideology of the movement was strongly anti-state and anti-urban.** The focus of demand was 'price and related issues' (for example price procurement, remunerative prices, prices for agricultural inputs, taxation, non-repayment of loans).
 - **Novel methods of agitation were used** such as blocking of roads and railways, refusing politicians and bureaucrats entry to villages, and so on.

- It has been argued that the farmers' movements have broadened their agenda and ideology and include **environment and women's issues**. Therefore, they can be seen as a part of the worldwide 'new social movements.'

3.2.2 Workers' Movements

1. **Start of Industrialization:** *Factory production began in India in the early part of the 1860s. The general pattern of trade set up by the colonial regime was one under which raw materials were procured from India and goods manufactured in the United Kingdom were marketed in the colony.*
 - These factories were, thus established in the port towns of Calcutta (Kolkata) and Bombay (Mumbai). Later factories were also set up in Madras (Chennai). Tea plantations in Assam were established as early as 1839.
 - In the early stages of colonialism, labour was very cheap as the colonial government did not regulate either wages or working conditions.
2. **Protests across the Country:** Though trade unions emerged later, workers did protest. Their actions then were, however, more spontaneous than sustained.
 - Some of the nationalist leaders also drew in the workers into the anti-colonial movement.
 - The war led to the expansion of industries in the country, but it also brought a great deal of misery to the poor. There were food shortage and sharp increase in prices.
 - There were **waves of strikes in the textile mills in Bombay**. In September and October 1917 there were around 30 recorded strikes. Jute workers in Calcutta struck work.
 - In Madras, the workers of Buckingham and Carnatic Mills (Binny's) struck work for increased wages. Textile workers in Ahmedabad struck work for increase in wages by 50 per cent.
3. **Birth of Trade Unions:** **The first trade union** was established in April 1918 in Madras by B.P. Wadia, a social worker and member of the Theosophical Society.
 - During the same year, **Mahatma Gandhi founded the Textile Labour Association (TLA)**.
4. **Birth of AITUC:** In 1920 the **All-India Trade Union Congress (AITUC)** was formed in Bombay. The AITUC was a broad-based organisation involving diverse ideologies.
 - The main ideological groups were the communists led by S.A. Dange and M.N. Roy, the moderates led by M. Joshi and V.V. Giri and the nationalists which involved people like Lala Lajpat Rai and Jawaharlal Nehru.
 - **The formation of the AITUC** made the colonial government more cautious in dealing with labour.
 - It attempted to grant workers some concessions in order to contain unrest. **In 1922 the government passed the fourth Factories Act which reduced the working day to 10 hours.**
 - **And in 1926, the Trade Unions Act was passed**, which provided for registration of trade unions and proposed some regulations.
 - By the mid-1920s, the AITUC had nearly 200 unions affiliated to it and its membership stood at around 250,000.
5. **Birth of INTUC:** During the last few years of British rule **the communists gained considerable control over the AITUC**. The Indian National Congress chose to form another union called **the Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC) in May 1947.**



Bombay textile worker's strike

- The split in the AITUC in 1947 paved the way for further splits on the line of political parties. Apart from the working-class movement being divided on the lines of political parties at the national level, regional parties too started to form their own unions from the late 1960s.
- **In 1966-67 the economy suffered a major recession** which led to a decrease in production and consequently employment. There was general unrest. In 1974 there was a major railway workers' strike.
- The confrontation between the state and trade unions became acute. **During the Emergency in 1975-77 the government curbed all trade union activities.** This again was short-lived. The workers' movement was very much part of the wider struggle for civil liberties.

3.3 Caste Based Movements

3.3.1 The Dalit Movement

The sun of self-respect has burst into flame
Let it burn up these castes!
Smash, break, destroy
These walls of hatred.
Crush to smithereens this eons-old school of blindness,
Rise, O people!

Social movements of Dalits show a particular character. The movements cannot be explained satisfactorily by reference to economic exploitations alone or political oppression, although these dimensions are important. **This is a struggle for recognition as fellow human beings.**

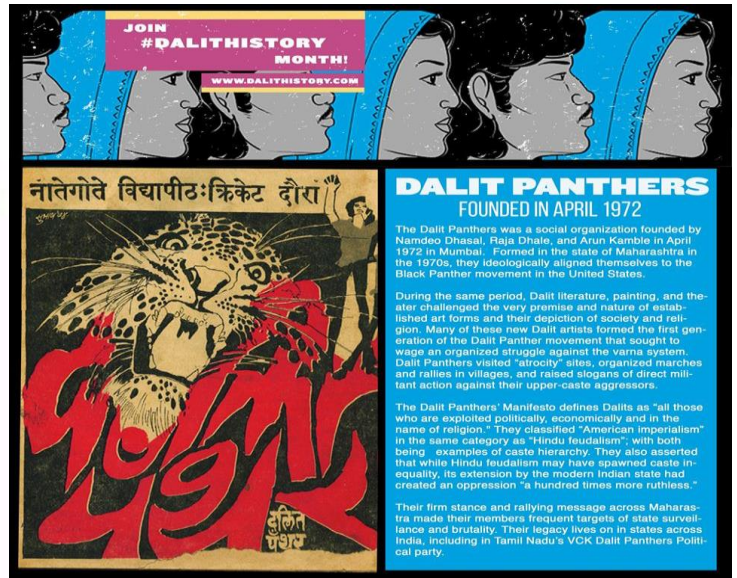
1. **Testing Struggle:** It is a struggle for self-confidence and a space for self-determination. It is a struggle for abolishment of stigmatisation, that untouchability implied. It has been called a struggle to be touched.
2. **Usage of the word Dalit:** The word Dalit is commonly used in Marathi, Hindi, Gujarati, and many other Indian languages, meaning the poor and oppressed persons. It was first used in the new context in Marathi by neo-Buddhist activists, the followers of Babasaheb Ambedkar in the early 1970s.
 - It refers to those who have been broken, ground down by those above them in a deliberate way. There is, in the word itself, inherent denial of pollution, karma and justified caste hierarchy
3. **Assertion of Dalit Identity:** There has not been a single, unified Dalit movement in the country now or in the past. Different movements have highlighted different issues related to Dalits, around different ideologies. However, all of them assert a **Dalit identity** though the meaning may not be identical or precise for everyone.
4. **Quest for Higher Ideals:** Notwithstanding differences in the nature of Dalit movements and the meaning of identity, there has been a common quest for equality, self-dignity, and eradication of untouchability.
 - This can be seen in the Satnami Movement of the Chamars in the Chattisgarh plains in eastern MP, Adi Dharma Movement in Punjab, the Mahar Movement in Maharashtra, the socio-political mobilisation among the Jatavas of Agra and the Anti-Brahman Movement in south India.
5. **In the contemporary period:** The Dalit movement has unquestionably acquired a place in the public sphere that cannot be ignored. This has been accompanied by a growing body of Dalit literature.
6. **Dalit literature:** It is squarely opposed to the Chaturvarna system and caste hierarchy which it considers as responsible for crushing the creativity and **very existence of lower castes.**
 - Dalit writers are insistent on using their own imageries and expressions rooted in their own experiences and perceptions. Many felt that the **high-flown social imageries of mainstream society would hide the truth rather than reveal it.**
 - Dalit literature gives a call for social and cultural revolt. While some emphasise the cultural struggle for dignity and identity, others also bring in the structural features of society including the economic dimensions.

Now let's take a look at the manifestation of Dalit movement in the post-independence era, which is discussed below.

3.3.1.1 Dalit Panthers

Origins

1. **Dissent from the Dalit graduates:** By the early nineteen seventies, the first-generation Dalit graduates, especially those living in city slums began to assert themselves from various platforms.
 - **Dalit Panthers, a militant organisation** of the Dalit youth, was formed by **Namdeo Dhasal, Raja Dhale and Arun Kamble in Maharashtra in 1972** as a part of these assertions.
2. **Demand for Social Justice:** In the post-Independence period, Dalit groups were mainly fighting against the perpetual caste-based inequalities and material injustices that the Dalits faced in spite of constitutional guarantees of equality and justice.
 - Effective implementation of reservations and other such policies of social justice was one of their prominent demands.
 - You know that the Indian Constitution abolished the practice of untouchability. The government passed laws to that effect in the 1960s and 1970s. And yet, social discrimination and violence against the ex-untouchable groups continued in various ways.
3. **Isolated Settlements:** Dalit settlements in villages continued to be set apart from the main village. They were denied access to common source of drinking water.
 - Dalit women were dishonoured and abused and worst of all, Dalits faced collective atrocities over minor, symbolic issues of caste pride.
 - **Legal mechanisms proved inadequate to stop the economic and social oppression of Dalits.** On the other hand, political parties supported by the Dalits, like **the Republican Party of India**, were not successful in electoral politics.
 - These parties always remained marginal; had to ally with some other party in order to win elections and faced constant splits. Therefore, **the Dalit Panthers resorted to mass action for assertion of Dalits' rights.**



Activities

Activities of Dalit Panthers mostly centered around **fighting increasing atrocities on Dalits** in various parts of the State.

1. **Outcome of the Movement:** As a result of sustained agitations on the part of Dalit Panthers along with other like-minded organisations over the issue of atrocities against Dalits, the **government passed a comprehensive law in 1989 that provided for rigorous punishment for such acts.**
2. **Vision of Dalit Panthers:** The larger ideological agenda of the Panthers was to **destroy the caste system** and to build an **organisation of all oppressed sections** like the landless poor peasants and urban industrial workers along with Dalits.
3. **Change through Writing:** The movement provided a **platform for Dalit educated youth to use their creativity as a protest activity.** Dalit writers protested against the brutalities of the caste system in their **numerous autobiographies and other literary works** published during this period.

- These works portraying the life experiences of the most downtrodden social sections of Indian society sent shock waves in Marathi literary world, made **literature more broad based** and representative of different social sections and initiated contestations in the cultural realm.
4. **Death of the movement:** In the **post- Emergency period**, **Dalit Panthers** got involved in **electoral compromises**; it also underwent many splits, which led to its decline. Organisations like the **Backward and Minority Communities' Employees Federation (BAMCEF)** took over this space.

Concept Check

Q. With reference to Dalit Panthers, which of the following statements is/are correct?

- (a) It is a social organisation that seeks to combat caste discrimination.
- (b) The initiative to form the Dalit Panther movement was taken up by Namdeo Dhasal, J. V. Pawar, Raja Dhale and Arun Kamble.
- (c) It was inspired by the Black Panther Party of the United States of America.
- (d) The Dalit Panthers led a renaissance in Marathi literature and art.
- (e) All of the above

Answer: E

3.3.2 Backward Class Castes Movements

1. **Caste- Basis of Patronage:** The emergence of backward castes/classes as political entities has occurred both in the colonial and post-colonial contexts. **The colonial state often distributed patronage on the basis of caste.** It made sense, therefore, for people to stay within their caste for social and political identity in institutional life.
2. **Consolidation of Castes:** It also influenced similarly placed caste groups to unite themselves and to form what has been termed a '**horizontal stretch**'. Caste thus began to lose its ritual content and become more and more secularised for political mobilisation.
3. **Origin of the term Backward Classes:** The term 'Backward Classes' has been in use in different parts of the country since the late 19th Century. It began to be used more widely in **Madras presidency since 1872**, in the princely state of Mysore since 1918, and in Bombay presidency since 1925.
4. **Emergence of organizations:** From the 1920s, a number of organisations united around the issue of caste sprang up in different parts of the country. These included the United Provinces Hindu Backward Classes League, All-India Backward Classes Federation, All India Backward Classes League. In 1954, 88 organisations were counted working for the Backward Classes.

Now let us take a brief look at the example of backward class movement which took place in reality.

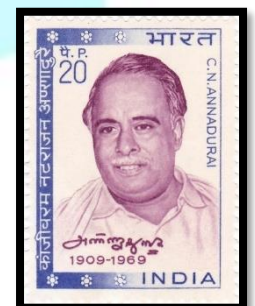
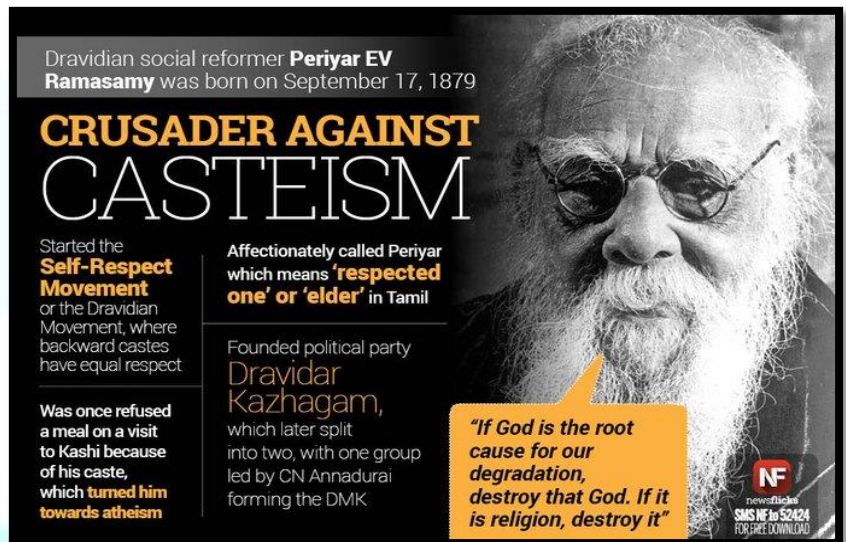
3.3.2.1 Dravidian Movement

1. **Introduction: 'Vadakku Vaazhkirathu; Therkkku Thaeikirathu' [The north thrives even as the south decays].** This popular slogan sums up the dominant sentiments of one of India's most effective regional movements, the Dravidian movement, at one point of time. This was one of the first regional movements in Indian politics.
2. **Call for Dravida Nation:** Though some sections of this movement had ambitions of creating a Dravida nation, the **movement did not take to arms.**
 - It used democratic means like public debates and the electoral platform to achieve its ends. This strategy paid off as the movement acquired political power in the State and also became influential at the national level.

3. **Formation Of Dravida Kazhagam Party:** The Dravidian movement led to the formation of **Dravida Kazhagam [DK]** under the leadership of Tamil social reformer **E.V. Ramasami 'Periyar'**.

- The organisation strongly **opposed the Brahmins' dominance** and **affirmed regional pride** against the political, economic, and cultural domination of the North. Initially, the Dravidian movement spoke in terms of the whole of south India; however, lack of support from other States **limited the movement to Tamil Nadu**.

4. **Chasm within the party:** The DK split and the political legacy of the **movement was transferred to Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK)**. The DMK made its entry into politics with a three-pronged agitation in 1953-54.
5. **Demands of DMK:** First, it demanded the restoration of the original name of **Kallakudi railway station** which had been renamed **Dalmiapuram**, after an industrial house from the North. This demand brought out its opposition to the North Indian economic and cultural symbols.
- The second agitation was for **giving Tamil cultural history greater importance in school curricula**.
 - The third agitation was against the **craft education scheme of the State government**, which it alleged was linked to the Brahmanical social outlook.
 - It also agitated against making Hindi the country's official language. The **success of the anti-Hindi agitation of 1965** added to the DMK's popularity.
6. **Consolidation of the base:** Sustained political agitations brought the **DMK to power in the Assembly elections of 1967**. Since then, the Dravidian parties have dominated the politics of Tamil Nadu.
7. **Another Split within the party:** Though the **DMK split** after the death of its leader, **C. Annadurai**, the influence of Dravidian parties in Tamil politics actually increased.
- After the split there were two parties – the **DMK** and the **All India Anna DMK (AIADMK)** – that claimed Dravidian legacy.
 - Both these parties have dominated politics in Tamil Nadu for the last four decades. Since 1996, one of these parties has been a part of the ruling coalition at the Centre.



In the 1990s, many other parties have emerged. These include **Marumalarchchi Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (MDMK)**, **Pattali Makkal Katchi (PMK)** and **Desiya Murpokku Dravidar Kazhagam (DMDK)**. All these parties have kept alive the issue of regional pride in the politics of Tamil Nadu. Initially seen as a threat to Indian nationalism, regional politics in Tamil Nadu is a good example of the compatibility of regionalism and nationalism.

Concept Check

Q. With reference to E.V. Ramasami, which of the following statements is/are correct?

- He founded the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam.
- He started a counter movement against Dravidian Movement.
- He is also referred to as Periyar.
- All of the above
- None of the above

3.4 The Women's Movement

1. The 19th Century Social Reform Movements and Early Women's Organisations

- You are already familiar with the 19th century social reform movements that raised various issues concerning women.
- The early 20th century saw the growth of women's organisations at a national and local level. **The Women's India Association (WIA) (1917), All India Women's Conference (AIWC) (1926), National Council for Women in India (NCWI) (1925)** are ready names that we can mention.
- While many of them began with a limited focus, their scope extended over time. For instance, the AIWC began with the idea that 'women's welfare' and 'politics' were mutually exclusive. Few years later the Presidential address stated, **"...Can the Indian man or woman be free if India be a slave? How can we remain dumb about national freedom, the very basis of all great reforms?"**
- It can be argued that **this period of activity** did not constitute a social movement. It can be argued otherwise too.

Let us recall some of the features that characterise social movements. It did have organisations, ideology, leadership, a shared understanding, and the aim of bringing about changes on a public issue. **What they succeeded together was to create an atmosphere where the women's questions could not be ignored.**

2. Agrarian Struggles and Revolts

- It is often assumed that only middle-class educated women are involved in social movements. **Part of the struggle has been to remember the forgotten history of women's participation.** Women participated along with men in struggles and revolts originating in tribal and rural areas in the colonial period.
- The Tebhaga movement in Bengal, the Telangana arms struggle from the erstwhile Nizam's rule, and the Warli tribal's revolt against bondage in Maharashtra are some examples.

3. Post 1947

An issue that is often raised is that if there was an active women's movement before 1947, what happened afterwards. One explanation has been that many of the women activists who were also involved in the nationalist movement got involved in the nation-building task. Others cite the trauma of Partition as responsible for the lull.

In the mid-1970s there was a renewal of the women's movement in India. Some call it the second phase of the Indian women's movement. While many of the concerns remained, the same there were changes both in terms of organisational strategy as well as ideologies.

- a) **Autonomous women's movements:** There was the growth of what is termed as the autonomous women's movements. The term 'autonomy' referred to the fact that they were 'autonomous' or independent from political parties as distinct from those women's organisations that had links with political parties.
- It was felt that political parties tended to marginalise issues of women. Apart from organisational changes, there were new issues that were focussed upon.
 - For instance, **violence against women.** Over the years there have been numerous campaigns that have been taken up. You may have noticed that the **application for school forms have both father's and mother's names. This was not always true.**
 - Likewise important legal changes have taken place thanks to the campaign by the women's movement. Issues of land rights, employment have been fought alongside rights against sexual harassment and dowry.
- b) **Disparity among Women:** There has been a recognition too that while all women are in some way disadvantaged vis-a-vis men, all women do not suffer the same level or kind of discrimination.

- The concerns of the educated middle-class woman are different from the peasant woman just as the concern of the Dalit woman is different from the 'upper caste' woman.
- **Let us take the example of violence.** Struggle against Dowry, Sexual crimes against women.
- There has also been greater recognition that both men and women are constrained by the dominant gender identities.
- For instance, men in patriarchal societies feel they must be strong and successful. It is not, manly, to express oneself emotionally.
- A gender-just society would allow both men and women to be free. This of course rests on the idea that **for true freedom to grow and develop, injustices of all kind have to end.**



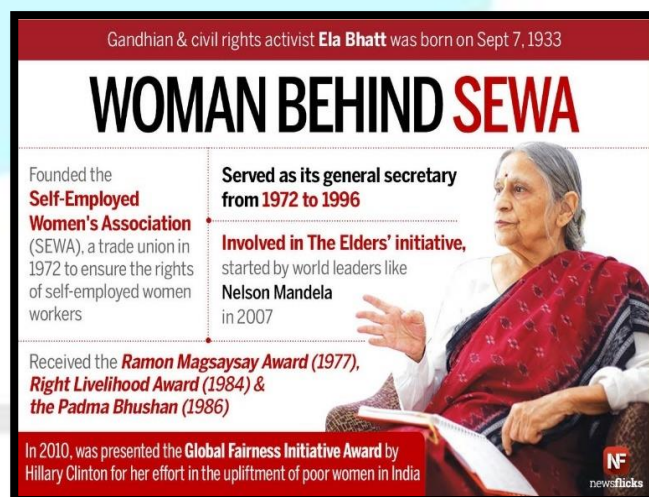
Struggle Against Dowry

Now let us look at one of the post-independence Women movements in detail.

3.4.1 SEWA Movement

I. Background

- Origin of Sewa:** In 1972 **Ela Bhatt** founded the **Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA)** as a **trade union of self-employed women**. In registering as a trade union, SEWA faced major resistance because the Labor Department felt that since members had no employer SEWA did not fit the model of a trade union.
- Registration as Trade Union:** After arguing that a union is not only for struggles against employers, but more importantly it is for the unity of workers, **SEWA was finally registered as a trade union in 1972 with 320 members.**
- Tracing the roots of SEWA:** It grew out of the **Textile Labour Association, TLA**, India's oldest and largest union of textile workers founded in 1920 by a woman, **Anasuya Sarabhai**.
 - The **inspiration** for the union came from **Mahatma Gandhi**, who led a successful strike of textile workers in 1917.
- Model:** SEWA adopts an **Integrated & Need based Approach for Organizing the poor, self-employed women workers.**
 - Presently It is a member-based movement of **about 7,00,000 poor, informal sector women workers of India.**
- Extent of SEWA:** SEWA movement covers **17 states of India**. It exclusively works in 14 districts of Gujarat, covering 50% of the State of Gujarat
 - There are about 3500 local producers' groups and 9 Economic Federation. Members represent more than 125 different kinds of trades
- Objective of the Organization:** SEWA's main goals are to **organise women workers for full employment**. (Full employment means employment whereby workers obtain work security, income security, food security, and social security)
 - Practically, the strategy is carried out through the **joint action of union and cooperatives.**



- g) **Gandhian thinking is the guiding force for SEWA's** poor, self-employed members in organising for social change following the principles of **Satya** (truth), **ahimsa** (non-violence), **Sarva dharma** (integrating all faiths, all people) and **khadi** (propagation of local employment and self-reliance).
- h) The SEWA movement is enhanced by its being a Sangam or confluence of **three movements: the labour movement, the cooperative movement, and the women's movement.**
- i) **It is also a movement of self-employed workers:** their own, home-grown movement with women as the leaders. Through their own movement, women become strong and visible.

II. SEWA Approach

1. **Empowering Women:** Organize women workers into trade groups, often helping them create cooperatives. They further help build their members' capacity through training on technical skills, leadership, and product development.
 - These organizing services help empower working women by allowing them to demand higher wages, better prices, and better work conditions, and by increasing their productivity
2. **Demand Driven Approach:** SEWA's approach in organising rural members has been to identify the issues or needs of the communities. Design demand-driven programmes that strategically link with the existing Government programmes thereby satisfy the needs of the communities.
3. **Integrated Approach:** SEWA's approach has been an integrated approach, where various inputs are needed not one after the other but simultaneously.
 - SEWA thereby strategically links the producers and their demands to the market.
4. **SEWA provides its members with both financial and social support:** Through SEWA's cooperative bank (governed, owned, and run mainly by the members themselves) *SEWA provides its members with access to low-interest loans*, the ability to develop savings accounts, and the opportunity to buy into various insurance schemes.
 - Through several cooperatives and in some cases coordination with the government, SEWA offers its members a variety of social services, such as health care, childcare, literacy courses, better housing, and access to water.
5. **Clarion Call to Institutes:** SEWA advocates on behalf of its members *to local, national, and international bodies* demanding changes in laws to take into account self-employed women's critical role in the labor force.

III. Outcomes of the SEWA Movement

Achievements: In reaching its own goals – to empower self-employed women workers through full employment and self-reliance – SEWA has succeeded.

- **Increased Self-Confidence:** In terms of SEWA's goal of its members' self-reliance, **the data demonstrated that 60 percent of members reported significant increases in self-confidence after SEWA trainings**, and members felt an increase of 10 – 25 percentage points in household decision-making power.
- **Rise in Membership of the organization:** With a starting membership of 320 in 1973, SEWA's numbers have increased tremendously. it has 1,256,944 registered members across India. While 50 percent of its membership is based in the starting state of Gujarat, the other 50 percent is dispersed across 11 states.
- **John Blaxall Analysis:** In his report for the World Bank, points to four key factors in explaining SEWA's success – its leadership, flexibility, values, and organizing strategy.
- **Observations of Rekha Datta:** In her 2003 article on SEWA attributed SEWA's success to the working women finding suitable strategies for themselves.
- **Nitya Rao's Analysis:** In her analysis lists 14 factors from its training to how it handles internal conflict. While they all point to strategies that were very influential in SEWA's success.

- **Reasons for its Success:** SEWA was able to emerge very successfully because it provided selective incentives to self-employed women, fostered a common identity and shared purpose between the women, and ensured its continuity through democratic governance and diversified sources of funding.

4 Miscellaneous Movements

4.1 Movement for Right to Information

The movement for the Right to Information (RTI) is **one of the few recent examples of a movement** that did **succeed in getting the state to accept its major demand**.

1. **Genesis of the movement:** It started in 1990 when a mass-based organisation called the **Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan (MKSS), under the leadership of Aruna Roy, in Rajasthan** took the initiative in demanding records of famine relief work and accounts of labourers.
 - The demand was first raised in **Bhim Tehsil** in a very backward region of **Rajasthan**.
 - The villagers asserted their right to information by asking for copies of bills and vouchers and names of persons on the muster rolls who have been paid wages on the construction of schools, dispensaries, small dams, and community centres.
 - On paper such development projects were all completed, but it was common knowledge of the villagers that there was gross misappropriation of funds.
 - In **1994 and 1996**, the **MKSS** organised **Jan Sunwais, or Public Hearings**, where the administration was asked to explain its stand in public.
2. **Course of Legislation:** The movement had a small success when they could force an **amendment in the Rajasthan Panchayati Raj Act** to permit the public to procure certified copies of documents held by the Panchayats.
 - The Panchayats were also required to publish on a board and in newspapers the budget, accounts, expenditures, policies, and beneficiaries.
 - In **1996** MKSS formed **National Council for People's Right to Information in Delhi** to raise **RTI to the status of a national campaign**.
 - Prior to that, the **Consumer Education and Research Center**, the **Press Council**, and the **Shourie committee** had proposed a draft RTI law.
 - In **2002**, a weak **Freedom of Information Act** was legislated but never came into force. In **2004** **RTI Bill** was tabled and received **presidential assent in June 2005**.