

# Value Addition NOTES

**Anthropology** 

UNIT 9.3: Contributions of Anthropology to the Understanding of Regionalism, Communalism, and Ethnic and Political Movements





# UNIT 9.3: Contributions of Anthropology to the Understanding of Regionalism, Communalism, and Ethnic and Political Movements

# **Anthropology and Regionalism**

<u>Regionalism</u> refers to a political ideology or movement where a particular region within a nation seeks **greater autonomy**, **recognition**, or **resources** based on cultural, linguistic, historical, or economic distinctiveness.

<u>Paul R. Brass</u>: "Regionalism is the expression of regional identity and the demand for greater political or economic power by a region within a nation-state."

<u>Type</u>		<b>Explanation</b>	Examples (India)
1.	Demand for Autonomy	Seeks self-governance within the state.	Telangana (before 2014), Gorkhaland
2.	Secessionist Regionalism	Demands complete separation or independence.	Nagaland insurgency (initially), Khalistan movement
3.	Developmental Regionalism	The region feels economically neglected.	Vidarbha, Bundelkhand
4.	Cultural-Linguistic Regionalism	Focus on preserving language or culture.	Tamil pride in Tamil Nadu, Marathi pride in Maharas <mark>htra</mark>
5.	Interstate Regionalism	Disputes between regions over resources.	The Cauvery water dispute between Karnataka and Tamil Nadu

# Approaches of Studying Regionalism in Anthropology

#### 1. Cultural Approach

- Focuses on language, religion, rituals, and ethnicity as drivers.
- Example: Tamil nationalism emphasized Sangam literature, Dravidian culture.
- Thinker: Franz Boas Cultural relativism helps respect and understand regional pride on its terms.

#### 2. Ethno-anthropological Approach

- > Analyses tribal and ethnic identity movements.
- Example: Naga and Bodo movements are rooted in ethnicity and tribal customs.
- Thinker: Verrier Elwin supported tribal autonomy and criticized forced integration.

#### 3. Political Economy Approach

- > Studies how unequal distribution of resources and neglect drive regionalism.
- **Example:** Jharkhand movement due to **resource exploitation**.
- ➤ Thinker: **David Graeber** local resistance to state-corporate control of land

#### 4. Postcolonial/Structural Approach

- Emphasizes how **colonial policies** and borders shaped regional consciousness.
- Example: British indirect rule in Northeast India led to regionally distinct identities.
- > Thinker: Bernard Cohn, Nicholas Dirks

#### 5. Globalization and Identity Approach

- > Regionalism as a **response to cultural homogenization** by global forces.
- > Example: Rise of **regional cinema and cultural festivals** to preserve identity.
- ➤ Thinker: **Arjun Appadurai** "locality is produced" in resistance to global flows.



# Contributions of Anthropology to The Understanding of Regionalism

#### 1. Understanding Regional Identity Formation

- Anthropology highlights how **cultural markers**—like language, rituals, festivals, cuisine, dress, and oral traditions—bind people together in a region and give them a shared identity.
- > Fredrik Barth emphasized that group identity is not determined by cultural traits per se but by maintaining boundaries between groups.
- ➤ Case Study: In Telangana, people distinguished themselves from Andhra Pradesh not by a completely different culture but through perceived neglect and historical differences in administration under the Nizam vs. British rule. Cultural symbols such as the Bonalu festival and dialectal differences became identity markers.

#### 2. Ethnographic Studies of Regional Movements

- Ethnography helps explore **people's lived experiences**, motivations, and grievances behind regionalist aspirations. It shows that regionalism is not merely political—it is deeply social and emotional.
- > Christophe Jaffrelot examined regional movements not only through politics but through caste dynamics, religious symbols, and local leadership.
- > Case Study: In Gujarat, Jaffrelot's work showed how caste pride (e.g., Patidar identity) and historical narratives about being warriors and landholders fueled regionalist pride.

#### 3. Role of Language in Regionalism

- Language is central to identity. According to the **Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis**, language shapes how people perceive the world. Language loss can thus mean identity loss.
- ➤ In Tamil Nadu, the Dravidian Movement viewed Hindi as a tool of northern domination. Tamil was elevated as a classical language with its own script, literature, and philosophy, symbolizing regional resistance.
- > Anthropologists note how language becomes politicized, creating an emotional connection to the region.

#### 4. Kinship and Local Allegiances

- > Kinship ties extend to economic and political support systems, forming localized networks of solidarity.
- > Kathleen Gough, in her study of South India, showed how matrilineal or patrilineal systems organize social life, often creating closed regional societies where external influence is resisted.
- ➤ Case Study: In rural Tamil Nadu, caste panchayats rooted in kinship manage land disputes, marriage alliances, and mobilize against external interference, reinforcing regional autonomy and identity.

#### 5. Regionalism as a Postcolonial Legacy

- > Colonial administrative practices often **reified ethnic and regional identities** by fixing boundaries, codifying customs, and creating a sense of "otherness."
- > Bernard Cohn and Nicholas Dirks argued that the British constructed caste and regional identities for easier governance.
- > Case Study: The British policy of indirect rule in the Northeast created a sense of distinctiveness. Later, states like Nagaland, Mizoram demanded autonomy, citing their historical difference from the Indian mainstream.

#### 6. Economic Anthropology and Resource Regionalism

- > Regionalism often emerges when locals feel **dispossessed of their natural resources** and excluded from economic benefits.
- > **David Graeber**, through his anarchist anthropology, emphasized how bureaucratic and capitalist systems dehumanize locals and provoke resistance.
- > Case Study: The Jharkhand Movement—Adivasis protested against forest land being taken by mining corporations. Their culture, religion, and subsistence were tied to land, and regionalism arose as a survival mechanism.



#### 7. Tribal Movements and Ethno-Regionalism

- > Tribal regionalism is not merely a demand for autonomy; it is a reaction to **cultural erosion**, **forced assimilation**, and **development aggression**.
- ➤ Verrier Elwin, advocating for tribal autonomy, argued that mainstream development policies would destroy tribal identity and self-governance.
- > Case Study: The Naga insurgency and later peace accords show how tribes seek regional identity based on ethnicity, religion (Christianity), and customary law.

#### 8. Cultural Relativism in Understanding Regional Aspirations

- Franz Boas' cultural relativism teaches that no culture or regional identity is inferior or superior. Each must be studied in its own context.
- Example: The Dravidian pride is not merely linguistic but a cultural-political worldview. By respecting this framework, anthropologists offer empathetic, insider perspectives on regional demands, avoiding labels like 'separatist'.

# 9. Identity Politics and Regional Assertion

- > Regionalism often intersects with **caste and class struggles**. **M.N. Srinivas' concept of "dominant caste"** shows how upwardly mobile castes assert regional control to retain or gain power.
- > Case Study: The Maratha agitations in Maharashtra and Jat protests in Haryana were about regional dominance, political reservation, and historical status. They used regional language, memory, and local heroes to make their claim legitimate.

#### 10. Globalization and Reassertion of Regional Identities

- ➤ Globalization may homogenize cultures, but anthropology shows how it also triggers "locality production"—the deliberate reinforcement of regional traditions to resist cultural erosion.
- > Arjun Appadurai used the concept of "ethnoscapes" and "mediascapes" to show how regional identities are being reimagined.
- Case Study: Regional film industries (like Bhojpuri, Marathi, Assamese, Tamil) gained popularity as people sought authentic expressions of their cultural roots amid global content.

#### Anthropology and Communalism

**Communalism** refers to a belief system or ideology where **one religious community** is considered superior or antagonistic to another, often leading to **conflict**, **polarization**, or **violence**.

<u>Bipan Chandra</u>: "Communalism is a political doctrine which uses religious identity to **promote political mobilization**, often resulting in **division and conflict** between communities."

Type		<b>Explanation</b>	<u>Like</u>
1.	Cultural Communalism	Emphasis on cultural difference, but not necessarily conflict-oriented.	Assertion of cultural superiority
2.	Political Communalism	Use of religion to gain votes or political power.	Vote-bank politics during elections, communal political parties
3.	Social Communalism	Social segregation or discrimination based on religion.	Residential segregation (ghettos), anti- minority prejudice
4.	Violent Communalism	Leads to riots, violence, or terrorism.	Delhi riots 2020, Muzaffarnagar 2013



# **Approaches of Studying Communalism in Anthropology**

# 1. Cultural Approach

- > Sees communalism as arising from **misunderstanding or stereotyping** of religious communities.
- > Anthropology promotes **cultural relativism** and **tolerance**.
- Franz Boas emphasized understanding each culture on its own terms.

# 2. Colonial/Structural Approach

- > Communalism is a **colonial legacy**, where British policy divided communities for administrative ease ("Divide and Rule").
- > Institutions like separate electorates institutionalized religious differences.
- > Benedict Anderson "Imagined Communities" shows how communities are politically constructed.
- **Example**: The British Census categorized Indians by religion, solidifying identities.

# 3. Political Economy Approach

- > Communalism is a tool used by elites to divert attention from **economic inequalities** and **class conflicts**.
- ➤ **Bipan Chandra** Communalism serves elite interests in times of economic or political crisis.
- **Example**: Riots triggered before elections to polarize voters.

#### 4. Ethno-Symbolic Approach

- Focuses on historical memory, myths, and symbols used to build religious identities.
- > Temples, mosques, and festivals become contested symbols.
- **Example**: Babri Masjid-Ram Janmabhoomi issue.

#### 5. Psychological/Social Identity Approach

- > Based on in-group vs. out-group thinking, religious identity becomes central to self-definition.
- > Reinforced through socialization, media, and education.
- Example: Youth radicalization through communal narratives

#### **Stages of Communalism**

#### 1. Mild Communalism

- **Focus**: Cultural and religious identity without hostility.
- **Example**: Arya Samaj, Aligarh Movement.

# 2. Moderate Communalism

- **Focus**: Political demands based on religion (e.g., separate electorates).
- **Example:** Muslim League, Lucknow Pact (1916).

#### 3. Extreme Communalism

- **Focus**: Open hostility and use of violence.
- **Example:** Direct Action Day (1946), Partition (1947).

# **Contributions of Anthropology To The Understanding of Communalism**

#### 1. Communalism as a Cultural Construct

- > Anthropology sees communal identities not as fixed or natural, but as **socially constructed**.
- > Fredrik Barth boundaries between communities are maintained socially, not due to intrinsic differences.
- > Case Study: Hindu-Muslim boundaries in rural UP villages vary by context (shared rituals vs. separate food habits), showing communal identity is fluid and situational.



#### 2. Use of Ethnography to Study Everyday Communal Relations

- > Anthropologists use **participant observation** to understand how communal tensions are lived and negotiated in daily life.
- > Thinker: Paul Brass riots are not spontaneous; they are institutionalized and manufactured.

#### 3. Communalism and Symbolism

- Anthropology examines how **religious symbols**, festivals, or spaces become politically charged.
- ➤ Victor Turner symbols carry emotional and social weight, becoming rallying points.
- **Example:** The **Babri Masjid-Ram Janmabhoomi** issue shows how a religious site became a symbolic battlefield for communal narratives.

#### 4. Cultural Relativism and Tolerance

- Anthropology promotes understanding of religious practices without bias, helping to reduce prejudice and ethnocentrism.
- Franz Boas each culture must be understood in its own context.
- **Example**: Anthropological teaching about **syncretic traditions** like Sufi shrines or Bhakti saints reduces binary Hindu-Muslim divides.

#### 5. Historical and Colonial Roots of Communalism

- > Anthropologists study how **colonial ethnography and categorization** created rigid communal identities.
- ➤ Nicholas Dirks, Bernard Cohn colonial knowledge systems reified caste and religion.
- Example: British census and separate electorates reinforced religious divisions, shaping post-colonial communalism.

# 6. Intersectionality: Religion, Caste, and Class

- > Communalism is not just about religion—it overlaps with caste, class, and regional inequalities.
- ➤ M.N. Srinivas The concept of dominant caste shows how caste and religion work together in power politics.

#### 7. Communalism as Identity Politics

- Anthropology explains how religion becomes a political identity under certain conditions.
- ➤ Thinker: Clifford Geertz "primordial ties" like religion are often politicized by elites.

#### 8. Syncretism and Shared Traditions

- > Anthropology highlights **composite cultures** that contradict communal narratives.
- **Example: Ganga-Jamuni tehzeeb** in Awadh, where Hindus and Muslims share customs, proves that lived culture is often inclusive.
- > Fieldwork: Anthropologists studying Sufi dargahs find interfaith practices that challenge communal polarization.

#### 9. Media, Rumors, and Riots

- > Anthropologists study how **rumors and mass media** escalate communal tensions.
- ➤ Veena Das in her work on riots, she shows how violence enters the fabric of everyday life and memory.
- > Case Study: Role of WhatsApp and fake news in Muzaffarnagar riots (2013).

#### 10. Rituals and Festivals as Sites of Conflict and Harmony

- > Insight: Anthropology examines how shared or contested rituals, processions, and festivals can be both bridges and battlegrounds.
- **Example**: In many towns, **Muharram** and **Holi** processions are jointly celebrated—or contested—depending on local politics.
- Field Observations: Ritual spatial practices (e.g., route of procession) often become conflict zones.



# **Anthropology and Ethnic Movement**

An ethnic movement refers to a collective mobilization by a particular ethnic group seeking political, cultural, economic, or territorial rights on the basis of their distinct identity, culture, or history.

Paul Brass: "Ethnic movements are politically motivated mobilizations where ethnic identity is used by elites to organize groups for strategic interests, often in response to perceived inequality or exclusion."

#### **Characteristics of Ethnic Movement**

Ch	aracteristic	<b>Explanation</b>	Anthropologist / Example
1.	Ethnic Identity Assertion	Emphasis on common language, culture, history, or religion.	Fredrik Barth – ethnic boundaries are socially maintained.
2.	Demand for Recognition	Seeks formal recognition or autonomy within the state.	Bodo movement – demand for Bodoland
3.	Historical Grievances	Rooted in perceived past injustice, exclusion, or colonization.	<b>Paul Brass</b> – ethnic conflict is rooted in historical marginalization.
4.	Symbolic Mobilization	Use of flags, myths, language, and rituals to unite members.	Nagas use their Christian identity, history of independence
5.	Collective Action	Protests, strikes, armed struggle, or peaceful advocacy.	Naga movement, Gorkhaland agitation
6.	Elite Leadership	Often led by educated ethnic elites.	Bodo leaders like Upendranath Brahma (Bodo Sahitya Sabha)
7.	Territorial Claims	Ethnic groups often link identity to geography ("homeland").	Naga demand for Greater Nagalim

# **Types of Ethnic Movement**

Ethnic Group	Region	Movement Goal	Notes
Nagas	Nagaland, Manipur	Sovereignty / Greater Nagalim	Rooted in pre-independence history, Christian identity
Bodos	Assam	Statehood / Cultural protection	Led to the creation of the Bodoland Territorial Region
Gorkhas	West Bengal (Darjeeling)	Gorkhaland state	Based on the distinct Nepali language and identity
Santhals	Jharkhand, Bengal	Autonomy / Land rights	Historic Santhal Hul (1855)
Dongria Kondhs	Odisha	Land and forest rights	Protested against Vedanta mining on Niyamgiri hills
Mizos	Mizoram	Independence (later Statehood)	Ended with the Mizo Accord (1986)

# **Approaches To Study Ethnic Movement**

- 1. Primordialist Approach
  - ➤ View: Ethnic identity is **natural**, **ancient**, **and emotionally rooted** in blood, language, kinship, religion, or territory.
  - > Key Thinker: Clifford Geertz



- **Explanation**: Ethnic bonds are deep-rooted and irrational, based on "primordial attachments."
- > Criticism: Overlooks the political construction of identity.
- **Example:** The **Naga movement** is rooted in ancient tribal identity and Christian faith.

# 2. Instrumentalist (or Constructionist) Approach

- ➤ View: Ethnic identity is a tool used by elites to mobilize masses for political and economic goals.
- > Key Thinker: Paul Brass
- **Explanation**: Ethnicity is not fixed; it is **strategically constructed and politicized**.
- **Example:** Politicians using **Assamese identity** to rally against Bengali migrants.

# 3. Ethno-Symbolist Approach

- ➤ View: Ethnic identity is based on historical myths, symbols, collective memory, and narratives that evolve over time.
- > Key Thinker: Anthony D. Smith
- **Explanation**: Emphasizes the **emotional power of history, myths, rituals**, and symbols.
- **Example: Gorkha movement** builds on the image of Gorkhas as brave warriors and loyalists.

#### 4. Structural-Functionalist Approach

- View: Ethnic movements emerge when the social system fails to integrate ethnic groups properly.
- > Key Thinkers: A.R. Radcliffe-Brown, M.N. Srinivas
- > Explanation: Emphasis on how ethnic groups respond to social exclusion, inequality, or breakdown of norms.
- Example: Santhal movement responding to colonial land alienation and breakdown of traditional institutions.

# 5. Marxist / Political Economy Approach

- ➤ View: Ethnic movements are rooted in economic exploitation, class conflict, and control over resources.
- > Key Thinkers: David Graeber, Eric Hobsbawm
- **Explanation**: Ethnicity is used to mask or express class-based grievances.
- **Example:** The **Jharkhand movement** arose from tribal exploitation in the mining and forest sectors.

#### 6. Postcolonial / Historical Approach

- ➤ View: Ethnic identities and movements are shaped by colonial classification, borders, and divide-and-rule tactics.
- > Key Thinkers: Bernard Cohn, Nicholas Dirks
- Explanation: Colonial practices like census, ethnographic surveys, and separate electorates rigidified ethnic categories.
- **Example:** Northeast India's ethnic fragmentation was partly a result of colonial isolation and policy.

#### 7. Symbolic / Interpretive Anthropology Approach

- > View: Ethnic movements express meaning through rituals, myths, religious beliefs, and symbolic action.
- > Key Thinker: Victor Turner, Clifford Geertz
- **Explanation:** Focus on **how ethnic identity is expressed symbolically** in festivals, dress, flags, slogans.
- **Example:** Use of **Bodo language**, **traditional dress**, and **rituals** to assert identity.



#### 8. Postmodern / Globalization Approach

- ➤ View: In the modern world, ethnicity is shaped by media, diaspora, and transnational networks.
- > Key Thinker: Arjun Appadurai
- **Explanation**: Identities are produced in "ethnoscapes" and influenced by global flows.
- **Example: Tamil diaspora** supporting ethnic movement in Sri Lanka from UK or Canada.

#### **Contributions of Anthropology to The Understanding of Ethnic Movement**

# 1. Ethnicity as a Social Construction

- Anthropology shows that ethnicity is **not innate or fixed**, but socially and historically constructed.
- Fredrik Barth argued that ethnic identity is maintained through social boundaries, not cultural traits.
- > Implication: Ethnic movements are not based on age-old hatreds but arise when group boundaries are politicized.
- **Example**: Bodo movement—identity defined not by ancient customs but by contemporary boundary-marking from the Assamese mainstream.

#### 2. Ethnographic Methods Reveal Lived Realities

- Anthropologists use **participant observation and fieldwork** to understand how ethnic grievances are experienced in daily life.
- **T.B. Subba** (studied Northeast India ethnic groups).
- Example: Subba's fieldwork among the Gorkhas revealed emotional and cultural layers behind the demand for Gorkhaland, often missed in policy analysis.

#### 3. Understanding Myths, Symbols, and Rituals in Movements

- Anthropology studies how myths of origin, cultural symbols, festivals, and heroes fuel ethnic mobilization.
- ➤ Anthony D. Smith ethnic groups mobilize around shared historical memories.
- Example: Gorkhas invoking the image of Lachit Borphukan, Bodos using traditional dress and language in rallies.

#### 4. Postcolonial Analysis of Ethnic Identities

- > Anthropology examines how colonial administration, census, and mapping created rigid ethnic categories.
- > Nicholas Dirks, Bernard Cohn
- Example: The British policy of classifying tribes in Northeast India as "backward" and distinct laid the foundation for later movements like Naga and Mizo ethnic nationalism.

#### 5. Anthropology of Resistance and Political Economy

- > Shows how ethnic movements are often a response to marginalization, land alienation, and exploitation.
- David Graeber
- **Example:** The **Jharkhand Movement** involved tribal identity but was also driven by resistance to displacement by mining companies.

#### 6. Role of Kinship and Clan in Mobilization

- Anthropologists highlight how kinship, clans, and lineage systems organize and sustain movements.
- **Example**: Among the **Nagaland tribes**, mobilization is often clan-based; understanding these structures helps explain how the movement sustains unity.



#### 7. Emphasis on Cultural Relativism

- > Anthropology avoids judging ethnic movements as "separatist" or "anti-national" and instead tries to understand their cultural logic and worldview.
- > Thinker: Franz Boas
- Example: Movements like the **Dongria Kondh's resistance to Vedanta Mining** are seen as cultural defense, not anti-development.

# 8. Focus on Syncretism and Cultural Overlap

- > Anthropology often reveals **inter-group cultural blending**, which helps in conflict resolution.
- Example: In Chotanagpur, tribal and non-tribal groups often share festivals and rituals; this shared culture becomes the basis for peacebuilding efforts.

#### 9. Globalization and Diasporic Ethnic Movements

- Anthropologists show how diaspora and media shape ethnic movements globally.
- > Arjun Appadurai concept of "ethnoscapes."
- > Example: The Tamil diaspora supported the Sri Lankan Tamil ethnic movement using transnational networks.

# 10. Long-Term, Holistic Perspective

- **Contribution**: Anthropology provides **longitudinal studies** of ethnic groups, tracking how movements evolve over decades with changing leadership, demands, and state response.
- Example: The shift in Mizo movement from armed struggle to peaceful settlement through the Mizo Accord of 1986 is better understood through this lens.

#### **Anthropology and Political Movement**

A political movement is a collective, organized effort by a group of people aiming to bring about or resist political change, often concerning power, governance, policy, or state structure.

Max Gluckman: "Political movements are expressions of struggles over legitimacy and authority within a society, often shaped by social and cultural contexts."

#### **Characteristics of Ethnic Movement**

Characteristic		<b>Explanation</b>	Anthropologist / Example
1.	<b>Collective Action</b>	Involves mass mobilization of people for shared goals.	Paul Brass – Collective Identity Mobilization in North India.
2.	Power-Oriented	Aims at gaining, altering, or resisting political power.	The Bodo Movement sought separate political autonomy.
3.	Ideological Foundation	Driven by belief systems (nationalism, socialism, tribal rights).	The Naxalite movement based on <b>Marxist-Maoist ideology</b> .
4.	Leadership and Organization	Often led by elites or charismatic leaders.	Birsa Munda in <b>Munda</b> Ulgulan movement.
5.	Symbolism and Identity	Uses cultural markers like flags, language, or religion.	Gorkha movement and the use of Nepali language, khukuri symbol.
6.	Conflict with State Power	Challenges existing laws, policies, or institutions.	Chipko movement opposed state-backed commercial forestry.



#### **Types of Ethnic Movement**

#### 1. Ethnic Political Movements

Movements based on **shared ethnic identity** (language, ancestry, religion, customs), demanding **political recognition**, autonomy, or even secession.

#### **Case Study:**

#### Naga Movement

- Led by the Naga National Council (NNC) and later NSCN, the Nagas demanded sovereignty based on their ethnic and Christian identity.
- > Conflict arose due to **colonial classification** and post-independence marginalization.

#### 2. Tribal or Indigenous Political Movements

These movements involve Adivasi or indigenous groups fighting for land rights, political autonomy, forest access, and cultural protection.

#### **Case Study:**

#### **Jharkhand Movement**

- Adivasis (Santhals, Mundas, Oraons) demanded a separate state to protect their land and culture from mining, displacement, and outsider domination.
- ➤ Led by organizations like JMM (Jharkhand Mukti Morcha).

#### 3. Agrarian / Peasant Movements

Mobilization of peasants and small farmers against landlords, feudal systems, or unjust agricultural policies.

#### Case Study:

#### Tebhaga Movement (1946–47) – Bengal

- > Sharecroppers (bargadars) demanded two-thirds of the produce (tebhaga) instead of the customary half.
- Linked to class struggle, led by the Communist Party of India.

#### 4. Regional Political Movements

Movements rooted in regional identity, culture, or economic grievances, demanding statehood or special status.

#### **Case Study:**

#### **Telangana Movement**

- ▶ Based on historical neglect and economic disparity with Andhra region.
- Achieved success in 2014 with creation of India's 29th state.

#### 5. Environmental Political Movements

Movements demanding sustainable use of natural resources, opposing environmental degradation by states or corporations.

#### **Case Study:**

#### **Chipko Movement**

- > Started in 1970s in Uttarakhand. Villagers, mostly women, hugged trees to prevent deforestation.
- > Protest against commercial logging by state contractors.

#### 6. Religious/Communal Political Movements

Movements that use religious identity for political ends, either to demand power or to assert dominance over other groups.

#### **Case Study:**

#### Ram Janmabhoomi Movement

- > Led by VHP and supported by BJP, aimed at building a temple on the site of Babri Masjid.
- > Mobilized Hindus across caste/class lines using religious symbolism (Rath Yatra, Ram flag, songs).



# 7. Revolutionary Movements

Radical movements aiming to overthrow existing political and economic systems, often through armed struggle.

#### **Case Study:**

#### **Naxalite / Maoist Movement**

- Started in 1967 in Naxalbari (West Bengal), now spread across "Red Corridor."
- > Tribals and peasants resist land alienation, mining, displacement, and state neglect.
- > Reject electoral politics; demand revolutionary justice.

# **Contributions of Anthropology To The Understanding Of Political Movement**

# 1. Holistic Understanding of Power and Resistance

- > Anthropology does not limit politics to governments; it studies how power operates in kinship, rituals, economy, and belief systems.
- ➤ Max Gluckman examined how political conflict is embedded in customary practices.
- **Example:** Chieftainship in African tribes shows how traditional authority can resist or align with state power.

#### 2. Ethnographic Fieldwork to Capture Grassroots Movements

- Anthropology's core method—participant observation—helps understand how people experience and engage with political movements on the ground.
- > T.B. Subba studied Gorkha political identity and everyday activism in Darjeeling.
- **Example:** Fieldwork in Jharkhand shows how Adivasis experience state neglect and mobilize around land rights.

#### 3. Culture, Symbolism, and Political Mobilization

- > Insight: Anthropology studies how flags, dress, language, festivals, rituals, and songs become tools of political assertion.
- > Victor Turner highlighted how symbols and rituals structure social drama and resistance.
- Example: In the Gorkhaland Movement, the use of the Nepali language, the khukuri symbol, and Gorkha history for mass mobilization.

#### 4. Political Movements as Identity Struggles

- ➤ **Insight:** Anthropology examines how caste, tribe, region, ethnicity, and religion intersect with political demands.
- > Fredrik Barth identity is maintained through boundaries and social interactions.
- > Example: Naga Movement an ethnic political struggle tied to cultural autonomy and religious identity (Christianity).

#### 5. Postcolonial and Historical Lens

- > Anthropologists analyze how colonial policies, censuses, and classifications created modern identity-based political movements.
- > Example: Colonial categorization of tribes in Northeast India laid the groundwork for Naga and Mizo insurgencies.



#### 6. Political Economy and Class Struggle

- Anthropology links political movements to land, labor, and resource control.
- ➤ David Graeber studied how bureaucracy and capitalism provoke grassroots resistance.
- **Example:** The Naxalite Movement is not only ideological but based on tribal dispossession, unemployment, and lack of land rights.

#### 7. Women's Role in Political Movements

- Anthropology uncovers gendered dimensions of protest and highlights how women use both traditional and new forms of resistance.
- **Example:** In the Chipko Movement, women used their cultural role as protectors of the forest to organize resistance against deforestation.

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