
UNIT 2 EVOLUTION OF PEACE MOVEMENTS

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2.1 INTRODUCTION

Just as there have been wars, and changes throughout history, there have also been peace and efforts towards peacemaking. If one judged such matters by the number of years spent at war versus those at peace, or even by the total number of wartime deaths versus peacetime deaths, one would be tempted to conclude that the peacemakers are far ahead. However, if we consider that virtually any war is an odious tarnishing of the human record, we must agree that the work of peacemaking is not only unfinished but woefully satisfactory. By many measures, wars have become more serious, making the work of the peacemaker all the more urgent. There have been, nonetheless, numerous efforts at peace, raising many possibilities and opportunities, some long-standing and others quite recent. There have also been hints of success although paradoxically, whereas the toll of war can be tallied, it is impossible to assess how many wars – or how much destruction during wars – have been prevented by the efforts of various peace movements.

Aims and Objectives

After studying this Unit, you will be able to understand:

- concept of Peace Movements in Indian Perspective;
- the evolution of Peace Movements;
- the role of Peace Movements in Indian Perspective; and
- interconnection between peace and other social movements.

2.2 MEANING OF PEACE MOVEMENT

A peace movement is a social movement that seeks to achieve ideals such as the ending of a particular war (or all wars), minimize inter-human violence in a particular place or type of situation, often linked to the goal of achieving world peace. Means to achieve these ends include advocacy of pacifism, non-violent resistance, diplomacy, boycotts, supporting anti-war political candidates, creating open government and transparency tools, demonstrations, and national political lobbying groups to create legislation. The political cooperative is an example of an organisation that seeks to merge all peace movement organisations and green organisations which may have some diverse goals, but all of whom have the common goal of peace and humane sustainability. A concern, of some peace activists, is the challenge of attaining peace when those that oppose it often use violence as their means of communication and empowerment.

Some people refer to the global loose affiliation of activists and political interests as having a shared purpose and this constituting a single movement, “*the* peace movement”, an all encompassing “anti-war movement”. Seen this way, the two are often indistinguishable and constitute a loose, responsive and event-driven collaboration between groups with motivations as diverse as humanism, environmentalism, veganism, anti-racism, anti-sexism, decentralisation, hospitality, ideology, theology, and faith.

2.3 A BRIEF HISTORY OF PEACE MOVEMENTS

Historically, periods of war have been tended to be followed by periods in which peace is espoused with particular vigour. This is apparently due in part to potential adversaries’ simple physical, economic, and social exhaustion, as well as to the literal inability of devastated societies to mobilize the resources – emotional and material – necessary to prosecute a lengthy war. The Greek Historian Herodotus called the “father of history” for his masterful treatment of the Greco-Persian Wars (500-479 B.C.E.), pointed out that “in peace children bury their parents; war violates the order of nature and causes parents to bury their children” (Herodotus, 1910). In so far as such experiences are what psychologists describe as aversive stimuli – events, such as corporal punishment, that are supposed to have the effect of reducing one’s inclination to repeat the immediately preceding behaviour – most people are especially likely to favour peace after they have buried their children, that is, in the immediate aftermath of war.

An important distinction must be made between the peace proposals of specific individuals and the history of peace movements in general. Mass mobilized peace movements as we understand them today are relatively recent developments, dating from the early 19th century. But they draw on a vast reservoir of popular discontent with war and have been nourished, in a large part, by universalism, a cosmopolitan ethic that sees shared humanity and a common interest in peace underlying and uniting political and ethnic distinctions between peoples.

2.4 ORIGIN OF PEACE MOVEMENTS

2.4.1 Religious Peace Movements

The early Christian Church was largely pacifist. During the first few centuries A.D., Christians were persecuted by the Roman Empire for refusing to serve in the Roman

legions. Renunciation of arms was inspired by the teachings of Jesus, notably as presented in the Sermon on the Mount. In addition, early Christian writing rejected service in the Roman legions as “idolatry”. Pacifism also seemed especially appropriate to many early Christians because it involved renunciation of the secular world, in anticipation of the Second Coming of Christ. Subsequently, there emerged with the conversion, toward a state-supportive view of the legitimacy of war and of military service. Earlier pacifist views came to be considered heresy by the so-called Christian realists, who believed that the Second Coming was not imminent and that therefore Christians must come to terms with the world of power and politics, that is, the world of “Cesar” as in the biblical injunction to “render unto Cesar that which is Cesar’s.: Christian realists, including Augustine, the founder of Just War theory, granted a certain legitimacy to the secular world of military force.

During the middle Ages, the Roman Catholic Church made some efforts to limit war, at least among Christians. The “Truce of God” forbade warfare on Sundays and certain other holidays (the word holiday originally referred to “holy day”), and the “Peace of God” forbade fighting in certain holy places while also granting immunity to specific persons, such as priests and nuns (However, the Church also uprooted the Crusaders, and supported the prosecution of so-called just wars, even among Christians). Traditions of absolute pacifism nonetheless, reemerged during the Middle Ages, most of which carried a strong anti-state flavour as well: The Waldensians of the 12th century and the Anabaptists of the 16th century were notable in this regard, and they were aggressively persecuted by both Church and State. Nonetheless, vigorous, if small-scale sects such as the Quakers, Mennonites, and the Brethern – sometimes knew as “prophetic minorities” – maintained religiously oriented peace traditions. Much of their activity was centered on individual statements of religious and ethical conscience, an individual refusal to participate in war often referred to as “personal witness.”

2.4.2 Secular Peace Movements

By contrast, secular peace movements, as we know them today, are less than two centuries old. Numerous organisations sprang up during the 19th century. The New York and Massachusetts Peace Societies, for example, were both found in 1815, and the following year. “The Society for the Promotion of a Permanent and Universal Peace” was established by the Quakers. Soon, thereafter, other organisations were found on both sides of the Atlantic, including The American Peace Society and the Universal Peace Union in 1866. Many international peace conferences were held during the mid-19th century, including gatherings in London (1843), Brussels (1848), Paris (1849), and Frankfurt (1850).

These efforts received some attention from governments, but were largely politically fringe events. Other than legitimizing the concept of peace, and spreading hope among those attending, they had virtually no concrete political successes. Later, The Hague Peace Conferences (circa 1890s -1909 and its May 1999 centenary) had more influence with government leaders, generating widespread expectations among many citizens as well. Although measurable successes have been rare, it can be argued that by placing the concept of international peacemaking on the world agenda and keeping it there, international peace meetings helped set the stage for such achievements with the establishment of the League of Nations after World War I and the United Nations after World War II. They also helped generate a growing international mood in which war was seen as uncivilised, and resource to war became increasingly unpopular.

Probably the first organised efforts by any peace group to prevent a war took place in the United States, prior to the Mexican-American War (1845). Although the effort failed, peace groups did succeed in getting the antagonists to negotiate their differences, and a pro-peace viewpoint was forcefully expressed. During that war, Henry David Thoreau was jailed for refusing to pay a poll tax, which, in his judgment, indirectly supported that conflict. His Essay "*Civil Disobedience*" has been enormously influential ever since. In it, Thoreau argued that citizens of a democracy have a higher obligation than to the policies of their government. He maintained that conscientious citizen is obliged to do what is right and to refuse personal participation in wrongdoing – even if the wrongdoing is sanctioned by the legal authority of government, and even if defiance leads to government retribution. The idea of civil disobedience has been greatly enlarged upon by modern practitioners of non-violence.

2.5 PEACE MOVEMENTS IN INDIA

The void arising from the precipitous decline of the Mughal Empire from the early decades of 18th century allowed emerging powers to grow in the Indian subcontinent. These included the Sikh Confederacy, the Maratha Confederacy, Nizamiyat, the local nawabs of Oudh and Bengal and other smaller powers. Each was a strong regional power influenced by its religious and ethnic identity. However, the East India Company ultimately emerged as the predominant power. One of the results of the social, economic and political changes instituted in the country throughout the greater part of 18th century was the growth of the Indian middle class. Although from different backgrounds and different parts of India, this middle class and its varied political leaderships contributed to a growing "Indian identity". The realisation and refinement of this concept of national identity fed a rising tide of nationalism in India in the last decades of the 1800s.

India attained independence from British rule by a peaceful and non-violent movement of the people. Gandhi's technique of Ahimsa and Satyagraha caught the imagination of mankind and has been and is replicated in several protest movements across the world. Mahatma Gandhi returned to India in 1915 from South Africa after being a part of the Apartheid. After his return he faced similar conditions in India. His aim was clear: To gain Independence. But his method of Satyagraha was a little complicated from the common man's point of view. As he went on giving speeches about the power of *Ahimsa* or *Non-Violence*, he was criticised for his weakness. His reply was, "Ahimsa is not the weapon of the weak. It is the weapon of the strong. Weak cannot practice Ahimsa. It involves active participation and presence of Mind." He also said that, "Non Violence is not a garment to be put on and off at will. Its seat is in the heart, and it must be an inseparable part of our very being." Though his views were met with praise, he did not achieve immediate national co-operation.

In the wake of the Indo-US nuclear deal of 2008 allowing India to engage in civilian nuclear trade, protest movements have emerged in several sites chosen for the construction of new nuclear power plants. India is aiming to establish at least thirty nuclear reactors and derive a quarter of its electricity needs from nuclear energy by 2050. With the establishment of the Atomic Energy Research Committee in 1946 and adoption of the Atomic Energy Act in 1948, India had preceded rather early on the path of atomic energy. Yet, two aspects related to the atomic energy programme are striking – first, the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) and subsequently the Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) have failed to match their own estimates of electricity production; and second,

there has been little public debate on these failures. Public awareness of even the nuclear tests of May 1998 and the “peaceful nuclear explosion” of May 1974 is strikingly low.

2.5.1 Nonviolent Resistance

Mahatma Gandhi (1869–1948) of India was one of the most influential spokesmen for peace and non-violence in the 20th century. Gandhism comprises the ideas and principles Gandhi promoted. Of central importance is nonviolent resistance. M.M. Sankhdher argues that Gandhism is not a systematic position in metaphysics or in political philosophy. Rather, it is a political creed, an economic doctrine, a religious outlook, a moral precept, and especially, a humanitarian world view. It is an effort not to systematize wisdom but to transform society and is based on an undying faith in the goodness of human nature (Sankdher; 1972). Gandhi was strongly influenced by the pacifist ideas of Russian novelist Leo Tolstoy. In 1908 Tolstoy wrote *A Letter to a Hindu*, which said that only by using love as a weapon through passive resistance could the Indian people overthrow colonial rule. In 1909, Gandhi and Tolstoy began a correspondence regarding practical and theological applications of non-violence (Murthy, B. Srinivasa, ed.; 1987). Gandhi saw himself a disciple of Tolstoy, for they agreed regarding opposition to state authority and colonialism; both hated violence and preached non-resistance. However, they differed sharply on political strategy. Gandhi called for political involvement; he was a nationalist and was prepared to use nonviolent force. He was also willing to compromise (Green, Martin Burgess; 1986).

Gandhi was the first to apply the principle of nonviolence on a large scale (Asirvatham, Eddy; 2004). The concept of non-violence (ahimsa) and non-resistance has a long history in Indian religious thought and has had many revivals in Hindu, Buddhist, Jain, Jewish and Christian contexts. Gandhi explains his philosophy and way of life in his autobiography *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*. Some of his other remarks were widely quoted, such as “There are many causes that I am prepared to die for but no causes that I am prepared to kill for” (James Geary; 2007).

Gandhi realised later that this level of nonviolence required incredible faith and courage, which he believed everyone did not possess. He therefore advised that everyone need not keep to nonviolence, especially if it were used as a cover for cowardice, saying, “where there is only a choice between cowardice and violence, I would advise violence” (William Borman; 1986; Faisal Devji; 2012).

Gandhi came under political fire for his criticism of those who attempted to achieve independence through more violent means. Gandhi responded, “There was a time when people listened to me because I showed them how to give fight to the British without arms when they had no arms [...] but today I am told that my non-violence can be of no avail against the [Hindu–Moslem riots] and, therefore, people should arm themselves for self-defense” (Louis Fischer (ed.); 2000).

Gandhi’s views came under heavy criticism in Britain when it was under attack from Nazi Germany. He told the British people in 1940, “I would like you to lay down the arms you have as being useless for saving you or humanity. You will invite Herr Hitler and Signor Mussolini to take what they want of the countries you call your possessions... If these gentlemen choose to occupy your homes, you will vacate them. If they do not give you free passage out, you will allow yourselves, man, woman, and child, to be slaughtered, but you will refuse to owe allegiance to them” (Stanley Wolpert; 2002).

2.6 TYPOLOGY OF PEACE MOVEMENTS

Peace movements may coalesce in opposition to a specific war to a particular weapon or weapons system (cruise missiles, neutron bombs, the MX missile, chemical weapons, land mines), to an aspect of war system (conscription, war taxes, sanctions), or to the prevailing socio-economic system (capitalism, globalisation). Or they may be opposed to the institution of war more generally (the position of absolute pacifism). Peace movements may be divided into three categories:

- 1) Movements to eliminate war in general
- 2) Movements to stop particular aspects of war
- 3) Movements to stop particular wars

It is easier to stop specific wars than to stop war in general; hence, efforts to banish war altogether are also most likely to be associated with efforts to reshape public opinion and to establish firm structures of positive peace. Such efforts are also more likely to persist, in contrast with opposition to particular wars or to specific means of waging war, which typically end along with the war in question or with the banning (or deployment) of the contested weapons.

2.7 INTERCONNECTION BETWEEN PEACE AND OTHER SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

Social movements are not eternal. They have a life cycle: they are created, they grow, they achieve successes or failures and eventually, they dissolve and cease to exist. They are more likely to evolve in the time and place which is friendly to the social movements: hence their evident symbiosis with the 19th century proliferation of ideas like individual rights, freedom of speech and civil disobedience. Social movements occur in liberal and authoritarian societies but in different forms. However, there must always be polarizing differences between groups of people: in case of ‘old movements’, they were the poverty and wealth gaps. In case of the ‘new movements’, they are more likely to be the differences in customs, ethics and values. Finally, the birth of a social movement needs what sociologist Neil Smelser calls an *initiating event*: a particular, individual event that will begin a chain reaction of events in the given society leading to the creation of a social movement.

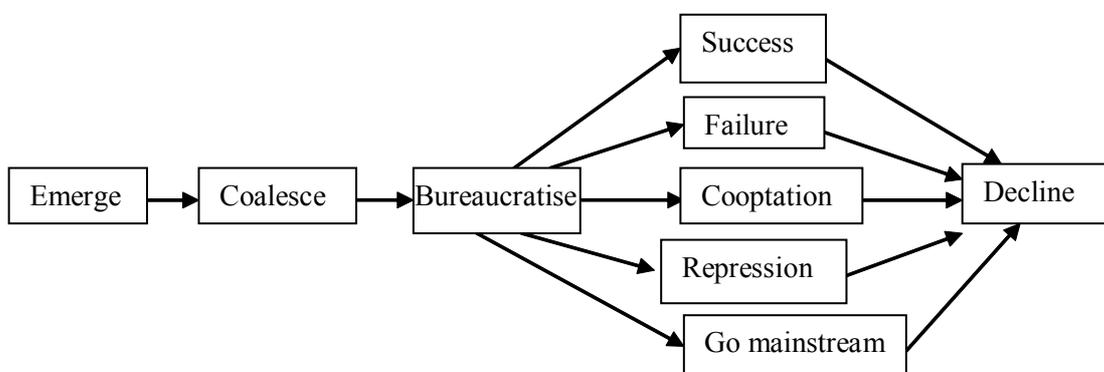


Figure 2.1

Source: Adapted from Blumer (1969), Mauss (1975), and Tilly (1978)

From the early 1970s new forms of social mobilisation began in India. They gained a variety of names such as social movement, people's movement, popular movements etc. (Ghanshyam; 2004). These movements emerged and highlighted some of the major issues such as gender and environment.

One of the leading analysts and participants in social movements in India, Sanjay Sangvi, identified the major agenda of them as "Movements of landless, unorganised labour in rural and urban areas, adivasis, dalits, displaced people, peasants, urban poor, small entrepreneurs and unemployed youth took up the issues of livelihood, opportunities, dignity and development."

Most well known movements in the country are, Narmada Bachao Andolan, Koel Karo, Chattisgarh Mukti Morcha, Jhola Aandolan Chutmarika (fighting polythene), Chipko Movement, Save Silent Valley, Appiko Movement, Save Kudremukh, Lok Satta Movement, Swadhyay Movement, Swatantra Sharad Joshi, Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha and so on.

These movements largely distanced themselves from political parties, or tried to cut across the ideologies of the political parties. Yet many of them rooted themselves or drew from ideologies of the Mahatma Gandhi, various shades environmentalisms or gender politics, or socialism.

The most recent of social movements is 'Campaign against corruption', April 2011, led by Anna Hazare; a Gandhian sits in the heart of New Delhi, capital of India, for fast unto death, demanding enactment of the long pending Jan Lokpal Bill. This movement got support of general masses and media. This created a buzz when political leaders were denied sharing of dias with the social activists. This movement is a landmark in the Constitutional history of independent India, which has forced government to include 5 non-official members in the Sri Ram Burgula Bill Drafting committee. Usually, only ministers are members of any legislation drafting committees. While enactment of the law and action will take some more time to be on actual ground, this movement has certainly made corruption a major social issue in India.

2.8 CURRENT PEACE MOVEMENTS

Modern peace movements in worldwide – tend to be somewhat periodic and generational (they rise and fall), pluralistic (i.e., influenced by a variety of traditions and motivated by a range of concerns, and tactically diverse (they employ a variety of techniques). Some peace movement activities, for example, are closely associated with feminists, others are allied with environmentalists.

2.9 SUMMARY

There are different ideas over what "peace" is (or should be), which results in a plurality of movements seeking diverse ideals of peace. Particularly, "anti-war" movements often have short-term goals, while peace movements advocate an on-going life-style and proactive government policy. It is often not clear whether a movement or a particular protest is against war in general, as in pacifism, or against one's own government's participation in a war.

Global protests against the US invasion of Iraq in early 2003 are an example of a more

specific, short term and loosely-affiliated single-issue “movement” — with relatively scattered ideological priorities, ranging from absolutist pacifism to Islamism and Anti-Americanism. Nonetheless, some of those who are involved in several such short term movements and build up trust relationships with others within them do tend to eventually join more global or long-term movements.

The Peace movement is primarily characterised by a belief that humans should not wage war on each other or engage in violent ethnic cleansings over language, race or natural resources or ethical conflict over religion or ideology. Long-term opponents of war preparations are primarily characterised by a belief that military power is not the equivalent to justice.

2.10 TERMINAL QUESTIONS

- 1) Define peace movement.
- 2) Discuss the origin of peace movements.
- 3) Briefly discuss the typology of peace movements.
- 4) Is there any interconnections between Peace and other social movements?

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