

Book Review

G.K. Karanth

M.H. Makwana and Richard Pais. 2022. *Understanding Social Movements*. Jaipur, India: Rawat Publications. 359 p. ISBN-13: 978-81-316-1250-7 (HB).

Useful Addition to the Study of Social Movements

In the backdrop of 75 years of Indian Independence, sociologists M H Makwana and Richard Pais bring together a volume of essays focusing on the benefits of many social movements by or for the deprived sections. The editors appropriately emphasize the fact that in a society like India, noted for its distinctive discriminatory institutions or practices involving caste, class, gender, and ethnicity, social movements too have been with a theme for study by social scientists.

Besides the introductory section addressing conceptual and theoretical issues, the essays are grouped into four types of social movements: Tribal, Backward Classes, Environmental, and Women's movements. Even though each of the contributors focuses on one or the other state/region in India, Richard Pais in his introductory essay neatly surveys the scene from a pan-India perspective. Makwana clarifies the conceptual maze that is involved in the study of social movements and takes the reader through different approaches to the analysis and classification of social movements, especially in India. However, it needs to be checked whether it is correct to trace the chronology of social movement studies in India to M.S.A. Rao. While it was (and continues to be) a useful source for the study, T.K. Oommen's (1972) *Charisma, stability, and change; an analysis of Bhoodan-Gramdan movement in India* had preceded Rao's edited volume, or a few others studying Indian national movement or freedom struggle as a social movement.

Chhaparia makes a meaningful examination of the different conceptions of social movements as propagated by the many schools of thought, while also

G.K. Karanth, Retired Professor of Sociology, Institute for Social and Economic Change Bangalore, India. He can be contacted at gk.karanth@gmail.com.

distinguishing conceptions within the different schools. Conceptually he traces how social movements were perceived to be distinct from political movements, but notes in the present context, this distinction to be merely semantic (p. 64). An interesting issue he discusses is the often-made claim (if not an allegation) that sociology as a discipline has made a delayed entry into the study of social movements. Instead, he sides with the view that many social movements' studies in India had missed out or lacked a sociological frame of analysis, as claimed by some (e.g., Gupta 1982). As a student, I would have welcomed a greater analysis of the Indian scene in his review of social movement studies—theoretical and methodological concerns—just to keep up with the trends elsewhere.

Rao's essay on tribal movements makes an interesting comparison between south and north India. He identifies several scholars who have classified tribal movements. Citing many such works, he observes that the specific character of tribal movements is largely a result of the internal structural contradictions within the region and conflicts of interest between the locals and the national bourgeoisie. One gets to read about, in greater detail, such structural contradictions and conflicts of interest in the state of Jharkhand in an essay by Rashmi and Singh.

Three essays with a focus on Dalit movements provide a wide canvas or review of literature pertaining to the subcontinent. Karade and Bhale drive home the fact that the "Non-Brahmin" or the "Shudra" movements did not specifically address the concerns of Dalits. Over the decades, Dalit movements have tended to shift their focus from merely seeking social welfare to asserting human rights. In a stand-alone piece, Lakum surveys the key stages in the growth of the Dalit movement in India, by making a specific analysis of it in a few states where the movements have been significant. With Makwana he makes a detailed investigation into the state of Gujarat. There is an attempt to balance the emphasis on both the impact of Gandhi and Dr Ambedkar in shaping the movement in Gujarat.

Any attempt to understand social movements in India cannot be completed without a focus on the Backward Class movement in India. Richard Pais takes us to Tamil Nadu—formerly Madras—the state where it had its origins. Pais makes an interesting observation on how "movements" within the "upper" or "forward" castes for greater representation in administration in the states of the then Mysore, Madras, and Kerala were precursors to the Backward Class movement subsequently. Gurulingaiah examines The Backward Class movement in Karnataka, keeping Yadavas in focus. In the state, they are known more popularly as Gollas and are part of the larger process of broad basing (Karanth 1996) of castes across different regions as Yadavas.

In two separate papers, Vinay Rajath and Sumit Saurabh Srivastava trace the nature of the relation between sociology as a discipline and the environment as an arena. Both provide a foundation for a preliminary understanding of the diverse concerns involved and take the readers through many movements across the country.

The final section is devoted to unraveling the women's movement in India with three papers, one each by Archana Srivastava, Basil Hans, and Sumit Saurabh

Srivastava. Archana Srivastava makes an elaborate analysis of the “#MeToo” movement in India, and points out the key ways in which it is distinct from the way it progressed in the west. Her conclusion highlights an important concern, of how #MetToo as a movement has evaded women from the unorganized section. Basil Hans takes the readers through the history of empowering journey of feminism in India. Sumit Saurabh Srivastava addresses an important question of caste in the women’s movement in India, and reiterates that both identities are seamlessly interwoven. A ray of hope is discerned with the refusal of Dalit feminism to be pushed under the larger carpet of the women movement in India.

With three well-knit introductory essays and 12 essays on five specific themes of social processes, this is a welcome addition to the existing body of literature on the social movement. In particular, it is a useful source for students of Social Movements. One wishes, however, there had been a treatment also of the trade union movement considering, especially, its decline over the past two-three years.

References

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