
UNIT 3 SOCIAL IDENTITY AND MOVEMENTS

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Suggested Reading

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Learning Objectives



After reading this unit, you will be able to:

- elaborate the concept of identity;
- discuss the process of transformation of identity;
- analyse the process of rejuvenation of identity in the context of social movement and its transformation; and
- delineate the resurgence of multiple collective identities as taking shape in grassroots movements in India.

3.1 INTRODUCTION: IDENTITY

In general sense of the term, it is widely stated that an identity is what “I am” or “we are”, “he is” or “they are”. The “I” and “we” similarly “he” and “they” is neither independent/autonomous social product nor remain fixed forever. One’s identity is constructed through the processes of interaction, and daily engagement both with the local and global society. These processes of construction get widely influenced by the social and cultural institutional arrangements of the society like the caste, religion and ethnicity, class, political party, state and the like. Thus the process of identity construction get negotiated both with the localised conditionalities, historical experiences and inter connections with the wider society. It is a complex and dynamic process through which individual collective self gets constructed, reformed and rejuvenated. Hence the summations of identity represent the collective self. Generally speaking human beings are born in society and societal conditions widely shape the identity.

3.1.1 Society, Self and Identity

The issues of ‘self’ and ‘identity’ are frequently used in the *symbolic-interactionist* theories. To them ‘self reflects society’, i.e., ‘society shapes self which shapes social behaviours’ (Mead 1934; Cooley 1902; Blumer 1969). Society however is not a homogenous undifferentiated identity. It is having eclectic dimension. Hence the *structural symbolic–interactionist* visualises societies as ‘highly differentiated yet organised systems of interactions and relationships encompassing a wide variety of crosscutting lines based on social class, age, gender, ethnicity, religion and more’. Here ‘self’ must be seen as ‘multifaceted, as comprised of a variety of parts that are sometimes interdependent and sometimes independent of other parts, sometimes mutually reinforcing and sometimes conflicting and that are organised in multiple ways. Self is conceptualised as sets of discrete identities or internalised role designations. It is also argued that identity varies in their salience. That a given identity can be invoked in a variety of situations or it ‘can be defined as differential probability’. Thus choice between or among behaviours expressive of particular roles will reflect the relative location of the identities associated with those roles (Stryker 1990: 873–74).

3.1.2 Culture and Identity

Philosophically identity is not a universal but a culture-specific discursive construction. Hall (1990) talks about cultural identity that is formed continuously: ‘Cultural identity is not an essence but a continually shifting description of us’. Hall’s (1996) argues that there is no automatic connection between various discourses of identity, namely, class, gender, race, age, etc. as they can be articulated in different ways. In this connection, the issue of multiple identities as propagated by several social scientists is highly relevant. To Barker and Galasinski (2001) ‘we may reflect on the multiple identities of the contemporary subject, that is the weaving of the patterns of identity from the discourses of class, race, gender, etc. We can thus conceive of people as operating across and within multiple subject positions constituted by the intersections of discourses of race, gender, age, nation, class, etc. Thus there is an element of plasticity in the formation of identity. Here to Hall (1996), it is the very plasticity of identity that makes its cultural and political significance, for the shifting and changing character of identities chronicles the way that get transformed over time and as a result, they tend to be subjective construction of mainly their objectively fixed phenomena (Hall 1996).

3.1.3 Identity, Self Recognition and Meaning

Furio Cerutti (2001) is of the view that the change in self-perception of the actor plays a crucial role both in the formation and transformation of identity. To him ‘there is a symbolic interaction (before and above any calculations and sometimes against the same calculations) that explains the development of the actor’s self, his actions, his transformations and his undoing’. The resurgence of identity also signifies a shift in attention ‘from structure to agency’.

Reflection

Cerutti (2001) emphasised two important dimensions related to the process of establishment and transmission of identity: (a) it creates a source of meaning to provide legitimacy to the decisions, action and unity of the group’s existence, and (b) it also defines the outer limits of group solidarity.

Identity in question thus, should be considered as an evolving identity and not a static one. Thus collective identity is a dynamic process and is a social construction.

Such a construction also involves the social production of boundaries reflecting the process of inclusion and exclusion. Self-recognition is an essential aspect of identity formation, which is produced by collectively operated individualisation of value, norms, life forms, etc. (Furio Cerutti 2001).

To Castells (1997) identities are sources of meaning for actors themselves, and by themselves constructed through a process of individuation. Identity refers to the process of construction of meaning on the basis of cultural attributes, or related sets of cultural attributes that is/are given priority over sources of meaning by set of social actors. Although identities can also be originated from dominant institutions, they can only become identities only when and if social actor internalises them and construct their meaning around their individuation. He distinguishes identities from roles. To him identities are stronger source of meaning than roles because of the process of self construction and individuation that they involve. In simple terms, identities recognise the meaning while roles recognise the functions. He again defines meaning as the symbolic identification of the purpose of action by a social actor (Castells, 1997:7).

3.1.4 Identity, Reasons and Choice

While examining the problematic aspects of identity, Amartya Sen (1999) underlines that the sense of community and fellowship relates closely to the idea of social identity. According to Sen, 'There are strong influences of the community, and of the people with whom we identify and associate, in sharpening our knowledge and comprehension as well as our ethics and norms. In this sense, social identity cannot but be central to human life' (Sen, 1999: 4). The centrality of human life is conditioned by inherited socio cultural processes on the one hand and by reasons and alternative choices on the other. Identity also shapes through societal recognition. In the interactive world individuals are posted with varieties of choices. This provides the opportunity to associate and to form and reform identities either based on reason, tradition or else. Sen extensively examines the question as to whether our identities emerge by choice or by reasoning or by passive recognition. He mentions that the choice to be identified is not permanent in the society and that there are limits to what we choose to identify with. He also mentions that one can discover his or her identity. However, to him choices have to be made even when discoveries occur. 'Choices do exist, and any denial to this fact leads to the uncritical and unquestioning acceptance of conformist behaviour with several conservative implications. To him, 'the unquestioned presumptions are merely unquestioned not unquestionable'. The unquestioning acceptance of social identity may also involve a radical shift in the identity having accepted as discovery rather than reasoned choice. **For example** a shift from the holistic to sectarian identities may be a product of unquestioning acceptance of coercive arrangement. This unreasoned identity shift may lead to devastating effects, like in Rwanda or Yugoslavia. Here he explains the phenomena of 'new tyrannies' in the form of newly asserted identity that tyrannizes by eliminating other identities. These identities may have a political role. However these may be oppressive if no room is given to other claims. To Sen, 'to deny plurality, choice and reasoning in identity can be a source of repression; choice is possible and important in individual conduct and social decisions even if we remain oblivious of it' (Sen 1999: 22).

3.2 TRANSFORMATION OF IDENTITY

Social movements not only help generate new collective identity or common identity, but also provide a broad field for the transformation of social identity [this lead

to the formation of a unified group out of scattered individuals e.g., transforming *serie* into *groups en fusion* (Sartre 1960), or this may lead to the transformation of a collectively into a self-conscious groups for collective ‘class-in-itself’ to ‘class-for-itself’ (Marx 1974), etc.]. Sartre calls *serie* the normal state of crowds, that is, a series of atomized individuals, each one seen as isolated in his or her inner world and going his or her own way without caring about others’ ways. What Sartre is pointing out is that whenever and wherever this figure is actually doing something or even just walking in the street, it has a silent companion: ‘social control’. The public space is wholly under the control of the established power. Every individual, whatever she or he thinks of the manifest public discourse “All is well” and its latent content “Nothing can be changed” (cf. Bertaux 1990: 150) whether he or she accepts the rule of this power or rejects it, does so secretly, thus behaving as if accepting it. Therefore each one, looking at all the others who work, comply and keep quiet, thinks they are alone in secretly rejecting this social order. When, however, frustration mounts in each person individually, it takes only a small event to trigger an instantaneous and massive change of state, from *serie* to *groupe en fusion*. As soon as each person in a serialised mass realises that some others contest the established power, as he or she takes one step forward to openly express support, a chain reaction spreads through the atomized series and transforms it into a fluid group (*groupe en fusion*) which instantly moves from the status of subordinated passive object to that of subject capable of action’ (cf. Bertaux 1990: 155–56). Indeed, social movements provide the required platform for such transformation.

In the Marxian analysis transformation in the collective identity has been viewed as transformation of class identities from that of ‘class-in-itself’ to ‘class-for-itself’. An identity is constructed not only through objective economic conditions but through a subjective consciousness about economic conditions that transform the social collectivity into a self-conscious entity to bring transform in the pre-existing social order. The social collectivity with common economic position and conflicting economic interest vis-a-vis the other form objective basis of a class-in-itself. This is social class without identity and it is incapable of collective action as it lacks subjective consciousness. The class-in-itself acquires collective identity of class-for-itself getting mediated through class-consciousness. In this analysis of transformation of identity all pre-existing identities like caste, gender, race, ethnicity etc are subsumed under the class identity.

3.2.1 Identity and Domination

To Longman (2010) in face of the structural crises, contradictions and dislocations due to globalisation, there is often a migration from the political economic to cultural/collective identity and emotional realms. Customary identities regarding work, gender, gender orientation, religion etc. face economic and/or cultural challenges and crises that in turn impact identities and cause emotional distress to actors.

For Foucault, power and domination work through the inscription and control of identity through various disciplinary/discursive practices. (cf. Buechler, 2000). Gramsci’s notion of cultural hegemony depends on mediation through identity to naturalise the historical (Langman, 2000). Thus a crucial aspect for certain contemporary social movements is rejection or refashioning of identities/values, to influence the future directions of a society. From what has been said, collective identity can be seen as a contested terrain in struggles for hegemony. The historic

blocs in power defend their power and privilege by fostering identities in which subjugation is cloaked and most people accept their domination (ruling block interests) as “normal”, “common sense” and “in their best interests”. In other words, the production of identities is a part of hegemonic processes that sustain structures of domination at the level of the person. And the acceptance and performances of those identities is not without certain emotional gratifications for most people most of the time. The extent to which such identities are embraced without question, and reproduced in performance over time, sustains the continuity of the society. This has been the essential nature of the structuration process for Giddens and the nature of the *habitus* for Bourdieu. Most notions of identity locate the person/group within certain structures of hierarchy and domination. This may be racial or ethnic. Colonisers impose subaltern identities upon on the colonised—the acceptance of which empowers the coloniser—even if the colonised turns violence on his/her self (Fanon, 1986). Women have been socialised to be subordinate to men—but as Simone de Beauvoir noted the suffering of women as Other, what Freudian called the illness without a name. Gays have long suppressed their identities.

3.2.2 Identity, Power and the Changing Society

Identity is also linked to broad societal arrangement. Each of the societies—primitive, agrarian, industrial and post-industrial is represented by their own variety of identities. In recent years the process of construction of collective identity has taken a complex shape in the wake of the initiation of new economic orders, introduction of new technologies and unprecedented flow of new technology and increasing flow of human and material objects across the globe. Manuel Castells (1997) in his famous work *The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture: The Power of Identity* elaborates the process of emergence of identity that challenges the processes of globalisation and cosmopolitanism. To him:

“Along with the technological revolution, transformation of capitalism, and the demise of the statism, we have experienced the wide spread surge of powerful expression of collective identity that challenges globalisation and cosmopolitanism on behalf of the singularity and people’s control over their lives and environment. These expressions are multiple, highly diversified following the contours of each culture, and the historical sources of formation of each identity. They include practice of movements, aiming at the transforming human relationship at their most fundamental level” (Castells, 1997:10).

Though it is easy to accept that identities are constructed, to him the real questions are how and for what. He is of the opinion that the identities are constructed in the context of power relationship and he proposes three forms of the origins of identity building.

Legitimising identity: Introduced by the dominant institutions of the society to extend and rationalise their domination vis-a vis social actors. **Legitimising identities** sustaining the social order—typically these include patriotic, religious or consumerist orientations. Such identities, the most typical in any society, maintain the status quo.

Resistance Identity: Generated by those actors that are in positions/ conditions devaluated and/or stigmatized by the logic of domination, thus building trenches of resistance and survival on the basis of principles different from or opposed to those permeating the institutions of society (Castells 1997) **Resistance identities** attempts to retain or restore waning identities that oppose globalisation and its impacts. For example, the fragmentation of community, often tied to economic

decline, leads some people to turn away from the global and embrace reactionary movements from nationalisms to fundamentalisms that would restore a [mythical] lost world or “Golden Age” of strong communities of the past and defend a particular cultural framework that would secure heretofore privileged, traditional identities. In some cases, there may be progressive forms of resistance albeit romantic and anarchic, and so individualistic; they are unlikely to foster mobilisations (Longman 2010).

Project Identity: When social actors on the basis of whatever cultural materials available to them build a new identity that redefines their positioning in society, by so doing, seek the transformation of the whole structure (Castells, 1997:8). For our purposes, the most important, if often least frequent pattern are the **project identities** that challenge the hegemony of the dominant class at several levels, not the least of which are proposing alternative identities that typically resist rationalisation and/or commodification and consumerism. These project identities pose fundamental challenges to late capitalist modernity in which rational technologies, as forms of domination, colonise the life world as well as collective identity, child rearing, family life, work, organisational spheres and even the pursuit of pleasure (Giddens 1991, Habermas 1975, Hochschild 1997). The attempts to re-negotiate and/or fashion new forms of tolerant democratic identities that embrace alternative futures, in turn act to impel progressive social transformations. Such people seek to transform people and society in terms greater equality, freedom and democracy. But these project identities are emergent in the interaction of struggle, they are neither *a priori* nor clearly envisioned as goals.

He again maintains that “identities that start as resistance, may reduce project and may also along with the course of history, become dominant in the institution of the society, thus becoming a legitimising identities to rationalise their domination. Thus to him there is per se no progressive or regressive identities except its historical context. However in his each type of identity process leads to a different outcome in constituting society. Legitimising identity generates a civil society, i.e. a set of organisation and institutions as well as a series of structured and organised social actors, which produce albeit sometimes in a conflict manner the identity that rationalises the source of structural domination” (Castells, 1997:2). This is indeed the original concept of civil society as formulated by Gramsci. The Gramscian sense of civil society is formed by a series of apparatuses such as the church, unions, parties etc on which on the one hand prolonged the dynamics of the state, on the other hand deeply rooted among the people.

The identity for resistance leads to the formation of communes or communities. It constructs forms of collective resistance against other unbearable oppression, usually on the basis of the identities that were apparently defined by history, geography or biology making it easier to essentialise the boundaries of resistance”. Here the examples of are religious fundamentalism, nationalist self affirmation, etc the expressions being ***exclusion of the excluded by the excluders***.

The project identity according to him produces subjects. They are collective actors through which individuals reach holistic meaning of their experience. In this case the building of identity is a project of different life... expanding towards the transformation of the society (Castells, 1997:10).

3.2.3 Identity in Networked Society

To him, the dynamics of identity is central to the network society and herein he accepts the tenets of Giddens’s characterisation of identity in the late modernity.

Locating self-identity within the interplay of local and global he accepts Giddens view that “self identity is not a distinctive trait possessed by the individual. It is the self as reflexively understood by the person in terms of his/her biography... To be a human being is to know both what is one doing and why one is doing it... In the context of the post industrial order, the self becomes a reflexive project... Reflexively organised self planning...becomes a central feature of the structuring of the self identity” Giddens (1991).

To Castells, however the raise of network society calls into question the process of construction of self identify. It is because the network society is based on the systemic disjunction between local and global for most individuals and social groups. Therefore, reflexive self planning becomes impossible, except for the elite inhabiting in the timeless space of flows of global network and their ancillary locals.

Under such new conditions, civil societies shrink and disarticulate because there is no longer continuity between the logic of power making in the global network... The search for meaning takes place then in the reconstruction of defense identified around communal principles. Most of the social actions becomes organised in the opposition between unidentified flows and secluded identities... (and) that the condition of the subject at the heart of the process of social change takes a different route to one we knew during modernity and late modernity: namely subjects if and when constructed, are not built any longer on the basis of civil societies, that are in the process of disintegration, but as prolongation of communal resistance... This is the actual meaning of the new primacy of identity politics in the network society (Castells, 1997:11).

Castells while explaining the process of emergence and transformation of social movements in the context of the network society states that information technology is transforming the world and it is causing disintegration of existing mechanism of social control and political representation. All over the world, there is perceived loss of control over lives, environment, jobs, economies, governments, countries and ultimately over the fate of the earth. There is an emerging new global order, and alternative projects challenge the logic embedded in the new global order. Now there are unexpected ways of reactions and mobilisations. In his view social movements can be categorised by three principles: the movements identity, the movements adversary and the movements goal which was originally propagated by Touraine (1966). The identity refers to the self definition of the movement of what it is, adversary refers to the principle enemy, as explicitly defined by the movement; and the social goals refers to the vision of the social order the movement would wish to attain.

To him in the information age, bypassed by global network of wealth, power and information, the modern nation state has lost much of its sovereignty. In this age the legitimising identities are drained away. He however has visualised the emergence of a powerful resistance identities both retrench in the communal heavens and built around proactive social movements’ which choose to establish their autonomy in their communal resistance’ for example the women’s and the environmental movements. In the network society together with the state apparatuses, global networks, and self centred individuals, there are also communes formed around resistance identity. However their logic excludes each other.

In this backdrop he visualises the emergence of project identities from the development of the resistance identities that arise from a commune. The commune

of resistance defends their space, and their places against the placeless logic of the space of flows characterising social dominations in the information age. In the network society power is diffused in the global network of wealth, power and information, and images. The social movements according to Castell are emerging from the communal resistance to globalisation, capitalist restructuring, organisational networking, uncontrolled informationalism and patriarchy. Such of them are of ecologist, feminists, religious fundamentalists, nationalists, and localists.

3.3 COLLECTIVE ACTIONS, NEW IDENTITY AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

Among the new social movement scholars the issue of collective identity formation has got a place of prominence whereby issues such as collective participation, group solidarity, and cultural integration and so on have been widely emphasised. How are these identities formed? What are their implications for a social movement? To Pizzorno the direct participation in collective action is an essential component of collective identity formation. This participation in the collective action, to him, need not be seen in terms of gain or loss, but in terms of production of solidarity. These kinds of action are ‘connecting a process of formation for an identity’ (Pizzorno, 1978: 293).

It is now imperative for us to look into the nuances of identity perspective that has been widely used in West European countries to study social movements since early 20th century. This intellectual tradition has emerged backdrop of proliferation of preponderant labour movements, development industrial democracies, Fabian socialism and welfare state in the UK and other countries on the one hand, and mobilisations of nationalist feelings in the countries like Germany on the other. Indeed institutionalisation of reformist and social democratic labour movement in Western Europe affected the way social movements were conceived by social scientists in these countries (Eyerman and Jamison, 1991:17-18).

However since 1960s, going away from the economic determinism and newness were the major thrusts to study social movements. Touraine (2006) makes it very explicit: “After the World War II and even very recently—especially in the 1960s—many people, including myself tried to discover new forms of collective actions in a so called, at that time, post-industrial, society and what we call now an information society ...I was convinced at the end of the twentieth century and beginning of the twenty- first century, the social and the political scene would be dominated by the growing role of these new and the cultural movements... Many people were convinced that priority should be given to the formation of what I had myself called ‘new social movements’” (Touraine, 2006: 89-92).

It was widely realised that not merely the empirical and the economic class position, but rather the issue of values, culture, subjectivity, morality, empowerment etc. have also played crucial roles towards the formation of new collective identities in these movements. Touraine (1981, 1983) observed ‘new social movements as potential bearers of new social interests’ and that social movements are characterised by the realisation of historicity, by self-conscious awareness and collective identity. Bertaux (1990) has added the view that “subjectivity” and “idealism” are essential elements of social movement and that “subjectivity refers to the subject in its totality...it concerns with the drastic change in the fabric of social life that takes place when a new movement is born.” (Bertaux, 1990:153). Social movements help generate sense of collective identity and new ideas that recognises the reality

from new perspective. Collective identities are formed as an achieved definition of a situation, constructed and negotiated through the constitution of social networks which then connect the members of a group or movement through collective action to provide distinctive meaning to collective action. Thus social movements grow around relationship of new social identity that are voluntarily conceived “to empower” members in defense of this identity (Melucci 1992, 1996). To Melucci ‘newness of the new social movements is a relative concept and it had a temporary function to indicate the comparative difference between the historical forms of class conflict and today’s emergent form of collective action. ‘The reality in which we live has in entirety become a cultural construct and our representations of it serve as filters for our relationship with the whole world... Social movements too seem to shift their focus from class, race, and other more traditional issues towards the cultural ground.....’ (Melucci, 1996:8-9).

In the world of cultural interactivity and co-construction social movement provides public spaces for generating new thoughts, activating new actors, generating new ideas. ‘Thus by producing new knowledge, by reflecting on their own cognitive identity, by saying what they stand for, by challenging the dominant assumptions of the social order, social movements develop new ideas those are fundamental to the process of human creativity. Thus social movements develop worldviews that restructure cognition, that re-cognize reality itself. The cognitive praxis of social movements is an important source of new social images and transformation of societal identities’ (Eyerman and Jamison 1991: 161-166). Thus social movements involve actions for ‘doing’. ‘The involvement in an action is a matter of conscience and emotion, of responsibility and intention, of reflection and (com) passion, it is basically moral, global and individual (Hegedus, 1990: 266).

Social movements are also linked however not only to the understanding of common social identity but also of common interest (Scott 1991: 6) With the growing space for globalism and informationalism while the notion of identity has emerged to be idealistic and hegemonic at one end, it is also tending to be diluted, fragmented and self oriented on the other. In view of the changes in the contemporary society critiquing the domination of the identity theory has also been a possibility and necessity. It is widely delineated that, with the technological revolution, transformation of capitalism, and the demise of the statism, informationalism is disintegrating the existing mechanism of social control and political representation. With the exception of a small elite of global politics (half beings, half flows), people all over the world recent loss of control over their lives. In the network society, “thus on the one hand the dominant global elites inhabiting in the space of flows tend to consist of the identity less individuals (citizens of the worlds); while on the other hand, people insisting economic, cultural, and political disfranchisement trend to be attracted to communal identity” (Castells, 1997).

Hence the concept of collective identity has also become an obstacle to explore the forms of mobilisations increasingly taking place in the networks, scapes and flows. The fluid like characteristics of emerging society with increasing unequal flows of people, information, money, images risks, practices and emotions with no clear beginning or the end points. Within these emerging complexities social systems increasingly manifest fluid-like characteristics and become increasingly subject to shockwaves fluidarity rather than solidarity, public experience of self rather than collective identity are the emerging paradigm of contemporary social movements (Urry 2000 cf. McDonald, 2002).

comprehending social movement theoretically, and in understanding the nature of collectivities on which the very foundation of social movement is laid. Social movement group is understood as a variant of social collectivities and is usually understood within the conceptual formulation of ‘community’. Now it has also been understood as collectivity of informal networks which mobilise about conflictual issues through the frequent use of various forms of protest” (della Porta and Diani 1999:16). Moreover, there are diverse types of adherent in social movements i.e. activists, participants, sympathisers (Neidhardt and Rucht. 2002). Social movement collectivities are loosely formed many a times independent of geographical boundary. Their collective identity is formed based on temporarily perceived articulated ideals and common interests, and that many participants tends to be members of more than one collectivities simultaneously. Significantly many of these collectivities do have contradictory interests and goals. Hence, it is inevitable that membership is fluid and are of varying strength. Thus the fluid and the fuzzy membership and the emerging fluidity of identity make the social order of social movement in communities very weak. The emergence of net work society adds more odds with the concept of community.

Though the identity theorists locate identity within the broad interactive social processes, they also simultaneously advocate the notion of autonomy of identity. Their focus has been on the theme of political autonomy against ideological determinism, personal autonomy, and autonomy from localised formulation. Away from the perspectives of these theorists, autonomy is also understood as process of formulation from below. E.P Thompson (1963) in his seminal history from below underlined the autonomous discourse by popular strata. To him, two processes are to be integrated to define popular movements; integration in the collective action of the popular strata, definition of an autonomous and independent discourse. ‘If such a definition is general, encompassing different historical realities, it might be useful as a methodological suggestion to attempt the interpretation of the actual, located in the time and space...’ Indeed the issue of autonomy has emerged to be an integral part of social movement analysis in the context of emerging fluidity of identity, emergence of resistance from below and formation multiple identities both at the global and the local levels.

Notwithstanding their contradictory theoretical positions from those of the political process and the new social movements theorists, the dependency theorists now recognise that in the world system there have existed multiple identities and varieties of social movements- the socialist, labour, women, nationalist liberation, peasant, ecology even some religious movements- within the capitalist world economy. Since late 1960s these have been “primarily triggered by the sense that the old movements – the social democrat, the communist and the nationalists had failed in many of their objectives... and that there has been a major crisis in the anti systemic social movements” (Wallenstein 2002). It is again pointed that the anti systemic movements “overshadowed the ever present other social movements who are now gaining significance while the performances and promise of other social movements are declining. The increasing failure of the state/ political parties labour movements/ parties, socialism/Marxist parties as well as people’s increasing refusal to be manipulated by these, now also increasingly draws the new other social movements” (Gunder Frank and Matra Fuentes 2002:177). “In the present moment of the society is ‘marked by the appearance new problems and new social movements which can no longer be explained by invoking another order of the phenomena- the laws of the capitalist development or the consequences of modernisation.’ It is also a different intellectual moment ‘causing to the inability

to the ‘traditional left’ to understand social and the political events’ of this era. Our most urgent need is to learn how to name and analyze the new social practices and the new forms of collective action which are shaping the societies of today and tomorrow” (Tourine (2005)11-12, 25).

In the changing society while most of the social movements have remained institutionalised, working class movements are also on a decline and have emerged to be incapable of rising to the level of historicity to challenge the over all control of the major orientations of collective life, new forms of social movements are also in the making to articulate new forms of identity and interests. Significantly enough the end of cold war and emergence of new phase of economy with globalisation has marked the proliferation of ‘global movements’ involving numerous struggles on the question of environment, human rights, vision of ‘another world’ demand of recognition of cultural identities and so on [Wieviorka(2005)]. In the changing world conflict is now getting institutionalised and social movements becoming permanent component of political interest mediation, and legitimate factors in contemporary societies. All these are leading to the conspicuous formation of the ‘movement society’. All these indicate the trends of potential emergence and sustenance of plurality of social movements taking up long term and permanent positions in society on diverse issues and interests (Rucht and Neidhardt 2002). With the emergence of multiplicity of social movements in the movement society, social movements are to encounter its inverted image— “the social anti movements which instead of promoting a social or a cultural identity, champion of some abstract entity, essence or symbol, and speak in the name of a purity or homogeneity. Again instead of building relationships with other actors, agreeing on the principles of debates and negotiations, they champion absolutes, and adopt do or die attitudes. And if they appear in an arena where social movements also exist, they try to destroy these movements, and fight against them” (Wieviorka 2005:18).

In the wake of globalisation and the emerging interplay of several new forces a large part of the society is undergoing a profound process of socio-cultural de-contextualisation. These have generated new varieties of social change and mobility and have led to the articulation of diverse interests and identities; and expression of diverse varieties of protests, conflict, collective mobilisation and social movements. Significantly many of the processes are intertwined with each other. Societies in India are experiencing fast processes of transformation in response to global forces and internal fluid situations which has resulted in emerge of various new movements.

3.4 RESURGENCE OF MULTIPLE COLLECTIVE IDENTITIES IN INDIA

In recent years societies in India have borne witness to the proliferation and resurgence of varieties of identities. These are widely caused by increasing quantum of interconnectivity, social mobility and interpenetration of new technologies on the one, and persisting poverty, unemployment, ill-health, livelihood insecurity, social subordination and coercion of the dominant section of the population on the other. Hence many of the pre-existing identities have got redefined and rejuvenated in the changing context to become protest identities in the contemporary society.

Societies in India now widely experience the proliferation of fluidity of collective identity. The conventional and the pre-existing patterns of vertical social mobility have been diluted in the wake of decline in the land man ratio, and the increase in the occupational diversification and rural to urban migration. Vast segment of the

population are now horizontally mobilised from agriculture to non agricultural activities and a good number of them from rural to the urban areas. It has widely contributed to the increasing informalisation of Indian economy to accommodate 92% of the work force who can't spend Rs 20 per day towards consumption. Indeed in spite of occupational mobility, the economic vulnerability of the marginalised segment of the population has not been altered. The vast segments of the population, due to the lack of proper education, training and social capital, look for alternative avenues of employment not by choice but by compulsion. This has led to the emergence of multiple employer-employee relationship even in rural areas. The pre-dominant and stable forms of agrarian employer employee relationships (landlord-tenant or land lord-agricultural labourer etc) are now being replaced by unstable, infrequent relationship with multiple employers or the service users. The traditional structure of authority and the primordial form of domination has been widely questioned with the emergence of NGOs activities and the functioning of Panchayat Raj institutions at the grass roots. Now gender, caste and ethnic identities are articulated to frame collective mobilisations against the hostile forces of patriarchy, feudalism and caste and ethnic hegemony. The struggles of the Dalits and the tribes for economic emancipation have been extended to the areas of struggles for political empowerment and to the struggles for their caste and ethnic identity. The practice of democracy at the grass-roots has generated a space for self-assertion among the marginalized groups on diverse issues and have contributed to the continuity of the culture of collective mobilisations and re-articulation of regional, ethnic, gender etc identities. For example the Telangana region of Andhra Pradesh which has visualised the proliferation of peasant movements (viz. the Telangana 1948-52, Naxalite movements 1972 onwards) has now seen the proliferation of numerous collective mobilisations at the grass roots through the resurgence of multiple identities. For example the resurgent separate Telangana statehood movements based on the ethnic identity of the Telangana people, mobilisation of the agrarian poor and sustained agrarian conflict spear headed by the CPI(ML), (Peoples' War Group) and various other Naxalite outfits, mobilisation for the protection of civil rights of citizen by Andhra Pradesh Civil Liberties Committee (APCLC), Organisation for the Protection of Democratic Rights, Citizens Forum etc, mobilisation of scheduled Tribes by Thudum Debba (a militant organisation of the scheduled tribes), mobilisation of Madiga (a scheduled caste) by Madiga Reservation Porata Samithi (MRPS) for re-categorisation of the scheduled castes into four groups based on their contemporary educational and economic status for the purpose of reservations in jobs, education, etc.), mobilisation of cultivators by Roytu Seva Samithi, Jala Sandhana Samithi (demanding irrigation facilities for the peasants), anti arrack movement to mobilise women against production and consumption of liquor and also for women's liberty, political participation and social development and so on are the contemporary realities of collective mobilisations in rural Andhra Pradesh.

Similarly, West Bengal which has experienced the proliferations peasant and class identities through the Tebhaga (1946-47) Naxalite (1967-71) Operation Barga movement (1977 onward) has been experiencing the rejuvenation of Gurkhaland Movements 1980s of the Gurkha hill tribes for a separate statehood, Kamtapur movement of the Rajbanshi (Scheduled Castes) since 1980s for the recognition separate statehood, movements against acquisition of agricultural lands by the Krishi Jami Suraksha Committee (Committee to Protect Agricultural lands) in Singur and the Bhumi Ucced Pratorodhi in Nandigram, Tribal villagers resistance against police oppression in the Midnapore District and several other grass roots mobilisations. Indeed all these movements have constructed distinctive protest identities against domination of various forms.

It is again that the state now has provided the liberal democratic space to articulate issues, interests, and identities for collective mobilisations. Within this available space many of the radical mobilisations have got transformed to be institutionalised, co-opted, and have sustained them being partially reformative. Evidences from West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh show that sustained mobilisations have opened up the possibility of articulation of new issues, identities and mobilisations of the marginalised sections of the population.

The society now sees the cropping up of several new issues, new patterns of conflict, mobility and mobilisation, while many of the old ones have taken a new shape in the present context. In the emerging scenario the relationship between social mobility, conflict, mobilisation and social movements have been extensive and implicit. Within the emerging dynamics the pre-existing forms of social collectivities got a significant place not only to protect their identity, but also their social, economic and political interests. These identities have also been encapsulated as a project to attain specific political goals. Hence they not only question the bases of legitimacy of pre-existing arrangements but also assert for a share in the social, economic and political spheres in the established order. These identities and conflicts however are not fixed. Even as the tribal and the Dalit identities are constructed in the Telangan region of Andhra Pradesh for getting better share of protective discrimination, they are simultaneously linked with the whole of Telangana regional identity. Similarly gender identity also cut across the caste and the ethnic identity. Thus collective identities are in a state of flux. They get articulated and rejuvenated both synchronically and diachronically on diverse issues in diverse context. They move like a pendulum in these mobilisations getting fixed at one end and liberated at the other (Singharoy 2004).

3.5 SUMMARY

Collective identity is constructed through the process of interaction and engagement with contemporary social processes on the one hand and historical experiences on the other. As, this engagement and experiences are historically circumscribed there have been diverse processes of construction and transformation of social identity. Though at times identities operate in silence, it also becomes idiom of public projections of collective solidarity becoming parts of organised and spontaneous social movements. As social collectivity, human beings respond to varieties situations, articulate multiple identities and get associated with multiple networks cross cutting the predefined boundaries of given social groups. Herein, the process formation and transformation of social identity is complex and fluid. This unit besides providing you conceptual clarification on identity, its formation and transformation has also discussed the location of identity within the local and wide social processes. We have learnt the intertwining between society, self and identity, relation between culture and identity, the interface of identity with reasoning and available social choices. As identity gets transformed its gets interlinked with process of formation, rejuvenation and reconstruction of identity. This unit has also discussed the emerging facets of fluidity in identity in the wake of the fast transformation of societies caused globalisation and emergence of network societies. Besides discussing the theoretical issues, this unit has also provided you a glimpse of the emergence of multiple identities as reflected in the grass roots collective action in rural India.

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Sample Questions

- 1) What is Identity?
- 2) Describe the relation between Society, Self and Identity.
- 3) State the causes leading to transformation of Identity.
- 4) Delineate the Collective Actions New identity and Social Movements.
- 5) Discuss the resurgence of Multiple Collective Identities in India.