



# Introduction

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# **Chapter 5: Popular Struggles and Movements**

# Chapter 5: Popular Struggles and Movements

## Introduction

Democracy in every country evolves through popular struggles and movements. Protests, movements and rallies are held by the people or a community even in the democratic countries to gain their rights and privileges. While the popular struggle in Nepal belongs to the first category, the water war in Bolivia belongs to the second category.

# Chapter 5: Popular Struggles and Movements

## Popular Struggle in Nepal and Bolivia

### Movement for Democracy in Nepal

The struggle of the people of Nepal is a source of inspiration for people all over the world. The following is a brief outline of the struggle of the people to gain democracy in their country:

- Nepal had become a democratic nation from a monarchical country in 1990. While the king remained a nominal head, the real powers were exercised by the elected members of the Parliament.

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## Movement for Democracy in Nepal:

- When King Birendra was killed in the much-debated massacre of the Nepal Royal Family in 2001, King Gynendra, the brother of the slain king, dismissed the then Prime Minister and dissolved the Parliament of the country.
- This marked the beginning of the movement which began in 2006 for the restoration of democracy in Nepal. Apart from the people fighting for re-establishing democratic rule in the country, all parties formed a Seven Party Alliance (SPA) and called for a four-day strike in Kathmandu.

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## Movement for Democracy in Nepal:

- The Maoists also joined the strike. People defied the curfew and came out in the streets calling for the restoration of democracy.
- Finally, on 24 April 2006, the king was forced to accept the demands of the protestors. Girija Prasad Koirala was elected as the Prime Minister of the country by the SPA. The powers of the king were taken away by the Parliament and Nepal again became a democratic country.
- This struggle came to be known as Nepal's second movement for democracy.

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## Water War of Bolivia:

- Bolivia is a small country in Latin America. Its government was forced by the World Bank to give up its control over water supply. The work of the distribution of water supply was given by the Government to a multinational company.
- This multinational company immediately increased the price of water by four times. In a country where the average monthly salary of the people is Rs 5000, people started receiving water bills amounting to Rs 1000. This marked the beginning of protests in Bolivia.



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## Water War of Bolivia:

- In January 2000, when a new alliance formed by labours, human rights activists and community members organised a general strike in the city, the Government made promises to look into the grievances of the people but nothing was done. When the agitation started again, the Government brutally suppressed the people and imposed martial law. However, the increasing participation of the people in the movement forced the officials of the multinational company to flee the country.

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## Water War of Bolivia:

- The contract with the multinational company was cancelled, and the Government took over the water supply into its own hands. This was termed Bolivia's water war.

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The stories of Nepal and Bolivia were different from each other. The movement in Nepal was to establish democracy, while the struggle in Bolivia involved claims on an elected, democratic government. Both these struggles show their impact at different levels. Despite these differences, both instances involved critical role of political organisations.

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**We conclude the following facts from the struggle which occurred in both countries:**

- Popular struggles and movements play an important role in the beginning and spread of democracy.**
- Conflicts within the democracy can be resolved through mass mobilisation. The resolution comes not only from outside but also from the people.**
- Organised politics play an important role in resolving conflicts within democracy. Public participation becomes effective only when politics is organised.**

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## Role of Organisations and Mobilisation:

Various organisations play an important role in establishing democracy and in resolving conflicts within democracy. In case of Nepal, the Seven Party Alliance or the SPA played an important role in establishing democracy. It was also joined by the Nepalese Communist Party (Maoist) which did not believe in democracy; however, it later joined the movement for the restoration of democracy in the country. Thus, we find that apart from political parties, many organisations such as associations of traders, teachers and human rights groups also play a prominent part in supporting the people's movement.

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## Features of Marketing:

### 1. Needs and Wants:

- The marketing process assists consumers in obtaining what they require and desire.
- A need is said to be known as a state of deprivation or the feeling that one is depriving oneself of something.
- Needs are fundamental to human beings and are unrelated to a specific product.

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## Role of Organisations and Mobilisation:

In case of Bolivia's water war, the protests against the privatisation of water were not led by any political party. It was led by FEDECOR, an organisation which included engineers, teachers and environmentalists. FEDECOR was supported by the unions of factory workers, university students and the Socialist party.

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## Role of Organisations and Mobilisation:

Therefore, we find that many organisations work in a democracy and perform two important functions:

- In a democracy, the decisions of the Government are influenced by directly participating in politics. This can be achieved through the formation of new political parties, contesting elections and forming the Government.
- People may not directly participate in politics and contest elections. By forming organisations and putting forth their demands, many people ask the Government to look into their demands. These organisations or groups are called interest groups or pressure groups.



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## Interest Groups, Pressure Groups and Movements:

Organisations which try to influence the policies of the Government are known as interest groups. An interest group is formed when people belonging to the same occupation and with common interests come together to achieve a common objective. However, they may not directly control or share political power.



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## Interest Groups, Pressure Groups and Movements:

Movements, on the other hand, sought to influence governmental policies rather than directly participating in politics. Movements depend on mass participation of the people.

- Interest groups which aim at promoting the interests of a particular group or section of society are known as sectional interest groups. They may include trade unions, industrialists, followers of a certain religion and professional bodies. Their prime motive is to demand for the betterment and well-being of their members and not for the entire society.

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## Interest Groups, Pressure Groups and Movements:

- Some organisations represent common and general interests. The members of the organisation may themselves not be directly benefited by their own demands. For example, a group fighting for the rights of sweepers is not benefited but work for the larger interest of this community. Such groups are known as promotional groups or public interest groups. FEDECOR is an example of this kind of interest group. In India, BAMCEF is an organisation which consists of government employees which fight for the rights of people from the lower caste.

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## Interest Groups, Pressure Groups and Movements:

- **Movement groups are mostly issue-specific and aim at achieving a single objective within a limited time period. The Nepalese struggle for the restoration of democracy was a movement. Narmada Bachao Andolan is also an example of a movement which deals with the specific issue of the people displaced by the building of the Sardar Sarovar Dam. Some movements may also be long-term movements. Environmental movements or women's rights movements are examples of such movements.**

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## Sectional Interest Groups

(i) Sectional interest groups seek to promote the interest of a particular section/group of society.

(ii) Their principal concern is the betterment and well-being of their members and not society in general.

## Public Interest Groups

(i) Public interest groups represent some common or general interest that needs to be defended.

ii) Their principal concern is the betterment of the entire society.

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## Sectional Interest Groups

(iii) They are sectional because they represent a particular section of a society like workers employees, business men etc.

(iv) Example: Trade unions/business associated and professionals (Lawyers, doctors, teachers, etc.

## Public Interest Groups

(iii) They are public because they are concerned with public issues rather than private.

(iv) Example: FEDECOR in Bolivia and BAMCEF in India.

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## How do Pressure Groups Influence Politics? :

Pressure groups influence politics in the following ways:

- They carry out campaigns and hold protests and rallies in order to gain attention and support of the people. They also try to influence media to pay attention to the issues raised by them.



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## How do Pressure Groups Influence Politics? :

- Pressure groups organise protest rallies or disrupt government programmes.
- Professional lobbyists are employed by business groups in order to influence the decision-making body of the Government.



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## Relationship between Political Parties and Interest Groups/Movements:

The relationship between political parties and interest groups take different forms. These are

- Leaders of political parties may themselves form an interest group or support them. Most trade unions and student organisations are either established or affiliated to a political party.

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## Relationship between Political Parties and Interest Groups/Movements:

- In some instances, a political party may grow out of movements. For example, the roots of DMK and AIADMK can be traced back to a social struggle in Tamil Nadu.
- The interests of a political party or an interest group may even clash with each other if both of them stand for opposite ideologies. In such a case, issues are resolved through dialogues and negotiations.

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## Relationship between Political Parties and Interest Groups/Movements:

Pressure groups and movements play an important role in a democracy. They help in widening democracy. They force the Government to recognise and implement laws benefiting wider interests of society. When a sectional interest group influences the Government to make policies in their favour, another group may bring counter pressure on the Government to not make laws the way in which the first group desires. This results in maintaining a balance of power and accommodation of conflicting interests of society.

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## Relationship between Political Parties and Interest Groups/Movements:

However, pressure groups may also prove dangerous. A sectional interest group may promote the interest of one section of society against the other. Many pressure groups may wield power without responsibilities. Sometimes, rich interest groups may hijack public discussions in favour of their narrow agenda..

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