Explain in brief the relationship between social movement, collective action and revolution in bringing about social and political changes.



SOCIOLOGY SCHOOL 2026 · PAPER I · QUESTION 1(E) · STUDENT EDITION

Collective Action, Social Movements and Revolution

THE QUESTION, AS SET IN UPSC CSE MAINS 2026

Explain in brief the relationship between social movement, collective action and revolution in bringing about social and political changes.

Directive: Explain in brief | 10 marks | 150 words

Politics and Society: collective action, social movements and revolution

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Guranchal Ma'am, Founder, UPSC Gurus · upscgurus.in

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Start here: the basics in plain words

New to Sociology? Read this page first. It explains the key ideas in the question in everyday language, so the rest of the document makes sense.

The question in simple words

Societies change in different ways. People may act together for a shared goal, sustain campaigns through social movements, or seek fundamental changes in political and social arrangements through revolution. The question asks you to explain **how these three are related** in bringing social and political change.

Word	What it means, in plain words	An everyday picture
Collective action	People acting together for a shared goal, which may be short-lived and loosely organised.	Residents of a colony protesting together for a day about water supply.
Social movement	Sustained collective efforts to bring about or resist social or political change, involving shared aims and varying degrees of organisation and leadership.	A long campaign for land rights, women's rights or environmental protection.
Revolution	A fundamental transformation of political power or social arrangements, often involving major conflict, mass mobilisation or changes in institutions.	A whole system of rule being overturned within a few years.
Social and political change	Changes in how society is organised (customs, inequality, relationships) and in how power and government work.	New laws on equality, or a new group gaining a voice in politics.
Explain in brief	Give a clear, short explanation of the main points and links, without long detail.	A concise answer that connects the three ideas neatly.

One picture to remember. Collective action is the broad idea of people acting together. Social movements are sustained forms of collective action. Revolutions involve fundamental transformation and may draw upon movements, but the three do not form a necessary sequence.

What the examiner wants, in one line. Define the three clearly, explain their connections and differences, and show how each may contribute to social or political change.

You now have the foundations. Section 1 examines the question carefully, while the later sections introduce the thinkers, Indian evidence and model answer needed to build a well-supported sociological argument.

Explain in brief the relationship between social movement, collective action and revolution in bringing about social and political changes.

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PYQ Deep Decode

This question tests whether you can distinguish three related sociological processes, explain how they produce social and political change, and recognise why the relationship is neither automatic nor necessarily revolutionary.

1.1 The demand

The question asks for a **brief explanation of the relationship** among social movements, collective action and revolution in bringing about social and political change. **"Explain"** requires distinguishing all three concepts before showing their connections. Collective action is the broad form of coordinated mobilisation; social movements are relatively sustained collective efforts; revolution involves fundamental transformation of political authority and major social structures. The answer must explain **how these processes overlap without assuming that one inevitably develops into another**.

Words in the question	What they ask you to do	What goes wrong if you miss them
Explain in brief	Give clear conceptual distinctions and explain the connections between them. Be selective: this is a 10-mark, 150-word answer.	Writing lengthy theories of collective behaviour or the causes of revolutions.
Relationship between	Make the links, overlaps and differences explicit. This is the central task, not three independent definitions.	Defining each term correctly but leaving the relationship unexplained.
Social movement	Identify relatively sustained collective mobilisation around shared objectives, identities and demands.	Calling every strike, crowd or temporary protest a social movement.
Collective action	Identify coordinated activity by people pursuing shared interests or responding to common grievances; recognise its broader scope.	Assuming collective action must be a formal or long-lasting movement.
Revolution	Distinguish fundamental transformation of political authority and major social structures from ordinary protest or policy reform.	Equating revolution with violence, mass participation or a change of government.
Bringing about social and political changes	Explain the mechanisms and varying depth of change, from discrete reforms to institutional restructuring and revolutionary transformation.	Discussing only mobilisation while ignoring what changes and how profoundly.

THE DEMAND IN ONE LINE

Distinguish collective action, social movements and revolution; explain how they interact to produce different degrees of social and political change; show why none must automatically progress into the next.

Explain in brief the relationship between social movement, collective action and revolution in bringing about social and political changes.

1.2 The hidden demand

Must collective action develop into a social movement, and must a social movement culminate in revolution for significant change to occur?

The question asks for a relationship, not an inevitable sequence. A strike may remain a short episode of collective action. Repeated mobilisation may develop into a sustained movement through organisation, shared identities and resources. A reform-oriented movement may secure lasting legal or institutional changes **without overthrowing the political order**.

Conversely, a revolutionary movement may seek fundamental transformation but not achieve it. **Theda Skocpol** shows why major revolutions must also be understood through state crises, international pressures and class relations. Collective mobilisation matters, but its presence alone cannot explain every revolutionary outcome.

The hidden demand is therefore to recognise **related but non-compulsory pathways of change**. The strongest answer evaluates the possible outcomes without treating reform as insignificant or revolution as inevitable.

One verified Indian example exposes the difference between a movement's substantial political effect and a revolution.

Process	Indian illustration	What the illustration establishes
Collective action	Coordinated strikes by workers and farmers on 9 July 2025 and 12 February 2026.	Shared demands can generate nationwide mobilisation. A strike itself does not establish revolutionary transformation.
Sustained social movement	Organised farmers' protests against the three central farm laws enacted in 2020.	Collective action can become an extended campaign with recurring mobilisation, organisations and demands.
Institutional change without revolution	The Farm Laws Repeal Act, 2021, Act No. 40 of 2021, repealed all three laws.	A major policy reversal can follow sustained mobilisation without fundamental transformation of the state. This does not establish that every movement demand was fulfilled.

WEAK

Collective action creates social movements, and social movements ultimately lead to revolution, which brings social change.

STRONG

Collective action may become sustained movement organisation, but revolutionary transformation is not its inevitable outcome. The farmers' movement was followed by the repeal of three farm laws in 2021, illustrating substantial policy change without revolution; Skocpol further shows why revolutionary outcomes depend on structural and state conditions.

1.3 The structure

The approved structure follows the question's three linked concepts and then explains their contribution to change. **Part 1 distinguishes, Part 2 relates, and Part 3 answers the hidden demand.** The shares refer to the body between the introduction and the conclusion. They are a writing guide, not a prescribed UPSC distribution.

Explain in brief the relationship between social movement, collective action and revolution in bringing about social and political changes.

Introduction	1. Distinguish about three-tenths	2. Relationships and change about one-half	3. Non-compulsory pathways about one-fifth	Conclusion

Part 1 Distinguishing social movements, collective action and revolution — about three-tenths

Social movement	Relatively sustained collective mobilisation involving shared objectives, identities and recurring claims.
Collective action	Coordinated activity around shared interests or grievances. May be brief, recurrent or sustained.
Revolution	Fundamental transformation of political authority and major social structures.
The distinction	Compare duration, organisation, objectives and depth of change. The concepts overlap but are not interchangeable.

Part 2 Relationships in producing social and political change — about one-half

Mobilisation	Collective action can provide the participants, claims and experience from which sustained movements develop.
Charles Tilly, 1978	Interests, organisation, mobilisation and political opportunities help explain collective action and the capacity to make claims.
Reformist pathways	Movements may alter laws, policies, recognition and institutional access without revolution.
Revolutionary pathways	Some movements seek fundamental transformation of the state and social order.
Theda Skocpol, 1979	State breakdown, class relations and international pressures help explain why revolutionary transformations occur in some historical circumstances.
Levels of change	Distinguish incremental reform, sustained institutional transformation and revolutionary rupture.

Part 3 Related but non-compulsory pathways of change — about one-fifth

First limit	Not all collective action becomes a sustained movement.
Second limit	Not all movements seek or achieve revolution.
Third limit	Revolutionary outcomes cannot be inferred from mobilisation alone; broader structural conditions also matter.
Balanced judgement	Social and political transformation can occur through several pathways rather than one predetermined sequence.

1.4 How to present it

This is a **conceptual relationship question**, so the strongest form is a concise comparison followed by a causal explanation and a qualifying judgement. A simple branching relationship is more accurate than a single straight arrow. Use a **Tilly and Skocpol pairing**, supported by one Indian example, rather than crowding the answer with theorists.

Explain in brief the relationship between social movement, collective action and revolution in bringing about social and political changes.

What to use	Where	How to use it
Three-way conceptual distinction	Part 1	Distinguish coordinated action, sustained movement and structural revolutionary transformation in one compact set of comparisons.
Charles Tilly	Part 2	Explain how mobilisation, organisation, resources and political opportunities connect collective action with sustained claims-making.
Resource mobilisation perspective	Part 2	Make the mechanism explicit: grievances alone do not guarantee sustained organisation or effective action.
Theda Skocpol	Part 2	Explain why revolution depends upon state crisis and structural conditions beyond a movement's mobilisation.
Indian evidence	Part 2	Use the 2021 repeal of the three farm laws as a precise illustration of policy change without revolution.
Simple branching flow	Parts 2 and 3	Show possible routes towards reform or revolutionary transformation without implying that either must occur.
M. S. A. Rao	Part 3, if space permits	His account of caste movements shows meaningful structural and organisational change between limited reform and revolution.
Evaluative close	Conclusion	State that these are related, not compulsory, pathways through which collective agency interacts with institutional and structural conditions.

Presentation choice	Fit	Reason
Short distinctions, headed points, branching relationship	**Best**	Visible comparison, clear explanation and space for the qualification.
Thinker-led paragraphs	Good	Strong sociology, provided Tilly and Skocpol explain the relationship rather than replace the distinctions.
Three independent definitions	Weak	The explicit relationship is missing.
Long historical account of revolutions	Weak	Disproportionate to the directive and 150-word limit.

1.5 The introduction and the conclusion

The introduction serves the whole question. Establish that collective agency can produce social and political change in different ways, from coordinated protest to sustained movements and revolutionary transformation. Do not begin with a dictionary definition of just one term.

The conclusion settles the relationship. Explain why mobilisation, movement organisation and revolutionary rupture are related but not inevitable stages. Recognise reformist achievements and the independent importance of structural conditions.

Explain in brief the relationship between social movement, collective action and revolution in bringing about social and political changes.

2 PYQ Intelligence 2013 to 2026

The contemporary relevance of collective mobilisation, the recurring conceptual skills tested across both Sociology papers, and the syllabus connections worth preparing next.

2.1 Why the theme mattered in 2026

Recent Indian developments place **collective action, sustained movements, legal reform and institutional change** in the same field of analysis. Farmers' mobilisation was followed by legislative repeal; demands for women's representation entered constitutional law; workers' and farmers' organisations continued to coordinate nationwide protests. The sociological question is not merely whether people mobilise, but **what sustains mobilisation and what kind of change follows**.

These developments provide **context, not a claimed explanation of UPSC's question-setting**. They occurred before August 2026. An enacted law, a documented government consultation and a reported strike are different kinds of evidence; none should be presented as proof of a movement's entire causal impact.

When	Verified development	Why it matters sociologically
30 November 2021	**Farm Laws Repeal Act, 2021** (Act No. 40 of 2021) repealed the three central farm laws of 2020. The repeal followed sustained farmers' mobilisation and political contestation over the laws. **Source:** India Code, Ministry of Law and Justice.	**Reform without revolution:** an important legislative change within the existing constitutional order. It illustrates an outcome, not proof that the movement alone caused repeal or secured every demand.
28 September 2023	The **Constitution (One Hundred and Sixth Amendment) Act, 2023** received Presidential assent and provided for women's reservation in the Lok Sabha and specified Legislative Assemblies. The Act came into force on 16 April 2026. However, reservation of seats still awaits the census-based delimitation required by Article 334A; a further amendment bill to change this was defeated in the Lok Sabha on 17 April 2026. Kalpana Kannabiran's 2024 study traces **27 years of parliamentary contestation** from 1996 to 2023, alongside wider struggles for women's political representation.	**Institutional transformation through prolonged contestation:** demands may enter constitutional law without revolution, but enactment and actual implementation must be distinguished.
8 to 18 February 2024	The Union Government held discussions with agitating farmers on 8, 12, 15 and 18 February 2024. Further discussions took place on 18 January 2025. **Source:** Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Lok Sabha Unstarred Question 1328, answered 11 February 2025.	**Movement-state interaction:** sustained mobilisation may produce negotiation and institutional responses without immediately settling the underlying dispute.

Explain in brief the relationship between social movement, collective action and revolution in bringing about social and political changes.

When	Verified development	Why it matters sociologically
11 February 2025	In its Lok Sabha reply on the agitation at the Shambhu and Khanauri borders, the Ministry recorded discussions with farmers, pending Supreme Court proceedings and the formation of a committee by the Court.	**Contentious politics and political opportunity:** movements interact with executive institutions, judicial processes and changing opportunities for negotiation. Discussion is not equivalent to agreement.
9 July 2025	**Nationwide industrial action** was organised by a coalition of ten major trade unions, with farmers' and rural workers' groups also supporting the strike. The Associated Press reported disruption to some public services and manufacturing.	**Collective action across sectors:** coordinated protest can express shared claims. A national strike does not by itself demonstrate revolutionary aims or successful policy reversal.
12 February 2026	Indian trade unions and farmers' organisations held a nationwide one-day strike. Reported demands concerned labour protections, economic policy and an interim India-US trade framework. The Associated Press reported partial disruption of services and manufacturing; the ITUC-Asia Pacific also documented the mobilisation.	**Organisation and coalition-building:** recurring mobilisation demonstrates collective capacity, but the depth and durability of any subsequent change require separate evidence.

The statutory sources establish what was enacted; the parliamentary reply establishes what the Government reported; contemporary reporting documents collective action. The table does not attribute a single cause to legislation or infer policy success from participation alone.

2.2 The skill UPSC keeps testing

The questions from **2013 to 2026** repeatedly move between defining movements, identifying the conditions under which collective action becomes sustained, evaluating movements' contribution to social change, and analysing the social bases of political mobilisation. Paper I tests the **conceptual mechanism**; Paper II repeatedly asks for its **Indian expression and consequences**.

The question texts have been **cross-checked against original UPSC papers or scanned reproductions**. The interpretation columns are study guidance, not part of the question text.

Year	The question as UPSC set it	What it asked of you	What changed in 2026
2013 Paper I Q5(b) 10 marks	Define social movement. Elucidate the role of reformist movements in social change.	Definition followed by the impact of reform-oriented movements.	Reform becomes one of several pathways that must be compared with collective action and revolution.
2013 Paper II Q1(c) 10 marks	Satya Sodhak movement of Mahatma Jyotiba Phule.	Explain a specific anti-caste reform movement in its historical and social setting.	The Indian example can illustrate enduring social transformation without assuming revolutionary state rupture.
2013 Paper II Q6(a) 20 marks	Bring out the main features of farmers' movements in Modern India.	Identify organisation, demands and social bases of farmers' movements.	Connect movement organisation to collective claims and assess the forms of change sought or achieved.

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Year	The question as UPSC set it	What it asked of you	What changed in 2026
2015 Paper I Q6(b) 20 marks	Explain the conditions under which a collective action transforms into a social movement.	Explain the conditions and mechanisms through which coordinated action becomes sustained mobilisation.	The earlier transformation mechanism now forms one link in a broader comparison that also includes revolution.
2024 Paper II Q5(e) 10 marks	What is your assessment about the recent farmers' movement in India? Elaborate.	Evaluate a movement's demands, methods and consequences rather than merely narrate events.	Distinguish observed policy outcomes from deeper structural transformation and unresolved demands.
2025 Paper I Q8(b) 20 marks	How do 'Civil Society Organizations' such as 'NGOs' and 'Self-Help Groups' contribute to grassroot level social changes? Discuss.	Explain how organised collective activity contributes to local social change.	The focus shifts from organisational contributions alone to the relationships among three distinct processes.
2025 Paper II Q5(c) 10 marks	Discuss the social bases of political mobilization in Independent India. Has some change occurred in these during the last 60-70 years?	Identify the social bases of mobilisation and explain their historical changes.	The 2026 question requires connecting mobilisation with movements and the varying depth of social and political change.
2026 Paper I Q1(e) 10 marks	Explain in brief the relationship between social movement, collective action and revolution in bringing about social and political changes.	Distinguish three concepts and explain their connections and differing outcomes.	**The combined conceptual demand:** mobilisation, sustained movement organisation and revolutionary transformation must be related without assuming an inevitable progression.

CARRY THIS METHOD TO ANY COLLECTIVE ACTION, SOCIAL MOVEMENT OR REVOLUTION QUESTION

1. **Identify the directive:** define, explain, compare, evaluate and critically examine require different depths of treatment.
2. **Separate the concepts:** an action is not automatically a movement; a movement is not automatically revolutionary.
3. **Explain mobilisation:** identify grievances, resources, organisation, identities and political opportunities relevant to the question.
4. **Explain the mechanism of change:** protest may generate negotiation, public recognition, policy reform, institutional restructuring or attempts at revolutionary rupture.
5. **Use a thinker for a mechanism:** Tilly for mobilisation, Skocpol for revolution's structural conditions, Rao or Omvedt for Indian movement outcomes.
6. **Evaluate the outcome:** distinguish what movements demanded, what institutions changed and what remained unresolved.

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2.3 What to prepare next

PAPER I: CONCEPTUAL FOUNDATIONS

Politics and Society	Protest, agitation, social movements, collective action and revolution. Distinguish the concepts and their relationships.
Sociological theories of power	How collective claims confront, negotiate with or challenge authority.
Pressure groups, political parties and civil society	Differences between movement politics and formal channels of political influence.
Social Change in Modern Society	Theories and agents of social change; reform, institutional change and revolution.
Theoretical preparation	Marx, Weber, Tilly, Olson, McCarthy and Zald, Skocpol, Tarrow and Melucci.

PAPER II: INDIAN APPLICATIONS

Peasants and farmers' movements	Agrarian interests, class relations, mobilisation and the outcomes of sustained collective protest.
Women's movement	Claims for representation, equality and institutional change; implementation versus enactment.
Backward classes and Dalit movements	Social dignity, status hierarchies, political representation and challenges to caste relations.
Environmental movements	Displacement, livelihoods, development claims and movement-state conflict.
Ethnicity and identity movements	Collective identity, recognition, regional autonomy and competing political claims.
Visions of Social Change in India	The Constitution, law and social change; the difference between legislative reform and lived transformation.

3 Additional information

Tier 1 supplies the sociological concepts, thinkers, perspectives and Indian evidence needed to answer this exact question. Tier 2 explains the wider debates on collective agency, reform and revolution, and the limits of major theories.

TIER 1: ESSENTIAL, EXACTLY WHAT THE DEMAND NEEDS

The sociological lens: thinkers who explain the relationship

The key distinction is between **collective agency**, the **organisation and continuity of mobilisation**, and the **conditions and extent of structural transformation**. No single theorist explains all three equally well.

Thinker	Work and year	Core idea in sociological terms	Use in this answer
Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels	*Manifesto of the Communist Party* (1848)	Historical class struggles are connected to relations of production and political power. Revolutionary class mobilisation seeks transformation of the class order, not merely the replacement of individuals in government.	**Revolutionary possibility:** collective struggle may challenge the social relations underlying political authority. Do not claim Marx regarded every protest as revolutionary.

Explain in brief the relationship between social movement, collective action and revolution in bringing about social and political changes.

Thinker	Work and year	Core idea in sociological terms	Use in this answer
Max Weber	*Economy and Society* (1922, posthumous publication)	Political domination rests on claims to legitimacy; traditional, charismatic and legal-rational authority are distinct ideal types. Charismatic leadership may challenge established authority, while its subsequent institutionalisation changes the form of domination.	**Political authority:** changing rulers, leadership and legitimacy must be distinguished from changing fundamental social structures.
Émile Durkheim	*The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1912)	Shared practices can generate collective effervescence, strengthening solidarity and the experience of belonging. The concept was developed in the study of religion, not as a sufficient theory of social movements.	**Collective solidarity:** helps explain how shared participation may reinforce commitment. It cannot by itself explain movement organisation or revolutionary outcomes.
Mancur Olson	*The Logic of Collective Action* (1965)	Shared interests do not necessarily generate cooperation because individuals may benefit from a collective good without contributing. The free-rider problem makes organisation and incentives important.	**Why mobilisation is not automatic:** a common grievance is insufficient to guarantee collective action.
Charles Tilly	*From Mobilization to Revolution* (1978)	Interests, organisation, resources, mobilisation and opportunities to act help explain collective action. The work links organised collective claims to changing forms of political contention, including revolutionary situations.	**The main bridge:** explain how coordinated action can acquire organisational capacity and develop into sustained contention, without implying an inevitable revolution.
John D. McCarthy and Mayer N. Zald	"Resource Mobilization and Social Movements: A Partial Theory" (1977)	Movement activity depends partly on mobilising resources and on relations among organisations, supporters, authorities and other actors. Grievances alone do not explain movement growth.	**Movement formation:** explain why some episodes of collective action develop organisational continuity while others do not.
Theda Skocpol	*States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia and China* (1979)	Social revolutions combine fundamental transformations of state and class structures with revolts from below. Her comparative explanation emphasises state crises, international pressures and agrarian class relations.	**Revolutionary outcome:** explain why strong collective mobilisation is not independently sufficient for social revolution.
David A. Snow and colleagues	"Frame Alignment Processes, Micromobilization, and Movement Participation" (1986)	Frame alignment connects individuals' interpretations and beliefs with movement organisations' goals and activities. Shared meanings help recruit and sustain participants.	**The cultural mechanism:** collective grievances become movement participation partly through common interpretations and identities.

Explain in brief the relationship between social movement, collective action and revolution in bringing about social and political changes.

Thinker	Work and year	Core idea in sociological terms	Use in this answer
M. S. A. Rao	*Social Movements and Social Transformation* (1979)	His comparative study of the Sri Narayana Dharma Paripalana and Yadava movements locates protest, conflict, leadership and organisation at the centre of middle-scale structural transformation, beyond mere status imitation.	**The Indian bridge:** important changes in power, representation and social organisation may occur between limited reform and revolution.
Ghanshyam Shah	*Social Movements in India: A Review of Literature*, revised edition (2004)	Social movements are approached as non-institutionalised collective political action seeking social or political change. The literature is analysed through participants, issues, ideology, organisation and leadership.	**Definition and scope:** identify the features distinguishing sustained movement politics from isolated collective acts.
B. R. Ambedkar	*Annihilation of Caste* (1936)	Caste inequality is embedded in an institutionalised social hierarchy. Emancipation requires challenging the structure and legitimacy of caste, not merely altering individual rank within it.	**Depth of social change:** structural social transformation can be a central objective even where the immediate struggle is not a revolution against the state.
Gail Omvedt	*Reinventing Revolution: New Social Movements and the Socialist Tradition in India* (1993, original publication)	Anti-caste, women's, farmers' and environmental movements express social contradictions and emancipatory aspirations not reducible to a single traditional class-struggle framework.	**Plural pathways:** movements can challenge caste, patriarchy, development policies and political domination through distinct forms of mobilisation and change.
Amita Baviskar	*In the Belly of the River* (1995)	Her fieldwork among Bhilala Adivasis affected by the Sardar Sarovar project examines how livelihood, local power, historical experience and movement politics intersect. It questions romantic interpretations of Adivasi environmentalism.	**Evidence and caution:** explain movements through participants' actual circumstances and claims, not assumed revolutionary or environmental motives.
Alberto Melucci	*Nomads of the Present* (1989)	Contemporary movements involve identity formation, networks and struggles over meanings in everyday life. Their influence need not be confined to the seizure of state power.	**Change beyond the state:** recognise cultural and identity transformation as significant movement outcomes.

For the 150-word answer, prioritise Tilly and Skocpol. Rao or the 2021 farm-law repeal provides the Indian application. The remaining thinkers deepen understanding and support changed questions; they are not all meant to appear in the model answer.

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Perspectives: different explanations of the same relationship

Perspective	How it reads collective action, movements and revolution	What it adds to the answer
Functionalist and solidaristic Durkheim	Shared participation can reinforce solidarity. Tensions between established norms and changing social conditions may provoke responses, but collective solidarity is not a complete explanation of institutional change.	Explains one basis of group commitment; prevents reducing mobilisation to material interests alone.
Marxian and conflict Marx, Engels	Movements express struggles over class interests, resources and domination. Revolutionary politics can seek transformation of the relations underpinning state and class power.	Distinguishes a challenge to existing inequalities from fundamental transformation of their structural basis.
Weberian Weber	Leadership, legitimacy, interests and competing forms of authority shape political action. A challenge to the legitimacy of rulers does not necessarily transform class relations.	Explains why political change and social revolution are not equivalent.
Resource mobilisation and political process Tilly; McCarthy and Zald; Tarrow	Resources, organisations, networks, strategies and opportunities influence whether people can sustain collective claims against authorities.	Explains the transition from episodic action to organised movement and why it may fail.
Interactionist and cultural framing Snow and colleagues; Melucci	Shared interpretations, identities and everyday networks help individuals recognise common grievances and coordinate action.	Explains how a movement becomes a collective identity, not just a temporary assembly.
Feminist and anti-caste Omvedt; Ambedkar; Kannabiran	Movements confront gendered and caste-based power and seek recognition, equality, representation and transformation in institutions and everyday life.	Shows why political and cultural change cannot be measured solely by revolution or transfer of state power.
Historical-structural and state-centred Skocpol	Revolutions depend on the interaction of state breakdown, class relations, international constraints and revolts from below.	Provides the essential qualification that revolutionary outcomes are not simply created by the strength or intentions of movements.

What the perspectives share. Collective agency matters, but it operates through social relationships, political institutions and structural conditions. The presence of grievances alone explains neither movement persistence nor the scale of change.

Where they disagree. Conflict approaches foreground domination and structural contradictions; mobilisation theories foreground organisation and opportunity; cultural approaches emphasise meaning and identity; state-centred accounts highlight conditions not controlled by movement participants.

Key concepts: eight precise definitions

Concept	Precise sociological meaning	Associated scholarship and use
1. Collective action	Coordinated action by multiple actors pursuing shared interests, claims or objectives. It may be episodic, repeated or sustained and need not constitute a social movement.	**Olson (1965); Tilly (1978).** The broad category from which movement mobilisation may emerge.

Explain in brief the relationship between social movement, collective action and revolution in bringing about social and political changes.

Concept	Precise sociological meaning	Associated scholarship and use
2. Social movement	A relatively sustained pattern of collective mobilisation organised around shared claims, objectives and identities, often involving networks and recurring engagement with opponents or authorities.	**Tilly; Tarrow; Ghanshyam Shah.** More continuity than an isolated episode, without requiring one formal organisation.
3. Resource mobilisation	The processes through which people obtain and coordinate resources, support and organisational capacity necessary to undertake collective action.	**McCarthy and Zald (1977).** Explains why shared discontent does not necessarily produce a sustained movement.
4. Political opportunity	Features of the political environment that affect the incentives, opportunities and constraints facing collective claimants.	**Tilly; Sidney Tarrow.** Explains why similar grievances may lead to different levels of mobilisation in different settings.
5. Frame alignment	The linkage of individuals' interpretations, beliefs and interests with a movement organisation's goals and activities.	**Snow, Rochford, Worden and Benford (1986).** Explains how shared understandings help generate participation.
6. Repertoire of contention	A historically available set of familiar practices through which groups make collective claims, such as petitions, demonstrations, strikes and occupations.	**Charles Tilly.** Protest techniques describe how claims are made; they do not, by themselves, classify the outcome as revolutionary.
7. Reformist and structural change	Reform alters policies or institutional arrangements within an existing political order. Structural change alters more enduring relationships of power, status or organisation, and need not involve a revolutionary overthrow.	**M. S. A. Rao (1979).** His Indian movement studies help distinguish positional mobility from wider structural transformation. This is an analytical distinction, not a term uniquely coined by Rao.
8. Social revolution	Fundamental and relatively rapid transformation of state and class structures, involving upheaval and revolts from below in Skocpol's comparative account.	**Theda Skocpol (1979).** Much more than a large protest, change of government or successful reform campaign.

Indian evidence: field studies and documented outcomes

Use Indian material to demonstrate **what collective actors organised around, how mobilisation operated, and what changed**. Do not turn an individual case into a universal law. Field studies reveal mechanisms; official documents establish specific institutional outcomes.

Study or evidence	What the evidence actually shows	Its precise use in this question
FIELD STUDIES, COMPARATIVE SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH AND HISTORICAL MOVEMENT ANALYSIS		
M. S. A. Rao, 1979 Kerala and the wider Yadava movement	*Social Movements and Social Transformation* compares the Sri Narayana Dharma Paripalana movement of the Ezhavas in Kerala with the Yadava movement. Rao emphasises leadership, organisation, relative deprivation and protest in struggles over status, access and power. His analysis describes **middle-scale structural and organisational transformation** rather than reducing social change to status imitation.	**Change between reform and revolution:** a sustained movement can challenge unequal institutional relationships without requiring revolutionary seizure of the state. This is especially useful for Part 3.

Explain in brief the relationship between social movement, collective action and revolution in bringing about social and political changes.

Study or evidence	What the evidence actually shows	Its precise use in this question
Amita Baviskar, 1995 Bhilala communities, Narmada Valley	*In the Belly of the River* draws on intensive fieldwork and historical research on Bhilala Adivasis affected by the Sardar Sarovar project. It examines local political relationships and the encounter between displacement, state authority and movement organisation. Baviskar questions interpretations that automatically attribute a single romantic environmental ideology to those resisting displacement.	**From grievance to movement:** collective mobilisation is shaped by lived interests, local histories and organisation. Do not equate every environmental protest with revolutionary ideology.
Gail Omvedt, 1993 India: anti-caste, women's, farmers' and environmental movements	*Reinventing Revolution*, grounded partly in participant observation, analyses different movements' ideologies, social contradictions and political relationships. It challenges the sufficiency of a narrow class-only account of emancipatory struggles.	**Plurality of transformation:** movements may seek change in caste, gender, development and political relations without following one revolutionary path.
Ghanshyam Shah, 2004 Indian movement literature	*Social Movements in India: A Review of Literature* surveys historical and sociological studies across peasant, tribal, Dalit, backward-class, women's, working-class, student, human-rights and environmental mobilisation. The analysis foregrounds issues, ideology, organisation and leadership.	**Conceptual classification:** sustained collective politics has different participants, objectives and organisational forms. This is a literature review, not a single-site ethnography.
Kalpana Kannabiran, 2024 Women's political representation in India	Her article in *Social Change* traces parliamentary and wider political contestation over women's legislative reservation from **1996 to 2023**. The analysis situates the 106th Constitutional Amendment within longer struggles concerning equal citizenship and differentiated representation.	**Institutional change:** demands may take decades to enter constitutional law. Enactment does not establish immediate implementation or the resolution of all representational inequalities.
VERIFIED LAWS, PARLIAMENTARY RECORDS AND CONTEMPORARY COLLECTIVE ACTION		
Farm Laws Repeal Act, 2021 India Code	**Three** central farm laws enacted in 2020 were repealed by Act No. 40 of 2021, dated 30 November 2021. The Government's statement of objects and reasons acknowledged protests against the laws. Repeal is an observable legislative outcome following sustained mobilisation.	**The clearest compact Indian example:** significant reform without revolution. Do not infer the success of every demand or exclusive movement causation.
Lok Sabha, 11 February 2025 Unstarred Question 1328	The Ministry of Agriculture reported discussions with agitating farmers on **four dates in February 2024** and again on 18 January 2025. It also noted Supreme Court proceedings and a committee concerning the issues.	**Movement-state negotiation:** collective claims interact with institutions. Negotiation is evidence of interaction, not evidence that an agreement was reached.

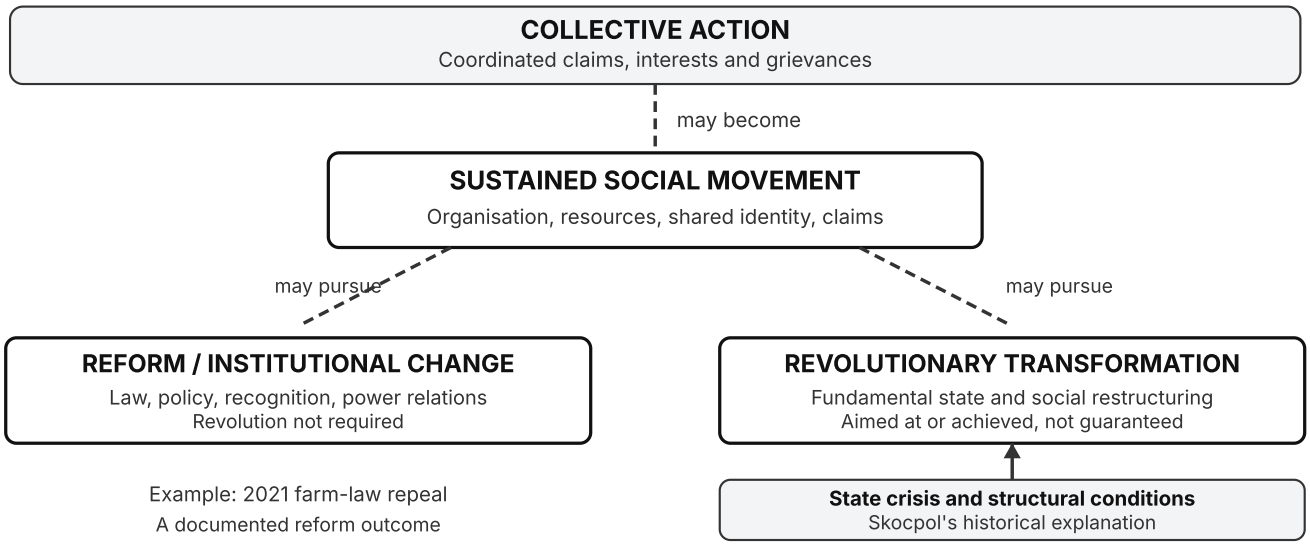
Explain in brief the relationship between social movement, collective action and revolution in bringing about social and political changes.

Study or evidence	What the evidence actually shows	Its precise use in this question
Nationwide strike, 9 July 2025 Associated Press	Trade unions, with support from farmers' and rural workers' groups, organised a one-day national strike. The Associated Press reported disruption across some sectors, including public services and manufacturing.	**Episodic collective action:** a coordinated event has identifiable claims and participants, but a single day's strike cannot establish either a durable movement or a revolutionary outcome.
Nationwide strike, 12 February 2026 Associated Press; ITUC-Asia Pacific	Organised trade unions and farmers' organisations again coordinated large-scale collective protest, involving workers across sectors and states. Contemporary reports described partial disruption and multiple economic and labour-policy demands.	**Recurring mobilisation:** continuity and coalition-building can be studied, but the evidence does not establish that the strike achieved the policy changes demanded.
Constitution (106th Amendment) Act, 2023	The Act, in force from 16 April 2026, provides for reservation of approximately **one-third** of specified legislative seats for women; Article 334A still requires census-based delimitation before the seats are reserved. The longer movement and legislative history is documented separately by Kannabiran.	**Legal change versus realised social change:** distinguish the recognition of a claim in law from its subsequent implementation and wider social effects.

What the farm-law example demonstrates. Three statutes were repealed within the constitutional order. The sequence is consistent with the capacity of sustained mobilisation to contribute to significant reform. The legislation itself is not a causal experiment establishing that protest was the sole reason for repeal.

What Rao adds that the statute cannot. Legal outcomes are only one dimension of change. Social movements can challenge status hierarchies, alter institutional access and transform organised relations of power even without a dramatic revolutionary rupture.

A simple relationship diagram: possible pathways, not compulsory stages



Dashed links indicate possibilities, not inevitable transitions.

An analytical teaching diagram combining Tilly's mobilisation framework with Skocpol's structural account of revolution. It is not a universal causal law. Collective action can end without sustained organisation; movements can fail, dissolve or produce cultural changes not represented by the two main branches. An individual revolutionary situation need not follow this exact organisational sequence.

Explain in brief the relationship between social movement, collective action and revolution in bringing about social and political changes.

The Paper I and Paper II bridge

Paper I concept	Paper II application: Indian society
Collective action and common interests Olson and Tilly: shared interests create possible claims, but mobilisation requires overcoming organisational constraints.	**Labour and farmers' mobilisation** National strikes in 2025 and 2026 demonstrate coordinated action across organised and unorganised sectors, supported by unions and allied organisations.
Sustained social movements Tilly and McCarthy-Zald: resources, organisation and opportunities enable collective claims over time.	**Farmers' movements** Extended mobilisation around the 2020 farm laws illustrates how organised claims can persist and interact with state institutions.
Collective identity and framing Snow and Melucci: shared interpretations and identities can sustain participation.	**Anti-caste and women's movements** Claims for dignity, equality and representation connect political demands with identity and everyday social relations.
Reform and structural transformation Rao: mobilisation may produce wider social and organisational changes without revolutionary rupture.	**SNDP and Yadava movements** Rao's comparative account examines status, institutional access and struggles over power, rather than simple imitation.
Class, power and revolutionary change Marx links class struggle with structural conflict; Skocpol explains revolutionary state transformation through broader historical conditions.	**Indian agrarian and anti-caste struggles** Analyse whether aims concern a specific reform, structural inequality or the fundamental transformation of political authority. Do not classify these movements as revolutions merely because they challenge domination.
Movements beyond a single class explanation Omvedt and Melucci: mobilisation can centre on caste, gender, ecology, identity and competing visions of society.	**Narmada Valley movements** Baviskar's field study demonstrates why displacement-related mobilisation must be understood through local histories, interests and relationships to state authority.

Paper I supplies the explanatory categories; Paper II requires evidence of how these categories operate within India's specific caste, class, gender, agrarian and institutional arrangements.

TIER 2: EXTENDED UNDERSTANDING: THE WHOLE TOPIC AROUND IT

From the sociology of crowds to the sociology of organised contention

Early collective-behaviour traditions often examined crowds, social strain and the disruption of established norms. Later scholarship asked more directly how people **organise, mobilise resources, frame grievances and confront authorities**.

Olson's collective-action problem explains why shared interests do not automatically produce cooperation. McCarthy and Zald then place resources and movement organisations at the centre. Tilly examines collective claims within political relationships and historically changing opportunities. Tarrow develops the significance of political opportunities, constraints and repertoires. Snow and colleagues explain the interpretive work through which people come to understand a grievance as a reason for collective participation.

These approaches can be combined rather than treated as mutually exclusive: **interests identify potential claims, resources enable action, framing supports participation, and political opportunities shape possible outcomes**. None of these mechanisms guarantees success or revolution.

Explain in brief the relationship between social movement, collective action and revolution in bringing about social and political changes.

From class revolution to multiple forms of social transformation

Marx's account of class struggle remains indispensable for understanding conflict over the relations of production and political domination. Yet the study of Indian movements requires attention to institutionalised inequalities that do not reduce neatly to class alone.

Ambedkar's critique of caste foregrounds a social hierarchy sustained through norms and institutions. **Omvedt** studies movements that challenge caste, gender relations and destructive development as well as class domination. **Rao** provides an important corrective to a rigid distinction between small reform and total revolution: sustained protest can produce substantial changes in organisational power and status relationships.

Melucci further broadens the picture. Movements may create collective identities, alternative cultural meanings and new claims to autonomy. Their consequences cannot always be measured only by legislation or control of the state.

Three distinct meanings of change

Level of change	What actually changes	Analytical caution
Incremental or policy change	A government alters a law, policy, administrative decision or specific arrangement.	It may be important, but does not necessarily transform the institutions or inequalities underlying the dispute.
Sustained institutional or social change	Access, representation, recognition, status relations, organisational power or cultural norms change over time.	Such transformation can occur without revolutionary rupture; the depth and durability must be assessed empirically.
Revolutionary rupture	Fundamental transformation of political authority and major social structures, including state and class relations in Skocpol's account.	Revolutionary aims, revolutionary situations and completed revolutionary transformations are different things.

Where the main theories have limits

Approach	What it explains well	What must be added
Marxian conflict	Structural domination, class antagonism and the possibility of transformative struggle.	Do not presume all movements have identical class interests or revolutionary objectives. Caste, gender, ecology and identity require their own empirical analysis.
Olson's collective-action logic	Why shared interests may not produce cooperation.	Participation may also be sustained by identity, solidarity, moral obligation and movement networks, not only selective material incentives.
Resource mobilisation	How organisations, material capacity and support enable sustained activity.	Explain why particular grievances become meaningful, how identities form and how state opportunities constrain action.

Explain in brief the relationship between social movement, collective action and revolution in bringing about social and political changes.

Approach	What it explains well	What must be added
Tilly's political-process analysis	How political relationships, collective claims and opportunities shape contention.	Not every important consequence of a movement is directed at state power; cultural and everyday transformations also matter.
Skocpol's structural theory	Why revolutionary outcomes depend on broader state and class conditions rather than voluntarism alone.	Do not erase leadership, ideology, culture and strategic organisation. Her conclusions concern particular historical social revolutions and must not be mechanically applied everywhere.
New social movement approaches	How identities, cultural meanings and non-class claims become central to collective mobilisation.	Class, livelihood and material inequalities remain relevant. Identity-centred explanations should not romanticise participants' motivations.

Two debates worth knowing

Does a shared grievance naturally become a sustained movement?

One view: serious deprivation or perceived injustice creates pressure for collective resistance. Grievance-oriented accounts emphasise why people become dissatisfied with an existing order.
The corrective: Olson, McCarthy and Zald, Tilly, Tarrow and framing scholars show that grievance is not sufficient. Participation must be organised, collective claims made intelligible, and resources and opportunities negotiated.
Balanced reading: grievances help explain why people might act; organisation, identity and opportunity help explain whether they can sustain action. Neither a movement nor its success follows automatically.

Do social movements create revolutions, or do historical conditions create revolutionary openings?

Agency-centred reading: organised groups mobilise participants, formulate claims and challenge existing authority. Without collective action, many forms of political contention would not occur.
Structural reading: Skocpol's comparison of France, Russia and China locates social revolutions in the intersection of state breakdown, international pressures and agrarian class relations, with revolts from below.
Balanced reading: collective agency helps shape struggles and their outcomes, while structural conditions shape what transformation becomes possible. Neither every movement becomes revolutionary nor every revolutionary outcome can be explained by a movement's intentions alone.

The strongest synthesis for this question

The three concepts differ on two dimensions that are sometimes confused: **the organisation of action** and **the magnitude of the resulting change**.

Collective action describes coordinated activity. A social movement describes a relatively enduring pattern of coordinated claims and shared identity. Revolution describes a fundamental form of transformation. These concepts therefore do not occupy identical positions on a single scale. The first two primarily describe **forms and continuity of mobilisation**; the third primarily describes **the depth of political and social transformation**, although revolutionary movements also constitute forms of organised collective action.

This is why the relationship is best represented as **overlapping possibilities, not a necessary evolutionary ladder**. A sustained movement can remain reform-oriented. A revolutionary movement can fail. Broad institutional change can occur without overthrowing state authority. Revolutionary situations can emerge through structural crises beyond the control of any single movement.

Explain in brief the relationship between social movement, collective action and revolution in bringing about social and political changes.

4 Pitfalls and variations

Six conceptual mistakes to correct, unsupported claims to avoid, and the changes required when UPSC alters the directive or narrows the question.

4.1 Six pitfalls, each with its correction

Three definitions, no relationship

~~Collective action is group action. Social movement is organised protest. Revolution is a major change.~~

Distinguish all three, then explicitly explain how collective action may sustain movement organisation and how movements may pursue reform or revolutionary transformation.

Assuming inevitable progression

~~Collective action always grows into a movement, and movements finally become revolutions.~~

Use "may" and "can". Identify organisational conditions, political opportunities and structural constraints that make outcomes contingent.

Equating size with revolution

~~The farmers' protests involved mass participation, so they were a revolution.~~

Mass participation does not define revolution. The 2021 repeal of three laws establishes significant policy change, not fundamental transformation of state and social structures.

Using theorists as labels

~~Tilly supported collective action, Skocpol supported revolution, and Marx supported social change.~~

Explain mechanisms: Tilly relates interests, resources, organisation and opportunity to collective claims; Skocpol relates revolutionary outcomes to state breakdown and structural conditions.

Ignoring Indian sociology

~~Only European revolutions can show how social movements cause change.~~

Use Rao's comparative Indian movement research or the 2021 farm-law repeal to explain substantial institutional change without revolution.

Ignoring the limits of evidence

~~The 2025 and 2026 general strikes achieved their demands and therefore transformed Indian politics.~~

Contemporary reports document mobilisation and disruption; they do not, by themselves, prove policy success or lasting institutional transformation.

4.2 Never write these

- "Every collective action is a social movement."
  Collective action is the broader category. An isolated strike or coordinated protest need not develop the continuity and shared claims of a movement.
- "Every social movement seeks revolution."
  Many movements seek reform, rights, recognition or institutional change within an existing constitutional order.
- "Revolution means a violent protest."
  Violence is not a sufficient definition. The central issue is fundamental transformation of political authority and major social structures.
- "A change of government is always a social revolution."
  Political leadership may change while the central structures of class relations and state institutions remain largely intact.
- "Tilly argued that every movement develops into a revolution."
  His analysis concerns the organisation, mobilisation and opportunities of collective claim-making, including revolutionary contention. It does not establish an inevitable sequence.
- "Skocpol argued that revolutions succeed whenever movements mobilise enough people."
  Her explanation gives independent importance to state crisis, international pressures and agrarian class relations.

Explain in brief the relationship between social movement, collective action and revolution in bringing about social and political changes.

- "The 2021 repeal proves that farmers' protests caused every aspect of the Government's decision."
  The Act records repeal following protest and governmental deliberation. It does not isolate a single causal factor.
- "Ambedkar's anti-caste project concerned only individual upward mobility."
  Annihilation of Caste is a structural critique of caste hierarchy and its institutional reproduction.
- "The 106th Constitutional Amendment immediately implemented women's legislative reservation."
  The Act came into force on 16 April 2026, but reservation of seats still awaits the census-based delimitation required by Article 334A.
- "Social reform does not bring structural change."
  Rao's Indian movement research explicitly examines important structural and organisational transformations that occur between limited reform and revolution.
- "All environmental movements represent the same ideology."
  Baviskar's Narmada Valley fieldwork cautions against imputing a uniform environmental worldview to diverse participants.
- "A nationwide strike automatically means millions of verified participants."
  Organisers' estimates, independent observations and official administrative counts must be distinguished. Do not present unverified participation claims as official statistics.

4.3 If the question changes

If UPSC asks	The structure becomes	What must change
Explain the conditions under which collective action becomes a social movement.	Collective action defined; grievance and interest; resources and organisation; shared identity and framing; political opportunity; limitations.	Make **Olson, McCarthy and Zald, Tilly and Snow** central. Revolution is no longer a required component.
Define social movement and explain reformist movements.	Definition and characteristics; reformist objectives; mechanisms of institutional change; Indian examples; limits and significance.	Use **Shah, Rao and Indian reform movements**. Do not spend space explaining state breakdown or social revolutions.
Critically examine the relationship between social movements and revolution.	Conceptual comparison; revolutionary aims and movements; Marxian account; Skocpol's structural explanation; counterexamples; evaluative conclusion.	Make the **agency versus structure** debate explicit and distinguish revolutionary intentions from outcomes.
Compare reformist and revolutionary movements.	Objectives; relationship with state institutions; organisational methods; depth of intended change; concrete examples; possible overlap.	Distinguish **aims, processes and outcomes**. Do not assume every radical movement achieves revolution or every reform remains superficial.
Evaluate social movements as agents of social change in India.	Definition; caste and gender movements; agrarian and environmental struggles; legal and cultural outcomes; limitations.	Prioritise **Rao, Omvedt, Shah, Ambedkar and Baviskar**, with verified Indian evidence and careful outcome assessment.

Explain in brief the relationship between social movement, collective action and revolution in bringing about social and political changes.

If UPSC asks	The structure becomes	What must change
Are revolutions primarily products of organised collective mobilisation?	Agency-centred explanation; organisation and resources; Skocpol's state and structural explanation; historical comparison; judgement.	Do not treat revolutionary organisation as sufficient. Examine **state breakdown, class relations and international pressures**.
How do identities and collective action produce social change?	Common grievance; framing and collective identity; mobilisation and networks; sustained movements; institutional and cultural outcomes.	Use **Snow, Melucci and Omvedt**. Give more weight to solidarity, recognition and everyday social change.
The same relationship for 20 marks	Conceptual comparison; theories of mobilisation; reformist and revolutionary pathways; Indian cases; agency-structure debate; balanced close.	Expand the **comparative theoretical discussion**, include Rao and Skocpol more fully, and evaluate multiple empirical outcomes rather than listing examples.

Explain in brief the relationship between social movement, collective action and revolution in bringing about social and political changes.

5

The model answer

One model answer, written to the Sociology School house range of 150 to 153 words (**152 words including all headings and labels**; UPSC's printed limit is 150 words). The answer first distinguishes the concepts, then explains their relationship through Tilly and Skocpol, demonstrates reform without revolution through a verified Indian example, and closes by addressing the non-compulsory nature of the three pathways.

Model answer

Conceptual distinctions, theoretical explanation and Indian evidence

152 words

Social movements, collective action and revolution are linked forms and outcomes of struggles for social and political change.

1. Distinguishing concepts

Social movements sustain organised, repeated claims through shared identities and networks. Collective action coordinates people around common interests or grievances, often episodically. Revolution transforms political authority; social revolutions also transform class structures.

2. Relationships and change

Tilly's (1978) political-process perspective links resources, organisation and opportunities to sustained collective mobilisation. Movements pursue reforms, rights or recognition. Farmers' mobilisation preceded repeal of three Indian farm laws in 2021, illustrating political reform without revolution. Some movements seek revolution; **Skocpol's (1979)** historical-structural account emphasises state crises, international pressures and class relations.

3. Contingent pathways

Not all collective action becomes a movement; movements also transform norms and hierarchies without capturing the state. Revolutionary aims may fail.

Collective agency interacts with institutional responses, structural conditions and political opportunities, yielding reform, social transformation or revolution without inevitable progression.

DEMAND

Distinguish collective action, sustained social movements and revolution, then explain their connections and different contributions to social and political change.

HIDDEN DEMAND

Collective action need not become a movement, and movements need not culminate in revolution; significant reform is possible without rupture, while revolutions also depend on structural conditions.

STRUCTURE

About three-tenths on conceptual distinctions, one-half on relationships and mechanisms of change, and one-fifth on related but non-compulsory pathways.

BALANCE

Introduction 18 words, conclusion 20 words; 152 words in all

Why it works: The introduction names the three concepts in the question's order and frames them as linked forms and outcomes of struggle. Part 1 distinguishes them by continuity, coordination and depth of change, and separates political from social revolution. Part 2, the largest, uses **Tilly's political-process perspective** to explain how collective action becomes sustained mobilisation, gives the 2021 farm-law repeal as Indian evidence of reform without revolution (without claiming mobilisation was its sole cause), and uses **Skocpol's historical-structural account** to show why revolutionary outcomes depend on conditions beyond mobilisation. Part 3 answers the hidden demand: no stage is inevitable, and movements can change norms and hierarchies without capturing the state. The conclusion balances agency with institutions and structure.

Explain in brief the relationship between social movement, collective action and revolution in bringing about social and political changes.

6 Other ways to write it

The model answer above remains the recommended answer. These alternative outlines show how the same demand can be met through different sociological approaches, provided the three concepts remain distinct, their relationship is explained and the conclusion rejects an inevitable progression.

Approach	How it is built	When it works
Conceptual comparison first	Introduction; three concise distinctions; Tilly's mobilisation mechanism; reformist and revolutionary outcomes; Skocpol's qualification; balanced conclusion.	**Best for 10 marks.** Keeps the central relationship visible and gives sufficient sociological explanation within 150 words.
Thinker-led answer	Start with the three concepts; use **Tilly (1978)** for mobilisation and organised contention; **Skocpol (1979)** for state crises and revolutionary transformation; close with reform as an alternative pathway.	When theory is your strongest material. Every thinker must explain a specific relationship, not merely be named.
Resource mobilisation approach	Collective grievances; Olson's collective-action problem; resources and organisation (McCarthy and Zald); political opportunities (Tilly); movement continuity; varying outcomes.	Especially effective if the question instead asks **how collective action becomes a social movement**. For this exact question, retain a clear explanation of revolution.
Comparative outcomes table	A compact three-column comparison of collective action, sustained movement and revolution, followed by a short explanation of their possible connections and one Indian example.	When a table improves clarity, but only if the answer does not imply that all collective action must progress towards revolution.
India-evidence-led answer	Introduce the conceptual relationship; use the sustained farmers' movement and 2021 repeal to illustrate reform; Rao's account of Indian caste movements for wider structural change; Skocpol for the conditions of revolutionary outcomes.	When the Indian application is strong. Keep the example subordinate to the conceptual explanation because this is **Paper I**.
Agency versus structure	Collective agency and mobilisation (Tilly); revolutionary aims (Marx); state crises and class relations (Skocpol); reformist counterexamples; judgement against historical inevitability.	Strong for a **critically examine** directive or a 20-mark question. Too much theoretical debate can displace the basic distinctions in 150 words.
Paper I to Paper II bridge	Define the three concepts; explain movement mechanisms; use Rao's SNDP and Yadava studies to show middle-scale transformation; contrast these with revolution.	Especially useful for questions asking whether social movements must be revolutionary to produce **structural social change**.

The safest combination for this exact question. Three precise distinctions, two complementary theorists, one verified Indian reform example, and a conclusion showing that the relationships are conditional rather than inevitable.

The principle across all approaches. Do not confuse the **form of collective action**, the **continuity of movement organisation** and the **depth of achieved transformation**. They are related analytical dimensions, not identical stages.

Explain in brief the relationship between social movement, collective action and revolution in bringing about social and political changes.

7

Quick recall

Sixteen facts for rapid revision: foundational thinkers, publication years, precise concepts, Indian research and a verified legislative outcome. Use these facts to build explanations, not as isolated names to insert into an answer.

1. **Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels:** *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, **1848**. Class struggle and revolutionary transformation of class relations.
2. **Max Weber:** *Economy and Society*, published **1922**. Traditional, charismatic and legal-rational authority; legitimacy matters to political domination.
3. **Émile Durkheim:** *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, **1912**. Collective effervescence helps explain shared solidarity, not movement success by itself.
4. **Mancur Olson:** *The Logic of Collective Action*, **1965**. Shared interests do not automatically overcome the free-rider problem.
5. **McCarthy and Zald:** "Resource Mobilization and Social Movements: A Partial Theory", **1977**. Resources, organisations and relations with authorities.
6. **Snow, Rochford, Worden and Benford:** "Frame Alignment Processes, Micromobilization, and Movement Participation", **1986**. Shared interpretations connect people with movement goals.
7. **Sidney Tarrow:** *Power in Movement*, first published **1994**. Political opportunities, repertoires and contentious collective action.
8. **Alberto Melucci:** *Nomads of the Present*, **1989**. Collective identity, networks and cultural change beyond state-centred politics.
9. **Charles Tilly:** *From Mobilization to Revolution*, **1978**. Interests, organisation, mobilisation, political opportunities and changing collective action.
10. **Theda Skocpol:** *States and Social Revolutions*, **1979**. France, Russia and China; state structures, international forces and class relations.
11. **M. S. A. Rao:** *Social Movements and Social Transformation*, **1979**. SNDP and Yadava movements; middle-scale structural and organisational transformation.
12. **Gail Omvedt:** *Reinventing Revolution*, **1993**. Anti-caste, women's, farmers' and environmental movements in India.
13. **Amita Baviskar:** *In the Belly of the River*, **1995**. Bhilala Adivasis, displacement and movement politics in the Narmada Valley.
14. **Ghanshyam Shah:** *Social Movements in India: A Review of Literature*, revised edition **2004**. Indian movements analysed through issues, ideology, organisation and leadership.
15. **Farm Laws Repeal Act, 2021: Act No. 40 of 2021**, dated **30 November 2021**; repealed **three** central farm laws. An example of legislative change without revolution.
16. **Kalpana Kannabiran:** *Social Change*, **2024**. **27 years** of contestation over women's political reservation, from 1996 to the 106th Constitutional Amendment in 2023.

THE ONE SENTENCE TO CARRY OUT OF THIS DOCUMENT

Collective action may sustain a movement, and movements may bring reform or seek revolution, but the scale of change depends on organisation, institutions and structural conditions, not an inevitable progression.

Explain in brief the relationship between social movement, collective action and revolution in bringing about social and political changes.

8 Write it yourself

Close this document and answer the original question within 150 words. Then use these seven checks to assess whether your answer explains the relationship sociologically, rather than merely defining three terms.

	Check	Yes / No
1	Does the introduction address **all three concepts and their role in social and political change**, rather than beginning with an isolated definition?	
2	Have I distinguished **collective action, relatively sustained social movements and revolution** by organisation, duration, objectives and depth of change?	
3	Is **Part 2 the largest part**, explaining the relationship instead of presenting three disconnected definitions?	
4	Have I used **Tilly for mobilisation** and **Skocpol for revolutionary structural conditions**, explaining what each thinker contributes?	
5	Have I included a **concrete Indian example** of change without revolution, with no unsupported claim about causation or movement success?	
6	Have I answered the hidden demand that **collective action need not become a movement, and movements need not culminate in revolution**?	
7	Is the answer **150 words or within the 150 to 153-word house range**, including headings and labels, with a balanced conclusion and none of the false claims in section 4.2?	

Sources

- **Union Public Service Commission:** Civil Services (Main) Examination, official previous-question-paper archive, Sociology Paper I and Sociology Paper II, 2013 to 2026. The questions in section 2.2 have been checked against original UPSC question papers and available scans of the examination papers. UPSC question papers; UPSC archives.
- **Charles Tilly:** *From Mobilization to Revolution*, Random House, 1978. Chapters on interests, organisation, mobilisation, the opportunity to act together, changing collective action, and revolution. Bibliographic record: Google Books.
- **Theda Skocpol:** *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia and China*, Cambridge University Press, 1979. Comparative explanation involving state structures, international forces and class relations. Wellcome Collection bibliographic and scholarly description.
- **M. S. A. Rao:** *Social Movements and Social Transformation: A Study of Two Backward Classes Movements in India*, Macmillan, 1979. Comparative study of the Sri Narayana Dharma Paripalana and Yadava movements; protest, conflict, organisation and middle-scale structural transformation. Gandhi Smriti Library, LBSNAA; Google Books; Yojana, September 1979, contemporary book review.
- **John D. McCarthy and Mayer N. Zald:** "Resource Mobilization and Social Movements: A Partial Theory", *American Journal of Sociology*, 82(6), 1977, pp. 1212 to 1241. Resources, movement organisations and external relationships. Journal publication; Penn State research resource.
- **Mancur Olson:** *The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups*, Harvard University Press, 1965. The free-rider problem and the limits of assuming that shared interests automatically produce collective action. Academic reading copy.
- **David A. Snow, E. Burke Rochford Jr., Steven K. Worden and Robert D. Benford:** "Frame Alignment Processes, Micromobilization, and Movement Participation", *American Sociological Review*, 51(4), 1986, pp. 464 to 481. Frame bridging, amplification, extension and transformation. JSTOR; Academic reading copy.
- **Sidney Tarrow:** *Power in Movement: Social Movements, Collective Action and Politics*, Cambridge University Press, first edition 1994; later editions titled *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics*, including the revised and updated third edition, 2011. Political opportunities, collective action, networks and contentious politics. Cambridge University Press.

Explain in brief the relationship between social movement, collective action and revolution in bringing about social and political changes.

- **Alberto Melucci:** *Nomads of the Present: Social Movements and Individual Needs in Contemporary Society*, Hutchinson Radius, 1989. Collective identity, cultural meanings and change in everyday life. Alberto Melucci's bibliographic archive.
- **Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels:** *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, 1848. Class struggle and revolutionary transformation. **Max Weber:** *Economy and Society*, posthumously published 1922, particularly the sociology of domination and legitimacy. **Émile Durkheim:** *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, 1912, for collective effervescence and solidarity. These classical works provide complementary lenses rather than a single theory of movement formation.
- **B. R. Ambedkar:** *Annihilation of Caste*, 1936. Structural critique of caste hierarchy and the requirement of challenging its institutional and normative foundations.
- **Gail Omvedt:** *Reinventing Revolution: New Social Movements and the Socialist Tradition in India*, M. E. Sharpe, 1993. Based partly on participant observation, with analysis of anti-caste, women's, farmers' and environmental movements. Google Books bibliographic and publisher description; Routledge edition.
- **Ghanshyam Shah:** *Social Movements in India: A Review of Literature*, Sage Publications, revised edition, 2004. Review of Indian movements, their participants, ideologies, organisations and leadership.
- **Amita Baviskar:** *In the Belly of the River: Tribal Conflicts over Development in the Narmada Valley*, Oxford University Press, 1995. Fieldwork on Bhilala Adivasis, displacement, development and political mobilisation. LBSNAA Library catalogue; Google Books, 1995 edition.
- **Kalpana Kannabiran:** "Political Reservation for Women: The (Un)making and Futures of the Constitution (106th Amendment) Act, 2023", *Social Change*, 54(1), 2024, pp. 36 to 53. Analysis of 27 years of contestation over women's legislative representation. Sage Journals.
- **Ministry of Law and Justice, Government of India:** *The Farm Laws Repeal Act, 2021*, Act No. 40 of 2021, dated 30 November 2021. Section 2 repealed three central farm laws enacted in 2020. Official India Code text; International Labour Organization NATLEX record.
- **Ministry of Law and Justice:** *The Constitution (One Hundred and Sixth Amendment) Act, 2023*, Gazette of India, 28 September 2023; commencement notification of 16 April 2026. The Act is in force, but the reservation of legislative seats remains subject to Article 334A's census and delimitation requirements. Official Gazette text; commencement notification of 16 April 2026, as reported. The Constitution (One Hundred and Thirty-First) Amendment Bill, 2026, introduced on 16 April 2026, failed to obtain the required special majority in the Lok Sabha on 17 April 2026 (298 for, 230 against): SCC Online summary of the Bill; report of the Lok Sabha vote.
- **Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare:** Lok Sabha Unstarred Question No. 1328, "Agitating Farmers", answered 11 February 2025. Official record of discussions with farmers on 8, 12, 15 and 18 February 2024 and 18 January 2025, and related Supreme Court proceedings. Lok Sabha parliamentary reply.
- **Associated Press:** "Indian workers go on a daylong nationwide strike against Modi's economic reforms", 9 July 2025, reporting a strike organised by ten major trade unions with farmers' and rural workers' support. AP News.
- **Associated Press:** "Indian unions and farmers stage a nationwide strike over interim trade deal with US", 12 February 2026. Contemporary reporting on collective mobilisation and partial disruption; not evidence of final policy outcomes. AP News.

Explain in brief the relationship between social movement, collective action and revolution in bringing about social and political changes.

YOUR NEXT STEP

Now write Sociology Paper I 2026 again.

You now know what this question asked, what it expected without saying so, and how its answer is built. Write the complete Sociology Paper I 2026 through Mains Replay under the clock, have it evaluated, and read the feedback against this document.



1 Write the full paper in three hours

2 Self-check this answer with section 8

3 Have the paper evaluated

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Guranchal Ma'am

Founder, UPSC Gurus