

CHAPTER - V

PROTEST MOVEMENTS IN INDIA : IMPACT ON THE POLITICAL PROCESS

The preceding chapters of the present study have shown the various dimensions of protest movements in India since Independence - major theories of movements and protests and their relevance to the understanding of protest movements in India ; social, economic, political ethnic, cultural, religious contradictions of the Indian society that act as the breeding grounds for the eruption of different types of protests and agitations; historical and analytical aspects of different types, nature, ideology, leadership and issues of protest movements in India. But any study on protest movements remains incomplete unless it is followed by the analyses of the impact of those movements on the various segments of political life of the society. This is one of the basic objectives of the present study and the present chapter addresses to this aspect of the study of protest movements in India.

Any movement originates to bring about change or resist change. By that logic, a movement may either be progressive, status-quo- oriented or conservative. Whatever may be the nature of the direction of the movement it leaves some impact on various segments of societal life. The impact may be positive ,contributing to the social cohesion, economic growth and political maturity and development, or negative, pulling the overall societal progress backward. The impact is also dependent on the perceptions of those who view movements and protests from different perspectives. Thus, a movement may be of positive impact and hence, progressive to the adherents of the movement while it may be of negative impact and hence, reactionary to those against whom the movement is directed. Under the circumstances, an objective assessment of the impact of a protest movements becomes difficult. Given this, it becomes pertinent to make a brief analysis of the concept of 'impact' itself.

There has been growing volume of writings on 'impact'. Social impact assessment is understood as a broad range of impacts or effects or consequences that are likely to be experienced by an equally broad range of social groups as a result of some course of action.¹ Therefore, it implies that impact studies are 'prospective' unlike evaluation studies which are 'retrospective'. Such studies began in the early 70s after the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 was passed in the United States. Initially, social impact assessment studies were essentially environmental impact statements.² It came to social sciences in 1973 after the council of the American Sociological Association formed a Committee "to develop guidelines for sociological contribution to environmental impact assessments".³ The Chairman of this Committee, C.P.Wolf, is credited to be the founder of this sub-discipline. His work in collaboration with Kurt Finsterbusch is an influential text on impact assessment in the United States.⁴

Most of the empirical studies in the United States and Canada on social impact studies have dealt with one or the other of the following things : forests, recreations, policy considerations, specific construction projects, urban renewal and urban highway construction, and large-scale energy development. But the accuracy of such studies has been strongly challenged.⁵ However, by now, the practitioners of the impact assessments have largely agreed to the following propositions'.⁶

- a) Socio-cultural variables need to be examined as well as economic or demographic ones;
- b) Impact assessments should not be limited to whatever may appear to be available.
- c) Impact assessments should not be limited to variables that are easily quantified and or politically salient,

d) Quality of life is a key dependent variable to be looked into, and

e) Impact assessment should focus more on the tendency of projects to redistribute resources at all levels.

In fine, it appears from the above discussion that a distinction is made between "impact" and "evaluation". While impact denotes to prospective effects or consequences, evaluation aims at retrospective effects or consequences. In this sense, evaluation should have been the appropriate term for the purpose of the present study as it seeks to measure the effects of the protest movements in India which have already taken place - a retrospective study by definition. This is the convention that is followed in the West.⁷ However, there are a number of limitations of the prospective studies and for those limitations prospective impact studies on protest movements have not been carried on a massive scale. Given this, the present study use the terms 'evaluation' and 'impact' interchangeably substituting 'impact' for 'evaluation' of the convention of the West.

In Chapter II of the present study it has been found that due to the social, cultural, ethnic, religious, economic and political contradictions that are found deep rooted in the Indian system, protests of different forms and scales emanate. These protests sometimes recede within absorbable time without much challenge to the unity, integrity and existence of the system. But some protests, in course of time, assume much higher scale and operational area posing substantial threat to the existence and functioning of the political system. Similarly, some protest movements are found to lead the system to a better direction thus contributing to the inculcation of positive change in the system while others turn to be disruptive force questioning the very legitimacy of the political system. Thus, protest movements in India are viewed from two distinct perspectives. First, protest movements are viewed as instruments for bringing about desired change in the system. It is assumed that protests reflect the unfulfilled aspirations of the protesting groups and thus act as pressure groups to direct action on the part of the government. Second, protest movements are thought to be negative means to

pressurize the politico-social system. These emanate from irrational primordial considerations and also are made to crop up by the vested interests on those irrational considerations for irrational parochial interests. Thus, protest movements are assumed to be disruptive threat to the existence and persistence of the political system. Given this background, the present section ventures to identify the impacts of protest movements on the political process of India.

In the pre-Independence period in India there was a wide range of protests, extending from courteous application to the authorities on the one hand to violent insurrection or non-violent civil disobedience on the other. And although the political parameters changed substantially after 1947, protests in one form or the other remained essentially the same. The fact is that the gaining of Independence has marked very little change in the use of the more direct and agitational modes of public suasion⁸. The movements of public protests not merely continue even after the establishment of a Parliamentary democracy in India but as some observers like Bayley, Kothari, Harrison, Weiner, Oommen, Rao, Mukherjee, Shah and others have indicated, these movements have been increasing in number and have been gathering momentum, threatening even the very existence of the Parliamentary federal form of Government and the pluralist socio-cultural structure.

India is the largest democracy in the world. Its record in the defence of political freedom and in the translation of democratic theory into practical reality is remarkable not only among the developing countries but among the countries of the Western world as well. Public protest and even violence in the politics of a nation do indicate that all is not well with the nature of that system. Great Britain and the United States have both been the scenes of violence and protest in recent years. Just as it would be wrong in these instances to argue from protest and violence to the extinction of democratic attributes, so too in the Indian case a discussion of public protest should not be read as an implicit denial of the vitality of its democratic process.⁹ But it should be added here that the Indian government is faced with a pervasive and continued threat to the maintenance of law and

order and law and order are jeopardized to an extent known only infrequently in either the United States or Great Britain and then never for prolonged periods of time.¹⁰

Under the circumstances, the questions that crop up are as to what interests and concerns are affected by the manifestations of these protests and why a government concerned with the strengthening of democracy, should feel impelled to undertake constraining action toward public protests of this magnitude. At least six closely connected reasons may be given for governmental anxiety and action.¹¹

First, public protests impose an economic burden upon the nation. This cost is a consequence of the physical destruction visited upon public and private property, the loss of life and health to individuals, the diversion of resources, time and energy from constructive economic programmes to the essentially neutral task of maintaining law and order. In an economy already straining to the utmost for rapid economic development the cost may be unacceptable, spelling the difference between plan success and plan failure. Protests in any form, but more particularly in its illegal forms, cause some reallocation of resources that established industrial countries may be able to afford it, India perhaps cannot.

Second, one of the fundamental duties of any government is the preservation of minimal conditions of law and order. No government, whatever its political form, can outlive a successful challenge to its ability to meet this end. If the government is unable to contain violent public protest and enforce its rules and regulations, it may lose its justification for existence, its claim to legitimacy.

Third, coercive public protest which succeeds in its object of affecting the decisions of government represents a derogation from majority rule. It is possible, of course, that demonstrators sometimes present a truer picture of majority sentiments than elected representatives

sample. Rather special circumstances must exist to support this proposition, circumstances which in the Indian case are most uncommon. Usually, coercive public protest has been the tool of an aggrieved minority. As such, it strikes at the basic premise of democratic government, namely, that the will of the majority as expressed in free elections and through elected representatives is sovereign. If coercive public protest is seen to succeed, the representative integrity and efficacy of the erstwhile democratic government will be lost.

Fourth, coercive public protest represents not only the introduction of a supplementary means for the suasion of government, but a fundamental threat to the rule of law. If laws can be disregarded, sloughed aside arbitrarily, the prospect of equality and impartiality before the law is destroyed, and the efficacy of constituted means of representation and adjudication is impaired.

Fifth, as a result of the destruction of the rule of law and of the rule of the majority, a sort of Gresham's law begins to affect the nature of political responses. Direct action and social violence - either threatened or actual - begin to drive out the orderly, constitutional responses demanded in a democratic state. Every success for direct action sets of precedent for its utilization by other groups and individuals. Coercive protest movements, if allowed to go unrestrained, will be more widely imitated and become an ever greater rival to the processes of peaceful change through democratic government.

Sixth, democracy demands a considerable measure of social discipline in order to work successfully. Coercive protest movements involving forms which are illegal or violent represents a breakdown of discipline. It is based upon the destructive principle that certain ends justify recourse to undemocratic means of resolution. If government fails to apply its sanctions, it allows new linkages to become established between ends and means. Due to the default of government, people

are permitted to protest in the belief that certain deeply felt needs, desires, or interests are beyond compromise and that extreme solutions are appropriate to satisfy them. Social accommodation based on compromise tends to give way to a series of internecine wars. The failure of government to restrain coercive protest movements represents a failure to secure acceptance of legitimate rules established to govern the relation between articulated wants and the procedure for their fulfilment.

As has already been discussed, protest movements in India assume many forms. For example, there are legal and illegal forms of protest. The illegal forms come in two varieties : violent and non-violent. Satyagraha or non-violent civil disobedience, is a non-violent but often illegal form of protest. Violent illegal protests refer primarily to riots, although it may include assassinations, coups d'etat, rebellions, insurrections, terrorism etc.

In India, people compel official attention and constrain decision-making by deliberately engaging in activities that threaten public order. Violence or the threat of violence have become important instruments in Indian politics. Group violence, like the wider category of protest, comes in many varieties. It is possible, however, to distinguish three general kinds, one of which has an explicitly political motivation and purpose. These three forms of violence may be termed the "violence of Remonstrance", the "Violence of Confrontation", and the "violence of Frustration".¹² These three forms are differentiated according to the target of the violence, the precipitating or catalyzing agency, the amount of prior organization, the length of time required for the generation of violence, the visibility of the growth process, the nature of the participants, and the location of the event.

Violence of Remonstrance refers to riots and public clashes growing out of agitational activities which have as their target governmental authority in some form. Violence here is a product of interaction between protestors and the representatives of the authority or public order in general - most commonly, the police. Violence of Remonstrance may not be organized but the activities

preceding it certainly are. The process by which the violence is generated is visible and usually prolonged. The participants in the violence of Remonstrance are, by and large, members of modern social groups, such as labour unions, universities, political parties, and professional societies. Violence of Remonstrance is more common in urban than in rural areas. Examples of this kind of violence are the anti-Hindi agitations in Madras in 1965 and 1966, the martyr's memorial agitation in Ahmedabad, 1958, students riots against higher fees, and foodprice compaigns in 1958, and again in 1966, Nava Nirman Andolan in Gujarat in 1974, movement for total Revolution in Bihar in 1974-75, and the anti-reservation agitation following the acceptance of the Mandal Commission Report by the V.P. Singh government.¹³

Violence of the confrontation refers to riots that grow out of the antagonism of private groups. In this kind of violence, public agencies are not directly involved; they are not the immediate target of violence. The prime examples of violence of confrontation are communal, ethnic riots and faction fights. In the Violence of Confrontation there is very little organization either in conduct or in the activities leading up to it. It is generated by a process which is invisible, involving feelings and attitudes that have matured over years, sometimes over generations. The violence of confrontation does not generally escalate through clearly defined stages as does the Violence of Remonstrance. Participants in this kind of violence tend to be members of traditional groups.¹⁴

Violence of frustration encompasses commuter riots in large cities when trains are delayed, or attacks by mobs upon food shops that refuse to open, or when unemployed persons besiege an employment office. The violence of frustration does not have a definable target - unless it be society as a whole. It is not an attack upon government or upon specific private group. It is frenzied lasting out at a state of affairs, galling largely because of its impersonality. The pretext for this kind of violence is impersonal too. There is no specific organization to the violence of Frustration; it is abrupt and spontaneous. Participants in this kind of violence may be anyone, not modern or traditional people particularly. It is more common in urban areas.¹⁵

The point to be noted here is that one common variety of social violence in modern India has an explicitly political motivation, and it stems from a desire to shape government policy. It also follows that political protest and the deliberate use of violence are a tactic of people in the modern sector of Indian life; traditional people do not utilize these means as a matter of course but only to further particular issues about which they feel very deeply - they use protests in proportion to their attachment to particular issues. For example, whenever students resort to protests there is always the danger that violence may ensue. Peasants, on the other hand, grow violent more selectively. However, as the traditional people become more politicised and more conscious of their rights, they will learn to use the systems^{of} agitational modes as well as its formal and institutional ones. It suggests, therefore, that Panchayati Raj, to the extent that it is a successful instrument for political socialization, may unleash, as it does particularly in West Bengal, forces that cannot be contained in its institutional framework.

There is no evidence that patterns of participation in protests have changed over the years, nor do the issues serving as pretexts for protests today differ much from those in the past. On the question of the amount of prevalence of public protest which, by threatening law and order, coerces governmental decision-making, it has been observed that the growth of violence in the country which has taken a turn for the worse since the death of Lal Bahadur Shastri.¹⁷ The evidence indicates that the amount of public protest as well as of the violence has increased during the last four decades. The expectation of Indian political life, which have been stable for so long, have been upset. Where once there was acceptance of Congress predominance, which bred apathy and cynicism, there is now ferment. In the past, the government could absorb a considerable amount of disruption and the political system seemed immune from the effects of violence. Now the possibilities to be achieved through protests have been enhanced because a decline in the capacity of the system to govern properly appears to have taken place.¹⁸ This being so, recourse to public protest appears much more tempting as well as more significant.

It is a fundamental premise that the ruling elite in all societies grab resources, power and status to themselves and leaves large sections of the society unsatisfied. This obviously creates conditions of conflict in all political settings. During the liberation struggle, the Congress Party as an umbrella organization had politicised the masses to gain their support for ending the colonial rule which was held responsible for poverty, misery, hunger, and exploitation of the people of India. After the attainment of Independence, those laud promises and lofty ideals were overlooked and the ruling Congress party came to be controlled by a new elite class which started manipulating politics of India to their own interests. The capitalist path of development enabled the elite class comprising the upper castes and big industrial bourgeoisie to corner fruits of economic development to themselves. Not much was done for ameliorating the economic conditions of the rural landless poor, the depressed sections of the society including the tribals, the adivasis, and the dalits. This path of modernization and development, as Myron Weiner¹⁹ and Rajni Kothari²⁰ observe, has given birth to the phenomenon of two Indias - one very modern on the path of progress having access to resources, information and technology and the other very much left behind in fact bearing the brunt of exploitations, depressions and oppressions. The spectacle of the poor becoming poorer and the rich becoming richer - an ever widening gap between the rich few and poor many alienates them from the system, unleashes in them a lava of desperate energy.²¹ Hence, it becomes easier to turn them into a mob, sometimes riotous. Again, when men live close to economic margins it is easy to capitalize on them for political ends. Thus, economic frustration is an important catalyst agent of protest movements in India including direct action.

Under the circumstances, regional imbalances become more visible. Numerous ethnic identities based on race, language, religion, culture and region feel alienated from the political system as they have failed to get equitable share in fruits of economic development and proper share in the decision-making process of the country. Nehru's accommodative model was bypassed by Mrs. Gandhi and evolved her own system of authoritarianism which was built up through a systematic approach of populist politics.²² During her regime, all these identities

were designated as fissiparous and secessionist posing threat to integrity and unity of India. The ethnic identities naturally reacted sharply to it. Some of the ethnic identities launched movements for demanding more autonomy to the states and also demanded the creation of some new states. One may mention in this connection that the whole of the North-East India had to be linguistically reorganized to pacify these identities. It, therefore, suggests that ethnic aspirations coupled with economic, social and political factors are responsible for giving birth to many protest movements in India.

Now the question that needs to be addressed is whether protest movements or direct actions are compatible with democratic form of government like that of India. The place of protest movements in Indian political context has been discussed by a galaxy of scholars, notable among them are Y.B.Chavan, David Bayley and Rajni Kothari.

Chavan distinguishes "Public Protests" into two categories : "Peaceful demonstrations or any peaceful movement for ventilating certain grievances" and "Direct Action" which is organised defiance of law on a large or mass scale. According to him, large -scale demonstration of grievances and expression of feelings in a peaceful way is permissible in a parliamentary democracy, but direct action, that is, "organized defiance of law on a mass scale has no place in parliamentary democracy because it means the end of it."²³

To him, there are four types of Direct Actions taking place in India : 1) Wherein a group of persons take law into their hands and administer direct punishment to the supposed wrong-doer without going through the due processes of law; 2) wherein a particular group of people (particular religious, economic or caste group) feels wronged and takes vengeance against the other group by methods not permitted by law; 3) when a group of persons feeling aggrieved on occasions by the policy of the government or party in power launches organised defiance of law as a technique of solving the problems; 4) actions launched by groups which are impatient to realize those "natural agro-cultural urges which make (them) aspire for better form of economic society for better social ideologies.

and political ideologies (they) are impatient to have it earlier in their own way in accordance with their time table."²⁴ Organized defiance of law of the above mentioned categories according to Chavan, is not permissible in parliamentary democracy.

However, he permits Direct Action in three exceptional circumstances : 1) Organized defiance of law by individuals who like Mahatma Gandhi, though having fundamental respect for law, "by reason of conscience are faced with situations where Satyagraha is necessary" and like Mahatma Gandhi" are fit to undertake such individual action". 2) "..... even in the functioning of a democratic government, there is one very important exception in resort to direct action. Any government that is itself out to destroy the values of parliamentary democracy needs to be replaced by direct action even under parliamentary democracy". 3) Direct Action carried out by men with moral stature and who, though few, are individuals representing a large section of humanity in a particular situation where humanity's future hangs in danger, for example, the use of nuclear power.²⁵

Chavan's argument that Direct Action, except under three exceptional circumstances, is incompatible with parliamentary democracy, is founded on his perception of the principles underlying parliamentary democracy. To him, parliamentary democracy is a rule of law and a type of democracy in which there are periodical election based on adult franchise. Again, there are fundamental liberties of freedom of expression and freedom of association and the most vital thing is the existence of an independent judiciary to enforce these fundamental rights. In this type a government is not irremovable and after a specific period, the government itself offers to be replaced.²⁶

But it should be noted that Chavan discusses the main tenets of parliamentary democracy at a 19th century Liberal democratic level of logic. He does not take into consideration even the observations of eminent students of parliamentary democracy from Mosca to Mills, from Bryce, Finer, Laski to a large number of social democrats, or the philosophical basis, institutional

weaknesses, nor the limitations seen in the actual experiences of the functioning of parliamentary forms of governments during the 19th and 20th centuries. He does not even refer to the crucial fact, observed by almost all sensitive observers of parliamentary form of governments, viz, the growing concentration of power in the hands of a few, and the reduction of the mass of people to insignificance and their transformation into voting hands manipulated by powerful groups possessing economic power and monopolizing instruments of mass communication. He also eschews reference to the fact that why the parliamentary democratic governments, in the name of democracy, rule of law, and the preservation of law and order or bringing about national integration, are inaugurating increasing authoritarian, undemocratic curbs on even the limited rights given to citizens, within the frame of a capitalist democratic constitution.²⁷

Again, as far as the functioning of parliamentary democracy in India is concerned, Chavan did not take into consideration the crucial feature pointed out by the All India Civil Liberties Council that India is "the only democratic country in the world whose fundamental law sanctions detention without trial in time of peace and in a situation which is not in the nature of an emergency."²⁸ Nor does he examine the potential antidemocratic limitations which have been attached to every clause of fundamental rights. Nor has he examined how far fundamental rights remain fundamental if they are subordinated to law and order requirements of the government. It therefore, suggests that for Chavan, struggle against unemployment, against the economic measures which increasingly lower the conditions of living of the masses, the struggle to eradicate a social order which is founded on exploitation of man by man and buttressed, protected and defended by the coercive apparatus of the state should not take the form of Direct Action.²⁹

Chavan's discussion of Direct Action and the need to suppress it by the democratic government, leaves out of account the analysis of the fundamental causes that lead to Direct Action. It also completely leaves out of account the possibility of transforming the anti-democratic measures adopted by the governments to preserve law and order and suppress public protests. Nor does

Chavan examine how far the so called philosophical, institutional premises underlying the specific form of government have stood the test of experience and life. David Bayley takes up the problems of the first type and Rajni Kothari examines the second aspects of the problems left undiscussed by Chavan.

Bayley attempts to examine the problem of relation of Direct Action and parliamentary form of government from a totally different angle. He wants to consider whether the parliamentary form of government in the process of suppressing Direct Action as well as in the anxiety to preserve law and order, or speed up economic advance in the country, will itself not violate some of the basic canons of democracy and thereby endanger the very democratic foundations of its existence. He presumes that in the context of Indian historical development "coercive public protests" have become characteristic of the political life in India and these protests have increased in number and intensity. He is therefore more anxious to find out not merely the limits which should be put on public protests but also a certain amount of permissibility to such actions by the democratic government if it wants to strengthen the democratic government democratically. Bayley believes that the Government of India is aware of the need to curb the coercive public protests in India, but less attention ... has been given to the ... other problem namely, to an examination of the possible consequences of successfully restraining coercive public protest" on the democratic government itself.³⁰

Bayley assumes that the Indian government is faced with a pervasive and continued threat to the maintenance of law and order and law and order are jeopardized to an extent known extremely infrequently in the United States or United Kingdom. He also takes into account the possible arguments which may be put forth by the Government to control 'coercive public protests' namely, that such protests impose an economic burden upon the nation; will prevent the government from performing its most fundamental duties, namely the preservation of minimal conditions of law and order; will destroy the basis of majority rule; not merely introduce a supplementary means for suasion of government, but a

fundamental threat to the rule of law; will encourage replacing orderly, constitutional responses demanded in a democratic state; become an even greater rival to the process of peaceful change through democratic government; and destroy the assumption of natural harmony, and social accommodation based on compromise by all groups and generate a belief that certain deeply felt needs, desires or interests are beyond compromise and that extreme solutions are appropriate to satisfy them.³¹

All these arguments, according to Bayley, attain great efficacy in an underdeveloped country like India where the democratic spirit does not prevail in the society. However, the Indian government while being aware of these consequences of permitting direct action, does not take into account the effect of measures adopted by the government to suppress 'coercive public protest' on its own self. He points out a number of dangers which may arise if the government adopts a stringent policy of suppression of all forms of public protests including illegal and violent forms. These may be : (1) The stopping of a socially useful or functional response; 2) the weakening of the consensus between rulers and the ruled; 3) the intensification of the Gandhian Martyrdom Syndrome; 4) the creation of situations tactically advantageous for the non-democratic political opposition; 5) the alienation of people from the police and court system; 6) danger of suppression of all unwanted opinion by the government in the process of disciplining the popular opinion as expressed through 'coercive public protests'; 7) the danger of the task of regulating coercive public protest degenerating into authoritarian suppression of all protests. This danger is more real because of the fact that in India an elite group composed of officials and policy makers is already separated from the masses by a chasm of education, training and experience, and are likely to easily extend a policy of tutelage in the rules of democratic interaction; 8) In the absence of institutional countervailing forces operating in Indian society, the after-effect of controlling tightly the various forms of political protests so popular in contemporary India may be that the agents of governmental authority may acquire a habit of using more and more of power for solving problems and thus slowly slide down to an authoritarian regime.³² Bayley thus points out

how the process of curbing public protests in the Indian setting has grave consequences for the very democratic parliamentary form itself.

Bayley's analysis of coercive public protests and parliamentary government, while an interesting as well as thought provoking piece of formal analysis, neither examines the socio-economic causes which generate mounting coercive protests, nor provides any clue to find out whether the parliamentary form of government will be able to eradicate the underlying socio-economic causes generating coercive public protests and threatening the very fabric of the rule of law created under parliamentary democracy. He does not even pose the problem of alienation of individuals which has taken place in capitalist profit oriented competitive industrial societies, nor does he examine why people develop fear of freedom or want to escape from freedom. The findings of thinkers like Tonnies, Weber, Reisman, Tawney, Laski, Erich From²⁹, Michels and a host of socialologists, psychologists, political thinkers and others show that the phrase "freedom of individual" has become a cliché in the new mass-societies emerging in the capitalist world, with its large-sized bureaucratic organisations, wherein the individual is transformed into commodity, into a robot manipulated by the powerful monopolists controlling economic resources and state power and manipulating gigantic mass communication media, for conditioning his views and preparing him to work as a guinea pig to be exploited in the drive for profits of the monopolies or to be slaughtered in the gigantic wars, launched by them in their drive for markets.³³ Thus, Bayley offers only a verbal fetish of freedom' plus a dose of advice to the leaders of the government to be pragmatic in their approach, and suggest a policy of an opportunistic handling of the situation. He has nothing to offer to the majority of the population, as to how they should develop movements which would help them destroy restraints imposed by parliamentary government, on their concrete economic, political, social and cultural democratic rights.

Rajni Kothari takes up the problem of protest and direct action and parliamentary democracy at a deeper level. He observes how the parliamentary

form of democracy has failed to embody the idea of democracy as understood in its essential sense and this failure principally stems from the fact that under it there is little scope for popular participation in political processes. This lack of participation leads to a sense of insignificance in the people, especially in those sections which are more politically conscious. Faced with a situation in which power is concentrated they grow under a sense of powerlessness, a feeling which is in sharp contradiction to the ideology of democracy.³⁴ What we find in reality is that power tends to get concentrated under parliamentary government. The participation of the people in the process of the government is kept to a minimum. Effectively, parliamentary democracy becomes a rule of minority. Decisions taken at the seat of the power and enforced by its agents come as a fait accompli to the people. Thus, grievances accumulate. The normal channels provided for removing the accumulated grievances prove to be impotent. The stage is set for direct action.³⁵

Kothari thus comes to the conclusion that direct action is inevitable under parliamentary democracy. He points out, "it is easy to dismiss direct action as unpermissible under parliamentary democracy; it is difficult to obtain conditions under which the need for direct action is wholly removed."³⁶ After establishing the inevitability of protest movements in parliamentary democracy he tries to dispose of the formal arguments which are usually put forth to oppose protest movements, namely, 1) it would result in anarchy and chaos, 2) that could be justified against foreign government but highly inappropriate under a government which is "our own government", 3) that the electorate ought to give a fair chance to the government in power, because the electorate is free to change it in the next election, 4) that it would make a mockery of the sovereignty of parliament.

According to Kothari, fear of anarchy and chaos in the body politic is itself a symptom of a deep-seated malady prevailing in society, which reveals that some drastic steps are required to settle the issue. The argument of the irrelevance of protest movements in self government is founded on a hollow reasoning. Because parliamentary democracy, by permitting only the single act of choosing a representative, and denying every other mode of participating in political action

never permits the people to feel even the representative government as 'self government.' The argument that the elected government should be given a fair chance by the electorate is also very feeble according to Kothari because elections in parliamentary democracy, are no more than a rubber stamp on one party's manifesto or another's which may be drawn up deceptively leaving out measures which are likely to be unpalatable to the public. Finally, Kothari refutes the fourth argument against protest and direct action, namely, that it will make a mockery of the sovereignty of the parliament by pointing out that the parliamentary sovereignty in effect turns out to be the sovereignty of an organized minority, with majority having little participation in the political powers, and he argues that the curious fact, indeed is that the only real participation possible for a majority of people under such a form of government is the participation in direct action.³⁷

Kothari's discussion of parliamentary democracy and protest movements, though stimulating, carries on the discussion at a formal level, and thus offers no basic clues to the understanding of the problem. After a brilliant exposure of the limitations of parliamentary democracy as a fetter on conscious, purposive and free participation of people in the political processes, he does not deepen his discussion. While recognizing that parliamentary government has failed, and therefore compels people to take to direct action, Kothari still glorifies freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, and freedom of press, which he feels are its essential features. He does not point out the truth that these freedoms in the context of a capitalist framework are accessible only to a small group of capitalists, landlords, exploiters and profiteers. He does not examine why the parliamentary democratic constitution in India has categorically laid down restrictions on fundamental rights, and has declared certain categories of rights as fundamental. He further remains completely silent over the fact that the Preventive Detention Act, and a number of other undemocratic clauses have armed the government with such powers that it can rule by suppressing all democratic liberties cherished by him. In fact, in the end Kothari ends curiously as a defender of the status quo - permitting only those direct action which would only fertilise parliamentary form of government and he is opposed to other direct actions.³⁸

In fine, it may thus be noted that parliamentary democracy as we experience in India is not completely satisfactory and hence inadequate to meet the grievances. Thus, protest in any form is inevitable. The protests and movements will continue till adequate institutional forms and mechanisms for the rationalisation and exercise of concrete democratic rights and social and economic environment conducive to the expression of the best selves of the individual is found and attained.

On the impact of the protest movements in India, T.K.Oommen³⁹ views it from a different angle. He first classifies the protest movements on their type of collectivity, nature of the goal, type of movements and their macro and micro consequences. These different types of protest movements thus vary in terms of their consequences for the system. To Oomen, collectivities may broadly be classified into three : biological, primordial and civil. These three different types of collectivities pursue goals that are symbolic, instrumental and both symbolic and instrumental simultaneously. Each category of the collectivities may thus take three different but overlapping forms, namely, biological-symbolic, biological-instrumental, and biological-symbolic and instrumental. Similar to these categories are also found in the case of primordial and civil collectivities. When a protest movement takes place for increasing and/or decreasing the age at marriage or for the right of admission to public places by women/black/untouchables, this is an example of biological symbolic movement. A movement by women for equal wages or a youth movement for lowering the age of franchise or for reservation/dereservation falls in the category of biological-instrumental protest movement. A movement of a racial category for establishing a new nation-state comes under the category of biological with both symbolic and instrumental goals. So far as the primordial collectivities are concerned, caste mobility movements, conversion or reform movements of religious collectivities; linguistic collectivities fighting for cultural autonomy fall in the category of primordial-symbolic movements. When the movement of religious, linguistic, caste or tribal groups is organised for political purposes like political representation or for economic opportunities it comes under primordial instrumental category. Seccessionist movements by religious, linguistic or tribal collectivities are regarded as primordial movements with symbolic and

instrumental goal. Finally, civil collectivities may resort to movements such as Workers' movement to get May day declared as a holiday, students' mobilization to abolish the compulsory attendance system and these movements are civil-symbolic movements. Students' movement for participation in University decisional processes, farmers' mobilization for agricultural subsidies, workers' demand for sharing of profits with owners fall in the category of civil-instrumental type. Finally, most of the movements by the civil collectivities combine both symbolic and instrumental goals but when the instrumental goal provides the thrust these movements are of civil with symbolic and instrumental type.

Movements which pursue exclusively symbolic goals rarely question the basic values and principles involved in the prevalent distribution of goods and services, they only strive towards a change in the system. Similarly, movements which pursue exclusively instrumental goals are capable of bringing about change within the system alone. But some of these movements may cause structural transformation, that is, change of the system, through an accretive process. For example, lowering of age of franchise has brought about substantial change in the distribution of political power in favour of the youth as they constitute a substantial proportion of the population. Similarly, workers' movements for sharing of profits, if successful, can gradually undermine capitalism as a system. The case of movements which combine both symbolic and instrumental goals is quite different. As for civil collectivities, such protests exist in large numbers but are rarely a threat to the nation-state, although the governing elite may be replaced through such movements. As for the biological collectivities only race provides a basis for the emergence of a nation-state. The possibility of the emergence of movements threatening the nation-state is the greatest when the collective actors are constituted by primordial collectivities such as religious, linguistic or tribal groups. In so far as these collectivities pursue both symbolic and instrumental goals simultaneously, secessionism is almost the inescapable demand.⁴⁰

Given the different collectivities with their different goals and consequences on the nation and the state, we get a variety of protest movements in India all of

which pose a threat, albeit in varying degrees, to the nation-state. The threat emanates from two sources; the nature of responses from the deprived, and that of the collectivity. On the one hand of the continuum is the eagerness on the part of the dominant collectivity to absorb all other collectivities into its fold, leading to the crystallization of assimilationist movements. If secessionism cannot be supported from the nationalist point of view, assimilationism cannot be defended from the humanist perspective. In between these polar opposites separatist, insularist and welfarist movements may be identified with their corresponding impact on the system as a whole and the parts of the system.⁴¹

The bases of secessionist movements in independent India are basically three : language, e.g., the Dravidian movement at the initial stage; tribe, e.g., Naga National Movement, Mizo National Front, Gorkha National Liberation Front; and religion, e.g., the movement for independent Kashmir, the movement for a separate sikh state, Khalistan. Whatever may be the bases of group formation, to the extent that the tendency towards extra- territorial loyalty persists or the 'aspiration' for disengagement from the nation-state continues, it is an indicator of inadequate welding of the constituents into the nation-state. Secessionist movements, if successful, will lead to the disintegration of the state and thus redrawing of boundaries. This, in turn, brings about independence, autonomy to the collectivities pursuing secessionist protests. Religion provides the most salient basis of secessionism in India. All secessionist movements in independent India have had a religious content. Dravidian Tamil nationalism was not only against Hindi but also against Aryan Hinduism. The majority of Mizos and Nagas look upon themselves not only as tribes but also as Christians. But the persistent secessionist movements for independent Kashmir and Khalistan - are clearly based on religious ideologies, those of Islam and Sikhism.

The tendency towards proliferation of states within the nation-state is a manifestation of separatist movements. Once language has been accepted as the basis of state formation it is inevitable that endemic demands for separate states based on language should crystallize in a country like India with a multiplicity

of languages. Accepting language as the sole or even the dominant criterion of state formation foments recurrent demands. Further, once language is accepted as the basis of state formation, those cases where language and other factors coexist pose severe problems. The identification, though perhaps wrongly, of the Punjabi language with Sikhism and Urdu with Islam are cases in point. Again, if the people speaking a language are not concentrated in a definite territory, in all probability, the development of their language and culture, for want of political patronage and administrative nurture, would be adversely affected. The case of Sindhi and to a certain extent, that of Urdu are examples. This would provide for the grounds for the emergence of separatist movements.

Once language is accepted as the dominant basis of state formation, other primordial bases would be used for mobilization - region, dialect and tribe. The persisting demand for a separate Jharkhand state - bringing together the tribal groups belonging to the border districts of Bihar, Orissa and West Bengal is simultaneously a demand to recognize Jharkhand as a specific cultural region and for tribal autonomy. The tendency in such contexts would often be to rediscover traditional identities which frozen or even to invent new myths of identity. Finally, the total neglect of administrative viability, ecological variations and developmental imbalances and the sole reliance on language for state reorganization gave birth to a series of regional movements such as the Telengana separatist movement between 1969-71, and the resurrection of the erstwhile Vidharbha movement. In fine, the separatist movements cause erosion of state authority at the centre and the emergence of federal polity. For the constituent units, separatist movements lead to limited autonomy within the framework of nation - state.

The logical extension of establishing states based on language is the emergence of animosity towards outsiders, that is, towards those linguistic groups outside the region, giving birth to insulationist movements. The widespread tendency to emphasise the rights of sons of the soil and the proliferation of 'senas' are too well known. This type of movement usually emerges either in advanced urban industrial towns or in backward rural areas. While the archetype of this variety of movement is the Shiv Sena of Bombay, the emergence of 'Lachit Sena',

Kannada Chaluvalligars only indicate the widespread tendency in this direction. An extension of this tendency may also be discerned in the emergence of regional political parties such as the Bangla Congress, Kerala Congress and Dravidian parties. Similarly, the proverbial hatred and suspicion that the tribals have towards the outsiders or "dikus" is well known. Generally, the contentions in this context anchor around employment, admission to educational institutions, licences for new economic ventures, etc. The mobilizations in Assam against Bengalis labelling them as 'foreigners', adds a new dimension to the already vexing problem.⁴² The consequences of insularist movement thus becomes weakening of the concept of unitary citizenship and hence of the overarching nature of the nation-state. As far as the micro structures of the nation state is concerned, insularist movements result in confrontations between two or more local structures and hence, hostility among constituent units within the nation-state.⁴³

While a culturally plural situation gives birth to the crystallization of identities and movements based on language, region and religion, a socially plural situation is likely to facilitate the emergence of identities based on social rank and prestige, giving birth to welfarist movements. These movements are geared to the welfare of their clientele in the broadest sense of the term. Given the fact that inequality was institutionalized in traditional Indian society through the caste system and the values and norms that were associated with it, it is not surprising that a large number of movements led by those who experienced deprivation under the rigidity of the caste system rebelled, particularly when the new democratic framework assured them equality, fraternity and freedom. Under the welfarist movement there is the possibility of traditional vested interests getting disenchanted and hence fomenting unrest. Thus, welfarist movement causes social development of the traditionally under-privileged primordial collectivities and hence there is the likelihood of animosity from entrenched collectivities. The virulent anti-Brahmin movement in Tamil Nadu,⁴⁴ the Mahar and Mali movements in Maharashtra,⁴⁵ the Ezhava movement in Kerala⁴⁶, the Chamar movement in parts of Uttar Pradesh⁴⁷, are some of the well-known movements of this variety.

Finally, the 'assimilationist' movement has been a part of the Indian ethos for centuries. Thus, through the Hindu mode of absorption⁴⁸, the tribal people, particularly in South-Central India, had been gradually assimilated into the Hindu fold. Similarly, through the process of 'Sanskritization'⁴⁹, the lower castes have been attempting to move up in the caste hierarchy. Under the assimilationist movement, the nation-state is consolidated but at a very high social cost because it leads to the eclipse of local identities and what Oommen calls 'culturocide'.⁵⁰ Among the religions of Indian origin, the Jains follow, by and large, a policy of socio-cultural assimilation with the dominant religious collectivity, the Hindus. As for the neo Buddhists, the recent converts from Dalits, who constitute the bulk of Indian Buddhists today, the tendency is to assert their status in caste rather than in religious terms. Among the religions of alien origin the tendency to undergo a process of enculturation or Indianization of their life style is clearly discernible.⁵¹ In the context of language too, the twin process of assertion and assimilation are at work.⁵² Most Hindus and some Muslims prefer the amalgamation of Hindi and Urdu and the resultant Hindustani.

Given these general pattern of protest movements and their tacit and manifest impacts on the nation-state of India and its constituent units exploration and identification of concrete and perceived impacts of the protest movements on the Indian political process may be ventured. These may not be all inclusive and exhaustive but will indicate the major pattern that is being shaped along which more comprehensive and pinpointed investigation could be made.

Since the late sixties, many things have changed - stability of leadership, party, government and the system as a whole. These changes have been, to a great extent, due to mobilizations and protests on the part of various groups and collectivities. Two themes have marked India's political history most in these later years - political awakening and political decay.⁵³

Political awakening is a process by which individuals and social groups develop a fuller understanding of the workings and implications of open representative politics, and become more active in seeking to participate in it. They increasingly

understand that elected politicians are supposed to represent and respond to felt needs, that problems are often shared by many other in their caste, class, occupational group, region, locality etc. and this fact places their social group in conflict with others. These groups have grown more assertive, so that conflicts quicken, as do the political rivalries that naturally follow from this. This awakening has been taking place among all sections of Indian society. It started earlier and has gone further among more prosperous and literate groups becoming conscious of their identity, status and position and the rights due to them. It has occurred among the poor and illiterate many as well. As these disadvantaged groups crystallize into active elements in the political process through their mobilization, they ^ebecome less willing to tolerate. This awakening is reflected in all areas of life which concern them - from the immediate cause of deprivation to ecological subject - and people assert by mobilization and protest. In other words, people are no longer passive receiver as they had been. The awakening has thus made India more genuine democracy as well as more difficult country to govern - a characteristic that is designated as political decay.

Political decay may be described as a decline in the capacity of political institutions to respond creatively or even adequately to discontent and the aspirations of social groups. Since the late sixties, both the formal institutions of the state in India such as legislatures, the Judiciary, and the bureaucracy, and informal institutions especially political parties have undergone decay. Broadly speaking, this has occurred for the loss, or decline of legitimacy of these institutions in the face ^{of} protest movements in India. Thus, the simultaneous occurrence of both awakening and decay resulting mostly from mobilisation and protest has led to serious social disorder and something close to political crisis.

This phenomenon has resulted in a divergence of the state and society giving birth to two trends - 'statism' among those near the apex of the political system that followed from the increasing isolation of the state from the society, and 'anti-politics' that follows from the increasing isolation of the society from the state.⁵⁴ Statists seek a strong state, some wanting a state whose strength resides mainly in its capacity for brisk, assertive leadership while others stress the importance of

the state's coercive powers. These views are arrived at as a consequence of recent political decay and of the loss of confidence in the state as an agency for creative change in society. Since the state cannot play much of a mediating role in this increasingly conflictual society, it must either provide clear, compelling leadership or must arm itself to meet social turbulence with force, or both.

The growth of statism at the apex of the system is paralleled by a reaction at and near the base of the system. At times, it is merely anti-statist, seeking a decent realization of power within the political system, but it also contains more uncompromising elements voicing sentiments that are fully anti-political - that is, they oppose involvement of any kind with the state. Instead, faith is placed in voluntary self-help associations, initiatives, protests and movements at the grass roots all across India. Thus, it is to be noted that the protests and movements in India flow from the different contradictions of the society including the dysfunctional role of the state that have their impact felt in the state making the latter centralised, authoritarian and interventionist.

India, like most of the developing countries, emerged as an independent state but it is yet to mature as a nation. Maturity to a nation implies an emotional - affective attachment of an average citizen to one's own country, transcending those based on his primordial attachments of religion, language, caste, race etc.⁵⁵ This passage from a "nation-in-the-becoming" to a "nation-in-the-being" is the period of "nation-building". The coming into being of the nation-state implies a national consensus on the institutions and mechanisms of the state, through which social conflicts keep getting articulated and resolved. But before such a consensus is reached, more often than not, this period is likely to be characterized by internal strifes and conflicts over clashing values and interests, over issues of exploitation, discrimination, and oppression. Hence, conflicts of scale taking place within a state need not be interpreted necessarily as destabilising, anti-national forces bent upon destroying the country. On the contrary, these should be considered as constituting very stuff out of which a nation-state will get galvanized.⁵⁶

Viewed thus, protest movements in India do not pose threat to the nation-state of India. Rather these movements contribute to the process of nation-building by helping to reach the consensus on which the 'nation-in-the - being' will be founded. However, this may be one side of the coin. Protest movements do indeed contribute but the negative aspect of the impact of these movements should not be lost sight of. Movements based on irrational grounds⁵⁷ of parochial vested interests with a veil of a broad rational goal only pull the state to fragmentations thus destroying the process of building the nation. The emergence of a number of protests and movements in India such as those of the Gorkhaland movement, Assam movement, Bodoland movement, movements for Khalistan and Kashmir has more negative impacts on the nation than their positive impacts. In other words, it may be said that some of the protests and movements in India have virtually weakened the nation of India thus weakening also the state.

Under the circumstances, in the face of numerous protest movements the government began to lose its command over the country. There was found the erosion in the legitimacy of the regime. This crisis of legitimacy and hence governability led the government, particularly during Indira Gandhi's tenure, to be more authoritarian and interventionist to counter those movement by the coercive power of the state. This was a clear departure from the earlier regimes where the accommodative norm was followed to meet the agitations and protests. But the interventionist and authoritarian policies and actions could not meet the grievances of the agitating and protesting groups. On the other hand, authoritarianism only fuelled to the fire of the grievances.

Given the volatile situation, we witness a new era in Indian political process - an era of political accords. In order to pacify the protesting groups in the name of protecting India's sovereignty and integrity a number of accords has been signed by the government with the protesting groups. Mention may be made of the Punjab Accord, 1985, Assam Accord, 1985, Bodo Accord 1993, Accord on Darjeeling, 1988, Mizo Accord 1986, Shilong Accord 1975, and Peace Accords in Tripura. Besides these there have been some agreements with the protesting groups and

concessions in the form of autonomy have been conceded. Various autonomous councils within the boundary of provinces are the examples of this sort.

- o In line with the Anandpur Sahib Resolution of 1977 the Memorandum of Settlement was signed by Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and Sant Harchand Singh Longowal, President, Shiromani Akali Dal on July 24, 1985 which is commonly known as Rajiv Longowal Accord. The Accord comprises eleven clauses with a number of sub-clauses. It intended to settle some long standing problems of Punjab along with settling some immediate problems that came with the assassination of Indira Gandhi and the subsequent riots and revolts. In the Accord, a number of concessions were granted including the territorial claims that Punjab had been having for long - the transfer of Chandigarh and other areas of Punjabi speaking people to Punjab.⁵⁸

The memorandum of settlement signed by the Union Government and the Government of Assam with All Assam Students Union (AASU) and All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad (AAGSP) which had spearheaded movement on the issue of foreign nationals in Assam, brought to an end the prolonged agitation. The settlement sought to resolve the foreigners issue by fixing a base year (1966), assured constitutional, legislative, and administrative safeguards for the protection, preservation and promotion of cultural, social, linguistic identity and heritage of the Assamese people.⁵⁹ The Bodo Accord was signed on February 20, 1993 after a long dialogue between the Government of India, the All Bodo Students Union (ABSU) and the Bodo Peoples' Action Committee (BPAC), and the State Government of Assam. As a result a scheme was finalised under which it was considered necessary to provide maximum autonomy within the framework of the Constitution of India to the Bodos for social, economic, educational, ethnic and cultural advancement. The scheme provided detailed provisions for the autonomy, powers and functions of the designated Bodo Autonomous Council.⁶⁰

The demands of the agitating Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF) having been considered by the Government of India and the Government of West Bengal

and consequent upon the tripartite meeting between Buta Singh, Union Home Minister, Jyoti Basu, Chief Minister of West Bengal and Subhas Ghising, President, GNLF at New Delhi on August 25, 1988, the agreement for the establishment of the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council was signed. The GNLF dropped the demand for a separate state of Gorkhaland and for the social, economic, educational and cultural advancement of the people residing in the hill areas of Darjeeling district came the autonomous hill council, the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill council by an Act of the Government of West Bengal. The council was allotted as many as nineteen subjects of basic nature to be dealt with.⁶¹

In order to satisfy the protesting and agitating people of Mizoram the process of negotiation and settlement started in 1971 with the twenty seventh Constitutional Amendment Act and reached its climax with the fifty third Amendment Act, 1986 via the Mizo Accord of 1986. With a view to satisfying the desires and aspirations of all sections of the people of Mizoram, the Government of India, in the memorandum of Settlement, 1986, considered it necessary to grant statehood to Mizoram and also conceded some special rights to be enjoyed by the people of Mizoram. All these were, however, conditional to the cooperation of the Mizo National Front to be acceded in the form of giving up arms and entering into the mainstream within the constitutional framework of India.

The process of negotiation with the agitating Nagas started as early as in 1947 with the Naga-Akbar Hydari Accord. Under the Accord, the right of the Nagas to develop themselves according to their freely expressed wishes was recognized. This was followed by the Sixteen Point Agreement of 1960 which sought to extend another set of concessions to the Nagas including the status of a full fledged statehood. The Thirteenth Amendment Act of the Constitution of India, 1962 inserted a special provision of Article 371A in the constitution guaranteeing some special privileges to the Nagas. Finally came the Shillong Accord of 1975 and the Supplementary Agreement to the Shillong Accord of January 1976 under which the underground Nagas agreed to accept the Constitution of India and in turn, their proper rehabilitation was assured.⁶³

The forty-ninth Amendment Act, 1984 and the Fiftieth Amendment Act, 1984 in the Constitution of India were adopted to satisfy the aspirations of the agitating people in Tripura. These Acts were followed by the ultimate Memorandum of Settlement, 1988. The Accord was the outcome of a changed position adopted by the Tripura National Volunteers (TNV) under the leadership of Bijay Kumar Hranugkhawl to abjure violence, give up secessionist demand and to hold negotiations for a peaceful solution of all the problems of Tripura within the Constitution of India. In exchange, the Government of India and the Government of Tripura declared some special privileges and concessions to the TNV including provisions for resettlement and rehabilitation of the TNV undergrounds.⁶⁴

Besides these peace accords some other agreements were also signed to pacify the agitating groups and concessions in the form of autonomy were extended. The Jharkhand Autonomous Area Council (JAAC) is the example of this type of concessions.

However, an analysis of these accords and agreements show that most of these accords had been signed under the initiative of Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi who lacked the quality of his mother Indira Gandhi to resort to authoritarian moves. Instead, he started the process of appeasement to the protesting groups. Thus, a review of these Accords show that these were more for gaining political mileage than to solve the problems of these areas. Again, it also shows that the Accords could not redress the deprivation and powerlessness of the agitating people. This implies that the agitations and protests did not cover the genuine deprivation and the resultant powerlessness of the common men for whom those agitations and protests were said to have launched. Similarly, these organized protests and the resultant accords have exposed the governability crisis of the system having its bearing on the entire political process thereby reflecting the message of a weak regime scared of its legitimacy thus resorting to the politics of appeasement.

It is also argued from some quarters that the constitutional scheme of federalism in India is one of the breeding grounds of deprivation of the regions thus leading to protests and movements for redressing the perceived deprivation. Viewed thus, the protest movements in India work as a contributory force to redefine the federal framework of India. But, in practice, one witnesses in India a number of movements that have been launched on sheer parochial grounds to satisfy some narrow vested interests. These movements, though under the shadow of perceived deprivation by the centre of the region or group, are in no way contributory to the Indian federal system and the process. The demand for a separate state of Kamtapur within the West Bengal on the grounds of separate culture, language and identity is a case in point. The fragmentation of the existing states to create new states as the protests intensify will open the flood gate and new protests for new states will get articulated, organized and intensified thereby posing question to the very federal identity of India. Thus, the regime requires to convey the message that the grievances of the protesting region or group may be redressed without creating new states. However, the present BJP led government could have avoided the decision to create the new states of 'Banarhal', 'Uttaranchal', 'Chhattisgarh' for the sake of the future of the Indian federal structure. The decision seems to be more politically motivated than pragmatically needbased.

Under the circumstances, however, the broad Indian political context is characterized by weakening political institutions and increasing power struggles. This results in the simultaneous tendencies in India toward increases in centralization and in powerlessness. Decision-making under successive governments continue to be highly centralised but that did little to enhance the governments ability to define and pursue clear policy goals. Personalization of power is closely connected with the issues of institutional weakness, which in turn necessitates a populist orientation in order to earn legitimacy and sustain popular support. Thus, the institutional weakness and the power struggles threaten the prospect for establishing legitimate and coherent authority.⁶⁵

Given all these, the following concluding observations may be drawn keeping in mind the broad research questions formulated for the purpose of exploration of the problem of the overall impact of the protest movements on the political process in India. In general, protest movements originate from the perceived deprivation, injustice, conditions of powerlessness or loss of identity of a section of the people. The broad general theory of Relative Deprivation concerning the social movements and also the Strain theory revolve around this assumption. If a protest movement is articulated and organized on these lines the movement becomes rational and justified. A protest movement of this type is certainly capable of expressing the legitimized conditions of powerlessness, injustice, deprivation of the different section of the people and hence, essentially remedial in nature. But often it is found that protest movements originate on relative deprivation, not of the section of the people, but of the leadership who, for some reason or the other has been out of the helms of power and wants to be around the power centre. Protest movements of this type are not capable of expressing the aspiration of the people in whose name the movements are launched. Rather, the movements under the garb of peoples' movements seek to redress the deprivation of the leadership - deprivation of his share in the power centre. In India too, not all the protest movements are of the first category. The protest movements launched by the Assam Gana Parishad and the All Assam Students Union, the Gorkhaland movement launched by the Gorkha National Liberation Front and the Kamtapur movement launched by the Kamtapur Peoples' Party are more of leader oriented in their objectives than people oriented. In all these movements even though the cause of peoples powerlessness, injustice and deprivation was highlighted, the real motive behind the movements have been the desire of the leaders to enjoy power who could not enjoy it through the accepted legitimate means. This becomes evident when one notices the compromise made by the Assam Chief Minister, Prafulla Kumar Mohanto, one of the important leaders of the Assam movement on issues of foreigners over which the entire Assam movement was founded. Logically, it follows that he wants to be around power and for power he can compromise the cause of the people that was showed to be the root cause of the movement. Similarly, whenever the legitimacy of the rule of GNLF chief,

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54. *Ibid.*, pp. 50-53.
55. Mukherjee, Partha N. : "Social Conflicts in India : Nation Building or Nation-Destroying ? An Agenda for Urgent Research", *Man and Development*, vol. XIV, No. 4, December 1992, pp. 21-32.
56. *Ibid.* pp. 27-28.
57. A number of movements and protests in India are organized by the frustrated leaders who want to be around power centres but fail to. Thus they exploit the primordial considerations to incite the otherwise passive common masses for a movement but effectively for their own narrow interests. This has been suggested by the present author as a separate theoretical framework in this study. Vide Chapter-1 of the present study.
58. Memorandum of settlement (Rajiv-Longowal Pact) 1985, quoted in Dutta, P.S. : *Ethnic Peace Accords in India*, New Delhi : Vikas Publishing House, 1995, pp. 190-93.
59. Quoted in Dutta, P.S. : *Ibid.* pp. 34-39.

60. Quoted in Dutta , P.S. : *Ibid.*, pp. 41-78.
61. Quoted in Dutta , P.S. : *Ibid.*, pp. 79-141.
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