

CHAPTER - III

PROTEST MOVEMENTS IN INDIA : HISTORICAL - ANALYTICAL SURVEY

The preceding chapter has shown the contradictions obtaining in the Indian society, economy, and polity that sufficiently suggest the causes for dissent and protest. However, it should be noted that the historical experiences of the protest of the Indian people against the repressive and discriminatory policies of earlier rulers give us a meaningful clue to the understanding of the protest movements in India. The mode, mechanism, and path of protest in India has been partly influenced by historical legacies and partly on account of the prevailing conditions in contemporary Indian society.

Although protest movements have been witnessed throughout India's history, those acquired a new significance during British rule which provided a different source of legitimacy to the protest movements.¹ Several new avenues for claiming higher status opened up, and there was greater scope for the channelling of new aspirations. Thus, the socio-religious revivalist movements of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century and the launching of the liberation movement against the colonial rule of the British not only influenced the social and political outlook of the people but significantly added new dimensions to the form and pattern of protest and dissent. The Brahma Samaj, founded in 1825, the Prarthana Samaj, founded in 1867, the Arya Samaj in 1875 and the Theosophical Society in 1875 were all reformist protest movements which influenced the Hindus and also contributed to the growth of Indian nationalism by raising the pride of educated India's past traditions. The Brahma Samaj organized welfare work for the depressed classes under the leadership of Keshab Chandra Sen. The influence of the Brahma Samaj spread to Madras where a theistic society was started in 1864 under the name of Veda Samaj which was later changed to Brahma Samaj of South India.² In Bombay, the Prarthana Samaj worked actively for the depressed classes under the leadership of M.G. Ranade, R. Bhandarkar, and N.G. Chandravarkar. The Arya Samaj started working with the

depressed classes mainly with a view to preventing conversion to christianity and regaining converts to Hinduism. It launched the 'Suddhi' movement in 1891 under the leadership of Lala Munshi Ram, aimed at reconverting to the Arya Samaj the Christian and Muslim converts who were mostly from the lower castes.³ It also gave the new recruits from the lower castes and the depressed classes the right to wear the sacred thread - the symbol of high caste status. It gathered momentum in Panjab, Kashmir, parts of U.P. and Bihar. The Theosophical Society, established in Madras under the leadership of Ms. Annie Besant and the Ramkrishna Mission under the leadership of Swami Vivekananda worked for the weaker sections, especially in the field of education. All these early reform protest movements were basically inward looking and sought to abolish customs and mores that seemed contrary to the liberal ideas of the French Revolution.⁴

Among the Indian Muslims, there arose similar movements. The Wahabi Movement laid emphasis on the virtues of Islam and the oneness of God. Sir Syed Ahmed Khan (1817-1898) and Syed Amir Ali (1849-1928) wanted the Indian Muslims to accept the Western culture and to reconstruct Indian society in accordance with it. The Ahmadiya Movement founded by Ghulam Ahmed (1839-1908) was a protest movement against christianity and westernization.

However, all these movements which reflected religious and sectarian basis had some unfortunate repercussions arising from the fact that while the Hindus went back to their religious and historical past to assert their self-confidence, the Muslims went back to early Islam and the past history of Arabia. Among many other factors, this also contributed widening of the gulf between the Hindus and Muslims, because the Hindu religious reform movements and the Muslim reform movements tried to rely on two separate sources of spiritual and intellectual sustenance.⁵

The liberation movement in India reflected three strands of political protest. The first phase of the liberation movement (1885-1905) was led by the moderates who are often referred to as the liberals and owed their allegiance to western political ideas. Consequently, they abjured the methods of violence, force, agitation and bloodshed for the redressal of grievances of the people of India. These moderate

leaders believed in the peaceful presentation of their grievances to the government and in requesting the latter to redress them. "Petition and prayers" were the usual tools which they employed.⁶

The second phase of the liberation movement (1905-1919) saw the emergence of the extremists who challenged the leadership and political ideas of the moderates. This political radicalism was the outcome of the activities and frustration of earlier phase of the nationalist movement. The increasing authoritarianism and repression of the British Government in India aroused political awakening among the people. Unlike the moderates, the political agitation of the extremists brought larger number of people to the political field and it incalculated the spirit of sacrifice for the cause of the nation. Among the extremists, there arose three different groups - the terrorists believed in the philosophy of organized conspiracies and planned murder of Britishers and their agents. Another group called revolutionaries did not approve the activities of the terrorists and they believed that only a mass uprising would drive the British out of India. They advocated the use of the strikes, 'hartals', guerrilla warfare to be carried on with arms from foreign countries. Finally, the militant nationalists, unlike the terrorists and the revolutionaries, devised a three fold programme for effective political action. it comprised boycott, swadeshi and national education. They also believed in "passive resistance" i.e., non-violent, civil disobedience, and non-cooperation with the government to achieve the goal of independence.⁷

The third phase of the nationalist movement (1919-1947) was guided and directed according to the genius and philosophy of Gandhian technique of protest. Under the inspiring leadership of Gandhi, several movements were launched to pinpoint the urgency and need for granting independence to India. The non-cooperation movement of 1920-21 was one of the landmarks of Gandhian era which saw the use of peaceful protest on the part of the Indian people on a massive scale. The Civil Disobedience movement of 1930-31, the individual disobedience of 1940 and the Quit India Movement of 1942-45 exhibited different variety of protest against the British colonial government.⁸

The historical legacy of protest movements of pre-independent India left a deep imprint on the minds of Indian people. Obviously, therefore, Indian masses use

those very modes of protest which had been used by the nationalist leaders for raising their grievances against the British. However, an understanding of the historical analytical aspects of protest movements in India needs to be viewed from the survey of separate type of protest movements that took place in post-independent India. Broadly, these types may be peasant protests, ethnic protests, students' protests, women protests, working class protests, and secular political protests. Though all the types of protests are invariably bound to be politically oriented, the secular political protests, are those which aim exclusively to affect the political process and the political system.

PEASANT PROTESTS :

India has predominantly been an agrarian country. About seventy per cent of its population still depends on agriculture for their livelihood. They are differentiated in terms of their relationship with the ownership of land, such as supervisory agriculturists, owner-cultivators, share croppers, tenants, and landless labourers. In common parlance, they are known as the 'Kisans' and 'Kisan' is often translated as 'peasant' in English. However, the term 'peasant' is ambiguous and used differently by different authors or variously by the same author in different studies. Eric Wolf emphasised in 1955 that ownership of land was critical criteria for defining 'peasants'⁹ In 1966, he defined peasants as those who are 'rural cultivators' whose surpluses were transferred to a dominant group rulers.¹⁰ In 1970, his emphasis was neither on, ownership nor exploited surpluses, and 'peasants' were defined as "populations that are existentially involved in cultivation and make autonomous decisions regarding the process of cultivation".¹¹ The category is thus made to cover tenants and share-croppers as well as owner - operators as long as they are in a position to make the relevant decisions on how their crops are grown. Besides this various use of the concept peasant by Wolf, it is, on the one hand, used for those agriculturists who are homogeneous, with small holdings operated mainly by family labour, and on the other hand, it includes all those who depend on land including landless labourers, as well as supervisory, agriculturists¹² Andre Beteille feels that the term 'peasantry' is misleading, in the Indian context.¹³ In the conventional meaning of 'peasant', the agricultural labourers, small and marginal farmers are not properly

taken into consideration. Irfan Habib argues that the history of agricultural labourers remains part of peasant history.¹⁴ Under the circumstances, the term 'peasantry' is preferred to be used for the analysis of agrarian relationship in the subcontinent.¹⁵

Regarding the peasant protests in India, Barrington Moore Jr. questions the revolutionary potential of the Indian peasantry.¹⁶ To him, peasant rebellions in pre-modern India were relatively rare and completely ineffective and where modernization impoverished the peasants at least as much as in China and over as long a period of time. The Indian peasant, to Moore, is traditionally docile and passive.¹⁷ In the similar vein, Eric Stokes also finds that peasant protests look strangely absent in Indian history. This situation is attributed to the peculiar Indian social structure, i.e., the caste system and the village structure.¹⁸

Moore's contention regarding the 'passive' and 'docile' character of Indian peasants and Stokes' obstructive nature of the Indian social structure have been challenged by Kathleen Gough, A.R. Desai, D.N. Dhanagare, Ranajit Guha and others. Gough argues that peasant revolts have been common during the last two centuries in every state of present day India. She disagrees with Stokes regarding the obstructive role of caste in peasant uprisings and observes that a number of movements were led by lower caste Hindus; therefore it is an oversimplification to say that the caste system has seriously impeded peasant rebellion in times of trouble.¹⁹ Desai observes that "the Indian rural scene during the entire British period and thereafter has been bristling with protests, revolts and even largescale militant struggles involving hundreds of villages and lasting for years."²⁰ Guha is of the opinion that agrarian disturbances of different forms and scale were endemic throughout the first three quarters of the British rule, i.e., until the very end of the nineteenth century. According to him, there were no fewer than 110 known instances of revolts during the 117 years though forms of resistance varied.²¹ Dhanagare also argues that Moore's conclusion is not deduced from any systematic theory and as such, needs reexamination in the light of a more extensive survey of various peasant resistance movements and revolts in India.²²

Available literature indicates that the peasant protests have been widespread in both the post and pre-independence periods. The intensity and nature of the protests vary, and certain areas appear to have a strong tradition of peasant movements. Kathleen Gough observes : Bengal has been a hotbed of revolt, both rural and urban, from the earliest days of the British rule. Some districts in particular, such as Mymensingh, Dinajpur, Rangpur, and Pabna in Bangladesh and the Santhal regions of Bihar and West Bengal, figured repeatedly in peasant struggles and continue to do so. The tribal areas of Andhra Pradesh, and the state of Kerala, also have long traditions of revolt. Hill regions where tribal or other minorities retain a certain independence, ethnic unity, and tactical manoeuvrability, and where the terrain is suited to guerilla warfare, are of course especially favourable for peasant struggles, but these have also occurred in densely populated plains regions such as Thanjavur, where rack-renting, land hunger, landless labour and unemployment cause great suffering.²³ According to Andra Betelle, the areas with a larger number of agrarian revolts are predominantly rice-producing regions. These regions not only have a large proportion of agricultural labourers but land is also unequally divided among those who cultivate, either as tenants or owners.²⁴

An analysis of the peasant protest in India shows that the organizational development of the peasant protests was slow and as such, the landlord groups were able to influence the state legislation on agrarian reforms. Thus, Winer has rightly observed that "the success with which the landlord-groups have influenced state legislation calls attention to the weakness of peasant movements in India."²⁵

There were many peasant agitations in the nineteenth century - the famous Santhal and indigo revolts in Bengal, and others in the Punjab and Maharashtra - But none of these survived in the form of organized groups. In the early twentieth century, Gandhi and his supporters organised the peasants of Champaran, Bihar against the exactions of indigo planters in 1917; and in Gujarat, Gandhi led the famous Kaira Satyagraha against the realization of land revenue in 1918. In 1928, the Bardoli Satyagraha against the enactment of land revenue was organized by Sardar Patel. In fact, throughout the 1920's Congressmen penetrated the countryside to win peasant support for "Swaraj" - freedom, defined by Gandhi, in the broadest sense,

freedom from deprivation as well as freedom from the British raj. At the Lucknow session of the Congress, an agrarian programme was adopted demanding removal of British imperialist exploitation, a thorough change of the land systems and a recognition by the State of its duty to provide work for the unemployed rural masses.

In the same year, a group of congressmen, some members of the communist section, some from the newly formed Congress Socialist Party, and some of Gandhian persuasion, formed the all India Kishan Congress. Many sections of the Congress Party criticised this attempt to form a peasant movement distinct from the Congress organization. Their uneasiness grew into antagonism in some states when the Kisan Congress became critical of the agrarian policies of the new Congress-controlled state governments. In 1937, the Kisan Congress dropped the word "Congress", renamed itself the All India Kishan Sabha, and adopted the Red Flag, then the symbol of all leftist groups in India.

In his presidential address before an All India Kishan Sabha national convention in 1939, Acharya Narendra Dev explained why a separate Kisan group was necessary, even though the Congress membership, was predominantly peasant and many of the peasants demands had been incorporated into the Congress agrarian programme of Faizpur and the Economic Rights Resolution of Karachi. Congress was, he argued, a multiclass organization within which the peasants were not fully able to exert their influence; many Congress resolutions could not be implemented because Zamindars controlled parts of the Congress organisation. Thus, a separate Kisan Organization could exert greater pressure on the Congress to adopt and carry out the demands of the peasants.²⁶

The new Kisan organization was a federation of state peasant movements the largest of which were in Bihar, Andhra, Panjab and United Provinces. In both Panjab and Bihar, the Kisan Sabha launched mass movements against the government - in Panjab, it opposed a new system of tax assessment; in Bihar, it pressed the government to abolish the Zamindari System, reduce rents, pass new tenancy legislation, place a moratorium on debts, and guarantee higher prices for crops.²⁷

However, during the Second World War itself, the Kisan Sabha virtually became the frontal organization of the Communist Party of India. With the achievement of independence, the Communist Party launched an insurrectionary movement to overthrow the newly independent government. As such, the Communist Party was banned in several states; so also the Kisan Sabha. The ban continued until 1950-51.

However, the Kisan Sabha, the leading leftist organization, believed that the interests of the agricultural labourers and the kisans were the same. This belief was reflected in the Telengana and Tebhaga movements launched by the Communist Party of India. In both these movements rich as well as poor peasants were mobilized to capture state power though one class was more active than the other.²⁸

In the Naxalite movement in West Bengal in 1968-1969, the participants ran from rich peasants to agricultural labourers.²⁹ Besides, the agrarian mobilization and protests organized by Charan Singh, the former Prime Minister of India, Mahendra Singh Tikayat and Ajit Singh's recently formed Bharatiya Kisan Kamgar Party in Northern India; Sharad Joshi in western India, and the left parties in eastern India are worth-mentioning. However, it should be noted that even though there has been debate over ticklish ideological issues³⁰ regarding the nature of the leadership pattern, the agrarian protests organized and launched by the left political parties had been significantly influential in the past, even to the extent of challenging the base of the socio-economic and political system (the Naxalbari Movement), and these protests are influential in contemporary India though their operations are limited to some pockets of the country. The peasant organizations of the left political parties, particularly those of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) and the Communist Party of India (Marxist Leninist) are significantly operating in West Bengal, Kerala, Tripura, Andhra Pradesh and Bihar.

ETHNIC PROTESTS :

India is a plural society with a large number of ethnic categories. This plural character of Indian society is also characterised by socio-economic inequality. Given this, it is obvious that Indian society will confront various types of protests on ethnic

lines and identities. The socio-economic inequality of the sections of the society led them search for separate identity and assert on these perceived separate identities. And this assertion on ethnic identities has culminated in the regional secessionist movements threatening the country's unity and integrity. Movements in the North East, the Jharkhand movement, the Gorkhaland movement, the Kamtapur movement and Khalistan movement are the cases of protests on ethnic considerations.

NORTH - EAST :

North-East India, as we find it today, is essentially creation of the British. Assam was known as Praghayotisha in ancient times. The Ahoms who came from Burma about the years 1226 established themselves firmly in upper Assam. By 1750 AD they conquered the whole of the Brahmaputra valley. However, the decline of the Ahom rule began with the Maomari rising in 1769. Later on, the Burmese invaded Assam. The British drove out the Burmese and concluded the Treaty of Yandavoo on February 24, 1826 by which the whole of Assam came under the British rule.

Cachar was an independent State. After the expulsion of the Burmese, the British annexed it to Assam, and in 1853 the whole of Cachar was transferred to the Dacca division and retransferred to Assam in 1874. The Jaintia territory was also annexed by the British and added to Assam. In 1822, the British annexed the Garo Hills. Arunachal Pradesh inhabited by the tribes, was completely isolated from the rest of the country. The British annexed it gradually and constituted it into North Eastern Frontier Agency. The British also occupied the Khasi, Jaintia and Naga hills gradually. Only Manipur and Tripura were princely states during the British rule.

Colonial rulers had experimented with different administrative arrangements in the North Eastern region. The basic objective was to create a permanent chasm between the different ethnic groups so that they could not offer organized resistance against the colonial rulers. In the process, the British also divided east of the tribes into splinters. Thus the Nagas were divided and dispersed into Assam, Manipur, and Burma; Mizos into Manipur, Burma. The Khasis, Garos and the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh met the same fate. In fine, their political objective was regime

maintenance and regime sustenance, the economic objective was to extract surplus in the interest of the colonial rulers. And they were successful in their primary mission.

After independence, the Constituent Assembly constituted a sub-committee under the chairmanship of G.N.Bardoloi to report on the North Eastern Frontier Areas of Assam and the tribal and excluded areas. The Bardoloi Committee recommended for the setting up of the administration of the hill areas based on the concept of regional autonomy in all matters affecting their customs, laws of inheritance etc. This pattern of administration took shape in the form of the Sixth Schedule. Under this Schedule six autonomous districts were created in Assam - United Khasi and Jaintia Hills, Garo Hills, Lushai Hills, Naga Hills, North Cachar Hills, and Mikir Hills. There was to be a District Council for each autonomous district.

The district councils which were set up to democratize the administration of the hill people failed to live upto the expectations. The state bureaucracy looked at them as subordinate organs of the state while the tribals looked upon them as symbols of supra tribal identity. In fact, the district councils which were subservient to Assam became source of growing distrust among the tribal people against the Assam administration. Some of the tribal people even demanded the creation of a hill state comprising the autonomous districts of Assam. In 1955 the Aizal Conference of the Khasi and Jaintia hills, Garo hills, Mikir hills and the Mizo hills resolved to demand a separate state. The matter was examined by the State Reorganization Commission in 1955 which rejected the demand. Then came the Pataskar Commission in 1965 recommending the appointment of a minister for the hill areas and the Ashok Mehta Committee which felt that the federal structure should not be the basis of reorganization of Assam. The hill leaders were unwilling to accept anything short of autonomous state. However, the Government of India had to accept the demand of an autonomous state within the state of Assam comprising the autonomous Khasi hills, Garo hills and the Jaintia hills. The relevant legislation had provided for an advisory council to be called North Eastern Council. The autonomous State of Meghalaya was inaugurated in 1970. The Mizo hills and NEFA were made union territory and Manipur and Tripoura became full fledged states in 1972. The Naga problem however could not be solved so easily as it had many dimensions and ramifications.

It is obvious that the colonial administrative system was adopted after independence with minor modifications without taking into consideration that the colonial administrative system was designed to create a chasm between the plains and the hillsmen with a view to carrying on uninterrupted colonial rule and exploitation. As a result of growing movements and pressures, autonomous states were created but no attempts were made to take care of the problems of the states. The creation of new states raised the hopes of the nationalities. But a highly centralized political system with a very powerful centre stood in the way of fulfilment of their dreams. Added to it was the capitalist model of development which generated unevenness in the development process.³¹ This model of development strengthened the sense of deprivation. And as a result of these, insurgency engulfed the entire North East leaving a direct threat to the unity and integrity of the country.

Thus, in the case of the Assam movement, though some scholars believe that the movement is for maintaining the basic ethnic character of the people of that province either by dispersal or disenfranchisement or by another boundary reorganisation, an indepth analysis of the movement shows that in the context of a stagnated economy, incessant flow of immigrants is viewed as a threat by the Assamese, squeezed as they were between the extra-regional bourgeoisie and immigrants.³² Again, regionalism in the North East is essentially a middle class phenomenon. It was led by the middle class people who suffer under a sense of economic deprivation, as in a highly competitive labour market they find middle class position already occupied by the migrants or their descendants. It makes them resentful against the migrant population. Thus, it is primarily a protectionist movement. The middle class people want protective privileges by imposing restrictions on the migrant population. At the same time, they demand reorganization of the distribution of state resources. It is essentially a grievance against the functioning of the state apparatus.

JHARKHAND :

In India, there has been a large number of tribal movements to protest against oppression and exploitation of their distinct culture, value, and way of life.

Among these, the movement of the tribals for a separate Jharkhand state has acquired the dubious distinction of being one of the oldest movements in the country. Since the formation of the Chhotanagpur Unnati Samaj in 1920 to the emergence of a so-called United Jharkhand Party in the early 90's, for the past seventy years the tribals of Chhotanagpur and Santhal Parganas have been struggling for separate statehood within the Indian Union. Today, the Jharkhand movement is divided into several groups and parties and has to struggle hard to maintain its distinct ideology and organizational identity. Such a state of affairs within the movement has often been blamed on the character of the tribal leadership, the divide and rule policy of the government, the weak pan tribal consciousness etc.

However, the present movement of the tribals of the South - Central part of the country for a separate state of Jharkhand is in very many ways a continuation and extension of their heroic tradition of struggle against the British imperialism and local feudalism. A series of tribal revolts and protests marked the Jharkhand history in the 18th and 19th centuries - revolt of Tilka Majhi (1780), the Kol revolt (1831), the Santhal hul (1855) and the Birsa revolt (1900), to mention only the very well known ones. It must be mentioned however that even prior to the advent of the British, the Zamindars and the petty rajas of the area tried hard but failed to subdue the tribals.³³ In fine, Jharkhand has remained a battlefield of uprisings, revolts and rebellions for more than 300 years against the zamindars, moneylenders, 'dikus' (outsiders), exploiters and the British.³⁴ Thus, prior to Independence, the tribal movements had two distinct features: i) mobilization of the masses against the appropriation of native resources such as forests and minerals, and ii) social and cultural upliftment of the advasis through various organizations such as Unnati Samaj (1912), Adivasi Mahasabha³⁵ (1938).

The progressive erosion of the tribal ways of life, values of communal and cooperative systems, the break up of the land systems and land alienation on the one hand and the imposition of the values and dominance of the non-tribals in collaboration with the British power, provoked the tribals into another series of protests. This resulted in the acceptance by the British of the distinct culture, life style and economic system, and administrative arrangements were accordingly made granting

the tribals a large measure of internal autonomy and protection through a series of measures such as Regulation XIII of 1833 applicable to Chhotanagpur and Act 27 of 1855 applicable to Santhal Parganas. Following independence, however, the substance of the tribal autonomy was more or less eroded, keeping only its shadowy forms through the schedules V and VI of the constitution.³⁶

The two main objectives set out for the Advasi Mahasabha, namely, i) statehood for the Jharkhand region, and ii) protection of the Advasis from the 'dikus'(aliens) could be realised by vocalizing them politically as envisaged by Jaipal Singh. These objectives were clearly indicative of the Jharkhandi sub-nationality. Jaipal Singh therefore, decided to form the Jharkhand Party in 1950 replacing the Adivasi Mahasabha. Concretisation of the Jharkhandi identity and consciousness has become evident more with the upstaging of the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM), Jharkhand coordination Committee (JCC) and All Jharkhand Students' Union (AJSU). Thus, today, Jharkhand is not merely a geographic region, it is a land of depressed people, it is a mass of destitutes. To Nirmal Sengupta, 'Jharkhand is developing; but not the Jharkhandis. Thus, the identity is not to be seen in terms of its conventional meaning, namely homogeneity of ethnicity, language, caste religion etc. In the Jharkhand region, now the language spoken by the oppressed and the exploited is the basis of their identity formation.'³⁷

On the question of the 'Sons of the Soil', one notices contradictions. Technically, those who have received education for one or two years or whose parents have served in the state could be considered as 'sons of the soil'. But those who are born and have lived for generations do not become 'Sons of the Soil' in the technical sense as they neither have the privilege of going to school or college nor their parents have been in employment of the government. Hence, they remain deprived of the privileged jobs and positions which in fact go to 40% of those people who have settled in the Jharkhand region - the fortunate north Biharis. Precisely due to this reason bifurcation of the Santhal Parganas district into three districts was opposed by the adivasis as it would benefit only the non-adivasis. Similarly, opening of new developmental programmes and projects was resisted fearing that its dividend would be harvested by the outsiders.³⁸

Thus, the tribal movement in Jharkhand as with all other tribal movements is a holistic movement in protest against the totality of non-tribals intrusion and dominance at all levels of life. The movement specifically was and is against non-tribal dominance which is becoming more and more articulate and aggressive. The great revolts of the past highlighted this protest in the areas of autonomy, protection of land, and of honour of their woman; but submerged within these is the persistent cry against the exploitative system into which they were increasingly being drawn. It is precisely this all embracing quality of tribal protest as well as non-tribal intrusion that has kept the movement alive and continues to evoke sympathetic chords in the hearts of the tribal masses even when the movement often fell into the hands of the degenerate leadership.³⁹ In other words, the Jharkhand movement was and continues to be a struggle to resist the imposition of the ideology and dominance of the non-tribal communities and the ruling structure created by them.

PANJAB :

The protest organised by the Sikhs in Panjab over the decades reflects the potential of ethnic and religious considerations for widespread mobilization. Paul Brass has rightly observed that the sikh political movement demonstrates that when an ethnic group turns to politics to achieve group demands, the political movement takes a life of its own to such an extent that political organizations may shape communal identities as well as be shaped by them.⁴⁰ The doctrine of Sikh nationhood, which figures so prominently in the Sikh agitational protests, implies a repudiation of Panjabi nationality based on territory, language and culture.

Whereas the present day assertion of the Sikh Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee (SGPC) and the Akali leaders that 'Sikhs are a nation and the consequent demand for a sect determined status for the sikhs naturally generates heat, apprehensions, and confusion, it seems worthwhile to take note of those political aspirations of the community which spring from a widespread sense of group identity. During the last one century the subjective consciousness of identity with objective marks of differentiation has been vigorously developed giving to the community a sense of distinctive heritage and destiny. Until 1880s "the Sikhs regarded themselves

and were regarded by everybody else as an integral part of the Hindus.⁴¹ The Sikh Sabha movement - that was started during that decade by a small section of Sikh landed gentry, theologians and the emerging urban middle class aimed at protecting the Sikhs from their absorption in Hinduism. Initial encouragement for that purpose came from the British historians of Sikhs, Cunningham and Macauliffe, as also from the British military authorities.⁴² Subsequently this communal identity took shape in the form of Chief Khalsa Dewan and the Akali Dal. The inauguration in 1920s of the Gurdwara Reform movement further contributed to the sharpening of this separate identity. Brass has observed that Sikh historians and politicians got engaged in symbol selection from the past, adapting those which would best support contemporary self-consciousness, rejecting those which would not.⁴³

But the religious cleavage in Panjab was "like the visible part of the iceberg, a mere facade" for social and economic cleavages. The basic cleavages were between the agriculturists and non-agriculturists, feudal landed interests and incipient capitalists, which further coincided with rural vs. urban, urban caste Hindus vs. rural dominant castes; and finally weak class conflict between the landlords and the tenants, but a stronger conflict between the peasants and finance capitalists.⁴⁴ Party alignments among the Sikhs proceeded to economic interests. Yet in the given environmental milieu communal identity retained a very powerful mobilisatory potential.

Before 1947, Sikhs were a minority in Panjab. In order to safeguard Sikh interests the Akalis thus submitted a memorandum to the Minorities Sub-committee of the Constituent Assembly demanding some statutory rights. These included : i) 50% seats in the Panjab Assembly for the Sikhs, ii) 5% seats in the central legislature; iii) communal representation of the Sikhs. The demands were rejected. Then the Akalis refashioned their demands as a cry for Panjabi Suba which was made a part of agitational politics.

After the death of Chief Minister Pratap Singh Kairon in a terrorist attack class alliances within Panjab politics started to change. This process of change was aggregated for two reasons : First, Green Revolution changed the agricultural scenerio

of rural Panjab, as a result of which a new class of rich peasants emerged with a more articulate political aims and a more aggressive class attitude. They had marketable agricultural surplus in their hands. But in spite of this economic development, unemployment among the youth of the comparatively low income peasant family grew mainly because of the fall of military recruitment. Secondly, religion continued to constitute an integral part of the Sikh-psyche. 'Raj Karega Khalsa' was a politico-religious chant, which Sikhs dutifully recite in their religious congregations. Thus, the efforts of the Akalis to mobilize the Sikh population under the slogan of a theocratic state gradually made an impact on the growing vested interests, and on unemployed little educated rural youth.⁴⁵ On the other hand, during this period, Jan Sangh and later the Bharatiya Janata Party became a potential contender of Congress Hindu Vote bank. Under the circumstances, Congress started playing the communal card. This was the background of the emergence of Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwala, as the leader of the most orthodox, backward looking, reactionary but economically prosperous section of the Sikh peasantry, who played with both the Congress and the Akalis with equal command the result of whose growing influence was the development of the demand of Khalistan.⁴⁶

GORKHALAND :

Ethnic movements in Darjeeling, the centre of Gorkhaland Movement, have a long history. But the history is not of a unilineal progress of these movements primarily because the people of Darjeeling were experiencing with this or that demand, this or that strategy. What is most notable of their long history is that they were absolutely non-violent until mid 1986.⁴⁷

In 1907, the first ever demand for "Separate administrative set up" for the district of Darjeeling was placed before the Government by the leaders of the Hill people (Lepchas, Bhutias and Nepalis) The demand is thought of arisen due to the widespread idea of reforms and the anti-partition wave in Bengal. However, some other factors may be attributed to the root of the demand such as the Bengali hegemony and the reluctance on the part of the British to concede to the demand for their strategic interests.⁴⁸ On November 8, 1917, the representatives of the Darjeeling

District submitted a memorandum to the Chief Secretary, Government of Bengal, demanding 'creation of a separate unit' comprising of Darjeeling district and the Dooars areas of Jalpaiguri district. They also suggested to the Government to consider the creation of a "North-Eastern Frontier Province (NEFP)" consisting of the district of Darjeeling, Dooars, Assam, and Arunachal Pradesh. The demand for the separate unit was reiterated in their memorandum to the Simon Commission in 1929, which, however, did not materialise. The Hill Men's Association (born sometime after 1917 but before 1919) in collaboration with other local associations submitted a memorandum in 1930 to Sir Samuel Hoare demanding exclusion from Bengal, reiterating for an "independent administrative unit". The Darjeeling District Committee of the CPI through a memorandum to Jawaharlal Nehru in 1947 demanded Gorkhastan for the Gorkhas which would comprise the present Nepal and Darjeeling district to form an independent nation. But in 1954 the CPI leaders revised their stand and spoke in terms of regional autonomy for the Darjeeling hills, which was jointly approved by the Congress, the CPI, and the All India Gorkha League (AIGL) leaders and was placed before Nehru on his visit to Darjeeling.

Besides, the Nepali Bhasha movement had its impact on the Gorkhaland movement. The Nepali Bhasha Movement can be categorised into three tentative phases. The first phase beginning in the early 20s was characterized by the demand for introduction of "Nepali" as a medium of instruction. The second phase beginning in 1953 clamoured for recognition of "Nepali" as an official language in Darjeeling. The demand for its inclusion in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution was also raised in this phase but it remained dormant. The third phase began in 1972 and was wholly concerned with the demand for its constitutional recognition.

More systematic demand for separate statehood for the district of Darjeeling and the adjoining Dooars areas of Jalpaiguri appeared after the appearance of the Pranta Parishad in April, 1980 and the Gorkha National Liberation Front in July, 1980. The Swatantra Manch, which was established in May, 1985 also strongly supported this demand. Each of these three organizations had other demands too but carving out a state from West Bengal was by all means the most important of them.

The movement was peaceful and democratic in nature for many years. The AIGL leaders joined hands with the Congress, the CPI and CPI(M) at different points of time with the hope that this would help them achieve their goal. Even the GNLF followed the same path until such a situation developed from ever increasing dissatisfaction and frustration that Subhas Ghising appeared on the scene, adopted the strategy of violence - deviating from the line drawn by his predecessors. That Ghising could gain something which his predecessors could not was due to different strategy that he used.⁴⁹

KAMTAPUR :

The Northern part of West Bengal, particularly the districts of Coochbehar and Jalpaiguri, is witnessing a movement since the 1980s though not in an organized and mobilised way. The objectives of this movement range from mere assertion of cultural identity based on language and heritage to a separate state 'Kamtapur'. The root of this movement may be traced to the movement launched by Thakur Panchanan, the ideological - spiritual saint of the Rajbangshis of this region. His basic objective was to bring up the Rajbangshis who were considered to be in the lower strata of the Hindu caste hierarchy by institutionalising the use of sacred thread for them. Later, for retaining their separate cultural identity mainly through the 'Kamtapuri' language - the colloquial language of the Rajbangshis in the region - came the All Kamtapur Students Union (AKSU). The operation of the AKSU is, however, limited to specific pockets and among the younger generation of the folk. The Kamtapur Peoples Party which emerged in late 1980s is somewhat radical and organizing the people for a separate state of Kamtapur, comprising the districts of Coochbehar, Jalpaiguri, Uttar Dinajpur, Dakshin Dinajpur and parts of Malda. As such, they are gaining some strength in some pockets of the districts.

CASTES :

One of the important features of backward caste movements in India is the opposition, conflict and protest that marks the relationship of the lower castes with the upper castes. The backward caste generally occupy a lower status position in

society, characterised by social and ritual disadvantages, discriminations and disabilities of several kinds, and of different degrees which go under the general term of relative deprivation.

However, all the backward castes do not enjoy a uniform socio-economic status. In his study on caste movements, M.S.A. Rao divides non-upper castes into three categories. The upper most category of the backward castes consists mostly of landowners. There are several such castes in different parts of the country, such as the Jat, the Ahir, the Gujjar in Panjab, the Maratha in Maharashtra, the Vellata in Tamil nadu, the Kamma, the Kapu and the Reddi in Andhra Pradesh, the Vokkaliga and the Bant and Lingayats in Karnataka. Ranking below them are tenant cultivators, artisans and other service castes. They include the Ahir and kahar in Bihar, the Koli in Gujrat and the Vaddar in South India. They are considered caste Hindus, above the pollution line. At the bottom are the untouchable castes who are designated scheduled castes under the constitution of India.⁵⁰

Backward caste movements in India may be classified into four broad types on the basis of structural cleavages and manifest conflicts.⁵¹ The first type is that of the movements led by upper non-Brahman castes such as the Vellata, the Reddi, and the Kammah of Tamil Nadu, the Vokkaliga and the Lingayat in Karnataka, and the Maratha of Maharashtra. Ramaswamy Naikar of Tamil Nadu launched the 'Self-Respect' movement in Madras in the late 1920s to perform marriage ceremonies without Brahmin priests. The non-Brahmin movements in Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu raised cultural issues. The leaders of non-Brahmin movements attacked caste and condemned it as a tool of Brahmin oppression.⁵² The second type of the backward caste movement hinges on the cleavages within the non-Brahmin castes, mainly led by the intermediate and low castes such as the Ahir and the Kurmi in Bihar the Nania in Panjab, the Koli in Gujarat, and the Mali in Maharashtra. The movement by the depressed classes or untouchables against and other backward castes are the third type of backward caste movements. The fourth type is that of the tribal movements.

The non-Brahmin movement in Maharashtra included both an elite based conservative trend and more genuine mass-based radicalism. It attained conservative goals but radical goals have not been attained. "The Maharashtrian Brahman intelligentsia", observes Gail Omvedt "though still dominant in educational and cultural institutions, has been swept from political power by a rich peasant non-brahman elite, with strong roots in villages and with an institutional basis in rural cooperatives and educational societies."⁵³ Rudolph and Rudolph consider the backward castes of Northern, Western, and upper Southern States "bullock Capitalists". The mobilisation of bullock capitalists in the 60s and 70s as an economic class has been reinforced by the simultaneous mobilization as a status order of the other backward classes, a euphemism for castes who by their own and states' reckoning are socially "depressed" or "backward". This layering of status and class interest enhances the political significance of both.⁵⁴

As a first step to fulfill their aspiration to rise in the caste hierarchy and resist oppression, the backward castes followed the path of Sanskritization, adopting the rituals and the life style of the upper castes. They invented legends about their ancestors and as such, demanded higher social status. However, the backward castes rarely resorted to large scale direct action for asserting their demands till very recently as is found in Bihar where the backward castes under the umbrella of Marxist - Leninist - Maoist extremism often resort to violence and direct action against the 'Ranabir Sena', an upper caste private army, constituted by the upper castes to counter and oppress the backward castes. Thus, many of them undertook social reform which generally did not involve confrontation with the higher castes, though in few cases, social reform did lead to clashes with the higher castes. They asserted their demands for higher social status by submitting memoranda and petitions to the Census Commissioners. The non-Brahmins of South India formed a political party to capture political power as did B.R.Ambedkar in Maharashtra. The Bahujan Samaj Party of Kansiram is also an example of this sort of assertion. Many others took part in election campaigns on a massive scale in order to get candidates of their castes elected. In this sense, their mobilization has rarely led to struggle.

WOMEN'S MOVEMENTS :

Women's resistance to male domination is the product of Western education. British Women took the initiative in forming organizations and defining their objectives. However, few scholars and activists have begun to raise issues relevant to the Indian context. Liddle and Joshi feel that the nature of male dominance is different in India from that in Western Society, therefore the demands and resistance of women against males are also different.⁵⁵ They argue, ideologically, cultural imperialism has introduced the notion of female inferiority which had no part in Indian culture, where female power and its containment was stressed. Although females were segregated in the upper castes into the domestic sphere, this separation did not imply an inferior evaluation of the domestic, since that area was crucial to the maintenance of caste purity.⁵⁶

However, Women's movements are generally classified into two types : a) Women's equality movements; and b) Women's liberation movements.⁵⁷ The former may not directly challenge the existing economic or political or family structure, but rather aim at attaining an equal place for women in it, and at abolishing the most open remnants of feudal patriarchy, whereas the women's liberation movements directly challenge the sexual division of labour itself. Jana Everett classifies Women's movements on the basis of two different ideologies of feminism. They are 'Corporate Feminism' claiming a larger role in politics for women on the ground that they have a special contribution to make as women, and 'Liberal Feminism' claiming that the rights of men should be extended to women on the grounds that women are equal to men and thus should have the same rights.⁵⁸

It is believed that women's movements began in India as a part of the social reform movement in the 19th century. Social reformers like Rammohan Roy, Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar, Mahadev Govind Ranade, Behramji Malbari, raised their voices against the prevailing religious and social customs subjugating women. Their influence encouraged the British government to enact certain laws against the Sati system, permitting women to remarry, abolishing the custom of child marriage etc.

Efforts were also made to spread education among girls. Mahatma Gandhi made efforts to bring women out of their kitchens. However, the role of Gandhi in raising the Status of women has been interpreted differently by scholars. Vina Majumdar⁵⁹ and Devaki Jain⁶⁰ see Gandhi as a great liberator who adopted a revolutionary approach in raising the status of women while Madhu Kishwar,⁶¹ Kalpana Shah⁶² and Sujata patel⁶³ are the critics.

Women's organizations such as the Women's Indian Association and the All India Women's Conference (AIWC) came into existence in the 1920s to spread education among women. However, Kalpana Shah argues that the role of the AIWC in the struggle for the liberation of women is negative. In fact, through its programmes the Conference strengthened the traditional role of a woman as a wife, housekeeper and mother. Such women organizations have become instruments in spreading an ideology which assigns inferior role to women. They strengthen revivalist values which are oppressive to women.⁶⁴ Jana Everett identifies five factors which have shaped such reformist Indian Women's movements. These are : i) the hierarchical caste system; ii) the Hindu religion; iii) the joint family system; iv) Islamic rule; and v) British colonialism.⁶⁵ Besides, the 'Purdah' System kept women secluded from men and discouraged them from public participation. It, therefore, gave women a certain sense of solidarity. This ideological implication of purdah "would tend to shape the goals of early women's movement leaders toward corporate ideals (improving women's performance of traditional female roles) and away from liberal ideals (achieving identical rights for men and women)."⁶⁶

Histories of various movements, such as, the freedom movement, the peasant movement, the tribal movement, the student movement, discuss the role and the participation of women in these struggles. But most of the studies do not examine the women's role in the movements specifically. It is the assumption that these movements are led and dominated by males and in which women have either no role or an insignificant one. This is a blatant misrecognition of the role of women in these movements. Govind Kelkar argues that "Women have had a distinctive active role in the area of social and political movement that has not been fully described and explained."⁶⁷

However, such conclusions are arrived at on the basis of stray instances rather than being based on adequate evidence. Kelkar herself observes that women were mobilised in the freedom movement because they were suited to carry out the non-violent struggle. She asserts that women's role in the freedom movement was that of the "helpers" rather than that of comrades.⁶⁸ Rajani Alexander observes that "Women's participation in the Independence movement took diverse forms and was not always organized and orchestrated political protests....."⁶⁹

Some scholars⁷⁰ show that women were an integral part of the various tribal movements in the 19th century in Bihar and Maharashtra. They used weapons skilfully. Some of them were arrested, beaten, molested and imprisoned by the police. Manoshi Mitra observes that all the contemporary accounts help to demonstrate the role played by women in the struggle, both in militant attacks and confrontations with the authorities when they were not behind others in wielding the traditional weapons with skill and courage, as well as in maintaining lines of supplies to the rebels in their hidden fortresses.⁷¹ Women also participated actively in large numbers in the Telengana, Tebhaga, Naxalite land grab and such other movements. Sunil Sen focusses his study on women's active participation in various peasant movements from the twenties to the seventies in West Bengal.⁷² Peter Custers focusses his study on women's role in the Tebhaga movement and shows how the women from the labouring and poor peasant classes provided effective leadership.⁷³ Shetkari Sangathana had also mobilized women in farmers agitations.⁷⁴ Similarly, women also played a leading militant role in the Chipko movement resisting the forest contractors' cutting of trees.⁷⁴ In fact, women never had any contact with government officials or other outsiders and had no model of interaction with them. They only understood that felling of trees is harmful for their well being and they simply acted according to their convictions.⁷⁵ In the course of the Bodha Gaya struggle of the tenants and labourers against absentee landlords, women asserted their rights on the land. They insisted that land should be given in women's names and in some villages they succeeded in realizing their demands.⁷⁶

Women in India also played significant role and participated in the communist led movement and they are still an organized force to be reckoned with. In Kerala,

women participated on a large scale in the 1938 strikes and formed the base of a crucial communication network.⁷⁷ Later on, the women workers launched struggles on issues such as maternity benefit and retrenchment of women workers and participated in the armed struggle led by the Communist Party in the late 1940s.⁷⁸ Thus, the role of the Kisan Sabha and the Communist Party in mobilizing women in various peasant struggles is worth mentioning. Renu Chakravarty, a communist leader who herself participated in several struggles highlights the role played by the communists in mobilizing women in various movements. According to her, the communist women identified with the toiling masses of women and gave a new turn and outlook to entire women's movement.⁷⁹ However, other scholars, though accepting that the Communist Party did play an important role in women's mobilization, are critical in that it did not play the role that was expected of it. Indra Munshi Saldanha argues that "women were not involved by the Kisan Sabha in the struggle in the same way or to the same extent as their male counterparts even in the most intensive phase of the struggle. The militancy, commitment and ingenuity of women, of which there was ample proof, were neither fully absorbed nor developed, and women were, by and large, assigned a mere "supportive role".⁸⁰ Taking Kerala as the reference state, Kannan observes, "In varying degrees, the absence of any real participation by women at all levels of leadership has continued to this day. While their "help" was actively sought and secured during the early stages of mobilization and organization, they were not incorporated into the important levels of leadership and decision-making."⁸¹

Women's organizations also raise issues affecting them as women. They fight around issues such as atrocities against women in the form of rape, sati, alcoholism and wife-beating, harrassment on the streets and public transports, dowry harrassment, murder, violence in the family, common civil rode, problems of working women, trafficking on women, oppression and exploitation of women belonging to 'dalit' and minority communities, problems of women in slums, communalism, obscene posters, problems of maid servants, the system of temple prostitution, superstition and witchcraft, deforestation etc. The Mahila Samity in West Bengal - the frontal organization of the CPI(M) , - is doing significantly influential work in organizing and mobilizing women along the common issues confronted by the women.

POLITICAL PROTESTS :

In the mid 1970s, there was an unprecedented turmoil in the history of post-Independence India. The deepening economic crises combined with weakening legitimacy of political institutions produced a situation in which disturbances, and even sporadic rioting, in several parts of the country became not uncommon. This had its culmination in Gujarat and Bihar. The Gujarat agitation of January-March 1974 ended in the dissolution of the State Assembly - the specific goal of the agitation. In Bihar, the agitation began in March 1974 and spilled over to 1975. Unlike the Gujarat agitation, Bihar agitation had an organization, with a central guiding authority of Bihar Chhatra Sangharsh Samity, planned programmes, a cadre and the leadership of Jayaprakash Narayan. These two agitations had far reaching consequences for Indian politics. They had raised certain basic questions regarding the political system and the type of future Indian society.

The protest movement and the consequent political upheaval that shook Gujarat for full two months in 1974 was an unprecedented phenomenon in the history of India after Independence. The intensity of the movement was so widespread that no town in the state remained untouched by the upsurge and tensions even prevailed in some parts of the countryside. Spiralling prices and scarcity of essential commodities and inadequacy of basic amenities in urban areas provided the breeding ground for the unprecedented upsurge in Gujarat. Discontent against the government was deep and widespread. This had its roots in the developments in early seventies. Since the beginning of the seventies, hopes among the urban and rural poor in Gujarat had been aroused. On the other hand, big businessmen and rich peasants became alarmed by the 'Garibi Hatao' slogan of the Congress. They organized themselves and pressurized the government to look after their interests.⁸² The party in power, dominated by the rich, succumbed to their pressures, both at the policy and implementation levels. Artificial scarcity, black-marketing and rising prices were the results. Given this state of affairs, people in general, and the middle class in particular, had increasingly felt that they were powerless and were being alienated from the political system.

Under the circumstances, students, one of the more organized sections of the middle class, spearheaded the agitation. In Ahmedabad, it had begun with the formation of the Yuvak Lagni Samiti, which was later transformed into the Navanirman Yuvak Samiti (NYS). As the agitation gained momentum particularly after Chiman Bhai Patel's resignation as the Chief Minister, such Samitis proliferated throughout the state. Several other organizations such as the Gujarat Students Circle in Ahmedabad, Study and Struggle Alliance in Boroda, Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad, and Tarun Shanti Sena of Sarvodaya Mandal also took an active part in the agitation. However, each Samiti and organization was independent of the city level NYS or Yuvak Sangram Samiti, and there was no coordination among them.

Observation of the Gujarat agitation shows that the agitation began on the issues of price rise and scarcity, but succeeded under the shrewd guidance of organized interest groups and parties in ousting Chiman Patel and dissolving the State Assembly. However, it also shows that though the Students had a sense of purpose and direction, they lacked organization and cadre. They were also confused about their immediate and future programmes. Under the influence of the radical leaders, the Navniram and other Samities tried in the beginning to link up their problems with those of the larger society. But because of their ad hoc approach, lack of organization and direction they merely became the instruments of organized groups; they lost track of their own objectives. Thus, the Student agitation in Gujarat suggests that "Students can overthrow a government and yet be unable to become an independent force for political change."⁸³

The Bihar movement began after March 18, 1974, but it was only a culmination of certain developments in different parts of rural and urban Bihar. Agrarian tensions had been mounting since the late sixties. In the year 1970, there were 649 agrarian agitations, seven times more than in the previous year.⁸⁴ The Naxalites and other Left political parties were mobilizing poor peasants and landless labourers against the landlords; and clashes between them were frequent. In the towns, teachers, government employees, and other sections of the vocal urban middle class raised their voice against sky-touched prices and increasing hardships. The imposition of professional tax in 1973 added fuel to the fire. The opposition parties and trade

unions formed an organization known as 'Bihar Rajya Mahgai Abhab Peshakar Virodhi Mazdur wa Karmachari Sangharsh Samity (the Bihar State Struggle Committee of labourers and Employees to oppose price rise and professional tax) to launch a struggle under the dominant influence of the CPI and other Left parties. Simultaneously student agitation relating to amenities on campuses, reduction in fees, concession in Cinema tickets etc. erupted in Patna and other towns. Meanwhile, the leaders of the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) of Bihar were planning to launch a state-wide agitation that would exclude the communists. For the purpose, they considered Jayaprakash Narayan to be best suited to guide the non-communist agitation. He took the opportunity and appealed to the students to give their studies for a year to "save democracy." During the period, the leftist students formed the Bihar Chhatra Naujawan Sangharsh Morcha (BCNSM). On March 16, the BCNSM organized processions at Patna, Muzaffarpur, Begusarai, Sahebganj, Motihari and many other places to protest against price rise. Besides other demands, they asked for the closure of universities and colleges for one year, implementation of land reform measures and state take over of the universities. The student leaders felt that there was no way out for them to organize a 'militant struggle' for the removal of the "present anti-people government."⁸⁵ On March 18, several hundred students assembled near Raj Bhavan and the State Assembly to prevent the Governor from attending the Assembly. A direct confrontation between the police and students took place near the Assembly. The disturbances on 18th March set the ball of agitation rolling. To maintain the tempo of the agitation, the Bihar Chhatra Sangharsh Samiti (BCSS) gave a call for Bihar Bandh on March 23. Political demands i.e., the resignation of Abdul Gofoor as Chief Minister and the dissolution of the State Assembly came to be raised on the same day.

The movement continued on the lines of Gujarat agitation. Different sections of the urban middle class joined the agitation. In April, J.P.Narayan assumed the leadership of the movement. The leaders of the movement claimed that it was a revolutionary movement aimed at bringing about total revolution in the society. After June 5, 1975, Jayaprakash Narayan himself announced "total revolution" as the ultimate objective of the movement, an "all round Revolution".⁸⁶ It was declared that "the crux of the matter is that the movement is basically one against the existing system."⁸⁷

However, like the Gujarat agitation the Bihar movement had its limitations in terms of ideology, leadership, participation and the like. The ideology which guided the Bihar movement was the Sarvodaya ideology. But the ideology has produced the results exactly the opposite of those expected by the Sarvodayaists themselves and it is primarily because of the deficiencies of the ideology itself.⁸⁸ Moreover, most of the constituent partners of the Bihar movement did not share the ideology of the Sarvodaya. Rather they were primarily interested in dethroning the Congress government and seizing political power for themselves. The movement had side-tracked economic issues and despite all denials, the dissolution of the State Assembly had become an end in itself. It is argued that "the beginning and end of every revolution is characteristically political, in the sense that it begins with a political crisis and ends with political settlement."⁸⁹ This is true. But the question is : what kind of political settlement and in whose favour ? It appears that the political settlement that the Bihar movement leading to was the settlement for status quo in favour of the haves.⁹⁰ Thus, the Bihar movement was a protest movement, protesting against the failure of the Congress rule in delivering the goods to the society.

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