

SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IN INDIA

A Review of Literature

Ghanshyam Shah

Praise for the First Edition

Prof. Shah deserves to be richly congratulated for his painstaking intellectual effort in giving us this invaluable reference tool. — Deccan Herald

... represents a feat of excellence in the realm of research. — Indian Historical Review

... an excellent contribution to an important area which demands greater attention by scholars and researchers. — Social Action

...an important contribution to the understanding of social movements in India. —Choice: Journal of the American Library Association

Social movements primarily take the form of non-institutionalised collective political action which strive for political and /or social change. While India has witnessed many such movements over the centuries, it is only recently that scholars have begun to study them in depth.

This thoroughly revised and updated version of a seminal book divides studies on social movements in India into nine categories based on the participants and issues involved: peasants, tribals, dalits, backward castes, women, students, middle class, working class, and human rights and environmental groups. Each of the nine chapters is divided according to the major components of most social movements: issues, ideology, organisation and leadership.

Based on these divisions, Professor Shah critically examines and reviews the literature concerning social movements in India from 1857 to the present. In the process he discusses the theoretical issues raised by various scholars while analysing major trends in different movements. In conclusion, he suggests areas for future research.

Proposing a logical classification of social movements in modern India, this book will be widely welcomed by social activists as well as by political scientists, historians and sociologists. It will also be invaluable as a text in courses on social movements.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ADMK	Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam
AEP	Adivasi Ekta Parishad
AFDR	All India Trade Union Congress
AFDR	Association for Democratic Rights
AITUC	All India Trade Union Congress
AIWC	All India Women's Conference
APCLC	Andhra Pradesh Civil Liberties Committee
BJP	Bharatiya Janata Party
BKU	Bharatiya Kisan Union
CITU	Centre of Indian Trade Unions
CMSS	Chhattisgarh Mines Shramik Sangh
CPDR	Committee for the Protection of Democratic Rights
CPI(M)	Communist Party of India (Marxist)
CSE	Centre for Science and Environment
CSV	Chhatra Sangharsh Vahini
DMK	Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam
HMS	Hind Mazdur Sabha
ICLU	Indian Civil Liberties Union
ICSSR	Indian Council of Social Science Research
ILP	Independent Labour Party
INC	Indian National Congress
INTUC	Indian National Trade Union Congress
KPSM	Kerala People's Science Movement
KSSP	Kerala Shastra Sahitya Parishad

MISA	Maintenance of Internal Security Act
MKSS	Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan
NBA	Narmada Bachao Andolan
NGO	Non-government Organisation
NHRC	National Human Rights Commission
OBC	Other Backward Castes
POTA	Prevention of Terrorism Act
POW	Progressive Organisation of Women (in Hyderabad)
PUCL	People's Union for Civil Liberties
PUDR	People's Union for Democratic Rights
PWG	People's War Group
RCDA	Rural Community Development Association {Tamil Nadu}
SC	Scheduled Caste
SCF	Scheduled Castes Federation
SEWA	Self-employed Women's Association
SNDP	Yogam Association for the Maintenance of Dharma founded by Shri Narayana
ST	Scheduled Tribe
TADA	Terrorist and Anti-Disruptive Activities Prevention Act
TISCO	Tata Iron and Steel Company
UGC	University Grants Commission
UNO	United Nations Organisation
UP	Uttar Pradesh

PREFACE TO THE SECOND AND ENLARGED EDITION

I am happy that the book received a wide response from teachers, students and researchers from different disciplines. More than two years back Mr Tejeshwar Singh suggested a new edition which I agreed to revise and update. While working on the revision I frequently felt like rewriting the whole book as my own theoretical framework on social movements and social transformation has undergone a change since 1990, but then it would have resulted in a new book which in the given time and with my other commitments was not possible. However, I have completely rewritten the chapter on women's movements and added a new chapter on human rights and environmental movements. I hope the readers will find them useful.

The Fellowship at NIAS (Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanities and Social Sciences), Wassenaar, the Netherlands provided conducive environment and facilities which enabled me to complete the revision. I thank the institute and its librarian

Harriet de Man for support. I also thank Jaya Dalai for meticulous and thoughtful copy editing.

But for the gentle perseverance and frequent reminders of Tejeshwar Singh I would have not completed this work. I thank Uma Chakravarti, Mary John, K.R. Nayar, Virginius Xaxa, Sharit K. Bhowmik and Shitharamam Kakarala for their help with different chapters of the book. Kalpana as usual not only patiently suffered my moods but also shared my thoughts as I read various studies and revised this text.

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

This monograph aims to review the literature on social movements in India. The Advisory Committee of the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) for the second round of the Research Survey-in Political Science assigned the task to me. The purpose of this exercise is to gauge broad trends—coverage of the subject in terms of social groups, geographical areas and periods, theoretical debates, approaches, major findings, etc.—and to point out the gaps so that the ICSSR can decide the priorities in funding research. Such a review may also be useful to scholars for planning their studies and avoiding duplication.

‘Social movements’ are not the concern of political science only. In fact, for a variety of reasons, political science has by and large ignored this subject. One who is interested in understanding the nature of the state, political power, and conflict in society cannot but help studying social structure, social processes, culture, economic structure, and the inter-relationships between them all. Some of the social movements in post-independence India have their antecedents in the colonial period, and they cannot be delinked from movements that took place in the last century or early in the twentieth century. Historical studies enrich our understanding of the present. Hence, a study on ‘social movements’ cannot be confined by the boundaries of separate academic disciplines. It should have not so much more of an ‘inter-disciplinary’ approach as understood by academia, as it should be ‘non-disciplinary’ to avoid the burden of one or another discipline. Though I have not been able to overcome my concern with political science in reviewing the literature, I have not confined myself to studies by political scientists only.

When I began this study, I was faced with two questions. Should I confine the study to merely the contemporary movements of the post-independence period? Should I cover only ‘mass’ movements, irrespective of social strata or classes involved therein? First, in order to come to a meaningful understanding of the present, one has to understand the past, but because of the constraints of time and resources, one has to draw a cut-off line. I have decided to cover the studies dealing with ‘social movements’ since the establishment of the British Raj. Again, because of the above-mentioned constraints, I have not adequately dealt with socio-religious and freedom movements. My excuse would be that socio-religious movements only marginally affect state power at a given point of time. In the case of the freedom movement, the studies are many and it is difficult for one scholar to cover them all. Also, many of the studies on the freedom movement have dealt with the decision-making and the action of the elite rather than of the masses. Second, I believe that most of the social movements are largely, though not always, confined to one or another class or social stratum. Many of the studies are class/strata-specific like those on peasant, women’s and dalit movements. I therefore

decided to categorise them as they are found in literature rather than clubbing them together or making thematic rearrangements. Thematic arrangements are not only complex but also problematic when one actually looks into the studies. That would have led one to ignore several studies which are otherwise interesting and informative.

I have covered a larger canvas than was expected by the committee. This is partly because I hoped, when I started the work, to comprehend the overall pattern of various types of movements and the lessons that activists and 'committed' scholars interested in social transformation can draw for understanding various social groups and classes, their militancy, their actions, the potentialities and limitations of their movements at different points of time. I am still struggling to fully comprehend the complexities of reality; therefore I have resisted the temptation to discuss this aspect in the concluding chapter. I do not feel confident enough to arrive at generalisations on social movements. More debate with myself and with others is needed. The present exercise may provide the background,

But for this assignment, I would not have read so many studies on social movements in India. I am grateful to the ICSSR for giving me this opportunity and bearing with me for the inordinate delay in completing the study and giving permission for its publication. The Centre for Asian Studies (CASA) at the University of Amsterdam provided a congenial environment and necessary facilities during my stay there as Visiting Fellow in July-August 1988 which enabled me to revise the manuscript. I am thankful to CASA, and its director, my friend Jan Breman. My gratitude is due to many friends and colleagues, at the Centre for Social Studies, Surat and elsewhere, who supplied references, read the manuscript either in full or in part and gave candid comments. Among them, special mention must be made of A. R. Desai, D. L. Sheth, Jan Breman, D.N. Dhanagare, David Hardiman, Vibhuti Patel, Pradip Kumar Bose, Neera Desai, Parita, Hein Streefkerk, Rakhahari Chatterji, S.P. Punalekar, Sudhir Chandra, Bhagirath Shah and Babubhai Desai. Kalpana, my wife, not only read and made very useful suggestions and comments on the chapter on women's movements, but also bore with my moods and idiosyncrasies. M.R- Mac and Hina Shah were always helpful in getting me books and journals, and also bibliographical details. K.M. Bhavsar typed and retyped several drafts of the manuscript with great involvement and care. Anupam Pruthi provided editorial assistance. Of course, the limitations and errors of style and judgement in the study are mine alone.

My friend, Thakorbhai Shah, a former Gandhian who was active in the Congress Seva Dal for three decades, between the 1940s and the 1960s, was my guide during my formative years in and outside school. He became a Marxist-Trotskyist and gave up bourgeois politics. He has led a number of working class struggles in and around Baroda. I admire his dynamism, commitment to the oppressed classes and constant search for alternatives. Though I differ with him on many issues, he and many such dedicated activists inspire and remind me constantly to combine theory with practice. I dedicate this work to Thakorbhai Shah with admiration and hope.

INTRODUCTION

There have been many studies on social movements in India during the last three decades, though compared to many other areas and the incidence of movements, their

number is very small. A majority of the studies are recent, published after the mid-1960s. Most of them are by historians, sociologists, political activists or journalists. Political scientists have, by and large, ignored this area till recently. Historians have for long concentrated on political history, which is mainly the history of rulers and of the elite. British historians, in whose footsteps Indian historians, for good or for bad, followed, focused their studies on the activities of the British as the actors on the stage of history with India as a shadowy background (Stokes 1959). Social history came onto the scene very late. And for a long time, it limited its scope to the 'history of people with the politics left out'. It has been largely confined to social policies of the government, educational and cultural history, social reform movements, the growth of the middle class, etc. (Bhattacharya 1982). Recently, social historians have produced very stimulating studies on social movements in general and peasant movements in particular. Sociology is a relatively-new discipline. Although the first generation of sociologists maintained a broader horizon, the second generation has confined its focus to the tradition-modernity paradigm. A majority of their studies are related to kinship, caste and village society. Their interest in social movements was largely focused on Sanskritisation and socio-religious reform movements, excluding the political dimension as beyond their scope, until political sociology or the sociology of politics began to take shape in the late 1960s. Political science is still lagging behind. *The Indian Journal of Political Science* has published only 10 articles on movements, out of as many as 370 articles between 1965 and 1978. Out of 906 doctoral dissertations in political science accepted by Indian universities between 1857 and 1979, only 15 dealt with movements. The situation has not changed in the 1980s and 1990s. The first trend report of research in political science commissioned by the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) in 1971 did not include them as a topic for the review of the literature. During 1969 and 1994-95 ICSSR sponsored 672 research projects in history, political science, sociology and anthropology. Among these, only 17 (less than 3 per cent) were related to social movements (ICSSR 1990, n.d-).

Even those movements which have a direct political character explicitly directed against the government, not to speak of social movements in general, have largely been considered by Indian political scientists to be beyond the purview of their academic discipline/Political science in India has largely concentrated on political institutions such as the executive, legislature, parties and elections. The study of the politics of the masses, their aspirations and demands, the articulation of their problems and their modus operandi in the assertion of their demands outside the formal institutional framework have been, by and large, ignored by political science academia. However, 'development' policies and welfare programmes, governance, etc, are on the agenda of teaching and research of Indian political science. But the focus is on the objectives and role of the government, and evaluation of the programmes rather than the processes of formulation of the policies. For instance, the policy of land reform is taught without analysing the struggles which forced the state and political parties to undertake the policy. Mrs Indira Gandhi's *garibi hatao* policy is not analysed in the context of the numerous struggles of the rural and urban poor in the 1960s. It is often forgotten that the functioning of the state cannot be fully understood without an understanding of the politics of the masses. Perception, beliefs, aspirations and the views of the subaltern classes can help us to define and redefine our concepts, and question our textbook-based knowledge.

One of the reasons for such an approach is the heritage of Indian political science. Though the heritage of the formal discipline is western, the notion of politics represented by the dominant intellectuals remains the same, cutting across cultural boundaries-Intellectual pursuit to understand, analyse and theorise politics is as old as the formation of collective life when rituals, rules and regulations, division of authority, distribution of resources and the existence of formal institutions for governance evolved. The *Geeta* and *Mahabharata* are treatises on politics. They discuss the duties and responsibilities of the rulers and the *nagarjans* at length. Kautilya's *Arthashastra* is also a documented political treatise. Socrates and Plato's works are well-known and widely taught to students of political science in our country. But all these are largely confined to rulers' political and religious authority. Such a conceptualisation of politics dominates discourse on charting out the scope of teaching and research in political science as an academic discipline in the modern education system (Shah 2001).

Earlier, under the influence of British tradition, political science in India was confined to political philosophy, formal government institutions and international relations. Empirical studies, including the functioning of the institutions, are of recent origin—from the late 1950s—influenced by the behavioural school developed in America. Positivism dominated analysis, and the question 'why' has been relegated to oblivion. Second, the concept of politics adopted by political scientists influenced by American and British traditions is narrow, confined to the political system whose functions are: rule making, rule application and rule adjudication (Almond and Coleman 1960). For many political scientists, 'polities' means who gets what, when and how in society (Lasswell and Kaplan 1950). For others, the definition of politics is 'authoritative allocation' of values. Elaborating on the meaning of 'authoritative', David Easton points out, "... a policy is clearly authoritative when the feeling prevails that it must or ought to be obeyed . . . that policies whether formal or effective, are accepted as binding' (1953: 76). Thus, these definitions delimit the study of politics to the functions of the government and the state, or the politics of the ruling class or elite. Therefore, it is not surprising that, in America and Britain, some universities have departments of 'government' or 'public law', and in India of 'civics and administration' or 'public administration', instead of 'polities' or 'political science'. These definitions delimit the study of politics to the functions of the government and the state.

Third, thanks to the dominance of post-World War II liberal political ideology and the structural-functional approach, there is greater emphasis in social science literature on equilibrium and harmony rather than on conflict and change. Political science, though primarily concerned with power and conflict, has refrained from researching the issue of societal conflict for social change (Sathyamurthy 1987). Political scientists have primarily remained interested in studying the internal conflict of the power elite and not the conflict between the masses and the rulers. According to them, societal conflicts have to be resolved by the government and political institutions. Their area of concern begins when conflict enters the political orbit of the government. For them, conflict resolution is more important than the causes of conflict. A majority of political scientists are liberal in their ideology and for nearly two decades of independent India, considered the constitution sacrosanct. They had and still have confidence that existing political institutions can solve all social conflicts (Aiyar 1966). There are innumerable constitutional channels to solve conflicts, and people should explore various

constitutional methods rather than resort to direct action. Even in 'a desperate situation' in which the constitutional system fails to solve conflict, the path of social wisdom, liberal political scientists believe, 'would lie in collectively exploring more rational and more humane forms of settling social conflicts' (ibid.: 33). They believe that people should develop the habits of obedience and respect for authority. Democracy ends when power shifts to the masses. The masses have to be kept in check, political scientists used to advise (Srinivasan 1966). Of course now they are baffled as they find that political institutions increasingly fail to cope with unrest in society. A small section of political scientists, both liberal and radical, do not abide by this narrow definition of the subject. They have begun to explore the area of social movements for a greater understanding of social transformation beyond liberal and Marxist frameworks.

This monograph is a review of literature and not a research study and analysis of social movements in India. Therefore, the most difficult riddle', which often baffled me in writing this essay, has been: Which studies should be included and which excluded? There is no precise definition of the term 'social movement' accepted by scholars of all disciplines or even scholars belonging to the same discipline. Like many other terms, such as 'democracy', 'masses', 'popular', 'equality', the term 'movement' is often used differently by different social activists, political leaders and scholars who have written on 'movements'. Some scholars use the term 'movement' interchangeably with 'organisation' or 'union'. Some use it to mean a historical trend or tendency- It is fashionable for political leaders and social reformers to call their activities 'movements' even though their activities are confined to the forming of organisations with less than a dozen members. Some claim to launch movements by issuing press statements on public issues. Like many other words, the term 'movement' is still regarded as a 'hurrah! word', to use T.D. Weldon's memorable classification (Weldon 1955).

The term 'social movement' gained currency in European languages in the early nineteenth century. This was the period of social upheaval.

The political leaders and authors who used the term were concerned with the emancipation of exploited classes and the creation of a new society by changing value systems as well as institutions and/or property relationships. Their ideological orientation is reflected in their definition. However, since the early 1950s, various scholars have attempted to provide 'thorough-going' definitions of the concept of social movements. The works of Rudolf Heberle (1951, 1968), Neil Smelser (1963) and John Wilson (1973) are important, though each one's definition is not without difficulties. Paul Wilkinson gives the following working concept of 'social movement':

A social movement is a deliberate collective endeavour to promote cTisirigelmany direction and by any means, not excluding violence, illegality, revolution or withdrawal into 'utopian' community. Social movements are thus clearly different from historical movements, tendencies or trends. It is important to note, however, that such tendencies and trends, and the influence of the unconscious or irrational factors in human behaviour, may be of crucial importance in illuminating the problems of interpreting and explaining social movement.

A social movement must evince a minimal degree of organization, though this may range from a loose, informal or partial level of organization to the highly institutionalized and bureaucratized movement and the corporate group. Indeed, it will be shown that

much of the literature of social movements has been concerned with natural histories, models or theories of movement development. Such models have attempted to simulate changes in movement structure and organization ranging from states of initial social unrest and excitement and the emergence of a charismatic leadership, to a revolutionary movement's seizure of power.

A social movement's commitment to change and the *raison d'être* of its organization are founded upon the conscious volition, normative commitment to the movement's aims or beliefs, and active participation on the part of the followers or members. This particular characterization of social movement in terms of volition and normative commitment is endorsed by something approaching a consensus among leading scholars in this field. Heberle, for example, conceives of these belief-systems as an expression of the collective will of the people among whom they are accepted. He is emphatic that it is the element of volition that makes the beliefs socially effective. It is the conscious volition of individuals acting collectively that brings about the embodiment of ideologies in social movements (1971:27).

The working concept above does not claim to offer a precise definition. It is too broad, and includes collective action for change 'in any direction' through legal means within the boundaries of the institutions (such as voting in elections or presenting memoranda), as well as violent extra-institutional collective action. The 'minimum degree of organization' is problematic. It is difficult to say precisely what this 'minimum degree' is. One also wonders whether the social movement begins with setting up an organisation with committed members, or does the organisation evolve in the course of time as the movement develops? Such a definition may exclude protests and agitations which may not have an organisation to begin with. Notwithstanding the difficulties with Wilkinson's working concept, it has a heuristic value. It should be mentioned here that studies on social movements in India have not yet made a systematic effort to define the concept in the Indian context (Chandra 1977). Needless to say, like many other concepts, the meaning given to the term 'social movement' by the participants has temporal and cultural contexts.

Objectives, ideology, programmes, leadership, and organisation are important components of social movements. They are interdependent, influencing each other. However, Ranajit Guha's warning needs to be kept in mind. He points out that though these components are found in all types of movements or insurgencies, including the so-called 'spontaneous' rebellions, their forms vary—from very unstructured to well-organised. He challenges the contention of some historians who opine that peasant insurgencies were spontaneous and lacked political consciousness and organisation. Such insurgencies lacked, 'neither in leadership nor in aim nor even in some rudiments of a programme, although none of these attributes could compare in maturity or sophistication with those of the historically more advanced movements of the twentieth century'

I realise that if I use a precise definition in this essay, which I formulated to analyse the particular collective action in the 1970s (Shah 1977), to include or exclude some studies, I would land myself in a number of difficulties. It may lead me to sacrifice some very interesting, well-documented and analytical studies. This would be detrimental not only to the understanding of the nature of social movements in India but also various theoretical perspectives as well as the changes therein over a period of time.

Since the purpose of this essay is not to analyse empirical data collected by myself, nor does it aim at being a theoretical essay on social movements per se, it needs to be pragmatic and adopt a broad concept to cover a wide variety of studies on social movements. However, our theoretical equipment and time constraints compel us to demarcate our scope and cover only certain kinds of collective action and to exclude others from this essay.

This essay pays attention to those studies which examine non-institutionalised legal or extralegal collective political actions which strive to influence civil and political society for social and political change. Collective actions which follow the path of acquiescence for social mobility and change in status are excluded. Action which is legally permitted and widely accepted as binding in society or part of society (Johnson 1966: 21) at a given point of time is institutionalised action. Such actions include petitioning, advocacy, lobbying, voting in elections, and fighting legal battles in courts of law. However, sometimes these methods are accompanied by other collective actions and are used as tactics. In such cases, we treat them as a part of the social movement and include them in the scope of this essay. Sometimes, resistance of the people against dominance, direction and commands of the dominant groups and the state is treated as a social movement. Resistance is certainly an expression of protest. But so long as it remains at an individual level and desists from confrontation involving collective action it is not a movement (Scott 1985; Guha 1989). The present study is largely confined to the direct actions of a group of people confronting authority. In David Bayley's words, it is 'illegal public protest' (1962). The term 'illegal' raises many questions and it is a matter of interpretation of law and the constitution. A particular action can be interpreted as illegal by those who are in authority or support the status quo, but the same action may be interpreted as legal by those who strive for social change. 'Direct action can be defined', according to Rajni Kothari, 'as an extra-constitutional political technique that takes the form of a group action, [and] is aimed at some political change directed against the government in power' (1960: 27). The term 'extra-constitutional' can be a matter of perspective. Kothari's concept of 'political change' in the 1960s was narrow, confined to change in the government (he has since moved away from this concept). We believe that political power is not solely confined to the government; it is also located at various levels in society. All those who strive for 'political change' do not always struggle against the government alone. The collective actions of the people are at various levels against dominant culture, caste, class and ideology.

Non-institutionalised collective action takes several forms, such as, protests, agitations, strikes, *satyagrahas*, *hartals*, *gheraos*, riots. Agitations or protests are not strictly social movements, if we follow the working definition quoted earlier. But, more often than not, a social movement develops in course of time, and it begins with protest or agitation on a particular issue which may not have the 'organisation' or 'ideology' for change. For instance, when students of an engineering college in Gujarat protested against the mess bill, it was a relatively spontaneous act. But that protest led to the Nav Nirman Andolan of 1974 in Gujarat (Shah 1977). Moreover, a particular collective action may be only an agitation for some scholars, and a movement for others, depending upon the level of analysis and the perspective. For example, the collective action of a section of society demanding the formation of linguistic states in the 1950s was viewed as an 'agitation' by some and as a 'movement' by others; the same scholars, at a later stage,

saw the 'agitation' as a 'movement'. For this essay, we treat agitations, protests, strikes, etc., as 'movements' or, to be precise, as part of a social movement of a particular stratum or strata of society. The studies on riots are not fully excluded from this study. Some collective actions are often labelled by the authorities as 'riots' but they are more often than not part of ongoing movements. A striking example is that of the so-called 'Deccan riots' of the late nineteenth century against the government's land policy. Studies on such riots are included in this essay, as they were a part of the larger peasant movement in Maharashtra.

More often than not, political scientists and sociologists do not make a distinction between 'social' and 'political' movements. Sociologists assume, and rightly so, that social movements also include those movements which have a clear objective of bringing about political change. Two volumes on social movements (1978), edited by the sociologist M. S. A. Rao, include two such studies: the Naxalite movement which aims at capturing state power, and the backward caste movement for asserting a higher status. Rudolf Heberle (1951) argues that all movements have political implications even if their members do not strive for political power. Political scientists, too, are not inhibited in using the term 'social movement'. The book on social movements by Wilkinson, published under the series *The Concept of Political Science*, is suggestive of this approach. It may also be mentioned that the Committee of Political Science on the trend report (constituted by the ICSSR), commissioned this study on 'social movement'. This indicates the approach of political science towards the subject.

The phrase new social movement is in vogue in the contemporary discourse among social scientists and activists. Some use the term for those movements which according to them are 'new', such as, women's, environmental, identity, peace movements, etc. For some the new social movements are the result of the issues of the 'post-modern' society (Singh 2001). These movements are not class based and they do not raise economic issues. Nor are they concerned with state power. They raise the issue of humanity cutting across the interests of all classes. In that sense 'new local movements' are social and not political. This is problematic. One may ask the questions: To what extent is Indian society 'post-modern' like that of the west? Were there no struggles for identity in the pre-modern society? Do the environmental movements, women's movements; dalit movements have no economic content? Are they not confronting the state? Granted that the nature of classes and class relationship have undergone changes in the present global capitalism, do the classes (or economic strata) have no relevance in the perception of people towards the dominant ideology and power?

Within the paradigm of new social movements, Andre Gunder Frank and Marta Fuentes (1987) make a distinction between social and political movements. According to them, the former do not strive for state power. Social movements 'seek more autonomy rather than state power'. There is a difference between social and political power, and the latter is located in the state alone. According to these authors, the objective of social movements is social transformation. The participants get mobilised for attaining social justice. This thesis is problematic of course, society and state, and therefore social and political power, are not one and the same. But to differentiate between social power and political power in the contemporary world is to gloss over reality, and ignore the complexities of political processes. Politics is not located only in the political parties. The authors ignore the political implications of the movements involving issues concerning

the sense of justice or injustice rightly assert that Frank and Fuentes are committed to a process of 'depoliticisation of the social realm'. Any collective endeavour, we believe, to bring about social transformation—change in the labour and property relationship—and to struggle for justice, and rights, involves capturing or influencing political authority, though it may not be on the immediate agenda. Therefore, in the present context, the difference between 'social' and 'political' movements is merely semantic.

Generally, studies on social movements broadly follow either a Marxist or non-Marxist framework for analysis. However all studies cannot be categorised into either approach for three reasons. One, several scholars do not study particular movements with a preconceived theoretical framework. They are not 'well equipped' with theories. Second, there is often a good deal of conversion between the two approaches when they deal with empirical situations. Third, there are variations within each theoretical framework. Scholars following the Marxist approach are primarily interested in bringing about revolutionary change in society, towards a socialist system. According to them, the causes for social movements are located in the economic structure of society. Antagonistic interests between the propertied and labour classes are inherent in a class-based society which generates contradictions. The former use the coercive power of the state, as well as of other institutions, including religion, education, mass media, to maintain their hegemony on the latter so as to control the exploited classes. The latter resist, protest and occasionally revolt or launch organised and collective action against the dominance of the propertied classes- It is their effort to bring about revolutionary political change by over-throwing the dominant classes in power. Though, to Marxists, structural causes of conflicting economic interests are central to their studies, a number of Marxist scholars have begun to pay attention to ethnic, religious and other cultural factors. Some of them have begun to analyse the nature of the consciousness of exploited classes. According to many 'orthodox' Marxist scholars, members of the same class not only have common interests vis-à-vis other classes, but also share a common consciousness regarding their position in society and the common interests they share. This facilitates their collective action against the ruling classes and state. But some of them have begun to re-examine the notion of 'class' and 'class relationship' based on the ownership of means of production. Like the community, class is a complex phenomenon. It is intermingled with the participants' notion of their identity, perception of their interests and of the dominant groups within a particular historical conjuncture (Chandavarkar 1998).

There is a good deal of debate among Marxist scholars on theoretical and methodological issues. Recently, a group of historians who are not non-Marxist, the 'subaltern studies' group, has begun to study 'history from below'. They criticise the 'traditional' Marxist historians for ignoring the history of the masses, as if the 'subaltern' classes do not make history of their own, depending solely on the advanced classes or the elite for organisation and guidance- It is argued that the traditional Marxist scholars have undermined cultural factors and viewed a linear development of class consciousness (Guha 1983a, 1983b; Chatterjee 1983, 1985; Hardiman 1987). On the other hand, the subaltern studies historians are strongly criticised by other Marxist scholars for ignoring structural factors and viewing 'consciousness' as independent of structural contradictions. They are accused of being Hegelian 'idealists' (Chopra 1982; Alam 1983; Singh et al. 1984; Gupta 1985). Other issues of debate are: Are the parties and trade unions equipped

to lead revolutionary social movements? Can the peasantry be divided into classes? Which class of the peasantry has more potential to deal with the revolutionary movement? Has the concept of 'vanguard class' remained a theoretically and empirically relevant category? Non-Marxist scholars accuse the Marxist studies of being 'reductionist', 'mechanical' and of 'over-determining' economic factors.

There is a great deal of variation amongst the non-Marxist scholars also in their approach to the analysis of social movements. The ideological positions regarding a need for social and/or political change, and the role of movements therein differ. It is argued by William Kornhauser (1959, 1968), Robert Nisbet (1953), Edward Shils (1982) and others that mass movements are the product of mass societies which are extremist and anti-democratic. These scholars are in favour of excluding the masses from day-to-day participation in politics, which hampers the efficient functioning of the government. The Indian scholars, who approved of the agitations for independence from foreign rule, did not approve of agitations in the post-independence period. They condemned them outright as 'dangerous' and 'dysfunctional' for 'civilised society'. Though some others do not favour revolutionary change in the political and economic structure, they advocate 'political change' which is confined to change in government and political institutions. A few also call for 'revolutionary' change but they differ from Marxist scholars in class analysis. They lay emphasis on value systems, political institutions and culture. In their analysis of the movements, some do not inquire into causes. Others differ in their emphasis on the causes responsible for the movements. Some emphasise individual psychological traits, some focus on elite power struggles and their manipulation, and some others emphasise the importance of cultural rather than economic factors.

In the mid-1960s, a group of political scientists addressed themselves to the question: Why has India witnessed an explosion of violence on such an unprecedented scale (Aiyar 1966). They disapproved of agitations. One of them argued, 'One can understand, if not justify the reasons which led the people in a dependent country to attack and destroy everything which was a symbol or an expression of foreign rule. But it is very strange that people should even now behave as if they continue to live in a dependent country ruled by foreigners' (Phadke 1966: 52). They blamed the opposition parties, leaders and trade unions for instigating the masses to direct action (Aiyar 1966; Srinivasan 1966).

Some scholars, including a few Marxists, assert that mass movements or protests are redundant in the Indian culture and civilisation due to its 'multilinear character' and 'all-pervasive hierarchy'. Because of the Brahminical ideology and hierarchical social structure, the oppressed classes have become docile, obedient and fatalist (Moore 1967; Chandra 1977; Badrinath 1977). Such assertions are refuted by other scholars who point to a number of struggles by the oppressed classes in pre- and post-independence India (Cough 1974; Thapar 1977; Damle 1977; Dhanagare 1983). Some explain that the protests and agitations in post-independence India are the result of the conflict between 'tradition' and 'modernity'. According to them parliamentary democracy has been transplanted in India, where there is no tradition of voluntary effort. People have developed an ambivalent attitude towards authority, they take the advantages offered by the political authority but at the same time do not legitimise it. Morris-Jones argues, 'Even after independence government is relied upon, and at the same time spat upon and abused. The same man who is "looking to government" one moment may in the next take part in demonstrations involving violence and on a scale that threatens to make any

government impossible' (1964). This is the result of the conflict between traditional values and attitudes on the one hand, and modern institutions on the other.

The scholars who adhere to the theory of political development consider that the rising aspirations of the people are not adequately met by existing political institutions which are rigid or incompetent. As the gap widens between the two, 'political instability and disorder' leading to mass upsurge increases (Huntington 1968; Johnson 1966). Rajni Kothari argued that 'direct action' is inevitable in the context of India's present-day 'parliamentary democracy'.

The general climate of frustration, the ineffectiveness of known channels of communication, the alienation and atomization of the individual, the tendency towards regimentation and the continuous state of conflict (which may remain latent and suppressed for a time) between the rulers and the ruled—all these make the ideal of self-government more and more remote and render parliamentary government an unstable form of political organisation (1960: 26-27).

David Bayley (1962) argues that public protests have a certain 'functional utility' even in a parliamentary form of government. He observes that before and after independence, a large number of the people felt that the institutional means of redress for grievances, frustrations and wrongs—actual or fancied—were inadequate. In 1960, Kothari did not justify all types of 'direct actions'. The action is desirable 'only if the political change desired by the group involved in direct action offers a greater scope of political freedom than is offered by the existing political arrangements (1960: 28). Kothari and Bayley confine their discussion to the direct actions which are against the government. They do not consider the direct actions or protests against socio-economic dominance and power structures in society. A.R. Desai (1965) joins issue with Kothari and Bayley, and argues that their discussion on direct action is confined to a 'formal level and offers no basic clues to the understanding of the problem'. Desai asserts:

The parliamentary form of government, as a political institutional device, has proved to be inadequate to continue or expand concrete democratic rights of the people. This form either operates as a shell within which the authority of capital perpetuates itself, obstructing or reducing the opportunities for people to consciously participate in the process of society, or is increasingly transforming itself into a dictatorship, where capital sheds some of its democratic pretensions and rules by open, ruthless dictatorial means. Public protests will continue till people have ended the rule of capital in those countries where it still persists. They will also continue against those bureaucratic totalitarian political regimes where the rule of capital has ended, but where due to certain peculiar historical circumstances Stalinist bureaucratic, terroristic political regimes have emerged. The movements and protests of people will continue till adequate political institutional forms for the realization and exercise of concrete democratic rights are found (1965: 323).

Desai (1986) reiterates his position that the civil and democratic rights of the people are not protected by the Constitution. Consequently, the movements for their protection have increased.

In the 1980s, Rajni Kothari (1984, 1986) argues that 'democracy' in India has become a playground for growing corruption, criminalisation, repression and intimidation of large masses of the people. The role of the state in 'social transformation' has been

undermined. It is more so under neo-liberal economy imposed by the First World. People have started asserting their rights through various struggles.

There is discontent and despair in the air—still highly diffuse, fragmented and unorganised. But there is a growing awareness of rights, felt politically and expressed politically, and by and large still aimed at the State. Whenever a mechanism of mobilisation has become available, this consciousness has found expression, often against very heavy odds, against a constellation of interests that are too powerful and complacent to shed (even share) the privileges. At bottom it is consciousness against a paradigm of society that rests on deliberate indifference to the plight of the impoverished and destitute who are being driven to the threshold of starvation—by the logic of the paradigm itself (Kothari 1984: 218).

Kothari feels that mass mobilisation at the grassroots level is both necessary and desirable. He asserts that it is in the state of vacuum in the traditional superstructure of the liberal polity that was supposed to render it humane despite powerful trends that the real counter-trends are to be found—not in the party system, not in the arena of electoral politics and of State power, not in the typical confrontation between the so-called haves and have-nots within the conventional economic space dominated by trade unions. In their place there is emerging a new arena of counteraction, of countervailing tendencies, of counter-cultural movements and more generally of a counter-challenge to existing paradigms of thought and action (1986:214).

The theory of relative deprivation developed by American scholars (Gurr 1970) has also guided some studies on agitations and mass movements. The limitations of the theory are pointed out by a number of Indian scholars. M.S.A. Rao asserts that relative deprivation is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for protest movements. He argues, 'A sufficient level of understanding and reflection is required on the part of the participants, and they must be able to observe and perceive the contrast between the social and cultural conditions of the privileged and those of the deprived, and must realize that it is possible to do something about it (1979: 207). Shah (1979) argues that the theory of relative deprivation ignores the importance of consciousness and the ideological aspects of the participants. It explains protests and movements of revolt, but does not analyse revolutionary movements. Protest does not necessarily lead to a movement. T.K. Oommen (1977) also argues that the deprivation theorists view movements as 'temporary aberrations' rather than as 'ongoing processes of change'. Moreover, they do not deal with the sources of deprivation. For Gurr, 'deprivation' is primarily psychological; therefore he does not deal with the socio-economic structure which is the source of deprivation.

The studies providing a conceptual framework have largely dealt with typologies of social movements during the 1970s. One of the classifying movements is their objectives or the quality of change they try to attain. Shah (1977) classifies movements as revolt, rebellion, reform, and revolution to bring about changes in the political system. Reform does not challenge the political system per se. It attempts to bring about changes in the relations between the parts of the system in order to make it more efficient, responsive and workable. A revolt is a challenge to political authority, aimed at over-throwing the government. A rebellion is an attack on existing authority without any intention of seizing state power. In a revolution, a section or sections of society launch an organised

struggle to overthrow not only the established government and regime but also the socio-economic structure which sustains it, and replace the structure by an alternative social order.

For Partha Mukherji (1977), social movements are accumulative, alternative and transformatory. Accumulative changes are changes within the given structure and system. M.S.A. Rao (1978) also offers more or less similar typologies: reformist, transformatory and revolutionary. However, T.K. Oommen believes that 'the movements will neither have the potentialities to root out the existing system completely nor will they succumb to the traditional structures entirely. Essentially then, social movements provide the stage for confluence between the old and new values and structures' (1977: 16). His typologies are related to the process of movement crystallisation, the life style and the phases of social movements. For him, movements are charismatic, ideological and organisational.

All these typologies, though useful, do not explain the dynamics of the movements which undergo change in the course of time. They do not take into consideration those movements whose objectives change during the development of the movement. Some movements do not have clear objectives in terms of the maintenance or the transformation of the system. Moreover, the overt objectives and theorisation of the leaders of the movement and the perception of the participants at various levels about the struggle and their own purpose /or involvement may not be always the same.

David Bayley (1962) divides 'coercive public protest' into legal and illegal protests. Each category is further sub-divided into violent and non-violent protests. Some others classify movements into grassroots and macro movements. Social movements are also classified on the basis of issues around which participants get mobilised. Some of them are known as the 'forest', 'civil rights', 'anti-untouchability', 'linguistic', 'nationalist' and other such movements. Some others classify movements on the basis of the participants, such as peasants, tribals, students, women, dalits, etc. In many cases the participants and issues go together. For convenience, in the earlier edition of the book we classified social movements into the following eight types on the basis of the socio-economic characteristics of the participants and the issues involved:

1. Peasant movements;
2. Tribal movements;
3. Dalit movements;
4. Backward caste movements;
5. Women's movements;
6. Industrial working class movements;
7. Students' movements; and
8. Middle class movements.

Now we add one more type—human rights and environmental movements. These movements are based around certain issues and their theorisations claim to cover all social and economic groups. Though the leadership of these movements in the contemporary times comes from the middle class, they primarily raise the issues affecting the deprived classes and communities. These categories are not exhaustive and they do leave out some other movements. We are aware that the categorisation made here is not

completely satisfactory as a number of movements have participants in different numbers from all the economic strata/class or from a number of social groups. If the issue of ecology in a particular movement is raised by tribals and they also constitute a majority among the participants of the movement, we have classified the movement as a tribal movement. But if the issue is raised by the intelligentsia and a majority of the participants are from the middle class, even though it directly affects all strata in one way or another, such as the movement for linguistic states, it is classified as a movement of the middle class. Similarly, economic and social position—the subjective identity of belonging to a particular social group—do not always go together. For instance, persons from backward castes are also peasants and sometimes they get mobilised around issues involving their status, and identity. The same is the case with tribals. In such a situation, the issue around which the participants get mobilised leads us to classify the movement in one or another category. This reminds us of the complexities of the situation and the limitations of typologies as well as of theorisation.

NOTES

This excludes the period between 1975 and 1978. The information is based on: *Social Sciences: A Bibliography of Doctoral Dissertations Accepted by Indian Universities, 1857-1970* (University Grants Commission 1980a); *Bibliography of Doctoral Dissertations, 1970-75* (University Grants Commission 1980b); and *Bibliography of Doctoral Dissertation, 1979-80* (Association of Indian Universities 1980). Some scholars in USA have theorised social movements as a 'resource mobilisation' model within the rational choice theory. It is a rational action of some 'entrepreneurs' who take initiative of their own, develop mechanisms and structures; calculate costs and advantages of mobilisation. It is a model of interaction between resource availability, the pre-existing organisation of preference structures, and entrepreneurial attempts to meet the demands of the people (McCarthy and Zaid 1987; Rule 1989). It is, however, an oversimplification to say that Pratap Chandra considers Indian society static. He is questioning the applicability of the concepts 'protest' or 'dissent' in Indian society. He argues, 'we do not come across any movement of dissent, protest or reform in ancient India for the similar reason that we equally miss in that culture any intellectual straitjackets, monolithic structures, chimed monopolies of truth, ideological homogeneity or even direct or indirect demand for any of these' (1977: 97).

2

PEASANT MOVEMENTS

After five decades of independence nearly 63 per cent of the population still depends on agriculture for its livelihood, though industrial growth is significant. The agrarian structure has undergone a change from a feudal and semi-feudal structure to a capitalist one. Agricultural production has increasingly become market oriented since the 1960s. Non-farm economic activities have expanded in the rural areas. In the process, not only has the rural-urban divide become blurred, but the nature of peasant society in terms of composition, classes/strata and consciousness has undergone considerable changes.

Those who depend on agriculture are differentiated in terms of their relationship with the ownership of land, such as, **absentee landlords**, **supervisory agriculturists**, **owner-cultivators**, **sharecroppers**, **tenants** and **landless labourers**. In local parlance they are known as *kisans* or *kheduts*. Thanks to the influence of western scholarship, *kisan* is often translated as 'peasant' in the academic literature published in English. The term 'peasant' is ambiguous and used differently by different authors or variously by the same, author in different studies. On the one hand, it is 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 agriculturists. To dub together agricultural labourers and the peasantry raises some problems. An agricultural labourer in contemporary India is generally no longer tied down to the same master, as was the case during the colonial and pre-colonial periods in pre-capitalist agriculture. In capitalist agriculture, a vast majority of the labourers are not attached or bonded. The process of **proletarianisation** of agricultural labourers has accelerated during the last few decades, and they are more dependent on 'wage labour while losing the extra-economic relations with their employers (old or new) which govern the conditions of their work and life' (Kannan 1988:12).

But where do we place small and marginal farmers who also work as agricultural labourers? And what about those agricultural labourers who have not become proletarian? It would be not only cumbersome but also mechanical and an oversimplification to treat agricultural labourers of the colonial period as peasants and those of the post-independence period as the proletariat. Moreover, as this monograph is concerned with mobilisation, labourers are mobilised along with other peasants in many agrarian struggles. Irfan Habib (1983) argues that the history of agricultural labourers remains a part of peasant history. Most of the studies so far treat them as part of the peasantry. We use the term 'peasantry' in a broad sense, for convenience rather than out of conviction, to cover a large number of studies. In fact, our preference is to avoid the term 'peasant', which is not very useful in the analysis of agrarian relationships in the subcontinent. From the mid-1980s some scholars have begun to use the category 'farmer' instead of 'peasant'. The former are being distinguished by their market involvement as community producers and also as purchasers of inputs (Byres 1994).

Most of the studies on peasant movements in India have been published after the mid-1970s. The **Chinese revolution** and the series of agrarian movements in Latin American countries led western political sociologists and anthropologists to initiate studies on peasant movements (Wolf 1966). At home such intellectual stimulation on the one hand and the **Naxalite movement** in the late 1960s on the other provided an impetus to Indian scholars to study various peasant movements. Barrington Moore Jr., in his celebrated work *Social Origins of Dictatorship, and Democracy Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World* (1967) questions the revolutionary potential of the Indian peasantry. He observes that the landed upper classes and the peasants played an important role in the **bourgeois** revolutions leading to capitalist societies in England and France, the abortive bourgeois revolutions leading to **fascism** in Germany and Italy, and the peasant revolutions leading to **communism** in Russia and China.

But 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' (Moore 1967: 202). The Indian peasant, to Moore, is traditionally **docile and passive**.

Eric Stokes (1978) also finds that peasant rebellions '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. Moore argues that cultivation was lackadaisical and inefficient over the wide areas, partly due to Mogul tax on farming, partly because of the peculiar structure of peasant society, organised through the caste system. In providing a framework for all social activity, quite literally from conception to the afterlife, at the local level of the village community, caste made the central government largely superfluous. Hence peasant opposition was less likely to take the form of massive peasant rebellions that it had taken in China (1967: 315).

In the caste system, the individual's duty to the caste system was emphasised, not his rights within the society. The lower castes were taught to accept their place in the social order, so as to obtain a better position in the next life through religious ceremonies and rituals. The leaders of the lower castes 'received commissions on the wages of labourers from their castes as well as fines for any transgressions of caste regulations' (ibid.: 337). His reading on caste and generalisation thereon is more textual than empirical. However, Moore is often misquoted and misinterpreted by many scholars. He does not say that there were no widespread and impressive peasant revolts against the ruling class in India. He does not dispute the thesis of the revolutionary potential of the peasantry as such. What he seems to argue is that the revolutionary potential of a particular class hinges largely on the structure of power alignment and class alliances in a given society, at a particular time.

Moore's contention regarding the 'passive' and 'docile' character of Indian peasants, however, has been challenged by Kathleen Gough (1974), A. R. Desai (1979), D.N. Dhanagare (1983) and others. They argue that historians have overlooked a number of peasant Rebellions before and during the British rule. Kathleen Gough argues that peasant revolts have been common during the last two centuries in every state of present-day India. She has counted 77 revolts,

the smallest of which probably engaged several thousand peasants in active support or in combat. About 30 revolts must have affected several tens of thousands, and about 12, several hundreds of thousands. Included in these revolts, is the 'Indian Mutiny' of 1857-58, in which vast bodies of peasants fought or otherwise worked to destroy British rule over an area of more than 500,000 square miles (1974: 1319).

She disagrees with Moore regarding the obstructive role of caste in peasant uprisings. She argues 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' (ibid.). **A.R. Desai** also observes that, **'the Indian rural scene during the entire British period and thereafter has been bristling with protests, revolts and even large scale militant struggles involving hundreds of villages and lasting for years'** (1979:xii). Ranajit Guha (1983a) observes that agrarian disturbances of different forms and scales were endemic throughout the first three-quarters of the British rule, i.e., until the very end of the nineteenth century. There were no fewer than 110 known instances of revolts during 117 years. The forms of resistance varied. Dhanagare argues that Moore's conclusion

is not deduced from any systematic theory but is only a reiteration of certain stereotypes of the Indian peasant and society, and that his empirical generalisations are questionable. His thesis on the Indian peasantry, therefore, needs re-examination in the light of a more extensive survey of various peasant resistance movements and revolts in India (1983: 5).

The question of whether the caste system or the Hindu religion is an obstacle which prevents the exploited and poor peasants from being organised to struggle against the exploiters, has been discussed and empirically investigated by several scholars. Granting that there were a number of peasant rebellions in India, it still remains to be explored as to why Indian peasants could not achieve what the Chinese and European peasants did. Was it because of the greater revolutionary potential of the Chinese or European peasants? Or was it due to factors outside the peasant society, which helped the Chinese and European peasants to attain their objectives?

ALL-INDIA AND REGIONAL STUDIES

Attempts have been made by some scholars to provide an all-India picture for both the British and post-independence periods. Kathleen Gough, a sociologist, was the first to give an overall scenario of peasant uprisings in India in an article written in 1974. On the same lines, Sunil Sen (1982), a historian, made an effort to present a bird's-eye view of the peasant movements of the mid-nineteenth and twentieth centuries. A.R. Desai's two anthologies (1979 and 1986), one dealing with the pre-independence and the other with the post-independence period, are important contributions to the field of peasant studies. Dhanagare (1983), Eric Stokes (1978), and several others present interesting and valuable case studies of peasant movements during the colonial period. These studies deal with a number of theoretical issues. We shall refer to them in the course of our discussion.

In the literature, a large number of studies are available on certain regions, such as, Bihar, Bengal, Andhra Pradesh and Malabar. They include case studies on specific movements, as well as historical accounts covering periods of a decade to a century or more. Certain movements, such as the Indigo movement in Bengal and Bihar (Mishra 1968; Kling 1977; Mitter 1978; Natrajan 1979b), the Moplah rebellion in Malabar, Kerala (Gopalan 1921; Dale 1975; Hardgrave 1977; Chaudhary 1979a; Hitchcock 1983; Wood 1992), the Tebhaga movement in Bengal (Dhanagare 1976; Sarkar 1979; Custers 1987), the Telengana movement in Andhra Pradesh (Rao 1972; Dhanagare 1974; Elliott 1974; Pavier 1981), the Naxalite movement in West Bengal, Bihar and Andhra Pradesh (Dasgupta 1974; Ghosh 1974; S. Banerjee 1980, 2002; Sengupta 1983; Gupta 1993), are well researched. Studies by Sumanta Banerjee compare the Naxalite movements in West Bengal and Srikakulam in Andhra Pradesh, focusing on the ideologies, strategies and tactics of the Communist Party of India (Marxist Leninist) (CPI[ML]) leaders in mobilising poor peasants and their relationship with the left parties (2002).

Historical analyses of peasant struggles from different perspectives are offered by B. B. Chaudhuri (1973a, 1973b), Kaviraj (1972), Sunil Sen (1972) "on West Bengal; Arvind Das (1983) and Henningham (1982) on Bihar; N.G. Ranga and S. Saraswati (1979) on Andhra; and Namboodiripad (1943), Oommen (1985) and Kannan (1988) on Kerala. A number of detailed case studies on different peasant struggles in pre- and post-independence periods in different parts of the country are now available. They include

studies on peasant struggles in Uttar Pradesh (UP) by Majid Hayat Siddiqi (1978), Kapil Kumar (1984) and Paul Brass (1980); in Punjab by Barrier (1967), S. Gill (1980) and Sharma (2000); in Rajasthan by Ram Pande (1974), Pushpendra Surana (1983), Ram (1986) and Sharma (1990); in Gujarat by David Hardiman (1981a), Ghanshyam Shah (1974), Shirin Mehta (1984) and Jan Breman (1974, 1985); in Maharashtra by G. Parulekar (1975), Gail Omvedt (1973) and Ashok Upadhyay (1979, 1980); and in Orissa by Binod Das (1985) and Sadasiba Pradhan (1986). It should, however, be noted that the studies on peasant struggles in the north-eastern states, such as Assam, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura, and in Madhya Pradesh and Orissa, are very few and less comprehensive. These areas need special attention. On the whole, a comparative approach to regional struggles is missing, though the studies by Dhanagare (1983), Peter Custers (1987), Roy (1992) and Dipankar Gupta (1997) are a good beginning.

Available literature indicates that peasant “struggles have been widespread in both the post- and pre-independence periods. The intensity and nature of the struggles 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 (1974: 1406).

According to Andre Beteille (1974), 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. These hypotheses need to be explored.

CLASSIFICATION

Peasant movements in India are generally classified on the basis of periods into pre-British, British or colonial, and post-independence. The post-independence period is classified by some scholars into pre-Naxalbari and post-Naxalbari periods, or pre- and post-green revolution periods (Desai 1986). The latter period is further divided into pre- and post-Emergency (Balagopal 1988). Oommen (1985) observes that there are certain movements which have continuity despite the change in political power. These are movements which started during the pre-independence phase but have continued till today, though their goals have changed. The classification is based on a time span, because it is believed that the “agrarian” structure has undergone changes during different periods, and that the nature of peasant movements varies under different agrarian structures. A.R. Desai (1986) classifies colonial India into *jyotwari* areas under British territory, *zamindari* areas under princely authority, and tribal zones. The struggles in these areas had different characteristics, raised different issues, involving different strata

of the peasantry and tribals. Desai prefers to call struggles in the colonial period 'peasant struggles' and those of the post-independence era 'agrarian struggles'. The phase 'agrarian struggles' is meant to convey that they involve not only peasants but others as well. He further divides post-independence agrarian struggles into two categories. The movements launched by the **newly emerged proprietary classes** comprised rich farmers, viable sections of the middle peasant proprietors and the streamlined landlords and the movements launched by various sections of the agrarian poor in which the agrarian proletariat have been acquiring central importance' (ibid.: xix). Gail Omvedt classifies the struggles into old and new, the former as peasants¹ and the latter as farmers' movements. More about it later.

Different scholars use different classificatory systems, depending upon the period involved and issues. However, there was no unified agrarian structure throughout the country, either under the princely states or British territory during the colonial period. Similarly, though a centralised political authority and capitalist mode of production have become driving forces in post-independence India, the agrarian structure has not yet evolved a unified pattern throughout the country. Gujarat, Maharashtra and Punjab have developed more intensive and widespread capitalist agriculture than Bihar, Orissa and Uttar Pradesh. The classification also varies according to one's theoretical framework. Kathleen Gough (1974) classifies peasant revolts on the basis of their 'goals, ideology and methods of organisation'. According to her, there were five types of peasant revolts:

1. Restorative rebellions to drive out the British and restore earlier rulers and social relations.
2. Religious movements for the liberation of a region or an ethnic group under a new form of government.
3. Social banditry.
4. Terrorist vengeance with the idea of meting out collective justice.
5. Mass insurrections for the redress of particular grievances.

This classification, though useful, is nevertheless unsatisfactory. It is based on the apparent goals of the revolts rather than on the classes of the peasants involved and the strategies that they adopted in attaining their goals. It also ignores some important peasant movements which were linked to the nationalist movement in some way or the other.

K. P. Kannan divides the historical process of rural labour struggles developing on class lines into three phases. They are:

1. Protest movements based on caste or religious identity and consciousness but basically a response generated by the emerging capitalist mode of production and hence directed against repressive social and cultural practices.
2. Secular movements arising from category (1) but rejecting caste identity and consciousness and appealing to the 'rationality' and 'brotherhood' of man.
3. The nationalist movement culminating in radical political consciousness—the seeds of which were in category (2)—culminating in 'class consciousnesses and class-based movements (1988: 90).

Kannan is aware of the overlapping in these categories. Though the classifications are important, one wonders how useful they are to activists for developing 'class consciousness' and class-based movements. Pushpendra Surana (1983) classifies peasant movements into eight types, mainly based on issues such as, the movements against forced cultivation of a particular type of crop, exploitation by moneylenders, price rise, outside invaders, dynasties. The limitation of such a classification is obvious, as more than one issue is often involved in many revolts.

Ranajit Guha adopts a different method of looking at peasant movements in his book, *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India* (1983a). He examines peasant insurgency from the perspective of peasant consciousness for revolt. He delineates the underlying structural features of tribal consciousness of the peasants, namely, negation, solidarity, transmission, territoriality, etc. This can help us to understand why and how the peasants rebel. Guha and others are not in favour of classifying the struggles into categories which have a greater element of arbitrariness. Social realities are complex and it is misleading to divide them artificially. According to them, paradigms are important in analysing complexities. Though this is a better way of comprehending complex reality, and not without problems, it is still worth attempting.

ISSUES

There was a tendency among the British officers and historians to depict some of the revolts as communal riots, or mere banditry. The Moplah rebellions of the nineteenth century and the early 1920s in Malabar and The Wahabi and Faraidi uprisings of the 1930s in Bengal were interpreted primarily as Hindu-Muslim communal clashes, rather than as conflicts of economic interest between tenants and landlords, merely because the two groups happened to belong to different communities. A study by Muinuddin Ahmad Khan on the Faraidji or Farazi movement (1965) states that all the sufferings of the Muslim peasants in the last century were due to oppression by the Hindu community. According to this school, the Farazi uprisings were communal outbursts by the Muslim peasantry against 'the non-muslim landed gentry.' A similar approach is followed by Stephen Dale in his study on the Moplah revolts in Malabar. According to him the main motivation of the Mappilas (Moplahs) was not economic grievances but the desire to secure paradise by dying in defense of the faith (Wood 1992). Conrad Wood though, does not agree with Dale and explains how religious networks and bonds contributed to the revolts in Malabar. He shows that Islam provided a means of solidarity in a region of poor communications and isolated settlements. Mosques provided a rallying point (1992). Such explanations are contested by others. It is argued that though religion plays an important role in mobilising peasants, to provide religion- centric explanations of the revolts and ignore internal social differences and socio-economic factors is a gross misrepresentation of peasant society. The studies on the Moplah uprisings by Dhanagare (1983), Arnold (1979a) V. Panikkar (1979) and Namboodiripad (1943) argue that the uprisings were mainly related to agrarian conflicts between tenants and landlords, though the former happened to be Muslims and the latter Hindus. Moreover, it should be noted that some of the leaders of the Moplah rebellion were Hindus. Panikkar observes,

That a total communal cleavage ever existed during the Rebellion cannot be accepted. In many villages the Mappilas protected the Hindus from the rebels coming from outside.

Individual cases of the Hindus being saved by unknown Mappilas were numerous. In Ponnani the Hindus and Mappilas jointly persuaded the rebels from Tanur to depart. Even in Eranad, during the thick of the rebellion, Hindus and Muslims lived together in peace.... The rebellion of 1921 cannot really be interpreted in communal terms. On the contrary, in the background of the economic condition of the peasantry, the pattern of rebel activity and the classes to which the participants belonged, it is reasonable to suggest that the Rebellion was a continuation of the agrarian conflicts of the 19th century (1979: 623).

Narahari Kaviraj makes similar observations in the cases of the Wahabi and Farazi uprisings of Bengal in the last century. He notes,

One thing must be clear, that neither the Barsat rising nor the Farazi [Faraidi] agitation was a case of communal outburst. These were definitely not cases of Muslim fanaticism pitted against Hindu fanaticism. The target of attack was the Zamindars. Most of them belonged to the Hindu community. At the same time, the Muslim Zamindars, who were few, were not spared. European planters, the worst oppressors of the peasants, were indiscriminately attacked. Throughout the course of the movement, its agrarian aspect took precedence over the communal one. From the beginning to the end, it was predominantly agrarian in character (1972: 110-11).

Though these scholars reject simplistic interpretations based on community, they do accept that there were religious overtones to these uprisings (Arnold 1979a; Wood 1992). Hardgrave (1977) emphasises the multiplicity of factors such as agrarian discontent, the perceived threat to Islam, the Congress-Khilafat agitation, inflammatory newspaper reports, and the “provocation by government officials and police that contributed ‘to the “explosive combination” that produced the Moplah rebellion of 1921 in Malabar.

The peasant community in Bengal, however, argues Partha Chatterjee (1982, 1983, 1986), was united by religion. There was a consciousness or communal rights and communal solidarity among members. In such a community ‘each individual conducts himself only as a link, as a member of the community proprietor or possessor (1982: 12). Political power is organised as the authority of the entire collectivity. Chatterjee uses the concept ‘communal mode of power to explain communal solidarity and the political autonomous character of the agricultural community where differentiations were not sharp. According to him, ‘the communal mode of power exists where individual or sectional rights, entitlements and obligations are allocated on the authority of the entire social collectivity, i.e., the community. The tension between the peasant community of East Bengal, predominantly comprising Muslims, and the state, dominated by landlords, moneylenders and urban traders, led to riots between 1926 and 1935. In such riots,

the ideology which shaped and gave meaning to the various collective acts of the peasantry was fundamentally religious. The very nature of peasant consciousness, the apparently consistent unification of an entire set of beliefs about nature and about men in the collective and active mind of a peasantry, is religious. Religion to such a community provides an ontology, an epistemology as well as practical code of ethics, including political ethics. When this community acts politically, the symbolic meaning of particular acts—their significance—must be found in religious terms (1982: 31).

For Partha, David Hardiman clarifies, ‘community’ does not mean social group (1992a). It is a form of social consciousness. It exists in a relationship of opposition to

those who are not of the community. According to Hardiman the boundaries of the community

shift and change according to context and circumstance. Thus, in a conflict between moneylenders and peasants, the 'peasant community' would include all those who are exploited by the moneylenders. Subsequently, in the same region, there might be a conflict between a dominant landed peasantry (a category which coincides with a caste or congeries of castes) and agricultural labourers (who tend to be from a congeries of subordinate castes and outcastes) (ibid.: 9-10).

Such formulation is an important and necessary caution to those scholars who tend to reduce everything to simple economic factors. The notion of community and class/economic interests in different space and time contexts requires further probing than what is provided by these scholars. There is a tendency to swing to the other side, according primacy to religion. Moreover, as the mode of production undergoes changes over a period of time, class differentiations within a religious community take place undermining communal solidarity. Javeed Alam questions the 'mode of power' as a conceptual scheme. The basic error in this conceptualisation flows from the notion that the survival of elements from the historical order of development can have the same significance in the making of political power in periods of capitalist transformation as they would before the beginning of capitalism (1983: 51).

It is argued by many that the peasants revolted against exploitation and oppression when their economic condition deteriorated. These changes may be classified under three heads:

1. Deterioration of their economic condition due to price rise, famine, etc.
2. Structural changes, which cause an increase in the exploitation of peasants, consequently deteriorating their condition.
3. Rising aspirations of peasants to improve their condition.

Most of these studies on the peasantry carried out during the pre- or post-independence periods assert that at a given point of time when the peasants revolted, their economic condition was deteriorating. L. Natrajan, in his study on the 1875 Maratha uprising observes,

Meanwhile the conditions of the farmers were deteriorating rapidly. Cotton prices which had sky-rocketed during the American Civil War in the sixties had fallen into a deep slump. Together with this, all other agricultural prices had started to fall rapidly. There was a general agricultural repression. Farmers' cash income suffered a disastrous blow (1979a: 162).

According to Majid Hayat Siddiqi (1978), the rise in prices of inferior foodgrains consumed by the tenants and agricultural labourers, was one of the factors underlying agrarian unrest in north India during 1918-22. Kapil Kumar also observes, 'Another important factor responsible for tensions in the rural society of Oudh was the rise in prices of essential commodities, especially during the war period (1984: 58). The peasants of Kheda, in Gujarat, joined the *Satyagraha* in 1918 because of their deteriorating condition during World War I. The Kharif crop of 1917 had failed and prices of various commodities, including wages of labourers increased (Hardiman 1981 a). Deteriorating conditions were an important factor for the Telengana (1946-51) and

Tebhaga (1946-47) movements in Andhra and West Bengal (S. Banerjee 1980; Dhanagare 1983). A series of revolts by agricultural labourers and tenants in the late 1960s and 1970s of this century were also partly due to the rise in the prices of essential commodities.

However, some scholars feel that the relationship between high prices and the peasant struggle do not have a significant correlation; at most a relationship between the two can be 'established in very general terms' (Henningham 1982; Oommen 1985). In fact, Sunil Sen goes further and argues that, 'There is evidence to show that the peasants, living in scattered villages, often rose in struggle when the situation appeared to be favourable; they hardly embarked on a revolution when their misery was at its most acute' (1982: 242). However, Henningham does not seem to support Sunil Sen's position. He warns against 'simple minded economic determinism', and stresses the intervention of organisation and ideology in launching and sustaining peasant movements. He argues that if deprivation was in itself sufficient to cause revolt, then the modern history of India would be characterised by uninterrupted turmoil, instead of consisting of long periods of relative quiet punctuated by outbursts of popular fury and by generally short lived agitation over particular issues. In addition to economic deprivation, the eruption of subaltern groups into political action required suitable occasion and the articulation of a moral justification in terms of their consciousness, for acts of physical force (ibid.: 152-53).

Balagopal (1988) also criticises the studies on peasant movements in the post-independence period which overemphasise the so-called 'objective conditions' and ignore subjective consciousness and the intervention of political parties in organising the peasants.

Famine was almost a regular feature of rural India in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and it has continued to be so to some extent even after independence, though it is now called 'drought' and not famine. Poor people live in conditions resembling famine as they are unable to buy food which is at-times scarce and expensive. Some scholars believe that Indian peasants did not revolt against authority even at the time of severe crises in which their very survival was at stake. N.G. Ranga and Swami Sahajanand Saraswati observe,

It is a sad commentary on the political capacity of our people that despite such terrible sufferings of the masses and the mass-deaths of workers and peasants and the outbreaks of cholera and other epidemics, in the wake of starvation and consumption of horrible things (ending in cannibalism also) no real and effective mass protest was organized by anyone or any organization against such inhuman state of things (1979: 48).

While analysing the Bengal famine of 1943-44, Paul Greenough (1982) argues that because of 'reciprocity' between peasant proprietors and labourers, the former accept the moral responsibility to help the poor in times of hardship and distress. Though this relationship breaks down during a famine, the starving peasants do not revolt because of their 'docile' character. The arguments cantering around 'reciprocity' have been challenged by quite a few scholars in recent years. Nevertheless, a number of studies on peasant uprisings mention that famine has remained a contributory factor in rural unrest and disturbances (Kumar 1984; Custers 1987). It produces 'a deepening division between rayiats and labourers'. Such a division reflects their separate class interests. In a famine

situation, agricultural labourers and other subaltern groups, including women, join together for collective action which often turns into a riot. Though historians and social scientists refer to famine as a cause, they have yet to explore its role in peasant uprisings in greater detail. David Arnold's paper on famine explores collective action by peasants in famine situations. During the early period of famine the poor peasants and labourers acted collectively in small bands against rich villagers, moneylenders and traders. 'But as the drought intensified and the effects of famine became more widespread, subaltern collectivity began to break down still further until appropriation and violence became expressions of individual frustrations, desperation and despair' (1984: 90),

Begar, *veth* or *vethi* (i.e., forced labour) was widely prevalent till independence. It is still prevalent, though in different forms. While discussing various peasant movements in Rajasthan between 1897 and 1941, Surana informs us that *begar* was performed by peasants, including the members of the upper castes, for the rulers of Mewar. The agricultural labourers and members of the lower castes were compelled to do all kinds of jobs including supplying water to the ruler's family, constructing buildings, roads, dams, carrying dead and wounded soldiers to their destination during and after war, etc.

The persons doing begar were very often beaten, they were not given adequate food, women doing the begar were insulted and molested, there was no consideration of rough weather and no time limit was fixed for it. Carts and animals were demanded to carry loads from one place to the other. Terrific atrocities such as these were attached to the system. So much so, that a few persons died in the process (Surana 1983: 33-34).

V. Raghavaiah observes that the immediate cause of the 1922-23 peasant uprising in Andhra Pradesh 'was the extraction of free forced labour from the tribal people of the Andhra Agency for constructing a highway penetrating thick jungles and across low hills from Narsipatnam to Chitapalli' (Surana 1979: 291).

During the peasant movement in Oudh (1919-22), the peasants took a pledge that they would not work as labourers without payment and those who violated the pledge experienced social boycott. The poor peasants and labourers of Telengana revolted against the *begar* system (Ram 1973). The poor Rajputs of Banaskantha in Gujarat launched a movement against forced labour in the early 1950s (Shah 1975). And the system continued in eastern India in the late 1960s against which the peasants fought. This movement is popularly known as the Naxalite movement (Mukherji 1979; S. Banerjee 1980; T. Banerjee 1980).

The landlords or rulers imposed various kinds of taxes on the peasants to meet the expenses of the 'royal' families. These taxes were customary and new taxes were invented as and when the rulers required more money. Their requirements varied and included all kinds of whimsical needs. In one district in Uttar Pradesh the landlord imposed a cess called 'gramophoning' when his son desired to buy a gramophone. One *talukdar* realised money from the peasants in the form of Pakwan cess when his wife had a boil on her leg which turned septic. Such indiscriminate imposition of taxes was a contributory factor in the Oudh revolt (Kumar 1984) and the peasant movements in Mewar between 1897 and 1915 (Surana 1983). Excessive taxation imposed by the Nizam was also one of the causes of the Telengana movement. Besides taxes, raising the land rent by the landlords was one of the factors in the peasant revolts in Rajasthan and Uttar

Pradesh (Siddiqi 1978; Surana 1983; Kumar 1984), and in some parts of Andhra Pradesh in the early nineteenth century (Ranga and Saraswati 1979).

Eviction of tenants as cultivators by moneylenders, landlords or government officers, was one of the causes for widespread disturbances in the last century. In the 1870s, as a result of the East India Company's auctioning land for the collection of land revenue, government officers and traders became the owners of land in Bihar and Bengal. The new owners raised the rent and they evicted cultivators to get more rent; the widespread rebellion in 1857 was due to the collusion between British officers and moneylenders which allowed the urban traders-cum-moneylenders to usurp land. S.B. Chaudhuri notes,

The public sale of land not merely uprooted the ordinary people from their small holdings but also destroyed the gentry of the country, and both the orders being victims of British civil law were united in the revolutionary epoch of 1857-58 in a common effort to recover what they had lost (1957:21).

He further argues,

'It was not so much the fear for their religion that provoked the rural classes and landed chiefs to revolt. It was the question of their rights and interests in the soil and hereditary holdings which excited them to a dangerous degree (Chaudhuri 1965: 136).

Eric Stokes (1978), in his studies on the Saharanpur and Muzaffarnagar districts of Uttar Pradesh, refutes Chaudhuri's argument. He presents detailed statistics of the two districts and suggests that 'the principal elements of revolt in 1857 came from castes and areas where the mahajan hold was lightest and the land revenue heaviest. More significantly, perhaps, these were the backward, thirsty tracts' (ibid.: 175). One has to study other areas to see whether Eric Stokes's thesis or that of Chaudhuri is correct.

Occupancy rights which were conferred on the tenants by the Bengal Rent Act X of 1859 were the central issue in the peasant struggle in Pabna in 1873. K.K. Sengupta observes,

the basic cause of this agrarian unrest was the persistent attempt of the local landlords to do away with the right of occupancy of a new class of ryots, the occupancy ryots, who had been browbeaten into existence by the Bengal Rent Act X of 1859. The agrarian movement in Pabna and other areas of Eastern and Central Bengal, was moreover, basically a movement of the substantial section of this type of tenantry who saw in the newly conferred occupancy right, a position of greater social responsibility for them in the rural society and more effective share in land control (1979: 179).

Similarly, the Rent Act, known as Imperial Act XIX of 1868 in Oudh, gave an inheritable right of occupancy to those tenants who had been able to show that they had formerly been proprietors, 'with 30 years preceding the annexation'. The control of the landlords on the tenants was so strong that the former succeeded in evicting the tenants from their land.

Such a situation, along with other factors, created tension in Oudh which led to uprisings in the 1920s and 1930s (Siddiqi 1978). Similar issues led to the Moplar uprising in Malabar in the 1880s and 1920s, the peasant movements in Rajasthan in the early twentieth century and the Telengana struggle, between 1946 and 1951 (Ram 1973; Hardgrave 1977; Dhanagare 1983). In post-independence India, tenants, sharecroppers and agricultural labourers asserted their right over the land that they had cultivated for a

long period. Distribution of equal land to all cultivators was one of the central issues in the Telengana movement in Andhra Pradesh in the late 1940s (Sunderayya 1972; Pavier 1974, 1981; Dhanagare 1983), the Tebhaga movement in Bengal in 1946-47 (Sen 1972; Dhanagare 1976; Sarkar 1979; Custers 1987), the Pardi satyagraha in the 1950s in Gujarat (Desai n. d.; Desai and Desai 1997; Desai 2002), the land grab movement (Prasad 1986; Sengupta 1986; Sengupta et al. 1986; Surjeet 1986) and the Naxalite movement (S. Banerjee 1980; T. Banerjee 1980; Ghosh 1992; Mukherji 1979) that developed during the late 1960s in different parts of the country, and the Bhoomi Sena and Shramik Sangathan movements in the 1970s in Maharashtra (Mies). The Bhoodan movement launched by Vinoba Bhave in the early 1950s, to counter the leftist movements, also focused the issue on the distribution of land. It followed a peaceful non-violent path of acquiring land from those who had more, and distributing it among the poor cultivators and landless labourers (Bhave 1953; Oommen 1970; Ostergaard 1985; Roy 2002; Sail 2002).’ Some struggles led by non-party people’s organisations demanded ‘community’ rights over land, forest and water. Their slogan in Madhya Pradesh was ‘*Jal, jangal, zameen. Ye hon janata ke adheen* (Land, water and forest, must be brought to the collective control of the people) (Ramagundam 2001; Sail 2002). The Chhattisgarh Mukti Morcha, an organisation of the peasants, adivasis and workers of mines and industries struggled for minimum wages, land rights and also social awakening (John 1998). In Rajasthan the Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan (MKSS) formed in 1990 launched struggles of the rural poor for minimum wages, land rights, employment and development programmes. It raised the issue of corruption in the implementation of development programmes. One of the important offspring’s of their struggle is the campaign for the people’s right to information (MKSS 2002). These innovative movements of the rural poor are talked about a lot but not studied by social scientists.

Changes in the mode of production in agriculture have disturbed the traditional agrarian relationships which also led to peasant unrest. Under British rule, land became a marketable commodity and commercialised agriculture developed during the late nineteenth century. Barrington Moore argues that wherever commercial agriculture led to the proletarianisation of peasantry, traditional bonds get eroded, providing possibilities of insurrection. Majid Siddiqi observes that with an increasing commercialisation of agriculture between 1860 and 1920, the landlords who used to collect rent in cash started collecting rent in grain, the price of which was high.

As the Rent Act of 1886 limited the landlord’s authority to enhance rents, he would change a formerly cash rented area into a grain rented one. At the end of the tenant’s statutory period, he would be able to again convert the grain rent into a cash rent.... This technique of profiting from the rise in prices was particularly adopted in the districts of the Eka movement, a few years before the eruption of the agrarian crisis in a violent form (1978: 83).

Dhanagare however, argues that commercial agriculture was not accompanied by any large-scale ‘modernisation of agriculture’. Commercialisation of agriculture developed in India without disturbing fundamentally feudal agrarian relationships.

Consequently, the middlemen, whether money-lenders, traders or local businessmen (many of them were landowners themselves), and also rich peasants, made fortunes by skimming off increasingly larger shares of the produce for marketing, sometimes even by

resorting to forms of usury, exploitation and tyranny. Where the burden on the peasantry grew enormously as a result of this peculiar development of commercial agriculture (for example, in Malabar, Bengal and Telengana) peasant revolts occurred. Thus the lag between development of market relations, and the capitalist mode of production in the countryside seems to be conducive to peasant mobilisation (1983: 225; see also, Thorner 1956).

However, since the green revolution accompanied with capitalist agriculture, penetration of market economy and globalisation, the peasant struggles have undergone change. Farmers' organisations such as the Shetkari Sangathana in Maharashtra, Bhartiya Kisan Union (BKU) in Uttar Pradesh, Khedut Samaj in Gujarat, Tamil Nadu and Punjab have come into existence with political clout. They demand 'remunerative prices' of their produce, concessions and subsidies in the prices of agricultural inputs, electricity charges, irrigation charges and betterment levies, etc. (Omvedt 1993; Brass 1994a; Gupta 1997; Lindberg 1997). They have raised the slogan, 'Bharat against India!' Bharat is the indigenous name for India representing the peasant community, and India is the westernised name, representing urban centres with industrial production. They assert for a change in the development paradigm from industrial development to agricultural development.

Though land reform is no longer on the government's agenda in the 1990s, a number of struggles led by political parties and non-party organisations for the implementation of various land reforms enacted by the state continue. They demand land to the tillers (Sandhu 2001), implementation of land ceiling acts and distribution of land to poor cultivators and landless labourers (Desai and Desai 1997; Desai 2002; Ramagundam 2001; Roy 2002) and other states.

This is a romantic view of the peasant community which at least does not exist in several parts of India particularly after the green revolution. The rural-urban divide has been blurred, and in many places, rich peasants have begun to invest their agricultural surplus in industries and other urban sectors. It is also wrongly assumed that a section of the peasants—rich peasants—cannot be a part of the ruling classes. In the 1980s and thereafter the rich peasants in Gujarat have argued that the adivasis affected by the Narmada dam should sacrifice their land for 'national interests'. They play a significant part in the Hindutva politics against minorities.

The Kisan Sabha, the leading leftist organisation in the pre-independence period, 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 mobilised to capture state power, though one class was more active than the other (Ram 1973; Pavier 1981; Dhanagare 1983). In the Naxalite movement in West Bengal in 1968-69, the participants ran from 'rich peasants to agricultural labourers' (Mukherji 1979). Similar efforts have been made by Sharad Joshi and Naidu in mobilising rich peasants and labourers in the rich peasant movements in Maharashtra, Punjab and Tamil Nadu (Omvedt 1980; Talib 1986).

Following Lenin and Mao Tse-tung some of the Marxist scholars who made the studies in the 1960s and thereafter, classify the peasants into different classes or strata. Hamza Alavi argues, 'where several modes of production coexist, classes cannot be

arranged in a single linear hierarchical order because they must be structurally differentiated' (1973: 293). According to him, in 'traditional historical situations' there are 'three sectors' of the rural economy, or three modes of production. In the first place, we have the sector whose essential distinguishing feature is that the land is owned by landlords who do not undertake cultivation themselves. Their land is cultivated by landless tenants mostly share-croppers who are classed as poor peasants. The second sector is that of independent smallholders who own no more land than they can cultivate themselves and enough of it to make them self-sufficient. They do not exploit the labour of others; nor is their labour exploited by others. They are the middle peasants. A third sector is that of capitalist farmers, also described as rich farmers, who own a substantial amount of land and whose farming is primarily based on the exploitation of wage labour, although they may participate in farm work themselves. Unlike landlords, they undertake the business of farming and employ capital in it. Alavi makes a significant distinction between the middle peasants on the one hand and rich and poor peasants on the other. He characterises the middle peasants 'by their economic independence (from landlords and rich peasants), whereas in the other two sectors—sharecropping and capitalist farming—the mode of production is characterised by the exploitation of the poor peasants and their economic dependence on their masters' (1973:294).

Daniel Thorner (1956) divides the peasants of post-independence India into three classes on the basis of 'the kind of rights and kind of services' they receive or offer. The classes are: *malik*, *kisan* and *mazdoor*. The *maliks* derive their income primarily from property rights in the land and their common interest is to keep the level of rents up while keeping the wage level down. They collect rents from tenants, sub-tenants and share-croppers. The *maliks* are sub-divided into (a) big landlords who are absentee owners/rentiers with absolutely no interest in land management; (b) rich landowners who supervise cultivation and take a personal interest in the management of land. The *kisan* are working peasants who have a property interest in the land but actual rights, whether legal or customary, inferior to those of *maliks*. They are divided into (a) small landowners having holdings sufficient to support a family, who cultivate land with family labour and do not either employ outside labour (except to harvest) or receive rent; (b) substantial tenants the size of whose holding is usually above the sufficiency level. The *mazdoors* earn their livelihood primarily from working on others' land. They include: (a) poor tenants; (b) sharecroppers; and (c) landless labourers. Some economists have classified the peasants into four categories: landlords, rich peasants, middle peasants, poor peasants and landless agricultural labourers. Some studies on peasant movements have either adopted these categories (Das 1983), or combined them with Thorner's categories (Dhanagare 1983).

Gail Omvedt treats the contemporary farmers' movements as 'new' and non-class movements. According to her these movements are based in the 'middle-range' areas 'of commodity production'; they have had little strength either in the most hierarchical and unequalitarian regions (the coastal areas, such as Thanjavur district) or in the more backward eastern states. In these regions they have not been limited to 'rich and middle peasants', confined only to those who sell crops. The mobilisation ranges from quite poor peasants (many of whom are also agricultural labourers) to rich ones and associated small professionals and shopkeepers and from very low shudra castes to 'dominant caste peasants' and even upper castes (1994: 45). She further argues—

ideologies of the farmers' movement thus provided a clear challenge to Marxism that limited its analysis only to capital-labour struggles as defined within a realm of commodity exchange; they looked to a wider arena of capital accumulation and economic exploitation taking into account factors other than class defined in the narrow sense, and in many ways their thrust coincided with that of the developing environmental movements (1993: 125).

Dhanagare and many others contest such a view. According to them the phrases like 'the environment' or 'poor peasants' used by the farmers' movement are rhetorical. It is a discursive form which enables rich peasants to reinforce their hegemony over the movement (1995). Tom Brass argues,

not only is the radical new agenda claimed by/for new social movements neither radical nor new, but the complicity of the new farmers' movements, ecofeminism, and sections of the left with what is an historically long-standing neo-populist/nationalist/(communal) discourse about the interrelationship between people/peasants/ gender/nature/nation has contributed towards the reproduction of an ideological space which permits right-wing political organizations to re-appropriate the Indian past (to undertake 'resistance' in defence of 'popular culture', in other words) with the object of creating an ethnically specific Indian state (1994a: 48).

Non-Marxist scholars, like Andre Beteille and the Rudolphs also classify Indian peasants into economic classes. Though Andre Beteille (1974) is not against the classificatory method, he points out the danger of arbitrariness. He argues in favour of 'additional criteria', other than merely economic ones, to determine an objective basis for classification. Rudolph and Rudolph (1984) divide the rural population into four agrarian economic classes: (a) agricultural labourers; (b) small landholders; (c) bullock capitalists and (d) large landholders. Unlike Marxists, they do not assume that necessary antagonisms or a principal contradiction exist among these classes. Most of their categories are more or less similar to what other scholars have used except the category of the middle peasant. Instead, they use the term 'bullock capitalists' for those who are self-employed and have holdings large enough to support a pair of bullocks and make use of the inputs associated with the green revolution during the 1960s and 1970s.

However, the 'middle peasant' category has generated a lot of debate among scholars. Kapil Kumar (1984) argues that there were no 'middle peasants', as classified by Alavi in Oudh during 1886-1922. As many as 98 per cent of the tenants did not enjoy occupancy rights. They were tenants at will. Like Alavi, some scholars lump all tenants together into one category. Kapil Kumar, however, classifies the tenant-peasants on the basis of the rent they paid. Krishna Kanta Sarkar divided the sharecroppers on the basis of their 'poverty or prosperity'.

'Poor' are those families which could not support themselves for several months of the year. Most of the poor peasants had no land of their own and were absolutely dependent on rented land. They themselves worked and did not employ agricultural labour. The landless wage-labourers belonged to this category. The 'middle' category was almost self-sufficient in food-stuff; some had a few maunds surplus, while others had a little deficit.... The rich family was one which possessed considerable amount of land (70-125 bighas, i.e., 40-70 acres) and did not rely on rented land (1979: 478).

David Hardiman (1981a) classified peasants on the basis of the size of land holding. For him, rich peasants own more than 15 acres, middle peasants own between 3 and 15 acres and the poor peasants own less than 3 acres. His study is confined to the Kheda district of Gujarat between 1917 and 1934. During that period there were tenants and sharecroppers in the district, but information on their land ownership is not available, hence Hardiman does not classify them into different strata.

On the basis of his analysis regarding the role of various classes of the peasantry in the Chinese and Russian revolutions, and the Tebhaga and Telengana movements in India led by the Communist Party, Hamza Alavi argues that the middle peasants, who are economically somewhat more independent, have greater potential than other peasant classes to play a revolutionary role. He argues that the poor peasants are initially the least militant class because of their dependence on landlords or rich peasants.

The poor peasant is thankful to his master, a benefactor who gives him land to cultivate as a tenant or gives him a job as labourer. He looks to his master for help in times of crisis. The master responds paternalistically; he must keep alive the animal on whose labour he thrives. When, in extreme and exceptional cases, the exploitation and oppression are carried beyond the point of human endurance, the peasant may be goaded into killing his master for this departure from the paternalistic norm, but he is unable to rise, by himself, against the system. His dependence on his master thus undergoes a paternalistic mystification and he identifies with his master. This backwardness of the poor peasant, rooted as it is in an objective dependence, is only a relative and not an absolute condition. In a revolutionary situation, when anti-landlord and anti-rich peasant sentiment is built up by, say, the militancy of middle peasants, his morale is raised and he is more ready to respond to calls to action. His revolutionary energy is set in motion.... The middle peasants, on the other hand, are initially the most militant element of the peasantry, and they can be a powerful ally of the proletarian movement in the countryside, especially in generating the initial impetus of the peasant revolution. But this social perspective is limited by their class position. When the movement in the countryside advances to a revolutionary stage, they may move away from the revolutionary movement unless their fears are allayed and they are drawn into a process of cooperative endeavour (1973: 333-34).

On the basis of his study of Kerala, Robin Jeffrey suggests that it is 'the middle peasants who are most likely initially to become active participants in such a movement, though poor peasants may be involved later in villages where the movement acquires a firm hold (1978: 148).

Dhanagare argues that Alavi's contention regarding the potentialities of middle peasants for a revolutionary role is basically a substitution of one myth with another. For example, the structural independence of the middle peasant has been overemphasised by Alavi and Wolf, and they have overstated the political mobility and strategic position of the middle peasant in the agrarian class structure. Alavi has ignored the fact that the chief source of agricultural credit for the middle peasant in India was, until recently, the village moneylender, landlord or rich landowner. Similarly, Alavi and Wolf both understate the middle peasant's attachment to land and the vulnerability of his class position in the rural social structure. Wolf does not take cognisance of the marginality of the middle peasants' class position nor of the conflicting roles they had to perform, namely, 'conserving the

peasant tradition' and dynamiting the social order. But Wolf has failed to perceive a theoretical possibility that the middle peasant, while responding to the conflicting pressures and performing contradictory roles under stress, may not always undertake an innovative or rebellious enterprise and that he may not provide the initial thrust and leadership in a revolutionary movement. He may show 'retreatist' or withdrawal symptoms. Thus, the middle peasant thesis seems untenable logically (Dhanagare 1983: 219-20).

According to Dhanagare, in terms of class solidarity, the middle peasants are weaker than other agrarian classes. Their landed interests are more heterogeneous than those of the rich and poor peasants.

Moreover, historically speaking, middle peasants have always been a transitional and fluid social category. Under the pressures of prosperity or pauperisation, the middle peasantry had to cope with the in and outflows. Also, increasing polarisation of agrarian relations has tended to eliminate the middle peasant as a very significant social category in India . . . the notion of structural independence of the middle peasantry which implies that it is self-reliant, free from market forces and capable of militant political action, appears to be a mythical construct (ibid.: 221-22).

Arvind Das argues that there was no significant difference between the middle peasant and the rich peasant in India. He asserts: 'to speak of the middle peasantry as the revolutionary vanguard when one really means the rich peasantry is to euphemistically give "respectability" to an otherwise incomplete and even exploitative traditional phase of agrarian struggle' (1983:15-16).

Hamza Alavi has tried to examine his middle peasant thesis at the empirical level. To him the Tebhaga movement was initially a movement of middle peasants. Sharecroppers were drawn into it at a later stage. He supports his contention by the fact that the leading members of Tebhaga committees were middle peasants. He makes almost the same observations regarding the Telengana movement, in which the demands were broad-based in the initial stage and which drew in the middle peasant as well as the poor peasant. One of the reasons for the failure of the movement, he argues, was that it became sectarian and lost the support of the middle peasants.

Dhanagare agrees with Alavi that most of the leaders of the Kisan Sabha in Bengal belonged to middle peasants. But they did not participate actively in the Tebhaga movement because

some petty jotedars and under-rayiats, active in the Kisan Sabha, employed bargadars for cultivating their lands, and the tebhaga demand had affected many of them as much as it had affected the rich peasants and big jotedars. This explains why the middle peasants either turned indifferently to the movement or sided with the big jotedars gradually (1983: 173).

A study of two villages involved in the Tebhaga movement by Krishna Kanta Sarkar (1979) also does not support Alavi's conclusions, though both differ in their concepts of 'middle' and 'poor' peasants. According to the findings of Sarkar, the poor section had the maximum involvement in the movement, whereas the middle section of the peasants remained passive. One should not, however, generalise on the basis of two villages and Sarkar does not tell us from which strata of peasantry the leadership came.

Barry Pavier's (1981) and Dhanagare's (1983) studies on the Telengana movement also do not support Alavi's contention. Pavier observes that,

Initially the Telengana movement was indeed a multi-class movement against the desmukhs—multi-class in the sense that everyone else was involved.... It is also true to say that, certainly in the initial stages, most of the leading cadres of the Andhra Mahasabha and the CPI came from 'rich' or 'middle' peasant families. It is also clear that the nature of the movement changed. The people who carried on the movement from 1948 were the agricultural labourers and poor peasants; they were the people who were doing most of the fighting, and they were the people, who along with declassed people from other peasant sections, were CPI cadres (1981: 191).

Dhanagare also argues that the Telengana movement had a mixed class character. However, the principal participants in the sustained revolt were 'unquestionably the poor peasants and landless labourers'. According to him, the middle peasants did not play 'any spectacular part, since on the whole, they did not constitute a significant social category in Telengana either numerically or "politically" (1983: 204). Peter Ousters (1987) also makes similar observations.

In his study on the Kheda *Satyagraha*, David Hardiman argues that the middle peasants (owning 3-5 acres of land) provided the bulk of support for the movement. The rich peasants had consolidated their power largely at the expense of the middle peasants. 'With less land and smaller share of the resources, the middle peasants were less able to weather economic crises. When such crises occurred in the early twentieth century, their long-felt discontent burst forth in the form of fervent nationalism' (1981a: 208). Hardiman further argues that 'on several occasions middle peasants pressurised rich peasants into joining nationalist agitations' (ibid.: 247). The *Satyagraha* also received the support of the 'subsistence peasants because they suffered great hardship during the first three decades of the twentieth century'. Hardiman supports his argument with empirical evidence. However, one has to examine to what extent 'the middle peasants' of Kheda were close to the rich peasants in terms of their income. It should be noted that Kheda was the most fertile part of Gujarat. Neil Charlesworth (1980) holds the view that Hardiman's characterisation of 'middle peasants' of Kheda was inappropriate as they were relatively richer than the rich peasants of south-west Maharashtra.

In his study on the Champaran *Satyagraha*, Jacques Pouchepadass (1974) reveals that the main leaders of the movement belonged to middle or rich peasants. A study on the Eka (1978), also suggests that the rich peasants played a predominant role in the revolt. Studies of the Bardoli *Satyagraha* by Shah (1974) and Dhanagare (1983) reveal the same pattern. A study by Stephen Henningham (1982) on peasant movements in north Bihar points out that between 1917 and 1942, six major peasant movements developed under 'the direction of rich peasants and small landholders'. While analysing various peasant movements in India, Sunil Sen (1982) also argues that the rich peasants played a leading role in the abolition of the feudal system as they were interested in improving farming and selling food grains and cash crops in the market. Myron Wetner (1963) observes that the majority of the leaders of the West Bengal Kisan Sabha till 1957 belonged to 'intermediary families that own but do not till the soil'.

Kathleen Gough (1968) identifies the poor peasants and agricultural labourers as having the potential for organising revolutionary movements in India. Dhanagare also

takes the same position. He argues that they form 'an overwhelmingly large section of the rural society but have also demonstrated their transformative potential from time to time' (1983: 222). Robert Hardgrave (1977), in his study on the Moplah rebellion of 1921 shows that the poorest tenant cultivators of Kerala were more militant than the middle and rich peasant owner cultivators. T. K. Oommen also observes that 'peasant mobilisation in Malabar was first identified among Verumpattomdas, who can be described as small peasants, and only at the second stage [did] the Kanmodars who may well be called middle peasants enter the struggle' (1985: 45). He further asserts that in independent India the poor peasants and agricultural labourers play a leading role in peasant movements. Kapil Kumar (1984), in his study on Oudh, shows that the poor peasants played a significant role in the movement against the zamindars. He observes that 'the poor peasantry of Oudh emerged as a potential revolutionary class'. For Arvind Das also, the poor peasants and agricultural labourers have the potential to lead revolutionary struggles. As mentioned earlier, they were the backbone of the Telengana movement. Some other studies also reveal the militant role played by agricultural labourers in various movements. Agricultural labourers of Thane district of Maharashtra launched a struggle demanding higher wages in 1946-48 (Parulekar 1979). They were also very active in land grab movements in the late 1960s. There were also a number of agricultural labourers-cum-poor peasants' movements in different parts of the country against the landlords, middle and rich peasants and the government during the 1970s and 1980s. Some of them aimed at bringing about a 'revolutionary' change in agrarian structure.

Swasti Mitter (1977) observes that in West Bengal the power structure based on the concentration of land holdings is on the wane, giving way to a broader-based middle peasant economy. Hence, conflict between middle peasants and agricultural labourers has come to the fore. Pradhan Prasad notes that the organised movement of the poor peasantry in some parts of Bihar 'successfully mounted pressure on landlords and rich peasantry by resorting to strikes for higher wages, public meetings and demonstrations to protest against unlawful and exploitative actions of the rural rich and sometimes to armed intervention to prevent eviction of sharecroppers' (1975: 1934). There have been constant struggles in Bihar and Andhra Pradesh in the 1970s and 1980s between the haves and have-nots in agrarian society (CPI[ML] 1986; Das 1987; Balagopal 1988).

A number of peasant movements in the pre-independence period were multi-class in nature, involving the rich, the middle, as well as the poor peasants. A study of Dhanagare, (1983) finds that in the Telengana upsurge the rich peasants dominated the movement and manipulated the alliance in such a manner that their interests were protected. He observes that the alliance worked as long as more 'fundamental issues such as land seizures, ceilings and distribution did not threaten its solidarity' (ibid.: 202). In Telengana, the rich and middle peasants took advantage of their dominant position in distributing the seized land. Swasti Mitter (1977) also finds the same conflict in West Bengal between relatively affluent sharecroppers and poor *bargadars*; the former were placed in an advantageous position. Similarly, T.K. Oommen argues in his study on Kerala:

while there is every possibility of the peasantry and agrarian proletariat combining their might against the feudal/landed interest at the initial stages, once the disabilities of the peasants (tenants, sharecroppers, etc.) are removed either through legislations or

through movements (and usually as a combined effect of these operating in union) it is extremely unlikely that they continue to remain allies. In all probability the newly prosperous owner/cultivators may come to view the agrarian proletariat as their enemies, if the latter make organised efforts to demand better working conditions (1985: 137).

Kapil Kumar asserts that there would be different sources of peasant mobilisation and political action.

As a section of the peasantry succeeds in meeting its own demands, it either withdraws from the agitation or curbs the agitation of those who are poorer than them. During the pre-independence period, the tenants or middle peasants joined various struggles, but they withdrew as soon as the tenants got occupancy rights or rich and middle peasants improved their condition. In several cases, the rich peasants or zamindars succeeded in seeking the support of poor peasants and labourers to meet their own class interests (Azad 1975; Shah 1988b). The experience of the Telengana movement, the land grab movement and the Bhoomi Sena movement, reveals that the better-off strata acquired land as a result of the movement and then withdrew from the struggle (Alexander 1975a; Pavier 1981). Studies on the Naxalite movement also tell the same tale (CPI[ML] 1986; Das 1987; Duyker 1987).

A major criticism against the Naxalite movement was that it did not build up a 'mass line'. The leaders of the movement failed to mobilise and organise a substantial number of poor and landless peasants (S. Banerjee 1980). And that led to changes their strategy and participation in electoral politics (Mukherji 1987; Hauser 1993; S. Banerjee 2002). Maria Mies, in her study on the Shahada movement, Maharashtra, points out the dilemma of the 'mass line' theory in small pockets. She argues that in its course, the movement formed an organisation of poor peasants and labourers and launched their struggle. But 'the organised masses proved to be powerless as soon as the ruling class as a whole reacted with systematic and direct repression of their demands' (1976a: 480-81).

Some scholars argue that it is difficult to arrive at a theory regarding the 'revolutionary' role of a particular agrarian class because the struggle was of a complex nature during the colonial period. Partha Chatterjee states:

The analysis of the agrarian class struggles in Bengal in the last decades of colonial rule, in fact, shows us the inappropriateness of any simple linear explanations, whether of the combined resistance of all subordinate classes to colonial rule, or of the opposition between capitalist owners and propertyless labourers. Even if we reduce these struggles to relations between a small numbers of fundamental elements, we are still left with a variety of possible alignments and combinations, differing from region to region and from period to period according to the specific structural formation and the historical conjuncture (1986: 201).

Attempts have been made by the leftist parties and groups to form an alliance between peasants and industrial workers in agrarian movements. Some studies observe that the urban industrial trade union workers in some parts of Kerala extended their support to agricultural labourers in their struggle (Kannan 1988). The studies on the Telengana and Naxalite movements also inform us about the attempts at forming alliances between the industrial workers and agricultural labourers. However, the alliance did not continue for long. This aspect of some of these movements needs detailed inquiry.

Women constitute half of the peasants but their role in the struggles, despite their heroic participation, has been, more often than not, ignored or minimised by male scholars. Regarding women's participation in the Telengana struggle, P. Sunderraya, one of the leaders of the movement, noted,

The story of their heroic and stubborn resistance in defending their personal dignity, against molestation, torture and rape, was [an] inspiring one! Their awakening to new social equality, to a moral and cultural life, their stubborn fighting quality, gave a glimpse of that tremendous revolutionary spirit and energy smouldering in our economically and socially oppressed women folk (1972: 328).

Kapil Kumar (1984), in his study on the peasants' revolt in Oudh, and K.P. Kannan (1988), in his study on the rural labourers' movement in Kerala, highlight the active participation of women in the struggles. Peter Custers's study (1987) is so far the only one which mainly focuses on the role of women in peasant uprisings, highlighting their participation in the Tebhaga and Telengana peasant uprisings. Kannan points out that women's participation was limited at the organisational, leadership and decision-making levels (1988: 134). During the 1990s several scholars have revisited the peasant struggles from a gender perspective which we shall discuss in Chapter 7.

LEADERSHIP

Leaders are responsible for translating objective causes into subjective consciousness and mobilising peasants. It is the contention of some scholars that peasants by themselves cannot lead any revolutionary movement. Shanin (1972) argues that traditional peasant struggles can never assume a genuinely political character unless they are taken over by leaders belonging to social layers politically more advanced than the peasants themselves. Kapil Kumar concludes from his study on the peasant revolt in Uttar Pradesh that, 'the peasant leadership on its own part, failed to articulate coherently the demand for the abolition of feudalism. Their lack of a clear cut ideology failed them when they needed it most—in the face of a crisis' (1984: 233). Jacques Pouchepadass (1974: 81) observes that the educated intelligentsia provided leadership to most of the peasant movements during the nationalist period. Their role was significant in the Champaran movement.

Those urban intellectuals did not create the rebellion, since they were as unable as ever to stir up the peasants 'from the top'. But this time, the angry peasants themselves called them in, so that the scale of their movement could be widened. And thanks to this mediation the local agitation developed into a district-wide movement, and even spread to some extent into the adjoining indigo districts. More important still, this mediation brought about a radical change in the objectives of the movement. From sporadic flare-ups of hostility against individual planters or factories, the disturbance turned into a global contestation of the Champaran indigo question.

Partha Chatterjee also points out that 'the middle-class intelligentsia' which had lost its ties of material interest with the land provided 'the organised cadres of the new parties of mass mobilisation'. Their intervention provided 'a radical edge to the anti-landlord demands of the mass of the tenancy, but it has continued to display an ambivalent attitude towards the "progressive" historical potentiality of the new contradiction' (1986: 203-4). Kapil Kumar also maintains that the urban leadership really exploited peasant discontent

to further its own political and party ends. The leadership of the Naxalite movement rested with the youths who belonged to the urban-educated middle class. Swasti Mitter (1977) observes that in the land grab movement, the leadership came from the urban better-off section of society. However, the outside leadership is not without its problems. Partha Mukherji remarks,

On the one hand was the urban-based leadership which cloaked in a more sophisticated ideology, claimed superior knowledge and status with regard to the manner in which the movement should be conducted. They would insist that the others follow the direction they gave and assured that the predicted outcome would ensue (1979: 75-76).

Dipankar Gupta, in his study on farmers' movements, shows that 'the thesis that peasants are incapable of thinking ideologically, and require leadership from outside stands disproved quite abundantly by the instances from Maharashtra and West UP.' (2002: 168).

It is the contention of S. Banerjee (1980) and Kapil Kumar (1984, 1988) that *babas*, *fakirs* and *sadhus* also played the role of a militant rural intelligentsia in peasant movements. They organised peasants against the British rulers. Banerjee calls some of the movements Sannyasi rebellions. Kapil Kumar argues that,

they were not revolutionaries of any accepted description belonging to any defined revolutionary social class; nor did they conform to the behaviour pattern or articulation style of the recognised leadership. They had mobility, were full-timers and unlike the urban leaders they did not indulge in sophisticated category or complicated double-faced political propaganda for the purpose of mobilisation. Their exercise rested on a precise understanding of the situation and a detailed diagnosis of contemporary social ills (1984: 221).

We have, however, to wait for other studies examining the role of the rural intelligentsia. Dipankar Gupta analyses the relationship between Tikait, the leader of BKU and Jat peasants in UP. He also comments that Jats saw Charan Singh as a symbol of nation against authority (2002; see also, Byres 1988).

Most of the studies on peasant struggles do not examine the nature— caste and class background, socialisation, etc.—of the peasant leaders. Though a few studies such as of those of Pouchepadass (1974), Kapil Kumar (1984), Hardiman (1981a) and Shah (1974), give us some information about the leaders, they do not enable us to glean an idea of the pattern of leadership involved in these studies.

ORGANISATION

By and large studies on the peasant upsurge ignore the organisational aspects of the movements: the organisation which formulates programmes and takes decisions, brings about effective coordination between the units, etc. Most of the studies give an impression that the peasant agitations were 'spontaneous', and they did not have any organised structure. This might be true of some localised revolts. Even in such revolts, an informal organisational structure is necessarily required to be formed for mobilising the peasants, communicating messages and planning strategies and programmes. Ranajit Guha is right in observing that insurgency was 'a motivated and conscious undertaking on the part of rural masses' (1983a: 2). Barry Pavier (1981) on the Telengana Movement;

Ghosh (1974), Partha Mukherji (1979), Sumanta Banerjee (1980), Tarun Kumar Banerjee (1980) and others on the Naxalite movement; Ghanshyam Shah (1974) on the Bardoli satyagraha; David Hardiman on the Kheda *satyagraha* (1981a); Atlury Murali (1988) on the Civil Disobedience in Andhra; Maria Mies (1976a) on the Shahada movement; Krishna Kanta Sarkar (1986) on the Kakdwip peasant insurgency; Kannan on the Kerala workers' movement (1988); Dipankar Gupta on the farmers' movement in western UP (2002); Rahul Ramagundam on the Ekta Parishad Movement in Madhya Pradesh (2001) and a few others, give a brief description of how the organisational structure in general, and formation of village units and their relationship with the central unit in particular, operated in the movements that they studied. The information on this aspect is very sketchy. A student of political science needs to explore these aspects more thoroughly.

From the early part of the twentieth century different political parties have been mobilising the peasants and launching their struggles. In order to build a mass-based party, the Congress started involving peasants in nationalist movements from the early 1920s. The Congress mobilised the peasants and linked some localised peasant movements, such as the Bardoli *Satyagraha* in 1928, the no-rent campaign, with the national movement for Swarajya (Low 1977; Pati 1983; Mehta 1984; Murali 1988). However, the Congress discouraged any movement which sharpened the conflict between landlords and tenants. In order to achieve Swarajya the Congress wanted to form an alliance of all classes of rural society. The Congress did not allow the poor peasants to participate in direct action beyond a point, so that they remained under the control of the rich and middle peasants (Pandey 1977; Harcourt 1977).

Henningham (1982) finds that the Bihar Congress managed to keep the nationalist struggle distinct from agrarian conflicts and discourage agrarian reform movements. The Congress did not support Swami Vidyanand when he led the movement against Darbhanga Raj. In fact, Rajendra Prasad, the chief of the Bihar Congress, accused Vidyanand of being a charlatan (see also, Chakravarti 1986). Similarly, in his study on the peasant revolts in Oudh, Kapil Kumar points out that the Congress and Khilafat leaders were trying to divert the peasantry from the path of struggle against landed barons to the path of non-cooperation against the government. Gyanendra Pandey (1977, 1982) also makes a similar observation in his study on the peasant movement in Oudh between 1919 and 1922. He argues that the Congress leaders in Uttar Pradesh were of the view that the sectional struggles led by tenants and peasants against landlords were hindering the 'larger' struggle which called for 'national unity'. The Congress which was responsible for mobilising the peasants in mass movements was 'equally responsible' for holding them down. Consequently, by 1940, the Congress became the party of rich peasants in Uttar Pradesh. Studies on the Bardoli *Satyagraha* (Shah 1974; Dhanagare 1983) show that the Congress leaders tried to maintain unity among the various strata of peasantry including landless labourers. T.K. Oommen observes that 'the strategy of class collaboration was a natural corollary and a logical necessity of a peasant movement which operated within the orbit of the nationalist liberation movement' (1985: 16).

A number of studies have explored the role of the Kisan Sabha in various agrarian movements in Uttar Pradesh (Crawley 1971), Bengal (Sen 1972), Bihar (Gupta 1982; Das 1983) and Punjab (Surjeet 1986). The history of the Kisan Sabha by M.A. Rasul (1974) is a valuable contribution to the literature on peasant struggles between the 1920s. The

studies on the Telengana movement, the Tebhaga movement, the Naxalite movement, the land grab movements in the 1960s, and agricultural labourers' struggles in Kerala since the 1940s, reveal the role of leftist political parties in the mobilisation of the peasants. Like Rakesh Gupta's study on Bihar (1982) many other studies point out that the Communist Party was in a commanding position in the struggles in Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Bengal and Andhra Pradesh. Barry Pavier (1981) observes that the Telengana movement became extensive and continued for a long period because of the political intervention of the Communist Party. The same was the case with the Tebhaga movement (Custers 1987) in 1946-47, and the Naxalite movement in the 1960s (S. Banerjee 1980).

At the same time, many studies point out that like the Congress, though for different reasons, leftist parties also obstructed the growth of the peasant struggles in the 1940s (Pavier 1981; Custers 1987). Though the parties of the left organised agricultural labourers and also occasionally provided leadership in launching their strikes, they did not pay much attention to them for strategic reasons. According to them agricultural labourers did not have the potential to lead the revolutionary movement. As a result, the non-party groups organised agricultural labourers in different parts of the country and launched their struggles, though these struggles have remained localised and have led to limited gains (Mies 1976a; De Silva et al. 1979a; Kannan 1988; Shah 1988a).

ROLE OF CASTE AND RELIGION

Scholars, who believe that leaders play an important role in developing political consciousness and mobilising peasants for political action, examine some of the following questions: What strategies and styles did leaders adopt in organising and mobilising peasants? What values do they evoke among them? What modus operandi was evolved by the leaders in mobilising peasants? Many studies show that traditional socio-religious institutions and rituals—*bhajans*, *kathas*, *yagnas*, folk dances and dramas, etc.—were used in various peasant movements during the colonial period, as also in the post-independence period, for arousing consciousness and articulating grievances (Von der Weid and Poitevin 1981; Kumar 1984; Irschick 1986; Shah 1988a; Murali 1988; Gupta 1997). They were and are being used by Gandhians who adhere to the non-violent path and also those non-Gandhians whose creed embraces neither violence nor non-violence specifically. In regard to the non-violent Gandhian method, Eugene Irschick raises the interesting question of whether it is a ritual of avoidance or a ritual of confrontation. According to him, Gandhians used non-violent methods to temporarily weaken the British. He argues:

The effect of this deliberate assumption of weakness, distance or avoidance, was to induce in the agent of authority temporary powerlessness. Essentially, by using these rituals of avoidance, the structural positions of the 'strong' authority and the 'weak' community it governed were temporarily reversed. Furthermore, these ritual reversals occurred not necessarily at calendrical transitions but when groups felt that 'disorder prevailed', when groups had a grievance against an authority, or when there was a crisis of relations. What these groups were doing by adopting a weak position was to create a field, a kind of ritual zone which enabled the protesters to reorder relations to their liking (1986: 1276).

The role of religion and caste in peasant movements has been viewed differently by different scholars. As mentioned earlier, Barrington Moore argued that the caste system and the Hindu religion were obstructing peasant movements in India. In his study on the Kakdwip Tebhaga movements, K.K. Sarkar (1979) observed that there was a lack of unity among the peasants because of the 'rigid caste structure'. Rajendra Singh (1974), in his study on the land grab movement in Uttar Pradesh, observes that caste and communal factors 'gave death to the movement'. On the other hand, a number of studies show that caste and religion played a significant role in organising and mobilising the peasants. In the Kheda and Bardoli *satyagrahas* caste organisations were used to invoke unity within and among the various castes. Shah observes,

In a nutshell, the language of both the direct and indirect communication media during this [Bardoli Satyagraha] political movement was highly indigenous and full of familiar referents. Political issues were conveyed to the people through social and religious symbols which appealed to the tradition-bound masses (1974: 106).

Kapil Kumar (1984) gives ample evidence to show how the *Ramayana* was used by peasant leaders for drawing on religious symbols for the mobilisation of the masses. Siddiqi also finds that 'the existence of castes helped the peasant movement to proceed with greater cohesion and speed and that the supposed irreconcilability between class and caste did not exist in the rural society of Oudh' (ibid.: 214). Henningham (1982), Pouchepadass (1974), Dhanagare (1983), Hardgrave (1977) and others refute Barrington Moore's hypothesis and assert that caste and religion are double-edged weapons. They could maintain the status quo and they could as well be the agents of change, depending upon how they were used.

Some scholars point out that peasants become united as tenants or poor peasants or agricultural labourers irrespective of their caste and religion. L. Natrajan (1979a) shows that Hindu and Muslim tenants stood together shoulder to shoulder against the planters' oppression in the 1860 indigo cultivators' strike in Bihar. Sukhbir Chaudhary (1979b) finds that caste differences faded into the background when the movement developed in Oudh in the 1920s. Regarding the Telengana movement, Barry Pavier observes:

For the record, there is no evidence at all from any source whatsoever that caste played any role at all in the movement. On the contrary, all the too scanty evidence suggests that the old social relations began to disintegrate under the impact of the movement, not only in relation to caste but also women (1981: 184).

In her study on the peasant movements in West Bengal during the late 1960s, Swasti Mitter (1977) observes that the tenants and *jotedars* belonging to the same caste fought against each other on economic issues. But Gail Omvedt (1993) has different observations. She says,

there is an ongoing difficulty in organising at the local level, seemingly impossible obstacles of uniting people across caste lines to confront hitherto unchallenged rich farmer dominance, entrenched both in open crude form which gives them the power of police plus goondas to beat and kill those who challenge them and in more sophisticated ways in which the powers and patronage of sugar cooperatives, village societies, educational institutions and family-caste ties are used to tempt, corrupt and split efforts to unite against them (ibid.: 190).

Dipankar Gupta (1997) examines the role of clan and caste honour in the mobilisation of Jats in UP. Various studies suggest that at some places caste hinders and elsewhere it accelerates the process of mobilisation. Or at one stage, caste takes the form of class and unifies the peasantry, at the next stage it 'relapses back into its caste locus' (Singh 1979).

AUTONOMY OF PEASANT CONSCIOUSNESS

Most of the studies on peasant struggles during the colonial and post-colonial periods assume that peasants had no political consciousness of their own. It is argued that political consciousness among the peasants was developed by political parties and outside leaders. Political consciousness is believed to be 'primarily a function of stimulus and response' to the elite and outside forces. This approach has been challenged by a group of scholars—historians, sociologists and political scientists. They argue that the peasants were the makers of their own rebellion, having their own political consciousness during the colonial period, independent of outside leadership. Ranajit Guha (1983a, 1983b) argues that the people's politics was 'an autonomous domain', which neither originated from nor depended on, the elite. People derived their consciousness and power from their traditions, and numerous instances are available throughout history which highlights the people's own initiative against exploitation, injustice and oppression. *Anti-nasbandi* disturbances in north India during the Emergency in 1976-77 provide a recent example of the people's initiative and autonomy. Partha Chatterjee argues that the peasants have 'specific subjectivity in the political processes which bring about change.

It is important to restore this subjectivity to the peasantry, to look at its political actions not as 'primordial', 'pre-political', irrational and hence inherently inexplicable 'spontaneous' acts, but as actions informed by its own consciousness, shaped by centuries of its own political history structured by distinct conceptions of power and morality, and attempting to come to terms with and act within wholly new contexts of class struggle. It is an approach such as this which will give us more reliable clues to an understanding of both the strengths and weaknesses of peasant resistance in [the] context of 'modern' politics, as well as of the opportunities of 'mobilisation' of a peasantry, or sections of a peasantry, by other classes and groups in a historical context which tends towards a presumably irreversible process of differentiation within the peasantry (1986: 202).

This is an important warning for those who look down from above. But at the same time, there is a danger of becoming romantic in overemphasising the 'autonomous domain of consciousness' and ignoring the dialectical relationship between 'below' and 'above'. Tom Brass argues:

The implication of such an approach is that opposition to the existing social order derives not from class formation, class struggle, and the politics of class, but from a hitherto undiscovered authentic grassroots voice (= 'popular culture') represented in subaltern/movement/ ecofeminist texts as a depoliticized discourse untainted by discredited overarching metanarratives. Like the 'moral economy' position, primacy is allocated to customs, traditions, culture and practices as these already exist within the peasantry and the working class, a view which contrasts with that of Marxists who have tended to emphasise the backward-looking, politically reactionary and historically

transcendent role of much of what passes of resistance based on an already existing 'popular culture' (racism, nationalism, religion) (1994a: 28)

It is argued by some scholars that though objective situation is important in the formation of consciousness, the role of leaders and the 'correctness' of policies of the group for mobilisation are equally important (Sengupta 1990).

OVERVIEW

A large number of studies on peasant struggles in the colonial and post-colonial periods are now available. Historians and political activists, rather than sociologists and political scientists, have contributed a great deal in enriching our understanding. A few of the studies are fascinating. They are well-documented and analytically sound. Notwithstanding the richness of the studies, we have a long way to go in our understanding of the complexities of peasant society which is changing with the larger economic and political system. The studies of different periods, regions and theoretical perspectives of scholars—notwithstanding differences in emphasis—do point out that the notion of community in the consciousness of the peasants of different strata has undergone changes. The findings of the studies clearly bring out that the peasants in the Indian subcontinent were and are not docile. Caste and religion do not necessarily always blur their militancy; though they are double-edged instruments depending on who uses them and for what purpose. The initiative for the struggles has not always come from outside and the peasants have not merely reflected and responded to outside forces. They have their own consciousness to determine the course of their action. How far their consciousness is autonomous is, of course, debatable and requires more analysis. The studies also forewarn those scholars who have romanticised the middle peasants for their ability to lead struggles. A number of studies point out that poor peasants and landless labourers have also 'successfully' launched heroic struggles against the state, the zamindars and the rich peasants. In the 1960s and 1970s scholars widely discussed the role and potentialities of the peasants in revolutionary transformation. In the 1990s such issues are no longer on the agenda of academic discourse. In fact one has begun to wonder about the relevance of 'peasant' as a social category in a situation where capitalism has penetrated into many parts of the country.

NOTES

1. Eric Wolf emphasised in 1955 that ownership of land was critical criteria for defining 'peasants'. In 1966, he defines peasants as those who are 'rural cultivators' whose surpluses are transferred to a dominant group of rulers. In his latest book (1970) the emphasis is on neither ownership nor exploited surpluses, and peasants are defined as: 'populations that are existentially involved in cultivation and make autonomous decisions regarding the process of cultivation'. The category is thus made to cover tenants and sharecroppers as well as owner-operators as long as they are in a position to make the relevant decisions on how their crops are grown. It does not, however, include 'fishermen or landless labourers'. See, for an interesting discussion on the definition, Henry Landsberger (1974).

2. See Daniel Thorner (1960). Andre Beteille (1974) feels that the term 'peasantry' is misleading in the Indian context.

3. In this context, a study of a Malaysian village by James C. Scott (1985), is interesting and important for understanding everyday forms of peasant resistance. At an individual level, the peasant struggle against exploiters involves 'the ordinary weapons of relatively powerless groups: foot dragging, dissimulation, desertion, false compliance, pilfering, feigned ignorance, slander, arson, sabotage, and so on' (ibid.: xvi).

4. V.J. Lenin in his *Development of Capitalism in Russia* (1819) (Rochester 1942) classified agrarian population in Russia into three groups, besides the landlords. They were: (i) the well-to-do peasantry- (including *kulaks*) who themselves employed some wage labour but in any case could produce a substantial marketable surplus; (ii) the 'middle' peasant who was a tenant and/or had a very small plot of his own, in either case producing some but only a small surplus; and (iii) the 'poor' peasant, who lived chiefly by selling his labour and was therefore a proletarian and part of the roiling masses. Mao Tse-tung classified the peasantry of China into five kinds: the peasant landholders, semi-landholders, sharecroppers, poor peasants and farm labourers and handicraftsmen. See Stuart R. Schram (1969). See also, Anna Rochester (1942). The purpose of this classification was to know which class or stratum of peasants had the potential to bring about revolutionary changes.

3

TRIBAL MOVEMENTS

The Scheduled Tribes (STs) constitute 8 per cent of the total population of the country. In 2001 their number was around 820 lakh persons. They can be divided into two categories: (1) frontier tribes; and (2) non-frontier tribes. The former are inhabitants of the northeast frontier states—Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura. Except Assam, all the other states are landlocked between Assam and India's neighbours—Burma, China and Bangladesh. They, therefore, occupy a special position in the sphere of national politics. They constitute 11 per cent of the tribal population. The non-frontier tribes, constituting 89 per cent of the total tribal population, are distributed among most of the states, though they are concentrated in large numbers in Madhya Pradesh (23 per cent), Orissa (22 per cent), Rajasthan (12 per cent), Bihar (8 per cent), Gujarat (14 per cent), Dadra Nagar Haveli (79 per cent) and the Lakshadweep Islands (94 per cent).

The STs are known as tribes, adivasis, and aboriginals or as autochthonous. Social scientists have not examined the term 'tribe' in the Indian context rigorously. They have largely followed government categorisation (Shah 1984; Sengupta 1988). Article 366(25) of the constitution has defined 'Scheduled Tribes' as 'such tribes or tribal communities or parts or groups within such tribes or tribal communities as are deemed under article 342 to be Scheduled Tribes for the purpose of this constitution'. By the Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order, 1950, issued by the president in exercise of the powers conferred by Clause (1) of the Article 342 of the constitution of India, 212 tribes have been declared to be Scheduled Tribes. 'Isolation, backwardness and cultural distinctiveness', of a social group, though undefined in legal and sociological terms, have

guided the state for inclusion to a community in the 'schedule'. Later, by an act of Parliament, some other groups were also included in the 'schedule'.

Tribals are ethnic groups. Different tribes have their own cultures— dialects, life styles, social structures, rituals; values, etc.—differing somewhat from those of the dominant non tribal peasant social groups. At the same time, most of them are settled agriculturists-and social differentiations have developed among them. Their agrarian problems were and are, to some extent, the same as those of other non-tribal peasants. Studies are now available to show how the tribals have, in course of time, become peasants (Upadhyay 1980; Shah 1984; Pathy 1984). Many scholars treat tribal movements as peasant movements (Gough 1974; Desai 1979; Guha 1983). Peasant leaders like Ranga and Sahajanand Saraswati described tribals as aboriginal *kisans*. K. S. Singh joins issue with these scholars and political activists. He argues, 'such an approach tends to gloss over the diversities of tribal social formations of which tribal movements are a part, both being structurally related' (1985: 119). Because of the concentration of the tribals in certain areas, their social and political organisation and relative isolation from the 'mainstream', their leadership pattern and modus operandi of political mobilisation may differ from those of other peasants. Some of the champions of Hindutva ideology consider tribals as *vanvasis* or forest-dweller caste-Hindus.

There seem to be less socio-economic differentiations within a tribe than are seen among caste-Hindu peasants; and their 'community consciousness' is strong. Singh argues,

while the peasant movements tend to remain purely agrarian as peasants lived off land, the tribal movements were both agrarian and forest based, because the tribals' dependence on forests was as crucial as their dependence on land. There was also the ethnic factor. The tribal revolts were directed against zamindars, moneylenders and petty government officials not because they exploited them but also because they were aliens (1986: 166).

John MacDougall, in two studies (1977, 1978) on the Sardar and Kherwar movements in Bihar between 1858 and 1898, shows that the nature of movements varies 'as the consequence of variations in the peasantisation of adivasi society'. When and how have the movements of the tribals taken the form of peasant movements? What are the striking features of tribal movements which differentiate them from the peasants'? In what manner, if any, were tribal movements linked with peasant movements during the colonial and post-colonial period? K. S. Singh and MacDougall attempt to explore these questions, but more rigorous efforts are needed to answer them.

Raghavaiah (1971) lists seventy tribal revolts' from 1778 to 1971. He also gives the chronology of these revolts. A survey of tribal movements conducted by the Anthropological Survey of India identified thirty-six ongoing tribal movements in India in 1976. As early as 1945, *Man in India* brought out 'A Rebellion Number', presenting four papers on various tribal revolts. The editorial of the number remarks: 'These revolts have been neither numerous nor gravely frequent, yet there is scarcely any major tribe in middle or eastern India which at some time in the last one hundred and fifty years has not resorted to this gesture of despair.' The publication did not cover tribal revolts in the northeast frontier region.

Three volumes on *Tribal Movements in India*, edited by K.S. Singh (1982, 1983a, 1998) are an important contribution to the relatively scant literature on the subject. The first volume (1982) deals with the northeast frontier tribes, the second volume (1983a) focuses on central and south India and the third volume confines itself to a survey of literature on tribal movements in different parts of the country. The first two volumes deal with tribal movements which primarily took place in the post-independence period. The major part of the second volume is confined to the movements of central India and Andhra. There is only one paper on the tribal movements of south India—Tamil Nadu and Kerala—and the Nicobar Islands. The third volume also has one chapter focusing on tribal movements in Lakshadweep and southern India. This is evident in the survey of literature by P.R.G. Mathur (1998). The reason is that there were an insignificant number of movements or none at all among the tribals of the southern states. K.S. Singh states, 'The tribes down south are too primitive, too small in numbers, and too isolated in their habitat to organise movements, in spite of their exploitation and the resultant discontent' (1983a: XVI). L.K. Mahapatra also offers a similar observation: 'We do not find any significant social movement, religious, status mobility or political, among the numerically small, migratory tribes, like the Birhor, Korwa, Pahira, the hill Kharia, or the shifting cultivators like the Hill Maria, the Hill Saora or the more primitive Kond' (1972: 408). Surajit Sinha makes similar observations regarding the small tribes in Bihar (1972). This may be true, but it is based on limited data as very few studies have been undertaken regarding the tribals of south India. One has to study these tribes before arriving at any conclusion regarding the capabilities of small tribes for revolt.

There are quite a few studies dealing with tribal movements in central and eastern India during the pre-independence period. These studies include K.K. Datta's *The Santal Insurrection of 1855-57* (1940), Kumar Suresh Singh's study on the Birsa Munda movement in Chhota Nagpur during 1874-1901 (1966), J.C. Jha's study on the Kol insurrection of Chhota Nagpur during 1831-32 (1964) and the Bhumij revolt in 1832-33 (1967), Haimendorfs (1945) and David Arnold's (1982) studies on the Gudam Rampa risings in Andhra Pradesh (the former covers the Rampa rebellion of 1879-80 and the latter covers the series of tribal uprisings between 1839 and 1924), and L.P. Mathur's study (1988) on the 'resistance movement' of the Bhil of Rajasthan in the nineteenth century. There are only a few studies on tribal movements involving northeast frontier tribes during the pre-independence era. They include Stephen Fuchs's (1967) sketchy study on Kabul and D. Mukherjee's and others' studies on the Zeliangrong movement in 1925, messianic movements among the KachaNaga during 1881-1930 (1982) and Gautam Bhadra's (1975) study on the Kuki uprising in Manipur during 1917-19. This however, should not lead us to conclude that there were very few uprisings in the northeast during the British period. Raghavaiah has noted a number of revolts by the tribals of the northeast frontier since the occupation by the British. Some of them need detailed study. K.S. Singh (1985) gives an overview of the tribal movements in the country. However, except for the Kuki uprising in Manipur, he mainly focuses on eastern and central India.

Different scholars have evolved different typologies of tribal movements. Mahapatra (1972) applies the typologies widely used for social movements to tribal movements: (1) reactionary; (2) conservative; (3) revisionary or revolutionary. The reactionary movement tries to launch a movement to bring back 'the good old days', whereas the conservative movement tries to maintain the status quo. The revisionary or revolutionary movements

are those which are organised for 'improvement' or 'purification' of the cultural or social order by eliminating 'evil' or 'low' customs, beliefs or institutions. Surajit Sinha (1968) classifies the movements into: (1) ethnic rebellion; (2) reform movements; (3) political autonomy movements within the Indian Union; (4) secessionist movements; and (5) agrarian unrest. K.S. Singh (1983a) makes more or less the same classification except that he uses the terms Sanskritisation instead of reform movement and cultural movements instead of ethnic movements. S.M. Dubey (1982) divides the tribal movements in northeast India into four categories: (1) religious and social reform movements; (2) movements for separate statehood; (3) insurgent movements; (4) cultural rights movements. In fact, there is a very thin line dividing the (2), (3) and (4) types. D. Doley follows more or less the same categories of the tribal movements in the north-eastern region (1998). There is no substantial difference among the scholars who use different typologies. Mahapatra excludes political movements whereas others do not. These typologies do not include the recent movements around the issues of forest rights and environment, and displacement of the tribals due to 'development' programmes of the state and the market. By the turn of the twentieth century, K.S. Singh observes.

In recent years, with the rise of the international movement of indigenous people in the post-modernist phase, the focus has shifted to self-determination or self-management of the resources, identity, and ethnicity. The environmental movement has focused on communities in situ, their relationship to resources, their rapport with nature, their world-view. Therefore with the growing concern for environment, particularly bio-diversity, pluralism, ethnicity, and identity—all are now interrelated—the tribal movements are assuming a new character. They are all now becoming more and more identity-based movements, with various issues concerning control over resources etc. being considered as ramifications of this central issue (1998: 9-10).

For brevity we might reformulate the typologies as follows: (I) ethnic movements which include culture/religion identity; (2) agrarian and forest rights movements; (3) environmental movements (4) involuntary displacement and rehabilitation movements; and (5) political movements around the nationality question for a separate state. Not only is there a great deal of overlapping among all five types, but they are also interconnected, and one leads to the other.

ISSUES

Tribal society has undergone changes and so have the issues that agitated the tribals and led to their struggles. K.S. Singh (1985) divides the tribal movements into three phases. The first phase was between 1795 and 1860. It coincided with the rise, expansion and establishment of the British Empire. The second phase covers the period between 1860 and 1920. It coincided with the intensive phase of colonialism, 'during which merchant capital penetrated into tribal economy affecting their relationship with the land and forest'. The third phase covers the period from 1920 till the achievement of independence in 1947. During this phase the tribals not only began to launch the so-called 'separatist' movements, but at the same time participated in nationalist and agrarian movements.

During the nineteenth century, the British came in conflict with various tribes in different parts of the country when they annexed tribal kingdoms and introduced British

administration in the tribal areas. The tribals in general and the chieftains in particular felt the loss of power and resources in the new administration. They revolted against the British (Mathur 1988). Various messianic movements in different parts of the country were launched by 'rebellious prophets' who promised their followers that they would drive out the outsiders and bring back the golden age of the past (Orans 1965; Fuchs 1967; Singh 1966; Troisi 1976). Their aim was to re-establish their Raj and maintain the tribal organisation and culture. The Birsa Munda movement in Chhota Nagpur aimed at the 'liquidation of the racial enemies, the Dikus, European missionaries and officials and native Christians. The Mundas would recover their "lost kingdom". There will be enough to eat, no famine; the people will live together in love' (Singh 1966:193). These were not fanciful dreams about the past. Religion provided them with courage and hope for a better future and vigour to fight against the oppression by alien rulers (Arnold 1982). Most of these movements took place during the early British period. K.S. Singh (1985) calls them 'the millenarian movements'. They were not confined to major tribes alone. The Konda Dora of Salur in the Vishakhapatnam area and the Naikda in Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat who were relatively small in number, also launched movements against the British officers and caste-Hindus with religious fervour.

Some tribes had an apprehension that after independence they would lose their identity. The Naga, for example, expressed the fear in 1947 that their culture—their ancient laws and customs and village organisations which they had retained—would be destroyed by the Hindu rulers of India. They argued that 'a constitution drawn by the people who have no knowledge of Nagaland and Naga people will be quite unsuitable and unacceptable to the Naga people. Thrown upon forty crores of Indians, the one million Naga with their unique system of life will be wiped out of existence' (Yonuo 1974: 167). They, therefore, demanded a separate independent state outside the Indian Union. Similarly, 'the fear of domination by the Assamese and the consequent threat of disintegration and destabilisation haunted the minds of most of the Khasis. This was the underlying factor which influenced all Khasi political movements' (Mathur 1983: 192).

Some tribal groups launched Sanskritisation movements to assert their status as caste-Hindus. These movements are also known as Bhagat movements. A large number of studies by sociologists and social anthropologists and historians are available on such socio-religious movements (Bodding 1921; Kalia, 1962; Orans 1965; Fuchs 1967; Ekka 1972; Ekka 1983; Bhatt 1983; Lal 1983; Mann 1983; Hardiman 1984, 1987). Religiosity and religious idioms were used by the oppressed groups against dominance and exploitation. David Hardiman (1987) argues that religiosity had 'a profound bearing' on the state of consciousness of the adivasis. It provided them with a practical code of 'political ethics' to resist and struggle against their exploitation. Persons of low social status were pleased when they were treated with respect by the people of higher status. This was a new experience for them (Fuchs 1967). Recently, some tribes have evolved their script with a view to revive their culture (A. R. Das 1982). Such cultural or revivalist movements are conscious efforts of tribal leaders 'to construct a more satisfying culture' (Singh 1985). These movements raised their aspirations and provided a sense of solidarity which enabled them, in some cases, to fight against their exploiters. In some areas like Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh, social reform movements led tribals to participate in the nationalist movement against British rule (Hardiman 1984). In Rajasthan, the Bhagat movement was also aimed at raising the political objective of

creating an independent kingdom of the Bhil (Mann 1983). During the late 1990s tribals were mobilised in some parts, particularly in Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan, by Hindutva forces, against Muslims and Christians (Shah 2002b, Hardiman 2002; Joshi 1999) which divided the tribals along religious grounds and converted them to militant Hindus. This aspect of mobilisation and its impact on tribal-non-tribal relationships has so far not drawn the attention of many scholars.

Economic issues involved in the tribal movements were often somewhat similar to those affecting non-tribal peasant movements. The main difference between the two in the last century was that the tribals had their own communal agrarian structure which was different from that of the non-tribal peasants. The non-tribals started penetrating the forest and hill areas to exploit economic resources, thereby undermining the traditional economy and society of the tribals (Arnold 1982). The newly imposed British land system was radically different from that prevailing among many tribals. K.S. Singh observes, 'the transformation of the Mundari agrarian system into non-communal, feudal, Zamindari or individual tenures was the key to agrarian disorders that climaxed in religious-political movements of Birsa' (1966: 1). In many villages in different tribal areas in Bihar, Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat and Maharashtra, tribals slowly lost their land to the non-tribal moneylenders and landlords, reducing their status to that of tenants or labourers. In some places, tribal chiefs were converted to Hinduism and invited the non-tribal peasants to settle in tribal areas. The latter being experienced farmers seized the land from the tribals and employed the natives as labourers. J.C. Jha observes:

The Kol insurrection of 1831-1832 was born out of frustration and anger—frustration with the new system of Government and laws, and anger at the people who either enforced them or took undue advantage of them.

The real tragedy of the tribal people of this area was that their chiefs, alienated by their conversion to Hinduism, and the English administrators, born and bred in the tradition of tribal ownership of land or idea of peasant proprietorship. That was why the former brought in non-tribal settlers and the latter a complex administrative machinery run by an unsympathetic society. Against these the tribal people found no remedy except unrest and violence.

It becomes clear that from two sides their traditional society was being undermined: custom was being undermined by contract, a barter economy by a money economy they had not yet learned to handle, divisions of the land determined by tribal custom were replaced by a landlord-tenant relationship, and tribal solidarity was being destroyed from within by the pressures of the British raj (1962: 240).

The landlords frequently imposed and enhanced rents on tribals. Moneylenders unscrupulously charged heavy interests. The tribals were unable to pay enhanced rent or interests on money that they borrowed and their land was usurped by non-tribal moneylenders and landlords. The tribals became tenants on their own land or even bonded labourers. The government officers—particularly police and revenue officers—used their authority to enslave the tribals. They used their labour for personal and government work without any payment. Furthermore, the courts were indifferent to the plight of tribals as they were ignorant of tribal agrarian systems and customs. These factors were common to the Munda, Santhal, Kol and Bhil revolts in the last century.

Tribais refused to pay rent for cultivating their land (Datta 1940; Archer 1945; Jha 1964; Orans

Besides these factors, the Kuki of Manipur revolted against the British government when the government tried to recruit them into the army as coolies during World War I. They were unwilling to go to far-off places. Moreover, the recruitment of able-bodied youths adversely affected their own agriculture (Bhadra 1975; Chaube 1982).

Land alienation, usury, forced labour, minimum wages, land grabbing, etc. continued to be the main issues of tribal movements on the eve of independence and thereafter. The tribals of Andhra Pradesh participated in the Telengana movement and fought against the landlords and the forced labour which they imposed (Pavier 1981; Dhanagare 1983). The Warli of Maharashtra struck work in 1944 during the harvest season, demanding higher wages. They fought against a system of bonded labour and exploitative landlords. They launched a strike in 1946 demanding higher wages for forest work (Parulekar 1975; Parulekar 1979). Some tribals of western India launched movements against moneylenders and landlords and liquor sellers in the 1920s (Hardiman 1987). They launched no-revenue and land grab movements in Gujarat in the 1950s (Shah 1975; Desai 1977), declaring that they were the natives and original owners of the land. Adivasis of Pardi *taluka* of south Gujarat launched a movement for the implementation of land reform acts and distribution of land to the tillers (Desai and Desai 1997, Desai 2002). The struggle was led by the Socialist Party in the 1950s. In the late 1960s, the main constituents of the Naxalbari movement in West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh were the tribals who fought against exploitation (Mukherji 1979; S. Banerjee 1980; T. Banerjee 1980; Adhikari et al. 1983). Struggles for minimum wages, repudiation of debts and exploitation, against landlords, were resorted to by the tribals of Andhra Pradesh, Bihar (Balagopal 1988), Maharashtra and Gujarat (Bremar 1974; Augustine 1984, Pinto 2002). So also the tribes in Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Andhra joined the land grab movement of 1969-70. The main participants in the Shahada and Bhoomi Sena movements in the 1970s, in Maharashtra, were the tribals (Mies 1976; De Silva et al. 1979; Kulkarni 1983). The tribals of the Chhota Nagpur region launched a movement against the *diku*, the exploiters who were moneylenders and landlords during the British period.

The same issue has continued to be the main factor in post-independence political mobilisation (Sharma 1976; Pardesi 1980; Singh 1983b).

Most of the tribes live in forests on which they are dependent in more ways than one. It is one of the main sources of their livelihood- In order to get the forest products the British government introduced certain regulations and permitted timber merchants and contractors to cut the forests. These regulations not only curtailed the rights of tribals over forest products, but also made them victims of harassment by the forest bureaucracy. Tribals resented this. Verrier Elwin (1945) observes that the tribals firmly 'believe that the forest belongs to them and that they have a right to do what they will with it. They have been there, they say, for centuries; it is their life and they consider themselves justified in resisting any attempt to deprive them of it' (ibid.: 257). The Saora of Andhra revolted violently against the forest department. Opposition to the toddy tax was an important issue in the Rampa rebellion in Andhra Pradesh. The Kharwar of Palamau, Bihar, participated in the forest *Satyagraha* in the 1930s demanding restoration of their

customary rights to extract timber and collect forest produce for consumption (Singh 1983d). The problem continued to persist in the post-independence period. The Kharwar again launched a *Satyagraha* movement in the 1950s (ibid.). The tribals of Garhwal region launched a movement against forest contractors in the 1930s and 1970s (Dogra 1980; DasandNegi 1983). Adivasis of the Dangs, Gujarat struggled without success over a decade in the late 1980s till the mid-1990s against the Forest Act and Forest Department which deprived them of land and the right to collect forest products (Engineer 2002; Joshi 2002; Shah 2002a). Some scholars classify the struggles around the issues of forest rights and control over land as environmental movements (see Chapter 10). Adivasis of eastern Gujarat struggled to get minimum wages for forest work, the right to collect forest produce and cultivate forest land. The movement was led by voluntary groups (Jani 2002).

Several adivasi groups have demanded more and more welfare programmes including reservation of jobs in government offices. They submitted memoranda and issued press statements, but there has been no mobilisation of tribals on a large scale. These issues attain prominence in elections (Mathur 1982, 1983). However, we have to examine the reasons why such efforts have not succeeded in sustaining political movements.

Before and since independence several tribes launched movements demanding 'autonomous' states or districts in which they could manage their own affairs. They strongly felt that alien administration and outsiders ruined their culture and economy. The Kol insurrection and the Santhal rebellion of the last century were, in a sense, direct political movements, as their objective was to establish their own Raj, expelling the outsiders—Indians as well as the British. Orans argues.

At least those who led the rebellion foresaw in victory not only economic relief but increased political power and an opportunity to improve the rank of the Santal. The goal of rank improvement is suggested by a number of ritual practices emulative of Hindu customs which accompanied the rebellion, such as putting on the sacred thread, ritual use of sun-dried rice and oil and vermilion, and purification with cow dung (1965: 33).

Similar demands for a separate political entity as a state or a district, within or outside the Indian Union, have been made by various tribes of eastern and central India, and those of the northeast frontier. The tribals of Dang launched a struggle demanding a separate district within the former bilingual Bombay state (Shah 1972). Some tribal leaders of Gujarat demanded an autonomous tribal state, though they failed to seek mass support and remained nothing more than a slogan (Desai 1971). Though this movement faded away, mobilisation around adivasi identity or *adivasivad*, assertion against domination of the ruling classes, continues to appeal to tribals of south Gujarat. Pinto observes,

The Adivasi Ekta Parishad (AEP), which formally came into existence and became active after the Rio Summit in 1993, was led by Adivasi intellectuals from the four western states of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Gujarat. AEP seeks to assert Adivasi identity through a cultural revival movement for 'self-respect' and 'self-esteem' (Pinto 2002: 222).

The Gond tribe of Chhattisgarh demanded the formation of a separate state for the tribals in the 1950s (Singh 1983c). The tribals of Chhota Nagpur have been demanding separate statehood to protect them against the exploitative tactics of the *diku* since 1938.

Their demand for a separate state has continued in one form or another to this day. By now, a number of studies dealing with the Jharkhand movement are available (Sharma 1976, 1993; Dhar 1980; Singh 1983b; Iyer and Maharaj 1986; and Das 1990; Devalle 1992; Mullick 1993; Basu 1994; Prakash 2001; Tirkey 2002). The Nagas submitted a memorandum to the Simon Commission in 1929 demanding that they should be excluded from the scope of proposed constitutional changes and be kept under the direct administration of the British. They expressed their apprehension that the Indians would introduce their laws and customs 'to supersede our own customary laws'. Their demand for a separate state outside the Indian Union has continued after independence. They received statehood within the Indian Union. The same is the case with the Mizo tribe who demanded a separate state outside the Indian Union after 1960 (Misra 1974, 1982; Anand 1980; N.K. Das 1982; Goswami and Mukherjee 1982; Shah 1984; Misra 2000; Vashum 2000; Kumar 1995). These political demands are accompanied by ethnic and economic demands.

N. K. Bose (1967) characterises these movements as the growth of sub-nationalism' among the tribals on the basis of their religion and language. Roy Burman (1969), on the other hand, calls it 'infra-nationalism'. According to him the tribes are involved in a progressive movement, in a phase of expansion from a primitive state of 'tribalism' towards 'nationalism'. At this phase of infra-nationalism agglomerates of tribes are in search of identity at a higher level of integration than tribalism. Some call it a 'nationality' movement (see various papers published in APRU 1982; TDSS 1987).

The nature of tribal movements, in terms of their solidarity and the issues that they raise, depends upon a variety of factors. The tribals of eastern and central India have close interaction with caste-Hindus, therefore, they do not demand political status outside the Indian Union, whereas the tribals of the northeast frontier do not have close contacts with the Hindus. In fact, many of them have embraced Christianity, and are located on the international border. Therefore, they ask for secession from the Indian Union. Sinha argues that the nature and the degrees of involvement of tribal groups in solidarity movements, depend upon a number of factors, such as, the locale of the tribal groups vis-à-vis the core peasant matrix, the numerical strength of tribals, the degree of their exposure to, and interrelations with, the non-tribals. He further argues:

the intensity of tribal solidarity/separatist movement will be positively correlated to an optimum convergence of the following factors:

1. ecological and socio-cultural isolation of the bulk of the tribal population vis-à-vis the core peasantry;
2. a certain level of numerical strength and economy to provide the striking powers of solidarity movement;
3. location near the international and inter-civilization frontier;
4. a certain level of literacy and education to provide elite leadership;
5. historical incidence and awareness of conflict with the peasantry and the political superstructure of the peasantry;
6. the opportunity for political rank path combined with limited scope for economic emolument (Sinha 1968: 420).

A number of studies on tribal political movements in different parts of the country have to be carried out to examine the validity of the argument advanced by Sinha.

According to one estimate, 213 lakh persons were displaced by irrigation projects, mines, thermal power plants, wildlife sanctuaries, industries, etc., between 1950 and 1990 in India. Eighty-five per cent of them are tribals (Fernandes and Paranjpe 1997). Their land and habitats are acquired by the government or private industries with negligible compensation. They often protest against the forced displacement. Their protests have taken the form of organised movements in some areas. The first recorded organised struggle against displacement was in 1921 and continued till 1924 against the Mulshi project near Poona. The majority of the affected persons under the project were non-tribals. It was led by Senapati Bapat (Fernandes and Paranjpe 1997; Vora 2002). In recent years, the Narmada Bachao Andolan has struggled against the construction of the dam which has displaced a large number of adivasis. In some places they demanded more compensation and a better rehabilitation policy and sometimes they raised the issue of 'development' which deprives them from their rights over natural resources (Baviskar 1995b; Dwivedi 1998; Vora 2002; Iyengar 2002). These studies describe the nature of the loss that the tribals suffer but research on the extent and nature of their mobilisation in the struggles is scantily done.

Adivasi mine workers joined hands with non-advasi workers in mines and industries for justice. Shankar Guha Niyogi formed the Chhattisgarh Mukti Morcha in 1978 with the commemoration of the martyrdom of Veer Narain Singh, a tribal leader who had been hanged to death by the British in 1857 for mobilising adivasis against imperialist rule. The Morcha mobilised tribals and non-tribal workers on several issues related to the exploitation of the Chattisgarh region.

In July 1992 there was police firing in Bhilai in which 18 people were officially declared dead, although unofficial estimates of the death toll went as high as 50. It was the culmination of 19 months of struggle demanding a minimum wage for unorganized workers. It was a demand supported by the unorganized workers in Bhilai, Urla, Tedesera, Kumhari and the farmers, youth, women and landless of many parts of Chhattisgarh (Roy 2002: 40).

Though the struggle received coverage in the media and a dossier was compiled by a non-government organisation (NGO) (Lahiri 1998), full-fledged analytical study by researchers is yet to be undertaken.

PARTICIPANTS

Most social scientists, both of Marxist and non-Marxist persuasion, treat adivasis as homogeneous groups having no class differentiation. Therefore, they have not examined which strata or class of tribals actively participated in the movement. Recently, a few political sociologists and historians have started examining class differentiations among the tribals. It is argued that Naga, Mizo, Jharkhand and similar movements demanding political autonomy are dominated by the tribal educated middle class (Weiner 1978; Shah 1984). H.K. Sareen (1980) alleges that earlier the British government, and during the last

few decades America and China have 'encouraged secessionist tendencies' among the English-educated tribals of northeast India.

As mentioned earlier, some scholars have argued that small and isolated tribes have less potential for launching political movements. Regarding the various tribes in the northeast states, Rao (1976) observes that the tribals of the Khasi hills were politically more active than those of the Garo hills. On the basis of studies on some tribal movements, K.S. Singh concludes that tribal unrest assumes an organised character only among large homogeneous, landowning tribal communities who have a relatively strong economic base, such as the Munda, the Santhal, the Bhil, the Gond, etc. Very few of the primitive tribes, who rely on pre-agricultural technology, participate in such movements (1983b). These groups react strongly to the issues concerning land or forests on which they subsist,

On the other hand, in the course of political movements, various tribes develop stronger ethnic identities and sometimes a pan-tribal identity. Various tribes of Nagaland or Mizoram have built up an alliance for achieving political demands. Not only that, the tribals of Chhota Nagpur have also begun to unite with the non-tribal toiling masses to fight against exploiters. They raise mainly economic and political demands. However, Rupert Moser (1978) feels that movements like the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha still have 'revivalistic and religious tensions'. But this is not the view of others. They feel that all the producers, irrespective of caste and creed, are being united in the recent phase of the movement (Roy 1982; Maharaj and Iyer 1982). It is their contention that this is a movement of the proletariat (Simeon 1982). Whether this is a reality or wishful thinking on the part of the activists needs serious consideration.

ORGANISATION AND LEADERSHIP

Most of the studies on tribal movements do not deal with their organisational aspects. It is assumed that the movements are 'spontaneous'. But this is not correct. Even the earlier Santhal, Munda and Kol movements were organised and a good deal of preparation had gone into them. Orans observes, 'The rebellion [Santhal] was not begun on the spur of the moment as a result of sudden passion. The Santhal had made many attempts to present their grievances to the government but were rebuffed for various reasons and by various means. Numerous meetings and communications between Santhal villages preceded armed revolt' (1965: 32). Similarly, the recent Naga and Mizo movements are organised but we know very little regarding their organisational structure. Das and Gupta (1982) tell us something about the organisational structure of the Ahom movement which demanded a separate state for upper Assam. It is argued by some scholars that tribal, social and political structures facilitate the organisation of their political movements. Maharaj and Iyer (1982) observe that the Jharkhand movement adopted the traditional social institutions operating at the village, inter-village and community level.

The tribal leadership of the Santhal, the Kol and the Munda rebellions came from religious leaders, or leaders who proclaimed themselves to be the incarnations of God. Birsa Munda is an example (Singh 1966). A similar case is that of Sido and Kanhu, the leaders of the Santhal rebellion who claimed that they received messages from

supernatural powers. Such leaders gained a powerful influence over their followers. Fuchs observes, 'All leaders of messianic movements in India have demanded great and often heroic sacrifices from their followers not only for admission into their movements but also as a condition for staying on in them' (1967:229). K.S. Singh observes that, 'while the leadership of the first phase (1795-1860) emerged from the upper crust of tribal society, that of the second rose from the lowest rung of it. The Santhal brothers were landless, Birsa Munda was a rayiat or a praja (sharecropper) and Govind Giri was a hali (bonded labourer)' (1985: 151).

Many studies show that the leadership in post-independence movements has come from educated tribals. The recent tribal solidarity movements are primarily the product of the initiative and interest of a limited coterie of the educated tribal elite, and there is a considerable communication gap between the interests and ideas of the elite leaders and the tribal masses (Weiner 1978; Shah 1984). The leadership of some of the tribal peasant movements such as those of the Telengana, the Warli, the Shahada, the Bhoomi Sena, the Naxalbari and Pardai, was provided by non-tribals coming from different political groups (Mies 1976; Parulekar 1979; De Silva et al, 1979; S. Banerjee 1980; T. Banerjee 1980; Desai 2002). At the same time, local leadership among the common tribals has also emerged. Amarsingh in Dhuliya and Kalu Ram in Thana are examples (De Silva et al. 1979; Kulkarni 1983). Political parties such as the Communist Party of India (CPI), the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) (CPI [ML]) in the case of the Naxalbari movement and the Socialist Party in the case of the Pardi *satyagraha* played an important role in setting objectives and programmes of the tribal movements. Sumanto Banerjee's study of the Naxalbari movement and Hakumat Desai and Kiran Desai's study on the Pardi *Satyagraha* examine the parties' role in the movements. More analytical studies on this aspect are needed. In the last two decades non-party organisations like the Chhatisgarh Mukti Morcha in Madhya Pradesh, Deesha in Gujarat and several others have played a proactive role in the mobilisation of adivasis. They need to be studied.

OVERVIEW

Various studies on tribal movements highlight the militancy of adivasis in various struggles during the pre- and post-independence period. They also point out that the line between the changing nature of issues that the tribals raised in the past and the present movement is thin and getting blurred as tribals become peasants. Few scholars believe that adivasis because of their locale and dependence on natural resources are closer to nature. They respect nature. Hence their struggles are considered as a part of environmental struggles. In the past, studies on tribal movements, particularly of the nineteenth century largely focused on their land and forest rights. However, during the last three decades, issues of identity and ethnicity are increasingly emphasised. Though the number of studies on tribal movements is large, only a few are intensive and well-documented. Many of the studies are sketchy. Moreover, the studies on tribal movements in south, central and northeast India are very few. Many of the tribal struggles have so far remained unexplored. Political scientists and social historians have almost neglected this field.

NOTES

1. It is interesting to note that the collective actions of the tribals during the last century were invariably described as 'rebellion', 'revolt', 'insurrection', 'uprising', or 'unrest'. These terms were used by colonial administrative staff and borrowed by anthropologists even after independence. Rupert Moser argues, 'Scientific terminology still reflects political situations. Movements which could achieve the independence of their representatives from colonial rule, or movements of societies forming now an independent state, are no longer called rebellions or uprisings' (1978: 125).

2. He led the movements of the Bhil in the Rajasthan-Gujarat border area during the turn of the century (Singh 1985).

4

DALIT MOVEMENTS

The Scheduled Castes (SCs) are known as harijans, i.e., children of God—a term coined by Mahatma Gandhi in 1933. The harijan nomenclature is considered pejorative by some leaders of the castes. They prefer to be called dalit, i.e., the oppressed (Guru 2001a). Occupying the lowest rank in the Hindu caste system, they are called *avarana*, those whose place is outside the *chaturvarna* system. They are also known as *perial*, *panchama*, *atishudra*, *antyaja* or *namashudra* in different parts of the country. Their touch, and sometimes their shadows and even their voices are believed to pollute caste-Hindus. Legally they are no longer untouchables, though in practice many of them still bear that stigma.

The SCs constitute 16 percent of India's population. They numbered around 1,680 lakh in 2001. Thirty-six percent of them are workers. Among the workers, 48 per cent are agricultural labourers. Many of them are engaged in traditional occupations, such as, flaying, scavenging. The SCs are scattered all over the country, though their number is insignificant in the predominantly tribal states of the northeast frontier. They are not concentrated in very large numbers in particular districts or *talukas* either.

On the whole, the studies on the dalit or SC socio-political condition are many but there are only a few systematic empirically sound studies on their movements. The Mahar movement of Maharashtra has been projected, more often than not, as an all-India movement. Of course, Dr. Ambedkar, Mahar by caste, was an all-India leader. While bargaining with the British and the caste-Hindus he represented all the dalit of the country (Burra 1986). But his role in mobilising the SCs outside Maharashtra is not so far well-documented. There is no full-fledged study or even an anthology giving information about various SC movements in different parts of the country of the colonial and post-colonial period. Two papers, one by Gail Omvedt and Bharat Patankar (1979), and the other by Ghanshyam Shah (1980), give an overview of the dalit liberation or anti-untouchability movements in India. The former deals with the colonial period, whereas the latter looks at both the colonial and the post-colonial periods. Many books dealing with the SCs do give a chapter on harijan movements in a particular region or in the country as historical antecedents. As they are not studies on the movements per se, the data given therein is sketchy, though useful. A few of them are worth mentioning. The study by Verba, Ahmed and Bhatt (1972), on the Blacks and the harijans, gives a

comparative picture of the movements of these communities in the USA and India. As far as the harijan movement is concerned, the study is confined mainly to Dr. Ambedkar's movement in Maharashtra. Ghanshyam Shah (1975) writes a chapter in his study, entitled *Politics of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes*, on comparative harijan movements in Maharashtra and Gujarat, to show why the harijan movement in Gujarat was less militant than that of Maharashtra.

TYPOLOGIES AND ISSUES

The main issues around which most of the dalit movements have been centred in the colonial and post-colonial periods are confined to the problems of untouchability. They are predominantly anti-untouchability movements. The other issues are the same as those related to agricultural labourers. They launched movements for maintaining or increasing reservations in political offices, government jobs and welfare programmes. Since very little attempt has been made to analyse dalit movements at the national level, no efforts have been made to evolve a typology of the movements. Ghanshyam Shah (1980) however classifies them into (1) reformative; and (2) alternative movements. The former tries to reform the caste system to solve the problem of untouchability. The alternative movement attempts to create an alternative socio-cultural structure by conversion to some other religion or by acquiring education, economic status and political power. Both types of movements use political means to attain their objectives. The reformative movements are further divided into: (1) Bhakti movements; (2) neo-Vedantik movements; and (3) Sanskritisation movements. The alternative movements are divided into: (1) the conversion movement; and (2) the religious or secular movement.

The latter includes the movement related to economic issues. In the context of dalit identity and ideology Shah has recently classified dalit movements into (1) movements within cultural consensus; (2) competing ideology and non-Hindu identity; (3) Buddhist dalits; and (4) counter ideology and dalit identity. The first three are based around religious ideologies whereas the last is based on class (2001 a). Patankar and Omvedt classify the dalit movements into (1) caste-based; and (2) class-based movements. In the 1990s, with the increased political participation in elections and somewhat political success of the Bahujan Samaj Party in Uttar Pradesh, some scholars consider their mobilisation as a 'new political movement' of the dalits (Pai 2000).

Bhakti is a form of worshipping God through devotion and personal communication. All *bhaktas* (devotees) are considered equal before God. Two traditions were developed within the bhakti movement after the 15th century - *saguna* and *nirguna*. The former believes in the form of God, mostly Vishnu or Shiv, relating to the Vaishnavite or Shaivaite traditions. It preaches equality among all the castes though it subscribes to the *varnashram dharma* and the caste social order. The devotees of the *nirguna* believe in a formless universal God. Ravidas and Kabir are the major figures of this tradition. This was partly developed to resist the Brahminical hierarchical order (Lele 1981; Lorenzen 1995). It became more popular among the dalits in urban areas in the early twentieth century (Gooptu 2001), as it provided the possibility of salvation for all. It promised social equality. Through these movements, Fuller argues, 'devotionalist ethic come(s) to be widely reinterpreted as a charter of egalitarianism' (1992: 158).

Neo-Vedantik movements were initiated by Hindu religious and social reformers. These movements attempted to remove untouchability by taking them into the fold of the caste system. According to the pioneers of these movements, untouchability was not an essential part of Hinduism and, for that matter, of the caste system. Dayanand Saraswati, the founder of the Arya Samaj, believed that the caste system was a political institution created by the rulers 'for the common good of society, and not a natural or religious distinction'. He said, 'in fact, any Brahmana, who is disqualified for his work, becomes at once a Sudra de jure, and a Sudra, who qualifies for it, becomes at once a Brahmana de jure; though neither can become so de facto also either by his own will or the will of others, as long as the state does not make him so' (Jordens 1978: 62). The Arya Samaj started various educational and welfare programmes for the upliftment of the SCs (Shah 1975; Jordens 1978; Pimpley and Sharma 1985; Sharma 1985). Satish Kumar Sharma's book *Social Movements and Social Change* (1985) is the only full-fledged study which examines the relationship between the Arya Samaj and the untouchables. The study is confined to Punjab only, but some of his observations seem to be valid for other parts of the country. Sharma observes that the Arya Samaj was against the political movements of the untouchables. It went against any move initiated by the untouchables for their solidarity and integration.

The neo-Vedantic movements and non-Brahmin movements played an important catalytic role in developing anti-caste or anti-Hinduism dalit movements in some-parts of the country. The Satyashodhak Samaj and the Self-Respect movements in Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu, the Adi-Dharma and the Adi-Andhra movement in Bengal and Adi-Hindu movement in Uttar Pradesh, are important anti-untouchability movements which were launched in the last quarter of the nineteenth and the early part of the twentieth century. Full-fledged studies on most of the movements except the Adi-Dharma movement of Punjab are not available. The other backward castes that are economically better off than the Scheduled Castes used the SCs against the Brahmins in their struggle for power. But once they gained a position of dominance, they kept the SCs at a distance (Nath 1987). We get scattered references to the Adi-Andhra, the Adi-Hindu and the Namashudra movements. Mark Juergens-meyer's book *Religion as Social Vision* (1982) deals with the Adi-Dharma movement against untouchability in twentieth-century Punjab. This movement began in the 1920s. The main plea of the movement was that the untouchables constituted a *quam*, a distinct religious community similar to those of the Muslim, Hindu and Sikh communities and their *quam* existed in India from time immemorial, i.e., before the Hindus arrived. The movement made its mark by the 1930s. 'It had established a fact which previously had been unproved: that the untouchable castes were capable of mobilising for their own benefits and of organising in ways that permitted them to compete under the conditions that governed the socio-political area at large' (1982: 80). Nandini Gooptu in her study on Uttar Pradesh in the early twentieth century briefly analyses the emergence of the Adi-Hindu movement in the urban areas of the region (2001). Like Adi-Dharma, the leaders of the Adi-Hindu movement believed that the present form of Hinduism was imposed on them by the Aryan invaders.

However, no evidences are available to suggest links between various 'Adi' movements in their initial stages. She argues,

it is more likely that the theory of a separate racial origin of untouchables in the various simultaneous 'Adi' movements was derived from British ethnographic

classifications and notion that the caste system originated through encounters between Dravidian and Aryan races. These radical theories had gained widespread publicity, especially with the various censuses. Acquaintance of the urban untouchables with Christian missionaries, who were propagating the concept of the original races of India and the theory of the genesis of the caste system among an Aryan minority, was another significant source of these ideas (2001: 158).

The movement did not pose a direct threat to the caste system. It was 'in essence, conceived as and remained a protest against the attribution of "low" roles and functions to the untouchables by means of a claim not to be Aryan Hindus; it was not developed into a full-blown, direct attack on the caste system' (Gooptu 1993: 298).

Followers of the Satnami Panth are found in many parts of north India. Saurabh Cube's ethnographic history of the Satnami community in Chattisgarh is a fascinating and important contribution to understanding the trajectory of the religious social reform movement among the dalits in their quest for equality (2001). Ghasidas, the founder of the sect in Chattisgarh threw Hindu gods and goddesses in the rubbish heap and rejected the discriminatory caste social order. Over the next hundred years the sect had undergone a transformation in its organisational structure and ideology. In course of time it has become a part of the mainstream Hindu social order and the political system. The dominant Brahminical symbols which Ghasidas rejected have become a part of the twentieth-century Satnami Panth.

A section of untouchables who could improve their economic condition, either by abandoning or continuing their traditional occupations, launched struggles for higher status in the caste hierarchy. They followed Sanskrit norms and rituals. They tried to justify their claim to a higher social status in the caste hierarchy by inventing suitable mythologies. All untouchable jail's, however, have not succeeded in removing civic disabilities traditionally imposed upon them. Practically, they are still treated as untouchables in their places of residence (Shyamlal 1981; Brar 1985; Kumar 1985; Parmar 1987). The Shanars or Nadars of Tamil Nadu however, have crossed the boundary of untouchability. The Iravas (also spelled as Ezhavas) of Kerala have also blurred, if not completely destroyed, the line of untouchability. The Nadars organised movements in the late nineteenth century against the civic disabilities they suffered. They entered the political system by first supporting the Justice Party' in the early 1930s and later the Congress party. They have moved from the lower rungs of the ritual hierarchy to a position of 'status and power' (Hardgrave 1969). Similarly, the Iravas formed their caste organisation in 1903, known as SNDP Yogam (that is, Association for the Maintenance of Dharma founded by Shri Narayana). According to it, the low social status of the Iravas is due to their low social and religious practices. They could attain equality with others by becoming upper castes. Dilip Menon observes that

This idea found expression in the realm of worship in setting up of Ezhava temples devoted to gods of the Brahmanical pantheon. The entrance to an equal society lay through common worship. Secondly, the SNDP Yogam sought to create self-esteem within the Ezhava community by building their economic strength and propagating a vigorous self-help ethic (1993: 266).

The association launched activities for Sanskritising the norms and customs of the Iravas. They launched a *Satyagraha* for temple entry in the 1920s. They bargained with

the government for economic opportunities and political positions (Aiyappan 1944, 1965; Arnold et al. 1976; Kannan 1988).

A major anti-untouchability movement was launched by Dr. Ambedkar in the 1920s in Maharashtra. This has continued in different forms till today. Though the movement is primarily rooted in Maharashtra, it has spread to different parts of the country and acquired an all-India character. Dr. Ambedkar emerged as the leader of the untouchables of the country. During the 1920s, the Mahars launched unsuccessful *satyagrahas* against untouchability in Maharashtra. Ambedkar saw the possibility of advancement for the untouchables through the use of political means to achieve social and economic equality' with the highest classes in modern society (Zelliot 1970b; Nath 1987).

Ambedkar organised the Independent Labour Party (ILP) on secular lines for protecting the interests of the labouring classes. Though the party' was open to the labourers belonging to all the castes, it was dominated by the Mahars. It did not make much of an impact. Eleanor Zelliot observes, 'Their political movement overrode efforts to claim religious rights, failed in its attempts to represent class or labour, and took on much of the nature of a caste association functioning in the political arena' (1970b: 52). Later, Ambedkar formed the Scheduled Castes Federation (SCF) in 1954, to fight elections and look after the interests of the SCs. Those interests were confined to reservations of jobs and political positions (Verba et al. 1972; Nach 1987). The SCF was later converted into the Republican Party in 1956, with the intention of broadening its base by including in its fold the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and backward castes.

The dalits demanded a separate electorate in the 1930s which led to a conflict between Ambedkar and Gandhi. Gandhi did not think that the problem of untouchability was a political issue. Trilok Nath (1987) examines various aspects of the conflict in detail and concludes that as a result of the Poona Pact, the SCs 'felt cheated politically'. They also launched large-scale *satyagrahas* in 1946 for separate electorates before the state assemblies in Poona and Nagpur, and Lucknow and Kanpur (Zelliot 1970b).

In the early 1930s, Ambedkar concluded that the only way of improving the status of the untouchables was to renounce the Hindu religion. He appealed to his caste brothers, 'you have nothing to loose but your religion' (Keer 1954: 273). In the early 1950s, he found that Buddhism was appropriate as an alternative religion for the untouchables. It was their only salvation. He preferred Buddhism primarily because it was 'an indigenous Indian religion of equality; a religion which was anti-caste and anti-Brahman' (Lynch 1972; Kamble 1979). Ambedkar and a large number of his followers—mainly Mahars—were converted to Buddhism in 1956 (Zelliot 1966). Wilkinson and Thomas (1972), however, find that the conversion has not made any significant change in their social and occupational life. Nevertheless, they did become more militant as a result of their conversion to Buddhism. Some of them have also been converted to Christianity and Islam. However, the movement for conversion to Buddhism has spread dalit consciousness irrespective of whether dalits became Buddhist or not.

The dalits of Maharashtra launched the Dalit Panther Movement in the early 1970s. Initially it was confined to the urban areas of Maharashtra, now it has spread to Gujarat, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and other states. By now we have a few studies on the Dalit Panther Movement (Gokhale 1979; Jogdand 1991; Yagati 2003a,

2003b). However Sharmila Rege complains that the Dalit Panther movement ignored the issue of oppression of dalit women (1998).

The Panthers condemn and discard the dominant culture and attempt to build an alternative socio-cultural identity for the oppressed classes. The Dalit Panthers organised demonstrations against injustices to the SCs. However, most of their activities are limited to propagating their ideas by publishing original literature such as poems, stories, plays which are used as a means of protest against the Hindu intellectual tradition, the Hindu religion and Hindu ethics. However, this literature was not widely read by the dalit masses themselves in the 1970s (Bhoite and Bhoite 1977), but it has become more popular in the 1990s. Several anthologies and books on dalit literature are now available (Zelliot 1978, 1960, 1994; Punalekar 2001). Gopal Guru critically examines Ambedkar and the cultural movement in Maharashtra. He observes:

The cultural and literary activists derived their intellectual inputs from Ambedkar when they borrowed their forms from similar emancipatory traditions of Kabir and Bhakti, particularly *Warkari* tradition . . . the Dalit cultural initiative before 1970 had the promise and potential to move away from the familiar to the universal (2001b: 191).

In order to serve their interests the established dominant political parties hijacked the culturally vibrant dalit movement.

At a number of places in Andhra, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Kerala, Bihar, Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh, harijan agricultural labourers participated in the land grab movements of the late 1960s; they also launched struggles demanding higher wages. In fact, harijan agricultural labourers and sharecroppers launched struggles even during the British period (Henningham 1981). We have discussed them under the section on peasant movements. However, the efforts of various voluntary organisations such as the Rural Community Development Association (RCDA), Tamil Nadu, the Harijan Labourers' Association, the Agricultural Workers' Movements in Tamil Nadu, the Rural Harijan Agricultural Development Association (RHADA) in Andhra, and the Association of Rural Poor (ARP) in West Bengal, to organise and mobilise agricultural labourers during the 1970s and early 1980s, invite special attention (Shah 1988). The leaders of these associations have been inspired by the Brazilian leader Paulo Freire's approach in developing 'conscientisation' among the oppressed. They develop consciousness among the oppressed regarding the socio-economic structure and cultural reality which keep them subjugated. For them, conscientisation is a way of autonomous creation open to the masses themselves. They expect that it will develop hope among the oppressed masses for their gradual internal transformation, cultural as well as economic, and for their democratic organisation, and eventually, for their taking possession of power. These organisations launched several struggles related to economic issues dealing with wages and social issues related to untouchability (Von der Weid and Poitevin 1981). During the various struggles which took place between 1974 and 1978 in Tamil Nadu, the activists realised that their concentration only on the harijans was detrimental to the unity of the masses of agricultural labourers as a whole. They, therefore, have formed various organisations of agricultural labourers and small and marginal farmers belonging to the harijan and non-harijan castes and launched their movements (Shah 1988).

Assertion for dalit identity has almost become a central issue of dalit movements. This involves local-level collective action against discrimination and atrocities. Statues of Dr.

Ambedkar are found not only in urban dalit localities but also in many villages where their number is fairly large. Dalits, though very poor, enthusiastically contribute to installing Ambedkar statues in their neighbourhoods. They struggle to get a piece of land from local authorities to install the statue. Radhey Lal Boudh of the Dalit Panthers argued in the 1980s that by installing Ambedkar's statue dalits could propagate an Ambedkarite iconography, which would generate a kind of pan-Indian bahun 'imagined community', apart from asserting their control over land (Pai 2002: 199). The statues and photos of Dr. Ambedkar are an expression of dalit consciousness and their assertion for identity. Eleanor Zelliot vividly describes the empowering image of Ambedkar:

The meaning of this symbol, or statue, or, the photo, grows from the life and work of B.R. Ambedkar. The image is always clad in a western suit, white shirt, red tie, pen in pocket, and book in hand. The image usually represents Ambedkar with an upraised arm, teaching or, declaring the message of courage and equality. It stands erect, unmoving. This is what the image represents: education, success, contribution to the political world of India, courage, empowerment through relationship to government, 'one of us', who was not only important personally, but was important to India. The book that Ambedkar carries is the Constitution, and his role as Chairman of the Drafting Committee has assumed great importance and symbolic value. He is without specific caste. He is the Dalit of Dalits. He has no identity as a Maharashtrian. He is for all India (2001b: 239).

There are several local movements in which dalits en masse migrate from their villages protesting against discrimination and atrocities. In the 1980s there were five such incidents. Desai and Maheria (2002) document one of the micro-level movements. In protest against torture and beating, the dalits of the village Sambarda undertook *hijarat*, i.e., en masse migration like refugees from their native village and camped in the open before the district collector's office for 131 days in 1989. Their demand was for alternative settlement where their life and dignity will be secured. They declared,

We do not want to return to Sambarda under any circumstances, no matter what guarantee or protection the government offers to us. We do not want to be pitied. Our well-being is the result of our hard work. We have pucca houses of our own. Many of us are employed. Still, we become slaves the moment we enter the village. For us, there will only be justice if the government, after having assessed our property, gives us land and helps us to settle elsewhere. We want our self-respect, not mercy. Getting our self-respect back is our constitutional right (2002: 239).

This was not just a protest. They wanted a concrete solution: alternative land to protect their dignity. They succeeded in their mission against all odds and collusion between the ruling elite and vested interests. The village-level movement succeeded in mobilising dalits of different parts of Gujarat.

ORGANISATION AND LEADERSHIP

Ambedkar formed the Independent Labour Party and Scheduled Castes Federation, and there are a number of Scheduled Caste organisations at regional levels. But there is no study focusing on the organisational setup and leadership and their efforts aimed at mobilising the Scheduled Castes. Owen Lynch, in his study, *The Politics of Untouchability* (1969), gives some information regarding the organisation of the Jatavas

of Agra city (see also Lynch 1974). Similarly, Denis Von der Weid and Guy Poitevin (1981) give a brief account of the organisation of the RCDA, Tamil Nadu. Saurabh Dube analyses the Satnami Mahasabha between 1925 and 1950 showing how it had undergone changes (2001). Mark Juergensmeyer (1982) in his study on Adi-Dharma, gives a fairly good account of the organisational structure and its role in uniting various factions of untouchables. He observes:

For most rural members of the Scheduled Castes who participated in it, the Adi-Dharm was an entirely novel form of association. It presented a complete contrast to the closed and parochial society they had always known, and as such it stimulated hopes and generated allegiance. But it contained a fatal flaw. For, although its ideological vision spoke of a united quam, the organisational reality gave evidence of sharp differences between the movement's educated progressive leadership and the illiterate traditional following, between jullunder, Hoshiarpur, and Lyallpur regions, and between the Chamar and Chuhra castes. The organisational structure was firm enough to obscure these differences during the initial years, but in time the tensions increased, and the precarious unity showed signs of breakage (1982: 62-63).

Robert Hardgrave (1969) and A. Aiyappan (1944) give an account of the organisations of the Nadars and Iravas. They are caste associations like any other caste organisations involved in the process of political mobilisation. Hardgrave observes,

The Nadar Mahajan Sangam is a voluntary association, drawn from the ascriptive, reservoir of castes.... Its actual membership is but a fraction of its potential in full caste recruitment, but the association claims to speak for the community as a whole, asserting virtual representation. If this claim is to be accepted as credible in the light of economic differentiation and the diffusion of political support within the community, the association must withdraw from active political involvement. The caste association has played a vital role, nevertheless, in the political mobilization of the Nadar community, serving as the agent of community integration and as the vehicle for its entrance into the political system of modern India (1969: 200-201).

Moreover, as peasants, the harijans participated in various peasant struggles. In a few movements they acted autonomously under the leadership and the organisation of militants drawn from among themselves (Henningham 1981).

The most important leader of the dalit movement in India was Dr Ambedkar. There are quite a few biographies of Ambedkar. Among them the important ones are by Dhananjay Keer (1954), W.N. Kuber (1973) and M.S. Gore (1993). Eleanor Zelliot's study on Dr Ambedkar and the Mahars is a very important contribution to the subject (1996). Gore analyses Ambedkar's ideology and locates it within the broader framework of a study on social movements, on the one hand, and the sociology of idea systems, on the other. According to Zelliot,

Ambedkar's programmes were intended to integrate the untouchables into Indian society in modern, not traditional ways, and on as high a level as possible . . . Ambedkar planned his programme to bring the untouchable from a state of 'dehumanization' and 'slavery' into one of equality through the use of modern methods based on education and the exercise of legal and political rights. At the same time, Ambedkar's modernising ideology was tempered in practice by a clear perception of the tenacity of caste and tradition. He sought to awaken in the untouchables an awareness of their debased

condition and common interests that would promote the unity needed for the development of effective organisations and mass action. For such reasons, Ambedkar advocated a separatist policy accentuating caste distinctions as an initial stage in creating a society in which identities would be unimportant (1972: 77).

Owen Lynch examines the charisma of Ambedkar at the micro-level in Agra city. He observes,

The Jatav easily accepted Dr Ambedkar himself and made him into a culture hero because of their many-stranded and important relations with him. He was one in a long line of saints who abjured the caste system, and he was for them an untouchable hero like those in their folk ballads. He provided a focus of identification and a sense of vicarious satisfaction for many Jatav longings. Ambedkar was also a leader within the political structure of Indian society and was therefore a real source of help and leadership. Finally, he was a leader who was in fact an untouchable and a revolutionary, just as the Jatavs; hence, they felt he could understand them better than a non-untouchable leader, such as Gandhi (1972: 110).

Besides Ambedkar, there were quite a few all-India harijan political leaders, but so far no major study has been available focusing on their role in mobilising the dalits. Except Abhay Dubey's short study on the ideology and functioning of Kanshi Ram, a leader of the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), we do not have micro-level studies analysing other dalit leaders and the political movements that they led. However, Mark Juergensmeyer (1982) gives an account of Mangoo Ram, the leader of Adi-Dharma in Punjab. He observes,

Mangoo Ram was a restless, even ambitious man, socially sensitive and politically astute. One would probably not describe him as religious, certainly not pious, and on the face of it there is something unlikely in his founding and leading a religious movement Mangoo Ram considered himself neither saint, avatar, nor guru; but despite his lack of pretense to religiosity he did fulfil a religious role. He was something of a broker, making religious symbols and ideas accessible to ordinary people (1982: 44).

PARTICIPANTS

Though economic differences among the harijan communities are generally ignored, some scholars such as Zelliot, Lynch, Hardgrave, Aiyappan and Juergensmeyer, point out that there was social and economic stratification among the Scheduled Castes. The leadership of their political movements has come from those *jatis* of the dalit who had improved their economic conditions. The main participants in the contemporary Dalit Panther Movement in Maharashtra, Gujarat, Karnataka and Uttar Pradesh come from the urban, educated middle class. Different *jatis* have been more active in different dalit movements. The Mahars of Maharashtra, the Jatavs or Chamars of Uttar Pradesh, the Vankars of Gujarat, the Malas of Andhra Pradesh, etc., are in the forefront of the dalit movements in their respective regions.

The Mahars of Maharashtra have been the most active in the dalit movement. Eleanor Zelliot (1970a) analyses the factors responsible for the growth of the Mahar movement in Maharashtra. According to her, the Mahar leadership was released from its traditional service in village society and the gap between the elite and masses was narrow.

Moreover, a group of 'brokers' emerged among the Mahars who could serve as links between the castes and institutions of power in society.

SUMMING UP

The dalit movements are dominated by their middle class raising issues related to identity and reservations of government jobs and political positions. There is widespread local-level assertion against the practice of untouchability and discrimination. But these collective actions have not geared regional-level sustained movements. Their struggles however have brought 'dalits' on the agenda of mainstream politics. In academic circles the movements have forced a section of intellectuals to critically review not only Indian traditions and culture but also the paradigms of modernity- and Marxism (Ilaiah 2001; Aloysius 1998). They have exploded a large number of myths created by Brahminical ideology. It is also asserted that 'our pictures of Indian labour and Dalit movements have been wrongly kept apart... our habitual disciplinary isolation, our conventional criteria of relevance, seriously distort our understanding of the history of dalits and meanings of labour in South Asia' (Robb 1993: 65-66). The dalit movements have also successfully built up a good deal of pressure on the ruling classes. However, several scholars and activists feel that dalits have been reduced to a pressure group within the mainstream politics. Their revolutionary edge is getting blunted. Their strategies, tactics, alliances, even goals, seem to be in dispute. It looks like the movement has reached an impasse (Shah 2001b). Gail Omvedt observes that 'the "post-Ambedkar Dalit movement" was ironically only that in the end—a movement of dalits, challenging some of the deepest aspects of oppression and exploitation, but failing to show the way to transformation' (2001: 157).

NOTE

1. Though there are a few studies on the Harijan elite, we have excluded those studies because the elite are not necessarily the leaders of" the movements.

5

BACKWARD CASTE/CLASS MOVEMENTS

It is difficult to give any precise acceptable definition of caste. The task becomes all the more difficult when we try to define 'backward castes'. Most of the scholars consider all the castes other than the *dwija* (the twice-born who have the right to wear the sacred thread) backward castes. But there are several castes in different parts of the country which are not *dwija* (though many of them aspire to achieve *dwija* status), and yet they do not consider themselves backward castes. They enjoy control over economic resources and political power. They struggle for power among themselves or against the Brahmins, and hence they cannot be considered deprived groups. The Brahmins and the Kayasthas of Bihar Gha 1977; Das 1983), the Jats of Rajasthan (Sisson 1969), and the Patidars of Gujarat, organised and mobilised themselves for asserting their political power. Their mobilisation was aimed at consolidating their social status (Bose 1985). They can also be considered upper castes/classes. The rest of the castes are considered 'backward castes'.

But all the backward castes do not enjoy a uniform socio-economic status. In his study on the backward caste movements, M.S.A. Rao (1979) divides non-upper castes/classes into three categories. The uppermost category of the backward castes consists mostly of landowners. There are several such castes in different parts of the country, such as the Jats, the Ahirs, the Gujjars in Punjab, the Marathas in Maharashtra, the Vellalas in Madras, the Kammas, the Kapus and the Reddis in Andhra Pradesh, the Vokkaligas and the Bants in Karnataka. Ranking below them are tenant cultivators, artisans and other service castes. They include the Ahirs and the Kahars in Bihar, the Kolis in Gujarat and the Vaddars in south India. They are considered caste-Hindus, above the pollution line. They have not enjoyed political power in the recent past. Most of them are small or marginal farmers, tenants, or agricultural labourers. They were under the economic and political control of the landowning castes. The latter often extorted forced labour from the former as domestic servants and palanquin-bearers, and expected several customary payments (free gifts) on various festivals' (Rao 1979: 4). At the bottom are the untouchable castes who are designated Scheduled Castes under the constitution of India. The socio-economic conditions of most of the Scheduled Castes and other backward castes are qualitatively different, though some of the non-upper-caste movements, known as anti-Brahmin movements, included untouchables. Most of the studies on the untouchables' movements do not include the movements of the other backward castes. However, M.S.A. Rao includes the untouchables in other 'backward castes'. Christophe Jaffrelot (2003) also clubs dalits and 'other backward castes' together as low castes. For the purpose of this essay, we exclude the Scheduled Castes from the backward caste and treat them separately. The Kaka Kalelkar Commission, appointed by the Government of India, identified more than 3,000 castes or communities as 'other backward castes' (OBCs) in 1956. The Mandal Commission (1980) calculated that 52 per cent of the population—including non-Hindus—constitute 'Other Backward Castes'. Besides, a number of state governments appointed commissions for identifying those castes which can be called socially and educationally backward castes/classes. Almost all the commissions except the Rane Commission in Gujarat (1983) used social, educational and economic criteria for identifying 'backwardness'. We are concerned here with the movements of some of these castes. There are a number of studies on movements launched by different castes for improving their caste status. Many of them aimed at social reform and did not enter the political arena to struggle for power. In this essay we do not deal with the studies which are primarily concerned with social mobility. However, the studies on political movements of the OBCs are very few. Most of these studies are confined to non-Brahmin movements in south India.

M.S.A. Rao (1979) classifies backward-caste movements in India into four types on the basis of structural cleavages and manifest conflicts. The first type is that of the movements led by upper non-Brahmin castes such as the Vellalas, the Reddis and the Kammas of old Madras Presidency, the Vokkaligas and the Lingayats of Mysore, and the Marathas 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 (Hardgrave 1965). These are known as non-Brahmin movements against the Brahmins. Such movements are not found in north India because

‘the Brahmins were generally backward with regard to modern education and government employment’¹ (Rao 1979: 11). The second type of backward class movements hinge on the cleavages within the non-Brahmin castes, mainly led by intermediate and low castes such as the Ahirs and the Kurmis in Bihar, the Noniyas in Punjab, the Kolis in Gujarat, and the Malis in Maharashtra. The movements by the depressed classes or untouchables against upper and other backward castes are the third type of backward caste movements. The fourth type is that of the tribal movements. We have treated the third and the fourth types of movements separately.

Gail Omvedt (1976) argues that the non-Brahmin movement in Maharashtra included both an elite-based conservative trend and a more genuine mass-based radicalism. It attained conservative goals, but radical goals have not been attained. ‘The Maharashtrian Brahmin intelligentsia, though still dominant in educational and cultural institutions, has been swept from political power by a rich peasant non-Brahmin elite, with strong roots in the villages and with an institutional basis in rural cooperatives and educational societies’ (ibid.: 2). The Rudolphs (1984) consider the backward classes (castes) of the northern, western and upper-southern states ‘bullock capitalists’. In the last two decades, they argue,

The mobilisation of bullock capitalists as an economic class has been reinforced by the simultaneous mobilisation as a status order of the ‘other backward classes’, a euphemism for castes who by their own and the state’s reckoning are socially ‘depressed’ or ‘backward’. This layering of status and class interest enhances the political significance of both (ibid.: 323).

ISSUES

With the change in the agrarian structure, the advent of the market economy, the growth of urban centres and the spread of liberal education under British rule, a few of the backward castes improved their economic condition. By the end of the nineteenth century and at the beginning of this century, they aspired to rise in the caste hierarchy. As a first step they followed the path of Sanskritisation, adopting the rituals and the life style of the upper castes. They invented legends about their ancestors and demanded higher social status. The Marathas, the Mails, the Sagar Dhangars of Maharashtra (Orenstein 1963; Omvedt 1976), the Kurmis and the Yadavas of Bihar (Qha 1977; Rao 1979; Das 1983), the Kolis of Gujarat (Shah 1975), the Kaibarttas of West Bengal (Nicholas and Mukhopadhyay 1962), the Lingayats of Karnataka (Srinivas 1966), and the Telis of Orissa (Bailey 1957; Patnaik and Roy 1960) followed the path of Sanskritisation in the first quarter of the twentieth century. However, the upper-caste non-Brahmins of Tamil Nadu did not follow this path for attaining higher status in the caste structure. They challenged the higher status of the Brahmins. In the case of the former, the upper castes were the reference group for the backward castes, whereas in the latter case, the non-Brahmins preferred to consider themselves Dravidians, i.e., natives of the area, and considered Brahmins alien intruder[^]. There was a widespread belief at the turn of the century that the Brahmins were racially different from the non-Brahmins. The non-Brahmins believed that they were the creators of ‘southern Tamil’ culture, whereas the Brahmins were the guardians of the ‘northern Sanskrit’ culture (Irschick 1969). The Ahirs (Yadavas) and the Kurmis of Bihar opposed the begar (forced labour) system in the

1910s. They collectively refused to perform *begar* for landlords and also opposed taxes imposed by the landlords. The Ahirs refused to sell cow-dung cakes, curds and milk to landowning upper castes at concessional rates (Jha 1977). This refusal to follow customary laws resulted in clashes between the upper and the backward castes. The upper 'backward' or non-Brahmin castes of south India, particularly the Vellalas, the Reddis, the Kammas, the Lingayats, the Vokkaligas, the Marathas, resented the dominance of the Brahmins. They raised the issue of exploitation and oppression, both economic and cultural, by the Brahmins (Hardgrave 1965; Irschick 1969; Omvedt 1976). The non-Brahmins of Tamil Nadu demanded a separate state for the Dravidians. They opposed the nationalist movement dominated by the Brahmins in the 1920s and declared their allegiance to the British government. They declared: 'It is a misrepresentation to say that Brahmins belong to the same Indian nation as the non-Brahmins while the English are aliens... Indian Brahmins are more alien to us than Englishmen' (Irschick 1969: 51-52). During the first quarter of this century, they demanded political representation in the State Legislative Assembly. Some of the backward or non-Brahmin castes in Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu demanded separate electorates, so that they could elect their own representatives. The demands for reservation in government jobs and educational institutions continued in the 1980s (Rudolph and Rudolph 1984).

One of the reasons for the non-Brahmin movements in south India was that the Brahmins took more advantage of modern educational and employment opportunities than the upper non-Brahmin castes, secured government jobs, and thus tried to maintain Brahmin preponderance in government service. The Yadavas of Bihar demanded reservations for themselves in the army and other government services (Rao 1978, 1979). The demands for reservation in government jobs and educational institutions for the backward castes began to be raised repeatedly in the post-independence period.

The main form of political mobilisation is the electoral process. Because of their numerical strength they have successfully increased their position in the state assemblies. Christophe Jaffrelot calls their rise 'India's silent revolution' (2003). The backward castes rarely resorted to large-scale direct action for asserting their demands. Many of them undertook social reform which generally did not involve confrontation with the higher castes, though in a 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. Many others took part in election campaigns on a massive scale in order to get candidates of their castes elected. In this sense, their mobilisation has rarely led to struggles. During the last two decades (1980s onwards) different individual castes submit petitions and organise meetings demanding some welfare programmes for their caste members. But studies on such mobilisations are not available.

PARTICIPANTS AND LEADERS

As mentioned earlier, the number of backward castes is very large, but only a few of them have launched movements for political power. Numerical strength is an important factor for a caste which attempts to organise itself politically. Backward castes which are relatively small and scattered in different parts of the country have less potential for

launching political struggles (Shah 1975). Those who organised movements secured the support of various sub-castes. The Yadava and Kurmi people of Bihar (Jha 1977; Rao 1978; Das 1983) are two examples. The non-Brahmin movement in Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu initially encompassed various castes including the untouchables, but in course of time the untouchables were excluded from the movement. The leadership for the Yadava movement in Bihar (Rao 1979) and the non-Brahmin movements in Maharashtra (Omvedt 1976) came from the well-off stratum of the castes concerned. Businessmen and large farmers supported the Yadava movement (Rao 1979). Gail Omvedt, in her study on the non-Brahmin movement in Maharashtra, observed that initially the movement received the backing of well-to-do non-Brahmins, primarily contractors and a few professionals, and moved fairly quickly to establish a peasant base. The studies on the non-Brahmin movements in Tamil Nadu do not adequately examine the participants and their leaders.

Jotirao Phule was the ideologue of the non-Brahmin movement in Maharashtra. By now, quite a few interesting studies are available on Phule's ideology and his life (Keer 1964; Omvedt 1971, 1973, 1976; O'Hanlon 1985). Phule rejected the Hindu scriptures and the caste system. The Hindu religion, as interpreted by the Brahmins, was both the ideological means of suppression and the cause of poverty of the low castes. The peasants and untouchables together constitute the oppressed classes. Under British rule, 'Brahmins used their secular powers to protect the orthodox religious values with which they identified, or to aggrandise their own personal positions in some more material way' (O'Hanlon 1985: 11). Gail Omvedt (1976) observes that Phule's theory of exploitation was focused on cultural and ethnic factors rather than on economic or political ones. According to Phule's ideas, education and organisation were the means to create unity and a sense of identity among the non-Brahmin castes by returning to pre-Brahmin religious traditions. Through this the Brahminical ideological chains could be broken and a caste-free and just society be created (O'Hanlon 1985). Phule founded the Satyashodhak Samaj in 1873 which initiated the non-Brahmin movement in Maharashtra (Omvedt 1971, 1973, 1976; Pathan 1977). Shahu Chhatrapati, the Maharaja of Kolhapur, was an important leader of the non-Brahmin movement in Maharashtra (Copland 1973; Omvedt 1976). Ramaswami Naikar founded the Dravidian movement to fight Aryan 'domination' which to him was synonymous with Brahmin domination and Brahminism (Rani 1974). He remained the central figure of the Dravidian movement from the 1920s till his death in 1973.

Various backward castes organised caste associations for social reforms and the struggle for political power (Rudolph and Rudolph 1960). The Yadavas formed not only district-level but also state- and all-India-level caste associations (Rao 1979). It was the same with the Marathas and the Malis of Maharashtra (Omvedt 1976), and the Kolis of Gujarat (Shah 1975). These associations were loose and ad hoc. They organised conferences, passed resolutions and occasionally submitted memoranda. The backward castes of south India formed political parties—first the Justice Party, and later the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam. The backward castes of Bihar also planned to organise their own party, but failed to put it into practice (Das 1983).

The nature of the backward-caste movements appears to be, from available literature, different than that of the dalits and the tribals. There is also a qualitative difference in the backward-caste movements in north India and south India. The movements in north India

are within the caste framework and confined to Sanskritisation. This has not been the case in Maharashtra under the leadership of Phule and the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam movement in Tamil Nadu. They revolted against the caste system. But in course of time, their opposition against the caste system fizzled out. The reasons for such diversion need examination. The backward caste movements in post-independence India are mainly confined to electoral politics. They function as pressure groups to seek reservations in jobs and educational facilities.

6

WOMEN'S MOVEMENTS

The International Women's Decade, 1975-85, has provided an impetus to the growth of social science literature on women in general—their status in society—and issues related to gender-based discrimination and inequality in particular. Gender studies are now on the priority agenda of the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) and the University Grants Commission (UGC). A number of important universities have Centres for Women's Studies. A research institute focusing on women, the Centre for Women's Development Studies was established with the support of ICSSR in 1980. There is also a full-fledged academic journal focusing on gender studies. A survey of literature by Malvika Karlekar (2000) on 'Women's Studies and Women's Development', sponsored by ICSSR covers the studies up to 1990 (It is a valuable document for further research in the field. By now, we also have a few compilations including an annotated bibliography on women's studies (Vyas and Singh 1993). Social science literature on various aspects of gender has increased considerably during the 1980s and 1990s. Many monographs and essays use the term 'movement' in a broader sense in their titles dealing with women writings, discourse, issues affecting women's position in socio-economic spheres, rather than confining themselves to mobilisation and collective action by women. Women's studies and women's movements are often used synonymously. Of course, both are closely related and the former includes the latter but the focus of the present essay, as we have discussed in Chapter I, limited to a review of the literature on women's collective actions. For that purpose, research-based monographs on women's movements in India are relatively few. Most of them are at an exploratory stage. Except for a few, many of the studies are anecdotal, impressionistic and polemical for action—prescription for action—written by feminist activists in journalistic style. For activists involved in feminist movements, feminism is not merely a discourse to be analysed, but 'a method of bringing about social change'. Whether one argues that the discourse and methodology—strategies, tactics and programmes—for social change are inseparable or not, the increasing literature certainly provides valuable theoretical and philosophical articulation and empirical data, posing relevant questions and hypotheses for in-depth studies on the social system in general and women's position therein, in particular. Some theoretical studies are also available, but more often than not, it is felt that they deal mainly with issues raised by western scholars. Even if this is so, this should not belittle the importance of such studies. Western influence, after all, affects all spheres of our life. This is more so in the era of globalisation. Moreover, 'women's resistance to male domination', as we understand it today, was the product of western education. British women took the initiative in forming women's organisations and

defining their objectives! Women's liberation movements in India are believed to be largely influenced by women's movements in the west, which emphasise the 'universality' of gender oppression and therefore 'universal sisterhood' of women. This has been questioned by many intellectuals. It is argued that feminism as a movement is rooted in the specific 'national history and culture' (Niranjana 2000).

A few scholar-activists have begun to raise issues relevant to the Indian context. According to Liddle and Joshi, 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. 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 were 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 arena was crucial to the maintenance of caste purity. The inferiority notion adds a derogatory component to the gender ideology, serving to worsen women's position. It also makes for a degraded position for women abroad when added to the imperialist ideology of Western racial superiority; for, the context of imperialism creates a notion not only of women's inferiority to men, but also of Indian women's inferiority to Western women (Liddle and Joshi 1986: 240).

Madhu Kishwar, the editor of *Manushi* (the women's journal) and activist scholar, also emphasises the need to look into our traditions and try

to separate the devastating aspects from the points of strength within the cultural traditions, and start using the strengths to transform the traditions. Our cultural traditions have tremendous potential within them to combat reactionary and anti-women ideas, if we can identify their points of strength and use them creatively. (1984: 46-47).

Gabriele Dietrich complains that the use of religion has been ignored by women's movements as an obscurantist hangover. She feels that the women's movement

needs to go into the cultural question more deeply. The effort to give women a new sense of identity beyond family, caste and religion needs to grapple with the problem of cultural identity and continuity. It is comparatively easy to point out what has been oppressive and destructive of women in our cultural heritage. But what the protest values and the humanist values of our cultural traditions are, also need to be answered if shallowness is to be avoided (1986: 160).

The gap persists.

On the other hand, traditional idioms and symbols are also creatively used to liberate women from subordinate positions in the social system. In that context there is a debate on Gandhi's role during the freedom struggle to bring women into the political sphere. Vina Mazurkar (1976), Devaki Jain (1986) and others see Gandhi as a great liberator who adopted a revolutionary- approach in raising the status of women. Malavika Karlekar argues that Gandhi invented the 'tradition' of a new femininity. Thus the Gandhian woman was to use her traditional qualities to build a new positive image of action, resistance and change. The Gandhian method of self-questioning and analysis is now being picked up by the women's movement which denies the universality of incarcerating stereotypes' (1991: 46). Madhu Kishwar argues,

While in many ways, Gandhi's views on women and their role in society are not very different from those of the 19th century reformers, in some other important ways he marks a crucial break from that tradition. The most crucial difference is that he does not see women as objects of reform, as helpless creatures deserving charitable concern. Instead, he sees them as active, self conscious agents of social change.... He is primarily concerned with bringing about radical social reconstruction.. . One of the most lasting contributions of Gandhi to the women's cause was that he gave it moral legitimacy. He helped create a tradition and socio-political atmosphere in which even today; hardly anyone will publicly stand up and explicitly oppose women's fundamental rights or will deny them participation in politics.... Gandhi's action, in bringing women dignity in social life, in breaking down some of the prejudices against their participation in social and political life, in promoting an atmosphere of sympathetic awareness of their issues, goes far beyond his own views and pronouncements of women's role and place in society (1985: 1757-58).

Some others assert that Gandhi endorsed the fact that women's 'primary function is to look after [the] home' (Shah 1984:10). He did not interrogate 'class based forms of the patriarchal oppression of women' (Sangari and Vaid 1989: 21). Sujata Patel argues that Gandhi's 'reconstruction of women and femininity did not make a structural analysis of the origins and nature of exploitation of women; in fact Gandhi used essentialist arguments to reaffirm her place as mother and wife in the household (1988: 386). Empirical studies show that many organisations which claim to follow the Gandhian path reinforce the traditional position of women which is subordinate to the male. Granting that Gandhi's views and practice were revolutionary at that point of time (in the 1930s) in history, one needs to examine why most of the Gandhian women organisations have stuck to Gandhi's position of the 1930s. Why do many, though not all, these organisations tend to feel closer to the Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) ideology on women? Of course all Gandhian women activists do not toe the BJP line.

Traditions and symbols are also skilfully used by the champions of status quo to mobilise women in the public sphere. Culture and traditions are conceptualised in a way to reinforce the women's position subservient to the male. Community rights based on traditional religious codes are emphasised over citizens' rights. Women are organised and mobilised to defend and perpetuate traditional institutions with patriarchal authoritarian structures and value systems. For instance, Muslim women were mobilised against Shah Bano, a 73-year-old divorcee to whom the Supreme Court granted a small maintenance allowance from her ex-husband. On the other hand, Hindu women organisations championing Hindutva ideology demand a Common Civil Code which has in practice a Hindu bias. The Mahila Morcha of BJP observes, 'We conceptually differ from what is termed as the women's liberation movement in the West.' We require a sort of readjustment in the social and economic setup. No fundamental change in values is desirable. Women in India ever had a pride of place within the household, and the society. That has to be only to be reestablished and reaffirmed (quoted by Kapur and Cossman 1995: WS 39). For the champions of this position, tradition and values are derived from Brahminical scriptures rather than custom and usage. This is being done for the elimination of political enemies and the establishment of saffron power (Mani 1989; Kapadia 2002). The Sangh Parivar defended the sati system and formed the Rani Sati Sarva Sangha which campaigned and mobilised women for the celebration of *sati*. They

hijacked a slogan used by women's liberation movements: '*Hum Bharat ki nari hain, phool nahi, chingari hain*' (We, the women of India, are not flowers but fiery sparks) (Akerkar 1995: W14). Some of the leaders (both male and female) of the Parivar inspired their women members to be militant and challenge male domination. Amrita Basu observes that the message these leaders convey 'is that women can assume activist roles without violating the norms of Hindu womanhood or ceasing to be dutiful wives and mothers. The support of prominent men in religious and political life not only-legitimizes their roles but also bridges the chasm between good citizens and devoted wives and mothers' (1999: 179).

A number of studies on communal riots in different parts of the country provide enough evidences of women's participation on communal lines. [These organisations use traditional symbols and idioms not only to reinforce patriarchal values but also successfully mobilise large numbers of women of one community against another ((Omvedt 1993; Agnes 1994; Sarkar 1991).

The riots dealt a severe blow to the premise that women have a separate existence away from their communal identity where we can discuss problems of rape, divorce and maintenance on common platform. The same issues affect different women in different ways at different times'. The women's movement does not stand in isolation and is an integral part of other social movements (Agnes 1994:1127).

A fact-finding report by women's groups on communal riots during the post-Babri mosque period in 1992-93 in Ahmedabad, Surat and Bhopal also observes, 'Even the most committed work among vulnerable sections of women is not capable of enabling such women to liberate themselves from the pressures of divisive identity politics, without a conscious direction to confront this type of politics which is so inimical to women's rights and the movement for equality!) (quoted by Agnihotri and Mazumdar 1995:1874). The scenario raises a number of theoretical questions. Sikata Banerjee questions materialist and/or structural explanations in comprehending identity construction in political mobilisation. She analyses the mobilisation of women by the Shiv Sena in Bombay. She argues that the creation of the Hindutva identity 'does not necessarily imply a rejection of material and structural factors. Indeed, the impact of the Sena's image of women was buttressed by structural factors such as grassroots contact, provision of economic benefits and focus on a homogeneous mass base' (1995: 229). In this situation, Lotika Sarkar asks,

Where do we feminists stand in relation to this manifestation of women's power? There is no denying that it does empower a specific and socially crucial group of middle class women, if not in absolute feminist direction then definitely in a relative sense. It helps hitherto homebound women to reclaim public spaces, to acquire a public identity, it confers upon them a political role and even leadership. It teaches the woman not to regard herself as merely feminine but as full-fledged citizen. It gives her access to serious intellectual cognition.... We know the costs too.... It prepares the woman to be a citizen of an authoritarian Hindu rashtra, to wreck secular, democratic politics (Sarkar 1991: 2062).

She further argues,

Gender, like class, does not have an emancipatory potential that is 'natural' or 'innate'. Gender power grows from a sense of solidarity to being a force for itself only

through intervention, contestation, and an exercise of and struggle over choices. Certainly, a feminist consciousness does not nestle within a woman, ready to attain progressive self-realisation within a congenial environment, but is acquired through bitter conflicts and problems of choices—within ‘herself most of all (Sarkar and Butalia 1995: 210-11).

TYPOLOGIES

Different scholars classify women's movements according to their theoretical perspective. Neera Desai observes that 'the women's movement is the organized effort to achieve a common goal of equality and liberation of women and it presupposes sensitivities to crucial issues affecting the life of women. For a concerned action to move towards the objective, there has to be some unifying ideological thread for various units' (1988: ix). On the basis of the ideological paradigm Gail Omvedt (1978) classifies women's movements into two types: (1) women's equality movements; and (2) women's liberation movements. 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 (1979) classifies women's movements on the basis of two different ideologies of feminism. They are (1) Corporate Feminism claiming a larger role in politics for women on the grounds that they have a special contribution to make as women; and (2) 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. Kalpana Shah divides the women's movements into three categories on the basis of their approach towards explaining women's unequal positions in the contemporary society and ways to liberate them from subjugation. They are: (1) Moderate or Women's Rights Position; (2) Radical Feminism; and (3) Socialist Feminism (1984). Sangari and Vaid make a distinction of women's movements into two theoretical categories: (1) modernising of patriarchal modes of regulating women; and (2) democratising of gender relations both at home and the work place. According to them, 'movements by working class and peasant women have a greater potential for democratizing patriarchal power relations than the modernizing movements' (1989: 19). Women's movements in India are also divided into periods or waves (Kumar 1993; Chaudhari 1990; Gandhi and Shah 1991). They are: (1) social reform movements during the freedom movement; (2) the movements from 1947 till 1975; and (3) the movements emerging during and after the International Women's Decade.)

SOCIAL REFORM MOVEMENTS AND WOMEN

The origin of the contemporary women's movements in India is often stressed to the social reform movement within the Hindu fold in the last century. (Social reform movements among the Muslims, Christians, Parsis, Sikhs, etc. have not received attention from social scientists.) Social reformers like Rammohan Roy, Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar, Mahadev Govind Ranade, Behramji Malbari, raised their voices against the prevailing religious and social customs subjugating women (Heimsath 1964; Mazumdar 1976; Sen 1979; Chaudhari 1990). [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. Some of these issues continue to affect women even in this century. The difference is that till the turn of the last century, very little effort had been made by the reformers to mobilise women for participation in public life in general around the issues concerning them.

Political rights—equal franchise and representation in legislatures—for women were demanded by women leaders, who were supported by the Congress party (Heimsath 1964; Desai 1977; Everett 1979; Shah 1984). Women's organisations, 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. These organisations raised similar issues and carried out welfare programmes during the post-independence period. They enjoyed an all-India status with branches in all states. Social reformers, as well as women's organisations, raised women's issues which primarily affected Hindu ideology, based on the notion of Vedic times. (Most social reformers believed in the separation of the roles played by the male and female in society. Though they were not against women working outside their homes, they were not in favour of independent careers for women in the wider world. They believed that women should not compete with men in all spheres (Basu 1976). The reformers 'continued to demand that women should be pure, firm and self-controlled. They should be *Pativrata*, i.e. devoted and chaste wives who should view the vices of her husband with tolerance (Shah 1984: 135). Those women's organisations which were offshoots of the social reform movements, share more or less the same ideology. Kalpana Shah observes:

The role of the AIWC in the struggle for the liberation of women is negative. In fact, through its programmes the Parishad (AIWC) strengthens the traditional role of a woman as a wife, housekeeper and mother. And despite wishful thinking of the moderate thinkers like Gandhi, woman's role as a wife is not considered to be equal to man's by women themselves. She is asked to perform some of the functions outside the four walls to assist her husband rather than to raise her head, to develop her dignity as a human being.... They [such women's organisations] have become instruments in spreading an ideology which assigns inferior role to women. They strengthen revivalist values which are oppressive to women. These organisations have lost the zeal even to fight against oppressive social customs (1984:145).

Jana Everett (1979) identifies five factors which have shaped such reformist Indian women's movements. These are: (1) the hierarchical caste system; (2) the Hindu religion; (3) the joint family system; (4) Islamic rule and (5) British colonialism. The caste system permits some mobility and tolerance for certain segments of society- Everett argues that

the Indian women's movement could be seen as an attempt by a previously excluded segment [high status women] to enter the political system. These women do not challenge the hierarchical framework—they justify their demands on the grounds of restoring previously held rights . . . because the Indian women's movement was composed of high-status individuals, it represented a low level of threat to the stability of the system (1979: 37).

Though the Hindu religion assigns a subordinate status to the woman, the religious dualism of the male and female principle (Shakti-Shiva) and also the religious tradition of

male-female equality in ancient Vedic times, provide a justification to Hindu revivalists for improving the status of women (Heimsath 1964).

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 implications 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)' (Everett 1979: 41) However, under British rule, liberal education spread in India. The educated upper-class males encouraged women's education to bridge the gap between the male and the female; and thus enabled wives 'to prepare their sons for western educated milieu'!(ibid.: 42). Jayawardena (1982) argues that the national bourgeoisie emerged to fight simultaneously the imperialist powers, and internally, the feudal structure and ideologies. As a counter to cultural imperialism, male social reformers became convinced that women had to be emancipated from a 'savage' past; so they raised issues against certain oppressive customs. And they wanted wives who had acquired a 'westernised' education to enhance their image. The goal of the social reformers was to inculcate and entrench the bourgeois norms of monogamy and the nuclear family which are the cornerstones of capitalist development. Romila Thapar observes: 'Women's Lib does not have immediate relevance to the Indian social situation. It is the product of an urbanised middle class with a large number of women trained in professions as a result of expanding educational opportunities whose professional skills are wasted by their having to limit themselves to domestic work' (1975: 5).

FREEDOM STRUGGLE AND WOMEN

Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay (1958), Aparna Basu (1976, 1984), Manmohan Kaur (1980), Rajani Alexander (1984), Uma Rao and Meera Devi (1984) and a few others, examine the role of women in the freedom struggle. Some scholars assert that the freedom movement helped women in their struggle for 'liberation', as feminism and nationalism were closely interlinked. Gandhi's ideology of recruiting women in public life without disturbing their social role as housewives, and his efforts at mobilising women, were also responsible for women's participation in the freedom struggle. Subhash Bose also formed a women's organisation called Mahila Rashtriya Sangh which played an active part in the freedom struggle (Mehta 1982). Besides describing women's participation in the freedom struggle at the macro level, the micro-level studies, such as Aparna Basu's (1984) and Pravin Sheth's (1979) on Gujarat, Sarojini Shintri and Raghavendra Rao's (1983) on Karnataka, Uma Rao and Meera Devi's (1984) on Uttar Pradesh, widen our horizons in terms of regional variation. According to Aparna Basu (1976), women were accepted in India's freedom struggle as 'political comrades and given equal opportunities for participation'. Such conclusions are arrived at on the basis of stray instances rather than being based on adequate evidence. Govind Kelkar (1984) argues 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. Rajani Alexander makes an interesting observation for further investigation, particularly in the present context of communal mobilisation. She observes,

Women's participation in the Independence movement took diverse forms and was not always organised and orchestrated political protests.... For example, especially in western India, in Maharashtra and Gujarat, the Prabhat Pheri was used during the freedom struggle as a medium for rousing patriotic fervour. All over India, countless women provided food and shelter for fugitives and underground activists, visited political prisoners—relatives and strangers—during their long terms, and in myriad ways dealt with the introduction of new and external stimuli into a domain normally insulated from all those, the home. Much of women's involvement in the Independence movement was of this nature—based on community and home (1984:2).

PEOPLE'S MOVEMENTS' AND WOMEN

Studies on various movements, such as, the freedom movement, peasants' movements, tribal movements, students' movements, discuss the role and participation of women in these struggles. These movements do not raise issues affecting women per se but they do raise societal or class issues. Gail Omvedt calls them pre-movements as far as women are concerned. They reveal the power of women as a force in society, they allow women opportunity to begin to bring forward their own needs, and they are often part of a process leading to the development of women's movements as such' (1978: 373). Most of the studies of various movements do not examine the women's role in the movements specifically. It is generally assumed that these movements are led and dominated by males in which women have either no role or an insignificant one. They are written from a male perspective. These studies suffer from male chauvinism (Mitra 1984; Kelkar 1984; Saldanha 1986). Govind Kelkar argues,

women have had a distinctive active role in the area of social and political movement that has not been fully described and explained. Misrecognition of that role has been associated with theoretical weakness in writing of history. While this leaves an incomplete account of the past which is to be regretted, History (like other social sciences) is to be criticised for its deficiencies not primarily because women have emerged with less significance than some scholars suppose is their due. They have to be questioned because of the incompleteness of their evidence and therefore, the biased and wrong explanations of social and political movements (1984: 127).

Restudy of these movements, specifically focusing on women's roles and their participation is now being attempted. They bring out the invisible participation of women in the forefront. *Samya Shakti*, a journal of women's studies had brought out a special number on this theme in 1984. The editor of the journal explains the reasons for the special number focusing on women's roles in various types of people's movements. She argues,

There is a tendency among social scientists to relegate women's activism to movements with a specific focus on women's issues only. If women are mentioned at all in the context of studies on other movements, they are, by and large, confined to stray mention of an 'also ran' character. Such studies also tend to confine their observations only to the role of a few leaders. We felt that something had to be done to correct this 'historical invisibility' of the large numbers of women who played an active role in these movements, if the myth of women's passivity in political action was to be demolished (*Samya Shakti* 1984: vii).

Iliana Sen edits an important anthology on women's participation in 'people's movements' in post-independence India. She argues,

the movements we examine are mass movements aiming for a broad political or social change in which women have been important participants. The role of women in some of these struggles has been commenced on in others it has been ignored. The fact of women's participation does not, of course, necessarily make them 'women's movements'; any movement which is wide enough or involves large numbers of women. Indeed, if we examine these movements using yardsticks of conventional 'feminism'—centring around what people see as 'narrow' or 'one dimensional' women's issues—we are often disappointed. Women in these movements do not strive for autonomous or independent articulation of only their women specific demands. At the same time their articulation of demands and issues exerts a pressure on their movements to take cognizance of the women in their mass base (1990a: 3-4).

Singha Roy poses important sociological questions in reference to peasant movements:

Why do women participate in peasant movements and other forms of political mobilization? What are the socio-economic conditions that encourage or obstruct women's participation? What changes take place in the form and extent of women's participation when a 'radical peasant movement' turns into a 'reformative peasant movement'?.. How are women's issues articulated by women themselves or focused on in the process of mobilization of the peasantry? (1992: 24).

In course of time a beginning has been made to revisit these movements from a gender perspective. Feminist historiography is developing the following two different approaches. One approach is primarily gender based focusing on patriarchy. It treats women as a homogenous social group. Bahati Kuumba argues, 'Gender, on both objective and subjective levels, significantly impacts social movement recruitment and mobilization, roles played and activities performed within movements, resistance strategies and organizational structures, and the relevance and impact of movement outcomes. As a result, taking gendered patterns into account opens up a Pandora's Box of previously unmasked questions and concerns (2001: 26). The Marxist approach on the other hand, addresses patriarchy and class division together. It is argued that oppression of women is an integral part of the exploitation of the Indian people (Chakravarty 1980). In an important anthology, *Recasting Women* (1989), Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid explain that feminist historiography is not

the tokenist inclusion of women or the numerical or even qualitative evaluation of their participation in this or that movement. It rethinks historiography as a whole and discards the idea of women as something to be framed by a context, in order to be able to think of gender difference as both structuring and structured by the wide set of social relations . . . under gird any attempt at a historical reconstruction which undertakes to demonstrate our society in the full sense, and is ready to engage with its own presuppositions of an objective gender-neutral method of inquiry, as well as with the presuppositions of the social movements and the movements it sets out to represent (1989: 2-3).

At the empirical level the studies on people's movements can be divided into two categories (1) movements led by political parties and groups; and (2) non-party social movements. The former examine how the parties with different political ideologies perceive and treat participation of women in the movements. Kapil Kumar observes, 'In spite of the advances made in the field of historical investigation, the role of women from the oppressed strata — particularly peasant women — in transforming economic, social and political life in the countryside stands neglected in historical analysis' (1989: 337).'

PEASANTS AND TRIBAL MOVEMENTS

As mentioned earlier (Chapter 2), the studies by Sunil Sen (1979) on Bengal, Kapil Kumar (1984) on Oudh, Shirin Mehta (1984) on the Bardoli *satyagraha* and K.P. Kannan (1988) on rural workers' mobilisation in Kerala, show the militant role played by women in various agrarian movements. With the growth of gender studies a beginning has been made to focus on the women's role in these movements. Meera Velavudhan (1984), in her analytical and well-researched study on 'women worker' and class struggles in Alleppey' examines the role and participation of women, in the communist-led movement of coir workers in Kerala. She shows that women participated on a large scale in the 1938 strikes. They formed the base of a crucial communication network. Later on, the women workers launched struggles on issues such as maternity benefits and retrenchment of women workers (Kannan 1988). They participated in the armed struggle led by the Communist Party in the late 1940s. In this struggle, 'women activists were arrested, tortured, raped by the military and police during house-to-house raids'.

Peter Custers (1987) focuses his study on the women's role in the Tebhaga movement. He shows how the women from the labouring and poor peasant classes provided effective leadership. This study along with India Munshi Saldanha's study on the Warli revolt, and K.P. Kannan's study on the struggles of the rural proletariat in Kerala are more critical of the role of the Communist Party than Meera Velayudhan's study on the workers' struggle in Alleppey, Kerala. Renu Chakravarty (1980), a communist leader who herself participated in several struggles highlights the role played by the communists in mobilising 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 the entire women's movement. However, other scholars, though accepting that the Communist Party did play an important role in women's mobilisation, are critical in that the party did not play the role that was expected of it; of providing an equal role to women cadres. Moreover, Chakravarty does not give credit to tribal peasant women who had traditions of collective action (Sen 1989). 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 (1986: 51).

In the case of Kerala, Kannan also 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 mobilisation and organisation, they were not incorporated into the important levels of leadership and decision-making. When combined with 'other features of subordination, i.e., lowest caste status, the situation became worse in terms of participation even though they are active in the continuing struggles of rural workers (1988: 138-39).

Peter Custers (1987) also makes similar observations. Like Munshi Saldanha, he feels that the patriarch holds sway over the Communist Party. He questions the 'Marxist theory of party-building' in which patriarchal prejudices are at the roots. The role of trade unions is worse than the parties in undertaking women's issues and giving them a share in decision-making (Kishwar and Ruth 1984; Rohini et al., n.d.). Ajitha in her reminiscences of her active participation in the Wynad (Malabar) movement led by the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) (CPI [ML]) observed that the party leaders were not sensitive towards the issue of women's equality and the need to build women's involvement. Vindhya (1990) makes a similar observation of the Srikakulam movement led by the Naxalites during 1958-68. She feels that 'prevailing patriarchal norms within the movement and the society outside influenced the role and position of women in the struggle (2000). Kalpana Kannabhiran and others observe that though women activists join the left party-led peasant struggles to liberate themselves from traditional customs; they eventually get dropped out from the movements because of the attitude of the parties towards women.

The man-woman relations in the revolutionary politics were determined on the basis of traditional patriarchal models of women. Party cadres treated women as the provider of 'sexual service'. . (there is) absence of open discussion on sexual harassment and other forms of domination meted out to women activists and their negligence towards women's issues in the name of maintenance of discipline and achievement of ultimate goals (Rani and Vidmahe 1999: 268).

However, it seems the situation is changing and the left parties have been influenced by the autonomous feminist movement. Since the mid-1980s the People's War Group (PWO) in Andhra Pradesh has formed a separate women's organisation: Progressive Organisation of Women (POW) in Hyderabad. It has taken up specifically women's issues, such as violence against women in the family, rape and molestation. The term patriarchy is now freely used in the party's documents. U. Vindhya remarks that 'there is therefore both external and internal pressure on the movement to respond to feminist critiques as well as questions of caste, questions that were not confronted in earlier struggles. The impact of these challenges to revolutionary practice has been perhaps to problematise gender as a determining factor in women's and men's lives' (2000: 170).

Bina Agarwal compares the Tebhaga and the Bodhgaya movements. The former was led by the Kisan Sabha and the Communist Party of India (CPI) in the 1940s, whereas the latter was led by Gandhians in the 1970s. She observes that in the Tebhaga struggle 'despite women's participation in the struggle, unequal gender relations persisted both within and outside the struggle' (1994: 99). In the Bodhgaya struggle, thanks to the middle-class women activists with a feminist perspective, women articulated gender concerns within the struggle. She observes, 'After the first phase (I am told) as male biases on a variety of counts began to be challenged by the women and debated within

the organization, there were perceptible changes: women's participation in decision making grew substantially' (ibid.: 109).

Several case studies document women's participation in various struggles of agricultural labourers, poor peasants, fisher workers and adivasis in the 1970s and 1980s led by non-party organisations (Manimala 1983; Savara and Gothoskar 1984; Vaid 1984; Nayak 1990; Subhadra and Rahul 1999). Shetkari Sangathana has also mobilised women in farmers' agitations (Omvedt 1986, 1990, 1993). The studies on the workers' movement in Chhattisgarh (Sen 1990b), the adivasi struggle led by the Sharmik Sangathana (Sathe 1990; Basu 1992) and the union of construction workers in Tamil Nadu point out the tension between men and women participants because of their different roles. In the process some of the movements evolved separate women's units such as the Mahila Mukti Morcha in Chhattisgarh and Shramik Stree Mukti Sangathana in Dhule. Within the struggles they raise women issues.

Women also played a leading militant role in the Chipko movement, resisting the forest contractors' cutting of trees (Dogra 1980; Bahuguna 1984; Jain 1984; Sharma 1984; Weber 1987; Bhatt 1988). Attempts have been made to analyse the Chipko movement from the perspective of ecofeminism. It has been argued that 'women had a special concern for the preservation of life and ecological systems' (Sen 1990b: 7). Vandana Shiva argues that 'women and nature are intimately related, and their domination and liberation are similarly linked. The Women's and ecology movements are therefore one, and are primarily counter-trends to a patriarchal maldevelopment' (1988: 47). In the context of the Chipko movement, Shobhita Jain observes,

Men, who sit in village councils and other village bodies and head their families, view the government officials with a great deal of respect and fear. They dare not oppose these officials. Women, on the other hand, never had any contact with government officials or other outsiders and had no model of inter-action with them. They only understood that felling of trees is harmful for their well-being and they simply acted according to their convictions (1984: 1793).

However, Sumi Krishna argues that women relate to nature not because of biological distinctiveness but because of gendered roles (1996). It is observed that in the course of the struggle, women sometimes raised issues asserting equality- with men. But their participation in the Chipko movement 'has not helped them in their own struggle against oppression although claims have been made that it is a "feminist" movement', Kumud Sharma (1984) observes. Emma Mawdsley argues, 'this is not to deny that many women are deeply concerned by agro environmental issues in the hills, but they allied this with a concern about other ways of winning a livelihood in Uttaranchal, including the commercial exploitation of the forests and resistance in Uttaranchal' (1998: 48).

Chhatra Sangharsh Vahini (CSV), a Gandhian organisation, mobilised tenants and labourers against a *math*, a religious organisation in Bodh Gaya, Bihar. The math was holding land as absentee landlord. In the course of the struggle 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 realising their demand (Manimala 1983, 1991). The movement also took up the issue of violence against women. One of the activists of the struggle observes,

We started by taking up wife beating as a humanitarian issue: no human being should beat another, for whatever reason. Women are humans too. But it was in the struggle for land rights in Bodhgaya that we realized the genuine fear women have of being beaten. All men, even propertyless men, view women as their property. If in the course of our struggle they were to get land then it would add to the power they exercise over women. We pointed to the commonality between husbands, landlords and the men in the Hindu Maths—all of them had the power to oppress women (Manimala 1991: 64)

Interestingly, CSV has moved ahead from Gandhi's notion of women's rights.

Some studies take note of women's active participation in various middle-class movements on issues such as price rise, the Nav Nirman movement in Gujarat and the JP movement in Bihar (Desai and Patel 1985; Patel 1985; Gandhi and Shah 1991). There is no critical analysis on the nature and extent of women's participation, nor do we have an idea of the position of women activists in these struggles. Women led the anti-arrack (liquor) movement in 1991-93 in Nellore district in Andhra Pradesh. Reddy and Patnaik (1993) in their study on the movement observed that the movement did not even highlight how arrack was a source of misery, perpetrated by the social system,

Robert Whyte and Pauline Whyte (1982), and Safa (1984) argue that Asian women are less inclined to see themselves oppressed as women and more inclined to see themselves as members of an oppressed socio-economic group. On the basis of the evidence collected by Indra Munshi Saldanha (1986) in her study on the Warli revolt, she concludes that it was evident that their exploitation and oppression by the landlord and his musclemen, and as part of the exploited tenant-labourer class, was to them the 'more important' oppression'. Increased involvement of women in various class struggles, according to Gail Omvedt, has been the result of their participation in the production processes in the country side.

Capitalist relations are replacing feudal relations in the countryside; as a result the issue is no longer simply 'peasant revolt' but rather poor peasant and agricultural labourer revolt, and this is affecting women because women are not dominant productive workers among 'peasants' as such but specifically among the rural poor. It is the rising revolt of the rural poor (agricultural labourers and poor peasants) in the last decade in India that is leading, unevenly to the development of genuine mass based movements for women's equality and liberation 1978.

WOMEN'S MOVEMENTS ON WOMEN'S ISSUES

During the last three decades a number of micro and macro struggles initiated by autonomous women's groups have taken place around the issues directly affecting women and addressing the question of emancipation of women (Kishwar and Ruth 1984; Desai and Patel 1985; Rohini et al, n.d.). The issues of rape, sexual harassment in the workplace, violence against women in the family and public sphere have been major issues on which women at micro and macro levels have struggled. Demonstrations, dharnas, public mass petitions, etc. of the urban middle-class women were sparked off with the Mathura rape case in 1981. Mathura, a 14-year-old girl from Maharashtra was raped in a police station. Two policemen accused of raping her were acquitted by the

lower court and later by the Supreme Court. The judges believed that Mathura had willingly submitted to sexual intercourse. Women in different cities protested against the incident and the court's judgement. They organised processions, public meetings, signature campaigns, etc.

When women's groups condemned the State and society they were, in fact, saying that it is not nature but human society, its laws and institutions which have created hierarchies between men and women, class and caste, that rape is not a random unpremeditated act but a form of violence by the powerful on those who are powerless, poor and disadvantaged' (Desai and Patel 1985: 48).

Women activists frequently expressed their wrath on the incidents of rape, molestation and domestic violence against women—including bride burning and dowry. Sometimes a few women would organise various programmes to pressurise the police and political leaders to arrest and punish the culprits. Though reports of such incidents are many, systematic studies examining various aspects of mobilisation and their sustainability are not available. Why some grassroots mobilisations succeeded and why many dissipated needs systematic inquiry^, number of groups have often protested sex determination tests, compulsory family planning practices and the state policy on reproductive health and population policy. Women groups have engaged in campaigns on several issues such as legal maintenance, guardianship and custody of children, a uniform civil code, etc. These campaigns demanded new legislations or changes in legislations to give justice to women and control violence. Now some activists wonder about the effectiveness of legislations,

so long as the attitudes of the establishment remain anti-poor, anti-minority and anti-women The laws which have been given for the asking and which confer excessive powers to the state need serious requesting. Perhaps the movement has been short-sighted in raising such demands in the first place and falling right into the manipulative schemes of the government. The women's movement is too insignificant at this moment to monitor the implementation of these laws and prevent their misuse (Agnes 1992: WS 33).

Gail Omvedt, in her book *We Will Smash This Prison* (1980), gives a fairly detailed account of ten months in 1975, beginning with a meeting of women agricultural labourers in a remote village in central India leading to the formation of a 'united women's organisation'^ Her account highlights the nature and the level of consciousness of women from different strata of society—tribal, dalits, middle-class castes, rural-urban, agricultural labourers—and the adequacy and inadequacy of the urban middle-class women in organising women in India. She gives strategies adopted by women leaders and leftist parties in inculcating consciousness among women for their rights and mobilising them into political action. In a sense, this is a self-analysis by women activists engaged in the mobilisation of women. Some activist researchers believe that autonomous women's movements in urban and rural areas have not taken a stable form for different reasons. One of the reasons, according to Rohini, Sujata and Neelam, is its failure in identification of women primarily as an oppressed group—Even where the issue is potentially a work-issue—e.g., abortion and contraception—this connection is not made explicit. The link between child-bearing and child-rearing, and hence the socially necessary labour implied by the former, is not recognised, the oppression of having to go through with unwanted pregnancies is the only issue high-lighted. Shared oppression does give women a strong sense of cohesion which could be the basis for stable organisation. But by itself it cannot

give the sense of power or strength to sustain a prolonged fight against this oppression. Being oppressed by itself gives no bargaining power (n.d.: 137). Needless to say, this inference is debatable.

Raka Ray (1999), in her well-conceived empirical study, inquires into why women's movements in different regions give different priority to different issues affecting women. She finds that women groups—both autonomous and affiliated with the parties in Bombay give more importance to the issue of violence against women and religious fundamentalism whereas for the groups in Kolkata, irrespective of their affiliation, issues of poverty and unemployment, consciousness and literacy are more important than other issues. It is because of different political 'fields' in the two places. In Bombay issues with women groups are dispersed and contested in the social movement sector. Women's groups are heterogeneous. On the other hand, in Kolkata groups are homogeneous and under the hegemonic culture of the Communist Party of India (CPI [ML]). She shows that different types of political fields inspire different dynamics in regional women's movements to set feminist goals and strategies rather than their status as either autonomous or party-affiliated. A number of women's organisations such as the Self-employed Women's Association (SEWA), Working Women's Forum, Annapurna Mahila Mandal, etc., carry out economic programmes for empowering women. Though their activities are often called 'movements', for our framework of analysis they are institutions rather than movements. According to Caiman Leslie 'these organizations serve as valuable intermediaries between unmobilised, unempowered women and institutions of government' (1992: 190). The Self-employed Women's Association is one such widely acclaimed organisation. It is an organisation of poor self-employed women. It began in Ahmedabad in the 1970s and now it has spread to many parts of the country. A study by Kallima Rose observes that organisations have made the women aware of their rights. According to the author SEWA shows that the concept of 'organization and collective agitation can bring about positive betterment in their (women workers') status' (1992: 16)¹. Some studies on grassroots mobilisation of the women have now undertaken. They are important descriptive accounts (Purushothaman 1998).

LEADERSHIP

The leaders of social reform movements who raised women's issues in the last century were mostly males belonging to the upper strata of society. A number of biographical studies give us some idea about what made social reformers undertake women's issues. They also inform us about their views on gender equality. Since the early 1920s women took the initiative in organising women and raising their demands. British women were in the forefront. These organisations were mainly confined to urban educated upper-class women. The leadership initially came from the upper caste or class, wives or daughters of princes, government officials and political leaders. Everett (1979) gives good biographical data on the presidents of the AH India Women's Organisation. Some biographical studies (Mazumdar 1976) are invaluable in understanding the leaders' socialisation and perception. The studies of AIWC by Shah (1984) and Caplan (1985) show that leaders at the local level come from the upper castes and the middle class. They are more educated than other women as a whole. The studies on women's struggles in rural areas either in peasant or tribal movements, or autonomous movements against

wife-beating or harassment, provide some glimpses about the women leaders and their organisational abilities, but more details are not available. Peter Custers's study on the Tebhaga movement also suffers from this limitation. However, Mira Savara and Sujata Gothoskar's study on the struggles of landless women is an exception as it gives some information on the leaders of the movement. (They find that the leadership comes from those women who were holding small parcels of land because they enjoyed 'relative stability and independence from the local rich peasants. Another characteristic of the leaders was that in their own homes they are the dominating figures. They either have very few children or none. On the whole, they do not have large households and their domestic work is limited' (1984: 147).

Among the women's autonomous organisations, the All India Women's Conference is the oldest. It is also the largest and is spread throughout the country. Everett (1979) gives a historical account of the organisation, its growth, programmes and leadership. The AIWC played a very important role during the 1930s and 1940s in highlighting the subjugated position of Indian women, and mobilised middle-class women to fight for their rights. It also played an important role in the early phase of women's movements in India. Kalpana Shah (1984) and Patricia Caplan (1978, 1985), have studied the working of the AIWC in two different cities— Surat and Madras respectively, in the 1970s. Both the studies arrive at similar conclusions: that the AIWC has become a welfare organisation and helps in maintaining the status quo. It no longer has the capacity to mobilise women for their liberation. Middle-class women dominate the organisation. Besides the AIWC and government-sponsored women's welfare organisations, a large number of women's organisations—either autonomous groups of and for women only, or undertaking women's issues as part of the organisation's other programmes—have come into existence at the local and regional levels, undertaking the issues affecting women. Neera Desai and Vibhuti Patel (1985), classify these organisations into the following types:

1. Agitational, propaganda, consciousness-raising groups which may be termed autonomous groups;
2. Grassroots or mass-based organisations like the trade unions, agricultural labourers' organisations, democratic rights groups, tribal organisations, etc., taking up women's issues;
3. Groups concentrating on providing services, shelter, homes to needy women;
4. Professional women's organisations such as doctors, lawyers, scientists, researchers, journalists;
5. Women's wings or fronts of the political parties; and
6. Groups involved in research and documentation on women's issues.

No detailed study of these groups and their efforts at mobilisation of women is available. It seems that most of these groups have not risen above propagating their views; for this purpose they issue leaflets, pamphlets, collect signatures in support of their demands, write articles in various journals and newspapers. They also organise street-corner meetings, street plays, skits and songs, poster exhibitions, and tours. Some of them also organise protest rallies and demonstrations.

OVERVIEW

A number of women's organisations have mushroomed with and without the support of the state and 'donor' international organizations. They have different kinds of organisational structure, programmes and functioning. Though all claim to work for the empowerment of women, much work at cross purposes. They raise several dilemmas for the concerned women social science activists. Agnihotri and Mazumdar pose a number of questions on the contemporary women's movements in India. They are:

Are the movement's decentralized structure and multiple arenas of interaction a point of strength or weakness or both? Is the movement's 'excessive preoccupation' with the state's development policies and legislation 'welfarist' in its objective rather than 'feminist' or 'radical'? Does the extension of the issue of violence against women from the domestic to the social and political spheres indicate a backsliding or an advance? Or does it successfully combat the dichotomy posed between 'economic welfarism' and 'body politics'? Should the women's movement get involved with issues related to environment, population, child rights, globalization/marketisation, international debt burden, all of which arise from its widening base at the grass roots level or should it retain its autonomy while restricting its focus? (1995: 1876)

As there is no one women's movement and there are different conceptualisations of 'women's equality and liberation' they have different views on the state. For some the state is essentially patriarchal, some look at the state as a relatively 'neutral' protector of 'women's civil and human rights', and for several others the state is both foe and friend (Mackinnon 1983; Mani 1989; Kannabiran and Kannabiran 1995; Ray 1999). Some do not subscribe to preconceived 'ideological' frameworks for women's movements for understanding and practice. Supriya Akerkar argues that 'women movements can be treated as "descursive practices"—redefine the traditional understandings of theory and praxis. They do not depend for their existence on prior theories of emancipation, but rather seek a new relation with theory through localized articulation and understandings of emancipation' (1995: W12). This is an important observation but the challenges before social scientists are to rigorously interrogate: What theoretical articulations based on experiences have emerged? What are the understandings of emancipations of different groups based on their struggles? In what way do these understandings challenge various theories of women's liberation?

Socialist and liberal feminists have been taken aback by the rise of right forces in India and the world over which have mobilised middle-class women in large numbers for creating hatred against 'others' including women of the 'other community'. The process of social transformation for the egalitarian social order seems to have taken a reverse turn. The gains of the movements for the last three decades seem to have been lost. It is felt that contemporary feminism both in theory and practice has not been able to go beyond the perspective of the middle class. If so, why? It is strongly felt by many that like many other movements including those of the working class, women's movements are in doldrums and almost directionless. It has become 'more an idea than a movement' (Epstein 2001).

INDUSTRIAL WORKING CLASS MOVEMENTS

Modern powered industries, based on western technology, came to India in the mid-1950s of the nineteenth century. Railways were constructed around Bombay and Calcutta; the former linked Bombay and Baroda in Gujarat and the latter Calcutta and Raniganj, the coalmining centre. The first textile mill started production in Bombay in 1855. Almost simultaneously, a jute factory was established in Calcutta. Industrialisation was mainly confined to cotton and jute industries till the beginning of the twentieth century. Large-scale tea plantation also began during this period, but the workers employed therein were generally treated as non-industrial workers. The cotton textile industry expanded in Bombay and spread out to other centres such as Ahmedabad in Gujarat, Sholapur and Nagpur in Maharashtra, and Kanpur in Uttar Pradesh. In 1914, there were 264 cotton mills employing 2, 60,000 workers. In Bengal, 60 jute mills employed 2, 00,000 workers in 1912. By 1914 the railways employed about 6, 00,000 persons (Karnik 1966). The iron and steel industry at Jamshedpur, which began in 1911, was a major landmark in industrial development, though it did not employ a large workforce. Besides this, by 1910, about 1, 50,000 workers were employed in mines, and 7, 00,000 were employed in plantations. According to the survey of industries there were 281 lakh workers employed in private and public sector industries in 1999. This covers both urban and rural areas and includes those employed in plantations, mining, construction, utilities, transportation and communication (Handbook of *Industrial Policy and Statistics* 2001).

The non-agricultural workforce is generally classified by economists, sociologists and planners into two sectors—organised and unorganised, or formal and informal. There is no precise definition of the ‘unorganised’ or ‘informal’ sector. For some it is confined to the ‘small-scale industry’ and for others it implies all wage earners, including agriculture labourers, other than the workers employed in large factories. It is also debatable what should be called ‘small industry’. Generally, the number of workers, their condition and capital are used as criteria—whether a worker is protected by laws in security and wages—to determine whether the industry is small-scale or a large one. Here the condition of the worker is generally examined in relation to wages, security and such other protection, as are covered by the Factory Act, and not in relation to the working class organisation and consciousness. In this sense, according to Mark Homstrom, the social anthropologist, the ‘small-scale sector’ is a post-independence phenomenon. Before 1947, there were many small firms, mainly in engineering, which served and supplied the cotton and jute mills and other big factories, but no clear line between workshops and factories. Big firms were bound by the Factory Acts in matters like health and safety, and were more likely to have unions, but their workers were often no better paid and no more secure than those in small workshops. Labour earned its market price, which was low, and could be laid off at any time (1985: 76).

It is difficult for us to accept Homstrom’s contention that the worker employed at the Tata Iron and Steel Company (TISCO) was not better paid and less secure than the worker employed in a small firm in an urban area, or the *bidi* worker in rural areas, before independence. The advantage that the former had might be because of the union. But what facilitated the textile industry or TISCO workers to form unions? Why could

they and not small-firm workers launch collective struggles and bargain effectively with the employers? One may raise such issues but that is beside the point as far as the focus of the present chapter is concerned as we are confined to the available literature. An important point is that studies on the struggles of workers employed in the unorganised sector are few and far between (Jaffrey 1981; Kannan 1988). The unorganised workers are those who are employed in small-scale industry and other wage earners in non-farm activities. There are also the so-called 'self-employed' workers like vendors, coolies, petty shopkeepers, repairers of vehicles, gadgets, etc., artisans, and so on. Their proportion of the urban workers is very large. Theoretically, we would like to include agricultural labourers and forest workers in this category, but for convenience we have included their struggles under those waged by the peasantry and the tribals. The workers in the organised sector can be divided into white-collar workers and blue-collar workers. This division is more artificial than real as far as their placement in employment structures of the market, working conditions, mobility, workers' organisations; their struggles and consciousness are concerned. Urban sectors are not compartmentalised and workers move from one sector to another (Bremner 1976, 1996; Chandavarkar 1985, 1994, 1998). Moreover, their struggles for their rights are not confined to the work-place only. They get involved in collective action as slum or pavement dwellers, commuters, migrants, dalits, etc., against the police, municipal authorities, slumlords, and many other powerful groups and centres of authority. However, the body of literature so far on movements of the urban poor is scanty; hence we have not dealt with them here. Struggles led and dominated by the urban middle class have been separately discussed. Similarly, the movements around the issues of industrial pollution and urban environment have been treated elsewhere. This chapter is primarily concerned with struggles of blue-collar workers in organised and unorganised industrial sectors primarily on economic issues.

Political scientists have kept this field almost untouched, though labour politics and 'consciousness' of the working class are their domain of interest. Sociologists have recently explored this area by developing the discipline of industrial sociology. But on the whole, studies on 'industry' and the 'working class' have been largely confined to so-called industrial development from the narrow point of view of traditional economists in terms of gross value, price, investment and production. V.D. Kennedy rightly argues that economics has been lukewarm to the 'study of unionism and industrial relations both because it is an applied, institutional subject area and because it calls for empirical work in the field, a mode of study which has been neglected by the Indian social sciences' (1966: 3). The field is mainly dominated by psychologists, trade unionists, social workers and management experts. The psychologists and management experts specialising in organisational behaviour are interested in commitment and motivation at the individual level. They hardly ever address themselves to the phenomenon of 'class' or 'community'. They are concerned with influencing social workers. While studying industrial relations, the chief concern of the academic social workers, E.A. Ramaswamy argues, is to prepare material for the 'training of personnel and labour officers'.

Much of what passes for research in industrial relations is indeed written for use in training courses. These textbooks have uncritically accepted outdated clichés, and sought to raise them to the status of established truth (1978a: 2). Therefore, it is natural for them to call the struggles of the workers 'deviant' and 'aberrant'.

However, historians have explored this area as a part of labour history; and a few well-researched studies are now available (Newman 1981; Lieten 1982, 1983; Robb 1993; Chakrabarty 1989; Chandavarkar 1998; Gooptu 2001). The framework of the studies in the 1980s and before has been confined to 'industrial workers' whereas with a paradigm shift in the social sciences to locate labour not only as an economic category but also a social and cultural entity, the studies in the 1990s have begun to focus on the urban poor. A compilation of documents by A.R. Desai, Puneekar and Varickayil (1989) on the condition and struggles of the workers of mines, plantations and factories covering 1850 to 1920 is a valuable source book for labour historians. There are, of course, a number of studies published in the 1960s and 1970s with the broad title 'Working Class Movements', but they are mainly confined to the growth and activities of trade unions rather than collective mobilisation for direct action by industrial workers (Sharma 1963; Mathur 1964; Karnik 1966; Rcvri 1972; Sen 1977; Bhowrnika 1998). One may argue that the participation of workers in trade union activities is a form of mobilisation to meet their demands. But such a framework restricts our vision to unionised struggles and leaves out the vast area of struggles by urban workers without the initiative and/or support of unions. In fact, a number of strikes in Bombay, Kanpur, Ahrnedabad, Nagpur, Coimbatore and Calcutta in the late nineteenth century and during the 1920s and 1930s were 'without the initiative of any effective trade union' (Chandavarkar 1998: 75). Since this perspective has dominated labour history we have few studies focusing on the wider spectrum of urban/industrial labourers' movements (Chandavarkar 1998; Gooptu 2001). As far as this essay is concerned, we do not concentrate on the so-called 'trade union movement' per se. We shall take this movement into account in relation to strikes and those struggles waged by other methods.

Like other sections of society, industrial workers, of both organised and unorganised sectors, resort to various types of collective actions such as strikes, *satyagrahas*, hunger strikes, *bandhs* and *hartals* (general strike), *gheraos*, demonstrations, mass casual leave, work to rule, cutting off the supply of electricity, etc. (Kannappan and Saran 1967).

Striking is one of the commonest methods widely used by workers to secure their demands. Broadly speaking, a strike means collective stoppage of work by a group of workers.' *Satyagrahas* and hunger strikes may not necessarily involve stoppage of work. These methods were introduced by Gandhi. There is no full-fledged study on workers' hunger strikes, *bandhs* or demonstrations. There is no effort to examine why workers take casual leave or follow the method of work to rule, rather than go on strike. Are these a prelude to a strike? It is assumed that these programmes are often, though not always, a part of strikes, hence scholars have not paid special attention to them.

Gherao means encirclement. Workers encircle the office, the residence or the cabin of the employer or the manager and press for their demands. This technique began in the mid-1960s in West Bengal. There are a few studies on the technique of '*gherao*' and its effects on industrial relationships (De and Srivastava 1967; Kannappan and Saran 1967; Aggarwal 1968).

Strikes by the workers in the industrial sector began with the early phase of modern industrial development in the nineteenth century. As early as 1862, about 1,200 railway workers went on strike at Howrah Station. Two strikes of textile workers in Nagpur and Bombay, in 1877 and 1882, respectively, seem to have been on a large scale. No detailed

studies are available. They are generally dismissed as unorganised and spontaneous strikes, though the Bombay strike is considered to be the beginning of the labour movement in India (Karnik 1966). By the end of the nineteenth century, there were a number of strikes by the textile, jute, plantation, mine and railway workers in Bombay, Calcutta, Ahmedabad and Madras. According to official sources, there were two strikes per year in each factory. They were usually localised and short-lived around personal grievances (Buchanan 1934).

After World War I, the working class struggle took on an organised form and resulted in the formation of trade unions on 'modern lines'. The textile workers of Madras formed the Madras Labour Union which led the strike in 1918. Almost at the same time, the textile workers of Ahmedabad went on strike and Gandhi intervened and provided leadership to the workers. As a result, the Textile Labour Association was founded in 1920. Another important strike during this period was that of the workers of TISCO in Jamshedpur in 1920. Besides this, there were a number of strikes in Bombay, Nagpur, Calcutta and other places which gave birth to unions. The 1920s began with a large number of strikes. According to official data, there were 396 strikes in 1921, involving 6, 00,000 workers. A total of 6,894 thousand man days were lost. Between 1921 and 1925, on an average, 4, 00,000 workers in a year were involved in strikes. The number of strikes had again gone up at the end of the 1930s. And the number reached a peak in 1947; there were 1,811 strikes involving 1,840 thousand workers (Giri 1962; Karnik 1966; Joshi 1969). The number of strikes declined between 1947 and 1960 (Myers and Kannappan 1958). However, the number of conflicts, including strikes and lockouts increased in the 1960s and 1970s. There were 2,151 disputes involving 1,002 thousand workers in which 7,725 'man days were lost' in 1964 - Ramaswamy and Ramaswamy emphasise that the number of man days lost is 'a much more reliable indicator of the severity and impact of conflict than either the number of disputes or number of workers involved' (1981:210).

Many studies give statistical information of strikes waged over a period of time in an industry or a city, a region or at the all-India level (Mukhopadhyay 1946; Joshi 1969; Vaid 1972, Pattnaik 1993). Sources of the data for these studies are government offices. It may be mentioned that the *Labour Gazetteer* published by the labour office in various states gives month-wise information on strikes. This information is important for forming a broad picture of the industrial scene, but one has to accept it with a pinch of salt. This statistical data, Ramaswamy rightly argues, 'treats strikes as if they are amenable to neat classification by cause, consequence, man days and production lost and such other indices' (1978b: 14). The data is also not reliable. It is difficult to trace a single cause in many strikes; and 'the immediate cause may offer no clues as to the issues involved' (Ramaswamy 1978b).

Notwithstanding the limitations of the data, V.B. Karnik's study *Strike in India*, is a very useful work, providing historical information. It is a chronological account of the major strikes between 1850 and 1950. O.K. Sharma's book (1963) is another study which also provides a historical account covering the hundred years (between 1885 and 1980) of the labour movement focusing on working-class organisations. Similar studies have been authored by Jha (1970), and Revri (1972). The span of the industrial working class movement can be divided into four stages: (1) 1850 to 1890; (2) 1890 to 1918; (3) 1918 to 1947; and (4) the post-independence period. The first phase begins with the

beginning of industrial production and ends with the formation of trade unions. During this period, strikes were spontaneous and unorganised. The labourers formed trade unions during the second stage. It was the initial stage, and the organisations were primarily concerned with welfare programmes carried out by outside do-gooders. During this stage the workers' movement was born out of philanthropy. It was a movement for the workers, rather than by the workers (Ornati 1955). During the third stage trade unions received political orientation.

There are a few monographs covering two or three decades which give an account of the working-class movement in the colonial period in a particular region. Panchanan Saha (1978) gives a descriptive account of various strikes by jute, railway, tramway, and Bata workers during the 1920s and 1930s. The book provides information about the role of various parties in organising workers, and the methods used by the government and other employers in breaking the strikes. Georges Lieten's study (1983), though not focused primarily on the working-class movement, critically examines various strikes and trade unions in Bombay province during the colonial period in relation to the nationalist movement in general and the bourgeois in particular. His main theoretical concern is: 'To what extent did the workers, particularly in Bombay Presidency constitute a working class, which at the political level was in a position to operate independently from the upper classes?' (1983: 8). Eaman Murphy's (1981) and Richard Newman's (1981) studies on workers, their strikes and unions in four south Indian centres—Madras, Madurai, Ambasamudram and Coimbatore—and Bombay respectively, are important historical works which use primary data from the archives. Both the studies examine the nature of the working class in terms of their social origin and recruitment pattern that influence their organisations and struggles, and the role of the leaders inside and outside in various strikes during the 1920s and 1930s.

The textile workers' strike in Bombay during 1982-83 is an important turning point in India's working-class movement in the post-independence period. The strike has few parallels in the working-class movement as it involved a vast number of organised as well as unorganised labour and continued over one year. Traditional trade union leadership failed and a new kind of leadership emerged. Rajni Bakshi (1986) has documented major events and the role of different leaders as well as political parties in the strike. This document would be very useful for further research. Salim Lakha (2002) analyses various aspects of the strike and its impact on the politics of the working class in Bombay. Among all the studies on the Bombay strike the most well-researched monograph is by H. van Wersch (1992) who not only discusses the various issues involved in the strike but also studies networking of the workers which enabled them to sustain themselves. He also inquires into the perception of the workers on strikes and leaders. This is an important anthropological study. Another important working class struggle in the 1980s is of the metal, textile and mine workers of Chattisgarh. They came from the unorganised sector working as contract labourers. The workers were organised under the Chattisgarh Mines Shramik Sangh (CMSS) founded in 1977 by Shankar Guha Niyogi (Lin 1992). Besides fighting against the employers, the CMSS launched a campaign against consumption of liquor and to develop social consciousness. The movement united peasants, adivasis and industrial workers (John 1998). We so far do not have any rigorous study on the struggle.

The studies focusing on strikes vary in covering the events. Some deal with one strike in a factory, some deal with a strike or strikes in a particular industry (Mukhopadhyay 1946; Joshi 1969; Ghosh 1973; Datca 1993), and some cover various strikes during a particular period in an industrial centre. These studies may be classified into three categories: (1) descriptive or statistical accounts; (2) analysis from the management's perspective; and (3) analysis from the socio-economic and political perspective. The descriptive or statistical accounts are journalistic writings which give chronological accounts, issues involved and the names of the leaders. They provide important reference material (Desai 1961; Joshi 1969). A student of industrial management studies strikes with a view to resolve conflicts and 'to understand the major events in the life of an organisation'. These studies examine strikes or conflicts between capital and labour primarily in the context of administrative and socio-technical production systems (Chakraborty 1969).

These studies treat workers as isolated masses and believe that the socio-economic structure and political system have nothing to do with the strikes. They also do not even probe into the perceptions and consciousness of the participant workers. Nor are social-cultural relationships among the workers studied. For them it is primarily a matter of labour-management relations as if the relationship exists in vacuum. Needless to say, this approach is erroneous.

By now a number of studies are available which examine strikes or working-class struggles in particular periods from a socio-economic and/ or political perspective (Punekar 1948, 1960; Joseph 1965; Karnik 1966; Tulpule 1976; Ramaswarny 1978a; Krishna 1979; Murphy 1981; Newman 1981; Bahl 1982; Kumar 1983; Lieten 1983; Patel 1984, 1987; Bakshi 1986; Lakha 2002; Patankar 1988; Wersch 1992; Chakrabarty 1989; Chandavarkar 1998). Different studies have different theoretical perspectives. They enrich our understanding of the complexities of the struggles of the working class in colonial and post-colonial periods. The narration by B. Tulpule of his experiences as general manager of the Durgapur Steel Plant highlights the significance of the political system, the economic structure and culture in understanding working-class consciousness and trade unionism. Dipesh Chakrabarty (1984) examines the jute workers' strikes in the 1920s and 1930s in the context of the culture of the workers. Lieten (1983) and Patel (1984, 1987) in their studies on working-class struggles in the colonial period, highlight how the bourgeoisie either directly or through the nationalist leaders and the Congress party, set limits to the working-class movement. Sujata Patel argues that the workers of Ahmedabad were able to appropriate certain Gandhian ideological elements to further the class struggle. However, once capital's representatives decided to intervene, they, that is capital, was able to set limits on the nature of the workers' movement, these limits becoming the circumscribing parameters from which the trade union movement in Ahmedabad could not break away. Capital could impose a structure, and condition the latter's growth (1984: 862).

Perhaps what is true of Ahmedabad and Bombay is also true for Calcutta and Madras.

Chandavarkar in his study on the working-class movement in Bombay during the colonial period examines the relationship between workers, trade unions and the state. He observes that

In fact, the development of the labour movement in India suggests that the origins and development of trade unions in general calls for political, rather than a specifically social or cultural, explanation. The development of trade unions was largely conditioned by, perhaps dependent upon, the willingness of employers and the state to tolerate them. It neither signified the development of a particular stage of class consciousness nor did it anticipate the rise of socialism. The quotient of capitalist tolerance for labour organization has usually been determined by the outcome of the changing relations between workers, trade unions and the state. Significantly, it has depended upon the political leverage which workers were able to gain upon state power, and thereby, through political pressure and negotiation, to raise the threshold of capitalist tolerance (1998: 99).

The industrial working class in India has launched various types of collective actions on several issues. The available literature does not enlighten us regarding the correlation between the issues and the nature of the actions. As mentioned above, most of the studies are on strikes alone. We assume, though it is risky, that issues involved in strikes are similar to issues involved in other forms of protest. Indian Labour Statistics classify causes of strikes thus: wages, bonus, personnel, leave and hours of work and 'others'. Now, violence and indiscipline have been added to the list. This classification has several limitations. First, official statistics, as Ramaswamy (1978b) points out, attribute a strike to some immediate cause or the main demand, whereas, the immediate cause is more often than not 'the final spark that ignites simmering tension'. Second, the category 'others' which covers around one-fourth of the total number of strikes, is misleading. It gives the impression of a residual and therefore, insignificant category, 'But neither the causes usually clubbed under this head, nor the incidence of disputes resulting therefrom, are of the residual nature' (Ramaswamy and Ramaswamy 1981: 218).

The typologies of strikes on the basis of the issues involved developed by Ramaswamy (1978b) are an improved and more comprehensive version of those by Dhyani (1965). Ramaswamy classifies strikes into six categories: (1) caused by the dispute over rules; (2) the wildcat strike, which is without the sanction of the union; (3) the rite-of-passage strike which is for demanding recognition of the union; (4) the inter-union dispute; (5) the tedium-relieving strike; (5) the political strike; and (6) the bread-and-butter strike. The wildcat strike refers to the nature of the strike rather than the issue. It indicates either an indifferent attitude of the union or an independent decision of the workers, but issues involved in such strikes are the same as those involving strikes organised under the banner of the unions. Ramaswamy is aware of the problems involved in typology: that the categories are not mutually exclusive, and that it is difficult to single out one dominant aspect of the strike. But, despite his criticism of the official data on 'disputes', his typology could not go beyond them. By mixing the nature with the issues of strikes, he unwittingly gave importance to the unions- As a result, like others; he also ignores the strikes launched by workers in the unorganised sector.

Since a systematic analysis of the strikes prior to the 1920s is not available, it is difficult to say which issues were predominant in those days. But it would not be off the mark to say that wages was one of the prominent issues over which unorganised workers resorted to strikes and other forms of protest. The issue of wages—more pay against wage cuts, non-payment of wages for Sundays and gazetted holidays, dearness

allowance, etc.—figured prominently in Calcutta, Ahmedabad, Nagpur and other places (Sen 1977). The textile workers of Ahmedabad launched their famous strike in 1918, demanding an increase of 35 per cent in wages in the form of a dearness allowance. Newman (1981) has classified the issues on which the textile workers of Bombay resorted to major and minor strikes between 1918 and 1929. According to his data, around one-fourth of the strikes were over the issue of wages. Two general strikes during this period were ‘preceded by a cluster of demands for cost-of-living bonuses, and followed by a claim for strike pay’. The weavers, winders and frame-tenters frequently struck work over wages but this was not the case with other workers. Newman observes, ‘It was seldom that a whole mill could be united by a pay claim, unless this was for a dearness allowance or strike pay’ (1981: 64). Kannan (1988) points out that the demand for more wages was the main issue for toddy tappers and *bidi* workers. The issue of wages continues in government figures, analysed by Ramaswamy and Ramaswamy (1981); one-third of the disputes get the minimum wages prescribed by the government (Streefkerk 1985; Homstrom 1985). Occasionally, the workers resort to strikes demanding minimum wages. But except for a few investigative reports and the study by Meera Velayudhan on the women workers’ struggle in the coir industry in Kerala (1985), we do not have studies on strikes by unorganised workers employed in small-scale industry and other sectors. Bonus is another issue which has occasionally led to strikes, though statistically the number of strikes on this issue are not many. Issues like more holidays, better infrastructure facilities like toilets, creches, canteens, also caused strikes in the pre- and post-independence periods. Workers of Bombay went on strike frequently in the early 1930s protesting against retrenchment (Lieten 1983). These accounted for 7 to 10 per cent of all disputes in the post-independence period. The proportion appears low because these disputes are seasonal being confined to festival time when bonus payments fall due’ (Ramaswamy and Ramaswamy 1981: 218). Outmoded machinery, which increases the strain on workers, results in strikes. In such a situation, the workers stop work on the flimsiest pretext. Ramaswamy calls this a tedium-relieving strike (1978b). Workers also resort to strikes against the so-called ‘rationalisation’ of distribution of work which adds to their burden and also results in unemployment for some. In 1928, textile mills in Bombay introduced the system of three looms and two frames to improve efficiency which involved a heavier work load and loss of employment. The workers resented the new system and went on strike (Newman 1981). Similar issues cropped up in the 1950s and 1960s.

Women workers of Ahmedabad and Tamil Nadu struck work in the last century and at the beginning of this century against discrimination and ill treatment (Murphy 1981). The workers of TISCO, Jamshedpur, went on strike in 1920, protesting against ‘manhandling of workers’ by the officers. Victimisation, wrongful dismissal and improper disciplinary fines, were some of the important issues in the railway workers’ strike in 1929 (Lieten 1983). Manhandling, victimisation, dismissal, etc., continued to be major issues in several other strikes in the 1920s and 1930s and also post-independence, though their number may have gone down in large industries, where unions took such issues on an individual basis and settled them in labour courts. Ramaswamy and Ramaswamy observe, ‘By 1977, suspensions and dismissals were no longer a significant cause of strike activity’ (1981: 228).

In the 1920s, one of the issues for strikes was the recognition of the union. This has continued to be an issue for strikes in one form or another in the post-independence period. Employers' sponsorship of preferred unions, or their partisanship towards one or another union in order to protect their own interests, leads to the formation of new unions and their recognition. Some unions in factories are not recognised under one pretext or another, and the workers launch strikes to legitimise them. Ramaswamy observes,

It is evident that in the absence of formal recognition the unions have to continuously use the strike to assert their right to exist. Only a close observer can detect this function of the strike. Since concrete issues are invariably picked up by the union to fight for recognition, these issues can easily be attributed an importance they do not possess, and the real basis of the struggle missed out. This explains why official statistics do not attribute even a single strike to the struggle for recognition (1978b: 29).

Inter-union rivalry also, occasionally, leads to strikes. Sometimes workers launch strikes in sympathy with the striking workers of other factories to demonstrate solidarity. Most of the studies on strikes are confined to one industry. There is very little effort (Rao 1972) to compare the nature and the causes of strikes across different types of industries.

The working class supported the freedom struggle by the end of the 1920s and the beginning of the 1930s. Workers participated in meetings and organised demonstrations and processions against the British Raj. Dilip Simeon observes that the workers were 'profoundly aware of nationalism, identity and gender, not to speak of the violence and communal strife around them' (2001:30). The workers of Bombay, Sholapur, Calcutta, Ahmedabad and other places went on strike to support the Civil Disobedience movement. The workers of Ahmedabad went on total strike to protest against the arrest of Gandhi (Choudhary 1971; Kamik 1974; Lieten 1983; Chatterji 1984). The workers supporting the Communist Party launched strikes in the mid-1950s as a form of political struggle. The Punnapra-Vayalar working-class strikes in 1948 involved political issues. Robin Jaffrey observes,

the workers had won their economic demands in the strike of early August, and the Coir industry itself was buoyant; jobs were available. The revolt was not a Jacquerie or spontaneous uprising; the build up had gone on for more than two months. Nor, similarly, was it a riot . . . the workers retreated to armed camps where political instruction was given; they sallied forth from such camps to attack the police of Punnapra, and were smashed in a similar camp at Vayalar. To be sure, the organisers and participants had little idea of what the outcome would be, yet they were convinced in a vague way that their actions were helping to advance some broad masterplan or historical force (1981: 121).

In his study on the cashew industry in Kerala, K.P. Kannan observes,

the process of mobilisation in the first phase (between 1937 and 1942) gave an added dimension to the struggle: the integration of political goals and demands with economic demands. During the next phase, 1942-47, political struggle became, as part of the overall freedom struggle, the major focus of trade union activity with the objective economic conditions of workers providing the ground for their participation in them. With independence of the country, the focus of the struggles reverted again to economic demands (1984: 49-50; see also 1988)

What is true of the cashew industry and the *bidi* workers in Kerala may not be true of other workers in small-scale industries who were not mobilised on political issues, before or after independence.

According to some scholars (Ramaswamy and Ramaswamy 1981, Vaid 1972, Simeon 1995), political issues figure prominently in working-class strikes in post-independence India. Ramaswamy observes, 'in the 'fifties and 'sixties non-Congress unions routinely attributed adverse government decisions, as when an award went against labour or police intervened in an industrial dispute, to the alleged anti-labour policies of the Congress party. On a few occasions workers have struck in protest against such decisions' (1978b: 31). The textile workers of Kanpur in 1955, and TISCO workers in 1958, protested against the industrial policy of the government and it was the major issue in their strikes (Kannappan and Saran 1967). The workers of Bombay, Ahmedabad and other cities participated in the *bandh* in the 1960s on the issue of price rise and scarcity of essential commodities (Vijayaraghavan 1966).

One also comes across incidents of strikes which do not have any immediate economic or political issue. Ranajit Gupta (1984) observes that the few riots involving labour employed in the Standard Jute Mill at Tatanagar and Lower Hooghly Jute Mill at Garden in 1898, were sparked off by 'narrow community or sectarian consideration'. Recently, the Scheduled Caste-Scheduled Tribe workers in Ahmedabad stopped work for a day in 1981 protesting against the anti-reservation agitation launched by caste-Hindus. Caste-Hindu workers also went on a one-day strike in support of the anti-reservation agitation.

K.N. Vaid (1972) and Ramaswamy and Ramaswamy (1981) analyse statistical data and argue that non-economic issues are also important causes for the workers' strikes. In fact, the strikes on non-economic issues are greater in number than those on economic issues in post-independence India. Vaid observes that

during the period 1956-1966 the economic demands pertaining to wages, allowances and bonus, amounted to a low percentage only, The payment of bonus constituted the bone of contention in the cotton textile and the iron and steel industries only. Further, it was only in the year 1967 that wage and bonus demands constituted the primary cause of about 42 per cent of the strikes in the State (West Bengal). On the other hand "personnel" matters, which included suspension, discharge, dismissal, parties' rights and obligations, interruption and implementation of laws, awards and agreements, etc., were the causes of 46 per cent strikes in the jute industry, 37 per cent in cotton textile mills, and 51 per cent in the iron and steel industry (1972: 87).

Ramaswamy and Ramaswamy (1981) find a similar pattern in the Coim-batore textile industry. However, the dichotomy between economic and non-economic issues is problematic. One can argue that 'personal issues' related to discharge, suspension, interruption of agreements, are also closely related to economic issues. It also depends upon one's definition of economic issues. Moreover, the strikes on 'political issues', as formulated by the parties and trade unions, may not be 'political issues' for the workers, even though they may participate in the strike. It should also be noted that Vaid and Ramaswamy refer to workers of the organised sector, whereas Kannan (1988) refers to the workers of the unorganised sectors whose wages are very low. Nevertheless, it should be noted that 'economism' of trade unions and the working class is overemphasised by

many political activists and scholars, whereas the available data does not bear out their contention.

Most of the strikes are confined to some individual factory and a few are spread through the whole industry, such as textiles or jute in a particular industrial centre. There is no effort to analyse how the issues leading to strikes differ from one sector of industry to another. One can assume that the nature of issues varies from industry to industry. Dilip Subra-manian (1980) studies a strike in a large-scale modern industry. He observes that the workers of the modern sector are better paid than those in the traditional sector and their skill, experience and education are higher than those in traditional or small industries. Therefore, their struggles concern issues which are different from those which include higher wages or bonus. 'The struggles instead increasingly gravitate towards the shop-floor around issues related to productivity and the utilisation of skills—in brief the control over the organisation and content of work' (1980:68).

Barring a few instances, industrial working classes have not allied with the peasants and other sections of society in collective direct action on political issues. Peter Waterman observes, 'There had been failure of the unions to present themselves as part of the democratic movement, to take up civil rights issues, the rights of peasants, the "residual" dimension of working class life, the rights of working women and of tribals' (1980: 466). At the same time their rural base facilitated their struggles to sustain for long periods. The Bombay Textile strike of 1982-83 is important in this context (Lakha 2002, Werscti 1992, Chandavarkar 1985, 1998),

Under what economic conditions do strikes take place and succeed? The personal character of the trade union leaders, which is a matter of chance, is sometimes responsible for strikes in certain places. This reason is attributed by some scholars for the strikes in Madras during the 1920s (Dutt 1947). This view is, however, contested by others. According to B. D. Punekar, the Madras happenings were not mere accident, but were an inevitable reaction to the grave post-war economic and social conditions of the Madras factory workers. Like Punekar many other scholars assume that workers resort to strikes or other direct action when their economic condition deteriorates (Murphy 1981; Patel 1984; Das and Gupta 1984). Pradip Kumar (1964), in his analysis of strikes during the 1950s, shows that industrial unrest increased between 1955-60 due to the price rise. He concludes, 'there is a marked correlation between strikes and the economic situation'. V.B. Karnik (1974) and Harold Crouch (1979) also take a similar position. According to them, the success or failure of strikes is closely related with the economic conditions. The strikes succeeded in days of economic prosperity and failed in days of economic depression. A few studies, though they do not dispute or accept this contention, examine strikes in modern industries in which the workers are more highly paid than others (Subramanian 1980). It is argued that economic conditions are not the only consideration for resorting to direct action. While examining the trade unions of the jute workers of Calcutta, Dipesh Chakrabarty argues that the condition of the jute mill workers in the 1920s made them feel discontented.

But we should not fall into the trap of thinking that working-class militancy was rooted in conditions alone or that the conditions by themselves were sufficient to generate such militancy. The persistence and volume of labour unrest in the 1920s and '30s have

also to be understood as signalling a growing propensity on the part of the workers to protest and challenge the employer's authority (1984)

ORGANISATION

Though trade unions were formed, in the 1890s in Madras and in the 1910s in Bombay, to organise the struggles of the working class, most of the early strikes were spontaneous and unorganised. Even when there were no unions, the workers had 'an informal but resilient organisation of their own'. They launched strikes on their own initiative and maintained wages at a steady level. Working-class consciousness was 'elementary' or low during the early stage of industrialisation. Ravinder Kumar calls the great strike of 1919 in Bombay 'a species of a working class jacquerie' (peasant revolt). According to him, the strike had many common features with peasant uprisings: 'complete spontaneity, an absence of class consciousness, class organization and formal leadership; and finally, the expression of long-standing grievances and pent-up frustrations through a popular explosion (1983: 215). Richard Newman disagrees with the analogy used by Kurnar in comparing the 1918 Bombay working-class strike with the peasant revolt in France. He argues that the Bombay strike

was neither mindless nor particularly violent; even if the grievances of the millhands were imperfectly formulated at the outset, the aims of the strike were sufficiently understood when the trouble began and developed as it went on. Most important of all, the Bombay strike did not dissolve into oblivion when protest was exhausted, the millhands did not, like the French peasantry, settle back into their old ways. They were left with a new maturity of outlook and a sense of common identity from which a common organisation could grow (1981: 128).

On the basis of his empirical study on the nature of industrialisation and working class struggles, Chandavarkar concludes

The political organization and action of the working class was neither the natural consequence of their aggregation in large factories and cities, nor a direct reflection of the level of industrialization. The notion that the development of working class consciousness and politics matched some inevitable process of its evolution from an essentially rural based casually employed immigrant labour force to the formation of a mature industrial proletariat is not borne out by the Indian evidence (1985: 663).

There were a number of strikes in the steel engineering industry in Jamshedpur in the 1920s without the existence of a trade union or centralised leadership. In Madras and Bombay, such strikes were possible because the labour force was socially homogeneous, and they were linked with each other in various ways (Karnik 1966). Ravinder Kumar observes that,

the textile workers could behave in such a way, despite the absence of any clear class consciousness, and also despite the absence of any working class organization . . . was largely due to the fact that they were linked to each other through a variety of institutions; through ties of community, through allegiance of jobbers, and through the sheer physical proximity in which they lived and laboured in the city of Bombay (1983: 238).

On the other hand, a study on the struggles of the TISCO workers in the 1920s reveals that the workers could launch a number of strikes in the steel plant 'despite their heterogeneous social origin and without trade union in the 1920s' (Bahl 1982, Simeon 1995). In Calcutta, jute mill workers were very militant and launched several strikes in the 1920s, though their unions were weak (Chakrabarty 1984).

The Madras Labour Union formed in 1918 was the first trade union on modern lines. At the same time, the Textile Labour Association came into existence in Ahmedabad. The All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) was formed in 1920. Prior to this, there were some industry-specific unions. According to some scholars (Mathur J. 1964), unions of workers began to be formed by educated groups, like post and telegraph workers and railway employees. Prior to the 1910s, philanthropic unions were formed to carry out welfare programmes for labourers. The motivating force for these unions was sympathy rather than justice. As mentioned above, there are a number of studies on the growth, composition and leadership of trade unions (Karnik 1966; Joshi 1969; Jha 1970). There are also a few studies of city- or industry-based trade unions (Vaid 1962; Pandey and Vikram 1969; Joshi 1969). Most of these studies do not examine the role of unions in organising and sustaining strikes. Whether unions launch a strike or prevent the frequency of direct action by workers is not examined thoroughly by scholars. At most we know how union leaders negotiate with the employers and the government on behalf of the workers. It should also be noted that recently, the legitimacy of trade unions and leaders seems to have declined in several places. Industrywide, city-wide, even state-wide strikes are being organised by joint action committees (Waterman 1980).

The trade unions are closely linked with various political parties. The Congress leaders played an important role in the formation of AITUC. There was a tug-of-war among three ideological groups—leftists, nationalists and moderates—within the Congress to control the working-class movement. The communists had gained strong influence by the 1920s in Bombay and the nationalists continued to enjoy their hold in Ahmedabad during the freedom struggle. As the AITUC was under the influence of the communists, the Congress party formed the Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC) in 1947. Socialists formed the Hind Mazdur Panchayat in 1948. The Royists who were no longer communists after World War II, formed the Hind Mazdur Sabha (HMS) in collaboration with some socialists. The Jan Sangh formed the Bharatiya Mazdur Sangh in 1955. The split in the Communist Party led to the formation of another trade union, the Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU) in 1970. Regional parties like the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK), and the Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (ADMK) have their own trade unions. Studies on industrial relations or working-class movements are largely confined to the studies on trade unions (Crouch 1966, 1979; Sen 1977; Bose 1979; Mitra 1981). More often than not, as N.R. Sheth (1978) remarks, these studies mainly give a historical account of the trade union movements.

Lakshman (1947) gives an account of the role of the Congress party in the labour movement in pre-independence India. This is not an analytical account, as it is a party publication. Lietau critically examines the role of the Congress and the Communist Party in the working-class struggles in the 1920s and 1930s in the Bombay region. Dick Kooiman (1980) examines the role of the Communist Party in general strikes in 1928 and 1929 in Bombay. While examining the Kanpur trial in which Dange was involved, Kooiman finds that Dange was unnecessarily dragged into the case. Robin Jaffrey (1981)

examines to what extent the Communist Party played the role of a vanguard party in the Punnapra-Vayalar strike; the working class was organised and disciplined and it was taking orders from the Communist Party. Studies by Meera Velayudhan (1985) and Kannan (1988) bring out the same pattern. However, Kannan points out that the 'popular character' of trade unions dominated by leftist parties has declined in the post-independence period, compared to the earlier phase. Analytical studies on political parties and unions in general and strikes in particular, in the post-independence period, are almost non-existent.

There are quite a few studies on working-class leaders and leadership. More often than not, these are studies of trade union leaders at the union or city level (Punekar and Madhuri 1967; Reindorp 1971; Masihi 1985, Lakha 2002). General studies on the working class also discuss the leadership issue and the role of some specific leaders in struggles. The studies on the Ahmedabad strike in 1918 highlight the conciliatory role of Gandhi (Desai 1961; Sen 1977; Crouch 1979; Lieten 1983; Patel 1987). Moni Ghosh's book, *Our Struggle* (1973), informs us about his own role as a trade union leader. Various studies show that during the early phase of the working-class struggle, strikes were spontaneous and their leadership emerged from within the working class. Later on, the leaders came from outside. The outsiders were philanthropic (Jha 1970; Bose 1979; Murphy 1981). Nationalist Congressmen provided leadership and played an important role in the formation of trade unions and the launching of strikes during the 1920s and 1930s (Krishna 1979; Bahl 1982; Lieten 1983; Chatterji 1984). Chatterji (1984) classifies the trade union leaders during the nationalist period into four categories: radical, militant, legal and constitutional. Punekar's and Madhuri's studies on leadership in the 1960s cover an all-India canvass, though the majority of their respondents belong to Bombay and Maharashtra. Their findings more or less confirm those of other studies on leaders, that they are moderately educated, upper class and affiliated with one or another political party. One-third of the leaders are employed in factories. They are outsiders and include jobbers as well as political leaders who themselves are not workers. The role of jobbers or *sardars* (who recruited labour for the textile and jute industry) in the strikes at the turn of the last century and the first quarter of this century, is a matter of controversy among scholars. There is, however, no disagreement on their key position in the factories and about their providing leadership in the strikes. The difference of opinion is on the emphasis: whether the jobbers were primarily initiators of the strike or the workers themselves took the initiative in which the jobbers played a contributory role (Murphy 1977; Sen 1977; Lieten 1982; Newman 1981; Kumar 1983). Richard Newman's argument is that 'it was the jobbers who, for the first sixty years of the industry's existence, performed the welfare functions of trade unions, bargained with the employers and mobilised the workers in strikes' (1981: 4). The jobber was the fulcrum of the labour organisation in Bombay. His importance declined as the nature of the labour force changed. Newman observes, 'The elimination of child labour and the cessation of the industry's growth meant that the work force became older, more urbanised and less pliable. Jobbers found it more difficult to maintain their old ascendancy over the men' (1981: 252). With the rise in the involvement of political parties in labour problems and the formation of trade unions, the jobbers' control over the workers declined. Their role as advisers in the recruitment of workers in Bombay, however, continued till the 1960s.

Sukomal Sen (1977) and Georges Lieten (1983) argue that many scholars have overemphasised the role of 'outsiders', jobbers and political leaders, and ignored the socio-economic conditions of the workers of that period. Sen emphasises the rebellious nature of the peasantry which joined the factories, and holds this fact to be responsible for the early militancy of the workers. He asserts,

The inherent tendency of rebellion that lay dormant in the minds of the impoverished peasants and agricultural workers who eventually turned into industrial workers impelled them to such acts of resistance against capitalist exploitation in modern factories. Collective working in the factories generated a mutual sympathy among them. Growth of caste, racial and regional unity among the heterogeneous mass of workers also led them to collective resistance against capitalist exploitation (1977: 76).

Lieten also puts forward a similar argument. According to him, 'the traditional structures served as an organisational basis, and in the given historical conditions helped the workers towards independent action. At the time, the appeal to the religious and caste susceptibilities of the workers was one way of mobilising them' (1983: 71) - Though this argument is valid, and though Newman and other scholars also do not underestimate the role of the socio-economic condition of the workers, the important task is to carry out a detailed analysis of the social network of the workers and its role in the strikes in the initial phase. Neither Sen nor Lieten provide any empirical evidence for their assertions. Moreover, the term 'rebellious nature' of the peasantry is a questionable proposition.

In this context, one needs to mention that, in Madras between 1918 and 1921 and in Bombay in 1928, caste and community ties contributed to the disunity among workers. The untouchables and Muslim workers did not completely support the strike in 1928, and they were used by millowners to break the strike. One of the major reasons for Muslim and untouchable workers to keep aloof from the strike was their economically weak position. They 'were incapable of surviving the loss of wages from another long dispute' (Newman 1981: 247). On the basis of his study on the strikes in Madras in the early part of this century, E.D. Murphy observes, 'caste and communal differences may also be accentuated in a situation when a particular caste or communal group has a favoured position in an industry or where a trade union leader supports a specific group' (1977: 320). However, at the same time, Murphy maintains that caste and community factors do not seriously inhibit 'the development of class consciousness in India and that the strength of caste and communal loyalties varied markedly in different regions' (1977: 321). In contemporary India, Ramaswamy observes that caste and community have played only a very minor role in promoting disunity among the Coimbatore workers. One needs similar studies on other parts of the country to understand the role of caste and community in working-class struggles.

The role played by outsiders, particularly party leaders and professional trade unionists, in trade union work in general and in strikes during post-and pre-independence India, is controversial. It is argued by some that these leaders use the working class for their political interests. They are responsible for 'instigating' the workers to launch strikes (Vijayaraghavan 1966). Those who hold such views are either political leaders or lay observers, but their views carry influence in society. It is interesting to note that in order to limit the domination of 'outsiders' in trade unionism, the Trade Unions Act of

1926 prescribes that at least half of the executive of a trade union must consist of actual employees in the particular industry (Crouch 1979). Newman argues,

Outsiders have often been criticised for pursuing their own interests to the exclusion of the people they originally came to serve, as if the workers were incapable of understanding or resisting such cynical behaviour. The Bombay evidence makes it very clear that outsiders succeeded only when they accurately represented the needs and beliefs of the ordinary worker (1981: 256).

Moreover, a worker realises that the leader from a middle-class background can meet the managers as an equal at the bargaining table. This can also reduce the scope for victimisation (Crouch 1979). Kannan, in his study on *bidi* workers and toddy tappers highlights the role of outsiders in organising and mobilising the rural proletariat. He finds that the role of 'external agents in initiating and stimulating the foundation of organisations has been crucial in India' (1988: 334). On the other hand, some others argue that thanks to their middle-class background, the outsiders failed to provide leadership to the working-class movement on the basis of a class struggle (Dutt 1947).

It should also be mentioned that those who are critical of the 'outsiders' overestimate their role in various strikes. Regarding various strikes in Bombay in the 1920s, Lieten observes, 'The strikes were called by the workers themselves, without instigation from an outside agency; political and social leaders appeared only on the scene at the time of negotiations' (1983: 74; see also Punekar 1948; Karnik 1966; Joshi 1969). The situation in post-independence India is not strikingly different in this matter, notwithstanding the bureaucratic functioning of trade unions. In his study on industrial conflicts in West Bengal during the 1960s, Vaid (1972) shows that over 60 per cent of the strikes between 1960-65 were called by the men without even the knowledge of the leaders. E.A. Rarnaswamy makes similar observations in south India. In his study on strikes in Coimbatore during 1963-64, he observes, 'As for the leaders misleading the workers, very few strikes are indeed called by the leaders and fewer still are in furtherance of political objectives. Strikes are in fact thrust on the leaders by the men and they are a response to the tensions and conflicts of the work place (1978b:36).

Who among the working class have the potential to sustain a struggle for a long period and provide leadership to others? Or, is such a question redundant as the workers are fragmented and their organised strength is not visible in the era of globalisation? What role do the strikes have in developing or otherwise stimulating the political consciousness of workers in social transformation? Or is it a myth that the working class is a vanguard for social transformation? What role do women workers play in the strikes and other struggles of the working class? In what way are the struggles of small-scale industry workers different from those of the workers in large-scale industries?

Most of the studies on working-class movements look at workers as an economic category, and their social as well as cultural aspects are not sufficiently explored. The studies: by Chandavarkar, Dipesh Chakrabarty, Nandini Gooptu though, deal with historical material which opens up new paradigms of understanding the 'working class' and their struggles. Sociologists and political scientists have to explore such paradigms to comprehend struggles of the contemporary working class in the era of globalisation.

NOTES

1. I am not suggesting that there was no industry in India before this period. There was a wide range of industries in pre-colonial India: cloth making, glass and paper making and there were urban and rural artisans, goldsmiths, brass and copper smiths, iron-smelters, potters, etc. There were also coal mines employing a large number of people. See Gadgil (1971), Revri (1972), Simmons (1985) and Chandavarkar (1985, 1998).

2. Small industry is often classified into small-scale industry and cottage industry. The former employs hired labour whereas the latter uses family labour. But it is not always the case. For example, the National Planning Committee has 'tentatively defined cottage industries as industries in which a worker works with his own tools in his own home and with the aid of his family or hired labour not exceeding five persons'.

According to the Second Five Year Plan, 'the working definition adopted by the Small Scale Industries Board brings within the scope of the term Small Scale Industries all units or establishments having a capital investment of less than Rs 5 lakh and employing less than 50 persons when using power'. The number of workers and capital investment amount differ from time to time. For various government definitions, see Rao (1965).

3. According to the Industrial Disputes Act, 1947, with Industrial Disputes (Bombay) Rules, 1957, 'strike' means a cessation of work by a body of persons employed in any industry acting in combination or a concerted refusal, or a refusal under a common understanding of any number of persons who are, or have been so employed to continue to work, or to accept employment.

4. Textile workers of Bombay got a 10 per cent wage increase as war bonus in 1917. Thereafter they continuously got this till 1924- It is generally considered as ex-gratia payment. The Labour Appellate Tribunal considered bonus as an extra remuneration for the effort of the worker. See Rarnaswamy and Rarnaswamy (1981).

5. These groupings are problematic as they assume that nationalists ate not leftists or vice versa. We use them here for convenience as they are used in the literature.

8

STUDENTS' MOVEMENTS

For this essay, we confine our attention to students in colleges and universities. College education began in India in the 1850s. There were 2-4 lakh students attending college in 1946-47. Their number has increased fifteenfold during the last three-and-a-half decades. In 1996-97, 67.5 lakh students were enrolled in the undergraduate, graduate and diploma courses conducted by universities and other institutions.

A large number of students participated in the freedom movement at various stages. According to a report of the government's Sedition Committee in 1918, 68 out of the 186 arrested in Bengal between 1907 and 1917 for revolutionary crimes were students; another 16 were teachers in schools and colleges (Weiner 1963). Besides participating in the freedom struggle, they launched agitations of their own against university and college

authorities, as well as the government. Similar agitations have continued in the post-independence period also. However, except the student movement in Assam in the 1980s, the students' movement has been dormant after the Emergency, the late 1970s. Reasons for such a scenario are not seriously probed into by social scientists. There were large-scale disturbances in Lucknow University and Banaras Hindu University in 1953 and 1958, respectively. Police firings on students took place in several cities such as Gwalior, Indore, Calcutta, Allahabad and Jaipur during the 1950s. Such events were repeated in almost all states in subsequent decades. The literature on student unrest or agitations, or what is called 'student indiscipline', is vast. Most of the write-ups have appeared in newspapers and popular periodicals and are of a journalistic nature. We have ignored them in this essay. Historians have not explored this area. A majority of the studies have been carried out by social-psychologists, educationists, journalists, and sociologists. A few political scientists have also explored this area. Though a number of case studies on different students' agitations in the post-independence period are available, there is no comprehensive study or anthology which offers an all-India picture dealing with different types of students' agitations. We do not have any in-depth historical account of student movements in India. There are a few booklets written by activists which give an account of student movements in the pre-independence period (Chandra 1938; Reddy 1947). They are sketchy and superficial. Myron Weiner (1963) and Philip Altbach (1968a), give brief accounts of the students' agitations during the British period. They give interesting information but they too are scanty and brief. Vishwa Yuvak Kendra (1973) has given a list of major students' disturbances between 1947 and 1970. It provides a useful chronology.

ISSUES

Students' agitations in different parts of the country and at different times have been concerned with issues varying from educational problems to political issues. Though students often take up issues affecting only their own narrow interests, sometimes they also take up causes which do not directly affect them. Ross (1969) classifies students' protests into five types: (1) political protests; (2) economic protests; (3) moral protests; (4) educational protests; and (5) protests for fun. These protests are often interrelated.

There are certain factors which are found in all types of protests, be they moral or educational. One factor common to all types of students' protests is the 'generation gap'. This is a pet theory of many sociologists and social psychologists. As college students belong to the age group of 16 to 21 years, they undergo biological and psychological changes. The stresses and strains of adolescence are reflected in their behaviour. It is a stage when they are developing their identity within the community. According to some scholars, student unrest is a symptom of 'negative identity' formation (Reddy 1969; Damle 1971a). In a transitional and pluralistic society like ours, it is difficult for students to conform to established norms. Moreover, the traditional moral authority of elders in general and the guru in particular, which used to provide a model to the youth for imitation, has been weakened in recent years. The authority of the traditional family is also being eroded (Cormack 1961; Ross 1969). A counter-culture has emerged amongst the youth (Fischer 1963a; Perkins 1968; Sinha and Gangrade 1971; Malik and Marquette 1974). Sudhir Kakar and Kamala Chowdhary argue that the 'authority crisis' is

increasing in our society. 'Our familial, educational, religious, social and political institutions are rapidly losing their capacities to command the easy compliance of our youth' (1970: 8). These two psychologists present very interesting biographical sketches of the youth. However, despite the availability of many studies by social-psychologists, an in-depth longitudinal study has yet to be undertaken (Nandy 1981).

It is argued that the youth are impatient to end their dependency and strive for autonomy, to take on responsibilities in the workplace and other spheres of life. This brings them in conflict with adults (Kakar and Chowdhary 1970; S. L. Sharma 1971). Moreover, the youth have attitudes and values that are different from those of the older generations. They are radical and reject a socio-economic structure which is oppressive. According to Philip Altbach (1968a) students' movements are generated by an emotional feeling often associated with inter-generational conflicts. They also have positive goals. As young intellectuals, they assume that they have a special Historical mission to achieve what the other generation has failed to achieve, or to correct imperfections in their environments. Students' movements are combinations of emotional responses and intellectual convictions. Moreover, the first generation of learners find it difficult to adjust to the new demands and values of society unlike those who have the advantage of generations of educational background in their families (Shah 1968; Metta 1970; Rege 1971; Chitnis 1971; Srinivas 1972). Some scholars, however, do not share these observations on the generation gap (Sinha and Gangrade 1971). Studies on the values of students and those of their parents show that the students do not differ from their parents so far as values are concerned, except in matters of dress and sexual mores. The majority of students accept the caste system, caste customs, family norms, the subjugated status of women, hierarchy, economic structure, etc. (Shah 1964; Gangrade 1975; Shah 1977). Divergence between the two is conspicuous in the sphere of aspirations (Sinha and Gangrade 1971).

In a way, students' agitations are a part of the overall ongoing economic and political crisis and the changing nature of the social order. As in other sections of society, intensive localism and middle-class interests prevail among them also (Shah 1977). Indian youth have not shaken off caste, family, regional or religious identities by becoming students (Gusfield 1970). The Education Commission (Government of India 1964) observes that falling standards of discipline among the adults and a weakening of their civic consciousness and integrity are responsible for the indiscipline of students. A number of studies assert that rising unemployment is an important cause of students' agitations. The waiting period between passing out of college and employment is quite long, though the estimates for the waiting period vary from four-and-a-half months to thirteen months (Ilchman and Dhar 1970). One of the demands in many student agitations is the enhancement of employment opportunities for educated youth. Students have realised their strength. Aileen Ross observes,

the students feel strongly that through their demonstrations, whether their goals are short term ones, such as reducing fees, they gain the power to change some aspects of their lives. In view of the strong traditional controls of family, caste and religion over their behaviour, this was indeed a heady discovery. Thus, their belief in their own right to demonstrate and in their fate through collective action are important factors in initiating their demonstration (1969: 25).

Students often protest about the immediate issues affecting them as students. Demands are made for more and better infrastructural facilities in hostels and classrooms, protests are made against a rise in fees, the conduct of examinations, and the authoritarian attitudes of teachers and college or university authorities. The Education Commission (1964) lists some of the factors related to the education system responsible for so-called 'student indiscipline'. They include: (1) mechanical and unsatisfactory nature of many curricular programmes; (2) totally inadequate facilities for teaching and learning in many of the educational institutions; (3) poor student-teacher contacts; (4) inefficiency and lack of scholarship on the part of many teachers and their failure to interest themselves in the students' problems; (5) absence of imagination and tact combined with firmness on the part of institutions; and (6) prevalence of teachers' politics in some colleges and universities. Sometimes, students also protest against the government's action restricting university autonomy (Shaw 1970). Breakdown of communication between students and authorities is also responsible for students' agitations in some universities (Singh 1970). Di Bona (1970) observes that the majority of students are at odds with the system. They participated in conjunction to do something about their miserable condition. They are alienated from the decision-making processes of the institutions (Ahluwalia 1972).

A number of students' agitations can be called political in the sense that they raise political issues related to government policy or action. During the freedom movement, some students' agitations took up political issues supporting the demands of the freedom fighters. Political parties formed front organisations for mobilising students. After independence, the political elite of the Congress party advised students to depoliticise. However, all political parties have formed front organisations among students. They mobilise students for party or factional politics. According to Weiner (1963), students are used by party bosses as a special pressure group. Several studies show the political involvement of student leaders and how political parties use them in creating disturbances on campuses (Kabir 1958; Cormack 1961; Gusfield 1970; Di Bona 1967; Singh 1968; Ross 1969; Vidyarthi 1976). Students launched agitations for larger political issues related to university autonomy, national language, corruption in politics, authoritarian and corrupt states, exploitation, etc. The students of Hyderabad played 'a visible and supportive role' in the Telengana movement (Cuseers 1987). They also played an important role in the naxalite movement in West Bengal in the 1960s. In Gujarat they succeeded in dissolving the State Assembly in 1974, and shook up the Congress in Bihar (Barik 1977; Shah 1977; Ostergaard 1985).

Though several student agitations took up political issues, some studies show that the majority of students were not only non-ideological but also non-political (Altbach 1969; Metta 1970; Vidyarthi 1976; Chopra 1978). Students took up issues on an ad hoc basis and out of emotional attachment. They did not have any 'general outlook' concerning the political system. Edward Shils observes, 'Indian student agitation declares no fundamental criticism of its society; it has no schemes for the reconstruction of Indian universities' (1972:147). Sagar Ahluwalia (1972) goes to the extent of saying that the behaviour of the young in recent years has been childish and immature. It is no better than 'ordinary ruffian behaviour'. However, these observations are not shared by other scholars. It is argued that student agitations are searching for a new identity and new values. The Vishwa Yuvak Kendra asserts, 'the argument of Shils that Indian students' agitations do not have content or direction is untenable. A sustained and integrated

movement for the realisation of various goals can be found. The student agitations do point out a need for bringing about change in the institutional order in the academic world more than anything else (1973:112).

PARTICIPANTS AND LEADERSHIP

An overwhelming number of students belong to the middle and upper classes. A study of Bombay University students shows that students as a body are not inclined to participate in politics- A majority of the students do not support strikes and demonstrations. Who among these students participate and lead the agitations. There is no all-India or comparative study of different agitations concerned with the above question. However, some observations based on case studies are available. According to Aileen Ross (1969), students who are protected by the wealth or influence of their families participate in the agitations. The leadership comes from 'professional students' who continue in the university as students in one way or another. Student leadership in Bombay and Delhi came from the elite caste/classes (Altbach 1968a; Oommen 1974). S.L. Sharma's study (1971) on student activists arrives at more or less the same findings. Some scholars observe that arts and commerce students play a more active role in agitations than science and engineering students (Metta 1970). The survey carried out by the Vishwa Yuvak Kendra does not support this observation (1973).

Metta (1970) observes that the leftist orientations of students correlated with their place of birth and the economic condition of the family. They were poor and of rural origin. This observation is, however, not supported by others. A study of Calcutta student's shows that they were not only more radical compared to other metropolitan students, but they were also more orthodox on a number of indicators, as well as more pessimistic, cynical and frustrated. Thus, the available studies give information about one city or university¹. There are no comparative data and different studies give different findings. The observation of Edward Shils in 1968 on the gap in our knowledge of students' movements is still valid. He observes,

we know very little about which students participate in them in different capacities—as instigators, as coadjutors, as swellers of the chorus. We do not know which students take the lead in acts of violence and in other acts of aggression or defiance against authorities. We do not know the scope of the process and particularly how actions begin and expand. We do not know how many students participate in these actions and we do not know how recurrent their participation is. We are especially deficient in our knowledge of the processes of growth of an agitation, and the way in which it spreads and draws in students previously indifferent to such issues and occasions of the initial disruption (1968:7-8).

ORGANISATION

There are some studies on students' unions and students' organisations (Reddy 1947; Oommen 1974; Vidyarthi 1976). These studies give information about the membership and activities of students' organisations. Very few studies examine how students' organisations play their role in conducting movements. The study on the Gujarat and Bihar 1974 students' movements shows that the students' organisation was loose, and

coordination and planning was lacking between the various units. There was ad hocism in their decisions on launching programmes. As a result, political parties and other interested groups could manipulate them (Shah 1977).

Though the literature on students' agitations is vast, in-depth studies are few, and the literature is full of stray observations, wishful thinking and personal anecdotes. Since the mid-1980s, as student movements are almost absent in the university campuses, the interest of social scientists in the area is also waning.

9

MIDDLE CLASS MOVEMENTS

The middle class is placed between labour and capital. It neither directly owns the means of production that pumps out the surplus generated by wage labour power, nor does it, by its own labour, produce the surplus which has use and exchange value. Broadly speaking, this class consists of the petty bourgeoisie and the white-collar workers. The former are either self-employed or involved in the distribution of commodities and the latter are non-manual office workers, supervisors and professionals. Thus, in terms of occupation, shopkeepers, salesmen, brokers, government and non-government office-workers, writers, teachers, and self-employed professionals, such as engineers, pleaders, doctors, etc., constitute the middle class. Most of these occupations require at least some degree of formal education.

This middle class is primarily a product of capitalist development and the expansion of the functions of the state in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Though the petty bourgeoisie and managers did exist in precapitalist society, they constituted a tiny class. Industrial development and expansion of markets require not only a larger managerial class than earlier, but also impel the state to shoulder the responsibilities of monitoring market competition and resolving the contradictions of capitalist development. This includes formation and implementation of welfare programmes to minimise tension in society. For carrying out these functions, the state also requires a managerial class. Formal education contributes to the expansion of this class.

It is difficult to estimate the size of this class in contemporary India. It is certainly very large. According to the calculations made by Ranjit Sahu (1986), the number of white-collar employees is larger than that of industrial workers.' A large majority of the members of the middle class belong to the upper and middle castes.

While scanning literature on the subject, one is disappointed at the absence of studies on middle-class movements per se, whereas one finds studies on peasant, working-class or tribal movements. This is not because the middle-class movements are few in number, nor because scholars have an aversion towards the middle class. They do take cognisance of the role of the middle class in various movements. But these movements are primarily analysed in terms of the issues that they raise, such as social reform movements, the nationalist movement, human rights movements, ecology movements, and so on. Or, these movements are called 'mass movements', as the issues are not class specific, nor affecting mainly the middle class. The issues are posed as societal problems. The leaders of such movements, who belong to the middle class, mobilise other classes for support. In

this section, I shall deal with the studies on those movements in which I believe the middle class played a prominent role as initiators, and those where a majority of the participants belong to the middle class. Though students also belong to this class, we have dealt with their movements separately.

British rule established and introduced a capitalist economy, a new administrative system and English education in the early nineteenth century. Consequently, a tiny educated class emerged in urban areas (Desai 1957; Mishra 1978). The members of this class were upper-caste Hindus. Muslims were, for a variety of reasons late in availing of an English education (Seal 1968). A few individuals in different parts of the country not only raised questions but also revolted against certain customs and traditions of the Hindu social system. These individuals, known as social and religious reformers, were all those who were advocates of alterations in social customs which would involve a break with traditionally accepted patterns; they were those who, convinced themselves that altered ways of thinking and behaving were positive values, sought to convince others to modify or entirely transform their ways of life' (Heimsath 1964: 4).

The reformers took up several issues. They included elimination of or change in certain caste regulations and rituals: the sari system, widow remarriage, child marriage, status of women, girls' education, prohibition, etc. Though a few talked against the caste hierarchy and untouchability, most of the reformers (except a few who led the anti-Brahmin movement), did not challenge the social structure. They adopted a gradualist approach. Heimsath argues,

In India, social reform did not ordinarily mean a reorganisation of the structure of society at large, as it did in the West, for the benefit of underprivileged social economic classes. Instead it meant the infusion into the existing social structure of new ways of life and thought: the society would be preserved, while its members would be transformed (1964: 5).

The reformers either revolted individually or formed associations. These associations were of three types: general (or voluntary) associations; caste reform associations and religious reform bodies (generally called *samaj*) (Heimsath 1964). The Indian National Social Conference was formed in 1887. Social reform associations came into existence at provincial and local levels. Some of them were formed around one issue, such as widow remarriage or marriageable age, child marriage, whereas others took up general issues related to social reform, protesting against 'conservatism', including protests against religious heads, superstitions, caste restrictions for crossing the sea, etc. They were loose organisations whose activities were largely confined to programmes, conferences and passing resolutions. A few of them turned into charity organisations and undertook welfare programmes—particularly in education. Some reformers confined their activities to their caste. They formed caste associations and persuaded caste fellows to join for the reformation of certain unacceptable practices which they felt were either inhuman or did not fit in with the changing times. The most prominent associations were related to religious reforms. Raja Rammohan Roy, who protested against the sati system, formed the Brahmo Samaj which remained the centre for social reform activities in Bengal (Kopf 1979). The Prarthana Samaj came into existence in Bombay under the leadership of Mahadev Govind Ranade (Tucker 1977). The Arya Samaj, formed by Dayanand Saraswati, was the predominant influence in Punjab and north India (Jones 1968; Jordens

1977; Vable 1983). On the whole, social reform movements were weak in south India, despite the presence of a large number of western-educated persons. Heimsath observes that 'the region produced no reformer of national standing and only a few with lasting local influence' (1964: 253). It should be noted that the backward-caste movement as an anti-Brahmin movement was prominent in the Madras Presidency; which we have dealt with later. The main thrust of the socio-religious reform movements was to revive or rejuvenate Hindu religion and society. This was, according to many scholars, to counter the impact of western culture and the efforts of proselytisation by Christian missionaries (Heimsath 1964; Jones 1968; Bhatt 1973; Sun 1977; Jordens 1977). K. P. Gupta (1974), in his study on the Ramakrishna Mission, refutes this position. He argues that the 'innovative potentiality' of Hinduism was more responsible for its rejuvenation rather than the threat or impact of other religions or cultures. According to A.R. Desai, the traditional social structure and religion were not able to cope with the new economic structure which was based on individualism. The reformers were therefore striving 'to extend the principle of individual liberty to the sphere of religion (1957: 258).

The social reform movements among Hindus and Muslims contributed to the development of nationalism on regional and religious lines. There were several kinds of nationalisms competing with each other. Anil Seal argues,

There were keen internal rivalries, but these were between caste and caste, community, not between class and class. Moreover, those groups which felt a similarity of interest were themselves more the product of bureaucratic initiative than of economic change. Since these groups can be largely identified with the men educated in western styles, and since it was these men whose hopes and fears went into the building of the new associations that emerged as the Indian National Congress, a conceptual system based on elites, rather than on classes, would seem more promising (1968: 341).

These elite belong to the middle class. Granting that the initiative came from the bureaucracy, it was intended to bring about economic change in society in general and the middle class in particular.

The middle class participated at various stages of India's freedom movement. The major events of their collective action were the partition of Bengal in 1906, the non-cooperation campaign in the early 1920s, the anti-Simon agitation in the mid-1920s, Civil Disobedience movements in the early 1930s, and the Quit India movement in 1942. Besides this, there were a number of local-level campaigns—organised and spontaneous—against the British Raj. Though there are a large number of studies on the freedom movement, most of them are mainly focused on the leadership and their decisions. In his study on popular movements between 1945 and 1947, Sumit Sarkar argues that, 'in this as well as in other periods of modern Indian history, the decisions and actions of leaders, British or Indian, cannot really be understood without the counterpoint provided by pressures from below'¹ (1982: 677). A few studies on the Bang-bhang movement, the Civil Disobedience movement and the Quit India movement, point out that there were close links between local politics and national agitations (Stoddart 1975). Use of religious and communal idioms and violence are examined by some other scholars (Irschick 1976; Hennigham 1979). The communal dimension of the participants has been highlighted by some studies.

Social reform among the Muslims began with the Aligarh movement led by Syed Ahmad Khan. The main thrust of the movement was to persuade the Muslim landed gentry to take an English education. Without English education, it was feared that the Muslims would be unable to compete with the Hindus and would remain backward. M.S.Jain (1965) argues that the spirit behind the Aligarh movement was to reassert Muslim superiority over the Hindus, which the former had lost during the early phase of the British rule. The movement generated the urge for a 'separate and independent status' for the Muslims. The Ullama of Uttar Pradesh opposed the Aligarh movement and the subsequent demand for a separate state for Muslims (Faruqi 1963). The Khilafat movement (1919-24) led by the Muslim intelligentsia and the Ullama, mobilised a cross section of the Muslims. Their claim was that the Sultan of Turkey was the custodian and defender, the protector of the holy places known as Jazirat al-Arab. The movement was supported by all the Muslim groups and by the Indian National Congress (Dixit 1969; Hasan 1981). Religious symbols, like the mosque, the *haji*, sufi shrines, provided a sense of belonging to the common fraternity of Islam in India (Hasan 1981).

Generally, the 'divide and rule' policy of the British rulers, Muslim orthodoxy, and the educational and economic backwardness of the Muslims, are considered to be responsible for the growth of communal Muslim politics (Desai 1957; Smith 1963). Prabha Dixit (1974) argues that a search for power was responsible for communal politics (see also Broomfield 1968). It is the argument of many scholars that the nationalist movement failed to develop secular symbols. The nationalist movement was dominated by the Hindus who used Hindu religious symbols and idioms for the freedom movement (Smith 1963; Ahmad 1969).

Seal (1968) and Brass (1970) refute the general argument regarding the backwardness of the Muslims. They point out that they were far from being backward in the Muslim-minority provinces. Gopal Krishna argues that 'it would seem that sociologically the communal movement was a movement of the privileged rather than of the deprived sections of the Muslim population (1981: 55).

A number of Hindu and Muslim communal organisations have come into existence in post-independence India. Through various programmes, they strengthen communal identities and stereotypes for each other. Sensitive issues are raised and articulated. These organisations play an important role in rousing communal sentiments. The number of communal riots has increased since the 1950s. Apart from a large number of journalistic writings and government-appointed inquiry commissions' reports, a few case studies by social scientists and activists are now available (Shah 1970; Engineer and Shakir 1985; Van der Veer 1987; Brass 1996, 1998; Horowitz 2001). They highlight not only communal antagonisms, but also economic factors in mobilising members of both communities against each other. Some studies focus on the manipulation of the elite in rousing sentiments leading to riots (Patel 1985). By now we have a good deal of documents on communal riots which include government reports and also reports by independent citizens as well as human rights groups and non-government organisations (NGOs). Systematic comparative studies on communally based mobilisation into riots need to be undertaken to understand the complexities of the phenomenon. There is a good deal of literature on secularisation, nationalism and communal politics. This requires a full-fledged review. We have excluded it from the scope of the present work.

The upper-caste Hindu middle class launched struggles in Bihar and Gujarat against reservation for the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and other backward classes. Upper-caste government servants also launched agitations against the roster system which provided certain benefits to Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe employees. These agitations were primarily the result of the conflict of economic interests between upper and deprived caste groups; the middle-class leaders of these agitations raised the issue of 'merit', 'secularism' and 'efficiency'. While analysing the 1981 anti-reservation agitation in Gujarat, I.P. Desai argues that the economic structure was not able to provide employment opportunities for the lower strata of the higher castes.

The higher castes therefore wish to prevent the mobility of lower castes and contain the discontent among the lower strata of higher castes by appealing to the concealed caste sentiment among them and speaking publicly against casteism, communalism, reservation and all that is particularistic, narrow and parochial. Thus although "merit" appears to be a progressive slogan, it is in fact a weapon for defending the moribund Hindu hierarchy and maintain [the] social economic status quo (1985: 135).

By now, there are a few articles on the Gujarat anti-reservation agitation (Yagnik 1981; Bose 1985; Shah 1987) providing information about the socio-economic and political dimensions of the conflict between the upper castes and the deprived groups. Shah (1987) argues that these two agitations were essentially struggles within the middle class. They were fights between the upper- and middle-caste members on the one hand, and the new entrants from the low castes on the other.

Some sections of the middle class—white-collar government employees, school and university teachers, etc.—launched movements on economic issues affecting them, such as, revision of pay scales, bonus, job security. Though there is no systematic study on the struggles, a few descriptive accounts and analyses of the demands are available. A few of the recent movements led by the middle class began with economic issues, like price rise, scarcity of essential commodities and unemployment. But in the course of the development of these movements, these issues were sidetracked and the movements raised populist issues, which appeal to various classes. They raise moral and cultural issues. They sometimes provide an ideological basis for 'democratic capitalism' and sometimes also for 'non-capitalist development strategy' (Khoros 1980). Take the case of the 1974 Gujarat movement, popularly known as the Nav Nirman (reconstruction) movement, and the Bihar movement known as the movement for total revolution. Though both these movements began with economic issues, they also raised the issues of corruption, democratic rights and social reform- These issues were not spelled out, nor were they linked with the economic and political structure of the society. They succeeded in ousting the chief minister in Gujarat and the Congress party in Bihar (Desai 1974; Wood 1975; Jones and Jones 1976; Barik 1977; Shah 1977). Ghanshyam Shah (1977) observes that they wanted more economic benefits by bringing about certain changes in the system. 'They do not believe in changing the basic aspects of the system. They have a stake in the system. To them Revolution is a slogan.'

At the end of the nineteenth century, the educated Hindu middle class of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh launched a series of agitations for the removal of Urdu and for its replacement by Hindi in the Devnagri script. Muslim intellectuals also launched a counter-agitation in defence of Urdu (Das Gupta 1970; Brass 1977). The middle class of

south India launched struggles during the 1950s and 1960s against the 'imposition' of Hindi and for the retention of English. For them it was a struggle against Hindu imperialism (Hardgrave 1965; Forrester 1966; and Rao 1979). The middle class of linguistic groups such as Marathi, Gujarati, Telugu and Punjabi, demanded the formation of linguistic states in the 1950s. They launched agitations for these demands (Phadke 1979; Nijhawan 1982). For maintenance of their cultural identity, the middle class among the Tamilians, the Punjabi, the Naga, the Mizo populations, the tribals of Chhota Nagpur area, spearheaded agitations for the formation of separate states within or outside the Indian Union.

We have already discussed the demands of the Naga, the Mizo, and the tribals of Chhota Nagpur and other tribals for separate states or districts (see Chapter 3).

The Dravidian movement in Tamil Nadu was a backward caste or non-Brahmin movement with which we have dealt earlier. It was also directed against north Indians, and demanded a separate state named 'Dravidisthan', i.e., homeland of the Dravidians outside the Indian Union (Hardgrave 1964, 1965, 1979; Irschick 1976; Ram 1979). Periyar E.V. Ramaswamy, a leader of the Dravidian movement said, 'Tamil Nadu was all along a nation and still it is a nation and that is known as Dravidian. Civilisation, customs and manners of Tamils are different from that of Bengalees and Bombayans.... Hindi language and literature are opposed to the interests of Tamilians in general and to all other non-Brahmins elsewhere, in particular.'

The Sikh community of Punjab also demanded a separate state called Khalistan. The Shri Anandpur Sahib Resolution demanded that one of the aims of the Akali Dal be 'maintaining the feeling of a separate independent entity of the Sikh Panth and creation of an environment in which the "National Expression" of the Sikhs can be full and satisfactory' (Dhillon 1974; Puri 1981, 1983; Kumar et al. 1984; Kumar 1984).

The Assam agitation, which began in the late 1970s with the formation of the All Assam Students' Union, also raised issues regarding the identity of the Assamese and the development of Assam. In a sense, it was a 'nationality' movement (Mira 1982; Gohain 1985, Basu 1992). Regional or linguistic identities have been sharpened in India since independence and they have become a potential force in mobilising the middle class which faces competition from other classes in the economic field. Robert Hardgrave asserts:

Regionalism is rooted in India's cultural and linguistic diversity. Projected in geographical terms, it is at the state level both an ethnic and economic phenomenon. It is an expression of heightened political consciousness, expanding participation and increasing competition for scarce resources.... Economic grievances expressed in charges of unfairness, discrimination or Centre neglect may be fused with cultural anxiety over language status and ethnic balance. It is this fusion that gives regionalism its potency. Language and culture, like religion, are at the core of an individual's identity and when politicized take a potentially virulent form (1983: 1171).

Most social scientists have seen these movements as 'dysfunctional' or a threat to national 'unity' and 'integration'. They believe that the Indian nation state should maintain its boundaries and hold its territory together. Therefore, they are unable to view these struggles as movements for 'self-determination' (Mohanty 1982).

NATIVISM

There is a very thin line between 'nativism' and 'nationalism': Katzenstein argues, 'Nativism ... is distinct from movements of ethnic, linguistic or regional subnationalism, and is specifically anti-migrant. Sub-national movements, such as in India the Akali Dal or Dravida Munnetta Kazhagam, may contain nativist elements, similarly, the mobilisation of anti-migrant sentiment may rely on ethnic, linguistic or regional loyalties' (1976: 44). According to Myron Weiner, nativism is one form of ethnic politics.

Nativism is that form of ethnic identity that seeks to exclude those who are not members of the local or indigenous ethnic groups from residing and/or working in a territory because they are not native to the country or region: nativism is anti-migrant. To the extent that the D.M.K., the Akali Dal, the Andhra Mahasabha, and the Samyukta Maharashtra Samiti were not anti-migrant, they should not be classified as nativist (1978: 296).

Nativist movements are not of recent origin, there were a few such movements before independence. For instance, the movement against the non-*mulki* developed in Hyderabad soon after World War I, when the local educated population expressed its opposition to the government policy of recruiting Muslims from northern India into the state administrative services (Weiner 1978; Reddy and Sharma 1979). Similarly, the anti-Bengali movement in Assam protested against the domination of their educational and administrative services by Bengali Hindus (Weiner 1978; Das 1982). In post-independence India, the widely known movements are: the Telengana Nativist movement, the Shiv Sena movement in Maharashtra and the Assam movement- The Telengana nativist agitation began in 1969. Initially, the agitation was aimed at the continuance of Telengana 'safeguards' and *mulki* rules formulated at the time of the formation of Andhra Pradesh in 1956. At a later stage, it demanded separation of the region from the rest of Andhra Pradesh (Reddy and Sharma 1979).

The Shiv Sena (i.e., the army of Shivaji) movement was initiated in 1966 in Bombay. It demanded that as Bombay was the capital of Maharashtra, Maharashtrians should be given the opportunity to make the most of what their capital city had to offer. They asked that 80 per cent of all jobs and economic opportunities in Bombay should be reserved for Maharashtrian; (Joshi 1970; Katzenstein 1976; Gupta 1982).

The Assam movement began in 1978. Its main demands included the detection, deportation and deletion of foreigners' names from electoral rolls. The movement aimed at the ouster of the Bengali middle class which enjoyed a major share in government jobs (Weiner 1978; Das 1982). Similarly, during the late 1960s the Kannada Chaluvaligar (i.e., agitation) demanded restrictions against Tamil, Malayali, and Telugu migrants to Bangalore and preference for the local Kannada-speaking population (Weiner 1978).

The underlying reason for the issue of nativism is competition for government jobs between the natives and the migrants. The cities and regions where nativist movements took place have the following characteristics:

1. The locale contains a substantial number of middle-class migrants belonging to culturally distinguishable ethnic groups originating from another section of the country;

2. There is a native middle class, expanding under the impetus of a growth in secondary and higher education;

3. There is a highly competitive labour market in which the native middle class seeks employment in private and public sector firms and in government, where middle-class positions are already held by migrants or their descendents;

4. There are limited opportunities for the native middle class to find employment outside their own locale (Weiner 1978: 293).

A small section of the urban middle-class intelligentsia—university and college teachers, researchers and lawyers—has formed organisations at state and national levels for the protection of 'civil' and 'democratic' rights. They raise issues related to violation of 'civil' and democratic rights of various strata of society, including the oppressed classes (Desai 1986). The existing constitutional channels, such as the judiciary, the state assemblies and Parliament are used for challenging the government's decisions and the power of vested interests. The media is used to highlight issues and create public opinion. Fact-finding committees are appointed. The intelligentsia has also raised ecological issues. They organise conferences, publish reports and submit memoranda to the government. Studies on these organisations and their mobilisation efforts are many (Ray 1986). We shall discuss the studies on human rights movements in Chapter 10.

PARTICIPANTS

Students and intellectuals have provided leadership to most middle-class movements. Though some of the populist, national and nativist movements draw support from peasants and other sections of society when they raise emotional and general issues; they continue to be dominated by the middle class. Myron Weiner observed, 'nativism is largely a middle-class sentiment, not a movement among the industrial labour force or the peasantry, even though there are culturally distinguishable migrants in the industrial labour force in many cities and in some rural areas' (1978: 293). Some scholars argue that political leaders excite regional or nativist sentiments in the middle class for their political ends. Iqbal Narain asserts that the political elite exploits situations of regional deprivation and unrest and converts them into movements to forge and strengthen its individual and factional support bases (1984). While studying regionalism in Telengana, Ram Reddy and Sharma observed that factional politics exploited the regional sentiments of the people of Telengana for strengthening their political positions. Similarly, Subramanyam argues,

Political leaders, when they feel that their due share is not received and they are being overshadowed and ignored, search for some kind of spontaneous rationale to infuse emotions among the people and project themselves as the protectors of public interests, and thus tensions and conflicts are created in an unparallel community in a democratic polity (1984:130).

However, Javed Alam propounds another theory. He argues, 'Re-gionalistic demands get flared up because of contradictions among the ruling classes.... The locally placed ruling classes seek greater power to further their own interests when such interests are perceived as not being served by the all India classes' (1984: 17). He does not support his argument with evidence. As a result of their assumptions that these movements are

created by the political elite, scholars do not examine the mobilisation aspect of the movement. They study primarily the decision-making process among the elite. Y.D. Phadke's study on the Samyukta Maharashtra movement (1979) is a case in point. Those who adhere to such conspiracy theories do not explain why political leaders succeed in arousing nativist emotions in certain states and why they fail in others.

Most studies on middle-class movements discussed above are brief. Some deal with the political decision-making process and the factors responsible for the movement. Some of the movements were 'spontaneous' and short-lived. They did not have an organisational structure, whereas some movements were well-organised. Many scholars do not analyse the organisational aspects of the movements. The studies on the Shiv Sena by Dipankar Gupta, the Nav Nirman and the Bihar movements by Ghan-shyam Shah and the Nav Nirman movement by P.M. Sheth, analyse the organisational structure of these movements. At this stage of our knowledge, it is difficult to find a pattern in organisational structures in different types of middle-class movements.

NOTE

1. According to an estimate around 30 crore at the end of 1990s belonged to this class. (See Harris-White 2003).

11

HUMAN RIGHTS AND ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENTS

The purpose of this chapter is to focus on the studies of the human rights and environmental movements as they are classified by scholars. As mentioned in Chapter 1, some scholars and activists hold the view that human rights and environmental movements are 'new', encompassing all strata of society. They are concerned with the whole society and not a particular section, community or class.

The term 'human rights' is now frequently used by social and political activist groups in the context of the rights of an individual which are 'natural', inherent in our nature 'and without which we cannot live as human beings'. These rights should not be violated by the state. In other words, they require to be protected against the authority of the state. At the same time, ironically, it is expected that they need to be protected and enhanced by the state. These rights are generally included in 'civil' and 'democratic' rights. In the course of history these rights have different philosophical roots. Their meanings have undergone change from time to time and in different contexts. For conservatives and status quoists human rights include the rights embodied in religion which justify ownership of private property including the system of slavery and bonded labour. For the liberals and leftists 'equality' and dignity of all individuals to sustain life are the main human rights. There is a good deal of debate among political philosophers and jurists on what human rights are and whether they are natural (Tuck 1979; Winston 1989; Baxi 2002).

In India the Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993 says, "human rights" means the rights relating to life, liberty, equality and dignity of the individual guaranteed by the Constitution or embodied in the International Covenants and enforceable by courts in

India.' Fundamental rights which include freedom of expression, association, religious freedom, equality before law, etc. and directive principles are related to socio-economic rights, such as, rights to education, equal wages, dignity of an individual, non-discrimination before law, etc. The former are justiciable whereas the latter remain guidelines for legislation. They both cover a broad spectrum of different civil and democratic rights. Justice P.N. Bhagwati expanded the scope of Article 21 of the constitution to incorporate the right to food, clothing and shelter in term 'life' in the Article. The question arises whether the right to life is limited only to protection of limb or faculty or does it go further ... , we think that the right to life includes the right to live with dignity and all that goes along with it; namely, the necessities such as adequate nutrition, clothing and shelter' (quoted by Mody 2000: 222). The international covenants include social and cultural rights (1966), civil and political rights (1966), and the optional protocol to the civil covenant (1976).

The discourse on rights of an individual and movements around these ideas have a long history rooted in western society. The movements that developed in the west during the French and American revolutions during the eighteenth century influenced a small section of Indian intellectuals. Social reform and political movements of different groups and the Congress provided a platform for discussion and assertion of the rights. The proponents of the rights were social reformers, liberal political leaders championing for equality of Indians as 'citizens' with the British before law and there were also the champions primarily concerned with protecting the economic interests of the landed class. Social reformers worked for reforming social customs and traditions so as to protect women and the lower strata of society. The liberals were concerned with individual freedom of expression and association and the recognition of equality before law for all citizens. One of the many factors which led to the organisation of the Indian National Congress in 1885 was the failure of Indians to get the Ilbert Bill passed in its original form proposing to give Indian magistrates the power to try British subjects in criminal cases. By the turn of the century, this consciousness crystallised in a new generation, according to a Congress leader 'with new thoughts and new ideas, impatient of its dependent position and claiming its rights as free citizens of the British Empire' (quoted by Dutta 1998: 277). Sitharamam Kakarala observes, the rights consciousness was thus concomitant to the emergence of organized landed gentry and middle class. They tended to perceive 'civil liberties' as something that only advanced sections of the natives can enjoy and appreciate. In other words, 'rights' became 'advantages' conferred by the colonial rule on the advanced sections of India. This attitude was further consolidated by the leaders of the Indian National Congress (INC) during the first three decades of its practice (1994:135).

In 1918 the Congress prepared a declaration of rights submitted to the British parliament. It included the freedoms of speech, expression and assembly, the right to be tried according to law, and above all, freedom from racial discrimination (Dutta 1998). Later, the Motilal Nehru committee of 1928 demanded all fundamental rights to Indians 'which had been denied to them'. Though the demands were rejected by the British government, the Congress passed a resolution on fundamental rights in the Karachi session in 1931. In 1936, Jawaharlal Nehru took the initiative to form the first civil liberties organisation. The Indian Civil Liberties Union (ICLU) was formed in Bombay in 1936 with Rabindranath Tagore as its president. The idea of civil liberties', Nehru said in

his address to the founding conference of the ICLU, 'is to have the right to oppose the government' (Quoted by Dutta 1998: 279). In 1945 Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru brought forth a constitutional proposal stressing the importance of fundamental rights. They were incorporated in the Indian constitution. Thus, liberties and rights enshrined in the Indian constitution were product of the freedom struggle of the people of India (Haragopal and Bala-gopal 1998:355-56). The historical account of the civil rights movements during the colonial period is sketchy and very brief. Rigorous analysis of the various phases of the discourse and involvement of various social forces in the assertion of such rights needs to be undertaken.

The human rights movement in the post-independence period is generally divided into two phases: pre- and post-Emergency. The Civil Liberties Committee was formed in West Bengal in 1948 to protest against the state repression on the communists (Dutta 1998). There is no account of this phase of the movement. The major civil liberties movement began in the late 1960s with the brutal attack by the state on the naxalites (Kakarala 1994). The movement raised the issue of 'democratic rights' of the oppressed sections of society for justice and equality. While documenting the struggle, Kakarala argues that democratic rights are needed by those who have to struggle for justice while the fundamental rights are adequate for the privileged.... The struggle for democratic rights in essence is the struggle to assert the rights already guaranteed formally but not ensured in practice. Denial of democratic rights takes the form of an attack on the right to assert rights already guaranteed (1994: 91-95).

The Emergency imposed by Indira Gandhi on 25 June 1975 brought new widespread impetus to the civil rights movement. She suspended the fundamental rights claiming that they were used by the privileged stratum to prevent her from carrying out programmes in the interest of the 'majority' (Rubin 1987). The liberal intelligentsia was shocked by the realisation of the 'built-in authoritarian proclivities within the political system, and the pitfalls endemic in any assumption of the durability of the democratic process, as heretofore. This shaped the intellectual and political milieu that led to the origin of the civil and democratic rights movement in its present shape' (Ray 1986: 1203). Many of the present-day civil liberties organisations came up during this period to fight for civil and democratic rights.

At present there are a number of groups in different states working on human rights. The most important and known are the People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL) and the People's Union for Democratic Rights (PUDR). They have their formal or informal branches and/or network organisations in many states with the same names, though autonomous. Besides, the important and active state-level organisations are the Andhra Pradesh Civil Liberties Committee (APCLC), the Committee for the Protection of Democratic Rights (CPDR) in Maharashtra; the Association for Democratic Rights (AFDR) in Punjab; the Naga People's Movement for Human Rights in Nagaland; Lok Adhikar Sangh in Gujarat; Citizens for Democracy in Delhi, Mumbai and other places. These organisations are not membership-based. They have office bearers such as the convenor, president, secretary, etc. In some places the executive committee functions collectively. They do not have defined objectives or constitutions to lay down their functions. As and when needed they form committees and subcommittees to carry out certain functions. Committees of Concerned Citizens have been formed in several states from issue to issue and time to time. Sometimes they try to mediate between the state and

political groups engaged in direct actions and become the victims of so-called 'encounter' actions of the police or military. They have an ad hoc character in terms of organisation and functioning. Such loose organisational structures may provide flexibility for undertaking activities. But they may lack continuity of members and activities. Except the study on the human rights movement in Andhra Pradesh by Sitharamam Kakatala which is yet to be published, we do not have a systematic analysis of the organisational structure, leadership and working of national- or state-level human rights groups. However, several observers note that these groups are often confined to a small group of individuals largely from the academia, media, writers, artists, lawyers and other professionals. Except in Andhra Pradesh where APCLC and APDR have attracted relatively large numbers of participants, human rights groups are mainly from the middle class (Ray 1986; Kakarala 1993).

In 1976 under the leadership of Jayprakash Narayan, the People's Union for Civil Liberties and Democratic Rights (PUCL & PUDR) came into existence. Soon after, it split into two organisations: PUCL and PUDR. The division is primarily ideological. The PUCL divides civil rights and democratic rights and generally does not take up the latter. It has a broad liberal perspective for social change in which the constitutional path is emphasised over mass struggles. The PUDR on the other hand believes that social, economic and political rights cannot be separated and they are needed to support the movements which undertake social and economic issues of the oppressed classes. The PUDR believes that the struggle for civil liberties is part and parcel of the entire struggle of the oppressed for a better life. Though the struggle for civil liberties is not a direct struggle for improving conditions of the masses and their rights, it supports their demands. They demand the enforcement of the rights enshrined in the constitution and ensuring implementation of the laws that are passed from time to time to help the poorer sections of society (Haragopal and Balagopal 1998). Nandita Haksar argues that 'the civil liberties movement does not offer an alternative political ideology. The sole purpose of the movement is to act as a watchdog monitoring the state. Other complex social, political, economic and cultural problems facing our country have to be solved through other political processes and movements' (1991: 5). Despite ideological differences both occasionally function together on certain issues like police repression, rights of prisoners, communalism, etc.

Human rights movements face a constant dilemma on the issue of violence practiced by the strugglers and activists on the one hand, and the violence of the state on the other. In 1948 the Civil Liberties Committee of West Bengal which protested against the repression of the state on the communist activists faced the question of its stand on the violence practised by the mass movement. Dutta observes,

Most of the communist activists, whose rights were under attack, were accused of practicing violence—and the liberals, who joined the CLC, had to answer the government's charge that they were condoning violence. On this issue, the CLC leaders took a stand that was, in fact, an extension of the ideal that the primary task of the movement was to oppose the authoritarian tendencies of the state. In defending the communists, they presumed that the state violence was more harmful to civil society than the violence against the state practiced by the revolutionaries (1998: 280-81).

Dutta further observes,

While the PUCL and some other organizations are yet to come up with a clear stand on the issue (of violence), the APDR, APCLC, PUDR and the CPDR have evolved a common viewpoint that state violence, along with the violence perpetrated by the dominant castes and classes should be the primary target of their campaigns, as this is the root of social violence in general (1998: 285).

Now in recent years since the late 1980s, all those who stand for democratic rights of the masses do not condone and defend the violence of the activists, particularly private violence practiced by so-called terrorist groups. The APCLC does not defend the arbitrary killing of civilians by the People's War Group (PWG) activists. But at the same time they are 'often faced with a crucial question, i.e., in the event of the state resorting to repression, do the people have a right to resist? What should be the form and modus operandi of such movements? Supposing the movements become lawless and violent, how should such movements be treated?' (Haragopal and Balagopal 1998: 366).

Different human rights groups have taken up a number of issues during the post-independence period. A.R. Desai (1986, 1990) has documented various instances of violation of human rights of the poor in the 1960s to 1980s. Bennett Rubin (1987) analyses the cases of human rights violations. They are: land and labour dispute, police lawlessness, suppression of free expression, urban housing, academic freedom, communal/regional conflict, treatment of women, etc. Nandita Haksar divides them into the following four categories:

1. Issues relating to rights of prisoners including undertrials, illegal detentions and prison conditions.
2. Violence by the police (later the armed forces) including torture in lock-ups, extra-judicial killings, illegal firing and death in false encounters.
3. Anti-people laws, including various disturbed areas laws, TADA/ MISA/POTO and laws affecting certain sections of the oppressed such as the Forest Act.
4. Oppression of the state on various unorganised sections of society such as bonded labourers, tribals, slum dwellers, landless labourers and of the religious minorities.

One of the common activities of many human rights groups is to document the violation of human rights in particular instances by the police, armed forces, other organs of the state and also the dominant castes/classes. Fact-finding teams consisting of five-six or more activists visit the place, record evidences from the victims, police authorities, media and other sections of society'. These reports are widely disseminated among the media and middle class. Democratic institutions like the Parliament, state assembly, electronic and printed media are widely used to highlight the cases of atrocities. Signature campaigns (including e-mails), petitions, write-ups in media as well as *dhamas*, public meetings and processions are also organised to pressurise the authorities for action against those who violated human rights. Public interest litigations are also used to seek judicial help for redressing the suffering of the victims (Ray 1986). However, they have limited use (Rubin 1987).

Under the pressures of the United Nations Organisation (UNO), Amnesty International and human rights groups within the country, the Indian parliament passed the Protection of Human Rights Bill in 1993 which became an Act in 1994. Under this Act, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) came into existence. The proposal of the formation

of the commission was not enthusiastically received by many human activists. Justice V.R. Krishna Iyer observed:

It is a reaction in panic, a shame that we should think in terms of a Commission on Human Rights only because Sweden or the United States Congress or some other country tells [us]. You are not respecting human rights. Therefore, have a Commission if you want help [financial aid] from us... [the NHRC is] an optical illusion, cosmetic coloration, opium for the people at home and brown sugar for countries abroad, a legislative camouflage, a verbal wonder which conceals more than it reveals. An ineffectual angel which beats its golden wings in the void in vain (quoted by Vijayakumar 2000: 216).

The commission receives complaints from victims and human rights groups. It undertakes investigations in these cases. The commission also initiates action on its own on the basis of newspaper reports. Under the Act some states—West Bengal, Himachal Pradesh, Assam, Madhya Pradesh, etc.—have also formed the state Human Rights Commissions. The national and state commissions have intervened in a large number of cases related to custodial deaths, encounter deaths, cases of rape, child labour, ill treatment to refugees, etc. By now we have a few published documents on the NHRC (Palai 1998; Vijayakumar 2000; Mohapatra 2001). Mohapatra believes that the NHRC has gained credibility and acceptance in the country and abroad. According to him it is not ‘a toothless tiger’ because most of its recommendations were accepted by the authorities. The number of complaints has gone up from 500 in 1993 to 70,000 every year. However, one cannot say that cases of violation of human rights have declined. These studies are based on secondary documents—annual reports of the NHRC. They are descriptive details of the powers and functions of the NHRC. They are not analytical. Sumanta Banerjee observes that in several cases the state governments find ways to defy the orders of the Commission. ‘In fact, ever since its birth in 1993 the NHRC had remained, mentally and physically, disabled child—its scope of both jurisdiction and intervention being strictly limited by the Indian government. There are inbuilt, well-contrived restrictions that render it infructuous’ (2003: 424).

The state has accepted its responsibility as directed by the Indian constitution and international declarations to safeguard human rights. But despite active national and international human rights groups, violations of human rights in one or another form continue unabated. The question arises, why are the human rights groups not able to mobilise a large number of people against the violation? Why are these groups by and large confined to a small group of the middle class?

ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENTS

The United Nations conference on Human Environment, Stockholm, 1972 paved the way for a number of studies and reports on the condition of the environment and its effect on the present and future generations. It expressed concern to protect and improve the environment for present and future generations. The development of ‘green politics’ or ‘eco-greens’ or the ‘green movement’ in Germany and North-America in the early 1980s boosted the formation of the ‘green network’ and the ‘green movement’ throughout the world, including India. A number of action groups, research institutes, documentation centres have been established to study and mobilise public opinion on environmental

issues (Spretnak and Capra 1985). By now the material on the environmental situation in general and in certain sectors such as air, land, forest, water, marine resources, etc. has proliferated in different forms from popular literature to 'scientific' studies. The reports on India's environment (five reports till 2003) published by the Centre for Science and Environment provide valuable material not only on various aspects of the environment but also people's resistance and struggles. The media also frequently reports on struggles of the people at the local level on the issues of land, water, marine resources, forest_products, etc. However, systematic analytical research-based monographs on environmental movements are few and far-between. More often than not the struggles of the people on the issues of their livelihood and access to forest and other natural resources are coined as 'environmental movements'. Historical studies on peasant movements, as seen in Chapter 2, mainly focus on the agrarian relationship between different classes of landowners. Studies on the struggles over forest resources are treated as tribal movements. Guha and Gadgil rightly observe, 'The agrarian history of British India has focused almost exclusively on social relations around land and conflicts over distribution of its produce, p the neglect of the ecological context of agriculture—for example, fishing, forests, grazing land and irrigation—and of state intervention in these spheres' (1989: 142).

Among the few important studies focusing on one of the important themes of the movements are those on the Chipko movement by Ramachandra Guha (1991) and Narmada Bachao Andolan (NBA) by Amita Baviskar (1995b). Both the authors, however, do not want their studies to be treated as mainly on environmental movements. Guha calls his study on peasant resistance focusing on the ecological dimension. It is a study on the ecological history of the region linking 'environmental changes with changing and competing human perceptions of the "uses" of nature' (3 989: xiv). The study is focused on the structures of dominance and the idioms of social protest. He analyses ecological changes and peasant resistance in the Himalayas in the wider comparative framework. Baviskar (1995b) studies the tribals of Madhya Pradesh focusing on their relationship with nature and their conflicts over state-sponsored 'development'. She interrogates the theoretical positions of the environmental movements which assert that the 'development' paradigm of the dominant elite followed by the Indian state is environmentally destructive. These movements claim that their critique 'is writ large in the actions of those marginalized by development—indigenous people who have, in the past, lived in harmony with nature, combining reverence for nature with sustainable management of resources. Because of their cultural ties with nature, indigenous people are exemplary stewards of the land' (ibid.: vii). She analyses the socio-cultural life of the tribals and their resistance to 'development'. She also probes into the question: 'Given the problematic nature of tribal resource use, how accurately are the lives of tribal people represented by intellectuals in the environmental movement who speak "on their behalf"? (ibid.: viii).

Guha and Gadgil provide a very valuable overview delineating conflict over forest produce, forest land and pasture land in different parts of colonial India. They discuss the resistance of hunter-gathers and shifting or *jhum* cultivators to the state intervention in settled cultivation. As discussed in Chapter 3, forest dwellers launched *satyagrahas* during the 1930s against the forest departments on the issue of encroachment of land. Similar confrontations increased during the post-independence period. Shiva and

Bandopadhyaya (1986, 1988) inform us that about three centuries back the Vishnois of Khejri village in Rajasthan sacrificed more than 200 lives in a passive resistance to the felling of green trees by the royal forces from Jodhpur. There were similar instances in which farmers and forest-dwelling communities resisted the destruction of forest resources. These evidences show a wide range of conflict between the authorities, particularly the forest department, and the communities residing in the forests. Shiva and Bandopadhyaya argue that 'these conflicts may not always take the form of people's ecology movements which hold the possibility of resolving these conflicts in just manner. They may also get distorted to take the form of other social conflicts like communal politics, which may not hold the possibility of resolution of the material conflicts' (1986: 85). Forest struggles may be divided into two phases— those that were a response to direct commercial exploitation, and those that were a response to commercial exploitation legitimised as 'scientific forestry'. The dominant strata use scientific forestry as a political weapon to legitimise the overexploitation of resources for profit. There is conflict between the profitability and survival imperatives. The latter is being challenged by the action groups supporting the poor by reinterpreting science for public interest. They observe that the Chipko movement became an ecology movement in 1977 'when environmental action of the Chipko was strengthened by public-interest science captured in the slogan,

'What do the forests bear?

Soil, water and pure Air'

created by the women of Henwal Valley in the Advani forest. They caricatured the partisan forestry science in the slogan,

'What do forests bear?

Resin, timber and profits' (1986: 88).

Baviskar analyses the development policy and performance of the Indian state. She finds that poor people's ability to control and gainfully use natural resources has declined in the last five decades of the development policies. She argues,

The model of development established since independence has fundamentally altered the way in which different social groups use and have access to natural resources. The changes wrought by the independent state have created conflicts over competing claims to the environment. These conflicts range from the incessant battle between the forest department and local communities, to the war raging between mechanized trawls and traditional fishing boats in India's coastal waters, to the controversy over the Dunkel Draft and rights to genetic resources. These claims are not merely for a greater share of the goods, but involve different ways of valuing and using nature-for profit or survival, or some combination of the two. They also involve different world views one driven by the desire to dominate and exploit nature and humanity, the other moved by empathy and respect, sometimes reverence, for the two (1995b: 32-33).

Broadly speaking, the theme of the man-nature relationship is central to environmental movements. Guha and Gadgil define the environmental movement 'as organized social activity consciously directed towards promoting sustainable use of natural resources, halting environmental degradation or bringing about environmental restoration' (1989: 455). In the west, environmental movements focus on consumption, productive use of

natural resources and conservation or protection of natural resources. In India the movements are based on use and alternative use of, as well as control over natural resources. Jayanta Bandopadhyaya and Vandana Shiva (1988) observe that ecology movements in independent India have increased against 'Predatory exploitation of natural resources to feed the process development' which is dominated by market forces. Such a process has threatened the survival of the poor and powerless. They argue that 'the ecology movements in India are the expression of protests against the destruction of the two vital economics of natural processes and survival from the anarchy of development based on market economy' (ibid.: 1230). These movements have unfolded the contradictions between 'three Indias and three economies: those revolving around the market, the household, and nature' (Shiva 1986; Sethi 1993).

Harsh Sethi (1993) classifies the struggles into three categories broadly around their ideological approach to the issue of environment. One, the struggles which operate in the domain of political economy, raise the issue of rights and distribution of resources. Second, the movements confined to a response to environmental problems and seeking solutions within existing socio-economic frameworks and technological innovations. They seek legal and policy-based shifts in the pattern of resource use. Third, some environmental movements reject the dominant development paradigm and 'seek to alter the very classification of both man and nature relationship'.

Guha and Gadgil classify the movements on the basis of the participants. According to them there are three categories of members: 'omnivores, ecosystem people and ecological refugees'. In this multiplicity of movements, one may discern seven major strands. Two of these are exclusively focused on nature conservation, one on aesthetic/recreational/scientific grounds and the others on the basis of cultural or religious traditions. A third strand confines itself to the technological perspective focusing on the efficiency of resource use. According to them the question of equity is the dominant concern of the environmental movements in present-day India. They are concerned with 'environmentalism' related to the poor. In terms of their ideology there are four strands within these movements. They are: 'crusading Gandhians, ecological Marxists, appropriate technologists, scientific conservation and wilderness enthusiasts'. Their ideological position on society, polity, economy are presented in tabular form in Table 10.1. According to the crusading Gandhians, eastern society, unlike the west, is primarily non-materialist (Guha 1998). They are against industrial growth brought by the colonial rule. They frequently cite Hindu scriptures as exemplifying a 'traditional' reverence for nature and lifeforms.

Table 10.1
Ideological Preferences of the Various Strands
of the Indian Environmental Movement

	Crusading Gandhians	Ecological Marxists	Appropriate Technologists	Scientific Conservationists	Wilderness Enthusiasts
Polity	Highly decentralised democracy, 'village republics'	Dictatorship of the proletariat	Decentralised democracy with Women, low caste participation	No firm view	No firm view
Decision making	Highly dispersed power of decision making	Centralised planning	Decentralised planning	Centralised planning	Strongly centralised administration
Society	No firm view	Economically equitable, but centralised political power	Economic, political equity	No firm view	No firm view
Economy	Mixed economy	State occupying 'commanding heights'	Mixed economy	Mixed economy	No firm view
Scale of economic enterprises	Predominantly small, village level	Predominantly large	Focus on small, complemented by large	No firm view	No firm view
Appetite for consumption	Limited through moral choice	Limited only on grounds of both equity and ecology	Unlimited	Unlimited	No firm view
Linkages to global economy	Weak	Weak	Weak	Weak	No firm view
Rate of technological change	Exceedingly low	High	Moderate	No firm view	No firm view
Commitment to military expenditure	Very weak	Strong	Weak	Weak	No firm view

Source: Madhav Gadgil and Ramachandra Guha. 1998. 'Towards a Perspective on Environmental Movements in India'. *The Indian Journal of Social Work*, 59(1), p. 469.

For ecological Marxists 'the creation of an economically just society is a logical precondition of social and ecological harmony. In their practical emphasis, socialist activists concentrate on organising the poor for collective action, working towards their larger goal of the redistribution of economic and political power' (ibid.: 466). The appropriate technologists" believe in synthesis between small and big, eastern and western traditions. Their emphasis is not so much on challenging the "system" as in demonstrating in practice a set of socio-technical alternatives to the centralizing and environmentally degrading technologies presently in operation' (ibid.: 467). Scientific conservationists are concerned with efficiency and management. Wilderness enthusiasts are concerned with protection of animals, forests, biological diversity, etc. They are naturalists. In practice, ideological positions overlap. Guha and Gadgil, however, do not examine how ecological Marxists or Gandhians deal with contradictions of economy and

society and reconcile with the changing reality in people's perceptions and the larger economy, Baviskar in her study on the Narmada Bachao Andolan observes,

The urgency of acting against the Project has necessitated that the Andolan compromise to some extent with its goal of charting a course as a movement creating an alternative political culture based on Gandhian principles.... Contradiction and fruitful conjunctions.... The struggle in the valley, despite its rich complexity, has been understood and appropriated in quite another way by the urban-based intelligentsia who are concerned with representing the Andolan as fitting into a theoretical critique of the paradigm of development. This has led to their ironing out the awkward parts of the movement—the presence of the Patidars, for instance, or the absence of ecological sustainability—in order to demonstrate that the movement constitutes a theoretically satisfying challenge to the developmental state, even though the reality in the valley is more ambiguous (1995a: 227).

Harsh Sethi divides the environmental struggles into five categories: (1) forest-based—forest policy, use of forest resources, etc.; (2) land use—industrialisation and loss of agriculture and indiscriminate popularisation of chemical inputs resulting in degradation of land and waterlogging, exploitation of mineral resources; (3) against big dams involving the problem of involuntary displacement of tribals and non-tribals residing in the upstream of the river, environmental degradation including destruction of forests; (4) against pollution created by industries; and (5) against overexploitation of marine resources. Andharia and Sengupta (1998) divide the contemporary environmental movements into five categories. They identify the issues around which these movements are launched. They also give a few examples of the groups involved in the struggles. They present their classification in a tabular form which is reproduced in Table 10.2. According to them environmental issues are related with the nature of development. And the development agenda in India is closely related to international political economy. Therefore, both cannot be studied separately. One can see from the table that environmental movements raise a variety of issues both in rural and urban areas related to forest, agriculture, industrial pollution, nuclear tests, tourism, etc. There are a number of non-government organisations (NGOs) who protest against environmental degradation and hazards. Besides pressurising the political authorities and dominant groups such as industrialists, planners, etc. they also campaign for creating awareness among people on the issues of environment. Organisations like the Kerala People's Science Movement (KPSM) try to demystify the science created by a dominant group of scientists. It advocates sustainable development. The KPSM organises *padyatras* to develop consciousness for a people-oriented environment. Several other groups also follow the same strategy. They disseminate literature related to pollution, land degradation, loss of natural resources, etc. Occasionally some groups resort to public interest litigation in the courts to stop certain government and private projects which adversely affect not only the health and other aspects of the people but also the livelihood of the marginalised groups.

In the struggles around the issues of forest resources and their use the main participants have been the tribals and other peasant communities depending on forest resources for their survival. They resist state intervention which impinges on their rights and control over resources. The forms of resistance and occasionally confrontation vary from outmigration, evasion of responsibilities, dacoities to murders. According to Guha, in the traditional system it is considered that it was the responsibility of the rulers to

protect the customary rights and interests of his subjects. When the ruler fails to do so or impinges on the rights of the people the resistance and revolt are 'traditionally sanctioned by custom'. In Tehri Garhwal the mechanism of social protest 'drew heavily on the indigenous tradition of resistance known as *dhandak*. Yet, for all its distinctiveness, the *dhandak* is a representative of a type of rebellion widely prevalent in pre-industrial and pre-capitalist monarchies' (ibid.: 89). When the traditional custom of resistance does not remain effective with the changed reality, people resort to confrontation. According to Guha, though the dominant ideology enables the elite to consolidate their position, it also, thanks to its ambiguity, allows some space for the people to maneuver for resistance. He argues,

The contradiction between the claims of the ruling ideology and the actual state of affairs in any society is, as Scott implies, a most frequent cause of resistance. The central argument of this work is that forms of domination structure forms of resistance. While protest normally arises in response to domination and attempts to resist it, most forms of domination actually enable resistance (ibid.: 98).

Table 10.2 Categories of the Environmental Movement by Issues and Examples

Table 10.2 Categories of the Environmental Movement by Issues and Examples		
Categories	Issues	Some Examples
Forest and land-based	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Right of access to forest resources. • Non-commercial use of natural resources. • Prevention of land degradation. • Social justice/human rights. 	Chipko, Appico, tribal movements all over the country (for example, Jharkhand/Bastar Belt).
Marine resources and fisheries, aquaculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ban on trawling, preventing commercialisation of shrimp and pawn culture. • Protection of marine resources. • Implementation of coastal zone regulations. 	National Fishermen's Forum Working for traditional fisherfolk on Kerala, Chilka Bachao Andolan, Orissa.
Industrial pollution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stricter pollution control measures, compensation. • Prevention of reckless expansion of industries without considering design, locational factors and livelihood issues of local population. 	Zahiro Gas Morcha in Bhopal; Ganga Mukti Andolan in Bihar; movement against Harihar Polyfibre factory in Karnataka; movement against pollution of Sone river by Gwalior Rayon factory led by Vidushak Karkhana Group in Shahdol district, MP; movements against poisoning of Cheliyar river in Kerala by Kerala Shastra Sahitya Parishad (KSSP).
Development projects:		
(a) Dams and irrigation projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protection of tropical forests. • Ecological balance. • Destructive development. • Rehabilitation and resettlement of the displaced. 	Silent Valley movement by KSSP; Narmada Bachao Andolan; movements against Tehri by Tehri Bandh Virodhi Samiti; the Koshi Gandhak Bodhghat and Bedthi; Bhopalpatnam and Ichampalli in the west; the Tunghbhadra, Malaprabha and Ghatprabha Schemes in the south: Koyna Project affected Committee
(b) Power projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ecological balance. • Rehabilitation and resettlement, high costs. 	Jan Andolan in Dabhol against Enron; Koe-Karo Jan Sanghatana in Bihar.
(c) Mining	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depletion of natural resources. 	Anti-mine project in Doon valley. Anti-Bauxite mine movement (Balco project) in Orissa.

(Table 10.2 contd.)

(Table 10.2 contd.)

Categories	Issues	Some Examples
(d) Industrial plants/ Railway projects/ Airport project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land degradation. • Ecological imbalance. • Realignment. • Rehabilitation and resettlement of the displaced. • Ecological balance. 	Protests and demands of Kakana Railway Realignment Action Committee. Citizen's group against Dupont Nylon 6.6. Goa. Amravati Bachao Abhyas against a large chemical complex.
(e) Military bases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ecological balance. • Rehabilitation. • Resettlement and safety. 	Anti-missiles test range in Baliapal and at Netrahat, Bihar.
Wild-life sanctuaries. National parks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Displacement, rehabilitation and resettlement, loss of livelihood. 	Ekjoot in Bhimashankar region of Maharashtra, Shramik Mukti Andolan in Sanjay Gandhi National Park, Bombay.
Tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Displacement, cultural changes, social ills. 	Himachal Bachao Andolan. Bailancho Saad. Goa.
Advocacy groups/ individual campaigns, citizen's Action Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy inputs, stricter measures for protected areas. • Clear policy on national park and wild-life sanctuaries, lobbying, research, training and documentation on wild life, conservation, education, community-based environmental management. Publications on environmental issues. 	Society for Clean Cities. Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS). Centre for Science and Environment (CSE), Delhi. Research, training and documentation organisations such as Bombay Environmental Action Group. Save Bombay Committee. Save Pune Citizens' Committee, etc.
Appropriate technology/ organic farming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International debates. • Sustainable development. Eco-friendly models of development. • Low cost, environmental-friendly housing and technology. 	Ralegaon Siddhi (Anna Hazare's village). SOPECOMM. Laurie Baker's Housing experiments. People's Science Institute, Dehradun.

Source: Janki Andharia and Chandan Sengupta. 1998. 'The Environmental Movement: Global Issues and the Indian Reality'. *The Indian Journal of Social Work*, 59 (1), pp. 429-31.

Baviskar also describes resistance of the tribals on 'development' projects. She finds that their resistance is not merely reactive, but through their participation in collective action they construct 'a creative alternative to the dominant and destructive system of development, based on their tradition of living sustainably with nature' (1995b: 47). In both the studies, community, assumed to be homogeneous, is the central category for analysis. Though Guha looks at the Himalayan peasant in the larger context of economy and polity, he does not examine the role of the 'outsiders' or linkages of the local movement with larger polity and environmentalists. Baviskar on the other hand analyses the nature of intervention of the NBA activists who address the issue of 'development'. She examines the structure of decision making within the Andolan and the role of the city-based activists of the Khedut Mazdoor Chetana Sangath Tilonia in the mobilisation of the local communities. They formed village committees and linked local struggles with the larger one of the NBA. 'Sangath tried to engage people's attention away from the divisive politics of the feud to create an imagined community of adivasis. This

transformation of consciousness has resulted in a distinct adivasi identity which propels Sangath politics' (I995b: 195). She finds that the struggles of the poor people are centred around the issue of their livelihood which is connected with natural resources.

The relationship between the local community and city-based activists is a contentious issue among the activists. Sethi argues:

When the issue is taken out of the local environs, it is the latter professionals who become the more crucial in the struggle. This shift not only raises vital questions of the ethics of the struggle, but can lead to move away from the central question, that of power. Whose rights are primary in such conflicts? Almost invariably, in any coalition between the affected people and their middle class spokespersons—with the shift in power locus—issues tend to get clouded. While the journalists look for good copy, lawyers for the vital legal points that they will argue in court, and film-makers for the audience, we can easily forget that a grim battle for survival is raking place at the ground' (1993: 139).

Besides the above studies several documents on the struggles of fishworkers (Murickan 1998; Mathew 2001) are available. There are also reports of the struggles of urban-based groups against pollution. These groups get involved in creating awareness among people, campaign and advocacy and occasionally mobilising directly affected victims of the urban environmental hazards in programmes like processions, *dhamas*, etc. They resort to legal measures through the judiciary to pressurise the state and industrialists. However, except by investigating journalists in newspapers, a systematic study of urban-based environmental movements is still not available. Though there is an assertion that the environmental movements are non-class and non-economic issue based^empirical data on social and economic background of the participants, their perception of the issue and their objectives for their involvement, etc. have not yet been studied.

11

CONCLUSIONS AND PUTUPJE RESEARCH

The foregoing pages, besides reviewing social science literature on the various social movements of the colonial period and the five decades of independent India, point out the gaps that currently exist in research. The same points need not be repeated here. We shall highlight some of the major issues related to the studies on social movements that need attention.

Thanks to its narrow concept of politics, political science in India, as well as in Europe and America, has, by and large, ignored studies on political movements. Collective action of people is often regarded as anomic, alienated and outside the polity. Political scientists are preoccupied with studies of the politics of the elite and politico-legal decision-making institutions. It is assumed that masses have no politics of their own, and that they are manipulated by the ruling classes. At most, they reflect on the decisions made by the political elite and opt for the choices offered by political parties and leaders. This is not only an oversimplification of the political situation but also, to an extent, erroneous and detrimental to the efforts of building a democratic egalitarian social order. Masses have their own politics. The politics of the elite and the politics of the masses are not generally identical. The politics of the masses decide the fate of governments and also of the state.

Our understanding of the politics of any society will remain superficial, irrespective of the theoretical perspective one holds, without understanding the politics of the masses. Collective direct action of the masses is one of the aspects of mass and democratic politics. Moreover, the study of mass movements is important in the present political context of globalisation, when political changes in India and elsewhere are rapid and frequent. Under the neo-liberal economy, the state is retreating on the one hand, and the oppressed classes have limited 'political opportunity'. Though they are more unorganised than the past, they continue to assert their identity as well as social and economic justice. Forms of struggle have changed not only from the pre-independence to the post-independence era but also during the last three decades.

Political sociology has developed in India recently. Political sociologists, sociologists and historians have studied social movements. The contribution of political activists and journalists to this literature is also significant. The literature is growing, and it has enhanced our knowledge of the 'structural' conditions that contribute to the rise of various movements. Scholars try to study movements when they occur. But more often than not, they are taken by surprise when another movement takes place. We have yet to make efforts in analysing the socio-economic and political situation obtaining at the point in time when a movement is likely to take place in a particular society. Very few efforts have been made to study ongoing movements. The study of the ongoing movements provides greater insights not only into the course of the movements but also the perception of the participants. Some scholars will have to be encouraged to undertake such studies.

There are quite a few theoretical studies on social movements. These studies are by European scholars based on their theoretical perspectives, and the experiences of their own societies. A few Indian political sociologists have attempted to evolve a theoretical and conceptual framework to study social movements. Conventional categories of the participants have been rightly questioned. Paradigms of looking at society and the perspectives on social change have been changing. New conceptual frameworks are emerging. This is a beginning, and we have a long way to go in that direction. First of all, rigorous debates need to be held regarding the role of social movements in civil society and democracy in general and the parliamentary democratic system in particular. The questions that have to be answered are: Does the political system have the potential of satisfying the aspirations of the oppressed masses? How does the political system meet the demands of those who launch a struggle? What strategies does the state adopt in coopting the agitators? To what extent are these strategies successful in maintaining the system? How do the different organs and actors of the state and civil society perceive the struggles of the masses? In what way does the state facilitate certain movements on particular issues by certain classes and/or communities? And which movements does the state try to crush? Second, which movements have greater potential than others in transforming the system, and bringing about revolutionary change in society for greater democratisation and justice for the deprived groups? How and in what ways do different emancipatory movements by women, tribals, dalits, the urban and rural poor, etc., contribute to the process of social transformation towards an egalitarian social order? What strategies should these movements adopt in achieving their immediate and long-term objectives? What are the constraints on the movements led by different classes/communities? What are the similarities and differences between the movements

launched by different classes/communities? To what extent do the participants share the objectives and theorisations of the leaders? The impact of different movements on political structures and civil society also needs to be studied. The concepts used in the studies on various movements have to be examined and defined with precision. These concepts include 'movement', 'social movement', 'political movement', 'agitation', 'protest', 'revolution'. Classifications or typologies of the movements offered by scholars need a thorough examination.

Why does man rebel? This question is, of course, central to the study of social movements, but the question is incomplete. It largely deals with the psychological dimension of the participants. This is not sufficient. The further questions—how and why do individuals join together for collective direct action to attain political objectives—also needs to be examined. The former question is largely confined to acts of individual revolts. It does not explain the nature and the reasons for collectivity and collective actions. It deals with riots, not with the purposeful movements launched for achieving social transformation. Similarly, the theory of relative deprivation is important, but by itself does not explain various types of social movements. We have to go beyond this theory. It explains only one type of movement and does not take into consideration revolutionary movements in which political parties and ideologies play an important part in articulating deprivation. Moreover, in a situation when political parties have lost their legitimacy for articulating problems faced by the people, how effective are they in the movements? Are the people, particularly the deprived, getting more and more fragmented on ethnic—religion, linguistic, caste, region, etc.—and economic strata/classes which result into numerous micro-grassroots struggles which have limited impact on the political system?

Political science has a long tradition of pursuing comparative analysis. This important approach enables us to discern uniformities and differences, determine variable and constant phenomena, and distinguish the unique from the common. The studies on social movements have ignored this approach. It is worthwhile to have a comparative analyses of movements of the same type from different regions or of different periods. A comparative study of the movements of different classes/sections is also worth pursuing. This is a step forward in the theoretical construct of socio-political movements in India. Most of the studies on movements enlighten us with regard to the issues which agitated the people and led them to launch movements. There is also a good deal of information about the chronology of the events that took place in the course of movements. This is important. But issues are not enough for collective action. The intervention of political parties and leadership in articulating issues, organising people and evolving strategies for struggles is important for sustained movements. Most of the studies do not adequately examine formal or informal organisational structure, its effectiveness in organising movements and communication channels linking various units of the movement and leaders and participants. Similarly, the roles of ideology, political parties and leadership in mobilising people from different classes/communities, have not been studied adequately.

Indian scholars have not paid enough attention to the methodological issues involved in the study of various movements. The methodological issues are of two types. One is related to data-collection techniques, and the other is related to the scale and levels of observations. Most of the studies on movements are sketchy and descriptive and are

based on data derived from secondary sources—mainly newspapers. Historians have largely used archival information. One has to be very careful in using information from these sources. Some historians have questioned the validity of the archival data which was written by government officers. Their personal bias colours the data. Similarly, newspaper reports have a tendency to highlight or underplay the scale of the mobilisation depending upon their sympathy or antipathy to any particular movement. It may be mentioned here that many of the grassroots movements are not reported by the newspapers. More often than not, newspapers publish reports based on official briefings, press notes prepared by the leaders of the movements, and hearsay. Only a few reporters visit the field when the movements are going on. Very few scholars have used the method of observation and in-depth interviews. Content analysis of the speeches of leaders or of the written material has rarely been attempted.

Political scientists and sociologists collect information with the help of structured and unstructured interviews of the participants in the movement. Such a method enables researchers not only to check and recheck ‘facts’, but also provides the perception of the participants towards issues and their role in the movement. The studies by political activists who participate in the movement enrich our understanding of the complexities of collective action. Recently, some historians have reconstructed the events and processes of the struggles through interviews with the surviving participants and through folklore. These are indeed important innovations. However, neither historians nor political scientists or sociologists have attempted to collect and analyse quantitative data on various dimensions of different types of movements over a period of time. Time series data is worth exploring to understand patterns of movements and political processes. Such exercises also enable us to know the cyclical nature, if any, of collective action in different regions.

One important methodological question is the scale of the movements. What numerical strength of participants in a movement enables us to call it a mass movement? This question has hardly been discussed by scholars. Many of the studies define the movement under study as a mass movement without giving a quantitative analysis. Even a rough estimate of the number of participants is not given. Since many of the studies are post-facto and are based on newspaper reports (and the term ‘movement’ is loosely used by journalists, political activists and the average person), there is a danger of over- or underestimating the strength of the movement. Of course, the extent of the participation should be looked into within the context of the time and social milieu in which the movement takes place. Similarly, the level of the movement in terms of the geographical area and sections of society involved is important for gauging the intensity and extent of the movement. This would also facilitate a comparative study of various movements.

Most of the movements discussed above lasted for a brief period, varying from a few days to a few years. Many of them disintegrated before attaining their objectives. However, a few movements took on the institutional form of pressure groups, unions or political parties. How and why do movements take on an institutional form? How effective are they in attaining their objectives after taking on institutional forms?

Though the literature on social movements is growing, the studies that have been published so far are uneven in their content. A large number of scholars have concentrated on peasant movements, whereas the studies on the movements launched by

the industrial working class or by women are relatively small in number. Except newspapers and activists' reports, there is no systematic study of the struggles launched by marginalised groups like agricultural labourers, fishermen, forest workers. Even the studies on peasant movements are uneven in their content. Certain regions are over-studied, whereas the peasant movements in Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and Karnataka have not been studied adequately. Similarly, there are very few studies on tribal movements in the northeast frontier states, Orissa, Rajasthan and Gujarat.

The number of struggles launched by the poor and oppressed sections of society has increased during the last three decades. In-depth reports on some of the movements are found in certain scholarly journals like the *Economic and Political Weekly* and other irregular journals of various political groups. But systematic studies of these movements by scholars working in universities and research institutes are few. Political sociologists and other social scientists need to pay attention to this area. Along with detailed studies of some of the contemporary movements, ICSSR should sponsor documentation work by concerned scholars for preparing a directory of the movements in each state during the last ten years. This would provide important source material to political sociologists and future historians.

End