Swaraj and Sweepers: The JP Movement

and the

Future of Transformational Politics

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CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

The thesis examines the question of how democracy might be deepened, particular so that it becomes more inclusive of currently marginalised groups and can thus meet their needs more fully. It focuses on India, drawing on interviews and visits to organisations, as well as on secondary sources, but it also utilises empirical and theoretical material from outside India, and it is suggested that the conclusions of the thesis may be applicable beyond India. From the 1960s, across the world, the 'new politics' - the politics of protest, local level action, new questions, new participants and specific-issue campaigns - has also sought to deepen democracy. It is argued, however, that while this kind of politics is a necessary component of effective democracy, it is not in itself sufficient to achieve the transformational goals to which it aspires. In rejecting or underemphasising the possibility of achieving change through more conventional political institutions, especially through governments and political parties, the new politics risks political ineffectiveness, for reasons that are identified in the thesis. It is argued that what is required is a combination of the old and new politics, and a particular model that embodies this is advanced. Major political change - such as the attainment of independence or formal democracy or the deepening of democracy - has often been achieved through broad alliances of organisations, termed 'aggregated civil bases',

in the thesis, and examples of these are cited. The thesis focuses on the scope for change through what are termed 'democratic-deepening aggregated civil bases' - alliances of organisations that come to an electoral arrangement with a party or coalition willing to implement a particular political program in exchange for electoral support. Examples of these are identified - including the link between trade union movements and social democratic parties in many Western countries, and some emerging examples in the Third World - but the thesis concentrates on India's JP Movement in the 1970s.

This movement, named after its leader, Jayaprakash (or JP) Narayan, challenged the mainstream politics of the time, and in particular Congress Party governments nationally and in the state of Bihar. Though it managed, indirectly, to bring these governments down and replace them with governments of the newly created Janata Party, these changes were not seen to generate significant change. Consequently, for many in the movement their faith in mainstream politics was even further reduced by this experience. However, an analysis of why the movement failed to meet its objectives reveals specific flaws in its composition, ideological foundations, leadership, organisation and strategies. On the basis of this analysis the thesis identifies a set of requirements for a democratic-deepening aggregated civil base to be effective: it needs to mobilise sufficiently, particularly among the marginalised; it must reconcile interest and ideological differences among

constituent organisations and sectors, and overcome organisational problems that may obstruct alliance-building; and accountability mechanisms need to be incorporated into any arrangement with a party or coalition.

I declare that this thesis is my own work and has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, in respect of any other academic work.

Robert Salter

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While I have declared that this thesis is ultimately my own work, it would not, of course, have been possible had I not been able to draw on the assistance and the knowledge of a large number of people. In this regard I would first like to thank Julie Stephens and Michael Hamel-Green, my supervisors at different times, for their balanced and constructive appraisals of my work as it progressed, their many useful suggestions, and their general support and patience. As well, I am very grateful to the following people: Robin Jeffrey, particularly for suggesting that I focus on the JP Movement, and for his comments on my ideas in the early stages; Simon Combe, for being so generous with his time, his resources and his hospitality, and for giving me a greater understanding of non-party political action in India; Sue Blackburn, for her early guidance and suggestions; Kamal Malhotra and Bruce Eady from Community Aid Abroad in Melbourne, and Augustine Ulatil from CAA in India, for giving me access to organisations and individuals in India, and for sharing their knowledge of the country; Allan and Wendy Scarfe for their assistance and hospitality, and for their stories about JP, with whom they had a long-time friendship; and Helen Hill, Tom Weber, Ron Adams, Sue Chaplin, Meg Gurry, Connie Lenneberg, Russell Wright and Les Terry for their comments, suggestions and information.

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I have footnoted references. For second and subsequent references to a source already cited in a chapter I have used abbreviated references, as recommended in the *Style Manual for Authors, Editors and Printers* (5th edn, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1994, p 169). This involves providing the minimum information necessary to distinguish the source from all others cited in the thesis (including those by the same author). Full reference details can be obtained by referring to the first citation in the chapter or to the bibliography at the end of the thesis.

I have followed a similar procedure with regard to material sourced from interviews. For the first citation of an interviewee in each chapter I include the interviewee's name and the date of the interview, while subsequent citations include the name only. Biographical information about the interviewees, as well as the dates and locations of interviews, is contained in Appendix A.

With regard to references in the text to Indian public figures, I have generally referred to them in the way that they are commonly referred to in India. Thus, Jayaprakash Narayan is 'JP', Vinoba Bhave is 'Vinoba', Mohandas K. Gandhi is 'Gandhi', and Indira Gandhi's name is used in full.

CHAPTER ONE:INTRODUCTION

On 5th June, 1974, at the Gandhi Maidan in Patna, capital of the Indian state of Bihar, the veteran Indian political leader, Jayaprakash Narayan, addressed a crowd of half a million to one million people, perhaps the largest political rally in India since Independence. In his two-hour speech, the ailing, seventy-one year old Narayan (or JP, as he was popularly known) called for "total revolution", the transformation of Indian society along essentially Gandhian lines. Prior to the rally, those present had marched through the streets of Patna in the intense heat of an Indian summer, and had stopped en route at the State Parliament to present the Governor with a petition of ten million signatures calling for the dissolution of the Bihar Assembly. The events of 5th June were a part of what was known as the 'JP Movement', a movement that started as a student agitation against certain policies of the Bihar Government, and in fifteen months - under the leadership of Jayaprakash Narayan - grew into a national force that changed Indian politics in a number of important ways. However, to a significant degree its objectives were not achieved - either during this period or in the years that followed.

The JP Movement was a coalition of organisations and individuals with very diverse beliefs, preoccupations, life circumstances and objectives, and so one has to be careful

when making generalisations about Movement participants.
Nevertheless it can be said that central to the concerns of
Jayaprakash Narayan and many other participants was the issue
of making Indian democracy work better, particularly so that
it might more fully meet the needs of the vast numbers of poor
and marginalised Indians who were ill-served by the status
quo. As JP expressed it at the 5th June rally:

The people are groaning under the hardships they have had to undergo during these twenty-eight years of
    Swaraj [self-rule]. There is hunger. There are high prices and corruption. One cannot get
    anything done without paying a bribe...Even the educational institutions are becoming corrupt.
    The future of millions of youth is uncertain and dark...The number of the unemployed among the
    poor and the uneducated is increasing day by day. Poverty has continued to increase in the last
    few years in spite of vociferous repetitions of the slogan "Abolish Poverty" [Prime Minister
    Indira Gandhi's slogan during the previous election campaign]. Various laws have been
    legislated, including the laws imposing [a] ceiling on land-holdings for eradicating
    landlessness, etc. But today there are more landless agricultural workers than ever before. The
    land has been snatched away from poor farmers.

...the villages...are already divided into the exploiter and the exploited, the rich and the poor. The
    main task is not simply one of doing away with these differences in a superficial manner but of
    establishing social and economic equality.[1]

The thesis engages with this question of how democracy can
function better, particularly in order to meet more adequately
the needs of the poorest and most marginalised sectors of
society. While it addresses these issues principally in the
Indian context, in later chapters it draws lessons from, and
suggests lessons for, regions of the globe beyond India. The
JP Movement is the subject of the central case study of the
thesis, but it also draws widely on other empirical and
theoretical material in support of the arguments advanced.

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[1]Jayaprakash Narayan, Total Revolution, Sarva Seva Sangh Prakashan, Varanasi, 1992, pp 2-3.

Primary research on the JP Movement was undertaken - in the form of interviews with participants and observers - but it was not intended that information emanating from this research would constitute the thesis's main contribution. The Movement is already well documented,[2] and the intention has been rather to draw upon a variety of sources - including interviews, secondary sources dealing with the JP Movement or with other movements or forms of social action, and theoretical literature - in order to reconceptualise some key political issues. It is hoped that from this will emerge some useful insights and some possible directions for future dialogue, research and action, relating to how citizens - particularly those who are currently marginalised - can participate more fully in democratic governance and thus succeed in having more of their needs met.

OLD AND NEW POLITICS

Since the 1960s there has been a worldwide questioning and critiquing of formal democratic systems by both practitioners and theorists.[3] The institutions of government, parliament and

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[2]See, for example: R K Barik, <u>Politics of the JP Movement</u>, Radiant, New Delhi, 1977; Sebasti Raj, <u>Total Revolution: The Final Phase of Jayaprakash Narayan's Political Philosophy</u>, Satya Nilayam, Madras, 1986; Ghanshyam Shah, <u>Protest Movements in Two Indian States: A Study of the Gujarat and Bihar Movements</u>, Ajanta, Delhi, 1977; Geoffrey Ostergaard, <u>Nonviolent Revolution in India</u>, JP Amrit Kosh/Sevagram, New Delhi, 1985; Adi H Doctor, <u>JP's Total Revolution: An Exercise in Utopia</u>, Seema, Delhi, 1987; and Bimal Prasad, <u>Gandhi, Nehru and JP: Studies in Leadership</u>, Chanakya, Delhi, 1984.

[3]In discussing existing political systems in this thesis, I use the terms 'democracy' and 'democratic system' (with or without the preceding word 'formal') in a fairly neutral way to describe systems that are popularly regarded as democratic. However, there are degrees of democracy, and the use of this term should not be taken to imply that I believe the systems so described could not be any more

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party, and the mechanisms through which citizens have conventionally sought to exercise their democratic rights (such as the ballot box, approaches to parliamentary representatives, party membership, interest groups utilising 'proper channels', and trade union action) have all been claimed to be wanting in important respects. As will be seen in this thesis, such institutions have been seen by many to be ineffective, unrepresentative or unjust. In their place new movements and processes for political participation have emerged, often involving less rigid, more participatory forms of organisation and a focus on specific issue areas, on the local level and on mass-based direct action. 'New social movements', 'community development', 'social action' and 'non-party political formations' are just some of the terms that have been used to describe these processes and the groups engaging in them, and literature describing and analysing these will be considered in Chapter Two. But while these new forms of political action have often been articulated in the language of transformation, they have - at the same time and somewhat paradoxically - displayed a loss of faith in the ability of societies to implement large scale change. 'Grand projects' such as Marxism, social democracy and 'development' have tended to be rejected in favour of an approach to change that features a multitude of specific-issue, small-scale or localised actions, strategies and struggles, only sometimes

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democratic. In fact, this is far from the case.

co-ordinated with one another, and often simply taking the form of resistance to the destructive and oppressive actions of governments and other large institutions.[4]

A question that is at the heart of this difference between the old and the new models of politics is this: What, if any, are the roles of overarching, 'aggregating' political institutions - namely, parties and governments - in advancing the wellbeing of citizens? Are they moribund institutions that must simply be pressured, resisted or ignored by more democratic and dynamic political formations, perhaps until a time in the future when they wither away or can be dispensed with, or are they unavoidable, essential components of democracy? If the latter is the case, we can then ask a further question as to whether they can become more democratic and effective, and if so, how this can occur.

These two forms of politics are often presented as mutually exclusive alternatives, but this need not be the case, and this thesis argues that each is the poorer without the other. This is not just a matter of saying that they should both be practised - this would not contribute anything new to the debate - but rather that they can be combined in ways that overcome the weaknesses that each has on its own, thereby

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[4]It should be acknowledged, however, that new social movements are frequently concerned with something much broader than political change alone (as the word 'political' is conventionally understood). They often have a broader cultural agenda, a point considered further in Chapter Two.

generating more effective and democratic forms of political action and governance overall. It is contended in this thesis that specific-issue and localised political action is necessary but not sufficient to achieve the kinds of transformation required to make a significant difference to the lives of those who are currently poor and marginalised. What is also required is change in the institutions of the party and, through this, of government. The thesis argues the case for achieving such change through a new particular kind of relationship between civil organisations[5] and parties.

AGGREGATED CIVIL BASES

Central to the thesis argument is the notion of what I call an 'aggregated civil base' (or 'ACB', for short). This is an alliance of civil organisations that aggregates the views and interests of members of these organisations in order to advance a general political agenda. By this I mean that it goes beyond specific issue areas, covers matters of political structure and process as well as policy, and concerns all the people within a given political jurisdiction. This is not just a hypothetical idea; political formations matching this definition already exist or have existed - for example,

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[5]By civil organisations I mean all organisations that are not commercial or governmental, or political parties. I have chosen this term, firstly, because of the limitations of alternative terms - for example, 'non-government organisation' (or 'NGO') and 'voluntary agency' have restricted meanings in the Indian context, as will be explained shortly, and the term 'community organisation' has problems because of certain connotations of the word 'community', discussed in Chapter Two - and secondly because it is consistent with the use of the word 'civil' in 'civil society'.

movements campaigning for independence or formal democracy. Another kind of ACB is what I refer to in the thesis as a 'democratic-deepening' ACB - one that functions in an existing democratic system to strengthen democratic processes and to ensure that poor and marginalised sectors of society can participate in the political system more fully and effectively. (These three kinds of ACBs - independence, formal democracy and democratic-deepening - are explored much more fully in Chapter 6.) One example of a democratic-deepening ACB would be a trade union movement in those Western countries in which such movements have formed links with Social Democratic or Labour parties in pursuit of certain policy agendas, although the efficacy of this model is diminishing for reasons that will be considered in the thesis. Other examples of emerging democratic-deepening ACBs from Latin America and the Philippines will also be noted. But the democratic-deepening ACB that this thesis will examine in greatest depth is the JP Movement itself.

It is through the relationship between democratic-deepening ACBs and political parties or coalitions of parties that there is scope for achieving a markedly more democratic and inclusive society. This would involve an ACB in reaching agreement among its constituent groups on a common platform of policies (which may also cover political processes and structures) and then seeking to win support for this platform from a party or coalition, who in turn stand to win electoral

support from members of constituent organisations within the ACB if an agreement can be reached. But this is not a simple or easy process, and three major components of it, that are not entirely sequential, are identified as follows, on the basis of the findings of this study.

Firstly, there must be a process of mobilising a critical mass of supporters, which normally involves an awareness-raising process that challenges hegemonic ideas underpinning the dominance of existing elites and structures, and inculcates skills of social organisation. This is very often routinely carried out by civil organisations in the course of their normal work, but the coverage that different civil organisations have over populations of potential supporters of a democratic-deepening ACB may be quite haphazard and unco-ordinated, and thus be insufficient to attain a critical mass of support for proposed political change, so there may be a need for substantial additional mobilisation. It is argued in the thesis that, in the processes of mobilisation, the ideological and other differences between civil organisations do not constitute the problem that they might at first seem to be, because there is often a core of common processes and beliefs in these organisations' approaches to mobilisation.

Secondly, there is the process of forming an ACB, by bringing together diverse kinds of civil organisations and arriving at a common platform, and this presents major - but, I believe,

not insurmountable - challenges of a number of kinds: organisational, logistical, ideological, and those relating to the different interests of members of the civil organisations involved. It should be noted that the sort of organisations I include under the title of civil organisations can be very diverse indeed. In the Indian context, for example, they might include voluntary organisations, unions, associations of self-employed people such as farmers, fisherfolk, artisans and small traders, women's organisations or those representing marginalised caste or ethnic groups, religious organisations, groups dealing with the environment, health, housing, employment, legal rights or other specific-issue areas, and groups providing other civil organisations with services such as publishing, education, legal representation and various kinds of advice. I argue that, to ensure that a democratic-deepening ACB particularly involves and serves the interests of the most marginalised sectors of society, it should start with these sectors and build outward from there as necessary in what I term an 'antodaya alliance'.[6]

Thirdly, there are the tasks of negotiating with parties or coalitions,[7] of renegotiating at periodic intervals (usually prior to elections), and of building in processes to ensure

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[6]*Antodaya* was a term used by Gandhi meaning 'the welfare of the last man' (or, as I shall interpret it, 'person'). He opposed any policy or measure that left the poorest worse off.

[7]Where heads of government are directly elected, negotiations can also be with non-party candidates for these positions, but for simplicity's sake I shall mainly talk in terms of parties or coalitions.

that the party or coalition is continuously held accountable for its performance subsequent to an agreement.

It is argued in the thesis that through this arrangement - whereby a democratic-deepening aggregated civil base gives conditional electoral support to a party or coalition that is prepared to advance the agenda of the ACB - there is reason to believe that democracy can be enhanced and made more inclusive of those sectors of society that tend to be marginalised within existing political systems. This represents a creative blend of what I have referred to as the old and the new politics, drawing on the new values, actions, structures and processes of the sorts of organisations and movements that have emerged in the last few decades, while at the same time making use of institutional mechanisms through which different interests and views can be aggregated and converted into public policies and laws.

THE CLAIMS OF THE THESIS

It is important to make clear, however, what this thesis is and is not claiming. First, it is not attempting to prove that the arrangement described above would always succeed. Because democratic-deepening ACBs have not yet become established and proven themselves - with the exception of union movements and their arrangements with social democratic parties (though the limitations of this type of ACB are increasing) - it is not

possible to present conclusive evidence of their efficacy. Rather, the thesis is attempting to challenge two beliefs or assumptions often held by proponents of the new politics. These are, first, that the institutions of government and party are no longer effective or worth trying to reform and, second, that the politics of the future is the politics of resistance and mass action, of specific issues or locally focused activity, rather than the politics of seeking to achieve broad and integrated changes to public policy. With regard to the first of these beliefs, the thesis presents possible solutions for the future, based on evidence from social action and a variety of theoretical insights, in support of its claim that it is unwarranted to dismiss conventional political institutions. Those who wish to do so would need to establish that the possibilities cited could not be implemented or would not bring about improvements. With regard to the second of these beliefs, the thesis seeks to point out the weaknesses and limitations of relying on the approaches of the new politics alone – particularly on specific-issue campaigning. It recognises that such campaigns are an essential part of effective political action, but contends that they are a part only.

A second point to be made about the arguments that the thesis is advancing relates to its relevance inside and outside India. By far the greater part of the empirical material that it draws upon is from India - principally relating, first, to

the JP Movement and the Janata Party Government that followed it, and second, to specific-issue campaigning and related kinds of politics in India, although in Chapter Six it does draw on a range of empirical material from outside India. It is recognised that there are significant differences between countries of the South and those of the North, and between India and other Southern countries, but it also contends that there are similarities. Accordingly, the conclusions from the thesis are most pertinent to India, but it is claimed that they might also be usefully considered in relation to the situation elsewhere, including in Northern countries. In broad terms, then, the thesis is intended to be a contribution to discourses about future social action, wherever they might occur.

Thirdly, it should be noted that the thesis is only considering (a) movements for change that are first and foremost in the interests of the poor and marginalised (although for strategic reasons these may also need to be in the interests of a larger proportion of the population) and (b) movements that are essentially non-violent, as there is much evidence to suggest that the costs and end results of violent movements generally do not give cause for faith in this approach to social change.[8]

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[8]For arguments in support of this position see, for example, Nigel Young, "Nonviolence and Social Change", and April Carter, "Nonviolence as a Strategy for Change", both in Paul Smoker, Ruth Davies & Barbara Munske (eds), A Reader in Peace Studies, Pergamon, Elmsford, N. Y., 1990, pp 217-220 and 210-216 respectively.

WHY THE STUDY WAS BASED IN INDIA

I chose to base the study in India for a number of reasons. Firstly, my interest in the thesis topic grew out of a concern for poverty in the Third World, and so I wanted to focus on a country where poverty is an unambiguously large problem. India is a country of about a billion people, a very large proportion of whom can be said to live in poverty. The United Nations Development Programme has ranked India 134th out of 174 countries in its Human Development Index listing.[9] In particular, poverty affects large proportions of labourers (especially agricultural labourers), tenant farmers, artisans, fisherfolk and very small landholders, as well, of course, as the unemployed and underemployed, and it is concentrated among 'dalits', 'OBCs' and 'adivasis',[10] who make up the great bulk

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[9]United Nations Development Programme, Human Development Report 1995, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1995, p 20.

[10]A dalit (which literally means 'oppressed') is a person identified within the caste system as 'untouchable'. Though the practice of treating people as untouchable has been banned in law, it is still very much a social reality, and in recognition of this such people are officially designated as being from 'scheduled castes' (hence, they are often referred to as 'SCs') and are thus entitled to certain compensatory benefits, programs and reserved places in universities, government employment and electoral bodies (though despite this they still experience much discrimination at the hands of officialdom as well as in the wider society). Gandhi coined the term 'harijans' (meaning 'children of God') to describe them, but this term is now considered patronising by many dalits, and so the terms 'dalit' will generally be used in this thesis. They make up about fifteen percent of the population. 'OBC' is short for 'other backward classes' although it actually refers to other backward castes - other, that is, than dalits - and OBCs comprise a quarter of the population. (Interestingly, the terms 'backward' and 'forward', used in Indian English to describe caste position, do not appear to have the pejorative connotations that they have elsewhere.) Adivasis (meaning 'tribal people') are those ethnic groups that preceded the waves of Dravidian and Aryan migration in India. Like dalits, they sit at the bottom of the socio-economic scale and experience much discrimination, and they are officially designated as 'scheduled tribes' (and are thus often called 'STs') and are entitled to the same sort of benefits and reserved places as are dalits. They comprise about seven percent of the population, and mostly live in their own communities in more hilly, forested or arid parts of the country.

of people in the above occupational categories, and among women. According to T.K. Oommen, not only do the majority of Indians live below the poverty line, but of the twenty-two percent of the population who are either dalits or adivasis, only a very small proportion of them have experienced upward mobility.[11]

Secondly, I chose India because since Independence it has had a formal democratic system, and I was more concerned to study social action aimed at deepening democracy and making it more inclusive of marginalised groups than to examine efforts to establish the formal structures and processes of democracy. In this respect India is unlike many Third World countries that have experienced long periods of military or one-party rule. India has had a continuous multi-party parliamentary system since it won independence from Britain in 1947, although it must be said that democracy was severely constrained during the twenty-two months of what was known as the Emergency. Though in many respects India can be proud of its democracy, in other ways it is seriously flawed. Politics has been dominated by 'forward' castes and the well-off, and at the local level party bosses and landowners (often the same people) have enormous power, although 'backward' castes have lately become more politically assertive. Corruption is extensive in every area of politics and the public service.

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[11]T K Oommen, <u>Protest and Change: Studies in Social Movements</u>, Sage, New Delhi, 1990, p 254.

Many laws - such as land reform laws - are frequently not implemented, and the poor and marginalised often have great trouble accessing the resources and services to which they are formally entitled. If they try to assert their rights they are often subjected to threats and violence at the hands of police or thugs employed by local powerholders. Little redress can be obtained through the courts, as these too are frequently corrupt and have a great backlog of cases. As well, for many years Indian politics was dominated by one party, the Congress Party, which grew out of the Indian National Congress - the independence movement - and has ruled nationally for forty-four of the fifty-three years between Independence and 2000, as well as occupying a dominant position at state government level in most states. Congress can now be successfully challenged by other parties nationally and in all states, but it can be argued that India is little better served by its parties today than it was in the days of Congress dominance.

Thirdly, India was selected because it has a very active civil society, with a huge number and variety of organisations representing particular ethnic groups, castes, religions, language groups, genders and occupations. There are groups concerned with different issue areas, small village groups and large national associations, organisations that are formal and informal, broadly and specifically focused, political and non-political, radical and mainstream, conservative and progressive. Of particular relevance to this thesis are those

that claim to be advancing the interests of the marginalised.
The focus of these groups ranges from charity to development
work to political advocacy and campaigning. Some are
democratic, membership-based organisations, while others have
grown up around a key figure or small group without any
democratic structure.

It is worth noting at this point that non-government
organisations, or NGOs, as the term is used in India,
constitute only one section of this range of organisations
that claim to serve marginalised communities. The typical NGO
(or voluntary agencies, as they are often called) has grown up
around one leader or a small group of people and does not have
formal membership or a democratic structure - although it may
spawn democratic groups or associations. It engages in general
development work in one (usually rural) locality, and receives
funds from the government or foreign sources. It may engage in
some sort of political advocacy or campaigning in the
interests of those for whom it is working. Though many work
genuinely in the interests of the poor, many others are
claimed to be corrupt and to be chiefly serving the material
or political interests of their leaders. Other organisations
working in the interests of the marginalised - for example,
trade unions, farmers' organisations, women's groups,
'people's organisations', caste- or ethnicity-based groups or
those concerned with particular issue areas - frequently do
not identify themselves as NGOs and often take issue with the

structures, funding sources and motivations of NGOs.

The fourth reason why India was selected was that in India there is extremely lively debate, through the written and spoken word, about social questions generally, including the issue of what civil organisations are and should be doing. Major ideological positions - such as Marxism, socialism, neoliberalism, feminism, environmentalism, liberation theology, religious fundamentalism, Gandhianism and other local perspectives - are all represented among civil organisations and social analysts. As an added advantage much of this debate in conducted in English, because, although it is only spoken or written by a tiny minority of Indians overall, many social activists and commentators speak English and there is much literature in the language.

WHY A FOCUS ON THE JP MOVEMENT IS USEFUL

It was through an analysis of one attempt in India to bring about radical change in the interests of the marginalised - namely, the JP Movement - that the notion of an aggregated civil base (and more particularly, the notion of a democratic-deepening ACB) began to emerge as a way of marrying the strengths and overcoming the weaknesses of what I have termed the old and the new politics. There are a number of ways in

which focusing on the JP Movement - rather than other movements in India and worldwide - offers important advantages, as follows.

The Movement was carried out partly in the name of marginalised sectors of Indian society (although, as this study will show, it was not initiated by the marginalised and they had very little power in it). It was an aggregated movement that claimed to represent and advance the interests of Indian society generally by asserting a general critique of government and presenting an alternative and, as already stated, it consisted of a broad range of groups and individuals. It is arguably the largest and most widely supported movement that India has seen since Independence.

It represented the first major challenge to the most important political institution of independent India, the Congress Party, and set in train a series of events that ended Congress's monopoly of power at Central Government level, and its near-monopoly at State Government level, creating a situation where, today, Congress is just one of three major parties or blocs of parties nationally, and party competition has increased at the state level as well. It also had a key influence on the evolution and politicisation of various civil organisations, and in particular had an impact on Gandhians and Gandhian organisations. In addition, it was responsible for some increase in the involvement of lower castes in active

political life, though not nearly to the extent needed to make a significant difference. In terms of changes to public policy, it was indirectly responsible for the later vitalisation of local democratic institutions, and for an increase in reserved places for marginalised groups in education, employment and electoral office.

Despite all of the above, many judge the JP Movement to have been a failure, both in its own terms and in addressing the issues that beset the majority of Indians, and this view seems to have some validity. So it is useful to consider the reasons for the Movement's weaknesses, and this the thesis does by examining its composition, leadership, organisation, goals and strategies. The thesis also examines the conclusions that participants and observers drew from the outcomes of the Movement - outcomes that included the existence and record of the Janata Party Government (1977-1979). Particular attention is given to conclusions people reached about the shortcomings of parties and governments. The thesis considers whether these are inherent to such institutions, and if not, how an ACB might work to prevent their occurrence.

In the realm of ideas, the JP Movement incorporated a range of other movements and ideologies, extending from socialism to Hindu communalism,[12] and it was led by a man who had himself

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[12]In other words, Hindu fundamentalism, a belief that the tenets of Hinduism should be reflected in laws and public policy (which of course leads to discrimination against non-Hindus). However, the word 'communalism' is used in India and for this reason I shall use this term.

belonged to several movements and subscribed to several ideologies during his long and active career in public life. It had elements that were both transformational and reformist, on the one hand presenting a radical challenge to the status quo (namely, to parliamentary democracy, to Western-style industrial development with a large degree of state control, and to a highly unequal and caste-ridden society), while on the other hand seeking to reform this system. It sought to represent very diverse interests and sectors of society. In all these respects, it embodied challenges and tensions present in the politics of many nations today. For example, many Western nations are now ethnically more diverse, no longer have such a homogeneous employee class, and are experiencing a period of confusion, questioning and division about the basic directions of their societies. Thus, in some respects, the issues the JP Movement addressed in the 1970s are issues that are even more pertinent in the world today.

Some two decades have elapsed since the Movement occurred, and this allows us to assess its consequences and effects with the benefit of historical distance. At the same time, participants in the movement are still accessible, and in many cases still active in public life, and the Movement is reasonably well documented. For these reasons it is a feasible research project. Moreover, there has been relatively little attempt to date to analyse the Movement in the context of political or social action theory, as most literature on the Movement

consists of historical accounts, analyses of the socio-economic backgrounds of participants, or studies of JP's philosophy and leadership of the Movement, written by participants, journalists and historians.

THE METHODOLOGY OF THE RESEARCH

The primary material for the thesis was obtained from three field visits to India, and to a lesser extent from correspondence with people in India. The visits were as follows:

The **first** lasted four weeks during December 1993 and January 1994 (just prior to officially commencing work on my thesis at VUT). This was more in the nature of an orientation visit - it was actually a Community Aid Abroad Study Tour - and consisted of short stays with three Indian rural organisations to which CAA donates funds, together with some time spent in Delhi conducting my own interviews. The organisations visited were all involved in development or advocacy work with marginalised communities, and the people interviewed in Delhi had similar concerns and backgrounds. (These are listed in Appendix A, as are the contacts made during the subsequent trips and through correspondence.)

The **second** field visit, for six weeks, was in February-March 1995, and consisted of visits (ranging in duration from an

hour to three days) to nineteen organisations also working with marginalised communities or having some interest in this field. At this stage I had not decided to study the JP Movement, and my research entailed examining these organisations' involvement in advocacy for political change on behalf of their constituents, in the context of their broader work. Both the first and second visits yielded relevant information on a range of subjects, including civil organisations, specific-issue campaigning and problems and issues faced by the marginalised. Notes were taken of all interviews during these visits, except for one interview that was taped.

The **third** visit, which focused on the JP Movement, was also for six weeks, in November-December, 1995. It involved 54 in-person interviews and one phone interview, of which 47 were with people who had been involved in the JP Movement (in a small number of cases only peripherally), while the remaining seven interview subjects had substantial knowledge of the Movement or of subsequent political developments in India. All the interviews except six were taped. As well, in 1996 I received replies from nine people to whom I had sent an interview schedule, of whom four had some involvement in the Movement and the other five had significant knowledge of it. Interviews were semi-structured and based on an interview schedule reproduced in Appendix B.

As well as the information gained on (and after) these three visits from in-person and mailed interviews and from time spent staying with organisations and seeing their work, I obtained a significant amount of printed information in the form of reports, organisational literature, campaign material, articles written by interviewees, journals and booklets.

Selection of organisations and individuals was based on the following considerations. Until a decision was made to examine the JP Movement, the focus of the thesis was on the actual and potential political role of Indian NGOs at the state and national level in India. Consequently, the great majority of interviews during the first two visits were with people from NGOs. As already explained, this term has a narrower meaning in the Indian context than it does in Australia. The NGOs visited were selected on the basis of personal recommendations, information obtained from literature, and the feasibility of visiting them in light of their geographical location. Care was taken to ensure that amongst the NGOs visited, a variety of issues, sectors, locations, organisational sizes and structures and political or philosophical orientations were represented, but it is not claimed that these NGOs were typical in any precise statistical sense.

Selection of subjects to be interviewed about the JP Movement (either in person or by mailed interview schedule) was based

on the same considerations: personal recommendations, information from literature, and their geographical location. An effort was made to include people who had played key roles in the JP Movement and were from a variety of organisations (large and small, rural and urban), occupations (workers from NGOs and other civil organisations, journalists, academics and politicians) and persuasions (Gandhianism, socialism, the Hindu Right, as well as more pragmatic, mixed or non-aligned positions). Again, however, it is not claimed that - beyond these measures - the selection of subjects interviewed or corresponded with is totally representative of all those who participated in the JP Movement.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE CHAPTERS

Chapter Two reviews existing literature relating to what I call the 'old' and the 'new' politics, particularly literature that assesses the value and political roles of civil organisations. After briefly arguing that discourses in one area of the world can influence thinking elsewhere - particularly stressing the influence of Western discourses on the Third World[13] - the chapter is divided into two parts. The first part considers literature from the West, especially new social movement and community development literature, that

[13]The terms 'West' or 'Western and 'Third World' are generally used in this thesis in preference to the terms 'North' and 'South' because they are more a part of common parlance, and because the thesis does not deal at all with the former Communist parts of the North, and the juxtaposition of 'West' and 'South' appears somewhat strange.

deals with the new forms of politics that emerged in the 1960s. I contend that this literature, which is generally in favour of the new forms of politics that it is considering, is in some respects inaccurate in its portrayal of the new politics, and also fails to adequately assess the effectiveness of such politics. I argue that in Third World settings, and increasingly in other parts of the world as well, there are shortcomings to the new politics that are insufficiently recognised. In the first part I also consider a promising new discourse, 'associative democracy'. The second part of the chapter looks at literature about civil organisations in the Third World, especially in India, written by both Third World and Western writers.

Chapters Three and Four are devoted to the JP Movement. Chapter Three begins with an account of Jayaprakash Narayan's life, as he was so important in leading and shaping the Movement that bore his name, and the different activities and ideological affiliations that made up his life are in many ways reflected in the complexities and contradictions of the Movement. This leads naturally into an account of the Movement itself, which occurred within the last five years of JP's life. This section describes the different forces that came together under JP's leadership - including socialists, Gandhians, Hindu communalists, students and opponents of Congress. It outlines the sequence of events between early 1974 and mid-1975 that constituted the Movement, as well as

the Movement's objectives and participating organisations, and the reactions of the Bihar and Central governments. This is followed by an account of the period known as the Emergency that was declared by Indira Gandhi partly in response to the Movement, and an account of the formation of the Janata Party, which grew out of the JP Movement, and its two and a half years in office.

Chapter Four then analyses these events and trends, as well as the meanings that were given to these by Movement participants and observers. The first part of the chapter presents the responses of those who were interviewed for the thesis, with regard to their views of the Movement's impacts, its failures and why these occurred. Then attention is given to the ways in which these conclusions affected the respondents' attitudes to politics, and in particular how it led many of them to adopt a more negative view of mainstream party-based politics. The second half of the chapter then offers another interpretation of these matters (although it draws in part on the observations of those interviewed). The Movement is critiqued with reference to those who participated and held power within it (who were disproportionately from upper castes and the middle class, with insufficient mobilisation of marginalised sectors), its ideas and goals (which were broad, unclear and often seemingly contradictory), and its leadership, organisation and strategies (which were in many ways undemocratic, not well organised and overly ambitious). The

chapter concludes with an assessment of the things that were changed by the JP Movement and the things that remained the same. Chief among these continuities were, firstly, the sort of people who dominated mainstream politics - the upper castes and middle class - and secondly, the manner in which politics was conducted. The thesis contends that the shortcomings of the JP Movement contributed to these continuities within Indian politics.

The argument of the thesis in support of the need for democratic-deepening aggregated civil bases rests upon the assessment that social action focused on a multitude of small changes through specific-issue politics and local level action will not achieve the sort of transformation that the proponents of such politics often seek, unless there are concomitant efforts to achieve more general change to government policies and processes. Chapter Five, therefore, considers specific-issue (and to a lesser extent local level) politics in India with a view to demonstrating why these limited outcomes occur. It begins by pointing out how the experience of the JP Movement and the Janata Government led many to turn to local and specific-issue politics - with an initial example of a campaign at Bodh Gaya in which many former Movement activists participated. The chapter then looks at aspects of government and governance that limit the effectiveness of specific-issue campaigning. It considers how any one issue can involve very many portfolios and levels of

government, and the demands this places on campaigners. It analyses the interests and ideologies that governments represent, and how specific-issue campaigns, in running counter to these, often face powerful opposition. It considers the repertoire of techniques that governments can use to counter opposition - techniques such as repression, buying compliance, absorbing activists into the system, propaganda, tokenism, promises made and not implemented or implemented in a biased way, secrecy, and demonising or ignoring opponents. It then points out how specific-issue campaigning often involves high costs in relation to benefits gained - costs in terms of time, resources and risks to those involved. It identifies the unavoidably defensive nature of much specific-issue campaigning, particularly when it involves the interests of marginalised sectors. The chapter then gives brief attention to local level political action, and contends that it faces similar limitations to those of specific-issue campaigning. It then concludes by considering the cases of Kerala and West Bengal, two Indian states that have experienced long periods of rule by progressive left-wing governments, and the differences that this has made to the lives of the people there, particular those from marginalised communities. This is intended to demonstrate the benefits that good government supported by an active civil society can offer, when compared with an active civil society acting alone.

Chapter Six is devoted to a more detailed consideration of aggregated civil bases. It seeks to take conclusions drawn from the experience of the JP Movement and the Janata Government, to combine these with observations about other ACBs around the world, particularly democratic-deepening ones, and with various theoretical perspectives, in order to arrive at some working conclusions that may be useful for the future. It cannot, of course, be definite about what will happen in the future. Rather, it draws on very diverse empirical and theoretical sources in order to arrive at some insights and frameworks that may contribute to future social action, but it is hoped that this will advance the discourse in ways that are useful to scholars and activists. The chapter starts by identifying three kinds of ACBs - independence, formal democracy and democratic deepening ACBs - and briefly gives examples of the first two from around the globe (examples of the third are covered later). It then applies lessons drawn from various theoretical and empirical sources, but particularly the JP Movement, in order to consider what is required to make a democratic-deepening ACB work, and these requirements are divided into five categories as follows: mobilisation of a sufficient base of support, particularly from among the marginalised; overcoming logistical and organisational problems when bringing groups together to form an ACB; reconciling ideological differences when constructing a common position; reconciling differences in the interests of the social sectors represented within the organisations of the

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ACB; and finally, ensuring that processes of democracy and accountability are built into the ACB and into arrangements it might reach with political parties or candidates. In considering the question of reconciling ideological perspectives in this process, special attention is given to the possibility that a common ideological position will actually embody significant roles and powers for civil organisations, given increasing recognition of the role of such organisations both in political advocacy and in implementing community-based solutions that do not principally rely on the state. Finally, the chapter considers examples of democratic-deepening ACBs other than the JP Movement, such as trade union movements having links with social democratic parties.

Chapter Seven provides a summation of the thesis and the working conclusions reached in it, and identifies possible directions for further research so that these conclusions can be further explored and lead to practical outcomes.

SWARAJ AND SWEEPERS

A long and brave struggle was waged to achieve *swaraj*, or self-rule, in India. For many, though, it was largely a case of replacing one set of powerful and privileged rulers with another. Though dalits, adivasis and other marginalised sectors in India have recently become more politically active

and powerful, they still cannot be said to play their rightful part in the collective 'self' that now rules India. The JP Movement - for many who participated in it - was one attempt to change this situation. When it failed to achieve any kind of fundamental political change, many of its participants went off to work in civil organisations that focused on local-level action or sought change in specific government policies and practices. One such person was Kumar Ranjan, who works in an NGO in South Bihar. When I interviewed him about the role of organisations like his in the politics of his country, he stated that such groups must act as "sweepers" to keep the government clean, adding: "If a building is very nice, well-constructed, and there is no-one to sweep the room, that room will be dirty."[14] But what kind of control does the sweeper have over the building? If it is not 'very nice' or 'well-constructed', if it requires radical changes to make it habitable for its occupants, it is normally people other than the sweeper who decide if this can occur and oversee the design and execution of any changes that eventuate. In like fashion, I argue that it takes more than specific-issue and local political action to bring about transformational change.

In a literal sense, sweeping is done in the Indian caste system by those whose status is considered equivalent to the task, namely, those branded as 'untouchable' and referred to

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[14]Interview with Kumar Ranjan (18/11/95).

in the thesis as dalits. Just as they - and other marginalised
Indians - have a right to be free of such ascribed
occupational roles and have the same access to more
prestigious and powerful occupations as higher caste Indians
have, so the civil organisations that represent them have the
right to go beyond being the sweepers in the house of
government, the right to participate in determining the
'architecture' of governance. They have a right to be a
powerful part of the collective 'self' that rules India.

The JP Movement was an attempt at transformational politics, a
grand project that fell far short of the expectations of many
of its participants. In a sense, in being perceived to have
fallen short it was not alone. Elsewhere in the world from the
1960s onward, there was a significant loss of faith in grand
projects, which caused people in civil organisations to turn
to new political objectives and approaches. Let us now examine
such objectives and approaches, in the broader context of
considering literature that focuses on the role of civil
organisations in political life.

CHAPTER TWO: A REVIEW OF LITERATURE ON CIVIL ORGANISATIONS

In contrast with political parties and pressure groups which are involved in institutional politics, new social movements aim to *transform existing cultural patterns*.
Christine Jennett & Randal Stewart[1]

...unless the visions of movements are translated into reality through institutional mechanisms, they will embody mere aspirations.
T.K. Oommen[2]

Groups are not parties and the same is true in reverse. Both operate out of different domains and the clash comes out of a mistaken perception that they are organisations vying for control of the same political and ideological space.
Harsh Sethi[3]

INTRODUCTION

As discussed in Chapter One, this thesis argues that, while specific-issue campaigning and local action are both necessary components of political change, they are insufficient to achieve the degree of change that would make a significant difference to the lives of the marginalised. It is contended in this thesis that - to complement these forms of action - there is a need for an arrangement in which civil organisations form an alliance, mobilise marginalised sectors, develop a common platform and negotiate an arrangement with a

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[1] Christine Jennett & Randal G Stewart (eds), Politics of the Future: The Role of Social Movements, Macmillan, South Melbourne, 1989, p 1 (emphasis in the original).

[2] T K Oommen, Protest and Change: Studies in Social Movements, Sage, New Delhi, 1990, p 151.

[3] Harsh Sethi, "Groups in a New Politics of Transformation", Economic and Political Weekly, XIX, no 7, 18 Feb 1984, p 311.

political party or coalition to implement the alliance's platform in government. The JP Movement is interpreted in the thesis as being an attempt at something of this kind, an attempt that fell well short of its objectives in a number of ways that will be identified. One of the outcomes of this failure was a deeper level of disaffection with parties and governments, an outcome that had the effect of turning people away from these institutions and increasing the focus on specific-issue campaigning and local forms of action.

This chapter examines a range of discourses that relate to these matters. As the thesis is centrally concerned with the roles of civil organisations in achieving political change, the discourses that have been selected for consideration here all focus on civil organisations. There is a vast array of literature that is in some way relevant to this topic, but some selection was necessary in view of the space limitations of the thesis, and so theoretical literature dealing more directly with areas such as political economy, democracy, the state and postmodernism has not been included. However, important questions that are addressed in these areas of theory do receive some attention in the literature that is included.

As outlined in Chapter One, while the central case study (considered in Chapters Three and Four) and evidence of the limitations of specific-issue campaigning and local action

(considered in Chapter Five) are derived from India, and while the thesis is primarily concerned with the roles of civil organisations in achieving social change in that country, it is not solely concerned with India in two important respects. Firstly, it is suggested that the thesis being advanced may also have some applications in relation to non-Indian political situations, and secondly, the thesis also draws lessons from the political experiences of other nations. Consequently, literature that is examined in this chapter concerns itself not only with India but also with the West and other parts of the Third World, and its authorship is similarly diverse.

But this is not the only reason for examining non-Indian literature. It is clear that literature in one country or setting can be influenced by ideas from another country or setting, and it can be argued that there is a 'centre' and a 'periphery' in social science discourses analogous to the centre and periphery that dependency theorists argue are a feature of global economic and political systems.[4] For this reason, the first part of the chapter considers literature emanating from the West that has advanced some major themes and ideas about the roles of civil organisations in politics - literature that, it is argued, has influenced thinking in

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[4]One indication of this is the proportion of social science literature published in New York and London and through the presses of the prestigious British and American universities and, to a lesser extent, elsewhere in the English-speaking West.

India and other parts of the Third World as well, even though such literature may claim to be specifically dealing with Western situations. The second part of the chapter focuses on literature dealing with Third World - particularly Indian - situations. This is followed by a brief conclusion.

To expand on this point, it would be hard to contest the large impact of Western political ideas on the Third World. Nation states in the Third World were determined by colonialism and colonial boundaries. Western institutions such as political parties and legislatures came into existence in most Third World countries with independence (even if, in many countries, they were then banned or their functions nullified for many years). And beyond formal institutions, key political ideologies have emanated from the West. Ponna Wignaraja claims that for the Third World the "two dominant frameworks of thinking and action...[have been] Marxism (mainly Leninism) and neoclassicism", both derived from the West.[5] Sometimes, one Western perspective will predominate over others. For example, Ghanshyam Shah, surveying literature on Indian social movements, asserts that "thanks to the dominance of post-World War II liberal political ideology and the structural-functional approach, there is greater emphasis in...[Indian] social science literature on equilibrium and harmony rather

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[5] Ponna Wignaraja, "Rethinking Development and Democracy", in Ponna Wignaraja (ed), New Social Movements in the South: Empowering the People, Vistaar Publications, New Delhi, 1993, p 4.

than on conflict and change"[6] (although outside of Indian academic circles the picture might be different). This can be seen to be part of a more general phenomenon in which Western thought has a higher profile and status than non-Western thought. As Ella Shohat and Robert Stam put it:

Endemic in present-day thought and education, Eurocentrism is naturalized as "common sense". Philosophy and literature are presumed to be European philosophy and literature. The "best that is thought and written" is presumed to have been thought and written by Europeans [who, according to Shohat and Stam, include "neo-Europeans" - Americans, Australians, etc.].[7]

Obviously the flow of influence is not all one way. Ideas emanating from the Third World can have influence in the West or other parts of the Third World, and notable examples of this include Gandhi's notion of non-violent resistance, Mao's adaptation of Marx to accord a revolutionary role to the peasantry, and Paulo Freire's concept of conscientisation, but these do not seem to challenge the general trend.

WESTERN DISCOURSES

Most of the Western literature that is examined in this section is neither Marxist nor neoliberal (although there are Marxist influences). Most falls broadly within the categories of either new social movement literature or community

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[6] Ghanshyam Shah, Social Movements in India: A Review of the Literature, Sage, New Delhi, 1990, p 15.

[7] Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media, Routledge, London, 1994, p 1.

development literature. It valorises neither the state nor the market, but groups of people - whether they be termed movements, organisations or communities - that are acting in new ways, within new 'political spaces' and in pursuit of new goals. It reflects deep disillusionment with government and political parties as agents of positive political change. In many ways this literature seems to be free of the ideological rigidity and myopia that can be said to characterise both Marxism and neoliberalism, to give scope to voices from different cultures, classes, genders and backgrounds, and to encourage a diversity of approaches to issues within social settings characterised by tolerance and decentralised power structures. There are a number of reasons for believing that these ideas have influenced thinking in the Third World. Partly it is a matter of inference. If, as a general rule, Western thinking has influence in the Third World, why should this be an exception? Partly it is based on the fact that trends in the Third World have followed chronologically those in the West, for example, the growth of new social movements such as the environmental and women's movements. And partly, it is based on anecdotal evidence of influence, such as the fact that India's Dalit Panthers took their name from the Black Panthers in the United States, or the acknowledgement by Jayaprakash Narayan that the French student movement influenced his thinking about the political potential of students (see Chapter 3, p 119) or the influence of the thinking of Western donor agencies on the organisations that

they fund in the Third World.

It would seem that new social movement and community development schools of thought, given their apparent lack of ideological rigidity and their acceptance of diversity, would be well suited to the process of being transferred from one cultural and political context to another, from the West to the Third World. But I argue in this thesis that this misses an important point. I contend that new social movement and community development approaches have been as successful as they have partly because certain preconditions have been present, preconditions that frequently have not been present in the Third World, or have not been present to the same extent. I argue that key institutions of the 'old politics', namely, government, political parties and the trade union movement, and particularly the relationship between union movements and social democratic parties, have been responsible for generating a broad and politically powerful consensus in Western democracies during much of this century that has significantly contributed to improvements in areas such as extensions to the franchise, the rule of law, universal education, income security and basic employment rights. All of these, in turn, contribute to a situation in which people have the knowledge and capacity to participate in the political system and can do so with relatively few risks to life, livelihood or property, and they have opportunities to seek redress through political and judicial processes. It is in

this environment that the various forms of 'new politics' can thrive, but if these preconditions are absent the situation is quite different, as will be seen. A trade union movement that has a political arrangement with a social democratic party is presented in this thesis as an example of what I call an 'aggregated civil base', and the fact that such an arrangement has not been prominent in Third World polities means that movements and organisations there are frequently operating in a very different political climate to that in the West, and for that reason may be much less effective. But further to this, the efficacy of the relationship between trade unions and social democratic parties is now seriously declining in the West, and so there is a critical need for the establishment of new aggregated civil bases in both parts of the world.

An examination of these discourses needs first to consider the climate of ideas that preceded them and against which they were something of a reaction. Within the pluralist tradition of predominantly American political science writing of the post-war era, interest groups were seen as articulating the interests of particular sectors of society, which were then aggregated by political parties in a system that was portrayed as fair and democratic. Competing interest groups – representing, for example, business, labour, agriculture or consumers - balanced one another out, it was claimed, and government played the role of co-ordinator or regulator of

these competing interests with no partiality to specific groups and no particular interests of its own.[8] This view did not go unchallenged. For example, C Wright Mills contended that American politics was dominated by political, business and military elites,[9] Ralf Dahrendorf wrote of the narrow interests being advanced by elites and the collusion between them,[10] and Robert Paul Wolff criticised pluralism on a number of counts. For example, he argued that the process of interest group representation becomes rigid and does not readily respond to new interests, that many within particular sectors (such as employees) go unrepresented, that the government tends to favour strong over weak groups, and that the political system does not do justice to issues such as the environment and public order in which everyone, not just particular groups, has an interest.[11] These critiques of existing political systems in the West - and of the pluralist justifications of them - were similar to many of the concerns about mainstream politics emerging within new social movements in the 1960s that are considered below.

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[8]See for example: Robert A Dahl, <u>A Preface to Democratic Theory</u>, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1956; Seymour Martin Lipset & Reinhard Bendix, <u>Social Mobility in Industrial Society</u>, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1959; David B Truman, <u>The Governmental Process: Political Interests and Public Opinion</u>, Alfred A Knopf, New York, 1962; and Gabriel Almond & Sidney Verba, <u>The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations</u>, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1963.

[9]C Wright Mills, <u>The Power Elite</u>, Oxford University Press, New York, 1956.

[10]Ralf Dahrendorf, <u>Class and Conflict in Industrial Society</u>, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1959.

[11]Robert Paul Wolff, "Beyond Tolerance", in Robert Paul Wolff, Barrington Moore Jnr & Herbert Marcuse (eds), <u>A Critique of Pure Tolerance</u>, Beacon Press, Boston, 1965.

Social movements, of course, were not new to the 1960s.[12]
Across the world and throughout history, there have been
peasant movements, movements of particular ethnic communities,
religious revival or reform movements, anti-slavery movements,
revolutionary movements and so on. In more recent times labour
movements have been prominent in most Western countries;
anticolonial movements have led struggles for independence in
the Third World; the early women's movement fought for the
right to have legal status, to vote, to work and to be
educated; peace and disarmament movements campaigned against
conscription, participation in World War I and nuclear
weaponry; and movements of ethnic minorities, such as
Australian Aborigines and African Americans challenged
oppression in their respective societies. As well,
authoritarian, ethnocentric and supremacist movements have
featured large in this century, and millenarian and other such
movements have attracted followers among the disaffected and
disadvantaged. Much of the literature on social movements up
until the early 1970s viewed them in an unfavourable light,
partly because of the dominance of the pluralist discourse
within political science and partly because many of the
movements studied were of an extremist or intolerant kind (for
example, Hannah Arendt's study of Nazism[13]). But any movement

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[12]I would like to particularly acknowledge Jan Pakulski's Social Movements: The Politics of Moral
Protest (Longman Cheshire, Melbourne, 1991) here, as it served as a valuable introduction to Western
literature on social movements.

[13]Hannah Arendt, The Origins of Totalitarianism, Andre Deutsch, London, 1973.

that represented a departure from normal political processes in Western political systems tended to be characterised as a kind of mass pathology that reflected upon the psychological state of the participants or the condition (or absence) of social institutions that might be expected to meet their needs. William Kornhauser posited the emergence of mass society in which large aggregations of "atomized" individuals were vulnerable to domination by elites,[14] while Neil Smelser saw social movements - along with panics, crazes and riots - as being caused by "structural strain" in society (although he did distinguish between movements and these other phenomena).[15] Hans Toch analysed a range of movements that were seen to be group expressions of irrationality, hopelessness or bigotry,[16] Ted Gurr studied the social and psychological causes of violent movements,[17] and Seymour Martin Lipset identified different types of authoritarian movements that appealed to different social classes.[18]

New social movement literature

What I refer to as 'new social movement literature' is a

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[14]William Kornhauser, <u>The Politics of Mass Society</u>, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1960.

[15]Neil Smelser, <u>Theory of Collective Behaviour</u>, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1962, pp 47-66.

[16]Hans Toch, <u>The Social Psychology of Social Movements</u>, Methuen & Co, London, 1966.

[17]Ted Gurr, <u>Why Men Rebel</u>, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1970.

[18]Seymour Martin Lipset, <u>Political Man</u>, Heinemann, London, 1960.

discourse that has described and analysed those movements that emerged in the 1960s, movements that have dealt with issues receiving insufficient attention before this time, such as peace, the environment and the rights of women, ethnic minorities, the disabled, the elderly, homosexuals, consumers, residents and other groups. These issues are thus seen in this literature to be new and to be contrasted with issues - principally relating to material distribution - which are characterised as the chief concern of the old politics and its institutions (governments, political parties, interests groups, and the major 'old' social movement, the labour movement). Whereas, it is claimed, the old politics focused on issues of material distribution, the politics of the new movements are more concerned with questions of culture, lifestyle, meaning, symbols, and knowledge, and valorise such things as spiritual and interpersonal development, the natural environment, co-operation and non-violence, personal autonomy and self-expression, diversity, decentralisation, the small-scale and the non-standardised.[19]

But as well as featuring new issues and constituencies, there

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[19]Stephen Cotgrove & Andrew Duff, "Environmentalism, middle-class radicalism and politics", Sociological Review, vol 28(2), 1980, pp 333-351; Claus Offe, "New social movements: challenging the boundaries of institutional politics", Social Research, vol 52(4), Winter 1985, pp 817-867; Jurgen Habermas, "New Social Movements", Telos, vol 49, Fall 1981, pp 33-37; Ronald Inglehart, "Post-materialism in an environment of insecurity", American Political Science Review, vol 75, 1981, pp 880-900; Sonia E Alvarez, Evelina Dagnino & Arturo Escobar, "Introduction: The Cultural and the Political in Latin American Social Movements, in Sonia E Alvarez, Evelina Dagnino & Arturo Escobar (eds), Cultures of Politics, Politics of Cultures: Re-visioning Latin American Social Movements, Westview Press, Boulder, Colorado, 1998.

are other aspects of these movements that are seen as new. One of these concerns the form and scale of movement goals. There is little faith in what Melucci calls "grandiose political programmes" which, as he puts it, have not only failed to achieve their objectives but have also often led to violence and totalitarianism,[20] as they generate structures that centralise power over people and nature and cause conflict and division. Instead of these broad programs and blueprints new social movement goals - to the extent that they can be said to have distinct goals - are seen to be more specific, local or spontaneous. Moreover, such goals are said to be pursued in two distinct but related ways, firstly, through protest actions, typically involving mass participation and, as Offe puts it, 'articulated mostly in negative logical and grammatical forms, as indicated by key words such as "never," "nowhere," "end," "stop," "freeze," "ban," etc',[21] and secondly, through the creation of new lifestyles and aspects of culture within the personal and quasi-public domains of movements and their participants, what Melucci refers to as the "production of new cultural codes within submerged networks".[22] As well, internal organisational and interactional structures and processes are portrayed as new. In the words of Offe, these are:

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[20]Alberto Melucci, <u>Nomads of the Present</u>, Hutchinson Radius, London, 1989, pp. 188-189.

[21]Offe, p 830.

[22]Melucci, p 44.

highly informal, ad hoc, discontinuous, context-sensitive, and egalitarian...[and] while there are at
      best rudimentary roles, programs, platforms, representatives, officials, staff, and membership
      dues, the new social movements consist of participants, campaigns, spokespeople, networks,
      voluntary helpers and donations...[with] a poor and at best transient demarcation between the
      role of "members" and formal "leaders".[23]

Finally, there is seen to be, as Offe puts it, "the fusion of public and private roles [and] instrumental and expressive behaviour",[24] and thus participants are more inclined to "live" the movement as an expression of who they are privately and publicly, and are less intent on achieving a political end by adopting a particular strategy.

Although this literature deals mainly with movements in the West, there is some attention given to Third World movements.[25] Moreover, as already noted, many movements in the Third World can be considered to be 'new social movements' if judged by the distinguishing features I have mentioned. As well, many Third World movements (such as Gandhianism) are influenced by premodernist values that are still strong in many Third World societies and resonate with the values behind many new movements in the West, involving as they do reactions against capitalism, materialism, competitive individualism,

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[23]Offe, pp 829-830.

[24]ibid, p 829.

[25]See, for example: Jennett & Stewart, Part 3; and Alain Touraine, "An Introduction to the Study of Social Movements", Social Research, vol 52, no 4, Winter 1985, pp. 749-87.

centralised and bureaucratised government, science and technology and the destruction of local culture.

The focus of this analysis of new social movement literature is on assessing what is stated or implied about the roles of government and political parties in social change and about the relationship of civil organisations with them. It is important to stress at this stage that this body of literature tends to paint a favourable picture of new movements, to portray them as being at the cutting edge of political action, "the politics of the future" as the title of one publication on this subject put it[26] (or, if not this, then at least to present them in a neutral light and to refrain from challenging their assumptions). Thus new movement attitudes to government and parties tend not to be challenged in this body of literature. The contributions of new movement theorists are varied and complex, and one thus has to be careful when generalising about them, but nevertheless the broad trends in the literature, as described above, can be critiqued.

Firstly, let us consider the claim that the issues of the new movements have not been those of material distribution (which had been a major concern of 'the old politics' and its institutions, government, parties, interest groups and the principal 'old' social movement, the labour movement[27]) but

[26]Jennett & Stewart.

[27]However, it should also be acknowledged that the 'old' social movements took action on cultural

have been primarily about culture, lifestyle, meaning and so on. I believe that this characterisation is inaccurate, that issues of material distribution have clearly continued to be important concerns for the new movements. Feminism, for example, challenges inequality in the distribution of income between men and women, resulting from unequal pay for the same or equivalent jobs and from unequal access to promotion and well-remunerated occupations, as well as challenging insufficient childcare facilities and unequal access to education, both of which also affect women's income earning capacity. In the Third World, women's groups fight for equal access to development funds and services that can improve their farms and small businesses. Looking at other sectors, movements representing disadvantaged ethnic communities contest similar discriminatory practices that affect their relative incomes, as do groups representing people with disabilities. Movements of those unable to earn an income demand that the state provide reasonable income support. And issues of wealth distribution do not just concern individual incomes and wealth, but also the availability and distribution of public resources in areas of health, housing, education, childcare, legal aid and so on. Even if these kinds of public provision are well-established, the extent to which they are resourced and the distribution of access to them are still very much matters that are contested. Groups concerned with

and other non-material projects as well, such as those concerned to promote peace, to oppose racism, to develop adult education opportunities and to support artists and writers.

all of these issues are included among those said to constitute new social movements. The role of governments and political parties in resolving these distributional concerns is no less critical than has been the case with the 'old' distributional issues.

Also, in new social movement literature there tends to be a conflation of two separate distinctions, that is, the distinction between material and non-material concerns and that between distributional and non-distributional issues. Issues of material distribution are contrasted with supposedly 'non-material' issues involving culture, lifestyle, knowledge and the like. But issues of distribution do not just concern wealth or material possessions. There can be - and is - unequal distribution of power over, or access to, many non-material things that are important to us. For example, certain people have far more power than others when it comes to determining the predominant features of culture, the subjects, symbols and interpretations that figure most prominently in the public mind, and the content, flow and use of information. And these non-material 'goods' are, of course, causally very related to material resources, in that those with the capacity to determine the shape and use of culture, meaning and knowledge can and do use it to create an economic and social climate in which they can maintain or increase their material wealth. This, in turn, can give them yet more resources with which to influence such culture, meaning and knowledge, and so

the cycle goes on. Thus, in the 'post-industrial' society in which the production of knowledge is claimed to be becoming more important in comparison with the production of things, the distribution of control over this knowledge is no less critical than the distribution of control over physical resources. Moreover, it should be noted that while some issues that new movements are involved in concern non-material values such as the intrinsic value of the environment, the pursuit of this has definite material consequences for other sections of society that might, for example, be seeking to extract natural resources, and accordingly, it will be contested as strongly as any issue involving two opposing material interests. Governments have an important role in resolving these issues concerning the distribution of non-material goods, and the idea that they are not suited to dealing with such non-material matters is challenged a little further on.

Issues of distribution and the causal relationship between material and non-material goods are especially critical in the Third World. In the West, if people have a relatively low wage, or no job at all, or if their farm or business fails, they will not starve, as they usually start from a position of greater wealth and, if necessary, the state provides a financial safety net. As well, whatever their personal fortunes, they generally still have access to clean water, health and education services, the protection of the law, and so on. In the Third World, the situation can often be very

different. Loss of income or low income and the absence of public services and facilities can be the cause of malnutrition, disease and death. And cultural questions - relating, for example, to the status of women, the acceptability of ascribed social hierarchies such as India's caste system, the worth of indigenous cultures, and the value placed on subsistence forms of production - are all questions that have a profound impact on the life or death issue of the rights and resources that particular sections of the community can access.

Secondly, in connection with the emphasis that new social movements place on issues of lifestyle, culture and meaning, a part of the problem that they - and movement theorists - have with government relates to how they characterise it. It is typically seen to be concerned primarily with laws, regulations and enforcement, to be incapable of changing people's attitudes or behaviour or group processes beyond those of its own employees, and in particular to be incapable of promoting non-material values like community, participation, concern for others or appreciation of nature. In line with this view, cold, hard, regulating, enforcing government is contrasted with civil society, which is seen to be warm, inclusive, participatory and voluntary, and to be a way through which people can learn, develop, support one another and pursue their deepest goals. Boris Frankel refers to this viewpoint when he talks about "the widespread tendency

to reduce state institutions to mere political-administrative apparatuses or machines which are separate from `the economy' or the `civil' and `cultural' relations and institutions of particular social formations".[28] However, there are plenty of examples that show that this conception of government is deficient, examples of government acting to promote a tolerant, multicultural society, to strengthen democratic processes and the rights of particular groups, to protect national culture and heritage, to foster community spirit and non-commercial, non-materialist values, to advance new forms of conflict resolution, to protect the environment and promote its values, and so on. It can do these things through laws, through its own campaigns and programs or the support it gives to non-government community and cultural organisations, through its powers concerning national symbols, through the regulation of media ownership and controls over foreign trade and investment and the economy generally, and through the value positions it takes when running schools, universities, health systems, state-owned media and departments of the environment, multicultural affairs, justice, the arts and various other portfolios.[29]

Thirdly, the ways in which new movement literature deals with

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[28] B Frankel, <u>The Post-Industrial Utopians</u>, Polity Press, Cambridge, UK, 1987, p. 202.

[29] The idea that 'stateways can't change folkways' is challenged, for example, by social psychologist Elliot Aronson when he cites evidence to show how people's attitudes and behaviour can change as a result of government policies, in this case in relation to racial integration (Elliot Aronson, <u>The Social Animal</u>, 2nd edn, W H Freeman and Co, San Francisco, 1976, pp 196-203).

movement strategies and approaches is problematic in a number of ways. To begin with, the argument that the tactics of new social movements are radically different from those of conventional politics is overplayed. It is sometimes acknowledged by the theorists that new movements may continue to engage in conventional politics as well as adopting new approaches, but this is usually in the form of a passing reference.[30] But observation of movements suggests that conventional political activities and processes are a significant part of their operations. For example, they commonly seek, in relation to specific issues, to influence the allocation of government funds, the passage of legislation and the formulation and implementation of government programs, and they frequently operate through the medium of organisations with hierarchies and professional staff. Many, perhaps most, still engage in at least some of the following – lobbying, doing deals, compromising, engaging in professional publicity campaigns, supporting (or even forming) parties and standing candidates for legislatures. They may do these things with a degree of equivocation, not really sure whether they ought to be part of their political repertoire along with the less institutionalised forms of activism, but they do them nonetheless. Furthermore, many of the tactics that we see as characteristic of new social movements are often no more than novel and dramatic ways of having the same kind of influence

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[30]For example: Offe, p 840; Jennett & Stewart, p 1.

on government that conventional tactics have achieved. For example, a mass rally to demonstrate the level of popular support a movement or organisation possesses may win them the chance to have regular meetings with the Minister. So when Offe talks about new social movements occupying a third sphere of non-institutional politics (the other two spheres being those of mainstream institutional politics and private life) the distinction is not really as neat as his categorisation suggests.[31]

Moreover, theorists often fail to address the question of the effectiveness of the kinds of strategies and approaches that new movements practice. As described earlier, the new approaches consist of either engaging with the state through specific-issue protest actions, or turning away from the state in order to create and live within social, economic and cultural alternatives of a quasi-public nature. In relation to the first of these, it is contended in this thesis that specific-issue campaigning is a necessary but not sufficient means of bringing about the sort of transformational change that new movements tend to seek, and Chapter Five is devoted to arguing, in the Indian context, why such campaigning by itself is insufficient. With regard to the second, the tendency of new movements to turn away from the state and create their own alternatives - acting within the domains of

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[31]Offe, p. 832.

autonomy that exist in the personal lives of participant and in their own groups and communities - questions need to be asked about how effective such an approach is if the movement participants wish to bring about change in mainstream society. There is clearly value in organisations creating and practising alternatives, and these may at some stage influence the broader society, including through the medium of government policies and programs. But it can be argued that it is also worthwhile to try to have a far more direct impact on government, given its roles as law-maker, program-manager, and custodian of public resources, all roles that significantly affect ordinary people.

It also needs to be recognised that different approaches may be appropriate for different times. Clearly, there have been many instances of new social movements applying new approaches that have dramatically advanced the causes of new constituencies and new issues - in areas such as civil rights, opposition to the Vietnam War, environmentalism and feminism. But this occurred most notably in a particular historical context, in which there was steady economic growth and full-employment, an unchallenged public sector and nationally bounded economies, a context in which it was easier to make concessions to the demands of the new movements.[32] Moreover,

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[32]For example, Meredith Burgmann & Verity Burgmann attribute the militancy of the NSW Builders Labourers' Federation during the 'green ban' period to conditions of low unemployment - and therefore high job security - and the absence of recent memories of war and economic depression (Meredith Burgmann & Verity Burgmann, Green Bans, Red Unions: Environmental Activism and the New South Wales Builders Labourers' Federation, University of New South Wales Press, Sydney, 1998). However, it is also possible

the initial demands of new social movements chiefly concerned the most blatant forms of racial and gender discrimination, environmental destruction and the like, demands that were harder to reasonably refuse than were later demands dealing with subtler and more complex issues. It was not necessary for the separate movements to come together and articulate a new, integrated ideology, because their separate demands could be accommodated within the framework of a prosperous liberal democratic society. In the Third World the situation in which movements have functioned had been very different, as there has not been the same level of prosperity, and the cultural systems that have sustained and justified inequality are often far more entrenched (witness the Indian caste system).

Some decades on, we see a different picture in the West as well. Many of the tactics that were fresh and dramatic in the 1960s have now lost their novelty and consequently much of their impact. Moreover, a resurgent economic right has challenged the new movements, not frontally in the sense of addressing each of the specific issues they raise, but in the broader ideological sense of valorising the market and challenging the wisdom and right of government to intervene in pursuit of the collective good. This has occurred in the context of increased unemployment and government spending and a more integrated global economy, a context in which

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to argue the contrary viewpoint, that in prosperous times elites may be less inclined to grant demands because they feel more secure and can be more defiant.

government is seen to have less room to move in response to movement demands. Consequently, we now have a situation in both the West and the Third World - in fact, in an increasingly globalised world - that is not nearly as conducive to the attainment of positive social change as was the case in the Western world of the 1960s and 1970s in which new social movements emerged. It is somewhat ironic that the postmodernist rejection of grand political programs per se - a rejection that is taken up by new social movements and endorsed by movement analysts such as Alberto Melucci[33] - meant that the Left (broadly defined) has not had an effective response to the Right's assertive promotion of its own grand political program in the form of neoliberalism.

Another point to be made about the approach to political action taken by new movements, as interpreted by literature on them, concerns the idea that the movements are highly participatory, and that people join them for intrinsic reasons, that such participation is expressive of their identity and lifestyle, rather than being instrumentally motivated, a means to achieve some kind of political objective. It is contended in this thesis that, while this may have some foundation, it also needs to be recognised that there are also costs involved in participation in the form of time, resources and risks, and over time, if the sense of

[33]Melucci, pp 188-189.

movement elan diminishes, these costs may seem more onerous. This can help to explain the marked ebbs and flows in movement activism, and casts doubt on the sustainability of mass action as the principal ongoing form of political activity. Among the marginalised of the Third World, where the costs of political participation can be enormous, and include threats to life and property and the loss of much needed income, this issue is a particularly critical one.

According to Melucci, the old social movements' goal of transforming the state is no longer appropriate, and assessing all political activity in terms of its impact on the state is an "extreme form of reductionism".[34] But is it not equally reductionist in the opposite direction to say that simply because action that is solely aimed at changing government policies is no longer appropriate, there should be no attempt at all to change such policies? Why cannot both kinds of politics occur? It is contended in this thesis that they can and they must. There needs to be a recognition - which is not apparent in the literature on new social movements, that some governments are better than others, generally as a result of the actions of civil organisations, including those from the old social movements, and that specific reasons for these differences can be uncovered. Achieving effective democratic governance is viewed in this thesis as a project that is

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[34]ibid, p 219.

ongoing and never complete, a project in which progress can be made by assessing the strengths and weaknesses in the performances of governments to date, and utilising civil organisations, individually and collectively, to work in a variety of ways to improve the quality of governance. It is argued in this thesis that the issues that concern people the world over cannot simply be resolved by people acting within their own groups and communities or creating their own meanings and lifestyles, and neither can they be solved politically through specific-issue campaigning alone. There are powerful forces that can control people's access to the things they want and need - be they material or non-material - and I argue that good governance is necessary to ensure that people can have such access. Alain Touraine, a leading theorist of new social movements, makes a related point when he identifies the main risk facing social movements as the risk that they might cut themselves off from the state, and become segmented and focused on minority issues and questions of identity, leaving public life to be dominated by other actors.[35]

Another important body of literature on social movements that is contemporaneous with new social movement literature is that of the resource mobilisation school. It has tended to view social movements as one means through which communities or

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[35]Alain Touraine, p 780.

sectors of society can pursue political objectives - and thus as neither inferior or superior to other political means - but it has concentrated on examining the ways in which such movements can be most effective - or conversely, the reasons why they may be less effective - and as such, it has generated many useful insights, some of which are referred to in this thesis (and in this respect, it has much in common with community development theory).[36] However, because resource mobilisation theory neither challenges nor supports the contentions of this thesis it is not considered further in this literature review.

Community development literature

Community development literature is another important body of writing that deals with the roles of civil organisations. This term covers a very broad and diverse range of writings, but in general, it is more practically and prescriptively orientated than literature on social movements in that it tends to be written by, or directed at, those engaged in work or activism that promotes (or could promote) 'community development', including social workers, community workers, foreign aid personnel, government employees and those active in civil

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[36]Examples of this literature include: Mayer N Zald & R Ash, "Social movement organizations: growth, decay and change", <u>Social Forces</u>, vol 44, March 1966, pp 327-341; Anthony Oberschall, <u>Social Conflict and Social Movements</u>, Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, 1973; Charles Tilly, <u>From Mobilization to Revolution</u>, Addison-Wesley, Reading, Mass., 1978; and Mayer N Zald & John D McCarthy (eds), <u>The Dynamics of Social Movements</u>, Winthrop, Cambridge, Mass., 1979.

organisations and social movements, in a paid or unpaid
capacity.[37]

Its orientations tend to be defined by commonly accepted
meanings of the word 'community', and as Kenny and others have
pointed out, while there are many meanings of this word, it is
often associated with the local level[38] (such as that of
neighbourhoods, suburbs, towns). Thus it is hardly surprising
that community development is commonly focused at this level.
As well, a sense of community can coalesce around common
identity, experience, values or interests,[39] and this means
that it often gives rise to specific-issue politics, as groups
pursue issues that arise from such commonalities. Also, the
domain of 'the community' is generally not seen to include the
internal operations of large public and private institutions
and workplaces (except perhaps those delivering 'community
services'). Rather it is centred on the 'spaces' in between
these, spaces in which people live, interact, shop, recreate,
access services and travel, although 'the community' is seen
to be affected by these institutions and workplaces, for
example, in the form of environmental threats, or the
availability of jobs or services. So community development

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[37]See, for example: Susan Kenny, Developing Communities for the Future: Community Development in Australia, Nelson, South Melbourne, 1994; Jim Ife, Community Development: Creating Community Alternatives, Longman, South Melbourne, 1995; Herbert Rubin & Irene Rubin, Community Organizing and Development, 2nd edn, MacMillan, New York, 1992.

[38]Kenny, pp 32-33.

[39]ibid.

tends not to address issues like the ownership and management practices of enterprises or other institutions, or the way income is distributed within them.[40]

The diversity encompassed within community development reflects the different contexts to which it is applied and the different orientations of those who use the term. Jack Rothman identifies three distinct models of community development practice: locality development, which involves a broad spectrum of people coming together to set community goals and take action; social planning, which tends to view problem-solving as a technical planning exercise; and social action, which focuses on disadvantaged sectors becoming organised so that they can gain greater access to resources and in other ways advance their interests.[41] Thus community development practice can vary from the apolitical to the very political, and from conservative to radical approaches. The term is used in both industrialised and Third World societies, although in the latter context terms like 'rural development' or simply 'development' are often applied instead to the same areas of consideration.[42] However, the term 'development' encompasses a

[40]As an example of this widely used distinction between institutions and the community, when people are moved out of institutions such as prisons, hospitals or government departments, it is said that they are being moved 'into the community', which really equates to 'anywhere that is not inside an institution'.

[41]Jack Rothman, "Three Models of Community Organization Practice, their Mixing and Phasing", in Fred M Cox, John L Erlich, Jack Rothman & John E Tropman (eds), Strategies of Community Organization, 3rd edn, F E Peacock Publishers, Itasca, Ill., 1979, pp 25-45.

[42]See, for example: Richard Holloway (ed), Doing Development: Governments, NGOs and the Rural Poor in Asia, Earthscan, London, 1989, p 1-9; and Michael Cernea (ed), Putting People First: Sociological

broader disciplinary field, including economic and technological development and both micro and macro level development. When used in relation to the Third World, such terms are often associated with government and foreign aid programs,[43] and thus have more institutional connotations, and more radical, community-based programs are more associated with terms like social action, or with terms describing the sorts or groups that engage in them, such as NGOs, action groups and non-party political formations. These are considered in the next section. As is the case with many discourses, community development tends to be dominated by Western literature, although there are important influences from the Third World, such as those of Gandhi and Paulo Freire.

Community development as a discourse, and others who focus on 'community' have their critics. For example, Martin Mowbray and Lois Bryson have criticised uses of the term 'community' which ignore conflicts of interest, inequality and antagonism connected with class, gender and racial differences.[44] Instead, they claim, romanticised notions of community are

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Variables in Rural Development, (2nd Edn), Oxford University Press, New York, 1991, pp xi-xiii.

[43]For example, in Holloway, and in Milton Esman & Norman Uphoff, Local Organizations: Intermediaries in Rural Development, Cornell University Press, London, 1984.

[44]Lois Bryson & Martin Mowbray, `"Community": The Spray-on Solution', Australian Journal of Social Issues, vol 16, no 4, Nov 1981, pp 255-267; and Martin Mowbray, "The medicinal properties of localism: a historical perspective", in Rosamund Thorpe & Judy Petruchenia, Community Work or Social Change?, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1985.

employed that hark back to traditional communities (though such communities also featured inequality, conflict and cruelty, but this tends to be ignored). Mowbray and Bryson contend that community development's association with local settings and local action, its emphasis on co-operation and harmonious social relations, and its reluctance to advance explicit political programs, mean that it fails to recognise conflicting interests or challenge unequal power relations. In fact, they see such an approach as serving the needs of capital, by generating the things it requires (for example, infrastructure, services and a trained workforce) and by instilling faith in a system in which people are permitted to some degree to 'participate'.

While 'community' is often used in these ways to obscure conflicts of interest and power differences, and to promote apolitical means of dealing with problems, there are very many community development theorists who do not fit this mould and stress the need for disadvantaged people in local communities to gain power in order to be able to meet their needs.[45] Thus, explicitly political approaches may be necessary, although community development theorists tend to be wary of doctrinaire politics,[46] and emphasise the importance of starting with the

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[45]See, for example, Kenny, pp 34-35; Ife, pp 56-64; Brian Wharf, "Community Organizing: Canadian Experiences", in Brian Wharf & Michael Clague (eds), Community Organizing, Oxford University Press, Don Mills, Ontario, 1997; and Robert Fisher, Let the People Decide: Neighborhood Organizing in America, Twayne Publishers, New York, 1994.

[46]See, for example, Kenny, p 16.

beliefs, values and priorities of community members.[47]
Community development as a body of knowledge contains a wealth
of practical information about how people can become organised
and act collectively through democratic, inclusive
organisations to redress power imbalances and have more of
their needs met.[48]

Many theorists acknowledge that local level community
development activities, however radical, do not in themselves
constitute a comprehensive means of challenging the prevailing
order. An emphasis on the local and the small scale, and a
lack of attention to the internal workings of large
institutions and workplaces, mean that community development
practitioners can be absent from key sites of political and
economic decision-making that have a critical impact on the
local communities that are the focus of their attention. As
Robert Fisher puts it:

Small may be beautiful, more manageable, and more feasible for democratic participation, but commonly
    the neighbourhood is neither the site of the causes of its problems nor the site of the power
    needed to address them.[49]

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[47]See: Rubin & Rubin, pp 207-211.

[48]Many writers tend to use the term 'community organising' instead of, or more often than,
'community development', and such writers tend to particularly stress the importance of powerless groups
organising themselves by forming or acting through organisations (see, for example: Saul Alinsky, Rules
For Radicals: A Practical Primer For Realistic Radicals, Vintage, New York, 1989; Jacqueline B Mondros &
Scott M Wilson, Organizing for Power and Empowerment, Columbia University Press, 1994; Gary Delgado,
Organizing the Movement: The Roots and Growth of ACORN, Temple University Press, Philadelphia, 1986.)

[49]Fisher, p 224

Such problems need to be addressed through organisations at a higher than local level, Fisher claims. And Paul Henderson and David Thomas note:

It has now almost become a conventional wisdom among community workers to give regular acknowledgement of the limited impact their work at neighbourhood level can have on problems such as inadequate housing, unemployment and poverty. These are the result of structural causes at regional, national and international levels, and they will be changed, it is argued, only through overt political action at wider levels than the neighbourhood.[50]

If proponents of community development believe, as they often do, that political and economic power should be decentralised or that large institutions should be scaled down and made more participatory and responsive, this does not remove the necessity to take action that is targeted at higher levels of governance or at large institutions. It is at these sites of power that centralised, unresponsive decision-making has been established and is being maintained, and it is only at these higher levels of power that such patterns of decision-making can be significantly changed.

When one examines community development literature that does give attention to the need to act at higher levels, however, one finds strategies that are no different to normal interest group or social movement politics, focusing on campaigns,

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[50]Paul Henderson and David Thomas, Skills in Neighbourhood Work, George Allen & Unwin, London, 1980, p 4.

protests and lobbying on specific issues by individual organisations or alliances built around the specific issues. It is rare to see reference to alliances that go beyond specific issues, and there is an almost complete absence of attention to electoral politics or political parties. When relations between civil organisations and the State are being considered, scant attention is given to the role of parties in generating government policies or to the possibility that citizens and organisations might have input into this policy-making process through involvement in or with parties.[51] There are exceptions to this, with some writers giving attention to electoral strategies involving supporting or putting up candidates, or to efforts to reform parties or build up influence or representation within them.[52] But in general, almost all community development literature surveyed does not even countenance any kind of progressive potential for political parties, or any role for civil organisations - at macro levels - other than that of specific issue campaigning. Given the commonly identified shortcomings of parties (that were referred to in the previous section on social movement literature) it is not surprising that little hope is invested in them, but this thesis challenges the idea that such shortcomings are an inevitable feature of political parties.

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[51]For example, see Brian Wharf & Michael Clague, "Lessons and Legacies", in Wharf & Clague, pp 303-307.

[52]For example, Janice Perlman briefly considers the possibility in the United States of a new radical party or the transformation of the Democratic Party through the efforts of alliances of organisations (Janice E Perlman, "Grassrooting the System", in Cox et al, p 425.)

Other literature on civil organisations

There is a range of other literature that recognises the political value and role of civil organisations and citizen participation in them, and this will now be reviewed briefly. Some of this literature focuses on the general importance of civil organisations in the political system, without arguing for a particular kind of relationship between them and other political institutions or a particular status vis-a-vis such other institutions. For example, earlier analysts such as William Kornhauser wrote of the role of such organisations in countering the impact of social disintegration, atomisation and rootlessness that is claimed to characterise modern 'mass society', thus enabling people to connect and cooperate with one another.[53] Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba referred to a "civic culture" of people belonging to many different social and political organisations, and their five country empirical research showed a correlation between membership of such organisations and above average participation, confidence and competence in relation to politics,[54] findings that were later supported by Verba and Nie,[55] and by Marvin Olsen.[56] Robert

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[53]Kornhauser, p 32. Also, acknowledgement is due for leading me to many of the references in this paragraph and the next to: Jan W van Deth, "Introduction: social involvement and democratic politics", in Jan W van Deth (ed), Private Groups and Public Life: Social Participation, Voluntary Associations and Political Involvement in Representative Democracies, Routledge, London, 1997.

[54]Almond & Verba: see, for example, pp 300-322.

[55]S Verba & N Nie, Participation in America: Political Democracy and Social Equality, Harper & Row, New York, 1972.

Putnam has written of the value of what he calls "civic engagement" and "social capital" in studies of Italian communities,[57] and Francis Fukuyama has highlighted the role of participation in civil organisations in generating trust in communities.[58] Ronald Inglehart contends that in Western societies new organisations with flatter, more flexible structures and educated members are creating new opportunities for political participation.[59]

Other studies have described or prescribed a particular kind of relationship between civil organisations and other institutions or aspects of the political system. Corporatist approaches entail a high level of involvement in government decision-making by civil organisations, particular peak bodies representing sectors such as business, labour and agriculture, with this involvement coordinated by government in order to generate a cooperative outcome, and as part of this, these organisations are expected to contain their demands.[60]

[56]Marvin Olsen, "Social Participation and Voter Turnout: A Multivariate Analysis", <u>American Sociological Review</u>, 37, pp 317-333.

[57]Robert Putnam, <u>Civic Traditions in Italy: Making Democracy Work</u>, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1993, see for example, pp 87-8, 167.

[58]Francis Fukuyama, <u>Trust: The Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity</u>, The Free Press, New York, 1995.

[59]Ronald Inglehart, <u>Cultural Shift in Advanced Industrial Society</u>, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1990, p 340.

[60]See, for example, P C Schmitter, "Still the Century of Corporatism?", in P C Schmitter & G Lehmbruch (eds), <u>Trends towards Corporatist Intermediation</u>, Sage, Beverly Hills, 1979, pp 7-52; and John Mathews, <u>Age of Democracy: The Politics of Post-Fordism</u>, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1990, pp 37-41.

Corporatism is sometimes criticised for representing a few powerful interests and excluding others, a point that is briefly addressed below. A variation on the corporatist approach features "consociational" arrangements in which there is representation, through civil organisations, of different ethnic groups in countries where there are two or more major ethnic communities.[61] 'Communitarians' like Amitai Etzioni focus on building strong communities that recognise mutual obligations through the medium of the family, neighbourhood, church, and local organisation, and they are critical of what they see as the narrow and self-interested demands on government of many civil organisations.[62] Other writers highlight the long history of efforts to create more effective and equitable social and economic arrangements through democratic, cooperative enterprises such as friendly societies, mutuals and cooperatives. These efforts have variously been referred to as associationalism, mutualism, guild socialism and distributism and, while their main focus has been social and economic, they have political implications in that their proponents have claimed that such forms of social and economic organisation remove the need for a high level of direct government provision of services or ownership of enterprises.[63] Finally, in the last decade a new discourse

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[61]See, for example, Arend Lijphart, <u>The Politics of Accommodation: Pluralism and Democracy in the Netherlands</u>, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1968, especially pp 36-40.

[62]Amitai Etzioni, <u>The Spirit of Community: Rights, Responsibilities and the Communitarian Agenda</u>, Fontana Press, London, 1995.

[63]See, for example, Race Mathews, <u>Jobs of Our Own: Building a Stakeholder Society</u>, Pluto Press,

has emerged, known as 'associative democracy', that builds on the aforementioned ideas and has some similarities with the ideas contained in this thesis, and for this latter reason it is given more attention than the discourses just mentioned.

Associative democracy is a Western discourse that has built on many of the aforementioned ideas, with contributions from Australia, the United States, Britain and Western Europe. Its key elements are twofold, and different proponents advocate these to different degrees. Firstly, it advocates a substantial role for civil organisations in the governance of society. Secondly, it proposes that many of the roles of service delivery now performed by governments should be taken over by civil organisations (or as its proponents refer to them, 'associations'), and that in general terms people can do a lot more to meet their needs and pursue their goals, with less reliance on or control by governments, through such associations. The distinction between these two elements tends to be fairly blurred in that, if civil organisations have a high level of involvement in delivering services alongside or instead of government, they tend to have the expertise, the legitimacy and the power to participate actively in public policy making and implementation in relation to these areas. But having said this, let us look at each of these two elements in turn.

Annandale, NSW, 1999; and Paul Hirst, <u>Associative Democracy: New Forms of Economic and Social Governance</u>, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1994, especially pp 100-111.

Those advocating a significant role for civil organisations in governance could be seen to be building on corporatist traditions identified above, but proponents of this view such as Joshua Cohen and Joel Rogers claim to recognise the faults and limitations of corporatism and suggest ways to overcome them. In response to the problem that some sectors of society are better organised than others and thus tend to be better represented in corporatist arrangements, Cohen and Rogers advocate that governments take steps to promote "the organized representation of presently excluded interests".[64] They also recommend that governments take measures to induce "the organized to be more other-regarding in their actions".[65] Both these objectives, Cohen and Rogers claim, could be achieved with "the conventional tools of public policy (taxes, subsidies, legal sanctions), as applied through the familiar decision-making procedures of formal government (legislatures and administrative bodies, as overseen by the courts)".[66] Paul Hirst questions Cohen and Rogers' assumption (as set out in an earlier formulation of their ideas) that governments would have the will or the capacity to ensure that organisations participating in such arrangements are more representative and inclusive of all sectors of society. As he puts it:

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[64]Joshua Cohen & Joel Rogers, "A Proposal for Reconstructing Democratic Institutions", in Joshua Cohen & Joel Rogers (eds), Associations and Democracy, Verso, London, 1995, p 44.

[65]ibid, p 45.

[66]ibid, p 44.

Such reforms will be rejected by exclusive and influential insider groups. Given that such crafting will
    be conflictual, since the aim is to improve social efficiency by equalizing group
    representation, it is difficult to see how it can be accomplished by disinterested state
    officials acting in the common good.[67]

Hirst adds that such an intervention by government would also be likely to weaken civil organisations vis-a-vis government and make them dependent on state benevolence. He advocates "building up associations from below" and focuses on the goal of devolving powers and responsibilities from the state to organisations, the other key element of associative democracy identified above, which is considered shortly (although he does see civil organisations working closely with government at regional and local levels in the promotion of economic development and in "coordinative politics").[68]

John Mathews comes close to the arrangements that I advance in this thesis when he says that according to his proposals:

politics will be a process of continual negotiation between organised groups or associations, within a
    framework laid down by governments at various levels. Associations will formulate their goals
    through their own internal democratic procedures, and then seek to achieve these in negotiation
    with each other and with the collective or public interest represented in the 'state'.[69]

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[67]Hirst, p 37.

[68]ibid, p 39.

[69]John Mathews, p 208.

This suggests that the impetus driving the establishment and ongoing implementation of such an arrangement comes more from civil organisations acting collectively, and less from government, than seems to be the case in the Cohen and Rogers formulation - although this is not explicitly stated by Mathews - and such a view would be in line with what is being advanced in this thesis. Where his ideas differ from what is proposed here is that he only refers to social democratic or labour parties entering into an arrangement such as this. In the context of Western democracies, where there is typically one major left or social democratic party, this is a fairly understandable approach to take, although it substantially weakens the position of any alliance of civil organisations, both at and between elections, if there is a prevailing idea that they can only negotiate with one party. In the Third World, where social democratic parties tend to be absent or insignificant, and where frequently no one major party can claim to represent marginalised sectors with any more justification than other parties can, there could be no valid reason why civil alliances should not negotiate with a range of parties or coalitions in order to achieve an optimal arrangement with one of them. This would also have the advantage of more explicitly subjecting such arrangements to the scrutiny and judgement of voters at election time, which would provide an added democratic safeguard against the possibility of less transparent, more exclusive corporatist agreements.

The other element of associative democracy, namely the idea that the responsibilities to deliver various services, that are currently in the hands of government, should be devolved to civil organisations, is an idea that is receiving renewed attention in the world today.[70] I argue in Chapter Six (pp 369-370) that it is an idea that has merit, but it is not essential to the propositions being advanced in this thesis. John Mathews says something similar when he states that an arrangement or contract between civil organisations and government is in itself neutral on the question of what is publicly owned and what is in private hands and the level of regulation that is desirable.[71] Mathews might have added that such an arrangement is also in theory neutral on the place of enterprises or services run by civil organisations, although civil organisations representing the marginalised might favour such approaches.

While the proposals outlined in this thesis are in some ways similar to those advanced by proponents of associative democracy, there are important differences. First, the thesis is dealing primarily with the Indian situation - though it is suggested that there may be lessons for other Third World and for Western settings - while associative democracy

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[70]For an overview of this see, for example, Hirst, op cit.

[71]John Mathews, p 47.

formulations are currently oriented to Western situations
only. Paul Hirst in fact explicitly states that he does not
see associative democracy as being a solution for Third World
poverty,[72] but this has to be seen in the context of his
particular version of associative democracy, that is, of the
devolution of responsibilities for the provision of various
previously government-delivered services to civil
organisations. This is certainly not the main thrust of what
is being advanced in this thesis. The other main difference is
that the thesis proposes a structure and a process through
which a strong, inclusive alliance of civil organisations can
negotiate with a range of parties or coalitions, can submit
agreements to the judgement of the electorate, and can monitor
the degree to which the party or coalition involved complies
with the agreement. Such a formulation is not present in the
writings just considered.

LITERATURE FOCUSING ON THE THIRD WORLD

The context of the development project

An examination of literature on civil organisations working
with the poor and marginalised of the Third World in the post-
World War II period needs to occur in the context of ideas and
debates about Third World development during this time, and so

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[72]Hirst, p 72.

a brief consideration of these is warranted here. There was a prevailing belief in the first few decades following the War that once countries achieved independence, adopted democratic forms of government and followed certain prescriptions in order to achieve what Walt Rostow referred to as "take-off" (marked by increased savings, investment, entrepreneurship, modernisation of agriculture and industrialisation)[73] then they would become 'developed' and prosperous like the West. But this did not appear to be happening, and these apparent failures led to various critiques of these mainstream approaches and their theoretical underpinnings, and to the emergence of alternative approaches that, it was believed, might yield better outcomes.

For example, one school of thought that drew particularly on the Latin American experience was dependency theory, which claimed that it was impossible under existing arrangements for Third World countries to 'develop' and become like Western nations, because they were locked into a global power structure and division of labour according to which the metropolitan centres (with the assistance of Third World elites, or 'compradors') controlled world capitalism and treated the Third World as a kind of global proletariat.[74]

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[73]W W Rostow, The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto, Cambridge University Press, London, 1960, pp 7-9.

[74]See for example: Andre Gunder Frank, "The Development of Underdevelopment", and Paul A. Baran, "On the Political Economy of Backwardness", both in Robert Rhodes (ed), Imperialism and Underdevelopment: A Reader, Monthly Review Press, New York, 1970; and Teresa Hayter, The Creation of World Poverty, Pluto Press, London, 1981.

This kind of thinking led Third World governments to demand a New International Economic Order at the United Nations and in other global forums, a demand that yielded no tangible result.[75] Another kind of critique focused on the shortcomings of what was pejoratively labelled 'trickle-down' theory, according to which a concentration on investment in industrialisation and large infrastructure projects was supposed to generate substantial economic growth in national economies as a whole - growth that would, it was claimed, eventually trickle down to the poorest sectors of the population.[76] This did not appear to be happening, and thus there were calls for a 'basic needs' focus instead - that is, the channelling of substantially increased resources directly into basic services for the poor, in areas such as education, health care, water supply and sanitation.[77] Other approaches focused on the need for more appropriate technology[78] and for development that is more ecologically sustainable,[79] cognisant of Third World cultures[80] and focused on gender issues,[81] and

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[75]Michael P Todaro, <u>Economic Development in the Third World</u>, 3rd edn, Longman, New York, 1985, 560-563.

[76]ibid, p 84.

[77]See Paul Streeten, <u>First Things First: Meeting Basic Needs in Developing Countries</u>, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1981.

[78]See, for example, E F Schumacher, <u>Small is Beautiful: Economics as if People Mattered</u>, Harper & Row, New York, 1973.

[79]See David Pearce, Edward Barbier and Anil Markandya, <u>Sustainable Development: Economic and Environment in the Third World</u>, Earthscan Publications, London, 1990.

[80]For example, Polly Hill, <u>Development Economics on Trial: The Anthropological Case for a Prosecution</u>, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1986.

on the need to redress disadvantage experienced by rural sectors in the Third World at the hands of their urban counterparts.[82] The role of non-governmental organisations came to be emphasised, as the poor were encouraged to participate, to organise and to build their individual and collective capacities (a role advocated in literature cited a little later).

In specific parts of the Third World, other models emerged. In Africa, for example, there was a questioning of the need for a multi-party political system, as it was claimed that one party could unify often divided societies in a common development effort,[83] and indigenous approaches - such as Tanzania's *ujamaa* (or familyhood), a kind of collectivism supposedly based on traditional culture - were pursued.[84] In India, Gandhianism provided an ongoing critique of Western values, political systems and ideas about development.[85] In Latin America, Paulo Freire and others were conceiving and beginning

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[81]See, for example, Vanita Viswanath, NGOs and Women's Development in Rural South India: A Comparative Analysis, Vistaar Publications, New Delhi, 1993.

[82]See, for example, Michael Lipton, "Why poor people stay poor", in John Harriss (ed), Rural Development: Theories of peasant economy and agrarian change, Hutchinson University Library, London, 1982, pp 66-81.

[83]See, for example, James Silk, "Traditional Culture and the Prospect for Human Rights in Africa", in Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na'im & Francis M Deng (eds), Human Rights in Africa: Cross-Cultural Perspectives, The Brookings Institute, Washington, 1990, pp 301-302.

[84]For an analysis of *ujamaa*, see Gavin Kitching, Development and Underdevelopment in Historical Perspective, Methuen, London, 1982, pp 65-67, 108-114, 118-124.

[85]See, for example Richard G Fox, Gandhian Utopia: Experiments with Culture, Beacon Press, Boston, 1989, and Geoffrey Ostergaard, Nonviolent Revolution in India, JP Amrit Kosh/Sevagram, New Delhi, 1985.

to implement a form of action that began with the 'conscientisation' (or awareness-raising) of the poor - in the context of literacy training - an approach which was cut short by the rise of military dictatorships in Latin America, but which continued to inspire activists worldwide.[86] This was linked to opposition within radical Catholic circles to military governments and prevailing economic approaches, embodied in what was known as 'liberation theology',[87] a school of thought that emanated from work with poor communities and contributed to the rise of many civil organisations among the poor, such as 'basic Christian communities'.[88] And of course, there was the political and economic model offered by Third World Communist states such as China, Vietnam and Cuba - Marxism-Leninism adapted to Third World peasant societies.[89]

This, then, is a very brief summary of the context of ideas about Third World development - and about why it was not developing - that provides a backdrop against which literature on Third World civil organisations working with the marginalised can be considered. Clearly, the challenges to orthodox development approaches have much in common with the

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[86]Paulo Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed, Penguin, Harmondsworth, UK, 1972.

[87]See, for example, Phillip Berryman, Liberation Theology, I B Tauris & Co, London, 1987.

[88]ibid; see also Madeleine Cousineau Adriance, Promised Land: Base Christian Communities and the Struggle for the Amazon, State University of New York Press, New York, 1990, especially pp 113-124.

[89]Regarding the Chinese experience, see Kitching, pp 102-104, 124-139.

new social movement and more radical community development approaches considered earlier in this chapter. They have both been part of a general trend, particularly from the 1960s onward, of challenging economic and political orthodoxies - capitalism, industrialisation, centralised and hierarchical societal and organisational structures, and representative democratic systems having the party as the principal vehicle of political change. Moreover, both have been part of new trends of thought and action on behalf of previously marginalised constituencies (such as women and ethnic minorities), raising new issues (such as environmental and consumer concerns), engaging increasingly in less orthodox political tactics (such as mass action), and adopting new organisational structures (often less formalised, less hierarchical and more participatory). Let us look more closely at the kinds of organisations that emerged in this context and the literature of which they are the subject.

Literature about development organisations

The development project has seen the emergence of countless organisations which have development (however defined) as their central purpose. These include not only civil organisations in the Third World, but also such organisations in the West, government agencies in both the Third World and the West and multilateral development agencies. Third World government agencies seek to plan and direct development

efforts and often to channel funds to civil organisations in pursuit of official development objectives. Western government agencies and civil organisations and multilateral agencies also focus on channelling funds into development projects or to Third World organisations, and as well, the power of Western governments, multilateral agencies and even some of the larger private agencies affords them influence in the development planning process in individual Third World countries. So an enormous amount of literature has been generated in pursuit of these development efforts, literature produced by government and multilateral development agencies, civil organisations, universities and freelance intellectuals and development practitioners. It reflects the range of views on what development consists of and how it can be achieved, including, at opposite ends of the spectrum, those views that characterise development as an apolitical, technical process and those that focus on encouraging marginalised communities to mobilise, form organisations, develop their capacities and in general become more active and powerful in pursuit of their own development. As has been noted, much of this development literature is very similar to community development literature in the West.

One of the similarities is that development literature tends not to examine the political role of civil organisations at macro levels, and there is a range of possible reasons for this. It may result from development being seen as an

essentially apolitical process, from a focus on a defined development project, from a tendency to focus on the local level, or from disaffection with mainstream politics. Or it may result from institutional constraints that prevent agencies and organisations being openly political. Of course, a combination of these factors may be involved. With regard to the institutional constraints, it should hardly be surprising that Third World governments are not at all keen on foreign government, private or multilateral organisations and agencies "interfering" in the internal politics of their respective countries, and so they tend to make foreign involvement conditional on political non-involvement (as is the case with India's Foreign Contribution Regulation Act). In light of these particular orientations and constraints associated with the development process (and therefore reflected in development literature) that discourage an overtly political role for organisations - especially at the macro level - I shall not be concentrating on this sort of literature in this section.[90]

Rather, I focus on writings that more directly address the political role of civil organisations. Some of this does address itself to organisations that are in the process of

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[90]Examples of this development literature include: Holloway; Esman & Uphoff; Cernea; Robert Chambers, Rural Development: Putting the Last First, Longman, London, 1983; Thomas Carroll, Intermediary NGOs: The Supporting Link in Grassroots Development, Kumarian, West Hartford, 1992; and Anne Gordon Drabek (ed) "Development Alternatives: The Challenge for NGOs", World Development, 15, 1987 (Supplement).

emerging from the development model (in view of its perceived failures) and evolving in a more political direction. This literature frequently uses terms such as 'NGOs', 'action groups', 'non-party political formations' and 'social action' (henceforth referred to as 'social action literature'). Then there are other writings that talk in terms of social movements. As is the case in the West, there is a large body of literature on social movements in India and other parts of the Third World, but much of it concerns movements that are not particularly relevant to this thesis, including those going back into last century and earlier, localised rebellions, religious revivalist or reform movements and ethnic separatist movements.[91] I am concerned here with movements in the post-colonial period, particularly in the last three to four decades, that consider political action through which the marginalised can improve their circumstances. In the review of literature that follows, I do not make general distinctions between social action and social movement literature, because these categorisations do not correlate with features of the literature or of the subjects they cover, in relation to the key questions I am examining. There are some differences in that, firstly, social movement literature tends to focus thematically on different kinds of movements (such as those of labour, women, peasants and so on) and thus often to focus less on individual organisations, and

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[91]Many Indian movements of this kind are described in M S A Rao, Social Movements in India, Manohar, New Delhi, 1984, and a broad range of literature about such movements is reviewed in Shah.

secondly, literature that deals with NGOs and action groups tends to cover a narrower range of organisations than do social movement writings (considered collectively), in that NGOs and action groups make up only a small proportion of all civil organisations, but these differences are not critical to the following analysis.

Literature on politically active organisations and movements in the Third World generally

The growth of politically active civil organisations worldwide since the 1960s has led to the emergence of a body of literature that describes and analyses them. For example, Alan Durning charts the range of movements and groups in different parts of the world and in different issue areas. While he stresses the value of local action, he also recognises its limitations. As he puts it:

All local groups eventually collide with forces they cannot control. Peasant associations cannot enact supportive agricultural policies or build roads to distant markets. Women's groups cannot develop and test modern contraceptive technologies or rewrite bank lending rules. Neighbourhood committees cannot implement city-wide recycling programs or give themselves a seat at the table in national energy planning. Thus, perhaps the greatest irony of community action for sustainability is that communities cannot do it alone. Small may be beautiful, but it can also be insignificant.[92]

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[92]Alan B Durning, Action at the Grassroots: Fighting Poverty and Environmental Decline, Worldwatch Institute, 1989, p 51.

He sees the answer in forging alliances between local groups
and national governments, and cites many cases in which such
an arrangement has produced dramatic results, but he adds that
this is can only work if governments are responsive. He does
not, however, address the question of how a citizenry might
achieve such a responsive government.

For John Clark, the optimum relationship between development
organisations and the state will vary from country to country
and from organisation to organisation. He believes that
organisations can best spread the impact of their efforts
beyond the bounds of the projects they are currently working
on by either replicating the projects, building grassroots
movements or influencing government policy formation.
Precisely which of these they choose to focus on will depend
on a variety of factors: whether the government is autocratic
or responsive, strong or weak, and whether organisations agree
with its policies or not; whether there is a popular
perception of exploitation; whether the poor are fearful of
voicing dissent; whether poverty is exacerbated by factors
such as corruption, repression or exploitation by landlords
and moneylenders; whether there are strong traditional elites;
whether there are potential allies of grassroots movements
such as trade unions and sympathetic parties; and the status,
resources and competencies possessed by NGOs.[93] It is

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[93]John Clark, <u>Democratizing Development</u>, Earthscan, London, 1991, pp 83-93.

interesting that he believes that in India the most appropriate way for organisations to spread the impact of their work is to seek to influence government policy formation rather than to build grassroots movements or to simply replicate projects. As he says, a "tactic of dialogue and persuasion rather than confrontation is more likely to secure the desired reform".[94] This view is highly debatable. The past two decades have seen the position of India's poor and marginalised decline markedly, as will be seen, and one has to ask, what the value is in persuading government officials of the merits of particular policies when there are so many powerful forces in society - acting at micro and macro levels - who can obstruct progressive change if it threatens their interests. Moreover, while Clark's style of pragmatism may often yield results in the short term and in specific instances, is it not necessary to also take on the bigger challenges of achieving more just and democratic governance, challenges that necessarily involve political action?

David Korten writes about different generations of NGOs, with first generation ones practising relief and welfare, those of the second generation bringing about small-scale, self-reliant local development and third generation NGOs seeking to change specific government policies and establish new institutions such as community banks.[95] But it is argued in this thesis

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[94]ibid, p 86.

[95]David Korten, <u>Getting to the 21st Century: Voluntary Action and the Global Agenda</u>, Kumarian, West

that what Korten describes as third generation NGOs are still far from capable of producing the necessary changes if they rely on specific-issue approaches alone. John Friedmann considers the role of alliance building in increasing the power and effectiveness of NGOs, but contends that such alliances can become bureaucratic and overly professional and centralise power at the top, and may be co-opted by the state. He stresses the importance of pursuing broad political objectives - while not alienating parties and governments and continuing to generate practical benefits for constituents - but does not offer any new insights about how such objectives might be pursued.[96] Jeff Haynes asserts that most action groups are focused on defending the livelihoods of members but are unsuccessful at this in the short term. While he characterises the growth of such groups as "a quite revolution" and "an organizational explosion", he is much less optimistic about their political impact:

> ...it would not be appropriate to conclude that [action groups] are at this stage in their development the progenitors, foundations and manifestations of a new age, the impending advent of true participatory democracy in the Third World. Reality is more complex and, for the subordinate, often much grimmer...many relatively powerless people find it increasingly difficult to defend their livelihood and well-being, even through participatory initiatives.[97]

Hartford, 1990, pp 114-122.

[96]John Friedmann, Empowerment: The Politics of Alternative Development, Blackwell, Cambridge, Mass., 1992, pp 136-166.

[97]Jeff Haynes, Democracy and Civil Society in the Third World: Politics and New Political Movements, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1997, pp 179-180.

Ponna Wignaraja stresses the need for civil organisations to systematically replicate solutions, to build alliances and to move beyond mere reliance on single-issue protest:

It is clear that a protest movement on a single issue alone is insufficient to reverse the complex processes of the past. Single-issue movements can merely be eruptions or the first mobilization. Movements must acquire greater depth through continuous processes of mobilization, conscientization and organization-building. [98]

In the same anthology Samir Amin endorses Immanuel Wallerstein's view that the "old organizations" (unions, popular and social democratic parties and national liberation movements) that were once anti-systemic "are now systemic in the sense that they...are not very keen on anyone wanting to go beyond their achievements and, above all, to move forward without them".[99] With regard to what such moves forward might consist of, he sees "no need to scorn the heritage of Western bourgeois democracy"[100] (although he does believe that one-party states have been justified in some instances) but he insists that what is needed is something distinct from bourgeois democracy, as well as from "populist mobilizations" in various parts of the Third World "where contempt for democracy wore down the potential for renewal".[101] However, he

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[98]Wignaraja, p 23.

[99]Samir Amin, "Social Movements at the Periphery", in Wignaraja, p 78.

[100]ibid, p 91.

[101]ibid, p 93.

speaks favourably of "Jacobin democracy" (by which he means a movement where the radical ideas of the leaders are far ahead of those supporting the movement) without seeing any contradiction in this term and without saying anything about the organisational agency of such a movement.[102]

Paul Ekins describes the failure of orthodox approaches to problems of war and military threats, hunger and poverty, environmental degradation and the denial of human rights, and he contrasts this failure with what he sees as the effectiveness of the large number of grassroots approaches that he cites.[103] He claims "scientism", "developmentalism" and "statism" are at fault, and calls for democratisation of knowledge, development and the state, but he does not say anything further about how this can be politically achieved on a larger scale.[104]

Of course, there is also a large amount of social action and social movement literature relating to specific Third World countries or regions. That which relates to India will be examined next. Space does not permit consideration here of literature dealing with other specific parts of the Third World, but it should be noted that literature concerning some

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[102]ibid, pp 92-93.

[103]Paul Ekins, A New World Order: Grassroots Movements for Global Change, Routledge, London, 1992, pp 200-209.

[104]ibid, pp 207-209.

relevant developments in Latin America and the Philippines in
is examined in Chapter Six (pp 390-393).

Literature on Indian organisations and movements

Some commentators on the Indian political scene locate the
solutions to India's social ills in turning away from
political parties and electoral politics, which are seen to
contribute little to the alleviation of poverty, and turning
instead to mass politics of a specific-issue or local kind.
Shashi Pandey, for example, sees the answer in practising such
participatory politics and thereby "transcending the formal
political system" which he sees as the politics of elites.[105]
Pandey describes a range of examples of organisations engaged
in awareness-raising and mass action on specific issues at
local levels, and at higher levels when groups act together.
He recognises the problems of this kind of politics - for
example, the divisions between groups and the reliance on
external funding - but he nevertheless believes that "people
involved in thousands of micro-struggles can come to some kind
of macro-perspective".[106] But Pandey sees little or no
possibility within such a macro-perspective for a constructive
role for political parties.

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[105]Shashi Ranjan Pandey, Community Action for Social Justice: Grassroots Organizations in India,
Sage, New Delhi, 1991, p 234.

[106]ibid.

Other writers, however, while seeing great value in the approaches of non-party groups (and at the same time recognising the challenges such groups face), also believe that there are still important roles for political parties. These include writers associated with two New Delhi groups, Lokayan and the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies. The latter was started by Rajni Kothari, a leading Indian political scientist. The themes of many of Kothari's articles in the 1980s and 1990s concern the shortcomings of mainstream political processes and organisations, the promise offered by the new politics of non-party political organisations, and the need for both parties and non-party groups. Kothari poses the question as to whether the non-party political action can produce "a macro challenge, a general transformation", and answers that:

> this cannot be achieved through the conventional channels of political parties, trade union activity, peasant organizations and the capture of state power through electoral mobilizations. For this task we need new building blocks. Partly, a macro transformation will come through the non-party political process, partly through counter-cultural and alternative movements that are global in scope, and partly through 'nationality' types of movements for regional autonomy and for the texturing of a pluralist social order supported by a decentralized political order. It is a political convergence of class, culture, gender and environment that I have in mind[107]

Kothari adds that he does "not conceive of the non-party political process as in any way hostile to the party political process"[108] but rather sees the former as being able to

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[107]Rajni Kothari, "Masses, Classes and the State", in Wignaraja, p 73.

[108]ibid.

revitalise the latter and connect it to the grassroots. However, he does not spell out what forms future relationships between parties and non-party groups might take. One reason why he sees a "mass politics of the grassroots" as so necessary is because Western-style social democratic or labour parties, which he sees as responsible for the welfare state in the West, are not in his view a possibility for India. (Consideration given in this thesis to the critical role played by union movements linked to social democratic parties, as an aggregated civil base, in generating political change has already been noted.)

Contributions from Smitu Kothari, Vijay Pratap and Shiv Visvanathan of Lokayan are along similar lines.[109] They also contend that there are important roles for both parties and non-party groups, but they note the complex and problematic relationship between them. Though both may work together on particular issues, parties accuse non-party groups of being diversionary and divisive, or of propping up the system with their development work and their acceptance of foreign funds, while the non-party groups claim that they are more responsive to their constituencies, do not engage in unsavoury compromises and are able to dream and practise alternatives. Parties are also accused of co-opting movements and leaders, but at the same time groups are seeing the need to form

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[109]See, for example: Smitu Kothari, Vijay Pratap & Shiv Visvanathan, "Between Idealism and Pragmatism: Non-Party Formations and Political Parties", Lokayan Bulletin, 11:1, July-Aug 1994, pp 1-4.

parties and stand for election. Kothari et al see the need for
the two sides to work together, in a spirit of "humility all
around".[110] They favour a multi-pronged approach, as the
"struggle for a just society will have to be simultaneously
waged in the small forums of idealism, in the movements that
articulate this alternative and in the pragmatic, negotiation-
based party political process".[111] But they do not suggest how
this might be done more successfully than it is at the moment.

Two other commentators associated with these groups are D L
Sheth and Harsh Sethi. Sheth identifies the difficulties
facing groups and movements, namely "fragmentation, isolation,
limited reach, lack of funds, and, above all, persecution by
governments and hostility of political parties".[112] The
politics they practise may turn out to be a temporary
phenomenon, he contends, because it possesses "no new social
knowledge and, more importantly, no macro-structure of thought
and institutions...powerful enough to contend with the
validity claims of the established macro-structures".[113] Sheth
does not venture to suggest what these needed features might
look like, except to say that if groups and movements joined
together in a large party-like structure, this would "only

[110]ibid, p 4.

[111]Smitu Kothari et al, p 4.

[112]D L Sheth, "Grassroots stirrings and the future of politics", <u>Alternatives</u>, IX, 1983, p 22.

[113]ibid, p 23.

change the regime...not change politics", and to canvas the
vaguely expressed possibility that "action-groups and
movements will continue to edge away from conventional
politics and achieve a degree of coherence in their
perspectives and practices for a new politics of
transformation".[114]

Like Smitu Kothari et al, Sethi acknowledges the often
conflict-ridden relationship between non-party groups and
parties, particularly parties of the left, with:

> ...the groups accusing the parties of dogmatism, monolithic structure, big brother attitude, non-
> democratic and manipulative practices and bureaucratism. The counter-accusations are equally
> vicious and essentially centre on the groups considering the Left parties as the major enemies,
> dividing the progressive forces, entering into dubious alliances with right-wing forces, and
> playing into the hands of the State.[115]

He sees this as unfortunate as both have their roles to play,
and both need the other. Parties do not encourage
participation and thus alienate people from the political
process, while non-party groups are unable to "resolve macro
contradictions in a micro frame"[116] - but neither should they
try to capture state power. Sethi considers three
possibilities for non-party groups. The first of these,
joining up with a major party, would, he believes, see groups

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[114]ibid, p 23.

[115]Sethi, "Groups in a New Politics of Transformation", p 311.

[116]ibid, p 312.

subsumed within the parties, with the former having little influence on the latter. The second, forming an autonomous federation with other groups, has in his view only worked so far at a regional level when groups have similar ideologies and specific objectives for the federation. The third, building a working but autonomous relationship with one or more parties, also in his opinion suffers from the relative weakness of the groups in such an arrangement. It is a pity Sethi does not consider a combination of the second and third options, which would be close to the proposals contained in this thesis. If groups come together their position vis-a-vis particular parties is stronger. Despite the shortcomings that he identifies in these approaches, he seems to endorse that process of trying out new approaches and seeking to formulate a new ideology as, in his view, existing intellectual traditions in India, such as Gandhianism, Marxism and the socialism of Ram Manohar Lohia, offer only partial answers (attention is given to these schools of thought in Chapters 6 and 7). As he puts it "[w]ithout the creation of an alternative macro structure of thought and institutions the movements are likely to be absorbed only as pressure groups to correct local anomalies".[117]

Other writers identify similar problems facing non-party groups. Anil Bhatt, for example, also mentions the "absence of

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[117]Sethi, "Groups in a New Politics of Transformation", p 315.

a concrete macro alternative with which... [their] local
initiatives can be linked and aggregated".[118] Bhatt notes the
ambivalence of groups to "politics, politicians and parties.
They see politicians as corrupt, power hungry, selfish people
and politics as dirty. And yet they go to local politicians
for solving their problems and also support and campaign for
them in the elections".[119]

Philip Eldridge sees a place for both parties and non-party
groups, challenging the "emerging conventional wisdom that the
two approaches represent polarized, incompatible, models of
politics. Could they not also represent a necessary division
of labour and variety necessary to any stable society and
polity?" he asks.[120] Though Gandhianism has influenced groups
to reject the legitimacy of mainstream politics, it has
offered no clear vision of an alternative. Eldridge believes
that non-party groups still have some way to go in adequately
articulating grassroots concerns, but he contends that they
should also go beyond this and seek to aggregate interests,
not as political parties but as people's movements.[121]

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[118]Anil Bhatt, <u>Development and Social Justice: Micro Action by Weaker Sections</u>, Sage, New Delhi, 1989, p 193.

[119]ibid.

[120]Philip Eldridge, "The political role of community action groups in India and Indonesia", <u>Alternatives</u>, X, Winter 1984-85, pp 427-428.

[121]ibid, p 427.

Mangesh Kulkarni sees in the discourse of action groups an orientation that has been noted as a feature of new social movements in the West, in that:

> unlike the 'grand narratives' of conventional ideological discourse which promised the progressive realisation of a determinate telos through the historical intervention of determinate agents, it offered 'little narratives' of liberation from particular forms of oppression, and a plural notion of agency.[122]

However, Kulkarni concludes that action groups have not lived up to the hope that Rajni Kothari (and others) have invested in them, that they would positively impact on the state.

> Most of them were centred on an individual or a small group of leaders; many of them turned out to be short-lived and have been effective only in rural pockets of the vast rural hinterland. Their growing dependence on government and foreign funds is a matter of concern. Above all, they failed to build a united front of the various oppressed strata and to give an alternative direction to the dominant political economy of development in the country. This is particularly evident through their ineffectiveness in resisting the anti-poor components of the New Economic Policy.[123]

But Kulkarni's solutions are obscurely expressed. For example, there is a need for action group to act on a "wider terrain" and to bring about a new "articulation".[124]

Rahul notes the shift of non-governmental organisations from development work to social action, but also the many

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[122]Mangesh Kulkarni, "Action groups and the state", <u>Seminar</u>, 446, Oct 1996, p 44.

[123]ibid, p 46.

[124]ibid, p 47.

shortcomings and challenges that need to be addressed, including repressive and co-optive tactics by government and the essentially undemocratic structure of many NGOs themselves.[125]

Other writers identify particular political tasks that they believe civil organisations should take on. Rajindar Sachar argues that NGOs should put up candidates for election with a view to participating in coalition governments.[126] D. Bandyopadhyay sees a critical role for voluntary organisations in helping to make the reformed Panchayat structure work.[127] Kavaljit Singh, on the other hand, stresses the need for civil organisations to tackle global issues impacting upon India by becoming far better informed about global financial matters so they can advance a cogent alternative to the consensus in favour of liberalisation among Indian parties across the political spectrum, and by building stronger links with civil organisations worldwide.[128]

Gail Omvedt, who has observed and documented a number of contemporary Indian social movements, is critical of the Lokayan school of thinking on action groups and what she sees

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[125]Rahul, "Whither voluntarism", <u>Seminar</u>, 431, July 1995, p 49.

[126]Rajindar Sachar, "A New Electoral Agenda", <u>Mainstream</u>, 7 Feb 1998, pp 11-12.

[127]D Bandyopadhyay, "Voluntary Organisations and Panchayats", <u>Mainstream</u>, 29 March 1997, pp 11-14.

[128]Kavaljit Singh, "New Challenges for Peoples' Movements", <u>Mainstream</u>, 12 Dec 1998, pp 15-19.

as the philosophy of "grass-roots-ism". She criticises NGOs for being hierarchical, personality-centred and sometimes corrupt, and for not having a strong base of support in their constituencies because their external funding renders this unnecessary, and she reproaches Lokayan for not distinguishing between NGOs and mass movements, such as the farmers', women's, environmental and anticaste movements that she describes, which she sees as the real harbingers of social transformation. She also contends that Lokayan has not offered a clear alternative approach for non-party groups.[129] At the same time, Omvedt herself states that although the "new social movements have...arrived on the threshhold of an alternative model of politics and development...they are as yet unable to cross it, while the unmapped terrain beyond is barely discernible" [130] So while Lokayan may lack a clear vision of the future, it is not alone. In relation to one critical area - the relationship between movements and parties, she sees no clear way forward either, as she contends that the movements "could not go ahead with the political parties as they existed, and they were not capable of replacing them".[131] Omvedt concentrates on describing the overall themes of campaigns in the different movements she covers, the big events, the debates between different key figures and groups,

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[129]Gail Omvedt, <u>Reinventing Revolution: New Social Movements and the Socialist Tradition in India</u>, M E Sharpe, New York, 1993, pp 189-194.

[130]ibid, p xiii.

[131]ibid, p 295.

the alliances and rifts between different organisations and parties.

A number of writers have analysed the farmers' movement, which has been growing in recent years. Unlike movements such as those of dalits and adivasis, this movement spans the whole socio-economic spectrum from upper caste large landholders to dalit labourers. For this reason it is important to consider the questions of which interests this movement is serving, and whether farmers' organisations might fit into a broader movement for change. Some analysts, such as Omvedt, at least partially accept the idea put forward by key farmers' organisations that they represent all agricultural groups - from small and large landholders to tenants and agricultural labourers - and that the main opponents of all these groups are urban interests wanting to draw wealth from rural areas and prevent it returning there.[132] Others such as M V Nadkarni argue that there are far bigger divisions within the agricultural sector and that the farmers' organisations are chiefly concerned to advance the interests of middle to large landholders.[133] I consider this further in Chapter Six (p 355-358).

The focus of Paul Routledge's study of Indian social movements

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[132]ibid, pp 100-126.

[133]M V Nadkarni, <u>Farmers' Movements in India</u>, Allied Publishers, New Delhi, 1987, pp 139-155.

is on resistance against "the dominating and destructive consequences of the development process"[134] through the use of non-violent sanctions, and he examines how the form this takes is determined by the specific locations and cultures in which it occurs. While Routledge concentrates on two movements involved in resisting, respectively, the destruction of forest and the establishment of a missile testing range, he sees these as part of a broader trend of "new social movements" in India that are engaged in "constructive resistance", that is, opposition to specific government policies combined with efforts to "articulate and implement alternative development practices"[135] Although both the movements he studies achieved some measure of success, Routledge acknowledges that such movements of resistance in India are likely to be "restricted to the local level" because "the ethnic, linguistic and cultural diversity of India...provides barriers to the formation of mass (national) movements within civil society".[136] But he also identifies instances in which this is breaking down and the interconnectedness of individual struggles is being recognised, and through the creation of such links he sees the possibility of "a powerful challenge to the hegemonic project of the Indian state",[137] but like many of

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[134]Paul Routledge, <u>Terrains of Resistance: Nonviolent Social Movements and the Contestation of Place in India</u>, Praeger, Westport, Conn., 1993, p 31.

[135]ibid, p 17.

[136]ibid, p 133.

[137]ibid, pp 132-133.

the other writers cited in this chapter he does not elaborate on the form this might take.

CONCLUSION

The foregoing examination of these diverse bodies of literature indicates that in the past four decades, in both the West and the Third World, there has been a broad change in ideas about how civil organisations can best act for marginalised constituencies, a change that is reflected in both theory and practice. Rather than having faith in the institutions of mainstream politics - in particular, governments and political parties - the new trend has been to valorise specific-issue protest, local action and new forms of political participation. Literature on new social movements, community development and social action describes and frequently supports this trend. While it may not explicitly reject the activities of the more mainstream political institutions, one is left with the impression that political change is principally being driven by the new organisations. While the failures and limitations of this kind of political activity may sometimes be recognised, commentators generally do not appear to consider the possibility that these may result from a failure to try and change the political mainstream and improve the process of governance through means other than protest. It can be argued that the new politics needs to become normalised, as T. K. Oommen argues when he

says:

> unless movements crystallize into institutions, unless the visions of movements are translated into reality through institutional mechanisms, they will embody mere aspirations. That is, institutions are the instruments movements employ to translate ideology into programme, theory into praxis, without which they remain shells without substance. In fact, every revolutionary ideology is in search of a structure - party, institution - capable of translating its vision into reality.[138]

Thus, the institutionalisation of movement goals is not, as often portrayed in social science literature, "pathological and undesirable",[139] but is an entirely necessary process. Richard Flacks makes a related point in a specifically Western political context when he writes:

> The American experience shows that movements must also interact with the state not only as a source of pressure on elites from outside but as a vehicle for achieving representation. Movement demands have to be legitimated; rights claimed have to be legitimated. Moreover, the high intensity of mass action is not sustainable indefinitely; movement members need to go home, they have to live in the space their actions have helped create. They need political representation in order to carry on daily life.[140]

Oommen maintains that there is a kind of dialectical relationship between movements and institutions, with institutions being vehicles through which movements can realise their goals, and movements infusing institutions with

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[138]Oommen, p 151.

[139]ibid, p 152.

[140]Richard Flacks, "The Party's Over - So What Is to Be Done?" in Enrique Larana, Hank Johnston & Joseph R Gusfeld, <u>New Social Movements: From Ideology to Identity</u>, Temple University Press, Philadelphia, 1994, p 339.

new values and preventing them from becoming obsolete.[141] This
is an elegant theory, but it is truer as a statement of what
ought to exist, I would argue, than as a description of what
does exist. If these two forms of politics simply react
against one another, each driven by its own internal dynamics,
the outcome may often involve a lot of costs and few benefits.
I argue in this thesis for a far more considered relationship
between the two, for the creation of structures and processes
that enable each to enhance the other in a smoother, more
continuous way, so that popular participation is encouraged,
empowered and integrated into mainstream politics, and as a
result of such participation institutions remain democratic
and responsive.

The JP Movement in India was a reaction against institutional
politics. The institutions that were challenged retaliated,
leading in turn to the JP Movement countering this retaliation
with the creation of an institution of its own, in the form of
a new political party that won government. When this largely
failed, many associated with the Movement became even more
negative about institutional politics than they had been
previously. But we need to examine carefully what actually
happened. I argue that there were defects in the Movement and
in its relationship with institutional politics that led to
the result that occurred. The next chapter, therefore, begins

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[141]Oommen, pp 152-153.

an examination of the JP Movement.

CHAPTER THREE: THE J.P. MOVEMENT, LOK SHAKTI AND RAJ SHAKTI[1]

I don't want to go into politics, because the politics of today is very dirty.

Rajdeo Choudhary[2]

Parties have totally failed in India. They have not solved a single problem.

H D Sharma[3]

The main enemy of community is the concept of government.

A B Bharadwaj[4]

Politics is the science of the devil.

An early Assamese poet, cited by Prabash Joshi[5]

A key part of the argument of this thesis involves a challenge to the idea - common around the world but certainly strong in India - that governments and parties are inevitably flawed or 'dirty', and therefore either not worth trying to improve or not something for 'good' people to become involved in. It is an idea that is not new in India, as the next chapter will indicate (pp 208-210). This belief is challenged through the medium of a case study of the JP Movement, and to a lesser extent of the Janata Party Government that followed it. The shortcomings of this movement and this government reinforced

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[1]Lok Shakti means people's power while Raj Shakti is state power.

[2]Interview: Rajdeo Choudhary (22/11/95).

[3]Interview: H D Sharma (29/11/95).

[4]Interview: A B Bharadwaj (15/12/95).

[5]Interview: Prabash Joshi (8/12/95). Joshi is not necessarily agreeing with the fourth quote, but rather citing it as indicative of a commonly held belief.

popularly-held negative views about governments and parties, but there is also much that can be learned from the JP Movement - including from its failings - about what transformational politics requires.

This chapter provides a historical overview of the JP Movement (1974-75) and the Janata Government (1977-79), with brief attention to the Emergency in the intervening period. While it is important to examine both the JP Movement and the Janata Government, the focus is on the former, for two reasons. First, there is a large degree of consensus about the poor record of the Janata Government's record, as will be seen, and this can be fairly simply stated. But more importantly, the Janata Party was substantially the child of the JP Movement, and its origins, and the basis of its electoral success and its ultimate failings, can be elucidated to a large degree from a study of the Movement. The thesis is concerned with the beliefs, structures and practices within society that create, or fail to create, the basis for parties to govern effectively in the interests of all, particularly the most marginalised sectors of society.

As has been pointed out in Chapter One, it is not intended that this account present new historical material about the Movement. It is already well-documented. However, what is needed is a re-assessment of the lessons to be drawn from the Movement, as - this thesis claims - the reasons for its

failures have not been fully appreciated, and many questionable conclusions have been reached that have led into political dead-ends. Re-examining the JP Movement and its outcomes, especially from the vantage point of two decades later, can shed light on the issue of how better governance can be achieved in India, and potentially elsewhere. This chapter will set the stage for Chapter Four to explore these issues further.

It is necessary to begin an examination of the JP Movement by looking at the life of JP himself, because the man who was Jayaprakash Narayan critically shaped the movement that bore his name, and the events and strands of his life up till 1974 are closely connected with aspects of Indian politics and society that need to be grasped if one is to understand the JP Movement.

THE LIFE OF JAYAPRAKASH NARAYAN

Jayaprakash Narayan was born in 1902 into a lower middle class family in the village of Sitabdiara, Bihar, fifty miles from Patna.[6] He was one of six children, of whom four survived to adulthood, and Jayaprakash was the oldest surviving son. His

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[6]. See, for an account of JP's early life, up until his departure for the United States: Allan Scarfe and Wendy Scarfe, J.P. His Biography, Orient Longman, New Delhi, 1975, pp 23-49; Brahmanand, "Introduction", in Jayaprakash Narayan, Towards Total Revolution, vol 1, (ed Brahmanand), Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1978, pp xiii-xv; S K Ghose, The Crusade and the End of Indira Raj, Intellectual Book Corner, New Delhi, 1978, pp 14-15; Ajit Bhattacharjea, Jayaprakash Narayan: A Political Biography, Vikas, Delhi, 1975, pp 26-33.

family were Kayasthas, a caste that commonly took up such occupations as law, medicine, teaching and administration.[7]

He was said to be a bright student, though shy,[8] and began at the village school at around six years of age. At the age of nine he commenced school in Patna at the seventh grade. In 1919, JP began a science course on a scholarship at Patna College. However, from the time of his secondary schooling he took an interest in the growing Indian opposition to British rule, and was inspired by Gandhi's earlier campaign of *satyagraha* (non-violent struggle) in South Africa. Consequently, in the second year of his course and just a few weeks before his exams, he followed Gandhi's call to students to quit their studies and devote themselves to a non-cooperation campaign as part of the struggle for Independence. In that year he also married fourteen year old Prabhavati Devi, whose father was an associate of Gandhi, in an arranged marriage.

When the non-cooperation campaign came to a halt early in 1922, JP wanted to continue his education, and so for a while attended a school set up for non-cooperation students, but this could not take him beyond second year level. He was not prepared to attend any institution run or aided by the

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[7] Scarfe and Scarfe, p 23.

[8] ibid, pp 25, 30; Brahmanand, p xiv.

Government, or to study in Britain (even if his family could have afforded it), as it was the colonial power. He then heard of opportunities in the United States for students to work part-time to support themselves while studying, and so he decided to take up this option. Prabhavati declined to accompany him, and during JP's time away she lived with Gandhi and his wife in their Ashram and was regarded by them as an adopted daughter.

His mother's ill-health and opposition to his US studies led JP to wait throughout most of 1922 until he won her approval, but at the end of that year, with some money from his father, JP left for America.[9] He was to stay there for seven years, attending universities in California, Iowa, Wisconsin and Ohio. He began studying Science but switched to Arts, finishing up with a Master of Arts. For this he wrote a thesis on "Societal Variation", in which he presented an essentially Marxist argument that social change is caused by changes in the tools and techniques of production.[10]

During his time in America he had a variety of casual jobs to support himself, including waiting and dish-washing in restaurants, picking grapes, packing fruit, working in a

[9]See for accounts of JP's time in America: Scarfe & Scarfe, pp 50-66; Brahmanand, pp xv-xviii; Bhattacharjea, pp 34-44; Bimal Prasad, Gandhi, Nehru and JP: Studies in Leadership, Chanakya, Delhi, 1984, p 171; Sebasti Raj, Total Revolution: The Final Phase of Jayaprakash Narayan's Political Philosophy, Satya Nilayam, Madras, 1986, pp 3-4.

[10]Scarfe & Scarfe, p 61.

factory, a foundry and an abattoir, and selling hair-straightening and skin-lightening preparations to blacks. At one point he had great difficulty obtaining work, and as a result became malnourished and sick and nearly died following a badly-performed operation to remove his tonsils. At the University of Wisconsin, which had a radical reputation, JP mixed with European and Jewish students and immersed himself in the writings of both Marxist and 'bourgeois' social scientists. These experiences, together with his general impressions of life in America - the wealth and poverty, the changes occurring in the society, and its differences from India - had a significant impact on JP's thinking, both challenging the attitudes of his Indian upbringing and establishing for him a set of beliefs about the shortcomings of Western society and political systems.

JP returned to India in 1929, a time of heightened nationalist activity.[11] Given his wife and father-in-law's close association with Gandhi and his own nationalist sentiments it was not surprising that JP was immediately drawn into the nationalist cause, despite the fact that his Marxism put him at odds with the beliefs of Gandhi and Nehru, with both of whom he worked closely.[12] He was appointed by Nehru to head up

[11]For accounts of the Independence struggle and JP's role in it, see: Scarfe & Scarfe, p 66-177; Brahmanand, pp xviii-lxiii; Bhattacharjea, pp 45-86; Ghose pp 15-17; Prasad, pp 171-184; Raj, pp 4-8; Adi H Doctor, JP's Total Revolution: An Exercise in Utopia, Seema, Delhi, 1987, pp 16-17.

[12]While studying in America JP was strongly influenced by the writings of the Indian Marxist intellectual, M N Roy. Roy did not believe that Gandhi was seriously prepared to challenge exploitation and inequality in India (Scarfe & Scarfe, p 69).

a new Congress Department of Labour Research, and in this position he sought both to win improved conditions for industrial workers and to enlist their support for Congress and the Independence struggle. With the second civil disobedience campaign of 1932-3 and the imprisonment of Nehru, Gandhi and other leaders, JP became Acting General Secretary of Congress and set up an underground office of the organisation, until his own arrest and imprisonment in January, 1933.

As a Marxist, JP saw himself as fighting for socialism as well as Independence. In the early 1930s Indian Communists, under the direction of the Communist International, were strongly opposed to Gandhi and the nationalist cause (and all other "bourgeois" independence struggles), and so JP did not see them as allies at that stage. Instead, he and six other jailed freedom fighters conceived a plan to set up a socialist party within Congress, a plan that was implemented upon his release in 1934. The Congress Socialist Party, with JP as its General Secretary, soon established branches all over the country and was particularly popular among educated youth. JP was both its chief organiser and its chief ideologue.[13]

In 1936, the Communists, under international direction, had changed their position on the Independence struggle, and as a

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[13]Prasad, p 174; Bhattacharjea, p 53.

result they were prepared to join the Congress Socialist Party. Despite his differences with Indian Communists, JP still considered himself a Marxist at this stage, and he dearly wanted to see unity among left forces in India. Consequently, for the remainder of the decade, he strenuously defended the alliance with the Communists, in the face of the view held by many of his colleagues that they were seeking both to control the Congress Socialist Party and to discredit it. He was finally brought round to this view, and the Communists were expelled in 1940. The experience left JP with a lasting distaste for Communist parties and their methods, which was reinforced by accounts that were emerging of Soviet purges and trials. He also began to re-examine his Marxist beliefs, and to look again at Gandhi's teaching and at Western democratic thought, paving the way for a change in his beliefs from Marxism to democratic socialism during the early 1940s.[14]

Throughout the independence struggle JP and other Socialists were much more militant than the mainstream within Congress, advocating mass mobilisation and uncompromising, even violent, opposition to British rule and to the manifestations of Britain's presence in India. They saw Congress involvement in limited self-government from the mid-1930s and Congress co-operation as Britain moved towards granting Indian independence in the 1940s as acts of collaboration. JP did not

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[14]Prasad, pp 178-179.

believe that Britain was serious about granting independence, and in any case he did not want to see a foreign privileged elite simply replaced by a local privileged elite.[15] Over the course of the struggle Congress's approach fluctuated between that of accommodation with and outright opposition to the British, so at times the Socialists and the rest of Congress took similar positions and at times they diverged widely.

JP was imprisoned for most of 1940 and then proceeded to tour the country setting up secret organisations, which led to his re-imprisonment in early 1941. His stature at that time, particularly among the youth, was assuming legendary proportions, and this was heightened by an aborted effort to smuggle a letter to his colleagues advocating armed struggle, an effort exposed by the British.[16] While in Deoli Prison Camp in Rajasthan JP also undertook a thirty-one day fast to improve conditions for the camp's political prisoners. His public standing grew further at the time of the Quit India campaign in 1942, which saw Gandhi, Nehru and others arrested and massive public protests. JP and five other freedom-fighters escaped from jail, and he then proceeded to encourage and invigorate the underground struggle, partly though the medium of three widely circulated letters to freedom-fighters.[17] He was also involved in training a guerilla force

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[15]Scarfe & Scarfe, pp 182-183.

[16]Prasad, pp 180-181.

[17]Prasad, pp 181-183.

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across the border in Nepal, and it was there that he and his colleagues were arrested, but then rescued by the guerilla trainees. However, he was re-arrested in September, 1943, interrogated and tortured extensively, and spent the next three and a half years in jail before being released.

The coming of Independence in 1947 proved to be a watershed in the relationships between Gandhi, the Congress Socialists, Nehru, and the Right of the party led by Deputy Prime Minister Patel.[18] The only thing that united them - the struggle for Independence - had been accomplished, and thus they drifted apart. Gandhi envisaged an Indian society of village republics pursuing a model of development emphasising self-reliance, simple technology, limited consumption, and moral purity, but this was ignored by a Congress Government intent on fostering industrialisation and powerful, centralised government institutions within the framework of a Western-style parliamentary democracy. JP and the Socialists became increasingly vocal about what they saw as corrupt and self-seeking behaviour within the Congress Party. At the same time, Patel and the Congress right-wing lost patience with the radicalism of the Socialists and persuaded the party to ban 'parties' within it. This led the Socialists to leave Congress and form an independent Socialist Party.

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[18]See, for accounts of the time from Independence to JP's joining the Sarvodaya Movement: Scarfe & Scarfe, pp 178-264; Bhattacharjea, pp 87-119; Brahmanand, pp lxiii-xciii; Ghose, pp 17-22; Prasad pp 184-194.

In the post-war period JP resumed his involvement with the trade union movement, as President of unions representing railway, postal and defence workers, which covered a total of more than one million employees, and were at the time the largest trade unions in Asia.[19] During a postal workers' strike JP believed he had received an undertaking from a government minister that, as part of a settlement, the postal workers would receive strike pay. This proved to be a source of dispute between the postal workers and the government over the next few years, an issue that was deeply unsettling for JP, to the extent, it is claimed, that it contributed to his leaving mainstream politics.[20]

The Socialists entered the election campaign for India's first General Election in 1951-52 believing that they were a serious challenger to Congress. However, they only managed to win twelve out of 500 seats (with 10.5% of the votes), whilst Congress obtained 362 seats. Congress was an ideologically diverse party, containing many different factions that each appealed to different sections of the population.[21] It therefore broadly straddled the centre of the political spectrum, making it very difficult for parties to the left or

[19]Scarfe & Scarfe, pp 178-9.

[20]ibid, p 268.

[21]As described, for example, in Robert L Hardgrave & Stanley A Kochanek, India: Government & Politics in a Developing Nation, 5th edn, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Fort Worth, 1993, pp 225-227.

right to make much headway electorally. For example, Congress's socialist rhetoric probably enabled it to capture many votes from the Socialist Party. The election result provoked a period of deep soul-searching and dispute among the Socialists.

But even before the election - in fact, since the late 1940s - JP had begun to question some of the basic principles of the Socialist Party, as part of a re-examination of his attitudes towards a range of issues, including violence as a political weapon, and the role of the state and political parties in society. This stemmed from a number of factors, including the massive violence that accompanied Partition,[22] the death of Gandhi,[23] and what he saw as the moral and political failures of the Congress Government.[24] He began to argue within the Socialist Party for policies that saw local communities, rather than the state, as the main initiators of change, and he felt that the party should be engaging in a range of activities apart from electioneering, including community development work, workers' education, trade union campaigning and *satyagraha*.[25] In other words, he began to argue for policies and activities that were much more Gandhian.

[22]Scarfe & Scarfe, p 202.

[23]ibid, p 219.

[24]ibid, Ch 11.

[25]ibid, p 232.

At the same time the shape of Gandhianism in the post-Gandhi era was emerging under the leadership of Vinoba Bhave, who, within what was called the Sarvodaya (or welfare of all) Movement, began to encourage landholders to donate land to the landless, a practice - known as *bhoodan* - that was then taken up by Vinoba's followers. JP was at first sceptical of *bhoodan*, but initial results appeared promising and he thus became more interested, talking with Vinoba about it and visiting a village in which all the land had been offered as a Bhoodan donation. Shortly afterward, in July, 1952, JP undertook a three week fast in Poona. He had been intending to do this for some time as a 'self-corrective' act to atone for what he saw as his error of judgement over the issue of strike pay in the postal workers' dispute mentioned earlier.[26] But the fast turned out to be a watershed in JP's life, as for the next two decades from that point his time and energies were devoted primarily to the Sarvodaya Movement.

JP, himself, began to solicit land gifts, and was elated to receive promises of nearly seven thousand acres within one week.[27] He came to feel that *bhoodan*, together with village self-government and constructive work,[28] could bring about the

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[26]ibid, p 248.

[27]For accounts of JP's time in the Sarvodaya Movement and of other contemporaneous involvements, see: Scarfe & Scarfe, pp 265-417; Bhattacharjea, pp 120-139; Brahmanand, pp xciii-cxxxii; Prasad, pp 194-236; Doctor, pp 17-21; Ghose, pp 22-27; Raj, pp 8-14.

[28]'Constructive work' is a Gandhian term, used in contradistinction to *satyagraha* or struggle, that

kind of social change he longed for.[29] In April, 1954 he took
a vow of *jeevandan*, lifelong service to the Sarvodaya
Movement. He also began to extricate himself from the
Socialist Party, although he did not resign from it until
1957. Just before doing so, however, he was involved in an
unsuccessful attempt to bring the, by then, two socialist
parties together again. His departure, when it came, caused
his socialist colleagues a great deal of anguish, although
many followed him into the Sarvodaya Movement.

During his two decades with the Sarvodaya Movement, JP was
involved in a range of activities: travelling from village to
village soliciting *bhoodan* land and speaking on village self-
improvement, writing articles and giving talks in cities, and
spending time at the ashram he established at Sokhodeora
village - overseeing the many agricultural experiments
undertaken there, the routines and problems of daily life, and
its overall development.

However, he did not restrict himself to these things. As we
have seen, he had some involvement with his socialist
colleagues until 1957. He often spoke out and wrote on a range
of foreign policy issues: for example, the Soviet invasion of
Hungary, China's annexation of Tibet, the India-China and

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refers to practical - basically non-political - projects, such as road-making or textile production.

   [29]Scarfe & Scarfe, pp 281-284.

India-Pakistan Wars and Bangladesh's independence. In the case of the India-China War he tried unsuccessfully (through the World Peace Brigade of which he was Co-Chairman) to organise a peace march from Delhi to Peking. He made several overseas trips to speak and participate in conferences on peace, socialism and other issues. He was actively involved in a number of domestic issues, for example: defending the rights of Patna students whose protests were brutally dealt with in 1955; playing a leading role in successful efforts to persuade Nehru in 1959 to legislate for a three-tiered structure of local or *panchayat* government,[30] and through the All-India Panchayat Parishad, scrutinising and critiquing this; persuading Nehru to grant statehood to Nagaland in 1962, and subsequently, following continued conflict there, leading a peace mission which achieved a ceasefire and contributed to a negotiated settlement; and directing the Bihar Relief Committee which was set up at the time of the Bihar Famine, with government encouragement, to co-ordinate the activities of national and international aid agencies and their relations with government, as well as supervising the government's own relief efforts. He was also involved in a number of organisations and institutions, including two that he established: AVARD (the Association of Voluntary Agencies for Rural Development) and the Gandhian Institute of Studies.

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[30]The three levels of the *panchayat* system of local government are: *panchayats*, at the level of a few villages; *panchayat samitis*, the level above that; and *zilla parishads*, above that at 'block' (or sub-district) level.

These involvements illustrate one of the main differences between JP and Vinoba Bhave. Vinoba was not interested in the ordinary affairs of state, in issues of democracy, human rights, national sovereignty and the like, but rather in living - and encouraging others to live - a simple, ascetic and spiritual life, while JP, despite his immersion in the Sarvodaya Movement, still saw some value in reforming existing political systems and practices. The structure of the Sarvodaya Movement by and large allowed them both to function in their own ways, although JP avoided directly contravening Vinoba's edicts.

However it was becoming clear that *bhoodan* was not living up to its early potential. Most of the land promised was either of unusable quality or subject to disputed ownership. Vinoba placed a lot of emphasis on obtaining more and more promises of land, but was much less interested in ensuring that the land was actually handed over to the Sarvodaya Movement (and much of it was not), or ensuring that the land handed over was in fact distributed to the landless, or that they received training and assistance in developing the land. Thus the amount of usable land actually distributed to the landless was only about two percent of Vinoba's original target. JP was also at odds with Vinoba over the latter's cosy relationship with Congress and his opposition to the use of mass action to

pressure the government to change its policies or practices.[31] JP made one last serious attempt to make *bhoodan* work. In 1970, Naxalites (Indian Maoists to the left of the two existing communist parties who took their name from a violent uprising of agricultural tenants at Naxalbari in the north of West Bengal in 1967) threatened the lives of two Sarvodaya workers in Musahari block, a rural area in Bihar. JP saw the Sarvodaya Movement and the Naxalites as offering two contending ideologies to deal with inequality and other social ills, and the Naxalite action challenged him to try and make *bhoodan* so successful in this particular area - and then in other areas - that the Naxalites would lose influence. So he devoted himself to intensive work in the area, but this only reinforced his already emerging conclusions that the *bhoodan* approach was not succeeding.

In mid-1971 JP left Musahari to campaign for assistance for East Pakistan in its secessionist war. He returned, but suffered a heart attack in November of that year. Further illness followed, and then in April, 1973, his wife died. Eventually resuming involvement in public affairs, he began to speak out against unemployment, inflation, food shortages and political oppression, and to proclaim his growing belief that India's youth should be encouraged to take the lead in bringing about political renewal. He was influenced in this

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[31]Prasad, pp 268-269; and Ostergaard, <u>Nonviolent Revolution in India</u>, JP Amrit Kosh/Sevagram, New Delhi, 1985, pp 15-16.

belief by the rise of youth activism worldwide, including events in France in 1968.[32] But before examining the direction in which this belief took JP, there is another subject to be considered. An account of JP's life would not be complete without a fuller description of his relationship with Congress, given the role of Congress in Indian political life.

Though JP left Congress when the Socialists went their own way after Independence, and though he subsequently turned away from parties altogether when he joined the Sarvodaya Movement, his past associations and the complexities of his beliefs meant that he never completely dissociated himself from Congress. Even after he had left party politics Nehru expected him to become a future Prime Minister.[33] Nehru had earlier invited JP to join his Cabinet while he was active in the Socialist Party.[34] Shastri, the next Prime Minister, had wanted Nehru to nominate JP as his (Nehru's) successor.[35] Indira Gandhi had known JP since childhood and used to refer to him as 'uncle'. JP maintained contact with many Congress politicians and, as mentioned earlier, he had a peripheral involvement with the Congress Government through his work on behalf of various government endeavours, such as negotiating a

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[32]Raj, p 94.

[33]Scarfe & Scarfe, p 313.

[34]Bhattacharjea, p 111.

[35]Scarfe & Scarfe, p 391.

ceasefire in Nagaland and supervising government famine relief in Bihar, and through his lobbying of Congress on certain matters, such as his proposal for government legislation to reform *panchayats*.

Unquestionably in the period up until 1977, and arguably for many years after that, Congress was the dominant edifice on the Indian political landscape. The circumstances that gave rise to the JP Movement and the Janata Government all in one way or another related to the Congress Party, and consequently a brief examination of Congress in the post-Independence period is warranted at this point.

Following Independence, the Indian National Congress, the organisation that had led the struggle against British rule, transformed itself into the Congress Party and began its long-term hold on power at the Central Government level, as well as dominating state politics.[36] Congress the party was similar to Congress the independence movement - a loose and broad alliance of different interests and ideologies positioned in the centre of the political spectrum. It contained a range of factions that reflected ideological, regional, ethnic and caste differences or coalesced around leading personalities. This breadth and diversity could potentially have been a source of division, but the party was held together by a

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[36]Hardgrave & Kochanek, especially pp 225-230.

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number of factors: its history stretching back over almost a century; its prestige as the political force that had achieved Independence, the figures of Gandhi, Nehru, and - for a time at least - Indira Gandhi, who were all held in high esteem by a large proportion of the Indian people and gave the party a unified face; and the fact that it was able, before any other party, to locate itself in the middle ground of Indian politics, such that parties situated either to the Right or Left of it found it impossible to gain anything like the support that Congress enjoyed. Furthermore, the Congress 'system' involved not only a broad range of factions, but also a process whereby these factions would have informal links with similar groupings outside the party, thus enabling it to be responsive to and appease key interests and sectors outside the party.[37]

But this coalition of interests and views was beginning to unravel by 1967,[38] following the deaths of Prime Ministers Nehru and Shastri and increased conflict within the party over Prime Ministerial succession and matters of party structure. Congress suffered a significant loss of support in the national parliamentary elections in 1967, and over the next ten years was to lose control, for at least some time, of nearly half the state governments. The new Prime Minister,

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[37]ibid, p 226.

[38]ibid, pp 234-242.

Indira Gandhi, sought to re-establish the dominance of the Prime Minister's position by challenging the 'Syndicate', the powerful figures in the party, and she advocated a series of radical, populist policies, including bank nationalisation (which was subsequently carried out), effective land reform and curbs on urban income and property. Her approach led the party to split in 1969 into Congress (I) (for Indira) and Congress (O) (for organisation). To consolidate her position Mrs Gandhi, during the 1971 election, appealed over the heads of local Congress figures to new groups, including Muslims, adivasis, dalits and the young, with a pledge of *Garibi Hatao* (Abolish Poverty), which resulted in a resounding victory that almost completely reversed the losses of 1967.

Her radical and uncompromising stance and India's defeat of Pakistan in what became Bangladesh created huge expectations that she would bring about change. But by undermining the power of Congress functionaries at state and local levels, Indira Gandhi undermined the power of the whole party in its relations with the broader society, as these functionaries had significant power in their own communities and played a crucial role in generating support for Congress. And her bold promise to abolish poverty could not be delivered as this would have gone against the interests of core Congress supporters, who continued to be from among the well-off farmers and the urban business class. The period saw increased militancy among industrial workers, a balance of payments

crisis, efforts to bring back foreign capital and struggles between the Central and State governments.[39] Globally at this time, oil prices were rising and contributing to a state of 'stagflation' - simultaneous increases in inflation and unemployment - and India was not immune from this. What followed was a period of mounting dissension within the party, growing public discontent outside it, and increasingly authoritarian rule by Indira Gandhi. The gloss was clearly wearing off the Congress Party's status as the party of Independence, and of Gandhi and Nehru, and it was wearing off the promises that parliamentary democracy and 'development' had offered the Indian people.

This disaffection with Indira Gandhi's Government was a major factor contributing to support for the JP Movement. In interviews conducted for the thesis, reference was made to the following aspects of, or feelings about, her government: increases in 'money and muscle power'; corruption; authoritarianism; brutal repression of the Naxalites; popular disappointment about Indira Gandhi's failure to abolish poverty; commonly held feelings of anger, frustration and cynicism; and the tendency for such sentiments to bring those opposed to Congress closer together.[40] As Sachchidanand, JP's

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[39]Points made in an interview with Kavaljit Singh (7/12/95) were useful here.

[40]Interviews with: Prabash Joshi, Surendra Mohan (8/12/95), Smitu Kothari (12/12/95), Vijay Pratap (12/12/95), Shiva Sharan Bhai (22/11/95), K K Mukhopadhyay (13/12/95), Rajni Bhakshi (15/12/95), Sharad Kulkani (17/12/95), Sebasti Raj (10/12/95), Ramchandra Purbay (14/11/95), Sachchidanand (12/11/95); and response to mailed interview schedule [henceforth 'mailed response']: Lallubhai Desai (12/4/97).

Secretary, summed it up, there was "widespread and deep-rooted discontent simmering in the hearts and minds of the people".[41]

This dissatisfaction with Indira Gandhi's rule was one of the two factors that brought disparate forces together under the umbrella of the JP Movement. The other factor, JP's involvement in the emerging agitations in Bihar, and the personality and public standing he brought to the role, was to occur a little later, but before it did students took to the streets in the state of Gujarat. Student agitations were not uncommon in India before this period,[42] but they came to assume a new prominence in 1974.

EVENTS IN GUJARAT

The agitation in Gujarat began in January, 1974, when students at LD Engineering College in Ahmedabad went on strike in protest against a big increase in their mess bills.[43] This rapidly grew into a broader (though still largely student-led) movement, against inflation, food scarcity and political corruption. The Congress State Government responded to the agitations with curfews, imprisonments and police and military

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[41]Interview: Sachchidanand.

[42]See, for example, an account of student protests in Bihar in 1955, in Scarfe & Scarfe, p 306.

[43]See, for accounts of the Gujarat Movement: Raj, pp 34-39; Ghanshyam Shah, Protest Movements in Two Indian States: A Study of the Gujarat and Bihar Movements, Ajanta, Delhi, 1977, pp 3-60; and R K Barik, Politics of the JP Movement, Radiant, New Delhi, 1977, pp 46-52.

firings that over the duration of the movement claimed the lives of over one hundred people and injured many more. The State Government resigned, and the Central Government of Indira Gandhi bowed to popular pressure and dissolved the State Assembly in March. At this point the movement abruptly ended, as its other political objectives were rather ill-defined.[44] Political parties had little involvement in the Gujarat agitation until the Government resigned.[45]

JP did not play any part in instigating the agitations in Gujarat, although he did lend students moral support (and was even photographed by one newspaper giving student hunger strikers glasses of lemon juice and water).[46] But events in Gujarat were being closely followed in Bihar and elsewhere, and they evidently made an impression on JP, who described the movement as "a path-finder in India's march to democracy" in which the people "are not mere passive agents but are active, demanding and in the end commanding".[47] However, JP was critical of the movement on three counts: its lack of sound leadership, its violence, and its focus on short-term objectives rather than social transformation. These conclusions were soon to influence the course of events in

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[44]Barik, p 47.

[45]ibid, pp 46-47.

[46]Scarfe & Scarfe, p 418.

[47]Jayaprakash Narayan, Prison Diary, Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1977, p 46.

Bihar.[48]

It should be pointed out that, while the Gujarat Movement, and the Bihar Movement in its early stages, principally targeted their respective state governments rather than Indira Gandhi's Government, this did not mean that the Central Government was considered any less responsible for the problems people faced. In fact, in the interviews that were conducted, such as those cited above, it was far more frequently identified as a cause of popular discontent than were the state governments. State administrations were simply a more local, tangible and accessible target for these frustrations. Both of these states had Congress governments, and within the Congress Party organisation there has always been a high level of interaction between the states and the Centre, so the malaise afflicting the party as a whole affected its performance at state levels as much as in New Delhi. Moreover, many participants in these movements failed to appreciate that state governments could do relatively little about issues like inflation and unemployment.

BEGINNINGS OF THE BIHAR MOVEMENT

In Bihar, students had similar concerns to those featuring in the Gujarat Movement.[49] A list of demands issued by them

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[48]Raj, p 38.

[49]See, for accounts of the events of the JP Movement: Ostergaard, Nonviolent Revolution in India, pp

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included a number of points related to their education and improvements to university life, but others went beyond this and concerned inflation, unemployment and political corruption. In February, 1974, while the Gujarat agitation was still taking place, students formed the Bihar Chhatra Sangharsh Samiti (Bihar Students' Struggle Committee) and struggle committees were also set up in individual universities. On 16th March, the day after Indira Gandhi dissolved the Gujarat Assembly, the Bihar Chhatra Sangharsh Samati staged a demonstration in Patna against inflation and unemployment, at which three people were killed by police.

Two days later the same student group *gherao*ed (surrounded) the Bihar Assembly, which led to fighting between police and students, police firings and five deaths. This in turn provoked mob violence, looting and arson, including the burning of two newspaper offices (although there were conflicting views as to who was responsible for the last of these, as the newspapers concerned had actually spoken out in favour of the movement).[50] Further police firings the next day claimed ten more lives. On that evening JP accepted an invitation from the students to lead the movement in Bihar.

69-217; Shah, Protest Movements in Two Indian States, pp 63-158; Barik, pp 52-57; Raj, pp 39-48; Brahmanand, pp cxxix-cxi; Ghose, pp 28-189; Bhattacharjea, pp 140-144; and Scarfe & Scarfe, pp 419-429.

[50]Ghose, p 37; the burning was attributed either to the students (Barik, p 52) or to "gangsters" (Bhattacharjea, p 143.

So began a process whereby a student agitation known as the 'Bihar Movement' grew into something broader, in terms of its geographical spread, the sectors of society that became involved and the issues and interests that were at stake - a movement that was to have a far from insignificant impact on political events and political consciousness in India from that time onward, even if, in many respects, it failed in its own terms. And given the central, charismatic role that was played in this movement by JP, a man of national, almost legendary, status in India, it came to be known as the JP Movement, although JP did not like the term and continued to refer to it as the Bihar Movement.[51]

JAYAPRAKASH NARAYAN AND THE MOVEMENT'S MAIN STRANDS

JP's involvement was the second factor that enabled the disparate non-Congress forces to come together for political action. While these parties, organisations and sectors were in fact no more diverse than the factions within Congress, they did not have a cause and a leader to unite them until opposition to Congress rule intensified and JP emerged for them to rally behind. The reasons why JP was able to perform this role were twofold. First, there was his public stature. He had a reputation for honesty and incorruptibility, for moral and physical courage (the latter derived from his bold

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[51]This last point was made by L C Jain in an interview (14/12/95).

exploits during the nationalist struggle), for his deep concern for the fate of the Indian people, and perhaps most importantly, for his refusal to take up positions of power. In Indian tradition there is the figure of the *rishi* (or seer) who does not hold power but instead exercises moral surveillance over those who do, and more will be said about this in the next chapter (pp 208-210). Gandhi was considered such a person, as was Vinoba, and people came to see JP in the same light.[52] Indications were that he could have been Prime Minister had he wanted to be.[53] Many of those interviewed for this thesis talked of these qualities of JP, including his renunciation of power.[54]

The second reason why JP was able to unite disparate forces within one movement was that he, himself, had been at one time or another connected with many of these forces. It is therefore appropriate to examine what these different parts of the Movement were, what concerns they had, and in what ways JP, as a result of his diverse background, was responsible for bringing them together.

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[52]Many of his actions over the years reinforced this image, such as his role in accepting the surrender of some notorious bandits in central India.

[53]Scarfe & Scarfe, p 304; and Prasad, p 210.

[54]More specific details of comments from interviews about JP are included in the next chapter, but in general such comments were contained in interviews with Surendra Mohan, Sebasti Raj, Kavaljit Singh, Sharad Kulkani, Shiva Sharan Bhai, A B Bharadwaj, Acharya Ramamurti (26/11/95), George Fernandes (13/12/95), Ram Sunda Das (14/11/95), and Ram Bachan Roy (14/11/95), and in mailed responses from Lallubhai Desai, and Jacob Thundyil (undated).

The movement could be said to have consisted of six main strands, and JP's life experience meant that he had had strong connections with all but one of these strands. Though distinct, these strands were not completely separate, and often particular individuals, organisations and sectors that participated in the Movement encompassed more than one of them.

Firstly, there was the socialist strand to the Movement. We saw how JP returned from America a committed Marxist socialist, participated in the nationalist movement as a socialist and played a central role in formation of the Congress Social Party. He worked for the Socialist Party after it broke away from Congress, and was active in the trade union movement both before and after Independence. His writings, speeches and actions indicate that he was a man greatly affected by social injustice and poverty.[55] Many of JP's socialist colleagues and the Socialist Party itself participated in the Movement, as did unions affiliated with the party. JP's departure from the Socialist fold had deeply saddened many of his colleagues, and they were pleased to be working with him again.[56]

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[55]This is clearly indicated in the four volume collection of his writings, Jayaprakash Narayan, Towards Total Revolution, (ed. Brahmanand), Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1978.

[56]For example, George Fernandes voiced these sentiments in his interview. For him, JP was "a towering person in the socialist movement".

Secondly, there was the Gandhian strand of the Movement. JP had not only worked alongside Gandhi in the nationalist movement, but had, despite their ideological differences, close, almost filial ties with him. Later he was to return to the Gandhian fold for some two decades, and at no stage following that time did he renounce his Gandhian beliefs. His effective withdrawal from the Sarvodaya Movement reflected his differences with Vinoba and with the direction institutional Gandhianism had taken, not with Gandhian thought as he interpreted it. The effectiveness of land gifts was one issue that has already been described, but there was another. Gandhi had emphasised the importance of both constructive work and *satyagraha* but, as we have seen, Vinoba was fairly uncritical of Congress and argued that *satyagraha* was no longer necessary. JP disagreed with Vinoba on both counts and favoured a return to *satyagraha* in the form of participation in the Bihar Movement. The issue split the main organisation of the Sarvodaya Movement, the Sarva Seva Sangh (Association for the Service of All), and JP took with him into the Movement the great majority of its active cadres.[57] Gandhianism was represented in the Movement by a number of Gandhian organisations including a youth movement, Tarun Shanti Sena (Youth Peace Force), and by many individuals of Gandhian persuasion.

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[57]See Ostergaard, Nonviolent Revolution in India, pp 97-111, especially p 105.

Thirdly, the Movement had a strand that was concerned with the preservation of democratic institutions and civil liberties. JP had frequently spoken out on such issues, even while he was in the Sarvodaya Movement. At first glance, this seemed to embody a contradiction, because, as a Gandhian, he was ultimately opposed to political parties and to all but very minimal government, but JP believed that parliamentary democracy and its attendant liberties were worth preserving until a Gandhian partyless democracy of village republics might be achieved.[58] He was to draw into the Movement middle-class professionals and intellectuals, with whom he had good contacts, and would form an organisation to encourage their participation, Citizens for Democracy.

Fourthly, there was a strong streak of anti-Congressism in the Movement. Essentially, the whole Movement was anti-Congress, so it might seem strange to single this out as a separate strand. However, as has been pointed out, the breadth of views outside of Congress was almost matched by the breadth of views within Congress, and what separated, for example, socialists within Congress from those outside the party was frequently something other than ideology, some experience or attitude related to Congress as an institution. JP had a very ambivalent relationship with the party, as we have seen, and he became more and more negative towards it during Indira

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[58]See, for example, his spirited defence of the current system, in a letter to Indira Gandhi, when it was threatened by the Emergency, in Prasad, p 238.

Gandhi's time in office. The Jana Sangh (People's Association) was the only party of those that came to support the JP Movement that had not originally been part of the Congress Party[59] (as JP himself had) and later, with the formation of the Janata Party, they were to be joined by a group called Congress for Democracy and a number of ex-Congress independents. Many people felt frustrated by their lack of political power, both those within Congress, as power there was increasingly centralised in Indira Gandhi's hands,[60] and those in the other parties, given that they had not been able to win power nationally, and at state level they had only won it briefly in some states. This is not to imply that their concerns were merely self-interested. There was undoubtedly deep disquiet about the direction in which Congress was taking the country.

Fifthly, as we have seen, there were the students and their concerns. Many of these related to their educational and practical needs and to job prospects, and normal student rebelliousness and high-spirits also accounted for much of the participation, as will be seen. There were many upper caste 'professional' students who were not particularly interested in their studies and were looking for diversions. Other students, not so well-off and struggling to keep themselves

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[59]Hardgrave & Kochanek, p 273.

[60]ibid, pp 258-259.

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while pursuing an education, were willing to support a movement that sought to improve their present life and future prospects, but not at the cost of threatening their educational progress. Both of these groups were willing to participate in mass actions, especially initially, but were much less willing to take time off from their studies, to go to the countryside or to sustain their involvement. These matters will be examined more closely in the next chapter (pp 190-195). The fact that JP was invited to lead the movement was evidence of his appeal to youth, and it should be remembered that his exploits in the Independence struggle had made him a hero of Indian youth after Independence. He had also defended the rights of protesting students in Bihar in the 1950s.[61] Moreover, he had been an idealistic and politically active student, himself, half a century before the Bihar Movement. Many students who participated in the Movement, and particularly the student leaders, were active in the student or youth wings of the parties or the Sarvodaya movement, as will be seen.

The remaining strand of the Movement, the Hindu communalist Right, was the only strand with which JP had not had a significant connection. He did not need to attract them to the Movement because they were well ensconced in it before JP arrived on the scene. The student organisation that

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[61]Scarfe & Scarfe, p 306.

spearheaded the initial agitations and invited JP to lead it, the Bihar Chhatra Sangharsh Samiti, was dominated by the student wing of Jana Sangh (while a rival Marxist student group was formed at the same time). Jana Sangh had had little electoral success to that point, although the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (National Volunteers' Organisation), or RSS, the organisation with which it was associated, had a large, tightly-knit following. Hindu communalism had many organisational fronts, including trade unions, which also participated in the JP Movement.[62] It could be well-organised and disciplined and link with other parties and groups when the occasion demanded. These forces of the Right provided the Movement with a large, well-coordinated and dedicated body of followers, which filled a gap in light of the lack of commitment of many other students and the relatively small number of Sarvodaya cadres and Gandhian students. The assassination of Gandhi by an RSS cadre had left the Hindu Right with a public stigma that was difficult to shake off, and so it was very keen to regain respectability. Participation in a broad and popular movement was an ideal way to achieve this.[63] Hindu communalists often couched their messages in language that looks like a Gandhian-style defence of Indian culture.[64] JP was a person who tended to think well

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[62]This participation of Hindu Right unions was noted by Surendra Mohan in his interview.

[63]Hardgrave & Kochanek, pp 242, 273-275; Ostergaard, Nonviolent Revolution in India, p 163; Barik, pp 62-63.

[64]Barik, pp 63-65; Deendayal Research Institute, Towards a New Horizon: Concept Experiments & Results (undated booklet of this institute).

of people until he saw proof to the contrary, and so, despite some reservations, he accepted the Right's professions of support for the principles he espoused. He believed that they were changing and would continue to do so under his influence.[65] There was also mutual antipathy between the Hindu Right and Marxists. As we have seen, there was a rival left-wing student movement in Bihar that did not participate in the JP Movement. The Communist Party of India (CPI) vehemently opposed the Movement, but it did have the tacit support of the Communist Party - Marxist (CPM). JP's negative experience of trying to work with the Communist Party in the 1930s, noted earlier, meant that he essentially shared the Hindu Right's attitude to the Marxists.

So we can see that the JP Movement brought together a diverse and rather unlikely collection of sectors, organisations and points of view, united only by their opposition to Congress and by JP's leadership of the Movement. The acceptance of his leadership was aided by his background, which encompassed most of the Movement's strands, and by his stature as a man of courage and principle who had eschewed positions of power.

THE MOVEMENT UNFOLDS

Returning to the Movement and JP's role in it,[66] on 20th

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[65]Ostergaard, Nonviolent Revolution in India, pp 163-4.

[66]See once again the following sources for the events of the JP Movement: Ostergaard, Nonviolent

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March, 1974, the day after he agreed to take up the leadership, JP issued a press statement calling on the Bihar Government led by Abdul Ghafoor to resign, on the grounds that it was ultimately responsible for the brutal over-reactions of the police. A *bandh* (general stoppage of business and work) took place in Patna on 23rd March, although this was not endorsed by JP as he feared further violence - a fear that was subsequently justified, as 25 people died and over 200 were injured. Estimates of deaths in the period 18th - 27th March ranged from 27, according to Congress, to 235, according to the opposition.[67]

JP's first major action was, on 8th April, to lead a 'Silent March' through Patna, with participants wearing material over their mouths, and in many cases with their hands tied behind their backs, to demonstrate their non-violence in the face of police actions. At a rally following the march, JP announced the commencement of a five week 'people's struggle campaign' aimed at bringing down the State Government. The next day he announced to the students that his leadership would be conditional on two points, that they strictly adhere to non-violence and that, while they might belong to political parties, they follow the leadership of the Movement rather

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Revolution in India, pp 69-217; Shah, Protest Movements in Two Indian States, pp 63-158; Barik, pp 52-57; Raj, pp 39-48; Brahmanand, pp cxxix-cxi; Ghose, pp 28-189; Bhattacharjea, pp 140-144; and Scarfe & Scarfe, pp 419-429.

[67]Scarfe & Scarfe, p 419.

than that of the parties.

By this time work in many government offices had come to a standstill in the face of protest actions, and many thousands had been arrested. On 11th April Ghafoor and thirty-nine of his ministers submitted their resignations to the State Governor, who called upon Ghafoor to form a new Ministry, but this only antagonised JP and the students. The next day eight people died from police firings in the city of Gaya. On 21st April, JP led a huge procession in protest against police violence.

Two days later JP travelled interstate for medical treatment and he was not to return until early June. He put four of his old Sarvodaya colleagues in charge of the campaign in his absence, and also left with them a plan of action, with specific weeks set aside for particular projects, including: organisation-strengthening; campaigning for the resignation of the Ministry and the dissolution of the Assembly; an anti-corruption week; and a week focusing on the education system. During this time, pressure was put on politicians and government offices, with *dharnas* (sit-ins), hunger strikes and processions, and generally the actions were peaceful.

On 5th June, three days after his return to Patna, JP led a procession in Patna that presented to the State Governor over ten million signatures calling for the dissolution of the

Assembly. The Government had sought to prevent people from entering Patna for this event by cancelling train, steamer and bus services, but despite this and the sweltering heat about one million people attended. In the evening they congregated at the Gandhi Maidan to hear JP give a two-hour speech in which he presented his program for *total revolution*. This was to be his major theoretical contribution to the Movement, and in it he called for a broad political and social revolution going well beyond (but not replacing) the existing aims of the movement. He presented an essentially Gandhian alternative of largely self-governing and self-reliant villages in which decision-making was participatory and consensual and political parties were absent, with the (relatively few) matters to be dealt with at higher levels in the hands of bodies elected from the level below and operating according to similar principles. He made it clear, however, that 'partyless democracy' was a future goal and was not an objective of the present agitation.[68]

Over the following months the agitations continued. For five weeks after the 5th June rally activists conducted *dharna* in front of the Assembly. Following this students rallied to demand the closure of tertiary institutions, and they did close for four months. From the beginning of August action shifted to local areas. From 3rd to 5th October there was a

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[68]Ostergaard, <u>Nonviolent Revolution in India</u>, p 93.

statewide *bandh* that was observed in almost all of Bihar. Ostergaard describes it as probably the most successful single action of the Movement, and he claims that it convinced JP that ninety-five percent of Biharis were behind him and forced the Central Government to take the Movement seriously.[69] In November, there were two more huge rallies in Patna, of 500,000 and one million people respectively. At the first of these JP sustained a blow to the head from a policeman's wooden *lathi* (truncheon). On 6th March, 1975, there was a March on Parliament in Delhi, and this was part of a trend to take the Movement beyond Bihar. There continued to be mass actions in Bihar, such as the 18th March procession in Patna to mark the anniversary of the Movement's beginning, but from about November of the previous year the steam seemed to be going out of this side of the Movement, and successive actions attracted fewer people.[70]

BROADENING THE MOVEMENT

During most of 1974, the Movement was substantially focused on campaigning for the dissolution of the Assembly and the resignation of the State Government, through the use of processions, rallies, *gheraos*, *dharnas*, fasts and other forms of *satyagraha*. As it progressed, but particularly after the

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[69]ibid, p 112.

[70]Raj, p 45; Barik, p 56.

October *bandh*, there were increasing efforts to broaden it in a number of significant ways - to take it beyond the cities and towns and into rural areas, to involve new sectors of society, to encompass a broader range of objectives and activities than simply engaging in mass actions aimed at having the State Government dismissed and the Assembly dissolved, to set up new organisational structures and expand the existing ones, and to take the Movement beyond Bihar. As well, opposition political parties became increasingly involved in the Movement, and more and more emphasis came to be placed on defeating the State and Central Congress Governments at the polls.

In relation to new objectives, there were, at different times, directives to participants to do the following: non-payment of taxes; keeping a check on corruption and bribery in government offices, on blackmarketing and hoarding and on irregularities in ration shops; distributing essential commodities at fair prices; picketing of liquor shops; protecting the land and homestead rights of scheduled castes and ensuring their equal treatment; protecting sharecroppers' rights; distributing *bhoodan* and government land; preventing crime and keeping the peace; flood relief; vaccination and hygiene campaigns; encouragement to renounce dowry-giving and the wearing of the sacred thread by high caste Hindus; verification of electoral rolls; and voter education. As well, a committee was established to consider electoral reform and there were

seminars on education reform.[71]

With regard to organisations, the sixteen member Bihar Chhatra Sangharsh Samiti (Bihar Students' Struggle Committee), was the principal organisation under JP responsible for the direction of the Movement, and there were Chhatra Sangharsh Samitis (CSSs) in most tertiary institutions in Bihar. Later, these came to be set up in high schools as well. Efforts were also made to increase the number of Jan Sangarsh Samitis (People's Struggle Committees) or JSSs, involving non-students as well as students), with the intention of having one in each *panchayat*. In order to attract middle-class professionals and intellectuals, an organisation known as Citizens for Democracy was formed. There were efforts to set up a system of Janata Sarkar (or People's Government) at village, *panchayat* and block levels, for the purpose of overseeing many of the new activities previously mentioned, with CSSs and JSSs performing the executive functions. It was something between a system of parallel government and a watchdog on government.[72] There was also talk of establishing a People's Assembly at the State level, but this was not implemented. JP called on students to boycott examinations and take a year off from studies to work for the Movement, and there was powerful peer pressure, and in many cases harassment, to discourage students from attending

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[71]Shah, pp 110-127.

[72]See Ostergaard, <u>Nonviolent Revolution in India</u>, pp 202-207.

classes and sitting examinations, and conflict between those
supporting and opposing these measures.[73] There were also
training camps for students and youth involved in the
Movement. JP was concerned about the party affiliations of
members of the CSSs, and so early in 1975 he set up the
Chhatra Yuva Sangharsh Vahini (or Student and Youth Struggle
Force, henceforth generally referred to as 'the Vahini'), the
conditions for membership of which included obeying JP's
orders and not belonging to any party.

It was through this new range of objectives and activities and
the new organisations that were established that JP hoped to
draw new sectors of society into the Movement and to give it a
presence in rural areas as well as in cities and towns. And
the Movement also spread beyond Bihar, as a result of three
factors. First, it increasingly targeted Indira Gandhi because
of her refusal to dissolve the Bihar Assembly and because of
the shortcomings of her own administration, particularly its
authoritarianism. Second, JP's national stature gave the
Movement a high profile outside Bihar and ensured large crowds
on the frequent occasions when he spoke and toured around the
country. Third, the Sarvodaya Movement and the political
parties supporting the JP Movement were all national in their
reach, and the chance to defeat Indira Gandhi's Government
held great appeal for the parties.

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[73]According to Anil Singh in his interview (6/12/95).

These parties - Jana Sangh, the Socialist Party, Congress (O) and the Bharatiya Lok Dal (BLD) - came to have a larger and larger role in the Movement for a number of reasons: the fact that most members of the Bihar Chhatra Sangharsh Samiti, and many other Movement participants, belonged to party front organisations or parties; the Movement's increasing focus on the Congress Party and Indira Gandhi's Government in particular as the opponent and the obstacle to change; the organisational weaknesses in the Movement, which meant that the parties and party front organisations, especially the Jana Sangh and the RSS, were the most organised parts of it and played significant roles, particularly in the recruitment and co-ordination of participants; JP's declining health which, in the absence of a strong second rank of leaders, created something of leadership vacuum; and the fact that, as the Movement spread beyond Bihar, the absence or near absence of a non-party following in the other states further increased the role of the parties.

HOW THE MOVEMENT FARED, AND WHY

According to Shah, the additional objectives of the Movement listed above were only partially implemented and had limited

success overall.[74] Some, such as the efforts to combat blackmarketing and ensure that essential commodities were available at fair prices, and the picketing of liquor shops, faced retaliation from traders who had activists beaten up, or sometimes bribed them. The no-tax campaign met with no response in urban areas and a very limited one in the countryside. The anti-corruption campaign was characterised as a failure. Efforts to end dowry giving and the wearing of the sacred thread met with much resistance. Students who went to work in the villages returned saying there was no concrete program to follow. Efforts to distribute Government and *bhoodan* land and formalise the homestead rights of scheduled castes were either aborted or unsuccessful. The committee to consider electoral reform was made up of opposition party members and so it simply targeted its criticisms at Congress. The education seminars failed to produce any original ideas. To balance Shah's assessment, it should be said that some people interviewed reported more productive experiences. They claimed to have done effective work in villages, to have raised people's awareness, and involved members of lower castes.[75] However, I am not contending that there were no successes in these endeavours, but rather that these successes were limited in number and scope. If one adds to this the fact that the Movement failed to bring about the dissolution of the

[74]Shah, <u>Protest Movements in Two Indian States</u>, 110-127.

[75]For example, as expressed in interviews with Anil Prakash (11/11/95), Raghu Pati (15/11/95), and Ghanshyam (17/11/95).

Assembly and the resignation of the Government, it is clear that, in general, it did not really succeed in its own terms.[76]

The nature of and reasons for the Movement's limited success will be the subject of more detailed consideration in the next chapter, but briefly, a number of factors contributed to its lack of success. Generally speaking, the Movement was poorly planned, with insufficient thought given to the groundwork to be undertaken and the obstacles to be faced in pursuit of its ambitious objectives. Most of the programs would have required a highly committed, disciplined and well-coordinated body of cadres, considering the opposition they could expect to face from police and vested interests and the time it would take to change accepted beliefs and practices. JP's decision-making was often autocratic, and yet many of his directives were not implemented because he failed to persuade his followers of their merits, and he had no effective organisation or second rung of leadership to underpin his authority. Consequently, parties, groups and sectors within the Movement used its popularity to pursue their own highly diverse agendas. In many cases, the only thing they had in common was their opposition to Congress. There was a lack of focus and ideological coherence in the Movement, and a fundamental contradiction

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[76]It should be acknowledged here that, insofar as the JP Movement was indirectly responsible for the Janata Party Government, it did in fact succeed in replacing both the Central Government and many state governments, but this was different to the Movement's declared objectives, and the record of these new governments fell far short of expectations, as will be seen in the next chapter.

between the vision of a Gandhian style *total revolution* and opposition party moves to oust Congress. The parties were in no way accountable to the popular forces that made up the Movement, and yet they came to play an increasingly important role. There was an overrepresentation of the middle class and higher castes among the Movement's followers, and very few scheduled caste and tribal people, Muslims, poor peasants, labourers and industrial workers. Furthermore, it lacked a significant popular base outside Bihar.

The response of the Bihar and Central Congress Governments was, for most of the Movement's duration, to 'tough it out' and not yield to its demands, to react brutally to dissent in many instances, to conduct limited negotiations with JP and - with the aid of their allies, the Communist Party of India - to paint JP as, variously, a frustrated politician,[77] a fascist,[78] a CIA agent and destroyer of democracy,[79] a self-righteous pseudo-saint,[80] or a hypocrite who condemned corruption but lived off corrupt supporters.[81] A number of counter-demonstrations were staged, including a CPI procession of over 100,000 people on 3rd June, 1974, and another huge CPI

[77]Ostergaard, Nonviolent Revolution in India, p 77.

[78]Barik, p 54.

[79]ibid, p 56.

[80]Ostergaard, Nonviolent Revolution in India, p 77.

[81]ibid, p 77.

rally on 11th November of that year. It was clear to Mrs Gandhi that the Movement had a very large following, and it was reported that she was willing to dissolve the Assembly in Bihar - as she had in Gujarat - if JP gave an undertaking that the Movement would not make similar demands in other states, but JP replied that it was not his place to determine how citizens in other states responded to the actions of their governments.[82] But perhaps her most significant response was to challenge JP, in November, 1974, to let the people decide on the issues raised by the Movement through the ballot box, which was an indication of the impact the Movement was having on her government. JP decided to take up this challenge, and from that point on the Movement was much more of an electoral contest and much less of a popular movement for sweeping reform.

Two further occurrences were to have a profound impact on the events that followed. On 31st March, 1975, JP said that the armed forces and police would be warranted in disobeying unjust and undemocratic orders from corrupt governments and their officials. This caused a furore among his opponents, and though he later clarified that he did not believe that the current situation was serious enough to justify such an approach by the police and army, he had provided valuable ammunition to his opponents.[83] Second, on 12th June, 1975,

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[82]Narayan Desai, "JP's Role in Second Liberation", Janata, Oct 1977, reprint.

[83]Ostergaard, Nonviolent Revolution in India, pp 186-187.

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following a petition from Indira Gandhi's opponent in her own parliamentary seat, a judgement handed down in the Allahabad High Court deemed that she was guilty of electoral malpractices and was thus ineligible to continue to occupy the seat. The offences she was guilty of were not particularly serious - involving the deployment of some government machinery and officials for electoral purposes - but the consequences of her conviction certainly were. However, Indira Gandhi made no move to stand down, and later won a stay of proceedings in the Supreme Court.[84] The second occurrence was to have even greater impact on the country.

THE EMERGENCY

On 26th June, Indira Gandhi declared a state of Emergency. In justifying her action, she put great stress on JP's alleged incitement of the armed forces and police to rebel. The state of Emergency meant that over 100,000 opponents of the Government were imprisoned, rigid press censorship was maintained, and twenty-seven organisations opposed to the regime were banned. JP was arrested on the day the Emergency was declared, and was to remain in prison until released on 12th November, seriously ill with kidney failure. The Government changed the Constitution to retrospectively legalise the actions which had led to Indira Gandhi's

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[84]ibid, pp 209-212.

conviction for electoral malpractices. The Prime Minister announced a 'twenty-point programme', a collection of progressive-looking social measures designed to restore the electorate's faith in her Government, but it consisted mainly of existing unimplemented policies.[85]

The Emergency drastically reduced, but did not completely eliminate, opportunities for political action in opposition to the Central and Bihar Governments. Some people went underground, and held meetings, distributed literature and ran clandestine organisations. Many of those imprisoned regarded the experience of detention as a kind of 'university of activism', as there was plenty of time to talk and debate, and many got to know people from other sectors of the Movement whom they had previously had little contact with.[86] There were also ongoing discussions between the opposition parties about uniting or co-operating to contest the next elections, whenever they might occur. The Emergency made it all the more imperative that Indira Gandhi's authoritarianism be defeated, and thus was a further unifying force among the opposition. But it also made mass political action far more costly. There was a planned program of *satyagraha*, in which groups of people would openly protest against the Emergency, be arrested, and then be replaced by further groups. But aside from this, it

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[85]Hardgrave & Kochanek, p 247.

[86]This view was expressed, for example, in an interview with Mahesh Sharma (5/12/95).

meant that the massive public actions and the grassroots political activities that had characterised the JP Movement for some fifteen months were now at an end.

THE JANATA GOVERNMENT

The Janata Party emerged out of those opposition parties that had worked together during the Movement and had suffered as a result during the Emergency. It was formed through the agency of JP himself, who saw a united party as a necessary vehicle for removing Indira Gandhi's Government from power. Dissatisfaction with Congress rule, particularly in relation to issues of inflation, unemployment, education policy, corruption and increasing authoritarianism, had sparked off the Movement and fuelled popular support for it. The Emergency only increased the public's feeling that Indira Gandhi's Government was no longer acceptable, and that the only feasible alternative was to turn to those parties that had been an integral part of the JP Movement.

Janata's subsequent electoral victory represented an important break from the past. Until then, the failings of Central Governments in India were the failings of Congress Governments. But from that point on, to the extent that the Janata Government did not meet expectations, the failings of

Central Governments in India could no longer be seen simply as the failings of one party. Instead they would come to be seen as shortcomings of the system and of the people and institutions that inhabit it. There had been non-Congress state-level governments before, it must be said, and these had not been viewed positively, but the failings of the first non-Congress Central Government were to add substantial weight to the level of disaffection with parties and governments per se.

Party efforts to face Congress as a united front had been fairly common, and had seen a number of state non-Congress coalition governments elected in 1967, and some more in 1970 and 1971, but none of these lasted very long and in general they were viewed as disunited, self-serving and ineffective.[87] The lack of success and poor public perception of these governments made non-Congress parties more wary of further efforts to unite or co-operate, until they came together in Gujarat and won the State Elections in 1975.[88]

Parties had been banned from participation in the early stages of the JP Movement, as it was keen to project itself as a people's movement, not as a movement of some parties against others. However this was difficult to sustain for a number of

[87]Madhu Limaye, Janata Party Experiment: An Insider's Account of Opposition Politics, 1977-80 (Vol:II), B R Publishing, Delhi, 1994, p 543.

[88]C P Bhambhri, The Janata Party: A Profile, National, New Delhi, 1980, pp 4, 10. There had also been some left and regional party governments.

reasons. First, key student organisations that had been part of the Movement from the start were closely linked to parties. Most important was Akhil Bhartiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP), the student association affiliated with Jana Sangh, and there was also the Samajwadi Yuvajana Sabha (SYS), the student organisation of the Samyukta Socialist Party. The RSS was also active in the Movement from the outset. Second, the parties and their fronts had important organisational resources and supporter bases that could contribute to advancing the aims of Movement, especially outside Bihar where it did not have a mass non-party following. Third, the aims of the Movement changed, and this can be seen as both a cause and a result of party involvement, in that, as Congress governments in Bihar and nationally increasingly became the Movement's targets, objections to the involvement by non-Congress parties softened, and these parties were naturally keen to accentuate the Movement's anti-Congress focus.

As has been stated, the parties involved in the Movement were the Jana Sangh, the Socialist Party, Congress (O) and the BLD. The first three have been described, while the BLD chiefly represented North Indian middle peasants. These were the parties that were to come together as the Janata Party, along with the Congress for Democracy, a group that broke away from Congress just before the 1977 Election. Jana Sangh was the most organised and active party in the JP Movement and, together with the RSS and the ABVP, it constituted a

formidable force for Hindu communalist values, a force that was to play a much greater role in Indian politics from the 1980s onward under the name of the Bharatiya Janata Party or BJP (Indian People's Party).

In the early stages there was disagreement on the questions of how the parties should work together and who should be involved. The BLD favoured a merger of non-Communist parties; Jana Sangh wanted to co-operate rather than merge; Congress (O) was primarily focused on the Gujarat elections in 1975 but was wary of working with either the Jana Sangh or the CPM; and the Socialists wanted an alliance of left parties. However, the Emergency brought the parties together more, and a Janata Front was formed in Parliament in January, 1976.[89] Two days after Indira Gandhi called an Election in January 1977 the parties agreed, in their words, "to work as one party".[90] It should be noted that although Janata came into being on a wave of support for a popular movement involving many organisations and sectors of society, a movement that advocated new forms of democracy and popular participation, it was no different to any other party when it came to selecting candidates, formulating policy and, later, making itself accountable for its performance. It did not involve these organisations and sectors in any significant way once in power. Even JP was to

[89]ibid, p 12.

[90]ibid, p 16.

recede into the background, as a result of his declining health, the fact that he no longer had a role, and his decision to refrain from judging the Janata Government's performance for one year. He had played a large part in generating the support necessary for Janata to win power, but once in power, most sections of the Government showed little interest in his visions of Gandhian political and economic decentralisation and social and moral regeneration.[91] Moreover, as is the case with any government, Janata in power attracted to itself those who saw some personal benefit from being connected to such power, which further tipped the balance away from JP's moral vision for it.

It must be said, however, that this lack of connection with or accountability to the movement that had spawned the party was exacerbated by the circumstances of the election. There were only two months from Indira Gandhi's announcement till the election itself, and in that time policies had to be formulated and candidates preselected - in fact, there was only ten to twelve days for the latter. Open quarrels broke out over the distribution of candidates among the constituent parties (which did not, in fact, officially merge until after the election), and JP was asked, but declined, to select the candidates himself. Candidates were eventually selected, and of the 298 seats won by the constituent parties, 90 seats were

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[91]Prasad, p 237.

won by Jana Sangh candidates, 89 by those from the Congress for Democracy, Congress (O) and Congress independents, 68 by BLD candidates and 51 by Socialists. The parties could also not agree, after their election victory, on who should become Prime Minister, as the necessary support could not be mustered for any of the three serious contenders, and there were personality differences between them. There was the veteran Gandhian and former Deputy Prime Minister from Congress (O), Morarji Desai, the scheduled caste former Congress Cabinet member and leader of Congress for Democracy, Jagjivan Ram, and the BLD's leader, Charan Singh. To resolve this problem JP and another venerable figure, Archarya Kripalani, agreed to make the decision, and they selected the 81 year old Morarji Desai, described by one source as "austere and puritanical".[92]

In the election campaign, the parties had focused on the issue of democracy versus authoritarianism and the need to preserve the rule of law, and in a hastily drafted Manifesto there was also a commitment to Gandhianism, decentralised democracy, rural development and the reversal of excessive industrialisation.[93] It was chiefly Charan Singh who presented an alternative development model, but this was simply couched in terms of increasing the priority on agriculture, vis-a-vis heavy industry, and, according to Limaye, Charan Singh was a

[92]Hardgrave & Kochanek, p 277.

[93]Bhambhri, pp 23-24.

representative of middle-class farmers and "did not have an instinctive rapport with the lowest rungs of rural India. He seldom talked of agricultural labour and landless people, although his speeches and writings were replete with touching references to the poor."[94]

Neither the policy formulation process nor the preselection of candidates involved anyone outside of the parties - other than, in an indirect way, JP himself. And in any event, it will be seen that there was in most cases little connection between the election pledges and the preoccupations of Janata politicians when in government.

As Janata had won office as a hastily merged party, it was necessary to consolidate its place as a party in the Indian political system, a task that required two things. First, to do this most effectively it had to be in government - not just nationally but in the states as well. In power, it could dispense political patronage and thus attract more supporters and active workers. Accordingly, soon after winning office, and without any other pretext, it dissolved many of the state assemblies and called fresh elections. The acrimonious disputes over selection of candidates and a leader that had occurred at the national level were then repeated in each state, but the elections were highly successful for Janata,

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[94]Limaye, pp 359-360.

with victories in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Rajasthan, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh. Secondly, it needed to create a party structure right down to the local level, but it was much less successful at this. G. K. Reddy wrote of Janata's "inability to build up proper party organisations, the absence of any functioning units in the states" and a membership drive that was a "non-starter".[95] Elections in the party organisation were deferred in order to avoid factional conflict, and certain party front organisations, most notably the RSS, did not merge into the combined party, causing further friction.[96]

Overall, the Janata Government's two and a half years in office were a time of factional conflict, other diversions and unimplemented policies. The conflicts saw factions based on the pre-existing parties opposing each other in shifting alliances, and growing enmity between major personalities, particularly between Morarji Desai and Charan Singh. Diversions included Desai's preoccupation with pushing for total Prohibition, a policy that was not even in the party's Manifesto,[97] and a dispute over alleged corruption by Desai's son, Kanti, about which the Prime Minister refused to hold an inquiry. Unimplemented policies were many, as will be seen.

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[95]Bhambhri, p 59.

[96]ibid.

[97]Limaye, p 363.

The Janata Government did release political prisoners and restore press freedom and judicial powers, but it stopped short of rescinding all restrictions on democracy that Congress had imposed, such as the Maintenance of Internal Security Act or powers of preventive detention.[98] The economy benefited early in the Government's term from good monsoons and record harvests, but before long inflation, strikes and civil unrest increased, with universities closed, caste and communal violence and industrial action by police and paramilitary forces.

In general terms, the Janata Government represented the same sectors of society as Congress Governments had before them, namely, an alliance of the urban bourgeoisie and the rich peasantry, as will be discussed in the next chapter. According to B K Shrivastava:

> The Janata Party should have created its own rank and file from among the masses if it wanted to take its feet deep into the grass-roots of leadership recruitment. But it did not or could not do it. Whenever the organisational work started, it was interfered [with] by the dominating roles of the different constituent groups.[99]

Srivastava adds that in central and state government elections in 1977 and 1978 endorsement went to "self-seekers defected

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[98]Hardgrave & Kochanek, pp 277-278.

[99]B K Srivastava, Concept and Behaviour of Pressure Group Politics in India, Progress Publishers, Bhopal, 1983, p 324.

from Congress" before "loyal Janata members".[100]

Charan Singh, whose support base was principally among prosperous peasant proprietors of North India, wanted to give more attention to rural interests, but this did not lead to any radical policy shifts. And those policies that were adopted benefited more well-off rural interests. Morarji Desai did not favour reservations (that is, reserved places) for backward castes in government employment, even though there was a clear commitment to them in the Manifesto. According to Madhu Limaye, he "dreaded the rising Kisan [farmer] and Backward Class political power".[101] A Commission established by Congress in the 1950s had recommended reservations, but they had only been implemented in the South, due to widespread opposition in the North. In order to put the issue off, Desai set up another Commission (which became known as the Mandal Commission) to inquire into them again.

The Government did take some measures to counter atrocities committed against dalits and adivasis, such as replacing the single Scheduled Caste - Scheduled Tribe Commissioner with a multi-member Commission, but, in the words of Limaye, "the problem was so serious and widespread and the Government machinery and security apparatus so much infested by class and

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[100]ibid.

[101]Limaye, p 393.

caste prejudices that the results were not satisfactory."[102]

A host of the party's policy commitments were not implemented
during the life of the government. These included: policies on
land reform and the maintenance of labour-intensive industry
(which Janata state governments also failed to implement);[103]
bills to combat corruption, to preserve media freedom and for
electoral reform that were not enacted;[104] and policies
promoting Panchayati Raj (that is, an increased role for local
government). To be fair, in some of these cases processes
began that bore fruit some years later, with the two most
notable examples of this being: in the area of Panchayati Raj,
where a later Constitutional change has substantially
increased the power of the three levels of local government
and reserved places in them for women, dalits and adivasis;
and in the area of Reservations, where, as a result of the
Mandal Commission Report, the Government of the day legislated
for additional reserved places in government employment and
universities for Other Backward Classes (OBCs).

The Janata Government's failure to honour many of its policy
commitments resulted partly from the briefness of its time in
office, and partly from the disputes and issues that arose to

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[102]ibid, p 395.

[103]ibid, p 382.

[104]Interview with Surendra Mohan.

distract it. But there was also a lack of will to implement the policies. For example, according to Madhu Limaye, Morarji Desai had little interest in the party's Manifesto or the resolutions of its Executive Committee.[105] Limaye also noted the lack of interest of Janata state governments in implementing policy, as the "energy of Chief Ministers was spent on the life and death problem of staying in power and managing the factional conflicts. There was no time for socio-economic reform and stepping up of development activity."[106]

Continued disputes between Janata's factions and enmity between Morarji Desai and Charan Sangh eventually brought about the Government's disintegration. In June, 1978, Charan Singh and his ally, Raj Narain, were forced to resign their portfolios. Alliances between the factions were forming and re-forming, and there was ongoing controversy within the party over the role of the Jana Sangh and its ties with the RSS. Then Raj Narain, denouncing the RSS as "fascist" and responsible for communal violence, resigned from the party, taking with him a block of 46 MPs, triggering further defections and ministerial resignations and eliminating the Government's majority. A no confidence vote in July forced Morarji Desai to resign his commission, and he was replaced as Prime Minister by Charan Singh, whose Government survived with

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[105]Limaye, p 363.

[106]ibid, p 382.

Congress support for 24 days before also falling in August, 1979.[107] In January, 1980, Indira Gandhi led Congress back into office after a resounding electoral victory that gave Congress a two-thirds majority and left the parties that emerged from the splintered Janata Party with fewer than 14 percent of the seats.[108]

The consensus of opinion about the record of the first non-Congress national government in India supports this electoral verdict - Janata is seen to have failed spectacularly to live up to the public expectations that were invested in it.[109] In Gail Omvedt's estimation, the regime "proved to be only another episode in the ongoing crisis of the ruling elite... and its policies remained little different in fact from those of Congress".[110] It is claimed by some, not without justification, that there were important achievements in office and that the Janata Government set in train processes that were to bear fruit many years later. But overall, its record tended to reinforce the belief of many Indians that in the pursuit of social and economic progress little or nothing can be expected of parties or governments, and those voters who had seen Congress as the chief cause of the country's

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[107]Hardgrave & Kochanek, pp 279-282.

[108]ibid, pp 255, 320-321.

[109]Only three of those interviewed had anything positive to say about the Janata Government.

[110]Gail Omvedt, Reinventing Revolution: New Social Movements and the Socialist Tradition in India, M E Sharpe, New York, 1993, pp 176-177.

political ills were now more likely to conclude that parties in general were to blame.

But another major cost of the Janata Government experience was that it caused the tide of social action and popular pressure for better government, that the JP Movement had - albeit insufficiently - generated, to lose direction and impetus. The Emergency was at least partially responsible for this, it is true, but what happened after the Emergency ended was critically important. Many activists joined opposition parties and many were preselected as candidates. JP's efforts were focused upon bringing these parties together and there was little for those who had participated in the Movement to do other than get behind the parties. On the day that Janata leaders were elected, JP gave a speech in the Central Hall of the Lok Sabha in which, in the words of one of his lieutenants, Narayan Desai, he "reminded the newly elected representatives of the people that the progress of the nation depended primarily on two forces: Lok Shakti (people's power) and Raj Shakti (State power). He implored the Prime Minister-elect that in case of differences between the Lok Shakti and Raj Shakti he should try to be with the Lok Shakti, unlike his predecessor. Shri Morarji Desai immediately responded positively."[111] After twelve months - the period JP gave the Government to prove itself - it was time for Lok Shakti. But

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[111]Desai, p 177.

when he initiated a process of community evaluation of Janata's performance, he was variously ignored and abused by the Government and its supporters. Morarji Desai was to declare "JP is not God" and party supporters at one public meeting threw sandals and shoes at him. Raj Shakti was clearly still in the ascendancy. As well as the party he created turning away from him, JP's health continued to fail, and he died in October, 1979, a disillusioned man.[112]

CONCLUSION

The JP Movement brought together a very diverse range of organisations, parties and individuals that had two things in common - they were dissatisfied with some aspect of mainstream politics, particularly Congress rule, and they were prepared to follow the leadership of Jayaprakash Narayan. The Movement embodied a major contradiction in that JP and many others involved were strongly opposed to party politics, and yet its major tangible result was to replace one governing party with another. The performance of the party that it created was not a significant improvement on that of its predecessor, and so, for many Movement participants and observers, these events only confirmed their dissatisfaction with mainstream politics, and led them to channel their efforts into different forms of political activity.

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[112]Ostergaard, Nonviolent Revolution in India, p 284.

In the next chapter I examine more closely the impact of these developments as perceived by participants and observers interviewed for this thesis. I then go on to explore in greater depth the reasons for the shortcomings of the JP Movement and the Janata Government. The purpose of this is to assess whether the negative views held by many of these participants and observers about the record and potential of parties and governments are wholly justified, or whether the limited outcomes of this particular movement, party and government are not in fact attributable to a series of identifiable factors that, if they were different on a future occasion, as a result of different choices, could be expected to yield different outcomes.

CHAPTER FOUR: HOW THE 'SECOND FREEDOM MOVEMENT' FELL SHORT

It was the second struggle...after the struggle for independence.
E D Awad[1]

It was the first movement after independence which had national scale, participation and impact and which can be compared to [the] freedom movement.
Gajanan Khatu[2]

We were feeling at the time that it is again an independence movement, a freedom movement. The freedom which we got in 1947 is not the real freedom. We are fighting for another freedom – the freedom of workers, farmers.
Vivek Pandit[3]

The impact of political events can lie as much in the conclusions people draw from them as in their more tangible consequences. From the experience of this 'second freedom movement', the JP Movement, and from the Janata Government that followed it, a range of conclusions were reached by different participants and observers, and these led to action in a variety of directions. Among other things, judgements were made about the value of political parties and governments, and about the efficacy of efforts to improve these institutions. Such judgements then determined whether people joined parties to seek change from within, whether they sought to achieve specific changes by putting pressure on

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[1]Response to mailed interview schedule [henceforth 'mailed response']: E D Awad (undated).

[2]Mailed response: Gajanan Khatu (22/1/97).

[3]Interview: Vivek Pandit (16/12/95).

parties and governments from without, or whether they kept both parties and governments at a distance and focused their efforts on change at the local level. So the first part of this chapter examines these conclusions that were reached about the JP Movement and the Janata Government - particularly as they bear on this issue of the efficacy of efforts to change government and parties - as well as the impact of these conclusions on the subsequent direction of political action. Of course, the influence of the JP Movement and Janata Government on people's thinking cannot be completely separated from the influence of other events and trends, and these are acknowledged at different points. The second part of the chapter will evaluate these assessments.

RESPONSES FROM THOSE QUESTIONED[4]

There was near consensus among those interviewed that, prior to the JP Movement, the situation in the Congress Party and in state and national Congress Governments was seriously deteriorating. Reference was made in the previous chapter to the level of concern about Indira Gandhi's authoritarianism, about corruption and about the failed promises of Independence and development, particularly their failure to deliver an adequate standard of living to the bulk of the population. As

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[4]In the section on the methodology of the research in Chapter 1, p #, the selection of interview subjects is explained, and as previously noted, Appendix A contains lists of the names of interviewees and gives some brief biographical information about them, while Appendix B contains the interview schedule.

H D Sharma put it, "people very much wanted change, but could not find a way...JP showed the way."[5] Shiva Sharan Bhai talked of how people felt frustrated and let down by the corruption and lack of social justice, and were therefore already motivated to seek change and did not need persuasion.[6]

Thus, there was clearly a readiness for something different, and the JP Movement became the vehicle through which people sought to effect that change. But there were widely differing views about how and to what extent the Movement succeeded or failed to bring about the change that was sought, and about the causes of this success or failure.[7] The perceived successes of the JP Movement will be noted first.

The most frequently cited success of the Movement was that it helped to preserve democracy by removing what was seen to be a corrupt and authoritarian government. In the words of Paul Valiakandathil:

It was the movement that gave India a deep awareness of its democratic foundations and an unmistakable warning to all the would be dictators. People had a unique experience of their power to punish the errant politicians.[8]

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[5] Interview: H D Sharma (29/11/95).

[6] Interview: Shiva Sharan Bhai (22/11/95).

[7] When I refer to 'the effects of the JP Movement' this includes, unless otherwise stated or implied, the effects of the Janata Government as well, as the Janata Government was itself an effect of the Movement.

[8] Mailed response: Paul Valiakandathil (Undated).

According to Ajit Jha, prior to the Movement many people within political parties and the middle class were of the opinion that universal franchise was not appropriate for India because the people were not trained for it, but after the Movement this view was rarely heard.[9] Gajanan Khatu echoed the views of many when he said that the JP Movement "sealed off the possibility" of further authoritarian government in India.[10]

Thus, it was felt that the Movement gave voters the confidence to remove governments of which they disapproved, which had the effect of creating a true multiparty system. As Prabash Joshi put it, the Movement succeeded in "awakening the people to organise themselves, protest and force the government to change its ways, and if the government doesn't change its ways, you throw it out."[11] According to Milind Bokil, the Movement showed that "people are supreme and the parties will have to bow before them (at least once in five years)."[12] E D Awad felt that it "created an alternative to Congress in the country for the first time."[13]

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[9]Interview: Ajit Jha (12/12/95).

[10]Mailed response: Gajanan Khatu.

[11]Interview: Prabash Joshi (8/12/95).

[12]Mailed response: Milind Bokil (22/1/97).

[13]Mailed response: E D Awad.

The JP Movement was also seen to bring into the political system sectors of society that had been until that time relatively inactive politically. Dalits, adivasis, other backward castes and youth were particularly identified in this respect. As Paul Valiakandathil put it, as a result of the Movement, the "Brahminic monolithic character of politics was weakened. Populism has come to stay."[14] And in the words of Ram Chandra Rahi, the lowest castes are "now a force to be reckoned with."[15] It was felt that the Movement created a new group of activists,[16] produced grass-roots level leadership,[17] and gave people an avenue for participation that they did not have previously.[18] On the other hand, George Fernandes attributed the increased political involvement of lower castes to better education rather than to the JP Movement.[19] And while certain current politicians were cited as examples of people from middle to lower castes who had commenced their political involvement with the JP Movement, this was not viewed wholly favourably, given the alleged corruption of some of these politicians.[20] A little further on in this chapter

[14]Mailed response: Paul Valiakandathil.

[15]Interview: Ram Chandra Rahi (30/11/95).

[16]Interview: Arbind Kumar (14/11/95).

[17]Interview: Kumar Ranjan (18/11/95).

[18]Mailed response: Narayan Desai (29/4/97).

[19]Interview: George Fernandes (13/12/95).

[20]Interviews: Ram Chandra Rahi, Shivananda Tiwary (11/11/95), Ram Jatan Sinha (14/11/95.

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this question of the extent of participation in the JP Movement of newly active social sectors is considered more closely.

The Movement was also seen to generate new levels and kinds of political consciousness. To a large extent this was a necessary part of the trends just described, that is, the increased readiness of the voters to challenge governments that did not meet expectations and the entry into political participation of new sectors. It involved coming to understand that almost all aspects of life were affected by politics. Ajit Bhattacharjea reported that from the Movement he came to appreciate the extent to which poverty was a political process.[21] According to L C Jain, the JP Movement made the connection between rural development and politics, which has informed voluntary organisations ever since,[22] while for Vivek Pandit, the Movement influenced him to see that "each issue has a political shape."[23] Furthermore, it was felt to have created a greater propensity for the public to critically evaluate the performance of governments,[24] to reject bad governments,[25] and to be more informed as a result of the

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[21]Interview: Ajit Bhattacharjea (13/12/95).

[22]Interview: L C Jain (14/12/95).

[23]Interview: Vivek Pandit.

[24]Interview: Ajit Jha.

[25]Interview: Shiva Sharan Bhai.

political training that took place in the Movement.[26] For marginalised sectors this new political awareness involved a reassessment of their place in the social hierarchy. In the words of Ramchandra Purbay, JP's philosophy of *total revolution* "awakened the downtrodden to the fact that they were not born to serve the landlords."[27] As well, according to Rajiv Vora, the Movement awakened the intelligentsia, who had been complacent and insulated from society within the universities, to the realities of life for most Indians.[28]

However, there were differences of opinion about the Movement's impact on people's thinking. As George Fernandes put it, "Has it given a new turn to an ideological debate, to any kind of new programmatic presentation of how to run the country...or how to solve the problems? No."[29] And Sharad Joshi doubts "if any sizeable organisation in India is... influenced by the JP or the Gandhian movement."[30] Moreover, others interviewed stressed the importance of other influences. Paul Valiakandathil, a Jesuit, was also influenced by Paulo Freire and liberation struggles in South America, Marxism, grassroots movements in India and youth movements

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[26]Interview: Ram Bachan Roy (14/11/95).

[27]Interview: Ramchandra Purbay (14/11/95).

[28]Interview: Rajiv Vora (12/12/95).

[29]Interview: George Fernandes.

[30]Letter from Sharad Joshi to the author (18/10/95).

around the world,[31] while Gajanan Khatu cites Gandhi, Dr Ambedkar, Marx and Jotirao Phule as influences on himself and his colleagues.[32] Smitu Kothari, however, believes that in North India, the ideology of the action group end of the voluntary sector was "substantially" derived from the JP Movement.[33]

Another significant impact that the Movement had on political consciousness - one that is particularly relevant to this thesis - was that it helped create a new view of the political role and modus operandi of voluntary or non-government organisations. Previously, many civil organisations, especially those known as NGOs, had concentrated primarily on what Gandhians called constructive work, but the JP Movement highlighted the importance of taking a political approach. This, according to a number of those interviewed, encouraged a great deal of NGO activism which has continued to this day.[34] As Paul Valiakandathil put it, "It has given protest a permanent place."[35] Daniel Mazgaonkar felt that the Movement heightened the profile of certain kinds of *satyagraha* that had

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[31]Questionnaire response: Paul Valiakandathil.

[32]Questionnaire response: Gajanan Khatu.

[33]Interview: Smitu Kothari (12/12/95).

[34]Interview: Smitu Kothari; mailed responses: E D Awad; Milind Bokil; Gajanand Khatu, Jacob Thundyil (undated), and a representative of the National Fishworkers Forum (undated).

[35]Mailed response: Paul Valiakandathil.

not been undertaken on such a scale before.[36] As has been
mentioned in Chapter One, Kumar Ranjan concluded from his
involvement in the Movement that government can only be
improved if there is ongoing pressure from the grass-roots.
Groups must act as "sweepers" to keep the government clean.
"If a building is very nice, well constructed, and there is
no-one to sweep the room, that room will be dirty." In
Ranjan's view, even with God as the Prime Minister, if there
was no popular pressure, government would not do the right
thing.[37] However, in relation to the politicisation of
voluntary organisations, K K Mukhopadhyay claimed that this
had begun a decade earlier when, among other influences, the
Naxalite Movement had heightened their political
consciousness.[38]

Several interviewees noted that the JP Movement revived the
importance of *satyagraha* within the Gandhian Movement.
According to Ram Chandra Rahi, Gandhians had previously
thought that those in power were "friends" who would support
them in their endeavours, but they came to appreciate the need
to struggle for "new politics" and for the reconstruction of
Indian villages, and that those in power would try to crush
such a movement.[39] For Gandhian worker Shiva Sharan Bhai, his

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[36]Interview: Daniel Mazgaonkar (19/12/95).

[37]Interview: Kumar Ranjan.

[38]Interview: K K Mukhopadhyay (13/12/95).

[39]Interview: Ram Chandra Rahi.

approach to village work changed after the experience of the JP Movement, with much more of an emphasis on protecting rights and challenging corruption,[40] and for Girija Satish the focus changed from constructive work to organising villages into lok samatis (people's committees).[41]

The JP Movement was also seen to have contributed to the revival of local democracy in India. Constitutional amendments in the 1990s made important changes to India's *panchayat* system, with its three levels of local government. Elections were regularised, the three levels were given greater powers and responsibilities, and reserved seats in local government were created for women and members of scheduled castes and tribes. JP had for many years tried to advance the cause of improved local democracy, not only by espousing a Gandhian vision of semi-autonomous villages, but also by his pressure on the Nehru Government to reform the *panchayat* system. The Janata Government instituted a review of the *panchayat* system chaired by Asoka Mehta that was to lead to the later changes.[42] According to Acharya Ramamurti, he and his colleagues' interest in the potential of revitalised *panchayats* was inspired by JP's concept of *janata sarkar*,[43]

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[40]Interview: Shiva Sharan Bhai.

[41]Interview: Girija Satish (21/11/95).

[42]Robert L Hardgrave, Jr & Stanley A Kochanek, <u>India: Government and Politics in a Developing Nation</u>, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich College Publishers, Fort Worth, 1993, p 114.

[43]Interview: Acharya Ramamurti (26/11/95).

while Ajit Bhattacharjea, Ram Bachan Roy and Jacob Thundyil agreed that the Movement contributed to the renewed attention to local democracy.[44]

These, then, were what interviewees saw to be the successes of the JP Movement. But it should be noted that these judgements about the Movement's successes were based upon certain views about governments and parties, views that tended to focus on the importance of curbing the powers and excesses of government, and of people having the confidence to throw governments out. The role of organisations is to be, in Kumar Ranjan's term, the "sweeper" that keeps government clean. Government is not seen as a positive or creative force but as something that has to be watched and contained. The only level of government for which any enthusiasm is expressed is the *panchayat* level, in which parties are officially not supposed to be involved.

Many, however, thought the Movement failed or fell far short of expectations, either wholly or in part. For example, B N Juyal did not believe the movement "left much imprint" in terms of "qualitative change".[45] Tripurari Sharan was of the opinion that it did not achieve its stated aims because the political system was not changed,[46] while Sharad Kulkarni saw

[44]Interviews: Ajit Bhattacharjea, Ram Bachan Roy; mailed response: Jacob Thundyil.

[45]Interview: B N Juyal (29/11/95).

[46]Interview: Tripurari Sharan (10/11/95).

it as "10-15% successful".[47] Looking at the Janata Government specifically, the great majority considered it to have been a failure. For Kumar Ranjan, it was no different to Indira Gandhi's Government, a group of old politicians who, when in power, forgot all the things they had been fighting for.[48] Prabash Joshi saw it as having "feet of clay",[49] Narayan Desai labelled it a "bungling" government,[50] while for Ram Bachan Roy it was an "unfortunate incident".[51] Arbind Kumar's high hopes for Janata were disappointed,[52] and Surendra Mohan, who had been part of the government and believed that it had done a lot of good things, acknowledged that it did not meet people's expectations and that many of its initiatives did not come to fruition.[53] According to Shiva Sharan Bhai, it failed to pursue the JP Movement's objectives,[54] while in the opinion of A B Bharadwaj, it contained some people who were interested in reform, but they finally got defeated.[55]

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[47]Interview: Sharad Kulkarni (17/12/95).

[48]Interview: Kumar Ranjan.

[49]Interview: Prabash Joshi.

[50]Mailed response: Narayan Desai.

[51]Interview: Ram Bachan Roy.

[52]Interview: Arbind Kumar.

[53]Interview: Surendra Mohan (8/12/95).

[54]Interview: Shiva Sharan Bhai.

[55]Interview: A B Bharadwaj.

Many blamed the Movement's failures on the lack of time that it had to achieve its goals, either because it was interrupted by the imposition of the Emergency,[56] or because JP's failing health limited the time he had to put into it.[57] Some, however, disputed the notion that lack of time adversely affected the Movement. Ram Jatan Sinha, for example, claimed that the Movement would have still failed had the Emergency not occurred, in that the impetus was dying down and the action programs - such as a call to fill the jails - were not being implemented. He added that no movement can continue at a high pitch for more than a few months.[58] Acharya Ramamurti agreed that it was waning by that stage,[59] while Ram Jatan Sinha went further and claimed that the Emergency actually revived a flagging movement.[60]

A collection of other factors that are closely interlinked were seen to contribute to the Movement's failures, as follows. The desire to see Congress removed from power was seen as the only objective uniting the Movement's diverse elements.[61] Thus, there was disunity and an unwillingness to

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[56]Interviews: Acharya Ramamurti, Ram Bachan Roy, Ram Chandra Rahi, Siddharaj Dhaddha (8/12/95), Raghu Pati (15/11/95), and Tapeshwar Bhai (12/11/95).

[57]Interviews: Mahesh Sharma, Sharad Kulkarni, Ram Bachan Roy, Surendra Mohan, Prabash Joshi, and Sishir Kumar (14/11/95).

[58]Interview: Ram Jatan Sinha.

[59]Interview: Acharya Ramamurti.

[60]Interview: Ram Jatan Sinha.

[61]Interviews: B N Juyal, Surendra Mohan, K K Mukhopadhyay, and Anil Singh (6/12/95).

follow JP's line on other matters. However, some saw this as stemming from a national trait. As K K Mukhopadhyay put it, "In our country, not many people support a person because of their understanding of the philosophy of the person...it is more the personality".[62] Others agreed that people supported JP's personality more than his message.[63] Vijay Pratap put it bluntly when he said that none of the party leaders believed in what JP advocated.[64] The parties, in fact, were blamed not only for pursuing their own agenda, that of replacing Congress in power, but also for diverting the whole Movement in this direction.[65] As Anil Singh put it, JP was a vehicle for challenging Congress, because no party could do it alone, but when the new government was formed, JP was not needed by the parties any more[66] (although it did seek and gain his initial endorsement). According to Narayan Desai, the parties gained much more from the popularity of the JP Movement than the Movement gained from the strength of the parties.[67] Sharad Kulkarni echoed the thoughts of others when he said that the election victory was the Movement's undoing, with the old

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[62]Interview: K K Mukhopadhyay. A similar comment was made by B N Juyal in an interview.

[63]Interviews: Sharad Kulkarni, Girija Satish, Jatin Desai (18/12/95), Kuldip Nayar (14/12/95), and P M Tripathi (9/12/95).

[64]Interview: Vijay Pratap (12/12/95).

[65]Interviews: Vivek Pandit, Daniel Mazgaonkar, K K Mukhopadhyay, Tapeshwar Bhai, Acharya Ramamurti, Prabash Joshi, Sebasti Raj (10/12/95), and Kavaljit Singh (7/12/95); phone interview: Rajni Kothari (11/12/95); mailed response: E D Awad, Narayan Desai, and Lallubhai Desai (12/4/97).

[66]Interview: Anil Singh.

[67]Mailed response: Narayan Desai.

guard taking over and the young getting sidetracked into electoral politics.[68] Moreover, as Ramchandra Rahi put it, after the Emergency people's resentment was expressed through the election rather than through popular action.[69]

The Hindu communalist Jana Sangh, and its associated organisations, chiefly the RSS, were specifically mentioned as being responsible for the diversion of the Movement's direction, given their large following, level of organisation and single-minded pursuit of their own objectives.[70] The Movement, it was claimed, enabled the RSS to become stronger and more respectable.[71] According to Acharya Ramamurti, JP mistakenly believed that he would be able to change the Jana Sangh.[72] The Right was seen to operate more strategically than other sections of the Movement during the time of the Janata Government as well. In the Janata Ministry its portfolios included Information, Broadcasting and Education, portfolios that enabled it to extend its ideological influence.[73] And while the left of the party went along with calls to act as a united party, the RSS continued to act as a separate

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[68]Interviews: Sharad Kulkarni, Sishir Kumar, Raghu Pati.

[69]Interview: Ram Chandra Rahi.

[70]Interviews: Daniel Mazgaonkar, Rajagopal (9/12/95).

[71]Interviews: Rajagopal, Vivek Pandit, Harsh Sethi (8/12/95).

[72]Interview: Acharya Ramamurti. A view echoed in interview by Daniel Mazgaonkar.

[73]Interview: Anil Singh.

organisation.[74]

The Emergency itself was also seen as partially responsible for the diversion into electoral politics, because it was felt to be critically important that representative democracy, for all its faults, should not descend permanently into dictatorship.[75] There was a feeling that the Movement was caught up in a process of simply reshuffling the old political players, including, as George Fernandes put it, many who had been part of "the rot" that it was supposed to be opposing.[76]

Some felt that the students, who had initiated the Movement, were primarily interested in narrow student concerns, or that their predominantly upper caste and class backgrounds meant that they were unlikely to be a radical force in support of the interests of the marginalised,[77] but others claimed that students were genuinely concerned about the poor,[78] that they were not predominantly upper caste and class,[79] or that all students tended to come from upper castes and classes and that the JP Movement actively encouraged others to become

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[74]Interview: Vivek Pandit.

[75]Interviews: Sharad Kulkarni, Siddharaj Dhaddha.

[76]Interview: George Fernandes. A view echoed in interview by Anil Singh.

[77]Interviews: Tripurari Sharan, Shiva Sharan Bhai, Surendra Mohan, Sishir Kumar.

[78]Interviews: Arbind Kumar, Jatin Desai.

[79]Interview: Ram Bachan Roy.

involved.[80]

Many who were interviewed acknowledged flaws or weaknesses in the JP Movement's message, organisation, leadership and strategies. It was claimed that JP's concept of *total revolution* and other aspects of the Movement's message were not properly understood by many followers.[81] Despite this, it was felt to have a capacity to mobilise people,[82] or as Vijay Pratap put it, the moral tone of JP's call served a historical purpose - it was needed to attract the following it did.[83]

There were frequent criticisms of the Movement's organisation, in general terms,[84] or in relation to particular aspects, as follows. There was seen to be a lack of a blueprint or program to guide action,[85] and a lack of strategy,[86] although it was recognised by some that this was because the Movement "just emerged or erupted" and this did not allow time for pre-planning,[87] The absence of a strong central organisation

[80]Interviews: B N Juyal, Ramjee Singh (29/11/95).

[81]Interviews: Tripurari Sharan, Daniel Mazgaonkar, Jitendra Singh (12/11/95); mailed response: Narayan Desai.

[82]Interview: Narayan Desai.

[83]Interview: Vijay Pratap.

[84]Interviews: Jitendra Singh, Ram Chandra Rahi; mailed response: E D Awad.

[85]Interviews: George Fernandes, Suresh Bhatt (15/11/95); mailed response: Gajanan Khatu.

[86]Interview: Vivek Pandit.

[87]Interview: K K Mukhopadhyay.

within the Movement was also felt to be a major weakness.[88] In this respect, the Chhatra Yuva Sangharsh Vahini was too small to even cover Bihar, according to Sachchidanand.[89] However, according to Narayan Desai, this did not mean that chaos prevailed. "The movement was organised in the sense that an atmosphere of discipline prevailed throughout the state".[90]

The lack of an effective second rank of leadership was noted by a number of those interviewed.[91] As Jatin Desai put it, JP was "such a towering personality", but immediately after him there was no-one to give direction to those following his philosophy.[92] According to Acharya Ramamurti, this resulted from the fact that charisma cannot be transferred.[93] It was claimed that there was a shortage of good or committed cadres,[94] as well as a lack of direction in the field.[95] As a result of these weakness, it was felt, no cohesive movement in Bihar has continued on where the JP Movement left off.[96]

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[88]Interviews: George Fernandes, Sachchidanand (15/11/95), Mahesh Sharma, Rajiv Vora.

[89]Interview: Sachchidanand.

[90]Mailed response: Narayan Desai.

[91]Interviews: Girija Satish, Jatin Desai, A B Bharadwaj, P M Tripathi; mailed responses: Lallubhai Desai, Sachchidanand, E D Awad, Narendra Dubey (undated).

[92]Interview: Jatin Desai.

[93]Interview: Acharya Ramamurti.

[94]Interviews: Girija Satish, George Fernandes.

[95]Interview: Girija Satish.

[96]Interviews: Vivek Pandit, Sharad Kulkarni.

The opinion was expressed that JP, himself, was not a practical person,[97] or a natural organiser.[98] He was considered by some to be a bad judge of people, as Ajit Bhattacharjea put it, an innocent man who took people at face value and thought the best of them.[99] Thus he thought that the students would remain idealistic,[100] and as previously noted, that the Jana Sangh was changing, and would change further under his influence.[101] But Narayan Desai claimed he was aware of the narrow interests of the parties but had to accept their support in the interests of preventing dictatorship.[102] Ram Chandra Rahi claimed that JP underestimated the political power of Indira Gandhi and the extent to which she would go to crush the Movement.[103] For Paul Valiakandathil, JP was primarily a moralist and a man of heart, and the Movement "fell to pieces once the emotional unity evaporated...It was an articulation of aspirations, not a tool for effective nation building".[104]

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[97]Interview: Ajit Bhattacharjea.

[98]Interviews: Sharad Kulkarni, Jatin Desai.

[99]Interview: Ajit Bhattacharjea.

[100]ibid.

[101]Interviews: Daniel Mazgaonkar, Acharya Ramamurti.

[102]Mailed response: Narayan Desai.

[103]Interview: Ram Chandra Rahi.

[104]Mailed response: Paul Valiakandathil. A similar point was made in the mailed response from E D Awad.

A number of interviewees made comments concerning the level of penetration of the JP Movement into Indian society. On the question of its penetration beyond Bihar, many claimed it was an All-India phenomenon or had made significant inroads into other states, of which Gujarat, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and the Northern states generally were identified,[105] while others saw it as being much more confined to Bihar.[106] An explanation for the divergence in these views on its penetration outside Bihar is put forward later in the chapter.

On the question of the Movement's penetration among marginalised sectors, comments concerning the caste and class backgrounds of students have already been mentioned, but beyond this there were few comments. Jacob Thundyil believed that the Movement was short-lived due to a lack of awareness among marginalised sectors,[107] while B N Juyal believed that owing to the Sarvodaya influence, the Movement took a "service" approach to the oppressed classes and did not focus enough on drawing them into mass action through mass awareness-raising.[108] Those who commented on the efforts to establish *janata sarkars* in villages believed that these had

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[105]Interviews: Vivek Pandit, Sharad Kulkarni, Jatin Desai, Daniel Mazgaonkar; mailed responses: Milind Bokil, Paul Valiakandathil, Gajanan Khatu.

[106]Interviews: Surendra Mohan, Kuldip Nayar; mailed response: Narayan Desai.

[107]Mailed response: Jacob Thundyil.

[108]Interview: B N Juyal.

been quite successful,[109] a conclusion that is at odds with literature on the Movement, and this will also be considered later in the chapter.

THE IMPACT OF THESE RESPONSES ON POLITICAL ATTITUDES

These, then, were interviewees' interpretations of the JP Movement. What implications did they have on people's views about the value of parties and governments and the efficacy of efforts to improve them? If the answers to these questions are considered in the context of the background of those holding particular views on these matters, certain trends can be seen. I want to focus here on the attitudes of two groups, the Gandhians and the socialists, because they tended to come to quite different and often opposite conclusions in relation to these questions.

For Gandhians the Movement confirmed their opposition to the institutions of government and party. They tended to externalise the causes of the Movement's failures, either by focusing on those factors that were clearly external, such as the imposition of the Emergency or the calling of an election after the Emergency was lifted, or by adopting a fairly restricted definition of which sectors constituted the Movement, so that, in particular, parties were conceived of as

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[109]Interviews: Ramamurti, Avinash Chandra, Ram Chandra Rahi; mailed response: E D Awad.

external forces imposing themselves on the Movement and diverting it from its true course. Thus, what these participants saw as the proper components of the Movement were largely absolved of responsibility for the failures that occurred, and the culpability of parties and governments was confirmed. Their interpretation reads like this: a party in government was responsible for the parlous state that India was in at the time the Movement began (at state and national levels); that same party in government responded brutally to the Movement's mass actions; other parties then managed to divert the Movement to suit their own selfish purposes; the governing party then clamped down on the Movement with its State of Emergency; and finally the new party that emerged out of the Movement and won government turned out to be no better than the government it had replaced. This view thus reinforced the idea that these institutions are inevitably corrupt and self-seeking and do nothing to advance people's real needs.

For the socialists, becoming subsumed within the Janata Party meant that they ceased to be a force within the Indian political system. As we have seen, unlike the Right they did not continue to have any kind of separate existence after the merger. According to George Fernandes, the whole experience not only destroyed the Socialist Party, but socialists and socialist unions became corrupted and began to take their share of the spoils. He added:

In fact, that became the watershed for the gradual erosion of all values in the country, because those
        who had become reference points of rectitude...these individuals also got branded as people who,
        when in authority, did not behave any different.[110]

Many socialists remained committed to the goal of achieving progressive change through party government.[111] A number were active within the Janata Party or its successors,[112] but it is difficult for those involved in mainstream parties to credibly defend the value of party government, because - whatever their own values and standards of behaviour may be - they are seen to be part of a system that so many regard as dishonest and self-serving. Other socialists became involved in non-party political activism,[113] or formed small socialist parties that so far have not had a major impact on the political process.[114] Thus socialists as a group have no longer been able to project to a mass audience a positive view of what party government can do for India.[115]

Returning to responses generally, many in the Movement, as has

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[110]Interview: George Fernandes.

[111]For example, the following people: George Fernandes, Shivananda Tiwary, Surendra Mohan, Vijay Pratap, Sharad Kulkarni (interviews); Gajanand Khatu (mailed response).

[112]For example, Surendra Mohan, George Fernandes, Mithilesh Kumar Singh (14/11/95) (interviews).

[113]For example, Vivek Pandit, Vijay Pratap, Ajit Jha (interviews).

[114]For example: George Fernandes and Shivananda Tiwary in the Samata Party, Ajit Jha in Samajwadi Parishad (interviews); Gajanan Khatu in Samajwadi Parishad (mailed response).

[115]As an indication of this, in the pre-Janata Party period, socialist parties scored between three and ten percent of the vote in national elections, whereas after that their vote was virtually non-existent (see Hardgrave & Kochanek, pp 319-321).

been indicated, saw the need to defeat Congress and thus recognised the necessity of taking action on the electoral front, but for a significant proportion of these it still represented an unfortunate diversion from the "true" aims of the Movement. To a large extent grassroots organising and electoral politics were considered to be diametric opposites - the former could only play a role in the latter if non-party candidates were being fielded. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that, while many lauded the defeat at the polls of Indira Gandhi's authoritarian style of government, this victory was almost universally seen as having been achieved by "the people", not by the party that had contested and won the election and enacted legislation to prevent abuses of power by future governments. In fact, very few of those interviewed had a good word to say about the Janata Government, and those few who saw some merit in it acknowledged that weaknesses or circumstances did not allow it enough time to achieve a great deal. Thus, the perceived failure of Janata, coming as they did after the perceived failure of Congress, was seen to confirm the failure of party government generally.

The best that those who continued to support the concept of party government tended to say in defence of it is that it is necessary because partyless democracy is "impractical".[116] On the other hand, support for non-party forms of political

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[116]Interviews: Kumar Ranjan, Girija Satish, Sebasti Raj, Anil Singh, K K Mukhopadhyay, Surendra Mohan, Vijay Pratap.

action - either Gandhian visions of decentralised partyless democracy, local level electoral politics involving non-party candidates, or campaigns that target governments on specific issues - is expressed much more enthusiastically. As indicated above, these approaches grew out a general disaffection with parties, but some specific strands can be identified within the overall impact that the JP Movement and the Janata Government had on this trend, and these were as follows.

Firstly, the majority of members of the Sarva Seva Sangh had followed JP into his Movement, because they felt that the need for *satyagraha* in Indian society had been downplayed by Vinoba, and with this one act they - together with JP - both repoliticised Gandhianism and loosened the institutional ties within the Gandhian fold. When the Movement died out, they tended not to rejoin institutional Gandhianism, but rather to engage in more autonomous grassroots work, some of them for a time doing so under the umbrella of the Chhatra Yuva Sangharsh Vahini, the organisation started by JP and later relaunched. Secondly, there were many students and ex-students politicised by their involvement in the Movement who chose not to join parties or party front organisations. Thirdly, as we have seen, many voluntary organisations that had been involved in apolitical development work became increasingly political through, or following, the JP Movement, but for a large proportion of these it was politics of a non-party kind. These strands, when combined with the conclusions drawn by many in

the broader population from the message of the JP Movement and
the experience of the Janata Government, namely, that party
government was failing the people, substantially increased the
popularity of non-party political activism focusing on
specific issues. As Rajni Bhakshi put it:

In an overall sense there was a crisis of democracy in society...because the euphoria of having
overthrown the Emergency and reaffirmed democracy was in a sense betrayed by the fact that
government fell in two and a half years and Indira Gandhi came back to power. What did it mean?
So that is when the whole sector of non-party activity took on a new urgency and a new
vitality.[117]

Or as in the words of George Fernandes:

There was a lot of disillusionment in this the new generation of youth when they discovered that between
what they removed and what they replaced it with there wasn't any great change...and people then
decided to go in for one-issue organisations, one-issue campaigns, one-issue struggles.[118]

AN ALTERNATIVE INTERPRETATION OF LESSONS TO BE DRAWN FROM THE JP MOVEMENT

However, this thesis contends that the reasons for the
failures of the Janata Government had little or nothing to do
with the inherent weaknesses or evils of parties or
governments, but rather were a result of clearly identifiable
shortcomings in the JP Movement, the movement out of which the

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[117]Interview: Rajni Bhakshi (15/12/95).

[118]Interview: George Fernandes.

Janata Party Government had emerged. In analysing these shortcomings of the JP Movement three areas will be examined: the sectors of society that participated in the Movement; the Movement's ideas and goals; and its leadership, organisation and strategies. But before considering these, it should be stressed that there is no suggestion here that the Movement might have been other than what it was. It was a particular series of events in which people made decisions and took actions based upon the information that was before them, the values and interests they possessed and the options they identified. The practical benefit to be derived from analysing any historical phenomenon lies, rather, in considering what can be learnt and applied to similar situations in the future.

The sectors that supported the Movement

We have seen that the JP Movement was supported by many sections of society, but particularly by students and youth. The Movement started as a student agitation, and students continued to play a major role in it after other sectors of society became involved. JP tended to see youth as less tainted by the evils of the political system, and he had called on them late in 1973 to "enter the national arena and play a decisive role in establishing the primacy of the people and securing their victory over the power of money, falsehood and brute force."[119] In the words of Bimal Prasad, JP believed

[119]Bimal Prasad, Gandhi, Nehru & JP: Studies in Leadership, Chanakya Publications, Delhi, 1984, p

that "if he could harness youth power he might be able to provide a shock-treatment to the operators of the political system".[120] However, the students were not quite as pure and unconnected as JP imagined. Let us first consider those students most involved, starting with the Bihar Chhatra Sangharsh Samiti. The BCSS was, until the formation of the Vahini, more than any other organisation the central co-ordinating body of the JP Movement. As Ghanshyam Shah points out, of its 24 student members, 20 belonged to upper castes, while in terms of political affiliations, one-third were in the Right-wing ABVP, four were in the socialist SYS, two in the Gandhian Tarun Shanti Sena, two in the Congress (O) and one in another student group. Only seven were not attached to any party or group. The composition of local Chhatra Sangharsh Samitis was similar to that of the BCSS, and in Shah's judgement, the ABVP sought to dominate the CSSs by putting RSS cadres in key positions.[121]

What was the case for the Movement's student leaders also appears to be the case for ordinary student participants. Barik maintains that the vast majority of these students had political affiliations, and identifies the Jana Sangh, the Socialist Party, the Samyukta Socialist Party and the BLD as

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[120]ibid.

[121]Ghanshyam Shah, <u>Protest Movements in Two Indian States: A Study of the Gujarat and Bihar Movements</u>, Ajanta, Delhi, 1977, pp 97-98.

active on campuses.[122] Sebasti Raj cites a comment from T. Abraham, one of JP's secretaries in the Movement, that most student participants came from middle and upper middle class families.[123] According to R. K. Barik, a general study of students in Bihar identified a significant group of "professional students" from the upper castes and the rich rural elite who played a dominant role in student organisations but were uninterested in social or political problems, although, Barik points out, such students played a leading role in the Movement and gave it a level of "rowdyism and hooliganism".[124] Shah also contends that at this time most Bihari students were from families of white-collar employees, businessmen and landholders, and had similar social attitudes to those of their parents. He claims that far from challenging traditional ideas about caste, these students were in general very caste conscious and that this was a source of conflict on campus.[125]

So, in general terms, it seems that students involved in the

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[122]R K Barik, <u>Politics of the JP Movement</u>, Radiant Publishers, New Delhi, 1977, p 81; see also Sebasti Raj, <u>Total Revolution: The Final Phase of Jayaprakash Narayan's Political Philosophy</u>, Satya Nilayam Publications, Madras, 1986, p 52.

[123]Raj, p 52.

[124]Barik, p 81-82. Against this, R N Dwivedi cites a study of student activists in eleven Indian universities that at first glance suggests something quite different, indicating that "the most [politically] active students come from the lower socio-economic strata" - and would mean that the JP Movement activists were atypical - but this study was not confined to Bihar, and student activists might be quite a different group to leaders of student organisations (R N Dwivedi, <u>Glimpses of the J.P. Movement</u>, Vijay Prakashan Mandir, Varanasi, 1989, p 149).

[125]Shah, <u>Protest Movement in Two Indian States</u>, p 74-75.

Movement were at least as politically aligned and as likely to come from upper castes and middle classes as students generally were, and were possibly more so on both counts. B N Juyal, when interviewed, maintained that to criticise the lack of representation of lower castes among the student activists in the Movement is unwarranted given that political participation of lower castes and tribals was generally very low - for example in political parties, including the Socialist Party - and that their low participation in the Movement was therefore typical. He added that a conscious effort was made to involve people from scheduled castes and tribes, as well as Muslims.[126] This may be true, but one has to ask how strong this 'conscious effort' was across the Movement as a whole, and the evidence suggests that this effort did not make a significant difference to the composition of students in the Movement, or, as shall be seen, to the composition of supporters as a whole.

Another point to note about student involvement in the Movement was that JP could not rely on their commitment and discipline. At first they participated spontaneously, but later their interest waned,[127] and JP was to become disillusioned with this loss of enthusiasm, as well as with the constantly changing composition of the student

[126] Interview: B N Juyal.

[127] Barik, p 80; Raj, p 52.

community.[128] In the words of Geoffrey Ostergaard, the students "showed a strong preference for combative encounters as against hard constructive work; in general they appeared to lack the stamina to carry on a sustained revolutionary struggle".[129] According to Shah, student leaders in the Movement:

> appeared more interested in press publicity and coffee-house gossip than in building up the organisation or carrying out the programmes with devotion. In the early stages of the movement the leaders used the funds lavishly till JP first, demanded accounts and subsequently, put restrictions on the use of funds, to their great embarrassment. The workers of the [Gandhian] TSS were, however, an exception.[130]

From the interviews conducted for this thesis, it seems that there were many exceptions, many selfless and dedicated young people who took the Movement to the villages and maintained their commitment, but it seems clear that JP would not have characterised most student participants in these terms. He tried to remedy some of these problems through the creation of the Chhatra Yuva Sangharsh Vahini, in which there was supposed to be tighter discipline and non-involvement in parties and party-front organisations, but with little success. The most active stage of the Movement was over by this time, and in any event the Vahini never became strong enough to replace the

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[128]Raj, p 182.

[129]Geoffrey Ostergaard, "The Ambitious Strategy of JP's Last Phase", in David Selbourne (ed), <u>In Theory and In Practice: Essays on the Politics of Jayaprakash Narayan</u>, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1985, p 169.

[130]Shah, <u>Protest Movement in Two Indian States</u>, p 98.

BCSS.[131] According to Ostergaard, the Vahini's non-party character inhibited its growth, as many politically active youth wanted a career in politics.[132] By the time of the Emergency it had 30,000 members,[133] which may seem significant, but its size is put in perspective when compared with the 700,000 full-time activists belonging (in the 1980s) to another organisation that was part of the JP Movement, the RSS.[134]

As was described in the previous chapter, JP sought to gain the involvement of non-students in the Movement by setting up the Bihar Jan Sangharsh Samiti (People's Struggle Committee). This was supposed to be the apex body of the Movement but, according to Shah, it did little other than issue occasional press statements,[135] and Raj cites JP's secretary, Sachchidanand, as saying that the BJSS was inactive, the BCSS was completely dominant and the students would only listen to JP.[136] The BJSS was also dominated by members of higher castes and classes, as were the JSS chapters in towns and villages.[137]

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[131]Raj, p 51-52.

[132]Geoffrey Ostergaard, <u>Nonviolent Revolution in India</u>, J P Amrit Kosh/Sevagram, New Delhi, 1985, pp 294-295.

[133]ibid, p 294.

[134]James Manor, "Parties and the Party System", in Atul Kohli (ed), <u>India's Democracy: An Analysis of Changing State Society Relations</u>, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1988, p 78.

[135]Shah, <u>Protest Movement in Two Indian States</u>, p 99.

[136]Raj, p 51.

[137]Shah, <u>Protest Movement in Two Indian States</u>, p 99.

As well as the BCSS, JP also came to rely heavily on the political parties and their front organisations. At the outset, JP had not wanted the parties to be involved in the Movement, but as they were ostensibly struggling for many of the same objectives, and as the struggle involved mass actions in which anyone could participate, it was difficult to keep them out. The most well-organised and powerful of the parties was the Jana Sangh, and together with its youth wing, the ABVP, and the closely linked RSS, it had a relationship with the Movement as a whole that was one of mutual advantage - these bodies provided a large number of well-disciplined cadres for the Movement, while participation in the Movement in turn gave the Right new respectability. The other parties involved, as has been stated, were the Socialist party, the Congress (O) and the BLD. JP also sought support from the CP(M) and the Naxalites, and received limited support from them for some of the Movement's objectives.[138]

The disproportionate representation of higher castes and classes, that has been noted among student participants and among members of the Jan Sangharsh Samitis, was true for participants and supporters of the Movement as a whole. B N Juyal's comment that higher caste members are generally more numerous in political parties was noted earlier, and this, of

[138]ibid, pp 129-130.

course, covers those parties supporting the Movement. Shah, speaking of parties in Bihar at the time the Movement emerged, writes:

Competing politicians, within and outside one's own party, not only belonged to the same class but most of them consciously upheld their class interests as against the interests of other classes. They isolated anyone, irrespective of the party, who talked about class struggle or organised a class other than their own.[139]

Research by Dwivedi indicates that the Movement was highly supported by members of upper castes with the exception of the Brahmins, with slightly lower levels of support from well-off but socially lower castes. Less support was extended by economically as well as socially backward castes, while scheduled castes supported the Movement the least. He defines support as covering "taking part in programmes, accepting membership, supporting financially and extending ideological support".[140] In relation to support for the Movement by occupation, Dwivedi's research indicates that it received the most support from teachers, doctors, lawyers, other professionals, government servants and business people, and least support from agricultural and industrial workers, who scored just below landlords and farmers.[141]

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[139]Shah, Protest Movements in Two Indian States, p 79.

[140]Dwivedi, pp 185-186.

[141]ibid, p 189.

The BCSS and the parties were the dominant forces in the Movement, but the role of Gandhian organisations was also significant, particularly the Tarun Shanti Sena, the Sarva Seva Sangh and the Sarvodaya Mandal (Council), in the opinion of Raj.[142] Gandhians were not nearly as caste or class conscious as other sectors of the Movement, but neither were they prepared to see struggle in terms of defending the rights and interests of the lower castes and classes. For example, Shah cites "a rare instance [in which] a Sarvodaya worker mobilised about 150 poor peasants for a satyagraha at the block level. His colleagues did not appreciate this. And the attempt was never repeated."[143] The role of Gandhians in the Movement will be examined more fully a little later, in the context of considering the Movement's ideas, goals and strategies. Various other organisations were involved in the JP Movement, such as the People's Union for Civil Liberties and Citizens for Democracy,[144] but the fact that they are rarely mentioned in accounts of the Movement suggests that they did not play a major part.

When we consider those sectors of Indian society that were not involved or less involved in the Movement, we find the following. According to Shah:

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[142]Raj, p 52.

[143]Shah, Protest Movements in Two Indian States, p 128.

[144]Ostergaard, Nonviolent Revolution in India, p 294.

> Adivasis, Harijans and Muslims (about 36 per cent of the total population) had, by and large, remained
> indifferent to the movement, and so had poor peasants, landless labourers, industrial workers
> and casual labourers. However, during the early period, from March to May, the urban poor people
> were sympathetic to the movement because they felt that students were fighting for their cause.
> There were instances of rickshaw pullers not accepting the fare from students and, instead,
> asking the passenger, "Malik! Chavel ek rupaya ser milega na?" (Master, will rice be available
> at one rupee a kilogram?) But later, as issues like corruption and dissolution of the Assembly
> came to the fore, they grew cool because they saw the movement was not meant to solve the
> problems of the poor.[145]

On the other hand, Raj cites a two month field study conducted in Bihar by J.S. Yadava that indicated widespread sympathy for the Movement from people of all walks of life and high regard for JP as a person. Yadava further concluded that the urban poor did not join the agitation despite their anger at Congress because inflation meant that they were pre-occupied with the struggle to survive, and they also suspected that the agitation was contributing to the price rises.[146] JP himself was firmly of the belief that the three-day *bandh* in October, 1974 demonstrated that most Biharis supported the Movement. Raj, in assessing these conflicting claims, concludes that the truth probably lay somewhere in between.[147] However, it is important to note that it is not simply a question of whether sectors of the population liked or passively supported the Movement, but also whether they actively participated in it, because the participants were the people who helped to shape

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[145]Shah, p 128.

[146]Raj, p 54.

[147]ibid, pp 54-55.

the Movement, and they did so at least partly on the basis of their values and interests. If, as Shah and others contend, the working class and poor peasants did not participate significantly - regardless of whether this was because they did not believe in it, were not encouraged to join it or were too preoccupied with survival - then their values and interests could not be adequately represented within it.

It is clear that the proportion of women in the Movement was very low, although the precise extent of this imbalance is unknown. The fact that this matter is largely unreported suggests it was typical of Indian politics at the time. Dwivedi, in his study, reports only isolated instances of women participating in the Movement, and these tended to be at lower levels, including "attending to office work",[148] while JP and others made references to the 'boys' in the Movement. Among all the names put to me as possible subjects to be interviewed, only three were women. (One did not respond to my communications, and another was in a remote part of the country and so could not be reached for practical reasons. Thus, only one woman was interviewed concerning the JP Movement.) Ostergaard reports that about 10 per cent of the members of the Vahini were female.[149]

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[148]Dwivedi, p 145.

[149]Ostergaard, Nonviolent Revolution in India, p 294.

With regard to the Movement's spread into different parts of Bihar and into other states, the following assessments were made. According to Shah, it reached all parts of Bihar, but to different degrees, with little presence in the industrial belt in the south, and a far greater impact in the Ganges belt where the middle peasants had made economic progress.[150] J S Yadava's study, cited by Raj, concluded that the Movement was initially confined to large cities but spread to other cities and rural areas from October, 1974.[151] Barik claims that the "social content of the movement was confined to the urban middle class", although the meaning of this is not entirely clear.[152] The impact of the JP Movement in states other than Bihar has been noted, and these include Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat, but several analysts have noted that this was primarily generated by the political parties,[153] and therefore could be expected to reflect their focus on electoral politics. Barik describes the Movement unambiguously as a national phenomenon, but he also stresses the role of parties in making it so.[154] It will be recalled that a number of those interviewed from states other than Bihar felt that it did have widespread support within their

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[150]Shah, <u>Protest Movements in Two Indian States</u>, p 128.

[151]Raj, p 54.

[152]Barik, p 86.

[153]Raj, pp 47-48; Ostergaard, <u>Nonviolent Revolution in India</u>, p 356; Richard G Fox, <u>Gandhian Utopia: Experiments with Culture</u>, Beacon Press, Boston, 1989, p 211.

[154]Barik, p 77.

states. The problem with anecdotal evidence like this is that what might seem to be significant support to the participant in the midst of this activism - hundreds, thousands or even tens of thousands of people in a specific local area - is not nearly so significant in the context of a nation with a population numbering hundreds of millions.

We can conclude, then, that those sectors of society that were most active in the Movement were, by and large, the same sectors that were already disproportionately represented in mainstream politics, particularly males from forward castes and middle classes, as well as parties and their front organisations. This is not to say that in the Movement as a whole there was a deliberate intention that it be dominated by already privileged interests to the exclusion of others, but the reality was that certain sectors started with a greater level of involvement and power, and the course of the Movement did not see a critical shift in this. Had the composition of ordinary participants and leaders been significantly different, it might well be expected that the ideas and goals driving the day-to-day decisions and actions within the Movement would have been different also, because they would have been based on different interests and life experiences. It is to the ideas and goals that actually featured in the Movement that we now turn.

Ideas and goals

Because Jayaprakash Narayan was the leader of the Movement and it was closely associated with his persona, the Movement's ideology - to the extent that there could be said to have been one - to a large degree drew upon JP's own beliefs, as these were reflected in his speeches and writings and in his actions and directives in the course of the Movement. The goals of the Movement, on the other hand, were shaped by both JP and those students who had initiated the Bihar Movement before he became part of it, as well as, later, by input from other sections of the Movement, particularly the political parties, but JP had the pre-eminent role.

JP's beliefs, however, were constantly evolving. They had done so over the course of his life, from his early Marxism to democratic socialism to Sarvodaya, and during the Movement they were changing in more minor ways on an almost day-to-day basis as he considered the turn of events in the Movement and consulted with those around him.[155] Moreover, throughout his life, as his views had changed, he retained key elements of former beliefs. For example, his commitment to Indian independence pre-dated his Marxism, but he maintained this commitment in the face of the Comintern's line that all independence struggles were 'bourgeois' movements. And for some time after he had renounced party politics and joined the

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[155]We see this, for example, in his changing attitudes to students, and to the role of political parties in the Movement.

Sarvodaya Movement, he was still involved in attempts to reform and reunify the Socialist parties and in other endeavours related to mainstream politics, such as his efforts to bring about reforms to the *panchayat* system.

His views during the time of the JP Movement were a good example of this complexity and ongoing evolution. He saw the beliefs he espoused during the Movement as incorporating elements of Gandhianism and Marxism,[156] and he was continually struggling in his own mind over the true nature of Gandhianism itself. It will be recalled that he had initially gone along with Vinoba's idea of concentrating on constructive work, but he later decided that the proper emphasis was not being given to Gandhian *satyagraha*. At times he rejected the idea of class-based analysis and class struggle, but at other times, especially later in the Movement, he saw a place for people to organise on class lines.[157] There is evidence of the lingering influence of socialism in JP's ideas about *total revolution*, which drew heavily on his socialist colleague Ram Manohar Lohia's concept of *saptakranti*, or seven revolutionary changes: gender equality; racial equality; social equality (including countering caste divisions); anti-colonialism; increased economic equality; privacy and democratic rights; and anti-militarism and civil disobedience.[158]

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[156]Raj, p 197.

[157]ibid, pp 95-96; Ostergaard, <u>Nonviolent Revolution in India</u>, p 297.

[158]Madhu Limaye, <u>Janata Party Experiment: An Insider's Account of Opposition Politics, 1977-80</u>

He also was in the habit of simultaneously pursuing objectives that were widely divergent although not contradictory. For example, he was part of the struggle for Independence while struggling for socialism within Congress. And in the 1950s and 1960s, he participated in things as diverse as supervising famine relief, negotiating peace in Nagaland, accepting the surrender of some notorious bandits in central India, overseeing agricultural experiments at his ashram and criticising the Soviet invasion of Hungary. The Movement's quite different sets of objectives were an example of this. One was to get rid of the Bihar Government and Indira Gandhi's Government. Another was a series of reformist political and economic measures such as regulating electoral expenses and protecting the land and homestead rights of dalits. Yet other objectives called for individuals to make moral changes in their personal lives, to reject the giving of dowry or the wearing of the sacred thread, for example. Finally, there were objectives that amounted to creating a Gandhian style society. JP might have said on a number of occasions that these more visionary, Gandhian-style changes were not on the Movement's immediate agenda, but they were nevertheless referred to in his speeches and writings.[159] JP was able to explain away the apparent contradictions and divergences. For example, he said

(Vol:II), B R Publishing, Delhi, 1994, p 543.

[159]For example, see his speeches and statements contained in Jayaprakash Narayan, Total Revolution, Sarva Seva Sangh Prakashan, Varanasi, 1992.

that it would be much more difficult to work towards a Gandhian system under an authoritarian system of government than under a democracy,[160] and therefore he supported moderate reforms to the political system, but this was not possible under Indira Gandhi, so she would have to be replaced.

But even though there might have been rationales and understandable explanations for this complex collection of ideas and edicts that emerged during the Movement, this does not mean that it was desirable or effective in strategic terms. The effect that it had on the Movement, when combined with a loose organisational structure (which will be described later), was that it allowed different elements of the Movement to follow their own priorities - each of which could be justified through something that JP had said – and it prevented the concentration of the Movement's efforts on particular tasks so as to achieve results. Thus, parties pursued electoral objectives, party-front organisations recruited new members and students engaged in coffee-shop dialogues and *gheraos* of politicians, but when it came to the need to systematically mobilise support for the Movement in the villages, sufficient activists could not be marshalled to do this. Another relevant factor here was that many Movement activists were quite ignorant of much of what JP advocated.[161]

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[160]Ostergaard, <u>Nonviolent Revolution in India</u>, p 353.

[161]Shah, <u>Protest Movement in Two Indian States</u>, p 98.

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The term, *total revolution*, which to a large extent was seen to encompass his thinking during the JP Movement, at least from the 5th June rally onward, really covered a range of speeches and pieces of writing that do not have particular thematic coherence (although they do contain many ideas that warrant serious consideration, for example, mechanisms to make politics more democratic, and to stimulate local economies).

Not only were JP's ideas diverse and apparently contradictory, they were also often vague and undeveloped. JP claimed that it was not his role to set out a blueprint for the future, and even if it was, he was not capable of such foresight. As he put it:

> When we stand at the foot of a mountain range only the tops of the nearest foot-hills are visible to us. When we climb them the peaks of the mountains behind them become visible. This movement is a process of ascent like this. New ranges and peaks will come into sight as we continue to climb.[162]

Many criticisms of JP's ideas are generalisable to Gandhianism as a system of thought. David Selbourne, in his highly critical introduction to an anthology about the JP Movement, condemns the vagueness and lack of rigorous analysis of the real world in many of the contributions in the anthology that come from a Gandhian perspective, and his comments constitute

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[162]Narayan, <u>Total Revolution</u>, p 101.

a telling critique of Gandhianism generally. He writes about how:

> an unspecific rhetoric of 'the people', or of 'brotherhood' or of 'universality' can degenerate into a vapid and empty-minded mysticism; how it becomes nothing more than political levitation, in which the real world and its *realpolitik* are dissolved by mere words, or verbiage rather. It is then that 'total revolution' seems to turn into a species of voodoo; or, let us say, a Vedantic overcoming of reality, a transcendental revolution...the facts of economic exploitation, of class relations, of the real nature of state power are sometimes merely wished away...as if a magician in search of a lost Elysium had waved a wand over them.[163]

There is also a large element of voluntarism in JP's approach.[164] Things would work a lot better if politicians and public servants became more moral, less corrupt, more devoted to the service of the people, and so on. The incidence of people actually following such advice in any society would be fairly low, but a distinctive feature of Indian political culture creates an additional impediment. This is the existence of political 'saints' or *rishis*, ascetic and charismatic figures who remain outside institutional structures of politics and are seen as the guardians of public - including political - morality. While the presence of such figures is commonly seen as a necessary corrective to the values and practices of mainstream politics in India, another interpretation has been offered by Geoffrey Ostergaard. According to Ostergaard, such saints:

> are seen as being in some sense "above politics" [and] are capable of eliciting a deep response from masses of people. The most glaring features of Indian political life are shameless self-seeking and the pursuit of narrow sectional interests, but these co-exist alongside selfless service and

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[163]Selbourne, pp 2-3.

[164]Barik, p 86.

the promotion of universalistic values. The two are, of course, related: "the saints" exhibiting the latter shine all the more brightly amidst the thronging figures exhibiting the former. It is almost as if the entire population is engaged in a tacit conspiracy: "saints" are to be permitted and up to a point even encouraged in order that others, the sinners, may indulge in sordid and shabby politics - a highly convenient division of labour![165]

Politicians use the saints to lend respectability to their actions and thereby advance their political fortunes. The names of Gandhi and Vinoba Bhave were invoked by many politicians, particularly within the Congress Party. In fact, from the early 1950s, Vinoba could be said to have been Congress's 'house saint', a role he fulfilled well by tacitly supporting Congress whilst claiming to be above politics.[166] On a number of occasions Indira Gandhi sought Vinoba's endorsement of her actions.[167] And JP came to assume an equivalent role for the non-Congress parties. He gave them respectability, but their willingness to follow his ideas and edicts was another matter entirely.

Even though it may clearly be convenient for leaders to ignore what the political saint has to say, the reason for doing so may go beyond mere convenience. To a large extent the focus is on the presence of the revered person, and the words spoken take on a much lesser importance. Expatriate Indian writer Ved

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[165]Ostergaard, <u>Nonviolent Revolution in India</u>, p 363; another description of India's political 'saints' and the distrust of power politics in India can be found in Hardgrave & Kochanek, p 167-168.

[166]Ostergaard, <u>Nonviolent Revolution in India</u>, p 221.

[167]ibid.

Mehta describes how he spent time with JP when the latter was with the Sarvodaya Movement. On one occasion Mehta accompanied JP to a meeting of Sarvodaya workers, and he reported:

> Now it is JP's turn to talk. Like the speakers who had preceded him, he has no prepared text, no notes, and no sense of time; his speech is in the tradition of Indian leaders who know that the people in their audiences have come not to study their words but to have a *darshana* [holy audience]. He talks on for a couple of hours, touching at random on many subjects...[168]

A combination of all these factors - Gandhian imprecision and unreality, Gandhian voluntarism, the practice of darshana and the existence of political saints who eschew institutional or power politics - produces the following dynamic. The condition of economic and political life - that is, whether it is effective and just - depends heavily on whether people follow calls to behave morally. The people who tell them to behave in this way are the saints or *rishis*, those who are too pure to be involved in power or party politics, while those who are involved in this kind of politics are by implication impure. The burden of this impurity, however, can be assuaged through the practice of darshana, paying homage to the saints, but the impure politicians need not actually be overly concerned about following what these saints have to say. Hence, they can continue to do little to improve conditions of life for their compatriots.

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[168]Ved Mehta, <u>Portrait of India</u>, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1973, p 559. In similar vein, there is an interesting account of Gandhi's one-day visit to Gorakpur District in eastern Uttar Pradesh in 1921 and the ensuing stories about miracles that were believed to have resulted from his physical presence in the area, described in Shahid Amin, "Gandhi as Mahatma: Gorakpur District, Eastern U.P., 1921-22", in Ranajit Guha (ed), <u>Subaltern Studies III: Writings on South Asian History and Society</u>, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1984, pp 1-66.

The only things that united the different sectors involved in the Movement were, first, opposition to Congress, and more specifically, to Indira Gandhi's Government, and second, the wish to follow JP and participate in the Movement that he led, as a result of either a belief in him or his message, or perceived advantages of involvement with him and the Movement. Is it possible to have a coherent ideology or platform that is sufficiently appealing to enough sectors to constitute a critical mass of India's citizens? (This question will be considered in Chapter 6, pp 350-355.)

Leadership, organisation and strategy

Thus, we see that the constantly evolving, complex, diverse, apparently contradictory, and sometimes obscure and incomplete nature of JP's ideas created latitude for those within the Movement to select from these ideas those that best suited their own views and interests, and as the Movement was dominated by those from higher castes and classes and by established political operators or those affiliated with established parties and groups, they were able to select those ideas that promoted, or at least did not challenge, their views and interests. We shall next examine what, if any, impact the Movement's leadership, organisation and strategy had on this trend.

Even though the JP Movement was in part a reaction to the authoritarianism of Indira Gandhi's Government and to the broader issue of the shallowness of democracy in India, dominated as it was by a narrow socio-economic elite, there were important ways in which the Movement perpetuated this state of affairs, in that it could not be said to have been run democratically. JP's leadership was conditional on his having the final say in decision-making, and there was no organisation, democratic or otherwise, that effectively represented the range of sectors involved in the Movement. Looking, first, at JP's leadership, we saw that, when he formed the Vahini, one of the commitments that new members had to agree to involved obedience to his directives. But was his leadership more democratic in a de facto than in a de jure sense? After all, there is evidence that JP consulted widely on many occasions, for example, with the students of the BCSS,[169] but this is not the whole story. He did make some critically important decisions by himself, with little or no consultation with Movement colleagues. The most notable example of this was his decision to accept Indira Gandhi's challenge that voters be allowed to pass judgement on the issues the Movement raised through the ballot box, a decision that converted the Movement into a predominantly electoral contest dominated - on the Movement's side - by the anti-Congress parties. According to Prasad, JP said that he decided

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[169]Raj, p 94.

on this course of action while travelling to a public meeting. In Prasad's words, "Thus was a major decision taken, which changed the whole course of the Bihar Movement, on the spur of the moment, without consulting anyone."[170]

With regard to the lack of an organisation to adequately represent all, or even most, of the sectors of society involved in the Movement,[171] we can see how particular organisations failed to fulfil this role. The Bihar Jan Sangharsh Samiti was more a formal structure than a functioning participant in decision-making, while the body most involved in directing the Movement, the Bihar Chhatra Sangharsh Samiti, represented only students, and in fact another left-wing student organisation also claimed to represent Bihar's student population. Furthermore, both of these organisations only had a Bihar-wide reach and therefore had no legitimacy in a national context as the Movement became increasingly a nationwide phenomenon. The Vahini, as we have seen, was formed after the Movement had passed its peak, was never able to achieve the dominant position that the BCSS enjoyed, and in any case, could only claim to represent students and youth. The one element within the Movement that drew all its component sectors together and gave it a national presence was the person of JP himself, and so it was in a

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[170]Prasad, p 441-442.

[171]See Raj, p 51-52.

sense natural that decision-making should rest with him in the absence of any other serious contenders for this role.

JP's dominance of the Movement is also expressed by observers in terms of the absence of a second rung of leadership. No person or people had the profile and the breadth of contacts to make any serious claim to significantly share the leadership with JP, and none was given such a role. Consequently, no-one was in a position to lead the Movement and hold it together after JP became incapacitated through illness, and ultimately, after his death. This is a common problem with charismatic leadership, in that a movement's fate is tied to the personality and stature of its leader. Even if there are serious challenges to that leader's authority - which there were not in this instance - they tend to be unsuccessful because the authority is underpinned by popular allegiance to that person.

Ironically, though, the fact that Movement decision-making was so centralised in JP's hands did not lead to strict obedience to his directives. No other individual or sector within the Movement could have obtained the following that JP was able to do, but equally, without a proper organisation and second rank of leadership, JP could not adequately direct the whole Movement. Whatever his personal capacities, the task would have been a huge one, but, as has been noted, in the judgement of a number of observers JP was not by nature a good

organiser, a strategic thinker, or a good judge of people -
ignoring, it was claimed, their weaknesses and self-interest.
According to Allan and Wendy Scarfe, who lived and travelled
with JP, he was not good at ensuring the proper implementation
of things he initiated, either in the Sarvodaya Movement or at
his Ashram. "This lack of attention to detail made a great
hero and an original thinker into a poor leader and an
unpredictable friend."[172]

The consequence of this inability of one person to properly
direct the Movement was that it exacerbated the trend,
previously described, for the Movement to be unco-ordinated
and unfocused, and for dominant forces in it, especially
higher caste and class sectors and political parties, to take
advantage of the looseness of the Movement and pursue their
own agendas. In particular, the well-organised forces of the
Right - the Jana Sangh, the ABVP and the RSS - gained
respectability from their participation in the Movement and
were able to go about the serious business of recruiting
thousands of new members and supporters. Moreover, their
followers maintained a distinctly separate identity throughout
the life of the JP Movement and the Janata Government. It
could be said that this pursuit of particular agendas in fact
took over the Movement, and took JP along with it. Because he
lacked an effective organisational base he was forced to rely

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[172]Allan & Wendy Scarfe, J.P. His Biography, Orient Longman, New Delhi, 1975, p 342 (and see also p 352).

on the parties and the forces of the Right, and over time he was drawn into the pursuit of their agendas. This was especially the case outside of Bihar, where the Movement lacked a popular base other than that provided by the parties and the Right.

Those of Gandhian persuasion are something of a separate case, and their beliefs influenced the nature of decision-making and strategy within the Movement in the following ways. Gandhi characterised his own life as a search for truth,[173] and he appears to have been more concerned to discover and act upon this truth as he saw it than to be a part of democratic processes with others and to accept the decisions emerging from these. For example, in 1942, while the Indian National Congress Working Committee was still considering a proposal for what was to become the 'Quit India' campaign (a heightened campaign of mass action against British rule) Gandhi began calling for it, which in effect meant pre-empting the Committee's decision and launching it.[174] (However, as an astute strategist, he only did this when he sensed he had public opinion behind him; he did not, for example, take unilateral action against the partition of India, despite his strong opposition to it, because he did not believe he had the necessary public support.)[175] Gandhianism after Gandhi's death

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[173]M K Gandhi, The Story of My Experiments with Truth, Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1940.

[174]Prasad, p 29.

[175]ibid, p 30-31.

was similarly uninterested in conforming to democratic processes of decision-making. Most notably, Vinoba made no pretence of running a democratic movement, and thus, for example, he placed a high priority on efforts to persuade governments to ban cow slaughter and alcohol consumption, without reference to other opinions in the Sarvodaya Movement, let alone other opinions within Indian society as a whole. As Allan and Wendy Scarfe put it:

> The Sarvodaya Movement was to run on the lines laid down for it by its leaders...It was a Platonic democracy - a rule by the guardians because they had discovered what was "good". Vinoba's statements, and less frequently Jayaprakash's, became the rule of law and their totalitarian nature was concealed by the epithets of love that accompanied them. "Vinoba has freed you," or "Vinoba has freed us," became the accepted contradictions.
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> Criticism of Vinoba was frowned upon, even referred to at times as blasphemy.[176]

To the Scarfes, this "pattern of deference and paternalism... [was] a fundamental break on the freedom of the workers in the Sarvodaya Movement."[177] JP's approach had elements of Vinoba's, according to the Scarfes, although it was much less extreme. As they put it:

> He was by nature a man who listened to the ideas of other people. He was not emotionally aggressive, so although he may have hoped others would accept his approach and may have been disappointed when they did not, he could never force his opinions on them. But at the same time there were in him the emotional elements of paternalism. Although he allowed freedom of discussion around him he still liked to hold the reins of solving matters in his own hands.[178]

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[176]Scarfe & Scarfe, p 339-340.

[177]ibid, p 10.

[178]ibid, p 339.

Though both Gandhi and JP envisaged an ideal system of democracy free of political parties and major conflict and run by citizens dedicated to the public good, neither saw this as a realistic possibility in the foreseeable future, and until then, parties were considered necessary.[179] Gandhi saw the necessity of the empowerment of the poor as part of revolutionary changes to the economic and social structure,[180] but he was opposed to taking property off the rich, or to the poor taking class-based action, unless the more well-off had demonstrated their incapacity to responsibly act as 'trustees' of the property they owned that was surplus to need.[181] Gandhi expected the middle class members of the nationalist movement to advance the interests of "the dumb, semi-starved millions scattered over the length and breadth of the land",[182] and in general, Gandhianism is not at all comfortable with the idea of people acting in their own interests, but prefers to make appeals to people to act morally regardless of their interests, *bhoodan* being the most obvious example of this.

However, its fixation with trying to get people to behave in

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[179]Prasad, p 271.

[180]ibid, p 37-38.

[181]ibid, p 44-45.

[182]ibid, p 39 (Gandhi's words).

this way seems to blind it, first, to the fact that in a great many, perhaps most, cases they do not do this, and second, to the fact that in consequent struggles between social sectors to advance their respective self-interest, some have a great deal more power than others. Gandhian advocacy of *gram sabhas* (village assemblies of all adults) is evidence of this myopia. It is claimed that gram sabhas enable villagers to reach decisions in the interests of all through consensus decision-making, completely ignoring the conflicting interests at stake and the reality of the social and economic power upper caste landowners have over the lower caste poor, and their ability to simply block anything that threatens their privileges, and to take retaliatory action if necessary. Another assessment of the Indian village was offered by Dr B R Ambedkar, the scheduled caste author of the Indian Constitution, who described it as "a sink of localism, a den of ignorance, narrow-mindedness and communalism,"[183] and on another occasion remarked that "democracy in India is only a top-dressing on an Indian soil that is essentially undemocratic."[184]

We can see, then, that the lack of systematic mobilisation and empowerment of a critical mass of people from marginalised communities was in part a result of the dominance of higher caste and class sectors, and for quite different reasons, of

[183]Hardgrave & Kochanek, p 113.

[184]ibid, p 119.

Gandhians within the Movement. Because there was not a significant influx of people from marginalised communities into the Movement, dominance by other sectors went unchallenged. Efforts to set up *janata sarkars* and Jan Sangharsh Samitis in villages and at other levels were hampered by the lack of commitment of students and by deficiencies in overall Movement co-ordination. In April 1975, Shah collected data in eight of the 18 blocks (out of the 587 blocks in Bihar) in which it was declared that *janata sarkars* had been formed by that stage. He observed:

In many of the villages of these blocks CSS and JSS had not been formed. The members of the block level Janata Sarkar were not elected by anyone. They were mostly, from the dominant sections of society...4 out of 8 Janata Sarkars had become inactive within two months of their formation.[185]

JP's secretary, Sachchidanand reported that, by June 1975, the month the Emergency was declared, the process of "giving shape to Janata Sarkars" had commenced in 115 blocks,[186] but how well-formed their shape was is far from clear. As well as the lack of progress in initiating organisation at the village level, the ones most prepared to go and work in the villages tended to be Gandhian activists who, as we have just considered, came from a tradition of not viewing the world in terms of class or caste interests and power struggles. However, to balance this picture it should be noted that, as

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[185]Shah, Protest Movement in Two States, p 118-119.

[186]Ostergaard, Nonviolent Revolution in India, p 206.

we have also seen, the Movement generated a repoliticisation among Gandhians who, as a result of participation in the Movement, came to see village life more in terms of competing power and interests, and consequently saw the need to organise the poor.

Movements for social transformation need to be prefigurative in their values and processes. In other words, movement participants must themselves practise the principles that they aim to instil in a future society, so that, for these likely future leaders, the principles become habits and the skills involved in their application are honed, and so that they are not tempted, upon assuming power, to put the application of the principles on ice for the time being. This imperative is well recognised by many non-violent political action theorists,[187] and it is just as critical in the area of democratic practice. As we have seen, the JP Movement did not function particularly democratically, and so democratic practice could not be developed and become a matter of habit. Thus, it was less likely to be a part of the approach to mobilisation in the villages, and less likely to feature in the process whereby the Janata Party emerged from the Movement. In the latter case, the lack of democratic practices during the Movement meant that the processes of selecting

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[187]See, for example, Nigel Young, "Nonviolence and Social Change", pp 217-220, and April Carter, "Nonviolence as a Strategy for Change", pp 210-216, both in Paul Smoker, Ruth Davies & Barbara Munske (eds) A Reader in Peace Studies, Pergamon, Elmsford, N.Y., 1990.

candidates and determining and implementing policy were not highly democratic, and there was no real sense in which the party made itself answerable to the Movement from which it emerged.

So, in general terms, what can be said about how the leadership, organisation and strategy of the Movement impacted upon its outcomes? First, the lack of cohesiveness and control that resulted from the absence of an overarching democratic organisation to run the Movement meant that there was no countervailing force to prevent the early dominant forces within the Movement - principally higher caste and class sectors and existing political parties - from simply pursuing their own interests. But such democratic control, while necessary, would not have been sufficient to achieve a broad representation of interests. It would have also been necessary to have a much more systematic process through which Movement participants could have organised and involved the marginalised. This, had it occurred, could have challenged the dominance of higher castes and classes.

CONCLUSION

The Movement's goals, then, were highly diverse. On one level they were enormously ambitious, amounting to a wholesale

social, economic and political transformation of Indian society that would have constituted a major challenge to authorities at every level and to entrenched interests and social attitudes. This would have required very large numbers of trained and dedicated activists, mass mobilisation of marginalised sectors, and a great amount of forethought, preparation and co-ordination - and, if the Movement was to properly become a national one, this would have been required across the whole country. But what occurred fell far short of what was needed. For example, on the long list of objectives for the student activists when they went out into the villages was the distribution of *bhoodan* and government land to the landless, but as Shah notes, "it was unrealistic to expect young boys to accomplish in a short period what [the] Bhoodan movement had failed to do in twenty years."[188] At another level the Movement was focused on ousting Indira Gandhi's Government and replacing it with another one, and this of course was attained, but the lack of systematic mobilisation of marginalised sectors and the scant processes of democracy meant that this change consisted of the substitution of one unaccountable group of elite political operatives for another.

The lack of systematic mobilisation by the Movement - particularly of the marginalised - as a result of a lack of time or will or both, meant that it was bound to disappoint

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[188]Shah, <u>Protest Movement in Two Indian States</u>, p 121.

most of its followers in relation to either its transformational goals or its more politically attainable ones, the former because they were so far out of reach and the later because they would produce so little real change. The fact that circumstances led the Movement to veer towards the goal of replacing the existing government with another one (later to be replicated in many states) caused the disappointment to be focused on mainstream politics, on the apparent inadequacy of simply changing the party in government.

The things that changed, the things that remained the same

The JP Movement set in train, or incorporated, a range of trends and forces that were contradictory, pulling in opposite directions. Hundreds of thousands of people took to the streets to make uncompromising demands for change to the political system, and to hear the revolutionary rhetoric of the Movement's leader, Jayaprakash Narayan, and yet the most significant concrete outcome of the Movement was patently conventional, namely, the replacement of one group of seasoned political operators by another such group that had at best only marginally justified claims to being more morally suitable or more politically representative. There was widespread opposition to Indira Gandhi's authoritarianism, and yet decision-making in the JP Movement was quite openly in the hands, ultimately, of JP alone, and when Janata came to power

it was not willing to be at all accountable to the Movement that had created it. The ideology that ostensibly guided the Movement was that of Gandhianism, which preached acceptance of all faiths, castes and communities, and yet the ideology to receive the biggest boost in power and public acceptance from the Movement was Hindu communalism, with its caste chauvinism, its identification of India with Hinduism and its consequent intolerance of other religions.

The period covered by the JP Movement and the reign of the Janata Government clearly saw some changes in the Indian political system. As has been mentioned, some interviewees noted an increase in the political participation of OBCs and a marginal increase in that of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, and this broader participation is noted in literature (for example, see the analysis by Bardhan, considered below). OBCs in particular came to take up political office, and backward castes could no longer be relied upon simply to follow the directives of forward caste landowners in their villages when it came to casting their votes, so they had to be courted with promises of benefits. If these promises turned out to be illusory, then the voters had much less compunction about throwing these parties out of power and replacing them with others. They could do this because now, at the national level and in many states, there were three serious contenders for power instead of one, three parties which had the potential to win government or to be the nucleus of a

coalition government (and as well as this, regional and Left parties were additional contenders in some states). This period also saw processes set in train that would eventually rejuvenate and activate *panchayats*, and broaden the scope of reservations for university places, government jobs and political office to enable women, lower caste members and tribals to gain greater representation in these areas. And finally, this period saw the growth of certain forms of political activity. Gandhians were repoliticised, after a politically dormant period under the influence of Vinoba Bhave, institutional ties within the Gandhian movement were loosened as Gandhians left the Sarva Seva Sangh or other Gandhian organisations and launched into fairly autonomous local action, and newly politicised young people were influenced by the strong Gandhian thread running through the JP Movement's pronouncements and actions. Many organisations engaging in constructive or development work - whether they called themselves Gandhian or were guided by one or more of a myriad of other influences - came to view what they were attempting to do in more political terms, and to become more politically active, but this activity was more likely to involve specific-issue campaigns for change, and was less likely to demonstrate faith in India's political parties and governments.

And yet many assessments of the Indian political system during the 1970s and 1980s - in other words, covering the period

before, during and after the time of the JP Movement and the Janata Government - say more about how things remained the same over this period than they do about how things changed. For example, Pranab Bardhan, talks about the continuing dominance of what he terms the three "proprietary classes", the industrial capitalists, the rich farmers and the white collar workers and professionals. (He calls them "proprietary" because they each own or control a large body of resources in private industry, agriculture and public institutions respectively.) According to Bardhan, a secondary level comprising unionised industrial workers, traders and small propertied groups was vocal during this period in lobbying for their interests, while a third layer of groups was seeking to break into the system and gain some benefits. But his analysis suggests that pressure from these new groups was at least as much a cause of the overt political changes that occurred in this period as it was a result of these changes. For example, he sees the troubles which Indira Gandhi faced within her party in the early 1970s, which led to increased centralisation and authoritarianism, as resulting from a patronage system cracking under the strain of demands from an increasing number of quarters. And yet from his vantage point of writing in the mid-1980s, he does not see the dominant interests he identifies being easily dislodged from their dominance by newly emerging sectors. The continuing patronage system, however, was leading to low economic growth and an erosion of the state's legitimacy as each sector secured its

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share of public resources, thus reducing those resources available for public investment.[189]

C P Bhambhri suggests that viewing the Congress and Janata parties as both constituting a national alliance of the urban and rural rich is one way of seeing Indian politics at this time. Thus, according to this picture, the Janata Party was:

the new Congress party minus the liability of the excess of the Emergency and the evil consequences of [the] authoritarian system of Mrs. Indira Gandhi. A question was asked: What is the difference between the Janata and the Congress parties? The Janata also projected a left-of-centre image and like the Congress party it had supporters of free enterprise co-existing with fire brand socialists. Irrespective of rhetoric of Gandhism and...decentralisation of economic power, the Janata did not adopt any policy regarding industry and rich peasantry which was fundamentally different from that of the Congress.[190]

Moreover, according to this view, the existence of two such parties was highly convenient for the ruling alliance, because it gave them a choice. "If the leading classes failed to legitimise their rule through the Congress party, they left it in the dustbin and the Janata emerged to perform the same social tasks."[191] Bhambhri does conclude that it is not quite this simple and that there are serious strains in the coalition of the urban and rural rich, but it nevertheless remains that he sees these two sectors as jointly, if

[189]Pranab Bardhan, "Dominant Proprietary Classes and India's Democracy", in Kholi, India's Democracy, pp 214-224.

[190]C P Bhambhri, The Janata Party: A Profile, New Delhi, 1980, p 117.

[191]ibid.

uneasily, maintaining control.[192]

Others have talked about the rise of the middle peasantry
during this period, as a result of the green revolution, the
consolidation of each farmer's landholdings into larger
blocks, and the benefits that land reform conferred on this
group (mainly as a result of the abolition of the system of
zamindars, or intermediaries, which put control of the land in
the hands of the tiller).[193] Many of these middle peasants were
'OBCs', and their new wealth was a source of new political
power. Paul Brass writes about how, in the electoral politics
of Uttar Pradesh, this new group of five to thirty acre
cultivators was central to the state-level Janata victory in
1977 and has extracted important concessions from the dominant
proprietary classes.[194] On the other hand, electoral politics
in Uttar Pradesh "has provided little more than specific
ameliorative measures for the rural poor".[195]

Francine Frankel identifies an intense power struggle in
Northern India between the forward castes and the newly
empowered backward classes, and these struggles have
contributed to the breakdown of political order in northern

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[192]ibid, p 118.

[193]Hardgrave & Kochanek, p 374.

[194]Paul Brass, "The Punjab Crisis and the Unity of India", in Kholi, India's Democracy, p 156.

[195]ibid, p 152.

states such as Bihar.[196] Ghanshyam Shah, in an overview of political actions undertaken by the poor, also notes this breakdown, which often amounts to caste war, and has seen a steep increase in murders and other attacks against scheduled castes and tribes committed by *goondas* [thugs] acting for the landowners, with the collusion or active involvement of the police. Furthermore, according to Shah, different marginalised communities are played off against one another or co-opted by governments and major parties, a trend that will be examined further in the next chapter.[197]

In relation to changes in the conduct of politics, James Manor considers change within Congress during this time, from a system whereby it accommodated social groups, subcultures and regions to a situation in which it set these sectors against one another. This change, he contends, came about because "a great many more contradictions existed in Indian society in the early 1980s than in the 1960s, contradictions between interest groups (caste, class, communal, regional and issue specific), most of which had not crystallised in the 1960s... [but by the 1980s] they had acquired enough substance and collective self-consciousness amid the general political awakening to produce conflict that could no longer be defused

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[196]Francine Frankel, "Middle Classes and Castes in Indian Politics: Prospects for Political Accommodation, in Kholi, India's Democracy, pp 225-261.

[197]Ghanshyam Shah, "Grass-Roots Mobilisation in Indian Politics", in Kholi, India's Democracy, pp 262-304.

by bargaining and co-optation."[198] This meant, according to Manor, that in the 1980s Congress was less concerned about preserving democracy, respecting the rule of law and avoiding conflict. Thus, in the 1980s "Congress-I was pugnacious towards the opposition, because the personality of its leaders (or at least its former leader) inclined in that direction, and because it needed to be standoffish once so little separated the decayed Congress-I from decayed opposition parties."[199]

So while the period after the JP Movement and the Janata Government saw some changes in the Indian political landscape, other significant features remained constant. Middle peasants, who were also often OBCs, became politically more powerful, and this both stemmed from and contributed to their increased economic power. But the three dominant proprietary classes have held onto their power, and the most marginalised sectors of Indian society - the scheduled castes, the tribals, landless labourers, the small tenant farmers and so on - have become more aware, more articulate and organised, and more willing to switch their vote, but they have not done so to the critical extent necessary, or in a united enough way, to challenge the dominance of those above them in the hierarchy.

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[198]Manor, p 89.

[199]ibid, p 91.

We have seen from the foregoing analysis of the key participants, the ideas and goals, the strategies, organisation and leadership of the JP Movement how the dominance of certain castes and classes was maintained, or at least not systematically and successfully challenged, over the life of the Movement and the Janata Government that followed it. For many of those among the Movement's participants who wanted something different, who saw the Movement as a struggle for a more moral and just society, and who later saw its aims become diverted into the pursuit of less-than-transformational changes within mainstream politics that turned out to produce few benefits for most Indians, the lesson was clear. Parties could not be trusted. Governments could not be trusted. Their faith in both Congress and Janata had been betrayed. The only answer was a new style of politics, taking up one or a few issues at a time or working at the local level, and tackling the institutions of power from the outside rather than working for change from within. The effectiveness of these approaches is the subject of analysis in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE: THE LIMITS OF 'NON-PARTYISM'

The masses are not organised and the government is well-organised.

Ram Chandra Rahi[1]

[Groups conducting specific-issue campaigns] can at best be pressure groups. They can't influence the tone and tenor of politics.

Prabash Joshi[2]

I personally feel that it [single-issue campaigning] did not take them anywhere and it did not take the issues anywhere...in the ultimate analysis, one sees that there is a sense of frustration which all this is causing, because you don't see the end of the road when you get into these one-issue programs because...the whole thing is so constricted in its reach that it does not attract the rest of the people into it...I see in all of these one-issue movements the failure of politics.

George Fernandes[3]

The JP Movement can be characterised in different ways. It can be seen as an alliance of forces against the incumbent party, as a campaign for certain policy changes, and as a means by which particular parties and individuals - many of them seasoned political operators from upper castes and classes - could acquire conventional political power. It can also be seen as something more transformational, as a broad alliance of forces against the prevailing political, social and economic system, the carrier of a visionary alternative in pursuit of a more just social order. The fact that the most obvious and tangible consequence of its existence was that it was instrumental in replacing the party that had governed India since Independence with a new party - a party that had

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[1] Interview: Ram Chandra Rahi, 30/11/95.

[2] Interview: Prabash Joshi, 8/12/95.

[3] Interview: George Fernandes, 13/12/95.

neither the will nor the ability to live up to the visionary ideals out of which it grew - should not blind us to the existence of these ideals and the alliance of forces that shared them to varying degrees. As such, the JP Movement can be said to be an 'aggregated civil base' as I have described it in Chapter One, a broad political alliance pursuing general, major political change, and seeking to have this implemented through the medium of a political party or coalition. As we have seen, opinion within the Movement was divided on the question of whether it should support or co-operate with parties. For some participants parties were anathema, a part of the political disease they were seeking to eradicate. Others, however, saw them as a means by which particular values, goals and processes might be promoted, in the interests of and with the participation of a far broader constituency, particularly among the poor and marginalised.

The previous chapter detailed how the Movement had many shortcomings, how many of the individuals and organisations who were involved and who played key roles had interests and beliefs that were akin to those of existing political elites, how the Movement's ideas and strategies were often unclear, overly ambitious, less than well-organised, and seemingly - if not actually - contradictory, how there was a lack of a central organisation and second line of leadership, and how the Janata Party was not answerable to the Movement from which it sprung. As a result of these shortcomings, the JP Movement

fell a long way short of its ambitious objectives, including the objective of instituting a different calibre of governance. Attention is given in Chapter Six to how these deficiencies might be overcome, but the purpose of this chapter is to examine the limitations of the 'non-party' political approaches many activists took in the period after the JP Movement and the Janata Government.

As we have seen, many Movement participants did not see the outcomes of the JP Movement and Janata Party rule as deriving from the sort of specific shortcomings just mentioned. Rather, the failures of the Janata Party - following on as they did from the failures of Congress - caused many of these participants to lose faith in parties and governments *per se* as instruments of social progress, and for others their existing lack of faith in these institutions was simply confirmed. With this perceived failure of parties and governments, alternative forms of political action came to the fore, and this chapter will examine these. These consisted of specific-issue campaigning, that is, putting pressure on governments from without in relation to specific issues, and locally-based action, which may or may not involve making demands upon the political system. This chapter explores the limitations of relying on such approaches alone. It is important to stress once again that these are seen as highly necessary but not sufficient forms of action. Their limitations mean that to rely on them alone is to risk falling

far short of attaining the political objectives being pursued, particularly if transformational change is sought.

The trend towards an exclusive reliance on these types of political action is not peculiar to India, but is part of a worldwide trend that was identified in Chapter Two, in which the loss of faith in parties, governments and grand political projects has led people to turn more to grassroots and specific-issue politics and to the use of new tactics. Its ideological underpinnings - in India and elsewhere - are vague and incomplete, and coalesce around two sets of beliefs, one that relates to the inadequacies of parties and governments, and the other that advocates grassroots approaches utilising direct action in resistance to established elites. But such approaches frequently fail to address the question of preferred forms of government. If parties and governments - at least in their current form - are failing dismally, what should replace them? Among activists of this persuasion in India, it is really only Gandhians who seem to address this question. JP supported an essentially Gandhian model of partyless democracy in which there would be multiple levels of governance, with each electing the one above and each practising consensual decision-making, and a distribution of power that sees most power located in self-reliant and semi-autonomous villages and decreasing amounts as one went up the levels.[4] However, the author has seen no evidence of Gandhians

[4] See: Jayaprakash Narayan, <u>Swaraj for the People</u>, Sarva Seva Sangh Prakashan, Varanasi, 1977, pp 5-

perceiving this as a possibility in the foreseeable future or taking steps toward making it a reality. But aside from this Gandhian alternative, no vision of a desirable form of governance has been clearly articulated by those who are currently disaffected with parties and government.[5] Without such an alternative, possibilities for the future are limited to those things that can be gained in specific-issue campaigns and in various forms of local action.

This chapter focuses on the shortcomings of exclusive reliance on these kinds of social action, with a particular focus on specific-issue campaigning. In considering such campaigning it does not examine specific-issue campaigns one at a time, but rather, in a thematic fashion. It presents a range of factors that limit the effectiveness of the specific-issue approach, with examples in each case from particular campaigns. Factors considered are as follows:

*To begin with, attention is given to the probability that any specific issue will not simply come within the domain of one section of government, but will most likely relate to a number of different branches, portfolios, agencies and levels of government, a factor that places great

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6; and Bimal Prasad, <u>Gandhi, Nehru and JP: Studies in Leadership</u>, Chanakya, Delhi, 1985, pp 222-224.

[5]It should be noted that most Marxists - that is, those in the Communist Party of India and the Communist Party (Marxist) - have favoured the conventional parliamentary road, as is evidenced in the accounts of communist governments in Kerala and West Bengal at the end of this chapter.

demands on specific-issue campaigners if they are to tackle the issue effectively.

*This is followed by consideration of the interests that governments represent and the ideologies they seek to advance. The demands of specific-issue campaigns often run counter to these interests and ideologies.

*Moreover, in the contest of wills between governments and specific-issue campaigners, governments can use their powers, resources and capacities to apply a wide repertoire of techniques for responding to specific issue-campaigns with minimal concessions to the demands involved, and these techniques are examined in some detail.

*The chapter then considers how, as a result of all these factors, there can be very high costs to specific-issue campaigning in relation to the benefits gained, and how such campaigning tends disproportionately to concentrate on defensive actions to prevent things from getting worse, rather than offensive actions to make the normal state of affairs better.

Towards the end of the chapter attention is given to locally-based action, which, like specific-issue campaigning, reflects a disaffection with mainstream politics, but in this case

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leads to an exclusive concentration on political and non-political activities at the local level. Often this is driven by what I contend is a misguided application of the notion of prefigurative action. In seeking to concentrate on local action and local empowerment and capacity-building - because, it is claimed, this is where the locus of power and action should be - activists and the communities they work with risk failure and frustration, in that other (non-local) sites of political and economic power that crucially affect the local situation will not disappear simply because they are ignored by activists. The chapter then concludes with an examination of two Indian states, Kerala and West Bengal, in which governments, supported by an active civil society, have been widely recognised as bringing about significant improvements in people's lives. This has made a particular difference to the lives of the poorest sectors of society in these states, and comparative indicators bear this out. These cases challenge the idea that focusing on specific-issue campaigns or local action alone can achieve desired results, and the idea that governments and parties cannot generate progressive policies. In other words, they demonstrate the importance and viability of good government.

Although, as stated, the chapter does not contain detailed consideration of particular campaigns, it does begin with an examination of a campaign that was waged by many who had been active in the JP Movement. Aside from this, the chapter does

not give particular emphasis to those campaigns in which ex-JP Movement activists participated because, once the Movement was over, there was little or nothing to distinguish campaigning by these activists from that of others who had not been part of the Movement. During the late 1970s and the 1980s many ex-JP Movement activists continued to be politically active through the Vahini, but its campaigning was similar to that of other non-party organisations, and many ex-JP Movement activists formed or joined other groups during or after the active life of the Vahini.

BODHGAYA

By early 1978, the Chhatra Yuva Sangharsh Vahini, which had been relaunched in May, 1977, began its most notable campaign in the post-JP Movement era, that of wresting illegally held land in the Gaya district of Bihar from the Mahant of Bodhgaya, so that it might be distributed to those who farmed it.[6] A *mahant* is the head of a Hindu monastery, but in effect the Mahant of Bodhgaya was little different to any other large landowner. He circumvented land ceiling laws by registering small plots in the names of relatives, deities and animals. The campaign to have the land redistributed began with a rally of labourers and farmers in April of that year, and this was

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[6]The account of this campaign draws on: Sashi Ranjan Pandey, Community Action For Justice: Grassroots Organizations in India, Sage, New Delhi, 1991, pp 154-156, and Geoffrey Ostergaard, Nonviolent Revolution in India, Gandhi Peace Foundation, New Delhi, 1985, p 296.

followed by the harvesting of crops (in the face of opposition from police and the Mahant's *goondas* or thugs), a strike by labourers, a march between the towns of Gaya and Bodhgaya, non-cooperation in forty-five villages and the occupation of land. In one incident in this initial period, conflict with *goondas* saw two Vahini members killed and one injured. Subsequently, between 1980 and 1984, the non-violent Vahini had to defend 200 charges of theft, banditry and murder, keeping two members and fifteen lawyers occupied in the courts, and in addition many activists were beaten by the police. This persecution of the organisation gave the issue national exposure and led to the setting up of a commission of inquiry which, in its report, highlighted the illegality of the Mahant's holdings. Three years later the government responded by ordering the redistribution of 35,000 acres of land, for which the Mahant was well compensated, although the redistribution did not fully take effect for some years.

Was this a successful campaign, an example of how concrete benefits can accrue from pressuring the government from without, on one specific issue at a time? On the face of it, it appears to have been successful, in that it distributed land to 49,000 people,[7] and it is often singled out by those who talk about the Vahini's progress in the post-JP Movement era.[8] However, material derived from my interviews has not

[7] Pandey, P 156.

[8] For example, in interviews with Surendra Mohan (8/12/95), Arbind Kumar (17/11/95) and P M Tripathi

revealed any campaigns comparable to this one, and so it may be concluded that such successes were far from common.

Can victories like this make a significant dent in the problems of inequality, privation and oppression that the poor of India face? We are talking in this instance of the redistribution of a total area of land of less than seven and a half miles square. The poorest sixty percent of India's peasants own only nine percent of agricultural land, and every year, five million households of cultivators become landless,[9] so it would take the equivalent of about a hundred successful Bodhgaya campaigns each year in India simply to maintain the highly inadequate status quo. It must also be recognised that, while this campaign was predominantly about landlessness, there are very many other issues to be addressed in the fight against poverty and oppression in India. And what about the costs of such campaigns to those participating? In the case of Bodhgaya the costs were not insignificant. From the start of the campaign it took a decade for the government to authorise the land redistribution (and even longer for the beneficiaries to take up ownership). It was the biggest campaign that the Vahini took on after 1977, and it took years of struggle by the Vahini activists and poor peasants, with lives lost, frequent police beatings and hundreds of trumped-up charges to

(9/12/95).

[9] Society for Participatory Research in Asia, Land Ownership and Alienation in India: A Manual for Activists, New Delhi, undated, p 5.

defend.[10] If activists were to contemplate launching specific-issue campaigns that were sufficient in number and scale to make a significant difference to poverty in India, the question would have to be asked as to whether the total costs of campaigning on this scale - in terms of time, resources, injury and death - could be sustained, especially as it would primarily involve those with the fewest resources to spare and the most vulnerable positions in society.

This example introduces just a few of the problems associated with specific-issue campaigning, and most of this chapter is devoted to examining these problems more closely.

THE INTEGRAL NATURE OF POLITICAL ISSUES

The first point to be made is that specific issues are rarely entirely separate from one another, and any one issue is likely to be affected by decisions taken in many different branches, portfolios, agencies and levels of government. Thus, those campaigning on one particular issue may need to take action on several related issues and target their efforts at a number of different faces of government if they are to avoid a piecemeal and ineffective approach to the problem with which they are principally concerned. Let us consider, for example, the situation facing an NGO involved in campaigning to protect

[10]Pandey, pp 155-6; Ostergaard, Nonviolent Revolution in India, p 296.

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the right of a particular group of *adivasis* to derive part of
their livelihood from the use of minor forest products. Many
adivasis have lived sustainably in forest or woodland areas
for centuries, and used forest resources for food, medicines,
stock fodder, cooking fuel, fertiliser, housing materials,
farming implements and artisans' supplies.[11] As well as
meeting subsistence needs, products made from forest materials
may be sold commercially.[12] A great many factors are involved
in protecting and developing the livelihood of *adivasis* living
in forest areas, and these factors relate to many different
levels and departments of government.[13] *Adivasis* have
historically been subjected to arbitrary treatment and abuse
by forest officers, police and other officials.[14] Where the
traditional occupancy of forest land and use of forest
products by *adivasis* is not recognised in law, they have often
been arrested, physically beaten, and had their houses burned
and their possessions confiscated. Even when they do have
official tenure, these things can still happen if bribes are
not paid or if police and officials are colluding with others
who want access to the land. If *adivasis* are charged or if
they wish to bring charges against others, they face what is a

[11]See: S R Hiremath, Sadanand Kanwalli and Sharad Kulkani (eds), <u>All About Draft Forest Bill And Forest Lands</u>, Samaj Parivartana Samudaya et al, Dharwad, Karnataka, 1994, p i; Samaj Parivartana Samudaya et al, <u>Janaaranya: People's Participation in the Management of Natural Resources</u>, Dharwad, Karnataka, 1991, p 5; and Vivekananda Girijana Kalyana Kendra, <u>Soliga: The Tribe and its Stride</u>, B R Hills, Karnataka, 1990, pp 23-24.

[12]Vivekananda Girijana Kalyana Kendra, p 95.

[13]Interview with Srikanth, Director of DEED (an NGO working with adivasis) (c 25/2/95).

[14]ibid.

common problem in India, long delays in the hearing of cases in courts and the bribing of judges in the lower courts.[15]

So protection of *adivasis*' rights to use forests involve the participation of all levels of government in a broad range of areas. First, it involves maintaining the rule of law, combating corruption, ensuring that courts are sufficiently resourced to avoid long delays, and ensuring that police and public officials are respectful of citizens - particularly of *adivasis*, who, along with *dalits*, generally receive the worst treatment from officialdom - and that there are means of redress if they are not. Second, protection of *adivasis*' rights to use the forest involves reducing the influence of certain propertied interests - especially timber millers, mining companies and landowners (the last of these because they may try to obtain the land for agriculture and because they may put pressure on governments to dam upland areas to irrigate their land downstream).[16] Given that the influence of these and other propertied sectors is deeply ingrained in the fabric of Indian politics, this would amount to an enormous political change. Third, protecting these rights of *adivasis* would require the promotion of alternative approaches to development, approaches that recognised the environmental values of the forest and encouraged such things as:

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[15]Dilip Hiro, <u>Inside India Today</u>, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1976, p 37.

[16]Interview with Srikanth.

sustainable timber production, crops using less water, alternative water catchments such as small 'check dams', alternative fuels for cooking, and more fuel efficient wood stoves. Fourth, protecting these rights would involve ensuring the economic viability of life in forest areas for *adivasis*. This relates to both the viability of small-scale commercial production using forest products, and the viability of supplementary income sources, chiefly small farming and wage labour, because in the main they cannot sustain themselves simply from the use of forest products. These in turn may require assistance with credit, locating markets, training, artisans' supplies, farm inputs, as well as fair wage laws that are actually enforced, protection from ill-treatment by employers and proper treatment, once again, by police and officials. Fifth, protection of *adivasis*' rights to use the forest requires that they have a certain level of literacy and general education, are aware of their legal rights and entitlements, are encouraged to form their own community organisations, can keep reasonably healthy, and, in general, can build up and maintain a capacity to both sustain themselves economically and protect their rights and interests politically.[17]

Thus, if *adivasis* (and activists working with them) who are seeking to protect their rights to use forest products are to

[17]ibid.

have a significant and sustainable impact, they need to deal with a large number of government departments and agencies and with all levels of government. They need to advocate new legislation, policies and budgetary allocations. They must seek to reduce the power of propertied interests in the major parties and government. They must argue for a new culture among public officials, police and the judiciary that supports the rule of law, opposes corruption and is respectful of all citizens, including the most marginalised. Such imperatives, understandably, are likely to be well beyond the capacities of even large groups of civil organisations, but the problem goes beyond this. To address an issue such as this most effectively requires an integrated approach that seeks to co-ordinate all the elements that can contribute to a solution, not simply a host of different organisations putting pressure on a host of different components of the governmental apparatus.

THE IDEOLOGIES AND INTERESTS THAT GOVERNMENTS REPRESENT

Mention was made in the above scenario of the substantial influence that propertied interests wield in most Indian governments, and this issue was considered in the previous chapter (pp 225-230), but it will be briefly revisited here. All governments come to power seeking either to implement an ideology or platform of policies (that may be more or less coherent) or to particularly advance the interests of certain sectors that politically support them - or commonly, to do

both of these things, as they are generally closely linked. As a result of this, groups representing sectors that are not part of the political base of the government are going against the grain of policy formation and implementation, especially if their interests are seen as antagonistic to those which the government seeks to advance. To use an analogy, it is as if a group of people are in a car with a driver who wishes to go to a different destination to their preferred one. By pressuring the driver along the way they have a certain amount of power, as the driver does not want to be harassed or have an accident, but this strategy involves risks for the passengers as well. It would clearly be far better for the passengers if one of their number was the driver. In similar vein, it would seem to be far more effective for major sectors of society to be represented among the 'drivers' or powerholders in government, than to rely on simply pressuring powerholders whose interests and views are opposed to their own.

While, as just noted, the previous chapter considered how the major parties have favoured the interests of particular sectors, ideologies have not played such a prominent part. Of the three parties that have governed in their own right or at the centre of a coalition at the national level in India, two of these - Congress and Janata/Janata Dal - do not have ideologies that, in substance, clearly distinguish them from other parties. Congress, while calling itself 'socialist', has really consisted of many factions covering, among other

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things, a broad range of ideological positions (as noted in
Chapter 3, pp 120-121), while the Janata Party was similarly
diverse ideologically as a result of the diverse parties that
came together to form it, even though it called itself
'Gandhian' (as described in Chapter 3, p 155). The third
party, the Bharatiya Janata Party (or BJP), appears more
ideologically distinct - with a focus on maintaining Indian,
and particular Hindu, identity - but so far the constraints of
government, and in particular the constraints of a multi-party
coalition - have prevented it from acting on this ideology in
ways that its more ideologically motivated supporters would
like.[18]

As was earlier pointed out, the absence of strong ideological
direction within Congress enabled it to maintain a loose
system of factions based on ideological, geographical, ethnic,
caste and personality groupings, while the Janata Government
represented basically the same caste and class interests as
Congress. When Janata split into two and spawned the BJP and
the precursor of what is now Janata Dal, the main change that
occurred was that pro- and anti-communalist forces were no
longer in conflict within the one party. The BJP, while in
opposition giving fairly free rein to the communalist forces

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[18]According to Arvind Das, scholar and former editor of the Times of India, eighteen months of BJP-
led government has made little difference to policy (Arvind Das, "India's Elections and New Government",
Paper presented at Melbourne South Asian Studies Group seminar, Fitzroy, 29 Nov 1999). This evaluation
is especially true of domestic policy, which is more the concern of this thesis. In the area of defence,
the Government's nuclear weapons policy is an obvious exception to Das's assessment.

within it, in government has acted little differently to the other major parties, because it has recognised that communal division and strife, and action against foreign companies, foreign imports and manifestations of Western culture would hurt key interests within its higher caste and class support base. And to the extent that it has acted against foreign interests it is seen to be chiefly intent on protecting local business interests rather than preserving indigenous culture.[19] So the main conclusion to be drawn from these observations is that, more than any identifiable ideology, it is the interests of the higher castes and classes that the major parties have sought to advance. The implications of this, which will be explored more fully in the next chapter, is that the critical factor determining the character of governments in India is the interests of the sectors of society that parties in power effectively depend on for their support.[20] Consideration will be given below to the means by which governments can advance such interests.

But first it should be noted that what has just been said is not meant to imply that all government is monolithic, that with one mind and one voice, it represents a clearly defined set of interests. Within the array of departments, levels, branches, agencies and offices - from the Cabinet down to the

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[19]Interviews with Vivek Pandit (16/12/95) and A B Bharadwaj (15/12/95).

[20]This may apply equally to governments elsewhere, but it is India that we are considering here.

village official - that are a feature of all governments, there will be: variations and pockets of autonomy; contacts and relationships with outside individuals and groups; empires, alliances and rivalries based on factors such as personality, ideology or ethnicity; and varying degrees of tradition, habit and inertia in the face of top-down or external demands.

Such pockets of autonomy create two possibilities. The first is that of winning concessions from particular officials even when the general tenor of the government is unsympathetic to the interests being pursued. As Milton Esman and Norman Uphoff argue in what they term a "structural-reformist" position, while governments do tend to favour some sectors over others, people within government do not always put the interests of elites over those of the poor, and so opportunities do exist for organisations to make claims on government in pursuit of their interests, as long as they do not threaten to upset the whole system.[21] This view is not being challenged here, although it needs to be acknowledged that there will be vast differences in the degree to which governments are willing to accommodate the interests of the poor.

The second possibility is that a government sympathetic to marginalised groups will be hampered by resistance among its

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[21]Milton Esman & Norman Uphoff, <u>Local Organizations: Intermediaries in Rural Development</u>, Cornell University Press, London, 1984, pp 54-56.

employees, particularly if they come from or have close links with other social sectors whose interests might be threatened in the process. Even well-intentioned public servants may be prevented by prevailing attitudes and practices from effectively implementing government policy. Aruna Roy, in recounting her experiences as a member of the Indian Administrative Service (IAS), describes a range of obstacles that prevent IAS officers from instituting effective change including: the intricacies of local bureaucracy and politics which an IAS officer is unlikely to fully grasp during the length of an average posting; and the tradition of IAS superiority which leads to separation from those not in the IAS, a deep suspicion of the public, obsequiousness among subordinates and a reluctance of IAS staff to seek information and thus appear uninformed.[22]

What are the implications of these two faces of public service autonomy from government? They both, in different ways, reinforce the importance of a combination of pressure from outside and effective governance from the inside. In relation to the first, if some concessions can be achieved by civil organisations in the context of a basically unsympathetic government, it can be argued that a great deal more can be achieved if the government is sympathetic. And in relation to the second, while governments may be constrained in the

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[22]Aruna Roy, "From Bureaucracy to People's Movement", <u>Lokayan Bulletin</u>, 13:1, July-Aug 1996, pp 41-44.

implementation of their policies, they still have very
significant powers in relation to the recruitment, training
and promotion of staff, the shaping of organisational
structures, processes, goals, norms and cultures, and the
instigation of consultation and review processes that may
involve countervailing pressures from outside government
bureaucracy, that is, from community representatives.
Governments have more power to overcome obstacles to change
within government departments than outside campaigners do, and
clearly the two forces combined have far more power to achieve
this than do outside campaigners alone.

THE POWERS OF GOVERNMENT

When governments seek to advance particular interests, they
have at their disposal an array of powers, resources and
capacities that specific-issue campaigners do not have. They
are seen as having legitimate authority, the right to make and
implement laws and regulations, and to institute policies and
programs. They are the only agency in society that can
legitimately exercise force, or compel people to surrender
their wealth (in other words, to collect tax). Revenue
collected is used by governments to, among other things,
employ a vast number of people to continuously do their
bidding (notwithstanding the constraints on this that we have
just considered). Moreover, governments are seen, both inside
and outside the country as being the voice of the nation.

Their spokespeople are considered to be important and are thus given wide media coverage, and as well, the government itself controls important organs of publicity, propaganda and education, including state-owned media and public school systems. Government can also build up large stores of information which can be used to argue its case to the public or to undermine the personal or political credibility of opponents. Through this stock of information and its command of publicity and propaganda outlets, it can have a huge influence over the agenda and parameters of public debate. And finally, given the spread of its responsibilities, staff and resources, it has a capacity to take integrated action that those outside government cannot begin to match.

Of course, there are many constraints on government power. In a democracy, a government has to face elections. It needs to prevent civil disorder and non-cooperation by citizens, both of which can undermine its legitimacy and threaten the interests of the sectors that support it. Consequently, when confronting the range of demands made upon it by citizens and organisations of civil society, especially those that run counter to the government's ideological position or the key interests it represents, it must find ways of responding to these demands that reconcile its key interests and ideological objectives with electoral and public order imperatives. But in such situations governments have a whole repertoire of ways in which they can respond to demands from civil society without

actually making major substantive concessions to those making the demands - a repertoire that ranges from repression to incorporation of opposition groups, from ignoring electorally unimportant groups to initiating laws and policies and then failing to implement them. This is a key weakness and limitation of specific-issue campaigning.

A repertoire of techniques for dealing with opposition

The following are some examples in the Indian context of how governments can respond to demands whilst making minimal substantive concessions. Initially these are each presented fairly briefly, and subsequently three are given more detailed consideration. These are: techniques of non-implementation (or biased implementation); the 'buying' of compliance; and repression.

Firstly, a government can practise tokenism, make cosmetic changes and use symbolism and particular language to create the impression that it supports, has an affinity with or cares about a particular sector, community or area of concern. Politicians can be seen associating with venerated figures from particular communities or can honour living and dead figures from these communities. Programs, offices, positions and even departments can be created, or their names changed, or reports commissioned, to give the impression that a government is, for example, environmentally aware, or attuned

to rural needs, or concerned about women or *adivasis*.

Gopal Guru writes of how, since International Women's Year (1975), Indian governments, especially that of Maharashtra "have given the impression that the question of women's emancipation is being brought to the core of [the] state's major concerns".[23] The reality, she claims, is somewhat different, with cutbacks to welfare schemes, insufficient funds for health and education, and a lack of action to prevent sexual and labour exploitation of village women, especially *dalits* and *adivasis*, by *goondas*, and rich landholders. In another example, DISHA, an NGO in Gujarat, was concerned to investigate the veracity of the State Government's claim that it was giving special attention to the provision of programs and resources for the state's *adivasis*, so it analysed the government's budget allocations across all portfolios. It found that on a per capita basis *adivasis* were getting significantly less than other sectors of the population. The government was able to create the opposite impression because it went to some lengths to publicise special allocations for *adivasis* while the record of underfunding for this sector in other portfolio areas was buried in various obscure budget papers.[24]

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[23]Gopal Guru, "Maharashtra's Women's Policy: Co-opting Feminism", <u>Economic and Political Weekly</u>, XXIX, no 32, 6 Aug 1994, p 2063.

[24]Interview with M D Mistry, Co-ordinator of DISHA (15/3/95).

Leslie Calman asserts that the symbolism of the Indian
Constitution is usually not matched by substance but
nonetheless gives the impression that India has a fair and
accessible political system.[25] Upendra Baxi refers to "sins of
commissions", the tendency to set up commissions on various
issues so as to be seen to be doing something.[26] These are
generally headed by figures sympathetic to the regime, but if,
in spite of this, their findings are challenging to the
regime, they are unlikely to be implemented. Baxi notes that
"no action whatever has followed in about 200-odd commissions
of inquiry on high political corruption."[27] Rajni Kothari
noted in the 1980s that while the Indian Government was
identifying environmental protection as its top priority it
was ruthlessly suppressing struggles by communities across the
country to preserve their environments from unwanted
'development'.[28]

Governments have the capacity through the language and
symbolism that they use to establish the terms, the parameters
and the criteria for success in public debate about broad
political, social and economic directions. In Rajni Kothari's

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[25]Leslie J Calman, Protest in Democratic India: Authority's response to Challenge, Westview Press, Boulder, 1985, p 9.

[26]Upendra Baxi, "Sins of commission(s)", Seminar, 405, May 1993, pp 50-53.

[27]ibid., p 51.

[28]Rajni Kothari, "On The Non-Party Political Process: The NGO's, The State And World Capitalism", Lokayan Bulletin, 4:5, Oct 1986, p 17.

words:

Neither the attempt to hand over crucial segments of the economy to the private sector through policies of liberalisation and privatisation nor the attempt to undermine the bureaucracy and its procedures of public accountability would have been easy to undertake without an extremely clever manipulation of words and symbols that give the impression of the new policies being more liberal, more flexible, more efficient and more dynamic.[29]

Secondly, governments may respond to campaigns by promising to enact laws and initiate programs and policies and then fail to honour these promises, or perhaps more commonly in India, make the laws and initiate the programs and policies but not carry them through to the implementation stage. Furthermore, there is huge scope for biased implementation of laws, programs and policies, as politicians and officials from the highest to the lowest levels have a role in such implementation, and at any of these levels distortion, bias or blockages can occur. Marginalised communities are routinely disadvantaged as result of this non-implementation or biased implementation, a problem made worse by the fact that such communities are often underrepresented in strategic official positions, and their members may lack the confidence to demand the services and rights that are due to them, or they may have a justified fear of retaliation if they do act. This means of responding to demands is considered more fully a little later on.

Thirdly, a variation of the above is that governments can

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[29] ibid., p 7.

respond to demands with delays. As Robert Hardgrave and
Stanley Kochanek put it:

Unwilling to accept responsibility for even minor decisions, petty bureaucrats refer the files, neatly
tied in red tape, to a higher level. In India, it is said, "the British have introduced red
tape, but *we* have perfected it."[30]

While such delays may stem from the timidity of petty
bureaucrats, they also serve the purposes of governments if
such governments do not favour certain kinds of change. While
a matter is still 'pending', it cannot be said that citizens'
demands have been refused, and even the most persistent
citizens can be worn down by interminable delays.

A fourth way in which governments can respond to demands upon
them is by giving more money from different program budgets to
the most politically vocal groups, or making other sorts of
concessions that do not flow on to social sections that are
not as assertive. These sorts of practices occur in government
the world over, but in a country in which corruption, nepotism
and favouritism is so prevalent,[31] it is not at all surprising
when politicians and bureaucrats respond to demands upon them
with special deals and one-off concessions. Rajiv Gandhi once
estimated that only 20 percent of development program funds

[30]ibid., p 96.

[31]For a description of such practices, see Robert L Hardgrave Jr & Stanley A Kochanek, <u>India:
Government and Politics in a Developing Nation</u>, 5th edn, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich College Publishers,
Fort Worth, 1993, pp 96 & 98-100.

ever reach the poor,[32] which leaves a lot of money to be diverted to other ends, such as satisfying particularly vocal groups.

A fifth tactic is for governments to deal with potentially contentious matters out of the public gaze. In an article by 'B M' in *Economic and Political Weekly*, the Narasimha Rao Government is judged to be secretive, devious and obfuscating, sweeping under the carpet any contentious issues and dealing with vested interests, domestic and foreign, "personally and not through the properly constituted machinery of the state",[33] in matters ranging from telecommunications to sugar policy. As part of this, it engaged in "secret negotiations with the governments of the developed countries...for bilateral treaties to guarantee security and high returns for foreign investment".[34] Alternatively, governments can treat certain issues as technical rather than political matters, a tactic noted by Harsh Sethi.[35]

Sixthly, governments may respond to demands upon them by buying compliance, by offering benefits or roles to activists or organisations, and requiring that as a condition of

[32]ibid, p 378.

[33]'B M', "The New Panchsheela", Economic and Political Weekly, XXIX, no 29, 16 July 1994, p 1839.

[34]ibid.

[35]Harsh Sethi, "Action Groups in the New Politics", in Ponna Wignaraja (ed), New Social Movements in the South: Empowering the People, Vistaar Publications, New Delhi, 1993, p 249.

receiving the benefit or playing the role they refrain from criticising the government or engaging in "political" activities. Alternately, they may require organisations to refrain from political activity if they are to receive funds from foreign sources. More will be said about this in a separate section to follow.

An eighth type of governmental response is to threaten or repress opposition, or to allow other forces in society to do it. Those challenging the government or vested interests in India cannot assume that they will be protected by the law. Harassment, violence and trumped charges at the hands of the police and armed forces, and violence committed by *goondas* and vigilantes, often with the encouragement and cooperation of the police, are commonly employed to deal with such challenges. More is said about this in a section to follow.

A ninth kind of response involves governments demonising their opponents by branding them as terrorists, agents of foreign forces, fascists or other names that are likely to bring public disapproval upon them. Thus, radical Muslim groups might be branded as agents of Pakistan, Naxalites - in the 1970s, at the time of the war with the Chinese - as agents of China, and those receiving foreign funding as agents of imperialism. As was noted in the report of a dialogue organised by the group, Lokayan:

...a situation when there is no end of propaganda about externally inspired destabilising moves, can easily end up painting the voluntary groups that receive foreign funds and do not toe the line as 'anti-national'.[36]

And Kothari notes "the manner in which the issue of national security has been used to put on the statute book sweeping powers of curbing citizens' liberties and the autonomy of the states and lower echelons of the system."[37] Often this tactic of demonising opposition is used as a means of justifying brutal and extra-legal responses by authority. For example, it is not uncommon for police to murder non-violent activists and then say that they were terrorists or Naxalites who had died in 'encounters' with the police.[38]

Lastly, governments can simply ignore the demands of groups that are insignificant in electoral terms. They can be insignificant for a wide variety of reasons: their members may be small in absolute terms or may be so widely dispersed as to be insignificant in any electorate; they may be already firmly committed supporters or opponents for other reasons; they may be concentrated in safe seats, whether these belong to the government or the opposition; or the group may not have the capacity to influence the vote of its members or constituents.

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[36]Lokayan, "On Threats to the Non-Party Political Process", Lokayan Bulletin, 3:2, April 1985, p 41.

[37]Rajni Kothari, p 6.

[38]For example, see: Andhra Pradesh Civil Liberties Committee, "On Civil Liberties in Andhra Pradesh", Lokayan Bulletin, 8:1, Jan-Feb 1990, pp 60-62.

In these circumstances, the group may still be able to embarrass or make life difficult for the government, but it does not have electoral power through its members. A level of support that may seem very encouraging to a protest movement may be considered insignificant by mainstream politicians. For example, Gail Omvedt, commenting on what was seen as a landmark rally for the environmental movement, at Harsud in Madhya Pradesh, has this to say:

> The twenty five thousand who came did in fact represent the largest crowd ever for such a gathering...But for purposes of political power it was not enough; politicians used to actual crowds of hundreds of thousands gave little weight to twenty-five thousand and could well assess the situation as one in which environmentalism had some middle-class base, a lot of "stars" and some localized support on some issues in some areas, but otherwise a negative factor that could cost them votes among a majority still sold on "development," on jobs to be had in polluting factories or prosperity to be gained through unhealthy Green Revolution technology.[39]

More detailed attention will now be given to three of these techniques that governments can use for responding to opposition.

Non-implementation or biased implementation

India's Constitution forbids employment of those below the age of fourteen, and there are also laws against bonded labour (that is, the practice of forcing people to work to pay off a debt) and additional laws against child labour. Yet India has

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[39]Gail Omvedt, Reinventing Revolution: New Social Movements and the Socialist Tradition in India, M E Sharpe, New York, 1993, pp 269-270.

55 million child workers, some as young as six years old, and most are in bonded labour. Many work 14 to 16 hours a day, are beaten and receive no payment at all.[40] This state of affairs continues because the laws are simply not being implemented. Governments are supposed to do routine inspections of work sites but little of this occurs, and when employers are convicted penalties are generally paltry or non-existent.[41] This is but one of countless areas in which laws are not effectively implemented in India. This is perpetuated by, and manifested in the form of, both widespread corruption and affective ties of family, caste, class, ethnicity and personality-based networks that are often far stronger than regard for the law and its implementation. Lack of regard for due process in the criminal law also leads to the harassment, 'framing' and abuse of those who would challenge the lack of proper implementation, and thus it deters such resistance.

Very often there is little evidence of the presence of authorities who might stop illegal practices. In Orissa, for example, illegal trawlers from neighbouring Andhra Pradesh operate inside the five kilometre zone allocated for small fisherfolk, often using illegal nets and cutting the nets of the locals, and little is done to stop them.[42] Often the funds

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[40]Interview with Mr Mohan, from the Bonded Labourers Liberation Front and the South Asian Coalition on Child Servitude (c 20/1/94).

[41]ibid.

[42]Conversation with fisherfolk from the village of Gopalpur in Orissa, c 12/2/95.

are simply not allocated to employ sufficient government personnel to properly carry out enforcement. For example, in Madhya Pradesh the law guarantees that *adivasis* who have occupied their land since 1980 can have title to that land, but according to one report there were not enough forest officers to check these claims in more than a minority of villages in the period allocated for this purpose. At the same time, these *adivasis* were prey to illegal occupation of their land by logging companies and rich landholders.[43]

Another set of factors that prevents proper implementation of the law relates to delays, costs and corrupt practices in the judicial system when citizens try to protect their rights through the courts. For example, while a law in Orissa prohibits non-tribal people from buying land in areas designated for *adivasis*, it was reported that there was a backlog of 500 such cases waiting to go to trial.[44] Primila Lewis, who worked for an NGO in villages south of Delhi, describes how a government instrumentality in the area was illegally allowing the subcontracting of stone quarrying, subcontracting that was responsible for appalling labour and environmental conditions. Contractors were able to use the courts to impose injunctions and thus achieve interminable

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[43]Interview with Gopinath from Prayog Samaj Sewi Sansthan (a member organisation of Ektaparishad in Madhya Pradesh) (8/2/95).

[44]Interview with Nageswara Rao, an attorney working with the People's Rural Education Movement (PREM) in Orissa, c 11/2/95.

delays in the execution of the law.[45]

Government officers who attempt to properly implement laws and programs can face recriminations. In Andhra Pradesh a district collector, who conducted a survey and found that 20,000 acres of land had not been allocated to backward communities as it should have, was transferred for his pains following pressure from political parties.[46] In fact, the area of land reform reveals many glaring examples of the law not being implemented. Laws introduced shortly after Independence did break up the old feudal estates, although the previous owners were handsomely compensated and a provision for the retention of "self-cultivated" land led to the eviction of many tenants. But later land ceiling legislation is riddled with so many loopholes and has been so widely flouted that only about one percent of total agricultural land has been declared as being above the ceiling, and of this, only a quarter has been acquired by the state and only a sixth distributed. Many forms of land use are exempt, and landholders often transfer the land into the names of bogus owners. To the extent that land has been distributed in India, the main beneficiaries have been middle peasants, while tenants have been subjected to widespread eviction, and employment for farm labourers has

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[45]Primila Lewis, <u>Social Action and the Labouring Poor: An Experience</u>, Vistaar Publications, New Delhi, 1991, pp 54-57.

[46]Interview with D Rama Krishna, Director of the Rural Institute for Social Education (RISE) in Andhra Pradesh, c 22/2/95.

become more insecure. As well, even if properly implemented
the poor lack the financial resources to take proper advantage
of any land they might acquire.[47]

Delays are not just in the courts. Primila Lewis describes how
"vacant" village land in the area that by law should have been
distributed to *dalits* was being illegally occupied by higher
caste Gujars. The *dalits* were not permitted to till the land
until the transfer had been effected, but they had been
allocated the land in 1960 and they still did not have access
to it by 1979![48] Lewis describes similar delays in accessing
development funds.[49]

Thus, for Lewis and her NGO colleagues, closing the "gap
between the laws, policies and development schemes of the
state and the government on behalf of the poor and deprived
sections of society in both the organised and unorganised
sectors, and their effective implementation" became a top
priority.[50] Unfortunately, though, while closing this gap may
be a priority for many civil organisations, their successes in
this respect in particular instances do not necessarily flow
on and lead to general implementation of the law or policy in

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[47]Society for Participatory Research in Asia, pp 12-15; Hardgrave & Kochanek, pp 384-385.

[48]Lewis, pp 53-55.

[49]ibid., pp 114-115, 138-151.

[50]ibid., p 102.

question. Governments having little will to implement a particular law or policy can assume that only a minority of those who would benefit from its implementation will be organised politically - and brave enough to face the likely retaliation from authorities or elites - to mount a campaign in support of such implementation.

Buying compliance

Governments are able to take advantage of the fact that they provide organisations with funding, access to services, development contracts and other forms of employment by using such benefits to obtain political compliance. Conversely, they can punish groups by effectively denying them such funds, services, contracts and employment. As well, governments can require that organisations avoid political activity if they are to receive foreign funds.

Rajesh Tandon, Director of the New Delhi based Society for Participatory Research in Asia, observes that, while voluntary organisations often encourage people to become aware of their social situations and demand their rights, the "use of regulatory mechanisms to harass and intimidate voluntary organisations encouraging such critique...has become increasingly common throughout the country." He cites changes to, or government use of its powers under, Society Registration Acts, the Cooperative Act, the Foreign

Contribution Regulation Act (which sets conditions for accessing foreign funds) and the Income Tax Act as "examples of the State flexing its regulatory muscles to silence and intimidate voluntary organisations" and he adds that "this type of intervention by the State is much more focused on those types of voluntary organisations which are engaged in organising the poor or in networking and federating around common concern".[51] The FCRA, for example, stipulates that organisations cannot access foreign funds if they are engaged in political activities.

In a notable case of seeking to punish political opponents, Indira Gandhi, when she returned to power in the early 1980s, set up the Kudal Commission to investigate Gandhian organisations that had been part of the JP Movement (and had thus opposed her previous administration) ostensibly because they might have "tarnished the image of Mahatma Gandhi". After six years of repression and harassment of these organisations, the Commission completed its work and recommended that organisations that had "digressed" should lose the right to receive benefits as charities and have their foreign funds monitored.[52]

As a variant of this approach, governments can try to reduce

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[51]Rajesh Tandon, Government-NGO Relations in India, Unpublished paper, p 3.

[52]Richard G Fox, Gandhian Utopia: Experiments with Culture, Beacon Press, Boston, 1989, p 231.

the impact of particular activists or public figures by offering them government jobs or contracts, or places on boards or commissions, or other kinds of official status that constrain their ability to be outspoken or their involvement with community-based organisations. And for many activists who have spent a number of years campaigning or working in villages with many hardships, little remuneration, and perhaps little recognition - at least when compared with their middle-class peers - such offers can be very tempting. In the words of Richard Holloway:

> As the founder-leaders of a voluntary agency mature, get established in life, have a growing family, and approach middle age, questions emerge like "Who am I?", "What have I contributed?", "Has my sacrifice been worth it?". The life cycle of a voluntary agency, and the life-cycle of its founder-leader(s) interact to create situations where recognition from the state becomes an important goal, and is sought and pursued, openly or not. It is in such circumstances that co-option by the state becomes relatively easy.[53]

The power of government to use inducements, or the threat of their withdrawal, as means of obtaining compliance is summed up neatly in the report of a dialogue organised by the group, Lokayan:

> When perceived as collaborative, 'the voluntary sector' can expect assistance, recognition and rewards. Otherwise, it faces a financial squeeze...a judicial inquiry (a-la-the Kudal Commission); or straight repression. This pattern does not change irrespective of which party is in command of the government.[54]

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[53]Richard Holloway, "Introduction", in Richard Holloway (ed), <u>Doing Development: Governments, NGOs and the Rural Poor in Asia</u>, Earthscan, London, 1989, pp 26-27.

[54]Lokayan, "On Threats to the Non-Party Political Process", p 42.

Holloway also notes that the fragmented structure of the NGO sector makes it particularly vulnerable to governmental tactics such as these. As he puts it:

In our quest for autonomy and independence, in our drive to be flexible, self-reliant and self-sufficient, voluntary agencies and their leaders today remain divided, unorganized and isolated. We are separated by caste, ideology, region, language, nature of work, type of funding, and so on. We have no mechanism of mutual support and solidarity; we have not shown our collective strength in support of each others' well-being and survival.[55]

Repression

Gubinda Mukhoty, commenting on the prevalence of torture in India, cites a 1992 Amnesty International Report which concludes that "torture is pervasive and a daily routine in every one of India's 25 states, irrespective of whether the arrests are made by the police, paramilitary forces or army. It happens regardless of the political persuasion of the party in power".[56] And Mukhoty notes that this is "despite repeated exposures [of such torture] by journalists and human rights organisations and interventions by courts."[57] According to Amnesty International, victims include those who have had "false charges...brought against them at the behest of

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[55]Holloway, p 27.

[56]Gobinda Mukhoty, "Torture, Human Rights, Legal Rights", <u>Economic and Political Weekly</u>, XXIX, no 21, 21 May 1994, p 1259.

[57]ibid.

powerful local interests, members of state ruling parties, businessmen or landowners. This is particularly common in states in which there is organised opposition to economic exploitation such as Bihar, where the police appear often to act as instrument[s] of repression on behalf of local ruling groups".[58] The Report also claims that successive Indian governments "have persistently refused to investigate the abuses documented in such reports and have frequently sought to discredit their authors. Some civil liberties activists have been detained because of their work."[59] While travelling by train to Pune in Maharashtra, I had a chance encounter with a small businessman from Bangalore who, along with his business neighbours, had been regularly subjected to extortion by government officials who threatened to concoct charges under various government regulations if they were not paid off. When a delegation of the businessmen went to the police to report this, they were detained and tortured (the man showed me his crooked hands where the bones had been broken by the police).

A report on state repression in Madhya Pradesh commissioned by the Voluntary Action Network Of India, an umbrella organisation for NGOs, catalogues a list of serious acts committed by police, forest officials, *goondas* and others

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[58]ibid., p 1260.

[59]ibid.

against social activists, trade unionists, environmentalists, *adivasis* and peasants when the latter were taking non-violent action to protect their rights, actions that include beatings, rapes, firings (leading to death and injury), framing people with false charges, dismissal from employment and setting fire to huts.[60]

RISE, an NGO operating in Andhra Pradesh, documented its experience of working in the hamlet of Kandriga, in which the high caste Rajus had tried to trick the tribal Yanadis out of their rights to fish in a 'tank' or small lake.[61] When the Yanadis went through official channels to protect their rights, the Rajus seized the Yanadis' fishing nets, an act which the Yanadis reported to the police. Instead of taking action to redress this action, the police simply informed the Rajus, who seized the remaining nets while the police looked on. The police then informed the Rajus about an agitation planned by the Yanadis that they had received word of, and at this agitation the Rajus turned up and an altercation ensued, in which members of both sides were injured, but only activists representing Yanadis were arrested. That night the Rajus rampaged through the Yanadi settlement, setting fire to huts and beating up anyone they came across. This was reported

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[60]Voluntary Action Network of India, <u>Report of the Fact Finding Committee on the State Repression & Oppression in M.P.,</u> New Delhi, undated.

[61]Rural Institute for Social Education, <u>Struggle Experience of Tribes in Chittoor District,</u> RISE, Tirupathi, Andhra Pradesh, undated.

to the District Collector, who visited and promised the
Yanadis relief and redress. As well, the Yanadis filed
complaints against the arsonists, but the police would not
accept these, intending instead to file false charges against
the victims. When the Yanadis and their supporters organised a
rally to protest against this, the police tried unsuccessfully
to prevent them rallying and mass arrests followed. This led
to a sit-in and further arrests. Three months later no action
had been taken to redress the Yanadis' grievances, and so a
relay hunger strike was organised. Finally, the Yanadis
received new housing, the use of some additional land, new
nets and other items, the false cases against them were
dropped and they were able to fish again with the lifting of a
court injunction that had followed the Rajus attempt to obtain
their fishing rights by deception. But none of the Rajus were
charged in relation to the arson or assaults. While the
Yanadis were partially successful in defending their rights,
the price they paid in the process was significant, both in
terms of harm done to them and the time and effort spent
campaigning for their rights, and at no stage were any
sanctions imposed upon the Rajus who had acted against them.
This whole series of events was not brought to the author's
attention because it was especially unusual. In fact, the
documentation of these incidents begins with the words,
"Oppression is such a routine state of affairs in India, that
one soon forgets about it".[62]

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[62]ibid., p 1.

Primila Lewis writes of how the NGO she worked for organised farm, factory, brickmaking and quarry workers into a Rural Workers Union, which campaigned for employer adherence to legislation covering minimum wages and working conditions. At one point in th early 1970s, farm owners responded to the union's direct action by verbally agreeing to the union's demands, but then reneged. Workers and union officials were harassed and intimidated by employers and the police, the latter laying fabricated charges and beating the unionists with *lathis*. Lewis describes how increased government repression before and during the Emergency rendered the union inactive, and how efforts to revive the union after the Emergency were hampered by fears of further repression. In other words, such repression is not only a response to existing challenges to governments. It also deters those not politically organised from becoming so.[63]

Lewis explains the threat to political mobilisation posed by repression in the following words. Such repression:

came first from the local vested interests who organised themselves to defend their hitherto unchallenged 'right' to exploit, oppress and cheat their labour force. Before long the local authorities, in the form of the police, the *tehsil* [block] officials and more often than not the local politicians, who were closely connected in various ways with the local vested interests, would come to their aid. If agitation, disorder and especially violence persisted, the authorities would intervene to quell the violence and, in effect, to suppress the workers. Activists invariably faced harassment, threats, arrest and physical violence, even death. Before long the movement would collapse.[64]

[63]Lewis, pp 20-25.

[64]ibid., pp 101-102.

There is broad public recognition of police involvement in repression and other illegal activities, often under pressure from powerful interests, as the following passage points out:

In a survey of "The Image of Police in India" conducted for the Home Ministry, 77 percent of the people interviewed blamed the police for "protecting or shielding *goondas* or criminal elements in the country" and for such malpractices as "putting up false cases, non-registration of complaints, use of third degree methods, highhandedness and illegal detentions at police stations." Survey respondents gave "political interference" as the principal cause of police malpractice. Police are under constant pressure from politicians and bureaucrats, with the threat of transfer used to secure compliance.[65]

There are two other important factors that need to be recognised when considering the political effectiveness of specific-issue campaigning: the costs of such campaigning in relation to the benefits gained; and the tendency for much of it to focus on defensive campaigning, that is, on situations in which there is a dramatic worsening of a particular community or sector's situation. Let us look at each of these in turn.

COSTS OF SPECIFIC-ISSUE CAMPAIGNING

As was evident in the Bodhgaya campaign described earlier, costs of specific-issue campaigns can be high in relation to the benefits gained. These costs consist of the time of

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[65]Hardgrave & Kochanek, p 207.

activists and others participating in the campaigns, the resources contributed by individuals and organisations, the risks participants face and the harm they may suffer as a result of repression, retaliation or civil disorder, and the harm and inconvenience to third parties. These can be a particular burden for the poor and marginalised, for three reasons. First, they have fewer resources to spare. The time taken to participate in campaigning may be time that is needed for farm work, other income earning work or household tasks, while money spent on transport or other costs may be hard to come by. Second, they may face greater risks, many examples of which have been mentioned in this chapter, including murder, assault, imprisonment, destruction of property, loss of jobs[66] and loss of funding for organisations. Reports of 'atrocities against *harijans*' - murders, rapes, beatings and house burnings - are common, and these frequently result from efforts by *dalits* to demand or defend their rights. And as Anthony Oberschall has noted, agricultural labourers and tenants are vulnerable if they engage in protest because they are so dependent for their livelihood upon landlords, overseers, officials and other local notables, and they have few resources to fall back on if that livelihood is threatened.[67] Third, as the poor and marginalised have fewer connections with powerholders - in government, opposition

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[66]Primila Lewis, pp 108-109.

[67]Anthony Oberschall, <u>Social Conflict and Social Movements</u>, Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, 1973, p 168.

parties, the bureaucracy or the media - they are more likely to need to rely on mass action as their means of campaigning, and this takes more time of more people than other forms of campaigning. Of course, as the costs increase, more people will simply not campaign, and put up with the problem instead.

The other side of the cost-benefit equation relates to the benefits gained. The same costs may be justified in one case where there are substantial benefits, but not in another where the benefits are much less. Thus, the more generalised the benefits are - over time, over a given population and over the range of situations in which they occur - the more the costs will be worth outlaying. In this respect, it could be said that there are three levels of generality in relation to political change. The most generalised change occurs when a government committed to change and capable of implementing it assumes office. It is able to channel all the energies and resources that the state commands into initiating, applying and maintaining a whole platform of laws and policies that reflects its values and priorities. The next most generalised change occurs when campaigners persuade or pressure governments to adopt specific laws and policies. The least generalised change occurs when people must campaign to see laws and policies properly implemented in particular instances. There will always be a need for people to engage in campaigns for new laws and policies in specific areas and for the proper implementation of laws and policies in particular

instances, but the more governments are elected with the commitment and ability to implement desired change, the less campaigners on specific issues and instances need to bear the responsibility of being the major political engine of social transformation. When there is good government, specific-issue campaigning will be more effective because its task in most cases will be to inform, refine and reinforce policies in which the government already believes. Furthermore, governments that believe in citizen participation are likely to facilitate the involvement of civil organisations in politics rather than deterring it. An examination of the cases of Kerala and West Bengal a little later in this chapter supports these points.

Another point to note about the costs and benefits of specific-issue campaigns is that it is frequently necessary to come up with new tactics to attract the attention of the public (and thus of government), as the existing repertoire of tactics lose their novelty value and dramatic effect. As an example of this, listed in the "What's On" column of *The Hindustan Times* (Patna), among announcements about seminars, a children's painting competition, a sports event and the like, was a notice about a "day-long dharna and launching of fast-until-death". I do not know how the fast progressed, but the way in which this event was recorded is a striking example of how a tactic that in other circumstances has been extremely powerful and dramatic has been reduced to the status of an

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almost everyday occurrence.[68]

It is worth repeating here an observation made earlier in the thesis about an entirely different political situation in a very different country. According to Richard Flacks:

> The American experience shows that movements must also interact with the state not only as a source of pressure on elites from outside but as a vehicle for achieving representation. Movement demands have to be legislated; rights claimed have to be legitimated. Moreover the high intensity of mass action is not sustainable indefinitely; movement members need to go home, they have to live in the spaces their actions have helped create. They need political representation in order to carry on daily life.[69]

Of course, there are costs - in terms of time, resources and risks - involved in working with and campaigning for particular parties that have the potential to provide good governance, and in many cases these costs will be greater than the cost of particular specific-issue campaigns, but the benefits from the former are likely to be far more generalised, and if this is the case the additional costs may be more than compensated for by the substantially increased benefits.

THE DEFENSIVENESS OF MOST CAMPAIGNS

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[68]"What's On", The Hindustan Times (Patna), 14 Nov 1995, p 3.

[69]Richard Flacks, "The Party's Over - So What Is to Be Done?" in Enrique Larana, Hank Johnston & Joseph R Gusfield (eds), New Social Movements: From Ideology to Identity, Temple University Press, Philadelphia, 1994, p 339.

A noticeable feature of a large proportion of specific-issue campaigns in India is that they are defensive in their objectives. That is, they are concerned with defending communities or social sectors from a worsening of their situation, as distinct from proactive campaigns that attempt to improve the normal circumstances of life. For example, in the past two decades a great many campaigns in India have sought to defend communities - usually but not always marginalised ones[70] - against new threats of displacement, or the removal of vital sources of livelihood, as a result of dam-building, mining, timber cutting, plantation forestry, commercial fishing, military installations and other developments. Often the threat takes the form of legislation to facilitate such developments and hamper opposition to them. Thus there have been the Koel Karo, Silent Valley, Narmada and Tehri campaigns against the building of dams, the Chipko and Attiko campaigns against timber removal, campaigns against displacement by mining operations in South Bihar, campaigns against the Balipal Missile Range and the displacement it entails, campaigns by Keralan fishworkers against commercial trawling and by those at Chilika Lake against commercial prawn production, the campaign for fair compensation following the gas leak at the Union Carbide plant in Bhopal, campaigns against the effects of Structural Adjustment, globalisation, GATT changes and the New Economic Policy, such as that against

[70]See the list of campaigns in Omvedt, pp 146-147.

the multinational, Cargill, and campaigns against national forest bills in the early 1980s and mid-1990s, to name just some of these defensive campaigns.

It must be acknowledged that there have also been many campaigns of a proactive nature, which, rather than responding to a sudden turn for the worse, have taken on issues that have for a very long time been part of the fabric of oppression and privation - campaigns for higher wages, for government provision of employment, for land and housing, for reserved places in education and the public service, and campaigns against child labour and bonded labour, against police repression, against atrocities perpetrated on *dalits* and *adivasis*, against communalism, dowry deaths and so on. But in India and elsewhere, much of the contemporary mythology that has developed around, and justifies, new movements and new politics - which essentially are other terms for describing anti-systemic specific-issue campaigning - focuses on the defensive campaign. It lionises the mass of people who put their bodies on the line in the face of bulldozers, truncheons and rising dam-water. It is the politics of resistance against sudden, dramatic threats to survival and identity. It is no accident that it is defensive campaigns such as Narmada and Chipko that occupy the pre-eminent places in modern-day political folk-lore.

And yet if one looks at the whole scope of poverty and

oppression in contemporary India it is not these sudden setbacks that have sparked defensive campaigns that constitute the main problem in India. Walter Fernandes reports that 14.5 million have been displaced by development projects (such as dams and mines) in a period of three decades, and in any perspective this is an issue of enormous gravity,[71] as are the other issues that have led to campaigns of this nature. But by far the greater part of the problems Indians face relate to the ordinary, everyday manifestations of poverty and oppression that hundreds of millions suffer from - infants dying from infectious diseases and malnutrition, women having to spend hours collecting water and firewood as part of dawn-till-dark days of arduous work, women eating last and eating least, the lack of work, land, farm inputs and decent wages with which to earn income to meet even survival needs, let alone allowing for luxuries or savings for the future, the lack of accessible healthcare and quality schooling, the daily indignities that *dalits* and *adivasis* face at the hands of officials and higher caste members and the risks they face if they assert their rights, to name just some of the more obvious faces of poverty and oppression.[72]

The question that needs to be asked here is: how successful is specific-issue campaigning in dealing with these? According to

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[71]Walter Fernandes, Development Projects and Displacement of Tribals, Unpublished paper.

[72]It should be acknowledged, however, that defensive campaigns may in some instances use an issue as a kind of a 'wedge' into broader range of changes, but this is also often not the case.

Indian journalist, P. Sainath, in every year since the Government commenced what is known as the New Economic Policy, India's rating on the United Nations Development Programme's Quality of Life Index has declined.[73] In other words, the overall wellbeing of Indians has been steadily declining over this period. Now it might be said that this is the fault of various domestic and international factors that are largely outside the control of civil organisations and ordinary citizens, and there is a large degree of truth in this. But it is not the whole story. If specific-issue campaigning is the politics of the future, if it is the way by which ordinary citizens can defend their rights and advance their interests, what has gone wrong? Why has it not enabled citizens to resist growing inequality, to tackle continuing poverty and to ensure that basic needs are met?

Why, if most of the issues faced by the poor and marginalised are continuing issues rather than those that have suddenly emerged, do such a large proportion of campaigns focus on the latter? There are two main reasons for this. First, as Charles Tilly points out in a general observation about political mobilisations, because of the high costs of mobilising, marginalised communities tend only to engage in it when it is absolutely necessary, when the little they have is threatened. In comparison, observes Tilly, the rich and powerful are more

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[73]P Sainath, "Reforms and the Heretic: A Critique of India's Economic Liberalisation", Paper presented at La Trobe University, 11 Oct 1995.

likely to conduct offensive campaigns, because the costs of mobilisation to them are relatively small.[74] They have more resources to spare, more influence and contacts, and they are less likely to experience repression or retaliation. Second, direct action approaches involving large groups of people lend themselves to defensive campaigns much more than they do to offensive campaigns. Through various means, such as rallies, dharnas and gheraos, campaigners can either physically prevent undesirable things happening or precipitate a dramatic confrontation that will give the issue at stake broad exposure. But it is more difficult to employ such overtly physical tactics in relation to something campaigners are calling for that does not currently exist, such as increased employment, access to credit, or better quality schooling. And as I have pointed out, the marginalised often must rely on such direct action approaches because they lack sufficient resources, influence and contacts to use other approaches.

THE FALSE LOGIC OF EXCLUSIVELY FOCUSING ON LOCAL ACTION

It was mentioned earlier that those who have turned away from parties and conventional politics have responded in two different ways. One way has been to engage in specific-issue campaigning, and much of this chapter has been devoted to

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[74]Charles Tilly, From Mobilization to Revolution, Addison-Wesley, Reading, Mass., 1978, p 73-76.

examining the limitations of this. The other way has been to turn away from macro level politics altogether and to focus on working with local communities. This might involve working with communities to raise awareness, identify needs, develop skills, set up groups and organisations, initiate services and enterprises, explore alternative techniques and approaches, seek government funds and services, and advocate for the rights of community members, and it might cover any issue areas that impacted on the life of the community, such as agriculture, housing, health, education, forestry, water supply, credit and cultural activities. It was common for those activists who were disillusioned with mainstream politics as a result of the failures of the Janata Party Government to take this approach, and for many of them it was not for some years that they became involved in macro-level specific issue campaigns such as those against the 1982 Forest Bill and against the damming of the Narmada River.[75] As briefly mentioned earlier, a key reason for focusing on involvement at the local level is that it is seen to be practising prefigurative action. If it is good, as Gandhians and others believe, to decentralise power, both politically and economically, and thus have fairly self-reliant and autonomous local communities, then why not help such a process along by working solely at the local level to build awareness and capacity, develop organisations, practise alternatives,

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[75]Interview with Kaviljit Singh (c 25/1/94).

get small enterprises going, revitalise local democratic structures, and demand rights and entitlements from local officials? While all of these objectives are crucially important, the problem with acting locally is that many of the forces that maintain village level power structures and modes of operation are located at higher levels, and change can only occur if political action occurs at these levels as well.

Most laws, public policy directions and allocations of public funds emanate from central and state levels of government. These levels are responsible for the selection and training of public servants down to the local level, and it is at these levels that the expectations of public service behaviour and the patterns of rewards and punishments that reinforce these expectations are set. Thus, for example, it is largely at these levels that it is determined whether officials will be rewarded for implementing land reform or minimum wage laws, or punished for doing so. Likewise, criminal and repressive behaviour by police can be encouraged, ignored or penalised at higher levels. Higher levels of government can also reward or punish activists and civil organisations for their local level actions. And while members of local elites may exercise substantial influence over local police and officials, the power of these elites tends to be reinforced by their connections with politicians, party officials, bureaucrats and influential business figures at higher levels. Moreover, central and state governments can heavily influence the whole

tone and direction of public debate on political, social and economic issues through their power over mass media, information flows and public education, and through their implied status as the official voice of the nation.

Thus, to be effective, action at the local level generally needs to accompanied by concerted action at those macro levels at which decisions that impact upon local communities are made,[76] and it was this realisation that has led many civil organisations that previously had a predominantly local focus to come together with other organisations to campaign at state and national levels on specific issues of concern in the past two decades. Paradoxically, even efforts to decentralise power to local communities require action at those higher levels in the political system where decisions on the centralisation or decentralisation of political power are made. Most notably, it has been central and state governments that have enacted legislation and provided funds for the increased powers and responsibilities for *panchayat* institutions and the changes to their composition and electoral procedures.

So this chapter has sought to demonstrate that, while both local level action and specific-issue campaigning at higher levels are necessary components of transformative political action, they are not sufficient. Let us now look, then, at

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[76]This view is supported in the dialogue cited earlier: Lokayan, "On Threats To The Non-Party Political Process", p 46.

what can happen if there is party-based political action as well.

THE EXAMPLES OF KERALA AND WEST BENGAL

The underlying contention in this chapter is that there is far greater capability to implement change in the interests of marginalised sectors if both governments and civil organisations are proactively pursuing such an agenda than if civil organisations are acting alone in this regard. Governments that oppose such change have an array of powers, resources and capacities - that civil organisations either do not have or possess to a lesser degree - that enable them to thwart the efforts of organisations or to grant only minimal concessions. It would seem logical, therefore, to examine the conditions of life for the poor and marginalised in those Indian states that have had governments seen as governing in the interests of the such sectors - at least more so than governments in other states do - to see whether the poor have fared better than they have in states where improvements in their welfare have depended more on other factors, particularly specific-issue campaigning.

The two most prominent examples of such governments are those of Kerala and West Bengal. Both have had sustained periods of Communist or Communist-led governments, and in both cases there have been significant improvements in the conditions of

life for poorer sectors of society. Before outlining these improvements, however, an important point needs to be made. It can be argued that a range of exceptional circumstances in Kerala and West Bengal have been responsible for the presence of progressive governments there, as the following interpretations suggest.

In the case of Kerala, Richard Franke and Barbara Chasin put this down to a range of factors: an even distribution of natural resources across the state and a dense and evenly distributed population, which has reduced urban-rural inequality; a long history of involvement in international trade and therefore of exposure to different cultures and ideas; the development of working class consciousness in British colonial factories and plantations; and a history of radical and committed reformers.[77] However, Franke and Chasin also point out that last century Kerala had the most rigid caste system in India,[78] and Robin Jeffrey notes that the assertive characteristics of Keralans today "contrast strikingly with the ruthless hierarchy and elaborate deference that distinguished Kerala from the rest of India only a decade before."[79]

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[77]Richard W Franke & Barbara H Chasin, <u>Kerala: Development Through Radical Reform</u>, Promilla & Co, New Delhi, 1992, pp 22-27. It may also be the case that money brought or sent into the state by Keralans working in the Persian Gulf has impacted upon the accumulation and distribution of wealth in Kerala.

[78]ibid., p 75.

[79]Robin Jeffrey, <u>Politics, women and wellbeing: how Kerala became a "model"</u>, Macmillan, Basingstoke, UK, 1992, p 228.

In West Bengal's case, Atul Kohli attributes the emergence of a progressive government to a long tradition of elite radicalism, the smaller proportion - and therefore relative weakness - of caste Hindus in the total population, and the weakness of the Congress Party in the state.[80] For Nripen Bandyopadhyaya, "the victory of 1977 was a result (and not the starting point) of a long and protracted period of peasant struggles and mobilisations based on the unity of classes, castes and communities constituting the toiling rural poor base in West Bengal", a process that began in the Tebhaga area in 1945-46.[81]

I am not disputing that conditions giving rise to these governments were atypical for India as a whole. But I argue in this thesis that civil organisations can take steps to promote good government by coming together to form an aggregated civil base, and the process through which this might happen is explored in the next chapter. Progressive governance in Kerala and West Bengal has not resulted from the presence of aggregated civil bases in these states, but they nevertheless warrant examination because they demonstrate what good governments can achieve.

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[80]Atul Kohli, <u>Democracy and Discontent: India's Growing Crisis of Governability</u>, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1990, pp 268-269.

[81]Nripen Bandyopadhyaya, "The Story of Agrarian Struggles and Land Reforms in Bengal and West Bengal", in Manoranjan Mohanty & Partha Nath Mukherji (eds), <u>People's Rights: Social Movements and the State in the Third World</u>, Sage, New Delhi, 1998, p 307.

Looking first at Kerala, it presents a remarkable picture of a state in which the basic needs of all are met to a far greater extent than is the norm in India. Infant mortality in 1992 was 17 per 1000, compared with an all-India average of 79 per 1000.[82] By 1980, life expectancy in Kerala was 67 for women and 64 for men, 15 years more than the all-India average for the time.[83] Population growth in the period 1981-91 was 14.3% in Kerala, but 23.8% in India as a whole.[84] In 1991, 89.9% of Keralans were literate, compared with an all-Indian figure of 52.2%, while the difference in female literacy rates was even more dramatic - 86.2% in Kerala and just 39.3% in India overall.[85] In Kerala in 1991 the number of people per hospital bed was more than three times the national average.[86] In 1987-88, 17% of Keralans lived below the poverty line, while for India as a whole the figure was 29.9%,[87] and the state's overall rating on a quality of life Index was 69% above the all-India rating.[88]

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[82]<u>Statistical Outline of India 1994-95</u>, Tata Services Limited, Bombay, 1994, p 10.

[83]T J Nossiter, <u>Marxist State Governments in India: Politics, Economics and Society</u>, Pinter, London, 1988, p 55.

[84]<u>Statistical Outline of India</u>, p 38.

[85]ibid., p 39.

[86]ibid., p 191.

[87]ibid., p 30.

[88]Nossiter, p 62.

Yet according to more conventional indicators of progress Kerala has not fared well. If Kerala was a country, it would be the ninth poorest in the world.[89] Its domestic economy barely grew at all between the early 1970s and the mid-1980s, while its per capita income grew by less than 4% between 1970 and 1986, compared with 26% for India as a whole,[90] giving it a per capita income 30% below that of India overall.[91] Unemployment is much higher than the national average, with 4.3 million of the state's 27.6 million unemployed in 1987. [92] Levels of both private investment and central government investment declined significantly during the 1980s.[93] While questions may be asked about the State Government's management of the economy, it also needs to be recognised that Kerala is not as well endowed as many other states - for example, it has a population density three times the national average (and 25 times that of the United States)[94] - and the fact remains that, despite below average economic performance, the government has still managed to achieve a level of distribution of income, resources and services that has enabled the basic needs of the people to be substantially met.

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[89]Franke & Chasin, p 10.

[90]Jeffrey, p 218.

[91]Nossiter, p 62.

[92]Jeffrey, p 218.

[93]ibid., pp 220, 222.

[94]ibid., p 162.

Keralans elected the Communist Party of India (CPI) to power in 1957, and it was the first freely elected Communist government in the world. This regime lasted until 1959 when it was dismissed by the Central (Congress) Government following right-wing agitation, leading to a period of rule by presidential decree from New Delhi followed by a conservative coalitions until 1967. In that year a Communist-led coalition was elected, containing both the CPI and the Communist Party - Marxist (CPM), which had broken away nationally in 1964. This coalition fell apart in 1969, and during the 1970s Kerala was ruled by the CPM and several conservative parties including Congress. 1980 saw another leftist coalition that included both the CPM and the CPI, a coalition that lost power to a conservative, Congress-led coalition in 1982, regained power in 1987, and lost it again to the previous conservative coalition in 1991. So in this period Communist or Communist-led governments were in power for a total of around two decades, but represented a serious electoral threat to non-Communist governments at other times. It should be noted that, in both Kerala and West Bengal, parties that are Communist in name have acted more like social democrats when it comes to both their ideology and their practice.

A range of policy initiatives have contributed to the impressive indicators that Kerala has achieved: redistribution of "land to the tiller"; a housing program for agricultural labourers; ration shops to distribute staple commodities;

improved sanitation and water supplies; effective immunisation and health care services; an education system that focuses on basic education for both children and adults; minimum wage legislation; and the introduction of unemployment insurance and pensions; to name just some of these.[95] But as important as the actual policy initiatives - many of which are quite common in India - is their fair and effective implementation. Franke and Chasin note that one of "the striking features of the state is that quality of life benefits are fairly equally distributed among men and women, urban and rural areas, and low and high castes",[96] Olle Tornquist remarks upon the efficiency and extensiveness of the health and education systems and food distribution through ration shops, and the consistency of land reform.[97] A study in the early 1980s indicated that doctors and nurses had a similar caste and gender to that of their patients[98] which makes caste and gender discrimination less likely to occur. And having people occupying positions of authority who have a proven record of activism in the interests of the poor makes it more likely that the will exists to effectively implement policy. For example, Kerala's trade union and Communist movement has a long history of challenging caste inequality by openly

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[95]Franke & Chasin.

[96]ibid., p 10.

[97]Olle Tornquist, <u>The Next Left? Democratisation and Attempts to Renew the Radical Political Development Project: The Case of Kerala</u>, NIAS Books, Copenhagen, 1995, p 19.

[98]Franke & Chasin, p 46.

flouting rules against caste mixing,[99] and having such people in power increases the chances of fair implementation across caste lines.

As well, government willingness to implement policy effectively and fairly has been complemented by the vigilance and assertiveness of civil organisations and citizens generally. In the health area, for example, the anthropologist, Joan Mencher, noted the higher rates of staff absenteeism in primary health centres (PHCs) in Tamil Nadu, compared with those in Kerala, and adds that "in Kerala, if a PHC was unmanned for a few days, there would be a massive demonstration at the nearest collectorate led by local leftists, who would demand to be given what they knew they were entitled to",[100] and Franke and Chasin cite other examples of *panchayats*, unions and parties demanding of government officials improved health care facilities, and of groups of citizens taking direct action towards the same end.[101] As well, they recount similar stories of civil activism in relation to other issue areas, such as the redistribution of land[102] and to improved wages for agricultural workers.[103] The main purpose of

[99]ibid., pp 79-80.

[100]ibid., p 45.

[101]ibid., pp 45-46.

[102]ibid., pp 61-63.

[103]ibid., p 65.

this chapter has been to outline the limitations of specific-issue campaigning, but it is important to note that what makes such campaigning far more effective in this instance is that there is less political distance between these campaigners and the government. Broadly speaking, they share a common ideology and objectives, with perhaps differences of degree, of emphasis, of speed and manner of implementation. In such a situation the government is much less likely to employ methods such as I have described in this chapter to respond to campaigns, methods that involve making minimum substantive concessions.

It is important not to idealise the record of progress in Kerala under left-wing governments. As has been said, the state is very poor, growth is sluggish and unemployment is high when compared to other parts of India. Many people, such as agricultural labourers, small farmers and the unemployed are still desperately poor. Though the position of women, and of scheduled castes and tribes, is better relative to other social sectors and to their counterparts in other states, there is still much room for improvement. Some analysts have suggested that it is time for Kerala to try new strategies to create wealth as well as ensuring fair distribution, as a kind of plateau has been reached,[104] while K. K. N. Kurup suggests that feudal exploitation in rural areas is now being replaced

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[104]Jeffrey, p 228, and Tornquist The Next Left?, pp 94-101.

by capitalist exploitation.[105] But there is no denying that, with a limited resource base and a history of rigid caste hierarchy, Kerala has achieved remarkable progress in advancing the wellbeing of its poor citizens through the combined actions of progressive governments and progressive civil organisations.

Turning to India's other success story in this regard - West Bengal - the Communist Party (Marxist)-led government there has been in power continuously since 1977. One Chief Minister, Jyoti Basu, has held office throughout this time. Even though in both West Bengal and Kerala the same party, the CPM, has played the predominant role in left-wing state governments, the strategies these governments have employed and the nature of their successes are quite different.

West Bengal does not have the remarkable social indicators that Kerala has, although in some areas its progress has been quite respectable. For example, between 1977-78 and 1987-88 it went from having 52.2% of its people below the poverty line (about 4% above the Indian average) to 27.6% (about 2% below the average).[106] Of seventeen Indian states it had the third highest proportion of children in primary school in 1992-93, and the fifth lowest infant mortality in 1992. West Bengal's

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[105]K K N Kurup, <u>Modern Kerala: Studies in Social Relations</u>, Mittal, Delhi, 1988, pp 161-164.

[106]All statistics in this paragraph are from the <u>Statistical Outline of India</u>.

level of literacy improved from 48.6% in 1981 to 57.7% in 1991, which in each year was around 5% above the Indian average. Female literacy in 1991 was 46.6%, almost 7% above the national average. Other indicators are fairly average, but it needs to be recognised that Communist-led governments in West Bengal commenced twenty years later than they did in Kerala, so it may be that improvements in social indicators will be similarly delayed.

Notable policy successes in West Bengal have been, first, in the area of decentralisation of political power to *panchayats*, in the process by-passing the propertied elites that have traditionally dominated local politics in India, and second, in relation to more equitable land policies, giving sharecroppers greater security of tenure and a greater share of crops, and later increasing the rate of land redistribution. With regard to the first of these, almost half of West Bengal's budget is now spent through *panchayats*, they have increased staff, and local public servants who have traditionally reported to state and central governments are now answerable to one of the three tiers of the *panchayat* system - a move that other states are now following. As well, the president of the *zilla parishad* (the highest tier) now heads various district level government agencies and committees.[107] As Kohli points out, while decentralising power

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[107]Kalyan Chaudhuri, "Lessons in development: Through land reforms and panchayats", <u>Frontline</u>, February 10, 1995, pp 67-72.

in this way, the CPM-led government also centralised power in another sense by making *panchayat* elections party contests,[108] and as a result the CPM has been able to extend its electoral success at the state level down the *panchayat* level. But more importantly, this measure has taken local power out of the hands of the landed elite and put it into the hands of lower socio-economic groups. Thus, more than 71% of *panchayat* members are now small and marginal farmers, while in comparison, a study of fourteen Indian states revealed that 88% of *panchayat* members and 95% of *panchayat* presidents are landed gentry.[109] *Panchayats* are branching out into new areas of responsibility, such as water management, provision of electricity for agriculture, rural credit and the provision of agricultural inputs,[110] and the increased representation of lower socio-economic sectors in the *panchayat* system helps to ensure that resources and services are distributed more fairly across sectors.

Kalyan Chaudhuri proffers the opinion that "The land-owning gentry has been rendered powerless, a phenomenon yet to be achieved elsewhere in India."[111] But according to Kohli, the

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[108]Atul Kohli, <u>The State and Poverty in India: The Politics of Reform</u>, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1987, p 108.

[109]Chaudhuri.

[110]Madhura Swaminathan & Anamitra Saha, "Agricultural Growth in West Bengal in the 1980s: A Disaggregation by Districts and Crops", <u>Economic and Political Weekly</u>, XXIX, no 13, 26 March 1994, pp A9-A10.

[111]Chaudhuri, p 67.

secret of the West Bengal Government's success in relation to agricultural land was that, when it first came to power, it did not engage in a frontal attack on these land-owning gentry in relation to the land they held in excess of land ceiling laws, because it did not consider that it was sufficiently entrenched in power to make this work effectively. For one thing, it was not confident that the public service would co-operate in implementing it fairly. It first concentrated on registering sharecroppers (who comprise a quarter of rural households)[112] and giving them greater security of tenure, as well as a larger share of the crops they grew. However, subsequently land redistribution has been occurring, to the point where it is reported that 20% of all land redistributed in India is in West Bengal, though it has only 4% of the nation's agricultural land, and 60% of land is owned by small and marginal farmers, compared with 28.8% for the country as a whole.[113] The West Bengal Government has also taken important policy initiatives in the areas of rural credit, better access to agricultural inputs, employment generation, better wages for agricultural workers, and the development of small-scale industries in rural areas.[114]

In general terms, then, the government's success in staying in

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[112]Kohli, Democracy and Discontent, p 290.

[113]Chaudhuri, p 71.

[114]ibid; Kohli, The State and Poverty in India, pp 133, 137.

power and implementing change is according to Kohli, due to the following features of the regime: good organisation and stable leadership; its blend of decentralisation of power (to *panchayats*) and centralist party organisation; its ability to control the bureaucracy and police, and thus counter corruption and class bias; and its commitment to exclude the propertied classes from governance, while at the same time recognising the government's limitations in a capitalist economy and a federal system, which include the fact that it cannot unduly threaten propertied interests if it wants them to pursue economic growth.[115]

However, as in the case of Kerala, change has been driven not just by government but by the actions of civil organisations and the citizens as well. According to Kohli, successful implementation of land reform has resulted from popular mobilisation and support backing up government action,[116] a view supported by Bandyopadhyaya.[117] The government's own efforts to promote the political organisation of landless labourers has meant that there is little of the brutal oppression of this sector that is seen, for example, in Bihar.[118] As well, *panchayats* have been active in detecting

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[115]Kohli, <u>The State and Poverty in India</u>, pp 10-11, 125-128, 131, 143, 227-228.

[116]ibid., p 131.

[117]Bandyopadhyaya, p 307.

[118]Kohli, <u>Democracy and Discontent</u>, p 290.

holdings of land above the permitted ceilings.[119] It should be noted in passing that this redistribution of power, land and resources has not harmed agricultural productivity in West Bengal. On the contrary, as *The Economist* noted - with accompanying praise for the government - agricultural growth has been remarkable.[120]

In addition, as with Kerala, it is important to acknowledge the government's limitations and the criticisms that have been directed at it. For example, Poromesh Acharya claims that the privileged classes continue to dominate the rural power structure. "At the panchayat level there may be quite a number of members and pradhans [presidents] from poor and lower middle peasants...[However they are usually] guided in decision-making by someone from the party who generally belongs to the upper strata of the rural society."[121] Kohli acknowledges that, at the local level, it is not the landless and sharecroppers who are in prominent political positions, but those of in-between class background such as lower-middle peasants and teachers.[122] Sumanta Banerjee writes of a state administration that is partisan, unprofessional, has links with the underworld through its police force and is guilty of

[119]Chaudhuri, p 71.

[120]The Economist, 31 July 1992, cited in Bandyopadhyaya, p 308.

[121]Poromesh Acharya, "Panchayats and Left Politics in West Bengal", Economic and Political Weekly, XXVIII, no 22, 29 May 1993, p 1080.

[122]Kohli, The State and Poverty in India, p 113.

electoral malpractice.[123] And Hardgrave and Kochanek concur that Jyoti Basu's reputation for clean government has suffered in recent years.[124] If there is some truth in all of these assessments it still does not negate the achievements of the regime just described.

In concluding this account of political developments in Kerala and West Bengal, it should be reiterated that in both states social progress was achieved, not just by popular pressure from civil organisations, and not just by government action, but by a mutually reinforcing combination of the two. The challenge for Indian political activists is to have this happen in other states as well.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has sought to demonstrate, in the Indian context, that specific-issue campaigning and local political action, while being very necessary to effect significant and sustained change in the interests of marginalised sectors, are not sufficient to achieve this end. In particular, the chapter has focused on the limitations of specific-issue campaigning in the face of the powers and capacities that governments have to respond to its political demands. Through a range of

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[123]Sumanta Banerjee, "West Bengal Today: An Anticipatory Post-Mortem", Economic and Political Weekly, XXV, no 33, 18 Aug 1990, pp 1812-1816.

[124]Hardgrave & Kochanek, p 299.

strategies and devices that were illustrated, governments can ignore, punish, deflect or in other ways undermine the objectives of specific-issue campaigns, in order to protect the interests and ideologies they represent, and this can force civil organisations into campaigning that is defensive in its objectives and costly in terms of the time and resources consumed and the personal and material risks involved. The chapter has then sought to show, through an examination of the cases of Kerala and West Bengal, how a quite different outcome can ensue if a government with the will to advance the interests of marginalised sectors is in power. As Atul Kohli concludes, on the basis of his study of three state-level regimes, in West Bengal, Karnataka and Uttar Pradesh:

...organizing the poor really does not shift the class basis of political power. What does shift the class basis is not merely the degree of organization of various classes, but also the institutionalization of lower class goals within the state...Parties aggregating lower-class interests, calling themselves communist, or by any other name, but reconciled to parliamentarianism and private-property economies, may then offer the best hope - to the extent that there is hope - for reconciling growth with distribution within the context of democratic capitalism.[125]

Kohli's analysis of these three state governments yields some ideas about what features of regimes can contribute to success. As he puts it:

Comparative analysis of Indian materials suggests that regime characteristics - leadership, ideology and organisation - and the class basis of the regime in power are the major variables in

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[125]Kohli, The State and Poverty in India, p 231.

redistributive outcomes.

> ...a left-of-center regime, headed by a tightly organized ideological party, can penetrate the rural society without being co-opted by the propertied groups. This facilitates a degree of separation between political and social power, making intervention possible for social reforms. Conversely, multi-class regimes with loose organization and diffuse ideology are not successful at reformist intervention.[126]

Francine Frankel makes a related point when she says:

> ...unless...efforts are made to organize the peasantry in new forms of class-based associations that can build their own direct relationships with outside power centers in the political parties and the administration, the superior numbers of the poor cannot be converted into a potent political force.[127]

The next chapter will consider how - through the agency of an 'aggregated civil base' - organisations of the poor and marginalised might become such a political force, and might, in conjunction with Kohli's "tightly organized ideological party", achieve substantial social reform.

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[126]ibid., 223-224.

[127]Francine Frankel, India's Political Economy: 1947-77: The Gradual Revolution, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1978, p 549.

CHAPTER SIX: TOWARDS SWARAJ FOR ALL

Every act of the government was to tell the ordinary person in the village that *'You*, we don't care for, *you* don't belong, we don't look upon you as an important person in this country.'
Rajagopal[1]

Everything has failed, so we are looking for alternatives.
Shivananda Tiwari[2]

The urgent need for building a broad alliance of as many...groups as possible was obvious.
B Tulpule[3]

The struggle for a just society will have to be simultaneously waged in the small forums of idealism, in the movements that articulate this alternative and in the pragmatic, negotiation-based party political process. It is for movements and other social and cultural activists as well as the few visionaries and idealists within parties to keep alive the spirit of envisioning, of demonstrating that alternatives to the current impasse are feasible.
Smitu Kothari, Vijay Pratap and Shiv Visvanathan[4]

In Chapter Four we considered the shortcomings of the JP Movement and the Janata Party. The Movement failed to mobilise[5] sufficiently within marginalised communities or to include enough members of such communities in leadership positions. It did not have a strong organisation or second line of leaders, and its ideology was somewhat diffuse, not well thought-through, and contradictory. And finally, the party that grew out of the Movement was not answerable to that

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[1] Interview: Rajagopal 9/12/95.

[2] Interview: Shivananda Tiwary 11/11/95.

[3] B Tulpule describes a meeting of activists and scholars from all over India at Khandala, Maharashtra, at which this was one of the conclusions, in "From a Different Development: A Beginning", Economic and Political Weekly, Vol XXXI, No 16, 20 April 1966, p 819.

[4] Smitu Kothari, Vijay Pratap and Shiv Visvanathan, "Between Idealism and Pragmatism: Non-Party Formations and Political Parties", Lokayan Bulletin, 11:1, July-Aug 1994, p 4.

[5] Consideration is given to the meaning of this term later in this chapter (pp 336-340).

Movement when it came to selecting policies and personnel, or for its performance in government. The failures of the Janata Party, coming as it did after the failures of Congress, led many people who had been part of or observed the Movement to lose faith in the efficacy of working to improve the quality of governance, except through the medium of specific-issue or local campaigns. However, Chapter Five sought to demonstrate that relying on such campaigns alone also has its limitations, especially when the results of such an approach are compared with the changes that occurred in two Indian states, Kerala and West Bengal, in which the interests of marginalised sectors have been advanced by both an active civil society and a progressive government. The point was also made that if circumstances do not bring about the emergence of such governments (as they did in these two states, as a result of factors identified in Chapter 5, pp 287-288), then the mechanism of a democratic-deepening aggregated civil base may provide a means of achieving such an outcome.

As previously discussed, the JP Movement is presented in the thesis as an example of what I term a democratic-deepening aggregated civil base (or ACB). I define an ACB as an alliance of organisations covering a broad range of issues and social sectors (as well, perhaps, as individuals not linked to organisations) that is seeking political change that is both significant and general. This thesis contends that it is unwarranted to conclude - as many did (see Chapter 4, p 185) -

that the JP Movement's failure to bring about significantly better party government demonstrated the futility of such efforts generally. Given the identifiable weaknesses of the Movement itself and of its relationship with the Janata Party, the limited outcomes generated by the Movement and the Janata Government are quite understandable, and they are not grounds for saying that all parties will fail when in government or that efforts by movements to improve the calibre of parties will fail.

From identifying the weaknesses of the JP Movement it is possible to be clearer about what would be required to make a democratic-deepening ACB more effective, and this is the subject of much of this chapter. The thesis is not predicting the likelihood either of democratic-deepening ACBs being formed or of such an alliance generating better government. This would be claiming something that cannot be substantiated, as to my knowledge there has not as yet been a successful example of one in the Third World. There have been partial examples in the West, which will be considered later, but Western and Third World circumstances are too different to allow one to infer with any degree of certainty that patterns in the West could be replicated in the Third World. Rather, the thesis is claiming - on the basis of theoretical and empirical material from a number of countries and contexts, which this chapter will present - that there is sufficient evidence to support the feasibility and effectiveness of

democratic-deepening aggregated civil bases as a means of generating better governance to warrant careful consideration and further research of this concept by activists and scholars. Some specific directions for research are suggested in the final chapter.

This chapter will first consider the concept of aggregated civil bases - what they are, what purposes they serve and the different kinds. I believe that three distinct types can be distinguished - independence, formal democracy and democratic-deepening movements. Brief consideration is given to examples of the first and second of these, mainly for the purpose of pointing out that, when independence and formal democracy ACBs achieve their objectives, their leaders often go on to become the new elites in government and, unless new countervailing powers emerge, this often does not augur well for democracy in these societies, and in particular for marginalised sectors. The chapter then turns its attention to democratic-deepening ACBs. The purposes and benefits of such an arrangement are outlined, and following this the chapter addresses the question of what is required for democratic-deepening ACBs to emerge, to be effective, and thus to bring about better governance. These requirements are considered in five categories, in relation to: mobilisation of supporters and participants, particularly from marginalised sectors; the task of reconciling the interests of different social sectors represented in the ACB; the task of reconciling different

ideological positions; other organisational and logistical issues associated with groups coming together as an ACB; and accountability processes in the relationship between the ACB and the party or coalition it is conditionally supporting. The chapter then concludes by considering examples of democratic-deepening ACBs. The movements included in this category could more accurately be described as *tending* towards this kind of arrangement, as they do not satisfy all the criteria set out in this chapter, and a detailed assessment of their effectiveness is beyond the scope of the thesis. They are included in order: firstly, to indicate that movements that approach what I describe as a democratic-deepening ACB have existed and do exist; secondly, to give the subject a little more concreteness and specificity; and thirdly, in some cases to make some broad or tentative assessments of their impact. Even though examples of certain phenomena are drawn from outside India, the principal purpose of the chapter is to draw conclusions that relate to India, so any general conclusions should be taken as concerning India, if this is not made explicit. However, as discussed below, I believe the model has relevance elsewhere as well.

WHAT ARE AGGREGATED CIVIL BASES?

In this thesis I make what I believe to be an important distinction between specific-issue movements and what I term aggregated movements. These two kinds of movements serve quite

different political purposes. Specific-issue movements, like interest groups (which can be part of them), focus on particular issues, as their name implies, and frequently have a pressuring or resisting role, while aggregated movements have a much broader function. Their purposes are also quite distinct from those of political parties. As such, they have their own requirements to be effective, as this chapter seeks to expound.

Aggregated civil bases, as I define them, attempt to bring about major political change, not in relation to one or a few specific issue areas, but in a broader context involving governance generally, and thus includes structures and processes as well as policies. The term as I use it relates primarily to state and national level politics, but it would also make sense to use it to describe a more local context. Aggregated civil bases are recognised as important when democratic structures are absent - when a country is colonised or ruled by a dictatorship - because in such circumstances the need for an alliance of forces to remedy this situation through major political change is easy to see. Thus, the role of independence and formal democracy movements is commonly acknowledged and described, as will be instanced in this chapter. But it is generally not recognised that a similar kind of alliance may yield benefits in an already existing formal democratic system, particularly - but not exclusively - if that system is dominated by a narrow political elite, such

that the interests of a substantial proportion of the population receive significantly less weight.

If, as I argued in the previous chapter, the interests of marginalised sectors cannot be effectively advanced in such circumstances solely by the actions of pressure groups or social movements on an issue by issue basis, what are the options for marginalised groups? They can form a political party and thus seek to have it supplant those parties that they believe have failed to advance their interests. The formation of parties to represent marginalised (as well, perhaps, as other) interests is far from uncommon, but success in winning office is much less common. For example, though many left parties - socialist or communist - have been formed in India, their only success in winning office has been in three states, or as minor partners in merged parties or large coalitions nationally.[6] It is argued in this thesis that neither specific-issue campaigns, nor political parties, nor both of these together, are sufficient, though they are both necessary. This chapter argues that political parties, old or new, are more likely to be successful - in terms of both winning power and implementing policies the benefits of which reach down to marginalised sectors - if they are supported by a substantial base of organisations in civil society, or in

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[6]See Robert L Hardgrave & Stanley A Kochanek, <u>India: Government and Politics in a Developing Nation</u>, 5th edn, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Fort Worth, 1993, Ch 6.

other words, by a democratic-deepening aggregated civil base.[7] The JP Movement has been presented as one example of such an arrangement, an example that was not particularly successful, as we have seen. Other examples noted later in this chapter come from the Philippines and Latin America, where recently new configurations of civil organisations have been becoming more involved in electoral politics. But clearly the most prominent and successful examples have been trade union movements that have created, or linked up with, labour or social democratic parties in Western countries, a form of co-operation that has over this century produced major gains in areas such as working conditions and welfare provisions, and this kind of ACB is also examined. First, though, examples of independence and formal democracy ACBs will be identified.

INDEPENDENCE AND FORMAL DEMOCRACY AGGREGATED CIVIL BASES

Independence and formal democracy ACBs have a clear purpose. In working towards this purpose they simply have to muster whatever support, in total, is necessary to achieve it. Such support does not have to come from particular classes or sectors of society. For example, it may be sufficient to build such an ACB around strategic sections of the middle and upper classes in business, the professions and government service,

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[7]Parties representing powerful economic and social interests tend to have less need to deliberately create a support base of organisations, given their existing economic, social and cultural power and their organisational connections.

with perhaps the involvement of the lower classes in mass actions from time to time. Furthermore, such ACBs do not necessarily have an agenda that goes beyond independence or the establishment of formal democracy. But constituent sectors or organisations within them may have their own additional agendas, agendas which may be antithetical to the interests of other sectors of society. If - as frequently occurs - groups and individuals within the independence or formal democracy ACB come to constitute major parties or dominant elites within the newly independent or democratic state, then it is likely that a quite different configuration of forces will be needed to maximise democracy and in particular to protect the interests of the most marginalised. Let us now look at a few examples of independence ACBs first, and as this thesis is primarily focused on India, it is logical to start with the Indian independence movement.

The Indian National Congress was the organisation that led the struggle for Indian independence, but it also contained other organisations and parties within it, and its leadership role in this struggle was accepted by yet other organisations and parties.[8] While it thus included people from all social sectors it was dominated by the middle and upper classes. Robert Hardgrave and Stanley Kochanek, while acknowledging that Congress under Gandhi grew from "an urban middle-class

[8]See, for example, Gail Omvedt, Reinventing Revolution: New Social Movements and the Socialist Tradition in India, M E Sharpe, New York, 1993, pp 15-22.

coterie into a movement with an extensive social base reaching into the villages", went on to add:

The nationalist movement, even in penetrating the villages, had limited impact. Those who were mobilized in the rural areas were far more likely to be the fairly prosperous peasants than the landless laborers. The mobilization of the still largely inert Indian masses to political consciousness and participation would remain the developmental task of India's leaders in the years after independence.[9]

And as Partha Chatterji points out, while Gandhi enlisted the support of the peasantry for the independence struggle, it was not something he allowed them to have a say in. In fact, he was strongly opposed to farmers and workers becoming politically organised nationally.[10] When India finally threw off its colonial status, Congress the independence movement became Congress the dominant party, and those members of the upper and middle classes that had most power in one continued to have most power in the other. Their agenda came to include the imperative of protecting their class and caste interests, as has previously been described in this thesis (Chapter 4, pp 225-230). It is questionable how seriously they took the task of developing the political consciousness and participation of the Indian masses identified by the Hardgrave and Kochanek in

[9]Hardgrave & Kochanek, p 50.

[10]Partha Chatterji, "Gandhi and the Critique of Civil Society", in Ranajit Guha (ed), Subaltern Studies III: Writings on South Asian History and Society, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1984, pp 173-174. It should be acknowledged that Gandhi was not opposed to these sectors becoming politically organised because he was unconcerned about their wellbeing, but because he was opposed to class-based organisations per se, which he saw them as encouraging the pursuit of selfish interests (Chatterji, p 163).

the above quotation, except insofar as this was necessary to maintain electoral support for their party. To take this view of the Congress Party is not to deny that there have been progressive or well-meaning figures within it - Nehru being a notable example - but it is simply an assessment of how, on balance, the party as a whole has acted within the Indian political system.

We see a similar picture when we look at other independence movements. Considering the Philippines, for example, in the independence struggle against Spain the *ilustrados* (the educated sons of the landowning class) were the dominant political group at the time that Spain was defeated. When the country was reconquered by the United States, the new colonial power almost immediately declared its intention to prepare the country for independence, and in the process it favoured the parties representing landed and emerging industrial elites. Left parties were formed later but never managed to challenge the ascendancy which these parties had established and which they took into the post-colonial era.[11] In similar vein, leaders of sub-Saharan independence movements were predominantly urban, Western-educated professionals, and upon independence these movements tended to become the ruling parties. Departing colonial powers required that multi-party systems be established, but these did not have much domestic

[11]Vera Simone & Anne Thompson Feraru, The Asian Pacific: Political and Economic Development in a Global Context, Longman, White Plains, NY, 1995, pp 80-81.

support and in most cases did not last. Thus, the sectors of society that dominated the independence movements also dominated politics after independence.[12]

If we look at formal democracy movements in these same countries later a few decades later, we see a not dissimilar picture. In the Philippines, the February Revolution of 1986 that ousted Ferdinand Marcos and installed Corazon Aquino resulted in a return to formal democracy but did little in the way of involving or meeting the needs of marginalised constituencies.[13] This was because Aquino was backed by diverse forces that were strong enough, collectively, to remove Marcos, but each lacked either the will or the power to take on these broader challenges. As Robert Reid and Eileen Guerrero put it:

Disparate factions from the armed forces, the United States government, the Catholic church hierarchy, traditional political parties and social activist movements had come together to oust Marcos. Each had its own agenda. There was no consensus on how to manage the nation now that Marcos was gone. Much would depend on Corazon Aquino, who was chosen standard-bearer in the first place because of her lack of strong, public views.

Holding that coalition together would become Aquino's greatest challenge as president. Failing to mold it into a cohesive force for social change would be her greatest failure.[14]

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[12]Peter Calvocoressi, <u>Independent Africa and the World</u>, Longman, London, 1985, pp 22-23. See also Ali A Mazrui & Michael Tidy, <u>Nationalism and New States in Africa</u>, Heinemann, London, 1984, pp 85-86. Mazrui and Tidy also note the role in independence movements of those they call "sub-elites" - teachers, clerks, pastors, and the more prosperous farmers and traders (with family and other ties to the rest of the population) - and this modifies the argument somewhat but does not negate it.

[13]Robert Reid & Eileen Guerrero, <u>Corazon Aquino and the Brushfire Revolution</u>, Louisiana State University Press, Baton Rouge, 1995, pp 245-246.

[14]ibid, p 33.

It can be argued that bringing about cohesive social change through the medium of such disparate interests would be an impossibility, in which case the failure was not Corazon Aquino's personally. Rather, a different constellation of forces was required for the task, and later in the chapter reference is made to how this may be emerging in the Philippines.

In sub-Saharan Africa a wave a democratisation in recent times has been led by formal democracy ACBs in each country. According to Julius Ihonvbere, who studied such movements in Kenya, Zambia, Ghana, Malawi and Nigeria, influential within them have been "wealthy elements, professionals, retired military officers, professional political agitators, [and] politicians of the 1960s".[15] Furthermore, "...the new prodemocracy movements have not been able to create, nurture and win the support of new political constituencies. They rely on the same constituencies as the incumbent or first generation political parties ...[and both old and new parties] find it hard to identify and represent any social or economic interest which has been previously under-represented, unless such a group is ethnically defined".[16] Not surprisingly,

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[15]Julius O Ihonvbere, "On the Threshold of Another False Start? A Critical Evaluation of Prodemocracy Movements in Africa", in E Ike Udogu (ed), <u>Democracy and Democratization in Africa: Toward the 21st Century</u>, E J Brill, Leiden, 1997, p 129.

[16]ibid, p 130.

therefore, current political debate in these countries tends to overpersonalise the causes of problems, blaming current leaders rather than looking at broader issues of class, bureaucracy, corruption, waste or opportunism, and emerging parties have not come up with any "new and credible alternative to existing policies".[17] Thus, the prodemocracy movements may have been able to muster enough power and support, given the influential figures involved, to achieve a return to formal representative democracy, but this does not mean they have been able to adequately represent previously excluded constituencies or develop credible new policies.

We can see, then, that in all of these cases independence and formal democracy ACBs dominated by upper socio-economic groups accumulated enough power to achieve their objectives, but their domination of these movements was subsequently translated into the domination of the newly independent or democratic societies. The imperatives of independence and formal democracy struggles may not have demanded significant involvement by other sectors of society, but in the context of independence or democracy these other sectors had quite different interests to those of the new political elites. Let us now consider the part that democratic-deepening ACBs can play in dealing with this issue.

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[17]ibid, pp 129-130.

THE PURPOSE AND VALUE OF DEMOCRATIC-DEEPENING AGGREGATED CIVIL BASES

What, then, would a democratic-deepening ACB do, and what would be the value of this? Broadly speaking, such an ACB would be an alliance of civil organisations covering a wide range of sectors and issue areas, formed for the following purposes: firstly, to generate processes of dialogue through which constituent organisations would arrive at a united and cohesive platform of policies; secondly, to negotiate an electoral arrangement with a party or coalition that promised to support its policy platform, in whole or in part; and thirdly, to monitor the policy's implementation. In the process of doing these things, the ACB would have two other important tasks, namely, facilitating increased mobilisation and organisation of marginalised sectors so that they constituted a critical mass within the ACB, and ensuring that the organisations in the ACB collectively command support from a sufficient number of voters to be taken seriously by a major party or coalition. Having a democratic-deepening ACB - as opposed to simply having a sympathetic and effective political party in the context of an active civil society - could be very valuable for two reasons.

A means of generating greater mobilisation of the marginalised

The first of these reasons is as follows. Neither political

parties, nor civil organisations acting separately from one another, may be capable of generating levels and forms of mobilisation within marginalised sectors sufficient to bring about general and significant change in the interests of these sectors.

In Chapter Four (pp 225-230), India's major political parties were assessed as chiefly governing in the interests of the most powerful sectors of society, but this was certainly not the intention of many who were involved in these parties at the outset. Many, perhaps most, political parties do not set out simply to represent the interests of one or a few sectors of society. For instance, from their inception both Congress and Janata contained factions or groups that, collectively, sought to represent the interests, as well as viewpoints, of a broad range of social sectors.[18] Both these parties contained quite radical elements seeking social transformation in the interests of the poor.[19] But one problem that faces party activists who set out to advance the interests of marginalised sectors - whether such party members constitute a whole party or a faction within one - is that, to the extent that these marginalised sectors are less organised and assertive and have

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[18]Hardgrave & Kochanek, pp 226-227, 272-276.

[19]In Chapter 3 (pp 120-121) the Congress 'system' was referred to, according to which different ideological strands within the party maintained links with similar strands outside the party. These included socialist elements who had chosen not to leave and join the Socialist Party when it broke away from Congress. See also Chapter 3, (pp 130-134) on more progressive and socialist elements in the JP Movement and later the Janata Party.

fewer political resources than other sectors, the party concerned needs to access a correspondingly larger proportion of the resources and support required to win office from other sections of the community. This in turn makes it more likely that they will need to appeal to or involve groups whose interests are very different from, or even antagonistic to, those of the marginalised, and less likely that they will introduce policies that benefit the marginalised constituencies that may have been their primary concern.

We saw, for example, how the JP Movement failed to mobilise marginalised communities to any great extent, and thus, even though many from these communities may have voted for the Janata Party in the subsequent election, those who were most involved in determining the policies and actions of the party were in the main established political operators from higher castes and classes - and Janata's performance reflected this. What is required to overcome this problem is an approach that maximises the mobilisation and involvement of those sectors of society that one is most keen to benefit. If parties are captives of other interests and can still be electorally successful, they have little motivation to do this. And if they need more electoral support, they may simply try to 'mobilise' members of marginalised communities into uncritical acceptance of the party and its policies.

According to a 1996 survey, 6.3 percent of Indians polled were

members of political parties, an increase from 3.6 percent twenty-five years previously.[20] But despite this increase, the survey's authors still concluded that, when it came to participation in electoral politics:

Indian citizens fall into three classes. On the very top is the class of political 'insiders' which has inherited social privileges, enjoyed economic clout and exercised political power. Of late this class...has shown cynicism towards democratic politics. On the other end of the spectrum are the virtual 'outsiders' - very poor, landless, artisan, tribal, Dalits or lower OBCs. This underclass is still excluded from mainstream politics.[21]

One obvious way to mobilise additional proportions of marginalised communities is to increase the number reached through non-party organisations. An advantage that such organisations have over parties is that people are, or can be, involved in them for a host of other social, economic, cultural and political purposes. Non-party organisations can include unions, NGOs, action groups, 'people's organisations', co-operatives, ethnic, religious or caste-based associations, women's organisations, or groups tackling a specific local issue. Of course, only a proportion of these groups are involved in serious mobilisation efforts, and there are a number of problems with the mobilisation that currently occurs through such groups.

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[20]A survey by the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (Yogendra Yadav, "The Maturing of a Democracy", India Today, 31 Aug 1996, p 34).

[21]ibid, p 37.

Firstly, by most estimates, only a small minority of India's poor are currently involved with such organisations. This is very hard to gauge with any precision. In the 1996 survey just cited, four percent of those polled claimed to be members of "social organisations".[22] Among subjects interviewed for this thesis who were prepared to estimate the proportion of marginalised Indians mobilised by civil organisations, estimates ranged from three to thirty percent, though some believed that a larger percentage had a more general awareness of oppression.[23] Organisations working with marginalised groups are often small, isolated from one another and poorly resourced.[24] This generally means that they can only work with limited numbers, and the tasks they attempt may also be quite limited, with mobilisation being just a small part of this.

Secondly, given that these sorts of organisations tend to work independently and often in isolation from one another, their mobilisation processes do not generate the coherence of ideas, or the sense of unity or solidarity across marginalised

[22]ibid, p 34. It is not clear what is and is not included under the term "social organisation", and the notion of membership of them is also problematic. For example, NGOs are generally not membership organisations, and yet people participate in them and may be mobilised by them.

[23]Interviews with Girija Satish (21/11/95), Kumar Ranjan (18/11/95), Daniel Mazgaonkar (19/12/95), Vivek Pandit (16/12/95), and Sharad Kulkani (17/12/95). Of course, part of the problem with arriving at a figure here relates to the difficulty of defining poverty and marginalisation, as well as defining mobilisation. But the validity of this point does not rest on a precise figure; it can reasonably be concluded from the estimates given that there are a great many of India's poor and marginalised who have not been the subject of a systematic mobilisation process.

[24]For example, see: Anil Bhatt, Development and Social Justice: Micro Action by Weaker Sections, Sage, New Delhi, 1989, pp 189-194; and D L Sheth, "Grass-roots stirrings and the future of politics", Alternatives, IX, 1983, p 22.

communities, that would most likely be the case if there was greater co-operation between such organisations (a point that is discussed later in this chapter). Thirdly, their independence and isolation also limits their capacity to influence macro political processes, and consequently their lack of success in this area - or their unwillingness to take action in it - is likely to convey the message that macro politics is so difficult to change that it is best to concentrate on local action, with perhaps occasional forays into campaigns on specific macro level issues.[25]

A democratic-deepening ACB could address these problems faced by constituent organisations in very much the same way that collections of individuals (that is, organisations) can often tackle problems that individuals acting separately are less capable of negotiating. Just as individuals who decide to act collectively can thenceforth proceed with more confidence and unity of purpose, marshall more resources, divide up tasks and thus become more efficient, make claims to speak for larger populations, increase their numbers and, through all these means, constitute an effective and formidable force for change on a larger scale, so organisations acting collectively can achieve the same sorts of gains when compared with organisations acting alone.[26] Thus, an ACB would have

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[25]Bhatt; also see Philip Eldridge, "The political role of community action groups in India and Indonesia: In Search of a General Theory", Alternatives, X, Winter 1984-85, p 410.

[26]Resource mobilisation theorists, M N Zald and R Ash, make the point that mergers of organisations can make a movement appear smaller, because many voices are replaced by just one, and as well, the

important roles in facilitating more comprehensive mobilisation among marginalised sectors, in engendering a greater level of solidarity, unity and cohesion of ideas across these sectors, and in developing within them increased confidence and effectiveness with regard to action at the macro political level. A little later (from p 332) we consider how this might occur.

A second major locus of political power

A second key reason for having a democratic-deepening aggregated civil base is that, if it is able to maintain an "arms-length" relationship with the party or coalition with which it is dealing, it constitutes a second major locus of power that can, potentially, broadly represent and advance the interests of citizens (governing parties being the first). Parties may start with an interest in contributing to the wellbeing of certain sectors of the community, but once in office, they develop other interests which can conflict with their initial motives - namely, interests in defending their record and staying in office, given the status, power, excitement and privileges that this entails. This, in turn, may cause them to attempt to restrict the voices and the

movement may actually become smaller as the extreme ends of the broad spectrum of views represented by the newly merged organisations no longer feel they can support the new organisation (M N Zald & R Ash, "Social movement organizations: growth, decay and change", Social Forces, Vol 44, March 1966, pp 327-341). But what is being considered here is not a merger of organisations but an alliance in which organisations maintain their own identity, activities, diversity of views, etc.

involvement of those not currently within the circle of powerholders. Robert Michels wrote of this phenomenon in the context of European social democracy earlier this century, coining the phrase "the iron law of oligarchy".[27] It is similar to the Gandhian notion of raj shakti or state power, which is seen as diametrically opposed to the interests of the people.[28] It should be acknowledged that Michels also saw a risk that non-party organisations - specifically in his study, trade unions - could also become oligarchies preoccupied with organisational maintenance.[29] This can happen to any social institution, and as described later in the chapter, steps would have to be taken to reduce the possibility of it occurring within an ACB.

An important aspect of the role played by ACBs as a second major locus of power is in the implementation phase of policy.

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[27]Robert Michels, Political Parties: A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy, Collier Books, New York, 1962. See, for example, pp 353-354.

[28]For example, as expressed by Jayaprakash Narayan in Total Revolution, Sarva Seva Sangh Prakashan, Varanasi, 1992, p 44. JP also saw the value of having a mechanism through which the performance of elected representatives could be monitored and assessed (ibid, pp 52-53), although there are two key differences between what he advocated and what is being suggested here. Firstly, he did not see these citizens' organisations as arising out of existing organisations; and secondly, he favoured having independent representatives rather than political parties. I have not given much attention to the Gandhian notion of non-party democracy, which I see as fundamentally impractical for the reason that, as Adi Doctor puts it, the "party system has its roots in the natural divisions in society and in the natural tendency on the part of like minds to unite in order to achieve common goals by common endeavour" (Adi H Doctor: JP's Total Revolution: An Exercise in Utopia, Seema Publications, Delhi, 1987, p 84). Even if representatives were elected as independents, they would in time coalesce in de facto parties with those having similar views. It is perhaps more feasible, however, for directly-elected executive presidents to avoid a party affiliation, as in this case executive power is vested in one person alone.

[29]Michels, for example, p 71.

Public policy is not some sort of 'package' that can be delivered to the populace, hermetically sealed, in one simple operation. It is something that passes through a large number of stages and levels, and is applied in countless individual instances, and at each of these points, officials are likely to have power or discretion to determine, in small or large ways, the form the policy takes or who benefits from it. And as Atul Kohli puts it:

Established bureaucracies are not only incremental and therefore by nature resistant to sweeping social change but, since they have usually been designed by the upper classes or by colonial rulers, they are biased against the lower strata.[30]

An ACB can be an additional means of monitoring the proper implementation of policy, given that governments by themselves may be unwilling or unable to do this effectively. It will be recalled from the analysis of the performance of West Bengal's Government in the previous chapter (pp 296-299) that one of the reasons for the government's success was that it was able to maintain control of policy implementation at local levels by keeping local elites out of the implementation process. This is not an easy thing to do, and in India local elites have generally been accommodated rather than excluded,[31] so having an ACB to monitor this process - and to take action if

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[30]Atul Kohli, The state and poverty in India, Cambridge University Press, London, 1987, p 44.

[31]See, for example, Pranab Bardhan, "Dominant Proprietary Classes and India's Democracy", in Atul Kohli (ed), India's Democracy: An Analysis of State-Society Relations, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1988, pp 215-224.

policy was not being properly implemented - could strengthen the government's hand, as well as its spine, in relation to proper implementation.

In passing it should be noted that responsiveness to the citizenry by government officials may not be able to be achieved simply by recruiting people from social sectors in proportion to their numbers in the general population. According to India's reservation policies, a certain proportion of places in government employment are reserved for members of disadvantaged castes, in order to counter caste imbalances. This may have some effect on policy implementation as it impacts on different castes, but it has been contended that low caste members in senior positions tend to identify or associate less and less with their fellow caste members and to thus partly negate the intent of the reservation policies,[32] (with such people sometimes referred to as the 'creamy layer' because they, allegedly, rise to the top and separate themselves from others of their caste). So there is reason to believe that it is necessary to go beyond simply having members of particular social sectors in government employment - important though this may be.

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[32]In support of this view, see Hardgrave & Kochanek, p 193. Oliver Mendelsohn and Marika Vicziany consider this issue and conclude that, while their study of members of parliament occupying reserved does not in general support this argument, their sample was small and did not include public servants. They do, however, identify 'danger signals' and contend that 'the longer the system of reservation persists, the greater will be the tendency towards concentration of its benefits in the hands of relatively few families' (pp 255-256) (Oliver Mendelsohn & Marika Vicziany, The Untouchables: Subordination, poverty and the state in modern India, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1998, pp 238-257).

Many civil organisations currently perform the role of monitoring the implementation of government policy (and taking further action when necessary), but there are a number of problems with this task being undertaken by individual organisations or small alliances acting alone. Firstly, as was described in the previous chapter, governments (or for that matter, local elites) have a repertoire of ways through which they can make such monitoring efforts by organisations difficult or unproductive. These include secrecy, delays, harassment, repression, the denial of funds and contracts, and rewards to those that are politically compliant. This can lead, not only to the efforts of civil organisations being ineffective, but to ordinary people avoiding participation in such endeavours. As Primila Lewis put it, reflecting on the experience of her action group:

> ...we learnt that people wanted to struggle for what was possible in ways that were possible for them, and without jeopardising their lives or livelihood; they also needed, as we learnt, to have the legitimacy of their struggle affirmed and upheld both by the law and, as far as possible, by the state as well. They were not encouraged or convinced by our efforts to expose the state as fundamentally antagonistic to their interests. This could have been because, for them, to become an 'outlaw' meant facing unacceptable retribution.[33]

If, on the other hand, an ACB that had negotiated an agreement with the governing party was involved in monitoring policy implementation, it would have ensured, as part of its

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[33]Primila Lewis, <u>Social Action and the Labouring Poor: An Experience</u>, Vistaar Publications, New Delhi, 1991, pp 131-132.

agreement with the party, that decision-making in the implementation process was going to be transparent, and that the ACB's member organisations could monitor such implementation without fear of recrimination. The leverage of the ACB in this matter would be derived from its ability to terminate or renegotiate its agreement with the party or coalition concerned if the ACB considered it was not allowing civil organisations to play their monitoring role. The ACB could also use its influence to discourage unduly favourable arrangements between governments and particular civil organisations that can be part of a government's 'divide and rule' strategy of rewarding compliance.

A second problem with individual organisations monitoring policy implementation is that their knowledge of the policies that should be implemented may be chiefly limited to the issue areas on which they focus. An ACB could facilitate the flow of information between organisations, as well as to organisations from any research and information services the ACB may operate in its own right, and thus organisations would be more informed about policy and its implementation in issue areas other than their own, should they need to monitor this.

A third problem that organisations face if they individually monitor policy implementation is that they can focus on their own concerns and the needs of their particular constituents without adequate regard for the broader picture. There is a

large body of literature known as public choice theory that, among other things, is critical of campaigning by civil organisations because of the way, public choice theorists claim, such campaigning distorts policy formulation and implementation.[34] This view is linked to neoliberalism and the political Right, and thus tends to be seen as an attack on the involvement in the political process of groups on the left or representing marginalised sectors. But in fact it is common for better off sectors to fare much better in this lobbying process than the poor and marginalised. For example, it was observed in Chapter Four (pp 225-227) how certain established and emerging 'proprietary classes' in India were managing to win special benefits. So public choice theory may have a point in its diagnosis of a problem.

But one of the solutions it advocates is that decisions be removed, as much as possible, from the influence of lobbyists and campaigners. It also sees politicians' decisions as being distorted by their need to win the favour of certain interests in order to be re-elected, and public servants' decisions as being influenced by a desire to maintain their budgets and staff levels. But since someone must make the decisions public choice theory advocates that they be in the hands of economic 'dries', who, it is claimed, can make decisions that are

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[34]A succinct description of the elements of public choice theory is contained in Stephen Bell, Ungoverning the Economy: The Political Economy of Australian Economic Policy, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1997, pp 134-137.

'objective' and 'value-free'.[35] But there is no such thing as objective, disinterested public policy making or implementation, as all decisions reflect or favour certain values, interests and preoccupations, as opposed to others. However, what can vary is the extent to which decisions cater for a narrow or a broad range of interests, the degree to which decisions favour economic and social elites, and the extent to which policy formulation and implementation is properly thought through, co-ordinated and cohesive, as opposed to ad hoc, reactive and narrowly focused. The answer to the problem posed by public choice theorists is not to separate decision-making from people, but to involve them in ways that are considered and fair and generate integrated solutions. The involvement of an ACB in the formulation of policy and in the monitoring of its application is one way through which this can happen.

While civil society needs to remain vigilant in its dealings with the state - given the often divergent interests between the two - this does not preclude forms of co-operation between governments and civil organisations. Increasingly in today's world, the role of such organisations in relation to the government is one of active partnership, rather than merely pressuring the government or being on the receiving end of

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[35]Michael Pusey's study of how this approach came to dominate Federal Government decision-making in Australia is well known (Michael Pusey, <u>Economic Rationalism in Canberra: A Nation Building State Changes its Mind</u>, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1991). See especially pp 56-73.

funds, services and laws. This kind of relationship between government and civil society (and also between these two and private enterprise) is commonly referred to in the West as the Third Way,[36] but in many respects such approaches have been common in the Third World for decades. The absence in the Third World of welfare-state style provision in areas such as income maintenance and health means that there is a higher level of community resourcing of such services, along with government inputs. Governments have supported and civil organisations auspiced programs providing savings and credit, income generation, health, education, and infrastructure. This kind of approach can create demands for citizens to become more skilled and knowledgeable in a wide range of new areas, not just in relation to technical or commercial matters, but also in the area of their capacity to understand entitlements and opportunities that government is making available, to negotiate with government, and to understand what it expects of them. In this domain citizens can expect assistance from civil organisations acting individually, but here, too, an ACB could offer advantages. It could help individual organisations to develop their knowledge, skills and capacities, and to take united action if necessary, so that they might be a more equal partner with government in these endeavours.

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[36]See, for example: Peter Kellner, New Mutualism: The Third Way, The Co-operative Party, London, 1998; Peter Kellner, "A new "ism" for our times", Commonweal, Summer 1998, pp 6-8; and Charles Leadbeater, Civic Spirit: The big idea for a new political era, Demos, London, 1997.

WHAT DEMOCRATIC-DEEPENING AGGREGATED CIVIL BASES NEED TO DO TO BE EFFECTIVE

The imperatives for a democratic-deepening ACB differ from those facing independence or formal democratic aggregated civil bases in a number of important ways. First, it has to win support for a much wider range of objectives than do independence or formal democracy ACBs, because it is concerned with the whole range of issues that are or should be the concern of governments, all of which may be divisive. Second, it has to persuade a party or parties - not once, but on an ongoing basis - to adopt its agenda, and to devise and implement mechanisms whereby these parties, when in government, are held accountable for their performance and for the extent to which they honour agreements reached with the ACB. Third, a democratic-deepening ACB that aims to include among those it represents previously marginalised sectors of society has a harder challenge still, as it must organise the unorganised, empower the disempowered and in general counter the trend that sees certain social sectors dominate the political system in pursuit of their particular interests.

Thus, the tasks involved in forming a democratic-deepening aggregated civil base and having it function effectively are large tasks indeed. As mentioned earlier in this chapter five

kinds of tasks are identified, namely:

*   the mobilisation of supporters and participants, particularly from marginalised sectors;

*the reconciliation of the interests of different sectors represented in the ACB;

*the reconciliation of different ideological positions;

*the meeting of other challenges - chiefly organisational and logistical ones - associated with groups coming together as an ACB; and

*the establishment and maintenance of accountability processes in the relationship between the ACB and the party or coalition it is conditionally supporting, as well as that between the individual organisations and the ACB.

These five kinds of tasks will now be considered in some detail, beginning with that of mobilisation.

Mobilisation

In all societies particular distributions of power, status and wealth are maintained through certain kinds of social relations, structures, and practices. Given that such

distributions may often appear to be patently not in interests of large sections of these societies, the question may be asked as to why people thus disadvantaged conform to these arrangements, or at least fail to challenge them. This is a particularly important question for anyone interested in social change, given that such change requires a loosening of these bonds of obedience. Many answers to this question have been advanced. For example, according to Susan Kenny, adherence to such systems is brought about by a combination of coercion and ideology,[37] a view shared by Paul Routledge,[38] while Gene Sharp suggests that there are seven factors that lead us to obey: habit, the fear of sanctions, a sense of moral obligation, self-interest, psychological identification with the ruler, the existence of what Sharp terms "zones of indifference" (matters about which we do not have an interest or preference), and lastly, an absence of self-confidence in our judgement and capacities.[39] According to Sharp, self-interest may dictate obedience because obedience can confer material benefits, positions, power and prestige, while obedience on grounds of moral obligation can derive from various beliefs: that a particular system advances the common good, that it has suprahuman sanctions, that it is legitimate

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[37]Susan Kenny, Developing Communities for the Future: Community Development in Australia, Nelson, Melbourne, 1994, p 115.

[38]Paul Routledge, Terrains of Resistance: Nonviolent Social Movements and the Contestation of Place in India, Praeger, Westport, 1993, p 29.

[39]Gene Sharp, The Politics of Nonviolent Action: Part One: Power and Struggle, Porter Sargent Publishers, Boston, 1973, pp 19-24.

because its source is legitimate, or that it conforms to accepted norms. Given that rulers cannot on their own administer all the mechanisms that maintain the systems and maintain their power, Sharp points out that they are assisted in this by hierarchies of underlings, who may feel a particular moral obligation to the ruler and the system, and whose commitment is likely to be reinforced through access to special benefits.[40] These hierarchies must ensure that those who do not particularly benefit from the systems are kept in line through the other six factors listed above.

Describing some of these mechanisms in another way, Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward characterise the power held by elites as being power

> not only to control the actions of men and women, but also to control their beliefs. What some call superstructure, and what others call culture, includes an elaborate system of beliefs and ritual behaviors which defines what is right and what is wrong and why; what is possible and what is impossible; and the behavioral imperatives that follow from these beliefs. Because this superstructure of beliefs and rituals is evolved in the context of unequal power, it is inevitable that beliefs and rituals reinforce inequality, by rendering the powerful divine and the challengers evil.[41]

Examining the Indian situation, Atul Kohli observes how the differences between upper and lower class interests is obscured by the entire socialisation apparatus of a

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[40]ibid.

[41]Frances Fox Piven & Richard Cloward, <u>Poor People's Movements: Why they Succeed, How they Fail</u>, Pantheon, New York, 1978, p 1.

hierarchical society, in which

upper classes penetrate and often control religious, educational and informational institutions. The value system generated and/or sustained by these institutions...tends to neutralize what should come naturally to citizens belonging to lower classes - consciousness of shared economic interests.[42]

Kohli further notes that because lower classes usually "enter the political arena as latecomers" they must fight against established values, roles and modes of politics that have served the interests of the previously dominant upper classes.[43]

Significant political change in the interests of poorer and less powerful social groups involves a challenge to these forms of politics, to systems of rewards, sanctions, beliefs, habits and zones of indifference, and this is a key part of the mobilisation process. But mobilisation does not simply involve deconstructing or delegitimising one set of ideas and practices through an educational process as this is commonly understood. It is more than this in two important ways. Firstly, it is necessary, not only to deconstruct, but also to construct something in its place, to envisage alternative ways of doing things and justifications for the legitimacy of such approaches. As Saul Alinsky put it, "The price of a successful

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[42]Kohli, The State and Poverty in India, p 43.

[43]ibid, p 44.

attack is a constructive alternative."[44] Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, it is necessary to go beyond learning and dialogue alone and engage in action in order to successfully challenge prevailing beliefs. These beliefs portray marginalised groups as naturally and appropriately having particular roles and status and as being incapable or unworthy of other roles and status which are reserved for higher socio-economic groups. Such beliefs have often been inculcated over centuries or more and are thus highly internalised, although there is debate as to the extent of this,[45] and consequently learning and dialogue alone may not remove their legitimacy in the eyes of the marginalised. It is necessary to demonstrate through action that things actually can function differently. Furthermore, doing this will generally involve the poor and powerless in acquiring new knowledge and skills which until that point they have not needed, and in reflecting upon new tasks and activities. Thus, Paulo Freire has stressed the importance of combining action and reflection, which together enhance learning through a kind of dialectical relationship.[46]

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[44]Saul Alinsky, <u>Rules for Radicals: A Pragmatic Primer for Realistic Radicals</u>, Vintage, New York, 1989, p 130.

[45]Some observers challenge the idea that the poor accept the prevailing ideology, suggesting, for example, that they may go along with it to the extent that is necessary and at the same time maintain their own values. For a discussion of this, see Kenny, pp 116-117. One might say that any time a social movement has emerged from the ranks of the marginalised without outsiders' performing a mobilising role, there must have been cracks in the hegemonic facade wide enough for alternatives views and actions to emerge. While these arguments provide a necessary corrective to guard against the tendency to see subordinate groups as always being persuaded by the prevailing ideology, they do not involve a wholesale denial that such ideologies have impact.

[46]Paulo Freire, <u>Pedagogy of the Oppressed</u>, Penguin Education, Harmondsworth, 1972, p 28.

Many of these skills will relate to the taking of collective action, both because in any setting this is an essential part of social organisation, and because in settings in which the powerless are challenging the powerful collective action is necessary to counter the powers and resources that the powerful possess. As Robert Michels put it, such organisation "is the weapon of the weak in their struggle with the strong."[47]

There are a number of different terms that describe this mobilisation process in whole or in part - empowerment, consciousness-raising or awareness-raising, conscientisation, capacity-building - to name some of them. They reflect different aspects of the process and different emphases, as well as the different kinds of organisations or schools of thought that engage in the process. Considering this matter in the Indian context, a wide range of organisations work with marginalised sectors including unions, farmers' organisations, NGOs, people's organisations, religious bodies, women's groups, organisations of dalits, adivasis, or other caste or ethnic groups, those concerned with the environment, civil liberties, or democratic rights, alternative professional associations and cultural organisations.[48] A great many of these organisations include mobilisation processes as part of

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[47]Michels, p 61.

[48]See: Omvedt; Sheth, pp 12-13; 16-17; Sethi, pp 305-309; and Eldridge, pp 404, 412-413.

this work. They may identify to varying extents with a range of ideological streams, for example, with the thoughts of Gandhi, Ambedkar or other Indian thinkers, with Marxism or other forms of socialism, with liberation theology, Alinsky-style community organising, or frequently, with a multiplicity of these.[49] They may see their task as specific and practical, and thus as apolitical in the sense of not being connected to the broader political sphere. They may identify primarily as being members of a marginalised community who are running their own organisation or movement, such as the Dalit Panthers. Thus, organisations and schools of thought may have significant differences from one another, relating to their affiliations and bases of support, their structures, strategies, relations with government and the kind of society they would ultimately like to see, but despite these differences, many such organisations will tend to have in common certain core values and beliefs. If, from among all organisations ostensibly working with poor and powerless communities, we exclude certain categories - those that apply a conservative, charity model or see their brief purely in 'techno-managerial' terms, those that are corrupt and are simply appropriating funds or building 'vote banks', or those that are communalist (which would exclude very many groups but still leave very many others in consideration) - these core values and beliefs are likely to focus on a commitment to

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[49]See, for example: Sheth, pp 18-19; Sethi pp 309-310.

change in the interests of the poor and marginalised, and to
working with these communities rather than simply for them,
that is, involving them in organisation and capacity
building.[50]

Moreover, the process of mobilisation that such organisations
institute will often have similar effects on those being
mobilised, whatever its explicit purpose or ideological
context, in the sense that it will involve dialogue, forming
and running organisations, planning, skills development,
learning and performing new tasks, and enhanced belief in
individual and collective potential, all of which contribute
to political capacity and confidence (although there may be
great variation in the extent to which ordinary people are
involved in real decision-making and action).

In relation to the different schools of thought engaged in the
mobilisation process, the one major difference that should be
noted in the Indian context concerns the different views of
Gandhians, on the one hand, and those who see the world in
terms of classes with conflicting interests and unequal power,
on the other. Mathew Zachariah compared Sarvodaya and
Conscientisation views and approaches, and found a number of
significant differences, as follows.[51] According to Sarvodaya,

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[50]Sheth, p 21.

[51]Mathew Zachariah, Revolution Through Reform: A Comparison of Sarvodaya and Conscientization, Vistaar Publications, New Delhi, 1986.

there will always be wealthy and poor in society and the wealthy should be exhorted to hold their wealth as a trust for the benefit of all, and in fact all should contribute what they can toward the general good - for example, labour, tools or money - through village-level constructive work. The Conscientization view is that this is naive. Such disparities of wealth are prima facie evidence of injustice and oppression, and it is necessary to confront those who oppress rather than vainly trying to change hearts and minds or focusing on constructive work. Sarvodaya favours decentralisation of government down to the village level, whereas the Conscientization view is that attempting this prematurely will simply consolidate the power of existing elites. Sarvodaya is opposed to large-scale industrialisation and to more than a minimum amount of material acquisition, and sees a focus on social harmony and spiritual development as a sign of a higher civilisation (with suffering contributing to spiritual development), while the Conscientization approach views material development in an economically poor society as of prime importance, democratically controlled technology as acceptable, and suffering as not particularly valuable.

The danger of the Sarvodaya perspective is that it tends to lead to situations where injustice is not challenged but merely suffered by the poor, in the interests of pursuing a superficial kind of harmony and supposed spiritual development. This in fact was the situation that JP faced in

his later years with the Sarvodaya Movement, a situation that precipitated his break with Vinoba and a renewed emphasis on struggle in the JP Movement, as we saw in Chapter Three (p 131). And as was also discussed in Chapter Three (p 131), one of the effects of the JP Movement was to weaken what might be called 'institutional' Gandhianism, with most members of the Sarva Seva Sangh following JP into the Movement never to return. In the Movement they and many others were exposed to a somewhat modified version of Gandhianism through JP's leadership, and many took this into their subsequent involvements, where it was unconstrained by the rigidity of institutional Gandhianism and often blended with other influences. At the end of the Movement JP himself came to realise the importance of class-based solidarity (as described in Chapter 4, p 204). Thus, despite the shortcomings of the Gandhian approach when it comes to the mobilisation process, for all but the remaining small number of institutional Gandhians in the post-JP era, the influence of Gandhi has been more flexibly applied and has often been blended with more struggle-oriented, class-based approaches, and therefore the differences on paper between Gandhianism and other approaches are no longer so evident in reality (a point that is further considered later in this chapter).

So a broad range of organisations are already involved in the mobilisation process, but in the context of considering how an effective democratic-deepening ACB can be created, it is

necessary to ask some more specific questions about mobilisation, as follows. Firstly, what scale of mobilisation is required to achieve this objective, and what scale of mobilisation has been achieved so far? And secondly, is it sufficient for this task to be carried out by civil organisations acting individually, as basically occurs now, or is some kind of co-ordination of the process by the ACB required?

The scale of mobilisation that is necessary can be defined as the number of mobilised supporters that would be required to enable a democratic-deepening ACB built around marginalised interests to gain enough power to be taken seriously by major political parties. It is obviously hard to put any sort of figure on this, but two things can be said. Firstly, there appears to be very little attention in India to this question of the critical mass required to achieve a given political change. It seems to be almost absent from Indian literature dealing with social action, and in my research in India the question of critical mass was never raised by activists, NGO staff and others with whom I talked. When I asked about the proportion of India's marginalised communities that they thought had experienced some kind of mobilisation process, in most cases this did not appear to be a question they had previously considered. As already indicated in this chapter (p 321), estimates of this varied widely, but it is very likely that the proportion of those from marginalised communities

that have been the subject of some kind of mobilisation process is far short of what would constitute a critical mass. As one illustration of how civil organisations are failing to generate significant support within the broader electorate, there have been many cases in recent times of such organisations putting up candidates for local and state elections, but these have rarely been successful.[52]

With regard to the question of whether it is sufficient for organisations to engage individually in the task of mobilising additional people, or whether this requires some degree of co-ordination by an ACB, the problem with the former approach is that it is hard to see how it could generate a significant increase in the rate of mobilisation that currently occurs, given that civil organisations so often claim that their resources are stretched to the limit. Co-ordination by an ACB may offer the following advantages: a higher profile for the mobilisation process, which could well lead to more people becoming involved; and a greater level of sharing of knowledge, skills, structured programs and resources, with those who had been mobilised moving on to other communities, a process that is less likely to happen if organisations are working more independently of one another.

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[52]The point was made in interviews with Rajagopal, Jatin Desai (18/12/95), Kavaljit Singh (7/12/95), Daniel Mazgaonkar (19/12/95) and H D Sharma (29/11/95) that a major reason why non-party candidates put up by civil organisations have not been particularly successful is that these organisations have not been able to put enough time into reaching enough citizens with their message.

A further point to be made about the mobilisation process - that has a bearing on the sort of organisations that are suited to engage in it - is that there are a number of reasons why it should not be generated solely for the purpose of macro level political change and why connections should be established and maintained between micro and macro levels of activity, and between constructive work and campaigning. As has been indicated, mobilisation develops through a process of ongoing, integrated reflection and action, and this requires that there are matters close to the daily life of those being mobilised that can be acted upon - such as community projects, community decision-making, negotiations with government officials, and *panchayat* level politics. Such activities provide immediate and proximate content for the dialectical process of action and reflection, and it is through these activities that political strength, skills, confidence and clarity emerge, attributes which can, if necessary, be applied to macro-level political action. Sethi makes a point along these lines regarding constructive work:

> Constructive work activity has a value not only in itself, or in providing an entry point for more radical work, or in generating cadres for organisational and political activity, or in supporting the work done by more overtly political action groups and parties, but very much because such groups offer the possibility of experimentation with alternative styles of doing things, and with different organisational models and processes.[53]

Power is not simply exerted at major points in political and

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[53]Sethi, pp 307-308.

economic systems (such as in Cabinet and in large corporations) but its exercise is diffused through innumerable sites in every sphere of life - in the work place, the many levels of government, civil organisations, community life, the family, educational institutions, the health system, the media, gender relations and so on. Thus, it is at these multiple sites - at both macro and micro levels - that it must be contested, a task that civil organisations working with people in many different aspects of their lives are well-placed to do.

Another way of looking at this is that the need for political action does not generally occur to people as a need for macro political change, but as a need to change specific, concrete occurrences and features of their own lives. Walter Fernandes quotes activist, Dinanath Manohar, as saying:

> ...the masses act not in response to the call of leaders or parties, but in response to the immediate social environment they exist in and every labouring individual dreams of change in his social environment, and in his own relationship to his surroundings. The action groups need to cater to these micro-aspirations within a macro-perspective.[54]

Thus, it is organisations working closely with people on specific, concrete issues, and involved in challenges to hegemonic power at its myriad of sites, that can help people to make the link between these specific and proximate issues

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[54]Walter Fernandes, "Some Dilemmas Facing Activist Groups: Reactions from Activists", in Walter Fernandes (ed), Social Activists and People's Movements, Indian Social Institute, New Delhi, 1985, p 95.

and the more abstract and distant issues at the macro level, and the consequent need for action at this higher level also. Also, a number of writers have observed that the Third World poor tend to be risk averse. They have so few resources with which to survive, and they face so many threats to survival from both nature and powerful interests, that it is imperative - and entirely rational - that they minimise risks, whether this is in their agricultural practices or their political activities. In relation to farming practices, Michael Lipton describes how they are more concerned with security than with maximum yields, which means that, for example, they may sow a mixture of higher yielding crops and more robust, drought-resistant crops to ensure that some survive in adverse conditions, even though this will normally lead to lower yields.[55] Looking at risk-taking in a range of situations that people face, Albert Hirschman identifies the three options of the poor as removing oneself from the situation (exit), saying something (voice) and continuing adherence to the system or institution (loyalty).[56] Applying this schema to the Third World poor and the options they face, Robert Chambers makes the point that many of the poor choose the loyalty option because of unacceptable risks associated with the other two options, exit (which may mean migration) and voice

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[55]Michael Lipton, "Games against nature: theories of peasant decision making", in John Harriss (ed), Rural Development: Theories of peasant economy and agrarian change, Hutchinson University Library, London, 1982, pp 258-268.

[56]Albert O Hirschman, Exit, Voice and Loyalty, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1970.

(protest).[57] Chambers cites the example of West Bengali sharecroppers who were afraid to register their sharecropping status with the government - a measure that would ensure that they kept three-quarters of the crop rather than a half - because they feared alienating landowners and thus losing the chance to borrow from them in times of hardship and need.[58] Primila Lewis describes her experience of trying to organise agricultural labourers who were very reluctant to take action in support of better wages and conditions for fear of losing their jobs.[59] In a more general context, Charles Tilly has noted that the poor and powerless only tend to mobilise politically in defence of the little they already have, rather than for the purpose of gaining more, given that the costs and risks of mobilisation can be so high.[60]

For this reason there can be value, especially in the early stages of the mobilisation process, in engaging in activities that are less ambitious and less obviously political, such as in typical 'development' activities through the agency of an NGO or a government organisation. For example, an adult literacy program, an income-generation scheme, a co-operative credit group or a project to plant trees or mend roads are all

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[57]Robert Chambers, Rural Development: Putting the Last First, Longman, London, 1983, pp 143-144.

[58]ibid, p 144.

[59]Lewis, pp 32-33.

[60]Charles Tilly, From Mobilization to Revolution, Addison-Wesley, Reading, Mass, 1978, pp 73-76.

ventures that might be seen as apolitical, but they can also be part of or at least contribute to the process of mobilisation. The benefits such projects are intended to produce - in the form of goods, services, facilities and income - and the skills and capacities that are developed in the course of establishing and running them - skills in forming groups and organisations, clarifying goals, planning, allocating and performing tasks, handling finances, keeping records, dealing with government officials, and so on - can both contribute to later mobilisation, by building up relevant skills and resources, freeing up time, increasing confidence, and generating faith in collective action. When participants are collectively stronger, better resourced and more confident, they may then choose to engage in more challenging or risky ventures, such as overtly political action, whereas if they had been presented with this option from the outset they may have completely avoided involvement. In the Western context, Herbert and Irene Rubin write about the importance of what they refer to as "bootstrapping", that is, building capacities step by step, starting with small goals in order to generate early successes and thereby build confidence,[61] and Saul Alinsky also stressed the importance of small wins early in the piece for building confidence.[62] These writers are talking about taking small steps within more overtly political

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[61]H J Rubin & I S Rubin, <u>Community Organizing and Development</u>, 2nd edn, Macmillan, New York, 1992, p 33.

[62]Alinsky, pp 113-115.

spheres of action, but there is no reason why these first small steps which build confidence cannot be in ostensibly apolitical endeavours.

A final reason why there needs to be a connection between micro and macro level change and between constructive work and campaigning is that, as Sethi points out, in the process of campaigning for social change:

Not all phases are war phases, and any long-term revolutionary activity has to plan for times of 'peace'...development activity helps tide over and consolidate the periods of lull that trade unions and kisan sabhas [farmers' organisations] find so difficult to deal with.[63]

So for all these reasons there are advantages in having mobilisation processes occur through organisations that are closely involved with marginalised sectors in a broad range of ways, only some of which would conventionally be seen as political. These organisations may be able to gain the involvement, the confidence and the support of marginalised communities more readily than more overtly political or higher level organisations, and they may be a more effective conduit allowing the voice and the vote of marginalised sectors to have impact in dialogue and decision-making processes at macro levels. They can contribute to a more seamless transition between the micro and macro levels, the personal and the political, and the small local action and a larger, more

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[63]Sethi, p 308.

integrated movement.[64]

Reconciling different interests

As we have seen, a democratic-deepening ACB needs to consist
of organisations that can, collectively, influence the votes
of a critical mass of voters. This means that it has to
persuade this critical mass that their interests and values
are better served by voting as the ACB advises than by voting
for any other realistic alternative. This in turn requires the
ACB to reconcile the differing and perhaps conflicting
interests among those in this critical mass, in the process of
arriving at the platform of policies that it is advocating.

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[64]It must be acknowledged, however, that there is considerable debate about the strategic wisdom of,
and motivations for, apparently apolitical "development" type activity commonly undertaken by NGOs. Some
on the left see it as part of a global strategy to prevent the occurrence of social revolution (See, for
example, Prakash Karat, <u>Foreign Funding and the Philosophy of Voluntary Organisations: A Factor in
Imperialist Strategy</u>, National Book Centre, New Delhi). Others believe that by engaging in social
initiatives in areas in which the state should, it is claimed, be providing services, that the state is
absolved of its responsibilities (a case put in an interview with Narinder Bedi (19/2/95), head of an
NGO called the Young India Project). It is also clear that becoming involved in delivering state
programs, or in other ways becoming financially dependent on the state, can reduce NGOs' political
activism because they become too close to the state or fear losing funds (a view expressed by Rajesh
Tandon in "The State and Voluntary Agencies in India", in Richard Holloway (ed), <u>Doing Development:
Government, NGOs and the Rural Poor in Asia</u>, Earthscan Publications, London, 1989, pp 22-25, though
Tandon is not opposed to development work or government funding of it). This is a large and complex
issue, and there is not space in this thesis to discuss it fully, except to say that, while these claims
appear to have some validity (with the possible exception of the more conspiracy-focused versions of the
first claim), there are many arguments for NGO involvement in development work: it can provide models
for government programs; links with government through the use of government funds or the delivery of
government programs can be a way in which NGOs can influence government development work; and as just
stated, it can provide opportunities for participants to gain skills and confidence which can then be
utilised in other ways. Moreover, I mentioned earlier, when outlining the benefits of having a
democratic-deepening ACB, that protection of the rights of organisations to criticise the government
without fear of retaliation could be an important part of any agreement reached between an ACB and a
party or coalition.

India is still predominantly a rural, peasant-based society. According to 1991 figures, 74.3 percent of the population live in rural areas.[65] Within peasant societies conflicts can of course arise over differing interests - conflicts between tenants and landlords, between farm labourers and their employers (landholders or sometimes tenants), between large and small landholders, and between those who have land and those who do not. These conflicts may be over tenancy arrangements, wages and conditions for labourers, the distribution of land ownership, and access to markets and to (often subsidised) credit, irrigation and other inputs.

It has therefore always been difficult in peasant societies to tease out precisely who are the 'exploiters' and who are the 'exploited' - and the exact forms of that exploitation - and it has also been difficult for those who by some measure are exploited to identify with those experiencing some other form of exploitation and to collectively constitute themselves, in Marxist terminology, as a 'class for itself'. But increasingly in contemporary India (and no doubt elsewhere) the picture is becoming still more complicated, as Gail Omvedt describes:

The "rich getting richer and the poor getting poorer" was a longstanding theme of left ideology. But...it did not give birth to the hoped for class politics for the simple reason that it did not have the...usual class form. The expected differentiation in agriculture, with poor peasants and agricultural laborers forming a growing opposition to kulak power, did not take place...In the rural areas there was clearly a rural power elite, but these were rarely "feudal barons" or cruelly accumulating "kulaks." Most were landholders, but the bulk of their power and wealth was

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[65]Statistical Outline of India 1994-55, Tata Services Ltd. Dept. of Economics and Statistics, Bombay, 1994, p 37.

drawn from their positions as co-operative society chairmen, contractors, holders of agencies for pesticides or fertilizers, despensers of political benefits, merchants, with sons pushed into law, medicine, or government service or any choice in preference to land management. Against these, "poor peasants" may have sunk into poverty, but they stubbornly maintained their small plots, continued to seek irrigation and fertilizer inputs that promised high production, and rallied around the peasant leaders who demanded such inputs and promised higher prices for their products. Poorer and landless peasants were forced into work relationships, but more and more these were not simply for the big farmers locally, but for the small factory owners, bureaucrats managing relief work projects, contractors, road-builders, forest officials; hiring relationships and the conflicts they involved were becoming diffused and extended.[66]

In a situation of such complexity, and with the well-off able to exploit any pressures and divisions among the less well-off, it is little wonder that the marginalised have not been particularly united.

Notwithstanding these complications, if a democratic-deepening ACB is principally concerned with the needs of marginalised communities, it needs to identify and start with such communities in its alliance-building, and only when it has made substantial progress in this area should it seek to incorporate other sectors in its alliance. Moreover, it should only involve additional sectors to the extent necessary to attain a critical mass of electoral support, focusing on those sectors whose interests are not antagonistic to the interests of the marginalised. Not to take this approach is to risk having an ACB containing a critical mass of those from non-marginalised sectors, whose interests and policy preferences will thus tend to predominate, as has frequently been the case

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[66]Omvedt, pp 187-188.

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in farmers movements (a point discussed later). An ACB that starts by involving the marginalised might be called an 'antyodaya alliance'. Antyodaya, a term used by Gandhians, means 'the welfare of the poorest person'.[67] An antyodaya alliance is to be contrasted with an alliance that starts with a nucleus of support in the middle or at the top of the socio-economic scale and then - possibly - works downwards.

If an antyodaya alliance were to start with small tenant farmers, labourers on farms and in rural industry (such as quarrying, brickmaking and road construction), landholders who do not have land above legal limits (and especially those who never or rarely employ agricultural labour), adivasis living in their traditional communities, fisherfolk, and rural small traders and artisans, then - together with their families - this would constitute an alliance of sectors who together make up a substantial majority of the Indian population,[68] but whose interests do not significantly conflict.[69] It might be said that there would be potential for them to compete for additional resources should these become available, but one

[67]See, for example: Narayan Desai, Handbook for Satyagrahis, Gandhi Peace Foundation, New Delhi, 1985, pp 35-36.

[68]It is difficult to calculate precisely what proportion of the Indian population this would be, partly because many of the categories mentioned here overlap, but if one simply looks at the fact that about 30% of rural households are landless and 33% have less than two hectares while only 4% have more than ten hectares (Country Profile: India, Nepal, 1996-97, The Economist Intelligence Unit, London, p 40) the point is substantiated.

[69]It should be stressed that material interests are being considered here. There are many other potential sources of conflict, such as ideological, caste and communal differences, which will be considered shortly.

can say that about any groups in society. It would be the job of the ACB to mediate in disputes over the distribution of additional resources.

This alliance would most probably also need to include additional sectors, because it could not be expected that all members of any sector that an ACB gained the support of - via organisations from that sector - would follow the ACB's voting recommendations. Some of these additional sectors might have interests that are in some respects antagonistic to those of the aforementioned ones, but the aim would be to at least balance this out with gains in other areas. For example, small landholders who employ some seasonal labour might be required to pay higher wages, but this could be more than compensated for by certain gains, such as better access to credit and farm inputs, or improved health, education or other services. Likewise, there might be an overall shift in the distribution of public resources from urban to rural areas, but for marginalised urban sectors this could be at least balanced out by a more favourable distribution of resources within urban areas.

It is worth noting, when considering the respective interests of urban and rural communities, and of different sectors within rural India, the matters raised by the nation's farmers' movements. This is a complex and much debated subject, and I cannot do more than briefly mention some key

issues here. These relate to questions of both ideology and the interests of different sectors, and thus they are broached both here and in the next section which deals with ideology. Farmers' movements make much of the alleged urban bias in government policy, and analysts of this issue line up on different sides of the argument.[70] But of more relevance to this thesis is the question of whether farmers' movements reflect the interests of all who work in the agricultural sector, or primarily serve the interests of larger farmers. In the anthology just mentioned, commentators again have different views.[71] But notwithstanding these differences, there is near consensus in this anthology

> that the new farmers' movements have had nothing to say about the socio-economic conditions and political interests of the rural proletariat, and that in many instances [they] are actually antagonistic to the latter.[72]

Nadkarni points out that farmers' movements have been led by large and medium-sized landholders, that they have not included farm labourers and rural artisans, and that small farmers who have joined have been partly motivated to do so by

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[70]See, for example, those supporting and opposing this view in one anthology that assesses these questions, noted in Tom Brass, "Introduction: The New Farmers' Movement In India", in Tom Brass (ed), New Farmers' Movements in India, Frank Cass, Ilford, Essex, 1995, p 17. As well, in support of the 'urban bias' argument there is Michael Lipton, "Why poor people stay poor", in Harriss, pp 66-81, and the opposing view is put in M V Nadkarni, Farmers' Movements in India, Allied Publishers, New Delhi, 1987, pp 215-227.

[71]For a summary of this, see Brass, pp 9-12.

[72]Tom Brass, "Introduction: The New Farmers' Movement in India", p 11.

the chance to get more attention and respect from government offices and thus to be less subjected to harassment and bribery at the hands of officials.[73] Furthermore, the movements have been unenthusiastic about farm wage increases, rural sanitation, health, drinking water and schools.[74] If farmers' movements can coalesce around the interests of the more prosperous farmers, with the support of others in the agricultural sector for certain specific purposes, would it not be at least as possible for an alliance to coalesce around the interests of those close to the other end of the socio-economic scale in rural India, if there was sufficient mobilisation and organisation? There would appear to be a greater convergence of interests in an *antyodaya* alliance such as this.

It is not being claimed here that this would be an easy process. On the contrary, the balancing of competing interests would require great skill on the part of participating organisations and a willingness by organisations representing particular sectors to make concessions in pursuit of the larger good of the sectors both individually and together. But it is not an impossible task. Parties in power currently do reconcile differing interests - often through negotiation with these interests - except that as this occurs now the interests

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[73]Nadkarni, p 140.

[74]ibid, p 145.

of the most powerful sectors all too often assume disproportionate weight. If, in an *antyodaya* alliance, the interests of the most marginalised sectors constitute the core around which a platform of policies is built, and if the different components in this alliance can be persuaded that they will fare better under this arrangement than under any other realistic alternative (even though they will not get everything they want), then reconciliation of differing interests should be a possibility.

Indian activist Primila Lewis and the NGO she worked with offer a similar perspective to that offered by Nadkarni, though they speak in stronger terms, identifying rich farmers as the major obstacle to the advancement of marginalised sectors. In what they refer to as the "Mehrauli Document", they provide an analysis of the political, and economic power of this sector.[75] Its political power emerged through its leading role in the Independence Movement (a point I have made earlier). Its economic power as the source of marketable surpluses in foodgrains reinforces its political power. It was the beneficiary of such land reform measures as were actually implemented, and of the green revolution, and according to Lewis, this advantaged position,

together with the historical bonds of dependence and feudal social practices and customs, has made this
class the major centre of political power in the countryside. Its control over the vast majority
of rural voters has been recognised by all political parties without exception, and they

[75]Lewis, pp 174-189.

The Mehrauli Document claims that the dominance of this sector is detrimental to both the national interest and the interests of marginalised sectors for many reasons, in that it leads to reduced productive capacity for other rural sectors, reduced markets for industrial products, and higher than necessary food prices. Moreover, much of this sector's surplus is spent on conspicuous consumption and unproductive activities such as speculation, middle-man trading, and smuggling. The Document identifies the critical need "to break the hold that this class has over the rural masses. As the essence of this hold is critical economic dependence, it is possible to create an alternate centre of rural power by broadening the social base of production to include the small and marginal farmers and the landless agricultural proletariat",[77] which could be achieved by encouraging the following: co-operatives for small and marginal peasants, improved wages and conditions for rural workers, more adequate tenancy records and better rural infrastructure. Of course, it is hard to see these things occurring unless there is a political climate in which they are encouraged or at least allowed, a climate that could be generated by an arrangement between an ACB and a governing party or coalition.

[76]ibid, p 179.

[77]ibid, p 189.

One also has to allow for the possibility of relationships between different sectors changing over time as particular political battles are won or as the economic and social conditions of specific sectors improve. If, for example, a government and an ACB acting in concert manage to achieve significant wage improvements for agricultural workers are achieved and the issue becomes substantially non-negotiable, this reduces the extent of contention between such workers and their employers - some of whom, as small to middle farmers, might be potential constituents of a democratic-deepening ACB. The same thing might occur in relation to other matters such as tenancy arrangements, land redistribution and the distribution of agricultural inputs. We can see how in the West over the course of this century, as certain sectors of society - such as women and particular ethnic groups - won the franchise, formal wage equality with other sectors, or access to public facilities and services, these issues tended to retreat from the public agenda and thus ceased to be such a source of conflict between sectors, and in many instances this removal of issues from the agenda created space for new kinds of co-operation. For example, since the introduction in many Western countries of laws outlawing racial discrimination with regard to immigration, employment, housing and other areas of life, issues that once divided racial groups have become non-issues as those that once practised discrimination have bowed to the weight of legal and social pressures opposing such

practices.

Also, issues of distribution of resources are not divorced
from questions of productivity and overall prosperity. As
Lewis pointed out in her observations noted above, if some
sectors of society are not as productive as they could be, due
to insufficient access to resources, and if, as Lewis and
Nadkarni pointed out, they cannot afford to buy goods and
services produced elsewhere in the economy, then the economy
as a whole will be that much less efficient and prosperous.
Thus, we are not talking about a question of distributing a
fixed quantity of resources, but rather a situation in which
changing the patterns of distribution can itself increase the
quantity of goods and services available to the whole society.
This means that one sector's gain is not necessarily another
sector's loss, a factor making co-operation between such
sectors more possible.

Finally, evidence that is only recently emerging establishes a
correlation between levels of equality and the extent of trust
and harmony in a society.[78] This would seem to confirm
anecdotal evidence of a link between serious inequality and
violent relations between sectors, from places as diverse as
rural Bihar, the cities of Brazil, and the southern states of
the United States. If inequality in India was reduced through

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[78]As cited in: Eva Cox "Creating a More Civil World", Paper presented to Community Aid Abroad
conference, Camberwell High School, Melbourne, 29 Aug 1998.

political or economic means, then there would seem to be more potential for co-operation between organisations representing different strata of society.

Reconciling different ideologies

To be effective, an aggregated civil base also needs to achieve a large degree of ideological unity and coherence among its constituent groups, and this involves a range of issues that go beyond merely reconciling the interests of these groups - issues which this section will consider. It is, of course, not possible to say with certainty that organisations representing the sectors listed in the previous section could arrive at a common ideological position, but there are grounds for hope in this regard, for the following reasons.

First, the extremes of what might be called the economic Left and Right are not particularly prominent in Indian politics. Looking at the Left first, the analysis of Indian communist parties in power in Kerala and West Bengal (Chapter 5, pp 286-303) indicated that communists in power have focused on things other than abolishing or restricting private enterprise, that they have in fact functioned as social democratic governments. Their flexibility and pragmatism may have been caused by a number of factors - electoral imperatives, the risk of Central Government intervention and the need in a more globalised

economy to attract foreign investment and build up exports. Globally, the collapse of Communism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, the growth of capitalism and joint ventures in Asian Communist states and reappraisals of social democracy and the welfare state in the West have all contributed to a re-thinking on the Left throughout the world. In India, the fact that the economy has always been a primarily agricultural one has presented Indian Communists with a dilemma: whether or not to adopt a different attitude to peasants and other (supposedly non-revolutionary) marginalised groups than that embodied in orthodox Marxism. There are conflicting indications of the extent to which Indian Communists are active in rural areas.[79] There has also been a well-publicised dispute between mainstream Communist parties and NGOs, with the Communists accusing the NGOs of being agents of imperialism that sometimes adopt a pseudo-left posture but in reality undermine the revolutionary potential of the masses,[80] and the NGOs countering that the traditional Left has not been able to organise marginalised sectors, has shown itself to be rigid and hierarchical in its approach, and yet makes an unjustified claim to an exclusive leadership role to the

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[79]In an interview with Gajanan Khatu, it was claimed that the Communist Parties have only been active and influential in rural areas in three states, West Bengal, Kerala and Manipur. On the other hand, when visiting rural NGOs in India, the author came across anecdotal evidence of co-operation between Communists and NGOs, for example, in Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat (although there is also ideological conflict between these two camps, as is briefly discussed next in the text). As well, the activities of Naxalite and other far left groups in the Indian countryside is well-documented (see, for example, Omvedt). Other references that follow also allude to Communist activity or influence in rural areas.

[80]See, for example, Karat.

process of bringing about political change.[81] Many have departed the orthodox left fold and have moved to work in NGOs, a trend that has caused some in the Left to question their own effectiveness.[82]

It is also claimed that, insofar as they have been active in rural areas, Communists have tended to support vested interests such as rich and middle peasants, those who, as Ross Mallick puts it, are "opposed to any encroachments, of people further down the ladder, on the benefits these vested interests have cornered",[83] a claim supported by others.[84] Mallick adds that the "really poor and exploited are, in fact, represented by no-one at the national level".[85] This may appear to contradict my assessment of the contribution of the Communist Parties in West Bengal and Kerala at the end of the previous chapter. But it seems that there can be great variation in the policies and practices of Communists in different parts of the country, and I also acknowledged that the Communist record in those two states was far from unblemished. In the final analysis, the question of whether

[81]See, for example, Harsh Sethi, "The Immoral 'Other': Debate between Party and Non-Party Groups", Economic and Political Weekly, Vol XX, No 9, 2 March 1985, pp 378-380.

[82]Monobina Gupta, "Unhappy Leftists flock to NGOs", The Telegraph, 13 June 1993.

[83]Ross Mallick, Indian Communism: Opposition, Collaboration and Institutionalization, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1994, p 324.

[84]For example, Tom Brass, "The Politics of Gender, Nature and Nation in the Discourse of the New Farmers' Movements", in Tom Brass (ed), New Farmers' Movements in India, pp 41-42.

[85]Mallick, p 236.

the orthodox Left can fit into a broader movement for change in the interests of the marginalised may be able to be answered more simply than would at first seem to be the case. If its ideology and methods of operation are not winning it substantial numbers of converts in the Indian countryside, it may be forced to work alongside other progressive forces - without seeking to dominate them - if it is to avoid remaining simply a minor player in most areas of Indian politics.

With regard to Indian Socialists, they have shown a willingness to act in concert with other groups and schools of thought, as their participation in the Janata Party and in subsequent parties and coalitions demonstrates, but they are less of a force in Indian politics than are the Communists. Socialist parties split on four occasions between 1955 and 1972, and as Sonal Shah observes:

The socialists today are a scattered and an insignificant lot and they do not have an organisation of their own. Some of their leaders occupy a few important posts in the Janata Dal and are among the few principled politicians in the country.[86]

Thus, the principles that led Jayaprakash Narayan and others to form the first Socialist party within the fold of the Congress movement in the 1930s may still be there, but they have not been effective as a separate force. Their only hope is to continue to combine with others.

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[86]Sonal Shah, Indian Socialists: Search for Identity, Bombay Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1994, p 161.

At the other end of the ideological spectrum, there has never been a politically significant party or movement in India with a strong ideological commitment to the market. A private enterprise party, Swatantra, received between three and eight percent of the national vote in the 1960s and early 1970s[87] until it amalgamated with several other parties.[88] Business interests have called for less government regulation, but also have been the recipients of government contracts and benefits, and their influence has tended to take the form of individual firms affecting the implementation of policy rather than a united sector affecting its formulation.[89] India is a country that seems able to live with stark contradictions. Though it is described in its Constitution as 'Socialist', and though the most dominant party over its history, the Congress Party, also claims to be socialist, 80% of national income is generated by the private sector, a higher percentage than in the United States.[90] As in many parts of the world, governments in India have sought to move to the right economically from the 1980s onwards, partly as a result of structural adjustment demands from the International Monetary Fund. Proposed changes have included tax and budgetary

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[87]Hardgrave & Kochanek, pp 219-220.

[88]ibid, p 275.

[89]ibid, pp 386-389.

[90]ibid, p 386.

reductions, relaxed controls within the domestic economy and greater openness to foreign trade and investment. But while measures such as these have been adopted to some extent, the politics of liberalisation has been as notable for the level of opposition it has generated as it has been for those things that have actually become policy.[91]

The major forces that are identified as being on the Right in India are Hindu communalist parties and groups, but they advocate economic policies that, in many respects, sit more comfortably with those of the Left. This is because such forces are predominantly interested in preserving Hindu culture, which leads them to look askance at foreign imports and foreign companies setting up in India, and furthermore they do not have the commitment to economic 'freedom' that characterises the economic Right.[92] The communalist Right is a force of the upper castes seeking - with some success - to co-opt lower castes into a chauvinist movement of the Hindu majority,[93] and thus its goals are clearly antithetical to the building of solidarity across all of India's marginalised. But as Madhu Kishwar points out, much of its following may result from its dogged work among very many Indians with ordinary

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[91]See, for example: Arun Kumar & Jai Sen (eds), Proposals for A National Union Budget for 1993-94: An Alternative to the Fund-Bank Dictated Budget, Voluntary Action Network of India, New Delhi.

[92]Though when in government, the BJP, the party of the Hindu right, has pursued an economic path little different from its opponents.

[93]See Omvedt, p 183-186.

concerns of one sort or another, rather than from any innate intolerance within the Hindu majority.[94] If this is the case, there is no reason why, if groups with a more tolerant philosophy can extend the scope of their work among the Indian people, they might not engender a stronger counter-movement to the forces of Hindu communalism.

A second reason why there are grounds for hope in the face of apparent ideological divisions among civil organisations in India, is that there are already very many examples of diverse groups and organisations coming together in campaigns that, while focusing on a specific issue, do demonstrate a shared belief by these organisations in a range of social and political values embodied in the particular campaign. For example, opposition to large dams and other major developments are often motivated by the following range of concerns: protecting the land, livelihoods and cultures of threatened groups, particularly adivasis; opposing large-scale, capital-intensive forms of development in favour of more labour-intensive, decentralised, environmentally sensitive and smaller-scale approaches; and favouring a greater distribution of public resources in the direction of the poor and away from prosperous farmers and commercial interests.[95] Frequently

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[94]Madhu Kishwar, "Ways to Combat Communal Violence: Some Thoughts on International Women's Day", Manushi, no 62, Jan-Feb 1991, pp 2-9.

[95]See, for example, Gail Omvedt's description of forces opposing the damming of the Narmada River (Omvedt, pp 266-268).

civil organisations involved in campaigns on behalf of the marginalised also share a commitment to greater gender equality, more participatory and co-operative decision-making processes, respect for ethnic and religious diversity, and the meeting of the basic needs of all, and often to more specific policy positions emerging from such values.[96] This is sometimes taken further and articulated in the form of public statements or charters. For example, prior to the 1994 state elections in Karnataka a group of organisations and individual citizens got together to formulate a "Citizen's Response from the Point of View of the Poor and Marginalised", in which they put forward about 160 specific policy proposals covering the range of portfolio responsibilities of the state government.[97]

Civil organisations that have become involved in specific-issue campaigns may not see themselves as 'political', as they may not normally be active in, or have entrenched positions on, macro-level political questions. This can have the advantage of allowing them to base their judgements about macro-level questions upon values embodied in, and lessons learnt from, their day-to-day experience of working with marginalised communities, rather than on established political

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[96]As articulated in organisational literature provided to me by a number of organisations, e.g.: People's Rural Education Movement, Role of Voluntary Organisation in Women's Development in Orissa, Berhampur, Orissa, especially pp 1-3; and DISHA, A Report On Developing Initiatives For Social and Human Action (DISHA): January 1993 to August 1994, Ahmedabad, especially p 1.

[97]R S Vijay et al, Assembly Elections in Karnataka 1994: Citizens' Response, undated.

dogmas, allegiances, alliances or animosities.[98] To the extent that these values and lessons are common across different organisations working with the marginalised, this can thus be a force for unity. Paul Routledge stresses the essentially tolerant and pluralist orientation of many organisations working with marginalised communities,[99] a characteristic that would aid them in reaching ideological accommodations.

The point has already been made that many organisations in India - whether they consider themselves to be political or not - demonstrate through their daily practice a commitment to what we in the West have started to call the Third Way, that is, the provision of goods and services and the pursuit of various social and political objectives through community-based co-operative organisations, often in concert with government or private enterprise. Given that India does not have a welfare state in the way that it is understood in the West, the debates that occur in the West concerning dismantling or radically altering it are absent from India. As previously stated, many of the measures that are commonly adopted in India and other Third World countries to deal with poverty, unemployment and a lack of facilities and services - measures such as income generation schemes, credit co-

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[98]For example, Shashi Ranjan Pandey discusses how the aims and procedures of many organisations are very much adapted to the lives and cultural traditions of the people they are working with (Shashi Ranjan Pandey, Community Action for Social Justice: Grassroots Organizations in India, Sage, New Delhi, 1991, pp 229-230.

[99]Routledge, p 132.

operatives and self-help projects to improve local infrastructure and services - are just the sorts of things that are being seriously examined by all sides of politics in the West. So in this sense Third World countries like India have the advantage of already having in place models of social and economic organisation that are to some degree outside the Left-Right dichotomy and are the kind of models that many people the world over see as the way of the future. It needs to be stressed, however, that even if such Third Way approaches become more common, in themselves these do not solve distributional issues in India. There are still issues such as land reform, wage rates, taxation and reserved places in employment and education to be resolved, and within Third Way approaches themselves there are distributional questions that must be considered - such as the amount of public money channelled into such schemes, who has a say in deciding how funds are allocated, and who the beneficiaries are.

Ideology is concerned not only about policy as it is generally understood - that is, laws, budgetary allocations, programs and so on - but also about political processes. Of course the two are connected, as laws, programs and budgets will reflect the interests of those involved in decision-making processes, as well as reflecting the forms these processes take. This particularly applies to distributional issues. Attention needs to be paid to both formal processes (such as electoral, legislative and executive processes) and informal ones. In

relation to the latter, l have already referred to the possibility of an '*antyodaya* alliance', an alliance built on the base of organisations representing the most marginalised sectors. If political process is part of ideology, the very fact of building such an alliance would in itself represent a major step towards greater ideological consensus.

An *antyodaya* alliance is an example of one of two possible ways in which people from marginalised sectors could combine with others in pursuit of their objectives, and it is useful to examine these two approaches in the Indian context, which has advocates for both. Jayaprakash Narayan supported the other approach when he wrote that in the Indian political system "power is flowing in the direction of creating an all-powerful apex [the government and parties] and an utterly powerless base [the people]".[100] According to JP, the people were powerless for the following reason:

The millions of discrete individual voters are like a heap of sand that can never provide a firm foundation for any structure. These particles of sand can be used for building the pillars of a building only when they are turned into bricks or slabs of cement concrete. For this we have to go to the living units where people live their lives together in face to face communities and will have to help to build up their organized power. These units...should become organic masses, living and integrated wholes. And in India today eighty-two percent of the people live in such face to face communities - in the villages - in which people have not become completely selfish or self-centred yet.[101]

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[100]Narayan, 1992, p 50.

[101]ibid, p 51. It is also worth noting that JP's idea of community is similar to Ferdinand Toennies' notion of *gemeinschaft*, the sense of community in small-scale, traditional social environments. Toennies distinguishes this from *gesellschaft*, the sort of impersonal relationships that, he claimed, are characteristic of large-scale modern societies, which is different to - but has some similarities with - JP's distinction between people united in community and people as isolated citizens of the state (Ferdinand Toennies, On Sociology: Pure, Applied and Empirical, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1971, pp 62-72.

This perspective, which is embodied in Gandhianism generally, encourages people to develop a sense of solidarity with those from their own community, as the term is commonly understood, those who live in the same area and frequently interact in the course of daily life. An opposite view encourages people to develop solidarity with those having a similar socio-economic status as themselves, and Marxism is the principal ideology expounding this. The first might be called the 'vertical solidarity' approach and the second the 'horizontal solidarity' model.

Both, by themselves, have deficiencies. The vertical solidarity model plays down the different interests of, and the different degrees of power held by, particular socio-economic sectors within the vertical solidarity group, and thus it can permit existing powerful sectors to maintain their power and privileges and thus continue to deprive marginalised sectors of their entitlements. Horizontal solidarity models work well when the most important areas in which marginalised sectors need to improve their circumstances necessitate assertive or confrontational collective action by the sector (for example, when they need to obtain the franchise or improve wages substantially or prevent discrimination). But to the extent that a social sector's wellbeing is advanced by co-operation with those outside the horizontal solidarity group

(for example, co-operation within enterprises, within
community life, or within local level governance) horizontal
solidarity models have their limitations, and some degree of
vertical solidarity or at least co-operation needs to be
forged. There is no reason why people cannot be members of
multiple solidarity groups, and this in fact happens, for
example, when there are women's groups defending particular
women's interests within broader organisations.[102] If members
of marginalised sectors are members of both vertical and
horizontal solidarity groups, then they can utilise either at
different times depending on the situation they are dealing
with.

Both vertical and horizontal solidarity approaches are well-
established in India, and any efforts to build an aggregated
civil base would need to accommodate this. From the early
1950s until the last few years of his life JP, as a Gandhian,
believed in the vertical solidarity model and saw the chief
threat to the interests of the poor as coming not from the
more well-off but from the state and political parties. But
during the Janata Party's time in government JP came to
recognise the necessity for members of marginalised sectors,
such as dalits, to come together to defend or advance their
rights.[103] As previously mentioned, the JP Movement also had

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[102]As is the case in many NGOs such as PREM in Orissa, MYRADA in Karnataka and DISHA in Gujarat,
according to information obtained in interviews with their leaders or staff.

[103]Geoffrey Ostergaard, <u>Nonviolent Revolution in India</u>, Gandhi Peace Foundation, New Delhi, 1985, p
297.

the effect of drawing many Gandhians away from institutional Gandhianism, and when, after the JP Movement, these Gandhians - and other activists who were not especially Gandhian - became involved in various civil organisations, they were often open to a variety of influences, including Marxism, and so blended these two approaches of vertical and horizontal solidarity. For example, a Dr Vinayan, founding Chairman of the Mazdoor Kisan Sangram Samiti (MKSS) describes this period as follows:

> A very large number of us who are in the MKSS were in Jayaprakash's movement. We did not belong to any party. JP's movement was historic to the extent that it mobilised people to fight the ruthless tyrant regime of Indira Gandhi. We expected much more from JP's movement, because the slogan was 'Sampoorn Kranti' [Total Revolution]. But no such thing happened. We ended up with the Janata government. Even though it came to power as a reaction against the Emergency and its black laws, it soon began enacting its own black laws.

> A segment of the young political activists who had participated in the JP movement found that unless there is a powerful agrarian movement with the agricultural working class as its nucleus, nothing would happen. We derived help from looking at the whole situation from a Marxist-Leninist angle. Then we decided to launch a class struggle, taking up the issue of minimum wages, the land ceiling act and bonded labour. Ours is not a movement of one particular class but of various classes of rural society, except landlords.[104]

Another ex-JP Movement activist, Jatin Desai, who was later active in the Vahini in Maharashtra for about seven years, spoke of how the members of the Vahini would debate about the approaches of Gandhi and Marx.[105] But the Vahini was also

[104]Smitu Kothari, "An Interview With Dr. Vinayan", Lokayan Bulletin, 4:3/4, May-Aug 1986, p 84.

[105]Interview with Jatin Desai. Paul Routledge also notes that recent social movements in India "have seen their leadership arise from two principal sources: from vestiges of the Gandhian movement that have moved from traditional methods of constructive work outside the state apparatus in favour of active opposition to government policies and programs; and from the nontraditional Left, such as Naxalites...radical Christians and independent Marxists" (Routledge, p 120).

moving in a somewhat different direction at this time through its contact with a leading activist representing farmers, Sharad Joshi, who argued that the main contradiction in Indian society was between 'Bharat' (primarily the villages) and 'India' (centred on the Westernised industrialists and bureaucrats), and the main issue was agricultural prices, with insufficient prices for produce being seen as responsible for a drain of wealth from the country to the city.[106] According to Jatin Desai, this contention precipitated much debate in the Vahini, and many members left to join Joshi's organisation, Shetkari Sangatana.[107]

This argument advanced by Joshi and others in the farmers' movement that the main form of exploitation in India involves the transfer of wealth from the country to the city, was considered, and to some degree challenged, in the last section which dealt with interest differences. In that section I noted that many consider the most marginalised within the agricultural sector to be not well served by farmers' organisations. The neo-populist ideology adopted by such groups is seen by some commentators as obscuring class-based differences within the sector by focusing on some common 'other', be it urban dwellers, industry, government or foreign interests,[108] and as such, agricultural labourers, small

[106]Omvedt, p 112.

[107]Interview with Jatin Desai.

[108]See, for example, Tom Brass, "Introduction: New Farmers' Movements in India", pp 12-17.

landholders and tenants need to consider carefully whether such an ideology is really advancing their interests. At the very least, it needs to be supplemented by ideological strands within their own organisations that give due weight to class-based differences in rural areas.

The point to be made here is not that organisations that might conceivably become involved in an ACB are free from ideological conflicts and divisions. Rather I argue, on the basis of the evidence I have just cited, that the situation is fluid enough for dialogue and accommodations to occur, and for groups to develop multiple forms of solidarity and co-operation, so that different kinds of interests can be protected in different ways.

Other challenges involved in getting organisations together

Obstacles to achieving the level of co-operation and united action that is necessary to build a democratic-deepening aggregated civil base do not simply consist of interest and ideological differences. There are a range of other factors involved - factors that have hampered not only united action itself, but also the resolution of interest and ideological differences that can be a precondition for such action. These will now be examined, followed by consideration of the factors and measures that might reduce these obstacles.

First, as well as in domains of ideology and interests, there are many other ways in which organisations differ. Caste, ethnic, religious and linguistic differences and geographical location can prevent people from identifying with one another and communicating.[109] As one indication of the extent of difference, of the approximately 5100 languages spoken in the world, about a third of them – or 1682 – are Indian languages[110] (although almost ninety percent of Indians speak one of the thirteen major languages).[111] Moreover, these and other factors cause people to face different circumstances and problems and thus have different preoccupations and priorities.[112] Moreover, organisations are often sector-specific (for example, focusing on health, housing, legal rights or the environment), factors that may hamper united action across sectors. Groups may have an organisational affiliation – for example, based on a common funding source – and this may not even involve ideological distinctions, but it may still lead the affiliated groups to associate much less with groups not sharing this affiliation. Different personality networks and personal rivalries can also keep groups apart.[113] Civil organisations differ in many features of

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[109]For example, see Routledge p 127-128.

[110]Wolfgang Sachs, "On the Archeology of the Development Idea", <u>Lokayan Bulletin</u>, 8:1, Jan-Feb 1990, p 8.

[111]Hardgrave & Kochanek, p 11.

[112]See: Routledge, pp 131-2; and Pandey, pp 209-210. This point was also made in an interview with Paul Valiakandathil.

[113]Lokayan, "On Threats To The Non-Party Political Process", <u>Lokayan Bulletin</u>, 3:2, April 1985, pp

their operations, as some accept foreign funding and some do not, some are controlled and run by middle-class outsiders and others by members of the marginalised sectors they serve, some focus on advocacy and others on 'development' or relief programs, and some co-operate with the government in program delivery while others refuse to do so,[114] and such differences can keep organisations apart.[115] As well, the different sizes of groups may stand in the way of united action, as small groups may fear the dominance of larger ones.[116] Sethi claims that differences in ideologies, activities, styles of operation and strength mean that attempts to bring groups together mostly just lead to "debating forums",[117] but on the other hand, if groups do not get together it is hard for them to develop a shared ideological perspective.[118] Moreover, in India there is a tradition of independent action by NGOs that may make them disinclined to participate in united action within alliances because they may fear that it could threaten the identity and independence of their individual organisations.[119] This lack of connections with other groups,

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[114]See Pandey, pp 209-220.

[115]Interview with Paul Valiakandathil.

[116]Pandey, p 245.

[117]Sethi, p 312.

[118]See F Stephen, NGOs: Hope of the Last Decade of this Century, SEARCH, Bangalore, undated, p 19; this point was also made in interviews with Surajana Reddy and M D Mistry.

[119]Interview with Paul Valiakandathil; Pandey, p 218; F Stephen, pp 18-19.

horizontally or vertically, can be exacerbated by foreign funding, as this leads to less of an apparent need to make such links.[120]

Furthermore, efforts to form alliances for united political action may be crowded out within individual organisations by what are seen as the core functions of the organisation, such as service delivery - particularly when staff time is severely stretched - or by organisational routines and traditions.[121] Organisations may be less inclined to make links and become political if they are dependent on foreign or government funds, especially as funding conditions may actually preclude action of this sort.[122] Finally, united action can be hampered by physical obstacles to communication and co-ordinated action - obstacles arising from the fact of groups being geographically separated in a predominantly rural population, and from groups lacking resources to devote to transport and communications in a country in which communications and transport infrastructure is not well-developed in any case.[123]

While these factors may seem to constitute a formidable barrier to united action, there are a number of reasons for

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[120]Lewis, p 124.

[121]See Pandey, p 209.

[122]ibid, pp 211, 213-214; see also Ch 5, pp 266-267, of this thesis.

[123]Interview with Paul Valiakandathil.

optimism. To begin with, in spite of all these factors, there are many examples of organisations coming together in temporary or permanent alliances for a range of purposes - for example, to conduct dialogue, to engage in specific-issue campaigns, to represent a broader constituency, to learn from each other or to share resources - and this suggests a strong belief in the value of such action. Examples of these include state level groupings such as FVORD-K in Karnataka and Samakya in Andhra Pradesh, and national alliances such as Jan Vikas Andolan, the National Alliance of People's Movements, Bharat Jan Andolan and the Voluntary Action Network of India.[124] So alliances of civil organisations are not uncommon in India. Also, according to Sethi, the motivation to act at a higher level is often present because many of the middle-class activists who frequently lead civil organisations feel insufficiently challenged in small rural organisations and want to take on bigger challenges on a larger scale.[125] As well, according to social movement theorists, the willingness of organisations to put their differences to one side and become involved in united action increases in proportion to the perceived likelihood of success of such action.[126] So if some initial successes can be registered, this can lead to a 'virtuous circle' with more and more groups seeing united

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[124]Interviews: Anil Singh (c 21/1/94); Nafisa D'Souza (14/2/95); D Rama Krishna (c 22/2/95); Augustine Kaunds (1/3/95); S R Hiremath (6/3/95); and Rajni Bhakshi (c 15/1/95).

[125]Sethi, p 312.

[126]Zald & Ash, p 335.

action as efficacious. With the achievement of common goals in sight, issues that currently divide groups, such as differing structures or sources of funding, or differing long-term ideological visions, may be seen as much less compelling reasons to avoid united action. And if more groups do join in, this further increases the efficacy of such action.

Another relevant factor is that improved telecommunications are breaking down physical communication barriers. As well, the strong stand that many civil organisations are taking against communalism is challenging religious and ethnic animosity and division in India. For example, the Voluntary Action Network of India, an alliance of NGOs, has been conducting a concerted campaign on this issue.[127] Also, if additional mobilisation of marginalised sectors (which, as has been pointed out, is necessary to develop a critical mass of supporters) is carried out by organisations under the umbrella of a democratic-deepening ACB, it can be expected that these newly mobilised sectors will identify at least to some extent with the ACB from the outset. The organisations involved would have made efforts to reconcile differences and reach a common approach, and thus would have stressed these commonalities and the importance of united action as part of the mobilisation processes they were engaged in. It is also possible, or even likely, that an ACB would be formed at the state or district

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[127]See, for example, VANI News, Jan 1993.

level first, rather than the national level, which reduces the possible number of organisations and sectors involved, as well as the range of differences, and thus makes the formation of such an ACB a more achievable task.[128] If it was able to demonstrate its success at one of these levels, this could serve as a model for other districts or states or for the national level.

Developing accountability processes

It was contended earlier in this thesis that one of the reasons why the JP Movement and the Janata Party failed to achieve more substantial change was that there were no processes through which the Janata Party was accountable to the movement that had brought it into existence. If a democratic-deepening ACB is formed and if it produces a platform of policies that forms the basis of an electoral arrangement with a political party or coalition, then there need to be accountability mechanisms to ensure that the arrangement is honoured by the party or parties concerned. This would require that the workings of government are transparent enough to allow for proper monitoring, and that representatives of the ACB are able to monitor the

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[128]Sethi has noted that regional federations have been more success than national ones, because the groups have more in common (Sethi, p 312); and Stephen advocates co-operation within what he terms "geo-political pockets", each of which is defined by a common feature, such as a predominantly tribal population, or a common concern such as drought (Stephen, p 21).

government's performance on an ongoing basis, and especially prior to any election. The ACB could then evaluate its performance, and consider whether to continue to recommend support for this party or coalition, in light of renewed negotiations with it, and possibly negotiations with other parties.

The ACB could negotiate not only about policy, as the term is generally understood, but also about the processes of government and the demographic make-up of its personnel. For example, the ACB could stipulate the inclusion of various consultation and review processes aimed at more democratic governance, it could require a more active role for the ACB and individual civil organisations in government processes and in party pre-selection of candidates, and it could require a greater role in government for representatives of marginalised communities (going beyond the present reservation policies which relate merely to membership of such communities rather than democratic representation). Of course it would be important that the ACB set an example in the area of its own democratic functioning, the transparency of its operations and its accountability to constituent organisations, which would in turn need to be democratic, transparent and accountable.[129]

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[129]Many NGOs, for example, do not have particularly democratic structures as they are commonly set up and run by a few individuals, although there has been a tendency for them to set up semi-autonomous and democratically run "people's organisations", "women's groups" and the like. Just how democratic a civil organisation needed to be before it could join the sort of alliance I am suggesting is something that the alliance itself would have to work out.

The composition of an ACB could change over time, with organisations joining or ceasing to belong, and such flexibility of membership could reduce the likelihood that ossified political in-groups would develop. There may in fact be more than one ACB, with different combinations of organisations advocating different policy platforms. The same organisations might not belong to more than one ACB, or ACBs themselves could form alliances, merge or split, or parties could reach agreements with more than one simultaneously. An ACBs might stipulate that they want particular parties included in or excluded from a coalition.

Overall, the optimal relationship between a democratic-deepening ACB and a party or coalition could be described as co-operative but conditional, to be contrasted, on the one hand, to the sort of oppositional relationship that many social movements have with parties and governments, or on the other hand, to the kind of affiliative relationship that some trade union, women's, youth or student organisations have with parties. This would mean that the ACB could creatively participate in formulating policy, in monitoring its effective implementation and in generally seeking to enhance the government's performance, but still be detached enough to be publicly critical when necessary and to represent the interests and views of its constituency. It would provide an additional locus within which democracy could function, one

that integrated the views and interests of very many strands and sectors of society and placed them centre-stage in politics, while maintaining enough distance from executive power-holders to provide a means of safeguarding its constituencies against abuses that might flow from executive self-interest, self-justification and partiality.

EXISTING OR PAST DEMOCRATIC-DEEPENING AGGREGATED CIVIL BASES

This chapter concludes with some examples of existing or past democratic-deepening aggregated civil bases. To reiterate, such an arrangement consists of: (a) a group of civil organisations (b) covering a wide range of social sectors and issue areas (c) and including among those sectors the most marginalised in society, that (d) comes together to develop and present cohesive policy alternatives and (e) lend conditional support to a party or coalition willing to support such alternatives. Strictly speaking, it would be more accurate to describe the examples cited below as tending towards being democratic-deepening ACBs, because none would meet all the aforementioned criteria in full, but for the sake of simplicity I shall refer to them as democratic-deepening ACBs. These examples are not presented as proof of the feasibility or effectiveness of the model I have presented, as they are too few and, considered collectively, too undeveloped for this, and furthermore it is not within the scope of this thesis to examine such examples either intensively or

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extensively. Rather, their inclusion is intended to give the subject more concreteness, to indicate that the sort of formations I have been discussing do, to some extent at least, already exist (or have existed), and to make some tentative observations about them in relation to the contentions of the thesis as a whole and this chapter especially.

Democratic-deepening aggregated civil bases appear to be less common than independence or formal democracy movements, perhaps because, while the need for national independence and for the formal mechanisms of democracy are quite evident, the need for an alliance of forces to strengthen democracy is much less so. When considering the forces necessary to sustain a democracy, it is rare for observers to look beyond such political organisations as parties, interest groups and social movements. In addition to the JP Movement, other arrangements fitting into the category of democratic-deepening ACBs that will therefore now be examined are trade union movements in certain countries in which they have links with labour or social democratic parties, and some emerging examples in the Philippines and Latin America.

Starting with trade union movements, these are included because in quite a number of countries they have, at their peak, encompassed a significant proportion of the population and covered diverse sectors of society, including many sectors that were, prior to union organisation at least, quite poor

and marginalised. Through their close relationships with social democratic parties they have been able to encourage policy changes in the interests of their members and members' families, which have led to the extension of the franchise, improvements in wages and working conditions, stimulation of employment, and the provision of education, health, housing and welfare services. Through such arrangements trade union movements have, it is claimed, contributed to the marked social progress that has occurred in many Western countries over the course of the twentieth century. John Mathews has this to say on the subject:

> We need to recall that a genuine political democracy based on universal suffrage was achieved in the metropolitan countries only at the turn of the century. It is the supreme political achievement of the labour movement, from which all else has flowed.[130]

Mathews further states that the "economic and social system that operates today is heavily influenced by the [social democratic or labour] activities of the post-war system", specifically identifying distributive measures such as income support and 'social wage' services, maintenance of employment and regulation of the economy.[131] It can also be argued that unions and social democratic parties may justifiably claim some indirect responsibility for progressive measures

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[130]Mathews, p 30.

[131]ibid, p 31. It should be noted that Mathews was writing in the late 1980s, and in many countries the social democratic legacy has been substantially undermined since then.

introduced by non-labour parties. If social democratic parties are generally advocating progressive, redistributive measures, an imperative exists for conservative parties to match them if they are to remain electorally competitive. In similar vein, for the United States, the most prominent western nation in which there is no social democratic party connected to the union movement (although the Democratic Party has close informal ties with the AFL-CIO), policy standards achieved in other Western countries in which the union-party connection does exist stand as models against which U.S. policies may on occasion be compared.

Andrew Taylor describes the relationship between unions and social democratic parties as follows:

> ...unions supported particular parties so as to influence them in government and secure concessions. Outsider parties welcomed union support, seeing in the unions a valuable source of finance, votes and organisations to support their electoral take-off. So the process was a mutually beneficial one to two outsider groups striving for access to the political process.[132]

But Taylor also contends that too close a relationship between the two can have disadvantages. If unions are seen as too dominant in the party it may cost that party electoral support; parties need as wide an electoral base as possible and thus must also appeal to other groups; unions need to influence all governments, not just social democratic ones,

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[132]Andrew J Taylor, <u>Trade Unions and Politics: a comparative introduction</u>, Macmillan, Basingstoke, UK, 1989, p 47.

and too close an identification with social democratic parties might hamper this; and such a close association may also cause a backlash among those union members who do not support the party concerned.[133] These differences, Taylor points out, reflect different electoral imperatives, unions as interests groups and parties as competitors for government office.[134] As union coverage diminishes and unions become less popular with the public, the need for a party to keep some distance from them increases, especially in government, when "the party invariably claims a wider destiny".[135]

While unions may be loath to withdraw from the arrangement, as it continues to yield them some benefits, there is a third alternative. There is no reason why they cannot join up with other organisations and movements and thus build a broader and more potent alliance. Various analysts, such as Verity Burgmann, have argued that unions and other progressive forces in society should work more closely together.[136] This would mean that a larger constituency would be amassed and a greater range of issues could be the subject of informed consideration in dialogues about policy. Perhaps as well, the less institutionalised organisations and movements within such an

[133]ibid, p 49.

[134]ibid, p 70.

[135]ibid, 94-95.

[136]Verity Burgmann, <u>Power and Protest: Movements for Change in Australian Society</u>, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, NSW, 1993, pp 264-271.

arrangement could draw the ACB's centre of gravity away from the corridors of corporatist power and towards a more open, conditional relationship with parties and governments. It is even possible that closer relationships between unions and other organisations could be a means through which members of these other organisations developed a closer knowledge and appreciation of the role of unions in advancing workers' interests, and thus be a way through which union membership might increase.

A broader alliance such as this would compensate for the tendency of unions to - quite understandably - concentrate on certain kinds of issues, particularly income and workplace issues, although to their credit many have broadened this in the last few decades to include issues such as the environment and the rights of women, ethnic groups and local communities. Such an alliance would also compensate for declining union coverage of the workforce, including among many of the most insecure and marginalised workers. This trend has meant that the union movement as a whole is less well-placed to claim to represent workers as a whole, and it has less industrial power, as reduced coverage mean less support for industrial action. But if unions are linked more closely to other organisations, both the membership base of such an alliance and the range of issues it is concerned about is significantly increased. The need for unions to work in concert with other organisations and movements is particularly strong in the

Third World, where, given a lower level of industrialisation, unions generally cover only a small proportion of the total workforce.

Turning to some other examples of democratic-deepening ACBs, we see some emerging arrangements in the Philippines that are worth noting. Olle Tornquist characterises the Philippines political system after the election of Corazon Aquino as "rootless middle-class democratisation" and observes that "the most vital question by 1992 [the subsequent presidential election] was...whether and how new popular movements and organisations could instead become vital in anchoring democracy".[137]

During this election campaign alliances began to emerge, of which the most notable one was Abayan, an electoral movement made up of socialists, social democrats, former members of the communist-led National Democrats, cause oriented groups, NGOs and unions. Abayan also became part of the wider National Coalition, but this coalition proved to be "economically and organisationally weak".[138] According to Tornquist, Abayan activists have been too busy with development and union work to put in time on the alliance, they have not been inclusive

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[137]Olle Tornquist, "Popular Movements and Politics of Democratisation", in Manoranjan Mohanty, Partha Nath Mukherji (eds), People's Rights: Social Movements and the State in the Third World, Sage, New Delhi, 1998, p 193.

[138]ibid, p 197.

enough of all progressives, and have had the difficult task of
telling people that voting mattered when previously they had
argued the opposite.[139] Speaking more generally of the
situation in the Philippines, Tornquist believes that such
alliances have so far failed to have much effect on electoral
politics because there is insufficient unity and too much
reliance on gaining the backing of rich and powerful figures.
He further contends that:

there is a basic lack, not of a grand theory, tight ideology and Leninist organisation, but of a common
analytical framework and vision of politics and society, as well as of democratically run forums
within which activists and groups can situate themselves, analyse the various movements, and
consider different problems and issues. These things will not of course emerge spontaneously
from below. Instead they must grow in a process of politicisation to which time and space and
money must be devoted. That is, the participants must study, discuss and try out how the issues
can be dealt with jointly instead of separately or even privately.[140]

In Latin America, also, there are some promising trends.
According to Orlando Fals Borda local organisations have been
coming together in forums and gatherings and taking action in
larger "sociogeographical regions"[141] through united action
fronts and networks. Through these means "the movements
shifted from the micro to the macro level and from protest to
proposal".[142] Such alliances are made up of community boards,

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[139]ibid, pp 198-199.

[140]ibid, p 210.

[141]Orlando Fals Borda, "Social Movements and Political Power in Latin America", in Arturo Escobar &
Sonia E Alvaraz (eds), The Making of Social Movements in Latin America: Identity, Strategy and
Democracy, Westview Press, Boulder, 1992, p 304.

[142]ibid, p 305.

voluntary communal labour groups, housing co-operatives, shantytown residents' groups and people's education campaigns. According to Fals Borda:

Today, through networks and other mechanisms of regional and national co-ordination, many of the movements are beginning to propose or demand programmatic or structural changes for society at large.[143]

Examples cited by Fals Borda include that of the Workers Party of Brazil, which is not a party in the accepted sense of the term but is rather:

the outcome of an all-embracing process of organization involving sectors of workers, community and religious leaders, and organic intellectuals (including Paulo Freire, the educator) who drew up a common program of political, economic, social and cultural action that went beyond the limits of associational or local concerns and now covers the whole of Brazilian society.[144]

Fals Borda also notes the emergence of united political forces in Chile, Peru, Bolivia, Venezuela, Mexico and Colombia.[145] In Mexico, the Cardenista alliance challenged the hitherto unbeatable Institutional Revolutionary Party, while in Colombia in the past two decades a number of major alliances have been formed. In 1987, fourteen regional movements formed one national one, and two years later two broad alliances emerged, Colombia Unida and Alianza Democratica. The former of

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[143]ibid, pp 305-306.

[144]ibid, p 306.

[145]ibid, pp 306-311.

these (which was part of the latter) was represented in government following the 1990 election. Fals Borda claimed that such a step would not bring about the co-option of the movement but was more likely to be a case of "Trojanism", as a result of historical lessons learnt and participatory control by constituent groups in the alliance. As he put it:

> Colombian contemporary experiences in Trojanism may teach new lessons on how to conduct well-balanced political affairs without capitulating, by combining inside beachhead action with external confrontation to the system.[146]

CONCLUSION

It was observed in this chapter how both Robert Michels and Jayaprakash Narayan, in their different ways, were concerned about the misuse of power upon gaining office by those who may have initially been well-meaning. According to Michels' 'iron law of oligarchy', whatever the original intentions of political leaders may be, once they become established in power different dynamics come into play. They develop a new set of interests connected with maintaining the organisation within which they operate and maintaining their own power and its trappings, and lose connection with the people they originally sought to serve. JP, as a Gandhian, had similar reservations about powerholders in political parties, whether in government or not. Parties were guilty of dishonesty,

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[146]ibid, p 310.

corruption, electoral malpractice, intimidation and the promotion of casteism, there was no real difference between them, and they had done little or nothing to solve India's problems.

But the question needs to be asked: If this is what happens to even well intentioned people when they win power, what can be done about it? Is there an alternative? This chapter has presented an alternative, one that is an extension of an idea embodied in a range of disparate movements that have occurred in different countries at different times. In all of these, individuals and organisations have come together in an alliance to demand change, not just in a particular issue area, but in relation to governance as a whole. This might be for the purpose of ending colonialism or dictatorship, or it might seek to deepen and enhance democracy within a system that already has formal democratic structures. It is with the last of these that the chapter has been principally concerned, and in it I have sought to identify what would be necessary to make such an arrangement work.

I have presented the idea of an alliance that functions as a second major locus of power, that works with, but at the same time counterbalances the power of, the party or coalition in government - not just on one occasion, but on an ongoing basis. But to even come into existence, such an alliance must be able to reconcile differences of ideology and interest, and

overcome other factors that prevent organisations working together. And to represent those sectors of society that have been marginalised economically, socially and politically, it needs to engage in large-scale mobilisation through its constituent organisations.

Such organisations can play a critical role in generating a more inclusive and participatory political system. It was observed that those who have not been active participants in the political system tend to respond more to concrete, local issues rather than to more abstract, higher level matters. Organisations that are in touch with ordinary people and their daily lives - particularly if they involve them in decision-making and action - can act as a conduit between these people and the higher echelons of political power. Such organisations are more likely to know what their constituents' concerns are and what alternatives may be effective, and they are more likely to have the motivation to achieve real change and to be accorded legitimacy as representatives of constituents' views and interests. If they act collectively they can also be more powerful. They can help to construct a political system that is more deeply democratic, that advances the interests of all citizens and protects rather than penalises those who stand up for their rights and participate in the running of their communities.

CHAPTER SEVEN: SPADE, VOTE AND PRISON

During Jayaprakash Narayan's time in the Socialist Party, his colleague, Ram Manohar Lohia, stressed the need for the party and its members to focus not just on trying to win elections but on other objectives as well. As Lohia put it, a three-pronged approach was required, summed up in the words 'spade' (constructive work), 'vote' (electoral politics) and 'prison' (*satyagraha*).[1] He advocated party involvement in such things as digging wells and channels and building roads, and he also claimed that the problems of a country such as India were so great that it was insufficient to rely on political change through parliamentary methods alone. These needed to be supplemented by popular campaigns of non-violent civil disobedience when the government did not adequately respond to people's demands. JP, despite his often troubled relations with Lohia, was in full agreement with him on this. As Allen and Wendy Scarfe put it, JP urged party members to engage in: "organisation, propaganda, agitation, trade union struggle and strikes, satyagrahas, workers' education, and co-operative work involving the building of co-operatives, roads, dams and bunds [embankments]."[2] They cite JP as saying:

The object of all our activities is not merely to win elections, but to serve the people, to organise them to fight for and protect their rights and interests and ultimately to enable them through

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[1]Chitrita Chaudhuri, <u>Rammanohar Lohia and the Indian Socialist Thought</u>, Minerva, Calcutta, 1993, p 141.

[2]Allan & Wendy Scarfe, <u>J.P. His Biography</u>, Orient Longman, New Delhi, 1975, p 232.

collective mass effort to establish a socialist state and create a socialist society.[3]

As we have seen, at different points in his public life JP changed his position on the comparative importance of the three kinds of objectives described above, and often his position was at variance with that of his colleagues. For example, when the British colonial administration was conceding limited powers of self-rule to Indians in the 1930s - through parliamentary elections based on a restricted franchise - JP strongly opposed Nehru's involvement in these developments and continued to pursue the path of resistance (see Chapter 3, p 110). When active in the Socialist Party after Independence, JP's advocacy of the three-pronged approach described above might have seen him in agreement with Lohia, but it led to serious differences with others in the party. For example, a party report that promoted the use of Gandhian methods of self-help managed to be passed by a slim majority, but it was vehemently opposed by a large minority who believed that socialism could be achieved only through the agency of the state.[4] Subsequently, JP's loss of faith in the electoral approach led him to leave the party and join up with Vinoba Bhave, who exclusively focused on constructive work, on persuading the rich to give up some of their land, and on spiritual matters (see Chapter 3, pp 114-116). These

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[3]ibid.

[4]Scarfe & Scarfe, p 260.

priorities of Vinoba, and his disinterest in *satyagraha* or electoral politics in independent India, eventually led to the split with JP, who became increasingly concerned with both the failures of *bhoodan* and the deteriorating political situation in the country. JP took most of the members of the Sarva Seva Sangh (India's main Gandhian organisation) with him when he turned once again to *satyagraha* - in the form of the mass actions of the JP Movement (p 131). Later he turned to electoral politics when he drew the opposition parties together to contest the 1977 election (p 150).

Lohia's notion of 'prison', 'spade' and 'vote', and the experiences of Lohia and JP in pursuing these different objectives - emphasising one or another at different times and often at variance with their colleagues - echo some key distinctions and debates considered in this thesis. In particular, there are similarities with the distinctions between what I call the old and the new politics. 'Spade', 'vote' and 'prison' each correspond to a major area of social or political activity in the contemporary world. 'Spade' can stand for all those forms of social action that do not make a direct claim on the state - a claim, that is, to change the law or implement it differently, to provide funds or programs, and so on. It includes what Gandhians call constructive work, but it can also be said to encompass the sort of collective initiatives and changes that are pursued within groups and movements, relating to culture, lifestyle, mores or group

processes, activities that social movement theorists highlight as a feature of the new politics (as discussed in Chapter 2, pp 42-43). It ranges from material developments (for example, creating a communal farm or building) to non-material ones (such as pursuing alternative organisational structures, spiritual practices or forms of conflict resolution). 'Vote' can be said to include features of mainstream or institutional politics - political parties, elections, and legislatures and governments subject to ongoing scrutiny by voters and interest groups. 'Prison' can stand for extra-institutional forms of politics, including Gandhian *satyagraha* and other forms of action (some influenced by Gandhi) that have become common in the post-1960s era. These are frequently characterised by mass, participatory action, an orientation towards resistance or protest against government rather than co-operation with it, and a focus on specific issues. Of course, more institutional forms of campaigning and lobbying can also focus on specific issues, and the boundary between these two forms of political activity is never distinct.[5]

Lohia and JP were asserting that all three forms of action described above were important, and that the political entity of which they were a part - the Socialist Party - should be

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[5]'Prison' may seem an extreme word to use for extra-institutional politics in the context of democratic societies - where few go to prison for their political activities, but I retain it because it was Lohia's original term, and because the 'punishments' often meted out to marginalised people in India and elsewhere by police and others acting on behalf of elites when the marginalised assert themselves politically can be at least as severe as more legal forms of punishment.

involved in all three. This thesis also stresses the necessity of these three forms of action, but more importantly it argues that there should be strong links between action in the three areas, links achieved through involvement by civil organisations in multiple areas simultaneously, and through the maintenance of alliances between such organisations. Taking action in one of these areas only has significant disadvantages as follows.

'Spade' alone, without connections with the other two, can lead to ghettoes of change in a world otherwise unchanged. Gandhian ashrams may be models for a future society, but they are not models that are being taken up by the rest of India or the world. JP left the Sarvodaya Movement because Vinoba's vision of voluntary redistribution of land and of personal change was not being followed to the extent necessary to bring about a significant decrease in poverty in India. In most villages land ownership remained highly unequal and land reform laws were not being properly implemented, and other manifestations of poverty and inequality continued as well. In a more general context, there may be countless examples of people in local communities and groups the world over making changes to their lifestyles or social relations, but one has to ask how far such changes can penetrate if they run counter to the values and priorities embodied in laws, government spending, government programs, educational institutions, the media and private industry - rather than impacting upon these,

and being supported and reinforced by them.

'Vote' without connection to the two other forms of action is also insufficient, it is argued. A critical mass of support for a political platform or direction that either is new or runs counter to powerful social or economic forces has to emerge from somewhere; it does not come out of a vacuum. When the Socialist Party was preparing for the first General Election in India it expected to seriously challenge Congress. But the Socialists were bitterly disappointed when they secured only 10.5 per cent of the vote and twelve out of 500 seats (as noted in Chapter 3, p 113). One of their number commented after the vote that they had gone too high without a base.[6] They were competing against a party whose base was the very movement (of which the Congress Socialist Party was but one small part) that had won Independence. Even though, as I have argued, this base - and subsequently the party - was dominated by upper caste and class interests, Congress was able to capitalise on it electorally, in this first election and subsequently.

In the West, social democratic parties have normally been built on the base of a well-developed trade union movement with which they have formal or informal links. Reduced union coverage within the workforce and the emergence of a range of

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[6] Scarfe & Scarfe, p 259.

other issue areas, such as environmental imperatives and the rights of women and ethnic minorities (in which the leading forces for change have not been trade unions), have been factors undermining the efficacy of the union movement as the civil base supporting social democratic parties. But the current weaknesses of the union movement in this role does not mean that a base of civil organisations is any less necessary.

On the contrary, the argument that has been presented in this thesis is that for government to be more deeply representative of citizens, particularly the more marginalised citizens, its tenure needs to be based on a conditional electoral arrangement with an alliance of civil organisations. Such an arrangement enables organisations that are involved in the daily lives and struggles of their constituents - and thus possess a degree of knowledge, motivation and legitimacy in the representation of constituents' views and interests - to be also centrally involved in the broad determination of public policy so that these views and interests can also be central. This does not simply concern the adoption by governments of particular policies and legislation. It also entails effective implementation down to the lowest level, and organisations that are involved in the diverse facets of people's lives are in a good position to monitor the proper implementation of laws and policies and to assist constituents in taking action at different levels and sites if this is not occurring.

'Prison' - that is, civil resistance or protest, normally
concentrating on specific issues - without links to 'vote' or
institutional forms of politics is inadequate for the reasons
that were outlined in Chapter 5, where the following points
were made. Firstly, given the interconnectedness of policy
areas, effective action on one issue frequently entails
involvement with a range of portfolio areas and levels of
government administration, something likely to be beyond the
resources of many organisations. Secondly, given that
governments often pursue a general ideological position or
focus on the interests of certain sections of society,
specific demands that run counter to these ideologies or
interests are unlikely to be very successful. Thirdly,
governments have a repertoire of techniques through which they
can avoid meeting these demands, techniques ranging from
repression and the demonising of opponents to tokenism and
buying off troublesome organisations and individuals with
grants, contracts and government jobs. Fourthly, the costs of
this sort of campaigning, in the form of time, resources and
risks, can be high in relation to benefits gained. Lastly,
such campaigns tend to be unavoidably reactive, particularly
when they involve the marginalised. In general, governments
have power over laws, programs and public revenue that civil
organisations can never have. Only governments can hope to
match the power of other governments, multilateral agencies or
large corporations, all of which can significantly impact on

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national interest, and only governments can provide the overall co-ordination that is necessary for transformational political change.

The new politics, by conveying the idea that social action primarily takes the form of ongoing challenges to institutionalised power, settles for a politics that is much less than transformational. As T. K. Oommen has argued, movements and institutions are not necessarily antagonistic, but rather play complementary roles, with movements revitalising institutions and the institutionalising of movement objectives enabling aspirations to be translated into mainstream structures, programs and practices.[7] Why should those pursuing the politics of transformation be satisfied simply to engage in permanent resistance against institutions that may primarily represent narrow and privileged interests antithetical to those of the broader population? To do so is to live in a state of ongoing alienation from such institutions - institutions that could be at the service of all. Citizens should attempt to reclaim them as their own.

The JP Movement was an attempt at transformational change. Jayaprakash Narayan talked about *total revolution*, a transformation with political, economic, social and spiritual dimensions that was aimed, among other things, at eradicating

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[7]T K Oommen, <u>Protest and Change: Studies in Social Movements</u>, Sage, New Delhi, 1990, pp 151-153.

the poverty and suffering that so many Indians experienced at the time (and still experience today). Unfortunately, as we have seen, this noble endeavour was flawed in a number of important ways. There was insufficient systematic mobilisation of people in general, and of the marginalised in particular, to produce a critical mass of support for change in the interests of such marginalised sectors. Ideological and interest differences were not properly resolved, with different parts of the movement working on very diverse activities in an uncoordinated and often ineffectual way. JP's leadership, at the one time both authoritarian and weak, did not help this situation. And when the Janata Party was formed out of the parties involved in the Movement, and won government, there was no effective process through which the Janata Government could be accountable for its performance to the Movement that had created it.

Drawing lessons from this experience and from other attempts at political transformation through alliances of civil organisations, I have argued that in forming such alliances special attention needs to be paid to five tasks or challenges: building a critical mass through mobilisation processes, particularly a critical mass of marginalised sectors; reconciling interest differences within the alliance; reconciling ideological differences; overcoming logistical, organisational and other problems that may obstruct the alliance-building process; and establishing and implementing a

process through which a party or coalition is held accountable to the aggregated civil base with which it has made an agreement. I briefly considered a range of other groupings of civil organisations that approach this ACB model, although - with the partial exception of trade union movements, with reference to their relations with social democratic parties - I have not sought to analyse the extent to which these arrangements conform to the model I have described.

Through such a model, it may be that 'spade', 'vote' and 'prison' evolve into forms of action that are quite different from their original forms and less clearly demarcated from each other. Thus, the role of governance, to which we currently assign a designated group of people, may become something with increasingly blurred boundaries, as aggregated civil bases play a vital role in the broad formulation of government policy, and alliances and individual organisations are increasingly involved in monitoring, advising on, administering and evaluating public policy and its implementation. It may become unclear what activities and enterprises are 'government' and what are 'community-based' as control and resourcing of particular activities and enterprises are shared and dispersed. In these ways, managing of the community's 'constructive work' would become less distinct from managing the government's 'constructive work'. Also, having civil organisations speak out on specific issues would become an expected and integrated part of the normal

processes of governance rather than being seen as a 'protest' against such processes.

Moreover, as political involvement by civil organisations becomes increasingly accepted and expected, many of the costs of such involvement may be reduced. I have argued that any agreement between an ACB and a party or coalition should incorporate ongoing consultative processes and include measures to ensure that there could be no threats to the person, property, livelihood or other interests of those who are politically active. And when the door is open to political participation, an organisation or individual does not have to put so much effort into being heard, in that there is less need for mass rallies, fasts and other such tactics. But does this mainstreaming of political participation by civil organisations lead to the risk that new powerful, privileged and unresponsive elites may emerge - elites composed of dominant political parties and of long-established, entrenched ACBs? This is certainly a possibility, but I have argued that one way to counter this would be for the membership of ACBs (of which there could be a number) to be very open and fluid, so that disaffected organisations could seek to join them or encourage other organisations to join them, or they could form or join other ACBs.

What has been presented in this thesis is a broad argument about the roles of civil organisations and their relationships

with political parties. The limitations of relying only on specific-issue campaigning and local level action to achieve political change have been examined, and the possibilities for general macro level change offered by alliances of organisations have been explored. The thesis has analysed the record of some existing or past alliances - which I refer to as aggregated civil bases - but has principally focused on the JP Movement. The shortcomings of this and other ACBs have been identified, and in light of these shortcomings a set of requirements for a more successful electoral arrangement between an ACB and a political party or coalition has been suggested. But there is a great deal of room for further research into many aspects of this argument, and some of these aspects are as follows.

Firstly, there could be an examination of emerging democratic-deepening aggregated civil bases, as I have termed them. The examples in Latin America and the Philippines that have been cited (Chapter 6, pp 390-393) warrant closer examination, and it may be that there are many other such alliances being formed elsewhere in the world. These could be examined in relation to the tasks or challenges I identified for such ACBs in this thesis, namely, mobilising a critical mass of people, and particularly of the marginalised, reconciling different interests and ideologies, resolving logistical and organisational difficulties, and having processes of accountability to ensure that an agreement between an ACB and

a party or coalition is honoured.

Secondly, the same sorts of areas could be examined with reference to trade union movements and their relationships with social democratic or labour parties, currently and in the past. As I have said, the success of the union movement as an ACB is diminishing as a result of a range of factors, including declines in union coverage of the workforce and the emergence of a range of new concerns on which organisations other than unions are taking the lead. What does this mean for unions as an ACB? What examples have there been around the world of unions joining with other organisations in alliances for broad political change, and what has been the record of such endeavours? Also, what are the arguments for and against maintaining a formal connection between trade union movements and social democratic parties - as opposed to the sort of conditional and time-bound agreements I have suggested?

Thirdly, further analyses could be undertaken of movements and alliances that involve co-operation across quite different socio-economic sectors. In particular, attention could be given to the extent to which such alliances serve the interests of the weaker, more marginalised sectors involved. We saw that, for example, in the case of Indian farmers' movements many argue that their campaigns have predominantly benefited the more prosperous farmers. Do such diverse alliances meet needs within all sectors involved only by

focusing on one or a few issues, on those in which there is a clear commonality of interests? In such alliances, can organisations representing weaker sectors hope to acquire the power necessary to have a significant impact on the alliance's agenda?

Fourthly, attempts at articulating new ideologies might be studied. In the West there is much discussion of a Third Way, although this is sometimes portrayed as a blend of social democracy and neoliberalism, and other times as something quite distinct from both, with a heavy emphasis on the community's role in decision-making, problem-solving and the running of enterprises. Such 'Third Way' approaches are not new to the Third World, but do they leave some questions unanswered? For example, how can stark economic, social and political equalities be remedied through an approach that talks about a largely undifferentiated 'community'. When is co-operation across socio-economic sectors called for, and when is class-based solidarity and confrontation still appropriate?

Fifthly, further analysis could address the question of how the decline of the nation-state as a focal point of power impacts upon the model of transformational change presented in this thesis. Consideration could be given to the need for, and feasibility of, international ACBs or international alliances of national ACBs, as power shifts to private and public

institutions at this level. An examination of past and present efforts by civil organisations to co-operate internationally would be an important part of such a study.

Lastly, there might be a more thorough reappraisal of theoretical literature on social movements, community development, social action, action groups and other faces of what I have termed the new politics. I argued in Chapter Two (see especially pp 45-57, 61-65 & 82-99) that a great deal of this literature fails to address adequately the limitations of these forms of politics, and Chapter Five was principally devoted to outlining and giving examples of these limitations (and, as well, they are summarised in this chapter, pp 403-405). But there is scope for a great deal more work in developing a strong critique of such literature along these lines.

These kinds of research could generate a more substantial body of scholarship in a critically important area, namely, that which explores how transformational politics - in India and elsewhere - can become a more feasible alternative.

It is only through transformational politics that the 'sweepers' of this world can have their voices heard and their needs met. It is only through such politics that they can be part of genuine *swaraj*. The 'new politics' that began in the 1960s was claimed to be transformational, and in many ways it

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was. It brought new issues to the political agenda, new tactics to the repertoire of political actions and new participants to the political arena. But institutional politics - in the form of governments, parties and more established organisations - found ways of responding to the new politics without actually conceding to many of its demands.

To be transformational, politics must not only challenge, but also reclaim ownership of, the major political institutions of a society. As long as these institutions include governments and political parties, citizens need to find ways to ensure that governments and parties serve the interests of all among them, rather than predominantly serving a privileged minority. They can do this by bringing together the civil organisations they belong to, so that such an alliance of organisations can sit down at the table of power in an equal, assertive and co-operative relationship with a political party. Through such a process deeper, more effective democracy might be achieved.

*This list includes those interviewed during the three research visits to India, as well as those who responded by mail after the third visit.

* Locations and dates of interviews are in brackets at the end of each entry. In some case there were two interviews.

* Where 'currently' and similar terms are used they refer to the time of interview.

JOHN ABRAHAM: Director of Asha Kendra, an NGO in Maharashtra [Puntamba, Maharashtra, 11/3/95].

ARUN ANAND: Joined the JP Movement (JPM) when a matriculation student; later involved in the campaign to win land from the Mahant of Bodh Gaya, and in the Mazdur Kisan Samiti, an organisation that grew out of this campaign [Patna, 11/11/95].

E.D. AWAD: A student at the time of the JPM, he participated in some of the marches and other programs and followed its progress; currently works for the Rural Development Centre, an NGO in Maharashtra [mailed response, undated].

NARINDER BEDI: Director of Young India Project, an NGO in

Andhra Pradesh [Penukonda, Andhra Pradesh, 19/2/95].

RAJNI BHAKSHI: Indian activist; involved in Narmada Bachao Andolan (Save Narmada Movement) and Jan Vikas Andolan (People's Development Movement, a loose federation of groups); wrote newspaper articles reviewing the JPM a decade after it occurred [Mumbai (Bombay), c 16/3//95; Mumbai, 15/12/95].

A.B. BHARADWAJ: A Gandhian and non-violent action trainer prior to the JPM; during time of JPM participated in All-India Convention of Young People initiated by JP, at which was launched Youth for Democracy; involved in the JPM in Delhi, training students, youth and other citizens, producing literature and visiting villages; also in Citizens for Democracy and the Chhatra Yuva Sangharsh Vahini (henceforth 'the Vahini') [New Delhi, 15/12/95].

SURESH BHATT: At time of JPM an underground activist in the CPM(ML), ie, the Naxalites, who maintained a link between that organisation and the JPM; was a student activist in the 1950s; currently involved in a civil liberties organisation [Patna, 15/11/95].

AJIT BHATTACHARJEA: Former Editor of *Indian Express* and *Times of India*; wrote a biography of JP and was very close to him during the last 5 years of his life; sometimes accompanied him on travels during JPM; Editor of *Everyman* (a journal that

became the main organ of the JPM) until it was closed down during the Emergency; as a journalist he participated in discussions but not actions relating to the JPM, and was an occasional confidante of JP [New Delhi, 13/12/95].

MILIND BOKIL: A student at the time the JPM began, he became involved in the Movement once he left college, and joined the Vahini in Maharashtra; now does consulting work with local and overseas development organisations [mailed response, 22/1/97].

AVINASH CHANDRA: Prior to the JPM was involved in the Sarvodaya Movement with JP, including at Musahari; participated in the JPM; currently working with the Sarva Seva Sangh [Varanasi, 29/11/95].

RAJDEO CHOUDHARY: From a poor family; was President of the Students' Union at a college in rural Bihar when he became involved in the JPM; was an organiser for the Movement in villages; in October 1974 went to jail for the first of six times; now Director of Jan Shikchan Kendra, an NGO in Bihar [Chakai, Bihar, 22/11/95].

RAM SUNDA DAS: Politician; a socialist and associate of JP since 1945; held different posts in the Socialist Party [Patna, 14/11/95].

JATIN DESAI: At the time of JPM was a student in Mumbai;

learnt of JP's philosophy during the Emergency; worked for the Vahini for 6-7 years in villages, organising tribals and labourers; currently a journalist in Mumbai [Mumbai, 18/12/95].

LALLUBHAI DESAI: Involved in the Gujarat Movement as a student and jailed in the process; influenced by JP and events in Bihar; currently leads the Manav Kalyan Trust, Gujarat [mailed response, 12/4/97].

NARAYAN DESAI: Prior to the JPM, a leading figure in the Sarvodaya Movement and Secretary of the Shanti Sena; one of JP's 'lieutenants' in the Movement; currently still involved with the Sarva Seva Sangh in Gujarat [mailed response, 29/4/97].

SIDDHARAJ DHADDHA: President of the Sarva Seva Sangh during the early 1970s; chose to go with JP into the JPM; still involved with Gandhian organisations [Delhi, 8/12/95]

NAFISA D'SOUZA: Director of LAYA, an NGO in Andhra Pradesh [Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh, 14/2/95].

NARENDRA DUBEY: Joint Secretary of the Sarva Seva Sangh (1966-75); was among the minority of Sangh members who disagreed with JP and did not follow him into the Movement; continued Gandhian constructive work through other organisations [mailed

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response, undated].

GEORGE FERNANDES: Joined the Socialist Party in 1949; at time of JPM, was National Chairman of Socialist Party and President of All-India Railwaymen's Federation; was involved in the JPM as a member of the Socialist Party; at one stage was banned from Bihar but would go there in disguise; went underground for a year during the Emergency; a minister in the Janata Party, Janata Dal-led and BJP-led governments [New Delhi, 13/12/95].

WALTER FERNANDES: Works for the Indian Social Institute (New Delhi); a leading campaigner against the displacement of people from dam sites and other 'developments', and for housing rights [New Delhi, c 24/1/95].

GHANSHYAM: Became involved in the JPM as a university student in Ranchi, Bihar; joined mass actions in Patna and rural Bihar; organised students and marginalised sectors, including in villages; jailed before and during the Emergency; now Director of Judav, an NGO in Bihar [Madhupur, Bihar, 17/11/95].

GOPINATH: Director of Prayog Samaj Sewi Sansthan, an NGO operating in Madhya Pradesh under the umbrella of a larger NGO, Ektaparishad [Raipur, Madhya Pradesh, 8/2/95].

SHYAMALA HIREMATH: Director of the Indian Development Service, an NGO in Karnataka [Dharwad, Karnataka, 6/3/95].

S.R. HIREMATH: Director of Samaj Parivartana Samudaya, an NGO in Karnataka [Dharwad, Karnataka, 6/3/95].

L.C. JAIN: Involved with JP in Socialist Party from Quit India period; opted out (earlier than JP) to do constructive work (not with Vinoba) then joined JP in Sarvodaya Movement; involved in the formation of AVARD (Association of Voluntary Agencies for Rural Development) [New Delhi, 14/12/95].

AJIT JHA: Currently involved in Lokayan, an organisation promoting political and developmental alternatives, and in Samajwadi Parishad, a socialist organisation [New Delhi, 12/12/95].

PRABASH JOSHI: Prior to JPM, he worked in villages as part of the Sarvodaya Movement; in his words, he was "one of the communicators" of the JPM and not otherwise active in it; currently editor of a Hindi language newspaper [New Delhi, 8/12/95].

B.N. JUYAL: Prior to JPM, he worked in the trade union movement, and was also involved with JP in accepting the surrender of some bandits in the Chambal region and in mobilising support for Bangladesh; for a time during the

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Movement, he helped JP with office organisation; currently an academic currently working at the Gandhian Institute of Studies, which was founded by JP [Varanasi, 29/11/95].

AUGUSTINE KAUNDS: Executive Officer of the Federation of Voluntary Organisations for Rural Development in Karnataka (FEVORD-K) [Bangalore, 1/3/95].

GAJANAN KHATU: Mumbai based socialist; involved in some JPM actions in Maharashtra; currently involved in efforts to increase co-operation between socialist organisations across India [Mumbai, c 16/3/95; mailed response, 22/1/97].

ASHISH KOTHARI: Activist and son of Rajni (see below), involved, among other things, in Kalpavriksh, an environmental organisation [New Delhi, c 20/1/94].

RAJNI KOTHARI: A leading Indian political scientist and public commentator; an associate of JP at time of the JPM; played some part in the Gujarat Movement; involved in the establishment of Lokayan [phone interview, 11/12/95, & mailed additional comments, 25/3/96].

SMITU KOTHARI: Activist and son of Rajni; an editor of *Lokayan Bulletin* and in other ways a leading figure in Lokayan; marginally involved in the Gujarat Movement as a student; then became a producer of instructional television programs for

villages; had connections with the JP Movement but was not actively involved [New Delhi, 12/12/95].

SHARAD KULKARNI: A university teacher and Socialist Party member at the time of the JPM; participated in JPM actions in Maharashtra; currently Director of the Centre For Tribal Conscientisation in Maharashtra [Pune, 17/12/95].

ARBIND KUMAR: Was a student at a regional college who left to join the JP Movement; became a district convenor of the Chhatra Sangharsh Samati, and later of the Vahini, for which he was also on the state committee; was jailed before and during the Emergency; currently Director of Lok Jagriti Kendra, an NGO in Bihar [Madhupur, Bihar, 17/11/95].

SISHIR KUMAR: Prior to the JPM, a Socialist Party MP (later an independent MP); participated in the Movement [Patna, 14/11/95].

GEORGE MATHEW: Director of the Institute of Social Sciences, New Delhi, an organisation that, among other things, promotes the development of Panchayats [New Delhi, c 21/1/94].

KULDEEP MATHUR: Professor of Political Science, currently working for Indian Government [New Delhi, c 7/12/95].

DANIEL MAZGAONKAR: Part of the Sarvodaya Movement in Mumbai

for 20 years from 1955; went on walking tours with Vinoba; as part of JPM, was involved in organising people in Mumbai, going door to door, organising youth camps, etc. [Mumbai, 19/12/95].

M.D. MISTRY: Director of DISHA, an NGO in Gujarat [Ahmedabad, Gujarat, 15/3/95]

AMIT MITRA: Associate Director of the Centre for Science and the Environment [New Delhi, c 19/1/94].

(Mr) MOHAN: Campaigner for the South Asian Coalition on Child Servitude and the Bonded Labourers Liberation Front [New Delhi, c 20/1/94].

SURENDRA MOHAN: At time of the JPM, General Secretary of the Socialist Party and associate of JP; became General Secretary of the Janata Party when it was formed, and later an MP; was also involved with People's Movement for Civil Liberties, the Vahini and in work with the landless and adivasis; currently involved with two socialist organisations [New Delhi, 8/12/95].

K.K. MUKHOPADHYAY: Prior to JPM, undertook doctoral and post-doctoral research, and management training; at time of the JPM, was working at the Gandhi Peace Foundation, which was very involved in the Movement; currently an academic [Delhi,

13/12/95].

NATIONAL FISHWORKERS' FORUM: An organisation advocating for the interests of small fisherfolk and fish vendors [Mailed response (no individual's name supplied), undated].

KULDIP NAYER: A lawyer and human rights advocate; an associate of JP at the time of the JPM and involved with Citizens for Democracy, an organisation closely linked to the JPM [New Delhi, 14/12/95].

NIRMALA PANDIT: Director of the National Centre for Advocacy Studies [Pune, Maharashtra, c 12/3/95].

VIVEK PANDIT: In college in Mumbai at time of JPM; also around this time was involved in a teachers' union and a bus drivers' union, and in a socialist youth movement as a national executive member and organiser for Bombay; followed JP's call and left school for a year; participated in protests in Mumbai in support of Gujarat and Bihar Movements; during the Emergency involved in circulating underground bulletins; currently heads Samarthan, an NGO in Mumbai [Mumbai, c 16/3/95; Mumbai 16/12/95].

RAGHU PATI: Was a committee member of Chhatra Sangharsh Samiti, and a leader of the Samajwadi Yuvajana Parishad (a socialist student organisation involved in the JPM); was

tortured by police during the JPM; was involved in organising Janata Sarkars; currently working with an NGO, Samata Gram Seva Sansthan [Patna, 15/11/95].

CHACKO PARUVANANY: Secretary of People's Rural Education Movement (PREM), an NGO in Orissa [Berhampur, Orissa, 12/2/95].

ANIL PRAKASH: Suspended studies for one year to join the JPM (even though about to sit final examinations); as part of this went to work in villages; subsequently has been working with Ganga Mukti Andolan, an NGO fighting for the rights of Ganges fisherfolk [Patna, 11/11/95].

VIJAY PRATAP: At time of JPM, was in the Delhi branch of the Chhatra Sangharsh Samiti, and was convenor of a socialist youth organisation; jailed for 20 months during the Emergency; currently a leading figure in Lokayan and an editor of *Lokayan Bulletin* [Delhi, 12/12/95].

RAMCHANDRA PURBAY: Involved in the JPM; currently Deputy Leader of the Bihar Legislative Council for Janata Dal [Patna, 14/11/95].

RAM CHANDRA RAHI: Has been in the Sarvodaya Movement since 1956; at the time of the JPM was working in the publication section of the Sarva Seva Sangh; co-ordinated or was involved

in struggle committees and Janata Sarkars; still works for the Sangh [Varanasi, 30/11/95].

SEBASTI RAJ: Did a doctoral thesis (later published) on JP's philosophy of Total Revolution; did not meet JP or participate in the JPM; a Jesuit; currently, Director of the Indian Social Institute (New Delhi) [New Delhi, 10/12/95].

RAJAGOPAL: Involved with JP in accepting the surrender of some bandits in the Chambal region; also involved in youth camps and land reclamation in this region; involved in Gandhian organisations; in Chambal region at the time of the JPM, involved in mobilisation and developmental activity, and was fully in support of JPM; has also worked in Nagaland and Orissa; responsible for setting up the NGO, Ektaparishad; currently Director of the Gandhi Peace Foundation [New Delhi, 9/12/95].

D. RAMA KRISHNA: Director of the Rural Institute for Social Education (RISE), an NGO in Andhra Pradesh [Tirupathi, Andhra Pradesh, c 22/2/95].

ACHARYA RAMAMURTI: Prior to JPM, was a leader of the Sarvodaya Movement and a long-time colleague of JP; a leading figure in the JPM; currently runs his own ashram, Shramabharati, in Bihar [Khadigram, Bihar, 26/11/95].

KUMAR RANJAN: Worked with the Tarun Shanti Sena (Youth Peace Force) and the Chhatra Sangharsh Samiti; during the JPM was primarily involved in organising work in villages, and was later in the Vahini; at the time of the Emergency, was a fugitive for three months before being arrested and jailed; currently Director of Chetna Vikas, an NGO in Bihar [Bilasi Town, Bihar, 18/11/95].

NAGESWARA RAO: Lawyer working with People's Rural Education Movement (PREM) in Orissa [Berhampur, Orissa, c 11/2/95].

SURANJANA REDDY: Staff member for SEARCH, an NGO in Karnataka [Bangalore, c 2/3/95].

VIDYA REENACHANDRA: Staff member for MYRADA, an NGO in Karnataka, [Bangalore, c 28/2/95].

RAM BUCHAN ROY: Involved in the cultural side of the JPM, which included street poetry readings, art displays, articles in magazines and literary meetings; currently Professor of Hindi Literature at Patna University and a writer on this subject [Patna, 14/11/95].

SACHCHIDANAND: From 1954 was close to JP in socialist circles and later in the Sarvodaya Movement; JP's secretary from 1969 to 1979 and thus very involved in the JPM; now retired. [Patna, 15/11/95]

GIRIJA SATISH: Associated with the Sarvodaya Movement as a student; in 1970 was one of the founders of Nav Bharat Jagriti Kendra (NBJK), an NGO in Bihar, for which he still works (its establishment was suggested by JP); worked for a steel company for the first 6 years of NBJK's existence, during which time he was involved in the JPM in south Bihar [Brindavan, Bihar, 21/11/95].

HARSH SETHI: A leading writer and commentator through the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies in Delhi; currently working for Sage Publications [Delhi, c 25/1/94; New Delhi, 8/12/95].

SHIVA SHARAN BHAI: (Bhai means 'brother') Involved in the Sarvodaya Movement from 1958 and during the time of the JPM; he taught literacy in villages and the Movement caused him to take a more political approach to his work [Brindavan, Bihar, 22/11/95].

TRIPURARI SHARAN: A socialist from aged 13, he was in Samajwadi Yuva Samiti and the Socialist Party; he was a student activist and student union official; met with JP many times and followed him into the Sarvodaya Movement and worked in JP's ashram; became Convenor of Bihar Gram Nirman Samiti (Village Reconstruction Committee); one of JP's four 'lieutenants' in the JPM [Patna, 10/11/95].

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H.D. SHARMA: A Gandhian; was chairman of the Madhya Pradash Sarvodaya Mandel (State Council) at the time of the JPM (according to Sharma, the JPM was active in the state); still involved with Gandhian organisations [Varanasi, 29/11/95].

MAHESH SHARMA: At the time of the JPM, he was an official in the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) in Rajasthan and was involved in the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (a student association linked to the Jana Sangh); through these he became involved in the JPM; he was jailed for two years during the Emergency; currently works for the Deendayal Research Institute, which is associated with the Hindu Right [New Delhi, 5/12/95].

SHRIKANTH: Director of DEED, an NGO in Karnataka [Hunsur, Karnataka, c 25/2/95].

ANIL SINGH: At the time of the JPM, he was completing university studies; was involved in raising money for the Movement, but otherwise not involved; currently the Director of the Voluntary Action Network of India, which assists and advocates for voluntary organisations [New Delhi, c 21/1/94; New Delhi 6/12/95].

JITENDRA SINGH: Participated in the Quit India Movement; at the time of the JPM, was the *Times of India* representative in

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Bihar and Orissa, and through this had contact with JP and the Movement; currently a freelance journalist [Patna, 12/11/95].

KAVALJIT SINGH: Leader of the Public Interest Research Group in Delhi [Delhi, c 25/1/94; Delhi, 7/12/95].

MITHILESH KUMAR SINGH: Was a leading student activist in the JPM; became Bihar Chief Minister for the Janata Party in the late 1970s [Patna, 14/11/95].

RAMJEE SINGH: At the time of the JPM, he was teaching Philosophy at Bhagalpur University in Bihar; he followed the lead of students there and became involved in the Movement; his work with youth had already brought him into contact with JP; currently Director of the Gandhian Institute of Studies [Varanasi, 29/11/95].

RAM JATAN SINHA: Was outgoing President of Patna University Students Union at the time of the JPM and was involved in the Movement; later became a member of the Janata Party Government before switching to the Congress Party [Patna, 14/11/95].

H. SUDARSHAN: Director of Vivekananda Girijana Kalyana Kendra, an NGO in Karnataka [B.R. Hills, Karnataka, 25/2/95].

TAPESHWAR BHAI: Involved with JP from 1956 through the Bihar Sarvodaya Mandal; through this, involved in the JPM [Patna,

12/11/95].

JACOB THUNDYIL: Director the People's Rural Education Movement (PREM), an NGO in Orissa [Berhampur, c 10/2/94; mailed response, undated].

SHIVANDANDA TIWARY: Was in Socialist Party; a member of the steering committee of the Bihar Chhatra Sangharsh Samiti and thus a student leader in the JPM; went on to join Janata Dal; currently a state parliamentarian for the Samata Party, which broke away from Janata Dal [Patna, 11/11/95].

P.M. TRIPATHI: Has worked for the Association of Voluntary Agencies for Rural Development (AVARD) - of which he is President - since 1966; AVARD was founded by associates of JP, and Tripathi himself was closely associated with JP, who urged him to continue working in rural development rather than becoming involved in the JPM agitations (advice which he followed) [New Delhi, 9/12/95].

PAUL VALIAKANDATHIL: A Jesuit and Director of the Indian Social Institute (Bangalore) [Bangalore, 11/3/95; mailed response, undated].

RAJIV VORA: Involved in Tarun Santi Sena and was its first organiser in 1967; prior to the JPM was doing a Ph.D. at the Gandhian Institute of Studies, which led him to participate in

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the JPM and the Bihar Chhatra Sangharsh Samiti; in the Movement he had responsibility for organising all *satyagraha* activities in Patna; currently works at the Gandhi Peace Foundation [New Delhi, 12/12/95].

Interviews on the third field visit - with participants in (or in some cases observers of) the JP Movement - were semi-structured. The topics and questions covered in each interview included the following:

* What was your involvement in the JP Movement?

* Why do you think the Movement emerged when it did?

* What did it feel like to be part of the Movement? What effect did it have on you?

* How successful was it overall? What were its successes?

* What were its failures? Why did these occur?

[Depending on what was said here, any of the following supplementary questions might then have been asked.]

- Did the Movement reach enough people in: rural areas; other states; different population sectors?

- Were JP's ideas understood and shared by people?

- Was the Movement too ambitious?

- What sort of people were most attracted to it?

- Was there sufficient unity among participants? What united the Movement? What divided it?

- How well organised was the Movement?

- What did you think of JP's leadership?

* How did the experience of being in (or observing) the Movement change your views? What effect did it have on your thinking about: parties and parliamentary democracy; social change through mass action?

* What did you think of the performance of the Janata Government?

In addition to the above, other areas and questions were explored depending on the particular nature of the interviewee's involvement.

GLOSSARY

adivasi tribal person

aggregate civil base author's term for a broad alliance of civil organisations seeking general political change

Akhil Bhartiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) Hindu right-wing student organisation

antyodaya the welfare of the last (poorest) person

bandh general stoppage of business and work

bhoodan gift of land

Bihar Chhatra Sangharsh Samiti Bihar Students' Struggle Committee (initially, the key organisation in the JP Movement)

Chhatra Sangharsh Samiti Students' Struggle Committee

Chhatra Yuva Sangharsh Vahini Student and Youth Struggle Force (organisation set up by JP for Movement activists)

civil organisation author's term for any non-government, non-commercial organisation

constructive work Gandhian term for physical, non-political community work

dalit former untouchable (literally, oppressed)

dharna sit-in

gherao surround (a political opponent)

janata sarkar people's government

Jan Sangharsh Samiti People's Struggle Committee

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lok shakti people's power

Naxalite far left revolutionary

NGO non-government organisation

Other Backward Class lower caste (but not dalit)

panchayat local government

raj shakti state power

Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) National Volunteers Organisation (Hindu communal organisation)

rishi sage, seer

Samajwadi Yuvajana Sabha (SYS) socialist youth organisation

satyagraha nonviolent resistance (literally, truth force)

Sarva Seva Sangh Association for the Service of All (central Gandhian organisation)

sarvodaya the welfare of all

swaraj self-rule

Scheduled Caste dalit

Scheduled Tribe adivasi

Tarun Shanti Sena Youth Peace Force (Gandhian organisation)

total revolution Jayaprakash Narayan's proposals for political, economic, social and ethical transformation

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