DIPANKAR GUPTA

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To
Ashwinida and Amal
goodfellas and Bengalis too

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What is Political Sociology?

To understand the scope and specifics of political sociology it is necessary to position this sub-discipline within the broader framework of the discipline of sociology. Political sociology is not simply a little political science that sociologists do on the side, but is an integral component of sociology. Without grounding itself firmly in this base, political sociology would lack a disciplined focus. It is sociology in the first place that provides the ground level orientation to scholars who proceed to specialize in political sociology. For this reason it is best to be aware of the basic charter of sociology, for only then one can fully appreciate what sociologists do when they specialize in "political sociology".

DISCIPLINARY SPECIFICS OF SOCIOLOGY

The answer to the question: what is political sociology? cannot therefore be a brief one, but demands an excursion, however quick, over the field of sociology. It will soon be noticed that all disciplines (and sociology is no exception) are grouped retrospectively, and do not emerge a priori from any hidden essence. What this means is that disciplines do not emerge fully fleshed with the original founder: most often the founder is unaware of being one, or having performed what later generations believe was the foundational act. When we reflect on the origins of physics, chemistry, philosophy, linguistics and even sociology, we come to realize that most of these terms are modern, and when they are not, (such as philosophy and linguistics) they are constituted very differently today from the way there were in the past. For instance, Herodotus, or later Guicciardina are now considered by modern scholars to be the founders of the discipline

of history, but they certainly did not see themselves as such. Physics, chemistry, history, etc., are taught and practiced today quite at variance from the way they were in the eighteenth century or even later in the nineteenth century. Therefore, when we set out to understand disciplines it is not as if each designated discipline grew out of an original act, but that a set of scholarly practices are grouped and regrouped retrospectively under particular disciplinary labels. The contents of disciplines keep changing over time, often dramatically, as with medicine after germ theory; on other occasions the changes are so subtle and gradual that they often go unnoticed. In the west, for instance, medical training now includes surgery, which it did not do in the eighteenth century, but it does not include philosophy, as it once did in the late Middle Ages.

Sociology had a founder in the person of August Comte who publicly declared the term and his role as progenitor of the discipline. But in fact sociology as it is practiced today is a far cry from Comte's idea of it; nearly as far as Hippocratic medicine is from germ theory. Sociology did not really begin with Comte, but grew out of certain scholarly practices that gave salience to particular themes, around which conceptual and theoretical schemes evolved. The term sociology usefully labelled these practices. Because Comte first coined the term, he gets more prominence than is properly his share.

Robert Nisbet was quite right when he argued that sociology came into its own in the latter decades of the nineteenth century when European intellectuals realized the importance of community and group ties in moulding individual action (Nisbet, 1966: 740). To see individuals as free agents, facing no resistance from collective social relations was either a species of utilitarianism, or of radical positivism. Talcott Parsons drew sociological attention to the fact that both utilitarians and radical positivists are unable to factor the normative world in understanding human action. For utilitarians, individuals were in sovereign independence, buying and selling in the market place; and as for the positivists, it was scientific knowledge and not social relations, primordial ties, or the multiple choices of value orientations that were important (Parsons, 1974). It is because sociology places greater emphasis on these latter features that the collective (group or category) has a central position within the discipline.

This collective has sui generic properties, which, while open to scientific examination, is neither an aggregate of individuals (as in utilitarianism) nor a carrier of perfectly distributed scientific knowledge (as in radical positivism). For this reason sociologists are no longer motivated today, as Comte was in his time, by the desire to replace religion with science, nor have they the ambition of setting up new moral standards for society. The Comtean vision where social engineering was paramount and where professors of science could legislate is definitely out. What, then, is in?

As sociology is the child of the Enlightenment, not in its youth but in its bruised and mature stage, it is predisposed towards themes that have the collective at the centre. This is why sociology examines issues like roles, statuses, social structure, family, religion, etc. Each of these themes is meaningless without the collective aspect being implicit in them. Or again when sociologists discuss ideology, it is not as if the issue is examined in terms of the pure idea, or in terms of its internal coherences and structure, but rather to understand how social factors either influence or undermine certain thought streams. If the issue is religion then again it is not a question of furnishing a theological discourse but rather to scrutinize the manner in which certain religious beliefs and practices grow, how they are observed, and who observes them, meeting what kind of social exigency, and so forth.

THE CENTRALITY OF THE COLLECTIVE IN SOCIOLOGY

In sociological practices of this kind, whether they be of Emile Durkheim, or Max Weber, or Karl Max, the common assumption is that neither Robinson Crusoe, nor a purely autonomous construction of the individual, is a useful template for understanding human action. And yet, because sociologists study action at the level of the collective this should not be taken to mean that the individual is analytically unimportant to them. In sociology collectives are not understood as eternal entities, but rather as dynamic phenomena that change, grow and arise because individual actions pressure collectivities. It is not as if collective phenomena bend immediately to each such individual

pressure, but the totality of these particularistic contributions attain a life of their own, sui generis as held by Durkheim (1938), which is not directly reducible to individual needs or exhortations. This is how the individual is analytically important for sociological theory. Without giving the individual this conceptual space, sociology would be unable to come to terms with issues of social transformation with any degree of authenticity.

This would mean that while the need for change, or revolution, can be felt by individuals qua individuals, the ultimate mobilization has a certain autonomy which can be understood only at the collective level. Even when individuals observe customs and traditions there are always minute differences in these observances, both synchronically and dyachronically (over time). Through these small variations, large bodies of tradition are constantly evolving. The fact that certain kinds of human ingenuity get more or less purchase than others is important to sociologists for they draw attention to the social forces that condition these outcomes. In addition, historical factors, such as wars, famines, or inventions, privilege certain kinds of customary observances over others leading to disputes regarding what is traditional. Traditions thus change without one's full awareness of it. Today cassette culture has transformed the ways people perform community festivals, but it is not as if there was ever any conscious effort to break away from tradition, nor is it that individuals have singly made this difference (see Manuel, 1993). It is true that certain individuals started the process, but what is important for sociology is the examination of why certain initiatives make greater headway than others and become institutionalized practice. Once institutionalized, these practices both *constrain* and *inform* subsequent individual performances.

SOCIOLOGY AND PSYCHOLOGY

In this sense, a lone idiosyncracy is outside the scope of sociology, but group or category wide idiosyncracies, even deviance, are not. For instance, sociology helps us to understand criminal behaviour and tries to demonstrate why criminality exists in all societies, and why certain kinds of crimes dominate certain societies. This is not the same as looking at a criminal from a

psychological point of view. Psychologists try to understand how an individual's background and somatic make up, have contributed to the committing of a particular action. This is what separates the two disciplines quite profoundly. While in sociology an individual action is an *instance* of the collective (category or group), in psychology, an individual action is an *outcome* of the peculiar mix that social, somatic and biographical variables have arrived at in the person concerned. It is not uniqueness, or lack of it, that separates individuals and collectives, for the latter can be unique too. The difference is that in sociology the collective not only exists independent of individual manifestation, but constrains individual behaviour—without necessarily determining it. In sociology it is this constraint, and not pure determination, that is emphasized, which is why there is always room for change. But social change too, as we had pointed out a little while back, is not simply reducible to the individual or to the individual's drive and persistence. In fact social change is a prime example of collective effort, for individual pressures when quantitatively added undergo a qualitative transformation. This is why it would be incorrect to reduce the collective to the individual. It would be equally wrong to assume that individuals are unthinking bearers of the collective.

While human action is a common concern for both sociology and psychology, it is the way in which it is apprehended that marks the divide. In sociology human behaviour is an *instance* of, and is *constrained* by, the collective, and in psychology human behaviour is an *outcome* of internal drives and biographical specifics. In psychology individual behaviour is not an instance of the collective, or of anything else. To say that it could be an instance of the Oedipus complex, or of the collective unconsciousness, or of sibling rivalry, is not the same as saying that it is an instance of the collective. This is so because there is no collective out there with these complexes that when aggregated qualitatively transforms the complexes, or unconscious states. If such a qualitative transformation were to take place in any unconscious component of human behaviour because of collective bonding, then sociology would move in and take over. Psychological phenomena are therefore general, but they are not in any way collective. The crucial distinction is that if they were collective then serial additions would transform the aggregate. The

whole, as Durkheim said, is greater than the sum total of its parts. The fact that the libido, or the Oedipus and Electra complexes, exist in some of us, or in all of us, does not change the character of these psychological variables. They exist as general phenomena such that if all the ids and unconscious states were added up, no qualitative transformations would result in the constitution of these psychological factors.

As the general phenomena that psychologists study are not collective in character they are always uniquely balanced in the individual. If the collective element enters psychological analysis then it does so only as a boundary condition that affects individuals randomly. For sociology, on the other hand, psychological factors such as the death wish, sibling rivalries, libidinous drives, the collective unconscious, are seen as boundary conditions that affect members of the collective randomly. Those psychologists who have taken the collective seriously have often been popular intellectual figures but fared rather poorly in keeping up their practice as professional psychologists.

To sum up, when in sociology individual action is seen as an *instance* of the collective then it has the following implications: First, as Durkheim said, social facts are general because they are collective, and not the other way around (Durkheim, 1938: 9). This is unlike psychological facts which are general but not collective. Secondly, when individual acts are instances of the collective then the aggregation of these acts brings about a qualitative change which is greater than their sum total. Thirdly, the collective constrains individual action whose obverse side is that it provides a format for individuals to act upon. Individuals, therefore, are not mute bearers of the collective.

Now these specifics of the sociological orientation, as it has emerged through scholarly practices, are not of the kind that can easily be subsumed by other disciplines in the social sciences. This is why the issues sociologists study are different from those that are pursued in other specializations. The recurrent themes in sociology are those of roles, status, stratification, family and kinship, political authority, and classes, because in each of these the collective is at the centre. A sociologist is not simply concerned with what an individual does, but rather the way in which roles are being performed, statuses are being occupied, keeping in mind all the while the constraints that the collective

imposes on the individuals through duties, obligations and sanctions.

MARX, WEBER, DURKHEIM: FOUNDERS OF CONTEMPORARY SOCIOLOGY

Marx never saw himself as a sociologist—as a political economist perhaps—yet there are established academics today who believe Marx to be a foremost sociologist. Indeed Marx is taught in all mainstream departments of sociology all over the world. This is because in Marx's treatment of the mode of production, of money, of labour, or of commodities, there is an insistent recurrence of the theme that none of these can be understood other than as social relations. A capitalist is therefore not just Mr. Moneybags, but is part of the capitalist system which both offers certain opportunities as well as imposes constraints. In capitalism, for instance,contractual relationships are the dominant order of the day which weaken earlier loyalties and solidarities. Likewise, labour is not just toil, but a specific relationship that workers enter into within the capitalist system. A proletariat's labour is different from slave labour because of the nature of the system (the collective aspect) in which this work takes place (Marx, 1969: 142-50).

For Marx, individual behaviour can be grasped only within the context of the social relations that characterize each epoch. This is why Marx continues to be regarded reverentially in sociological theory, no matter what the fate has been of one time socialist societies. Durkheim, who was a more self conscious sociologist, approached the concept of the society, or the collective, much more directly. He drove home the point that society is more than the sum total of its parts, and that the collective is a phenomenon sui generis. These irrefutable sociological axioms owe their longevity to Durkheim's dogged and skillful presentation of the special place that sociology has in the social sciences. Like Marx before him, Durkheim too was a little too insistent with his case which earned him the reputation, of being dogmatic and too sociologistic. This is because Durkheim primarily saw the collective as constraining, and not as providing opportunities for, or exhibiting hiatuses and gaps which are amenable

to, human manipulation (Durkheim, 1938: 13). Marx too is blamed for stressing the materialistic dimension too deterministically without making room for individual agency. As with Marx, in the case of Durkheim too, a careful reading of their works demonstrate a greater level of subtlety which is often concealed in their zeal to press on with their significant conclusions.

Max Weber, the other leading influence in the making of contemporary sociological thought, came to the notion of the collective rather differently. Unlike Marx and Durkheim who did not problematize the subjective component of social action, Weber believed that the value dimension was central to sociological analysis. This is because individuals don't just act but find and give meaning to their action. Giving meaning to action is however not to be seen as a solipsistic enterprise, grounded deep within the interiority of the individual, but rather in terms of socially accepted genres of thinking, emoting and evaluating. Therefore individuals make their choices in life, pursue career goals, relate to other people, and contemplate on the meaning of existence, through these accepted genres of thinking prevalent within their society (see Weber, 1958: 155-80). It is true that Weber too was somewhat of an extremist, like Durkheim and Marx, much as he abhorred extremism in political life. This is because Weber often postulated cultural types and cultural predispositions rather inflexibly, leaving little room for commensurability between cultures, and for factors outside the realm of culture which may affect social life. Weber's great contribution, however, was to draw attention to the fact that individuals are not just powered by forces outside them, or act reflexively, but are thinking and even sentimental creatures. While neither Marx nor Durkheim would deny this truth, their sociologies were not sensitized in the same measure, as Weber's was, to the richness and density of the cultural sphere. Without this element, human behaviour would lose its sociological resonance and vivacity to a very significant extent.

To be able to give meaning to action would be inconceivable for Weber if individuals were to live in their own private and incommunicable worlds. After all the factor of meaning arises because one is sharing a world and cohabiting with others in a symbolic zone. The significant terms through which individuals consciously strive to give meaning to action are already there in

the collective prior to the individual, even if the individual is not always aware of this, and believes that his values and attitudes are entirely self wrought (see Parsons on this subject, 1974: 661).

The fact that the works of Marx, Durkheim and Weber are significant influences in contemporary sociological practices and not Comte or Saint-Simon, though they are routinely recalled in textbook histories of sociology, is because the discipline today visualizes the collective as being qualitatively different from aggregates, and that the whole is greater than the sum total of its parts. Individual action is thereby both constrained by, and is an instance of the collective. Interestingly, there are also some scholars who, in their lifetime, were hostile to sociology, but are now retrospectively considered to be important figures in the discipline. George Sorel (1950) is an outstanding example of this. Though he castigated sociology for what he believed was its partiality towards order and rationality, he is recommended today in most sociology courses for the following good reason. It was Sorel who forcefully, if also tendentiously, brought to our notice how powerful myths can be for bringing about social transformation once they grip the imagination of the masses. When myths are collectively appropriated they are infinitely more powerful than when they are lodged in disaggregated individual consciousnesses. Through Sorel sociologists realized that myths become potent and display strengths that may never have been suspected in them if they were to remain discretely within the individual. It is because sociology has now retrospectively regrouped and included Sorel (and here we may also add Pareto) within its fold, that its ability to understand the impact of so-called non-rational behaviour on collective life is so much richer.

POWER AND AUTHORITY — THE BASIC FEATURES OF POLITICAL SOCIOLOGY

Political sociology operates within these sociological concerns and, like any true sub-discipline, its contributions strengthen the main frame of the discipline itself. As the term quite explicitly suggests, political sociology is about politics, but only of a certain kind. While politics concerns itself with power in the broadest sense of the term, political sociology is really interested in

authority, i.e., in legitimate power. When power is legitimated it has the approbation of those who are dominated, whereas power per se has only to do with domination. It is true there are dictators and potentates who "wade through slaughter to a throne," but once there they, nevertheless, seek to legitimate their power. The extent to which they succeed or fail in this enterprise is a relevant subject for examination for political sociologists. The distinction between power and authority, therefore, explicitly or implicitly, frames all scholarship in this sub-discipline. Indeed, issues of this kind had little analytical focus before Weber's intervention. It can then be said without any hint of exaggeration, that Weber's distinction between power and authority, at one stroke, provided the key concepts for political sociology, as well as cleared the field for the growth of this specialization.

Moreover, as the above clearly implies, legitimate authority can be properly explicated only at the level of the state. Political sociology, therefore, has to do with the struggle to influence or capture state power, either directly or indirectly. This hangs together with Weber's definition of the state as the institution that legitimately *monopolizes* the means of physical coercion. If power is all about how others can be made to succumb to one's wishes, authority is about how acquiescence to this power can come from below. Accordingly, Weber distinguished between three main types of authority—traditional, rational-legal (the modern kind), and charismatic (Gerth and Mills, 1970: 295-99). The last form however is not a permanent feature, but comes up when the other two forms of governance have lost their authority and the search is on for something new. Eventually it is one or the other, either traditional or rational-legal, but charisma brings about the transition. It should however be remembered that charismatic authority is only such when it is recognized by the collective, for without this recognition it would not authority at all. More of this in a while.

Though, superficially, charisma is understood as an unique gift of the individual, yet it is only in certain settings that these special talents get full play and are commended by the collective. In a different context the same individual would perhaps not be appreciated at all, nor visualized as one with a historic mission. This again demonstrates that it is the collective that ultimately sanctions charisma.

Once the distinction between power and authority was spelt out, political sociology could look back and incorporate within its rubric earlier contributions on this subject by those who had not so self-consciously made this distinction. For example, Karl Marx's statement that the ruling ideas of an epoch are the ideas of the ruling class was interpreted earlier in an instrumentalist mould to suggest that rulers consciously forced their views on a recalcitrant population. But Weber's distinction between power and authority allowed sociologists to reinterpret the same statement of Marx to mean something quite startingly different. Though ruling class ideologies were still understood to quite clearly favour the ruling class in an objective sense, they are nevertheless subscribed to universally by both ruler and ruled. That a certain ideology gains predominance in a certain epoch is not because of elite or ruling class manipulation, but rather because social conditions favour such an outcome. Now one can fully appreciate why Marx argued that the ideology of freedom is such an important force in capitalist societies for both the bourgeoise and the proletariat. Capitalism demands that capital be free to search for the highest profit and not be tied down by guild restrictions. Concommitantly, labour too is free to look for remunerative wages without being held back by feudal and traditional obligations (see Marx and Engels, 1969). It is true that this ideology of freedom favours the capitalist more than the worker, but it is not as if the workers are reluctant believers in this matter. It is because the organization of capitalism gives the capitalists a clear edge over the working class, that the values most spontaneously and readily brought to the fore by capitalism can be called the ideas of the ruling class.

This theme has direct consequences for contemporary Marxian political sociology. It was in modern capitalist societies, after all, that democracy first developed and was subsequently consolidated. Democracy, all said and done, has to do with freedom and this idea once admitted, cannot by definition be limited to only a certain sector of the population. In other words the ideology of freedom applies to all, high and low, or else the notion itself becomes quite meaningless. This is the reason why the capitalist state, in Marxian scholarship, is structurally predisposed towards protecting and forwarding capitalism, as well as its cohort—the notion of the freedom of the individual. Capitalist

structural features and governing principles thus have a wider and much more broadly based popular appeal. Contemporary Marxists employ the term *hegemony* (borrowed from Antonioni Gramsci) to conceptualize this phenomenon, whereby the dominated accept the principles by which they are dominated, freely and of their own volition. Likewise, under feudalism, the ideology of chivalry and knight errantry, along with various kinds of patronages, were deemed legitimate by the collective, and were pursued and defended not just by the nobility and the aristocracy. If rebellions and uprisings take place, either in capitalist or in pre-capitalist societies, it is not as if they are always against the structural features of governance. Very often they are only against a particular regime which has lost its legitimacy. Revolutions on the contrary, occur when the existing principles of legitimacy have lost their authority and new ones are required to be erected in their place. It is not just a change of regime but a transformation of structure, as in France in 1792 and China in 1949.

THE NORMAL AND THE LEGITIMATE

Emile Durkheim's sociology also received some rearticulation in the light of Weber's power-authority distinction. In the *Rules of Sociological Method* (1938: 55), and elsewhere, Durkheim argued that sociologists should study the normal type, and that they should be able to differentiate the normal from the pathological type. Simply stated normal (sometimes even referred to as the average) phenomena were those that helped to sustain and reproduce a particular type of society. Pathological phenomena were disruptive for the maintenance and perpetuation of the whole. He did not attach moral judgments to normal and pathological, in the sense he did not posit that the former was good and that the latter was bad, but rather saw the two in terms of their contribution to the social whole. It is of course possible, Durkheim noticed, that what may be considered pathological in a particular society may be in fact the very feature that is urging the whole to transform itself, think differently, and set up new standards. Many scientists and great thinkers were considered to be subversives in their time but performed great historical tasks

in terms of social "progress" and transformation. Likewise, Durkheim maintained, certain forms of behaviour which are considered criminal are often not pathological at all. This is so because they do not disturb the foundations of the society, but may, in fact, help it to reproduce itself and re-emphasize its central values. If a society had no thieves and beggars then Durkheim contended, bad taste could well become a crime. Crime therefore is quite a normal feature of society, and indeed, an inescapable one, for it helps to draw attention to, and reaffirm, its core values (Durkheim, 1964).

Looking back at Durkheim's contribution from the vantage point of the Weberian formulation regarding power and authority, sociologists and anthropologists were able to separate judgments of what "should be" from "what is," with reference to particular political orders. If the "what is" in terms of the exercise of power has legitimacy in the society concerned, then it does not matter what the sociologists think should be the case. Political anthropology (a sister concern of political sociology) benefitted a great deal from this. Tribal chiefs were now understood as authority figures, and pre-modern forms of governance received a certain scholarly respectability in their own right. Max Gluckman, for example, argued very vividly that rivalry over kingship in Africa was normal for it demonstrated that the institution of kingship was held in great esteem by the people (Gluckman, 1971:111). Or when Evans-Pritchand (1969) found that the Nuer of East Africa have no political institutions like the ones we know, but nevertheless have institutions to resolve conflicts, then it opens our consciousness to the fact that all that is strange to our sensibilities need not be pathological, or unformed, but may have deep and legitimate bases in their respective societies. There is therefore no reason at all to be judgmental or dismissive of institutions and practices different from our own. Instead we should examine their functioning and efficacy in relation to the whole.

Coming to more modern systems of governance, the mere fact that somebody is in power and is manning seemingly legitimate institutions of rule, *but* by force and fear, would not make that power legitimate, nor normal. Durkheimian sociology would view such forms of domination as pathological regardless of how much silence such a regime has ruthlessly instilled. Underneath

the facade of tranquility such a society would be seething with contrary pressures and could hardly be deemed as stable, even though it may seem to be superficially so. Though the normal is not synonymous with legitimacy, it has helped to flesh out the definitive features of legitimate rule. If legitimate rule leads to higher than average rates of criminality and of normlessness, then it is quite likely that such a rule is pathological and will soon lose its authority and appeal. The Reign of Terror that followed the French Revolution is an example of such a situation. Eventually, in order to escape from Jacobin excesses, the people of France accepted the return of monarchical rule. Therefore, a legitimate authority when it is also normal, can expect a long duration; and, on the contrary, if it does not function within normal limits then no matter what the initial surge of popular enthusiasm for it, it would soon turn pathological and consequently lose its legitimacy. In this fashion, the distinction between the normal and the pathological, and that between authority and power complement each other.

THE LEGACY OF DURKHEIM, WEBER AND MARX

While noticing this affinity between Durkheim and Weber two other factors should be noted. The first is that Weber himself never thought of this affinity, though it is often puzzling as to why he did not do so. When Weber examined different kinds of authority, like traditional, legal and charismatic, he realized, as mentioned earlier, that the last was only a temporary phase and not a permanent solution. To restate the same in Durkheiman terms, charismatic authority is not a normal state of affairs, though there is no doubt that in the period of its duration it has the acquiescence of the people. Nevertheless, charismatic authority as Weber understood it, is structurally incapable of being durable over a long period of time. Contemporary political reality confirms this state of affairs quite abundantly. Even if we consider Lenin to be a charismatic leader, there is no doubt that once he came to power he was not interested as much in mobilization as in the consolidation of the Soviet regime on rational-legal lines. Mahatma Gandhi stayed charismatic to the end, and that is why he kept away from actual governance in independent

India. Mao Zedong on the other hand exercised charismatic, and anti-institutional, authority repeatedly after he came to power in 1949. First there was the Great Leap Forward campaign of 1958, and then came the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution of 1965 whose rallying call was: "Bombard the Headquarters"—the Headquarters being the Communist Party. It is because Mao successfully continued to exercise charismatic authority that Chinese society remained in convulsive throes of mass agitation for decades. Such a state of affairs cannot quite be called normal though Mao certainly possessed legitimate charismatic authority. Nearer home Mrs Gandhi's Emergency rule failed because its anti-institutional thrust needed strong boosts of charisma which, at that point in her career, Mrs Gandhi had forfeited with the mass of electorates. This should also remind us that charisma is not given once and for all to a person, but that it has to be earned and can be lost.

Secondly, though this happy confluence of Durkheim and Weber was all to the good, yet it needs to be noticed that it cast a somewhat conservative slant in the practice of political sociology. If the situation was stable on the surface it was often seen as normal for there was a marked distaste for charismatic authority among mainstream political sociologists. This was especially noticeable in the 1950s when under America's growing post World War II political influence, the American system was held up by many as the ultimate model. Studies in political development and nation building reflected this mood. Authority could best be legitimate and normal if the polity performed certain functions (as Durkheim would insist) for the maintenance of the whole. According to this line of reasoning the polity should be able to respond effectively to political inputs from the society as a whole in an institutional fashion, such that order and coherence of the entire social system can be preserved. Society was thus seen as a stable system, and the political structure was viewed as an important component of this larger system whose pre-eminent function was to meet goals deemed desirable by society (as in Talcott Parsons). But in order to perform all this the political structure must be differentiated to an appropriate degree. This would allow it to cope with the strains and pressures of society with specialized competence. This differentiation of the political structure ensures, above all else, that the politically relevant

strata are enlarged and that there is greater mass participation in politics. It was here that the American experience began to dominate the consciousness of western political sociologists. The institutions that were recommended by political sociologists of this genre were lifted straight out of the Western European, or more particularly the American world, and posited as logically necessary for the proper functioning of a modern political system. The recommended institutions were representative democracy, liberal values, and capitalism (see Huntington, 1971: 23 and passim; Deutsch, 1971: 390-91; Lipset, 1963: 211). Without these important supports, it was argued, polities would not be stable and would be prone to charismatic, Caeseristic and communist influence. In none of these cases, it was felt, would stable polities develop, so newly formed nation states had better beware in their nation building efforts.

As this conservative spirit was quite dominant it is not surprising that there were not too many studies on social mobilization and revolutionary transformations in mainstream political sociology. In addition, prominent scholars single mindedly devoted themselves to exposing the inadequacies of the Soviet or the communist model. In their view as communist societies, were premised at birth, on mobilization they continued to carry this strain in post revolutionary times as well. As communist regimes seek to realize hidden potentials in their respective societies, their people are constantly being exhorted by the state to perform exemplary action regardless of personal well being or interest. Communist societies are therefore mobilization societies inherently incapable of reproducing themselves without the state, and hence wanting in many respects when seen from the western capitalist viewpoint (Apter, 1967: 24).

Though such an approach was very useful for comprehending actually existing socialist/communist societies, it often obscured other issues. Western democracies, and America in particular, were portrayed as if they were well oiled political structures pumping out all the essential outputs, without any internal contradictions or dissensions. Though scholars like Lipset were alert to the fact that democracies can create apathy, bureaucratization and sentiments against representational governance, yet on the whole no serious problems were visualized (Lipset, 1963: 208). The fact that the turmoil of the 1960s and 1970s in the west was

unforeseen by these academics gave rise to a sense of disquiet amongst them, but it did little to alter their fundamental orientation. It is true that America is a mature democracy, but it is also true that America has grave problems which it has not yet overcome. For instance, less than half of its eligible voters actually go to the polls; it suffers from serious inner city strifes; and every now and again, different communities in the country clash against each other with such unbridled ferocity that even the law enforcing machinery is paralysed with fear. Indeed America herself has room for further development and can hardly be put out as a finished model whose every aspect is worthy of admiration. The fact that this seamier side of western politics was never fully recognized by many western scholars demonstrates how easily political opinions and prejudices can overwhelm one's intellectual agenda, openly determining the choice of topics and the outcomes of research.

Political sociology therefore became somewhat predictable in such renditions. But as will be easily admitted, this trend was not a logical outcome of the conceptual framework of political sociology, but was only characteristic of a certain kind of scholarship that came up primarily in the 1950s and 1960s.

During this period and later there were other tendencies too. C. Wright Mills' examination of the power elite in America demonstrated how authority was won and maintained by the skillful management of credulous and inherently powerless masses (Mills, 1956). But Mill's critics argued that though there was a kernel of truth in what Mills had to say, it was nevertheless articulated in too instrumentalist a fashion. Mill's contentions were however not so easily dismissed for he cogently demonstrated the political advantages certain privileged classes had over the others even in a democratic society. This brought many Marxists close to Mills but a fundamental divide remained between the two. The ruling class in Marx stems from the ownership of control over the means of production, but for Mills, the power elite could be drawn from diverse quarters, military, industrial, and corporate.

Thus while there was a strong conservative trend on the one hand, the radical and critical stream also made impressive strides. From the 1970s onwards there was a significant increase in the number of scholarly works which asked questions

reminiscient of Marx and Mills. Legitimate authority which was hitherto not seen in problematic terms began to viewed as such. Very simply the question was how domination could be authoritatively achieved even though the majority neither wield power nor actually enjoy its benefits. Yet, whether it was openly acknowledged as such or not, even in these radical studies, domination was never simply pure power but the striving for legitimate authority. Weber's influence thus kept showing up even in avowedly non-Weberian exercises.

It was in the 1970s again, and in pursuance of the anti-conservative, and at times radical research concerns that closer attention came to be paid to social movements. Peasant movements and ethnic/communal movements were the ones that attracted the most attention. Though studies on peasant movements were inspired largely by historians, sociologists too made significant strides in this field. They contributed substantially to the understanding of peasant ideology, the class bases of peasant movements, and the potentials that peasant movements possess for revolutionary transformation (see Dhanagare, 1983: Shanin, ed., 1971). Ethnic/communal movements were also a major area of study that emerged in political sociology in the 1970s. After the rise of Hitler and fascism, this was the first time that interest focussed around how cultural differences can become potent weapons for social mobilization (see Rex and Mason, eds, 1986; Esman, ed., (1979). Both peasant movements and ethnic/communal movements, as we shall soon see, have been studied in great detail and depth in India. India provides the ideal field for such investigations as it is primarily rural and also has rich social and cultural diversities within it.

POLITICAL SOCIOLOGY OF INDIA/POLITICAL SOCIOLOGY IN INDIA

Independence in 1947 changed the political and social climate of this country. There was a spurt of optimism in the future and energetic enthusiasm for the present. India set out to modernize itself but without the phillipics and upheavals that China or Russia went through. In the Indian case, neither tradition nor traditional authority was extirpated by force, and yet, political sociologists argued, this did not hold up the development of

democratic institutions in the country. In their view this was possible because tradition was moulded and transformed in a uniquely symbiotic way to aid the cause of political and social modernization of India.

In spite of scepticism from several quarters, internal and external, India was able to politically steady herself, give herself a modern secular constitution, and, most remarkably, adopt a democratic pattern of governance. Sociologists such as Lloyd and Susanne Rudolph (1967) found that India had irrefutably taken the road to modernization, and many of its traditional institutions, like caste and kinship, were undergoing substantial modifications as a consequence. Political sociologists were particularly interested in studying how caste loyalties interact with democratic politics, for the two have such disparate logics. Yet, in the 1960s itself, it was argued by a number of sociologists, notably the Rudolphs, that the caste system, far from being a hindrance to democratic polity, was in fact providing peasants with a ready-made grouping from which they could put forward their interests within a competitive political structure. Neither did it seem that the myriad differences in caste, language and religion that characterize India, were posing a threat to its unitary coherence as a nation state. In India regional loyalties co-exist with nation-state sentiments in a manner that most western commentators thought would be well near impossible.

India therefore presents many features that have substantially altered received theories and conceptualizations in political sociology. It is for reasons such as these that it is argued here that the phrase political sociology *in* India is more appropriate than political sociology *of* India. It is true that the general concerns of political sociology, such as authority, and social bases of power, still hold good for India, as indeed they do elsewhere. Nevertheless, experience has shown that it would be unwise to transplant western theories, particularly those of the nation state, or the relationship between tradition and modernity, wholesale to India without doing injustice to the realities of the situation.

2

Scholarship and Social Reality

Political sociology in India has been significantly influenced by events that have taken place in the country. While at one level this may sound like a truism it needs also to be noted that political sociologists and anthropologists have been extremely sensitive to their social environs and have reacted to issues without always waiting for the dust to settle. This speaks not only for the sub-discipline but also of our national concern with the Indian polity for it attracts so much intellectual energy and vigour. The fact that India is the world's largest participatory democracy naturally demands attention. Add to this the fact that India is the most ethnically diverse nation state, as well as one of the poorest, and one can see the reason why India's politics and political system draw so much academic concern.

In the decade of the 80s too, political sociologists and anthropologists have been driven by contemporary events. It is not as if such scholars did not take a long term view of India but that such long term views were occasioned by very immediate happenings in the political sphere. Significantly, it also needs to be noted, there has been no major attempt at general political theory in the 1980s, though most contributions on the subject of political sociology and anthropology have been imbued with theoretical concerns. This is important to bear in mind.

THE POLITICAL SCENARIO IN INDIA IN THE EIGHTIES

The 1980s inherited from the seventies, at least in the first few years of the decade, the concern with the Janata experiment and what consequences it had had on the nature of political participation and articulation in the country. The re-emergence of the Congress (I) with Mrs Gandhi at its helm invited scholarship on

the nature of governance and the role of institutions in political affairs. A few contributions delved into the aspects of political participation and ideological interplay. But the early 80s still gave evidence of an overwhelming concern with the workings and machinations of the political system including the plottings of the coterie at the centre. As we move into 1984, or thereabouts, a distinctive feature of the eighties emerges, viz, a burgeoning volume of scholarship on the issue of communalism and ethnicity. That studies on this subject overwhelm one is also understandable for from the 1980s onwards one saw the emergence of heightened communal and ethnic tensions all over the country.

It is true that the Assam agitation began in the 1970s but it somehow did not put pressure on the given ideological and theoretical parameters of the nation state. The problems with the refugees from Bangladesh, and of Bengali domination in the province, were contained within the prevailing constructs of the nation state. In terms of political participation and ideological articulation they did not generate the kind of heated debates nation-wide as the ethnic issues of the 80s did. The most significant reason for this is that the leadership of the Assam agitation did not question the viability of the nation state and thus did not put secession on the agenda. Thus while in Assam people were embroiled in protracted and intense political agitations which often led to the ruthless killing of innocent people (as in the Nellie massacre), the national reaction to these was not quite the same as in the case of the Punjab agitation, or the unrest in Kashmir.

The issue of Kashmir will perhaps draw a lot more attention in the nineties as it surfaced in its current angry form in the late eighties. But the Punjab problem burst on the Indian scene without too much of a warning, leading many to ponder not only on the nature of ethnic conflict and militancy, but also on the received theoretical and analytical understanding of the nation state. In Punjab for the first time a section of the Sikh community demanded unconditional secession from India. The Punjab agitation revived old memories of antipathy between Hindus and Sikhs and brought out a new dimension in inter-ethnic group behaviour. The Sikhs who were hitherto considered by many Hindus to be the sword arm and protector of Hinduism had now suddenly given notice, as it were, to the Hindu community.

Consequently many scholars began to ask questions regarding the nature of the bond that holds together a nation state.

Besides Punjab, India has also witnessed in this past decade other communal conflicts and tensions such as those between Hindus and Muslims, as well as those based on caste mobilizations. Naturally with problems of this sort the nature of the power structure, including its apex and the ruling government, was also researched upon. But it must be said that academic studies on caste movements have not figured as much in the eighties as they did earlier. Perhaps in the wake of the Mandal Commission agitation the nineties will have more to say on the subject.

The farmers' movement in India again was studied by a large number of scholars. This too was not simply sponsored by an academic interest but one which was directly inspired by events in the country. In 1985, Mahendra Singh Tikait galvanized the farmers of west UP to agitate against the increase in electricity rates. The agitation was highly successful. This led to the consolidation of Tikait as a spokesperson for the farmers of west UP. Tikait led many other agitations soon after, in Meerut, in Delhi, and so on, and all of them were widely publicized and very impressive. What was particularly noteworthy was the fact that the peasants of west UP responded to the call of the BKU and turned up in large numbers over several days and exerted considerable pressure on the state government.

It is not as if the phenomenon of the farmer's movement is new to the decade of the eighties, but that Tikait gave it a flavour which was quite exceptional. Farmers were now seen in their own right and not as adjuncts to the working class, or as part of the modernization phenomenon. In addition, attention was being paid to examining the relationship between rural outlooks and urban imperatives. The farmers too were conceptually separated from peasants and from the rural proletariat. The focus was explicitly on those rural producers who were middle peasants and above: who not only marketed their grain, but also used modern agricultural inputs.

The emphasis on the farmers' movement has other significant ramifications. The green revolution had inspired a great many studies in the past and continues to do so now, but the farmers' movement demonstrates the stressful consequences of the green

revolution among those who are supposedly its beneficiaries. This aspect of the green revolution was hardly noticed earlier. The emphasis so far had been on the benefits of the green revolution: on whether or not the effects of the revolution were trickling down; and on the gap between the beneficiaries of the green revolution and the rural poor. It is true that the farmers (or the green revolution beneficiaries) had begun to grumble in the past but somehow these voices had not carried very far. It needed the likes of Tikait and the massive show of disdain by the west UP farmers towards the structures of power that lent the farmers' movement a new dimension.

If one were to put the farmers' movement aside then one would not find too many studies in the 1980s on agitations by the rural classes of India. This however is in stark contrast to the earlier decades when agitations of the rural poor were highlighted in many studies. While it is true that the problems of the rural poor have not yet been resolved, it is also true, and perhaps ironically so, that rural agitations by the poor have not received much attention in the eighties. It would be incorrect to say that there have been insignificant cases of unrest by the rural poor, or, as is often the case, of the rural rich against the rural poor, but academically it appears there was not much by way of stimulus in these agitations. One might conclude, perhaps a trifle hazardously, that unlike the farmers' movements, these other rural agitations opened no new queries which needed to be addressed.

A similar situation pertains with reference to the trade union front as well. If there is any trend at all with respect to scholarship on the urban working class then the trend is a negative one. Unlike the seventies, and the eighties, when the Datta Samant phenomenon hit Bombay, there have been no significant cases of working class politics in the eighties. The paucity of academic contribution on this subject, reflects, in this case, the reality of working class quiescence. One could say the same for student movements as well.

Therefore, to reformulate the above: it is true that contributions in the field of political sociology and anthropology have been influenced by political occurrences in the country, yet it needs also to be stated that there have been areas where academics have not been unduly involved because these areas provided no fresh intellectual stimulus. The best case in this

connection is of course the movements and agitations by the rural poor.

On reviewing the literature of the eighties four broad trends emerge in the sub-discipline, political sociology and political anthropology of India. These trends relate to studies on (i) Power structure, (ii) Crisis of governance, (iii) Ethnicity and politics, and (iv) Peasant or farmers' movements. These are of course broad categories and there is considerable internal differentiation and variation within each of these.

The works that have been grouped under power structure, refer not to examinations of how the power structure operates but instead focus on the various political groups that are relevant for power analysis. In other words, the examination tends to concentrate on the role of caste, language groups, religious identities, economic affiliations and interests which are politically salient either for capturing power or for exercising it. Studies under this rubric often take into account certain ethnic and communal identities and yet they should not be grouped under studies of ethnicity. This is because ethnicity and politics, in our categorization, refer to exceptional moments of ethnic tension and strife and not to the routine uses and abuses of ethnic identities for political purposes. It is necessary to keep this distinction alive for otherwise distinctive features of the eighties will be undermined.

When we deal with the crisis of governance we are going to review those studies which emphasize institutional decay of the political order, especially after 1975 and the proclamation of Emergency. It may be a moot point to argue that if there is institutional decay then this decay will lead to a state of perpetual crisis. The concomitant question could well be that if one set of institutions is decaying then are there other institutions coming up to take their place? If the latter is not happening then truly we are headed towards a crisis of legitimacy. The last two categories of our presentation, namely those of ethnicity and of the farmers' movement, need no preamble as I have already spent some time on them.

3

The Power Structure

In the studies of the power structure one is liable to get diverted with works on the role of parties, their alignments, and with the personalities involved in them. Political biographies or accounts of political parties: their birth, membership rules, numerous resolutions, and contemporary visage are all no doubt interesting and are relevant for political sociology and anthropology but are still not quite germane to the sub-discipline. Such preoccupations typically characterize political science and even history. For this reason I shall not pay attention to works of this order though they are all very useful to sociologists/anthropologists, and indeed should be read by them.

The most significant contributors in sociology and anthropology on the Indian power structure include among them notable political scientists. Paul Brass, Francine Frankel, and Rajni Kothari are some of the names that immediately come to mind. Interestingly enough the three authors just mentioned have also contributed quite significantly in the 80s and their individual works reflect various aspects of this decade.

THE WEAK-STRONG STATE

Let us begin our review of the works that have contributed to our understanding of power structure from a sociological perspective with the important publication, *In Pursuit of Lakshmi* by Rudolph and Rudolph (1987). Starting from the fact that India has dual and paradoxical features about it, the Rudolphs set about to analyse the consequences of such paradoxes. India has a "weak-strong state" and the Indian economy has its "rich-poor quality" (ibid: 9). Consequently "the historic adversaries of class politics, capital and labour are marginal and the centrality of the

political process is captured by the state" (ibid: 21). Private capitalism in India depends on the state for its profits as well as for its security—a kind of *"dharmashala* model" (ibid: 25). Private capital does not have a strong public voice and most negotiations do not take place in the open but are conducted in camera behind closed doors. After the demise of Swatantra Party there is no clear party which clearly and unabashedly advocates the interests of private capital (ibid: 25).

The centrality of the state figures again when discussing the reasons as to why confessional politics of the Hindu variety have not taken over the state despite an 80 per cent Hindu majority in the country. In order to create a broad national base the imperative seems to be to seek consensus across the board and conform to a centrist ideology. To challenge this would be a formidable task especially in view of the fact that the founding myth of the Indian nation state is secularism and it exerts a powerful influence in the ideological realm even today (ibid: 36).

In addition to this founding myth, India has, the Rudolphs argue, many significant minorities like the Muslims. Seventeen per cent of the population is not Hindu, and even within Hinduism there are the so-called untouchables who roughly constitute about 15 per cent of the population. These untouchables have been so discriminated against in the past, over centuries, that they are not attracted to the call of Hinduism. All told about 38 per cent of the population (including the scheduled tribes) lie outside the Hindu fold proper. The fact that a large number of ex-untouchables and tribals are called Hindus is an error of census enumeration (ibid: 37). This leaves only 68 per cent of the population that one could reckon as belonging to the Hindu stream (often, mainstream). Obviously, not all of them are going to be swayed by Hinduism and by the lure of confessional politics. This makes the challenge of confessional Hindu politics feeble when seen in the national context. This is why centrist parties are usually preferred when the people go to cast their votes in national elections (ibid: 36-37).

POLITICAL DOMINATION AND SOCIAL POWER

On the issue of electoral calculus and demographic break up one

finds several contributions in the eighties. Francine Frankel and M.S.A. Rao have together edited a two volume work entitled *Dominance and State Power* (vol. I 1989, vol. II 1990). Basing herself on the assumption that India is a religious society (Frankel, 1990: 484) Frankel argues that British rule in India opened the door to educated Shudras and untouchables who had hitherto been bound by the order of the religious hierarchy (ibid: 485). But the traditional order was too entrenched to be displaced completely. Caste associations cropped up all over India and were used to lobby governments for specific caste based concessions. Quite paradoxically economic differentiation enhanced primordial caste loyalties. The Backward Classes too found their own identity as separate from the other Scheduled Castes (ibid: 506). Thus Frankel argues: "All of these factors taken together help explain why despite growing economic differentiation, region, religion, caste cluster or tribal group remained the primary identity through which economic discontent was articulated" (ibid: 507).

Some of the articles in the volumes mentioned above contain factual testimonies to Frankel's views and she quotes them repeatedly in her study. In particular her argument is bolstered by her presentation of the Backward Classes Movement since Independence. In the seventies in Andhra the Congress Party responded to increasing Backward Caste pressure by providing reservations of up to 25 per cent for these castes. Mrs Gandhi too wanted the Backward Castes with her for electoral purposes and hence reduced the number of Congress tickets to Kamma and Reddy castes after 1972. In neighbouring Karnataka, Chief Minister Devraj Urs also reduced the proportion of upper caste Lingayat and Vokkaliga aspirants to the state government on the Congress ticket.

In Gujarat the Patidars deserted the Congress in 1975 but the Congress strategy of bringing together the Koli-Kshatriyas, Harijans, Adivasis and Muslims (KHAM) brought it back to power in the elections of 1980 (ibid: 511). In Gujarat the important castes to be taken into account for electoral calculations are the Vanias, Brahmins, Patidars and Kolis. But the interests of these castes are not always identical. The Vanias and Brahmins are worried about employment for the youth and believe that the rise in the number of educated unemployed, is principally from among the upper castes. Thus they argue, unemployment can be traced to

the reservations for Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe candidates (ibid: 511). The Patidars who want to be included among the Backward Castes, though they also claim Kshatriya status, have successfully lobbied for an increase in reservation for the Backward Castes from 10 per cent in 1978 to 28 per cent in 1985 (ibid: 512). Thus, concludes Frankel, "caste and community remained the primary identity for all groups" (ibid: 513). Electoral outcomes are therefore understood in terms of caste alliances and religious pacts. Such phenomena explain why the elections, say in Bihar, went a certain way and why the poll outcome in UP went the other. The emergence of the BJP in 1989 and 1990 is also attributed by Frankel to the primacy of primordial groups, in this case, religion (ibid: 515). In her own essay entitled, "Caste, Land and Dominance in Bihar" Frankel tries to demonstrate how caste and the Backward Castes in particular have played an important role in Bihar both before Independence and after (Frankel, 1989; 108).

While this is certainly a very persuasive position there are several difficulties with it. The most glaring conceptual flaw is that the understanding of loyalty to traditional and primordial associations like caste and religion is not quite that unproblematic. Mobilizations based on caste are quite different from mobilizations based on religion because in each case a different set of people is being mobilized. It is not as if a certain number of people stand aside separately and discretely as religious groups and certain others as caste groups. There is for instance the Hindu religion and there are different castes within it. The important issue then is why is it that at certain times castes become active and at certain other times religion? In addition, the coming together of castes such as the Kshatriyas in Gujarat (Shah, 1990) or the Kurmis in Bihar (Frankel, 1989b: 63) or the Lingayats in Karnataka (Manor, 1989: 333) or the Brahmin groupings of Tamil Nadu (Washbrook, 1989), is also a contrived grouping and not one that corresponds to endogamous jatis. The fact that different named jatis have cobbled together such identities raises issues other than simply loyalty to traditional caste and religious identities.

In this connection it needs also to be noted that even if one were to assume that the masses express their political opinions only (or primarily) through traditional institutions, it still does

not explain two features which cannot be overlooked when examining the Indian political scenario. The first is that if a multiple caste alliance, such as the KHAM, has done so well on one occasion then how is it that it is often removed or voted out by rivals soon after: in the case of Gujarat in just a few months (as with the Solanki government: see Brass, 1990: 217-22)? Obviously, if it is caste loyalty and traditional attachments we are talking about, then once domination has been achieved by virtue of numbers, and assuming that castes do not change colours easily, then surely this domination should be of an enduring character. Zoya Hasan argues that there are certain very definite limits to caste mobilizations "because of the perpetual struggle over the distribution of benefit to various castes and classes" (Hasan, 1989a: 187). In fact, she goes on to say that where there is caste consolidation this consolidation comes about principally against the rural poor who statistically belong to other castes. Thus "the rise of middle and Backward Castes such as the Jats, Ahirs, Kurmis, and Gujars in a number of districts intensified conflicts between the Yadav and Kurmi landowners and landless agricultural labourers" (ibid: 189).

Hasan's argument seems to be that caste consolidation does not take place because of cultural affinity, but rather because of economic interests. Statistically, there is a correlation between caste membership and economic or class location. This is the motive force that pits Yadav, Kurmi or Jat labourers against landless labourers who often belong to other castes. It is this statistical association between caste and class that often conceals deeper economic interests behind caste consolidations.

This is not all. There are problems at the level of electoral results too. If one examines the election outcomes in terms of caste break up and caste alliances one cannot adequately explain electoral outcomes. Joseph and Mahajan, in a recent article in the *Economic and Political Weekly*, have argued that the 1990 polls show that caste alliances and predictions based on caste numbers have both come to grief (Joseph and Mahajan, 1991: 1953-1957). While this is not to say that castes do not sway minds in India it would be overstressing the point if one were to argue that it is caste alliances and caste loyalties alone that matter. Frankel seems to encourage this point of view though it does not seem

to be reflected in the papers by some of the contributors to her volumes (Hasan, 1989; Washbrook, 1989: 225, 231-232).

In this connection one might also refer to Moin Shakir's analysis of election figures. Shakir's principal contention is that it is difficult to forecast in advance which way the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and religious minorities will vote, for secular issues are also taken into account by voters during elections (Shakir, 1980: 222-225). In a later paper Shakir returned to this issue more pointedly. He examined Muslim support to the Congress on a national scale and found that the party did not enjoy a monopoly over Muslim votes (1990:105). Indeed, on occasions, as in the elections of 1977, the Muslims went against the dictates of several Muslim organizations, including those of the teacher's and student bodies of Aligarh Muslim University and Jamia Millia, and voted for the Janata Dal (ibid: 101). In 1971 Muslims in Bengal voted for the left alliance and in 1980 the Lok Dal and Congress (U) won a lot of Muslim votes (ibid).

Subrata Mitra's field study of political choice in an Orissa village is different and innovative. The argument here seems to be that the tendency to form caste associations seems to be a somewhat recent trend in political campaigns. Benefit maximization and obligation are, in his view, two competing norms (1980: 53-54). Though the transition has been from obligation norm to benefit norm, the working out of the modalities for carrying out this norm has fallen on caste association like-formations. This does not mean that traditional obligations along caste and feudal lines are not operating any longer, but in order to maximize one's benefits competitive caste associations have come into being. The movement in this village has thus been from faction to caste association but in both cases the erstwhile traditional obligation norm has become more or less ineffective (1980: 70-72). But caste associations have one principal drawback—they lack flexibility (ibid: 73). The question remains: How durable are these associations built on caste or religion? Is it not also important to record the instances when these alliances come apart? Somehow political sociologists and anthropologists are not quick to examine this aspect. We shall return to themes related to this matter a little later when we discuss ethnicity and politics.

THE DREAM THAT SOURED

The early euphoria with the world's largest democracy, in spite of the works of doubters, lasted till well near the mid-seventies. After the declaration of the Emergency, scholars began to pay special attention to the institutions of governance and to their evolution since Independence. It was increasingly being noticed in the 80s that the earlier understanding of the Congress model of one party dominance, where different interests were all accommodated within the capacious shade of the Indian National Congress, was beginning to wear thin. As Kothari said: "the dominant party model has started to give way to a more differentiated structure of party competition" (quoted in Manor, 1988: 67). In particular scholars were now focussing on the wearing down of institutional authority. Of course, the Emergency of 1975 played a major role in this, but even after the democratic process was resumed, the problems of governance and systemic strains in the political structure continued. While the Emergency may have announced this crisis rather dramatically, many authors are of the opinion that there are certain features of our polity that have contributed to this growing malaise.

To begin with the nation state itself is caught in a peculiar dilemma of its own—whether to rely on a foreign model or to forge a unique Indian entity which would meet the many claims made from within the country (Brass, 1990:14). National parties fail to meet this tension satisfactorily because they are unclear as to what their stance should be. They are therefore caught in a cleft: should they stand by secular and universalistic norms or relent to the many pressures that come from parochial corners. Consequently there is a good deal of ideological posturing which attempts to play both ends. This has brought about a disjunction between what a political party publicly states and what it actually does (ibid: 17). This coupled with the beginning of personal rule and its quasi-legitimation with Mrs Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi brought about a significant decline in the institutional role of political parties (Kohli, 1988: 3). One might then say that all this only added to the distance between what the parties said publicly and what was in fact being done. This gap has also contributed to the politicization of the civil services, as well as to

violence and corruption as a daily fact of political life (see for eg. Kohli, 1990: 16).

Brass comes to a similar conclusion through a slightly different route. In Brass's opinion, ideological compulsions are not among the important factors of the Indian polity. Rather the distinctive features of this polity have been the following: (i) the importance of those who control land and own it, (ii) caste, and (iii) links between state power wielders and those who control resources. These links are not ideological but arise because the government is so powerful that it not only has control over resources and people, but can also, through the bureaucracy and the police constantly threaten and harass citizens who in turn think of ways of protecting themselves from such governmental excesses (Brass, 1990: 19).

Though there is always the tendency to display a strong moral streak in Indian politics, much as in America (ibid), what characterizes India is factionalism, personalism, and interference from the higher to the lower levels (ibid: 25). The premium on personal leadership, for instance some see Rajiv's leadership as divine right (ibid), encourages factionalism as it is not based on ideology or programmes but on loyalty to the leader. This is why Brass believes that personal leader - follower ties have been the "principal structural components of the ... Indian party, or better, of the Indian factional system" (ibid: 97, see also 96).

Quite clearly there seems to be very little optimism regarding the character of India's polity. The concessions that were made earlier by academics to India's commitment to an ideological programme that veered towards socialism are no longer that evident or operative. In the past many critics of India felt that the problem with India's political structure was principally an outcome of its misguided ideological orientation. The other trend in the past was to praise India for the many signal achievements it had accomplished since Independence because of its committed leadership. Consequently, if India had these strengths it was in large measure due to the fact that the political culture at the national level merged with the local cultures, and that traditional loyalties like caste were metamorphosing to play a constructive role in the democratic politics of India. This is as Rudolph and Rudolph had argued earlier in the 1960s in their book *The Modernity of Tradition*. In this connection one ought to note James

Manor's contention that Indian politics have in recent years become increasingly normless because of the way the Congress party has cynically used ideology. It is not as if non-political institutions, like jatis, religious groups, and so forth, were thrusting themselves into the political arena, but it was the normlessness of politicians that led them to use these institutions for political purposes. And once this was done, these traditional groupings began to have a disintegrating influence on society as a whole. This is the price India has to now pay for the primacy it has given over the years to politics (1983: 725-731). Manor thus seems to take away from the traditional optimistic position principally associated with Myron Weiner that India's political elite were instrumental in forging a new fusion between elite and mass culture such that it would strengthen the democratic core of political institutions (see Pye and Verb, 1965: 17-18). Pessimism obviously runs very deep with analysts of the 1980s.

As the above discussion will reveal there is very little optimism in the writings of the 80s. Caste is seen as a baneful influence (for e.g. Brass); political leaders and elites are driven by the compulsions of power; and as for ideological pronouncements, these are merely diversionary and act as a cloak to hide the real interests and drives of power seekers. The government which in earlier times may have been an active agency of change is now viewed primarily as an oppressive institution which bullies and suppresses those below it in brutal exercises of power.

DEMAND POLITY AND COMMAND POLITY

In this connection we need to examine, in addition, the relationship between the pressures that are being exerted from the outside on the political system and how the system responds to these pressures. Distressingly it appears that the system is not always able to handle these pressures effectively. One might well say that this is but a symptom of the emergence of personal rule and the undermining of authority that was once vested in institutions like political parties. But Rudolph and Rudolph in *The Pursuit of Lakshmi* (1987) prefer to take a more analytical view on this theme which is indeed helpful when we see political institutions and events from a more general perspective.

The Rudolphs bring to bear the twin concepts of demand polity and command polity in their analysis of Indian politics. These terms are related to the better known economic terms, namely demand economy and command economy. In a demand polity the "voters, citizens are sovereign" (Rudolph, 1987: 211), and the polity "is oriented towards short term goals; towards competitive processes for determining policies and the public interest (e.g. voting, deliberation, and bargaining); and toward the provision of private goods. It is constrained and directed by the imperatives of electoral victory and by pluralist and class influence on public choice" (ibid: 212).

In a command polity the "(e)xtractive and allocative decisions reflect the preferences of the elected and appointed officials who choose and implement policies. They favour, repress, license, or co-opt classes, interests, communities, and elites. Using the economic analogy ... the role of the state is like that of monopolistic or oligopolistic producers who can determine what and how much is produced because they control investment and product choice and shape consumer preferences accordingly" (ibid). A demand polity then is a polity of the consumer, of the voter, and one that is sensitive to voter's preferences. A command polity on the other hand is a polity which is dominated by the purveyors of power, by those in authority. They determine what the citizens should or should not do and have. Of course these two concepts have thus far been stated in somewhat extreme or pure terms. There is frequently an intermingling of the two and the scale in each case tilts significantly towards one end or the other. To quote lengthily from the Rudolphs:

> "Democratic or authoritarian regimes sometimes express elements of demand and command polities, respectively, but there is no necessary congruence between regime and polity. For example, strong and skillful institutional or personal leadership in democratic regimes can practice command politics that favour long run objectives and collective goods by appealing to national pride and social justice and by manipulating incentives and sanctions to achieve the desired goals... Jawaharlal Nehru's Congress government exemplified the possibility of combining command politics with a democratic regime" (ibid: 212-213).

But in order to be legitimate these polities, both demand and command have to demonstrate their efficacy, though in each case this is done differently. "Legitimacy in demand politics depends on the state's capacity to provide short-run equitable treatment of citizens' demands. Legitimacy in command politics depends on the credibility of the state's call for equitable sacrifice to achieve future benefits and avoid social costs" (ibid: 213).

One of the critical characteristics of a command polity is that it should be in control of the commanding heights of the economy. The central government should have a very decisive say in budget allotments, and indeed should be the recipient of large budgetary allocations. This in fact is the trend in India from the Nehru years. During the authoritarian regime of Mrs Gandhi the central government budgetary allocations went even higher (ibid: 214). But the Indian case is not one where command politics hold absolute sway and like other polities on the ground exhibit characteristics of its counterpart (in this case demand politics) too. The danger of a demand polity however is that it often "threatens governability when mobilizations overrun established channels" (ibid: 217). Over the years in India the demands put on command politics by workers and by peasants and farmers has put an increasing strain on the system (ibid: 218). In addition the incidence of riots has also gone up after the relatively stable decade 1954-55 to 1964-65. From 1967 the incidence of riots has risen dramatically (ibid: 238). Likewise the number of man-days lost has also been rising from 1971 onwards. The Rudolphs have divided India into four different phases. The first phase is characterized by the years 1952-63 when a democratic regime/command politics mix dominated (basically the Nehru years). In the second phase from 1964-65 to 1974-75 democratic regime/demand politics combined to characterize the Indira Gandhi years prior to the emergency. During the emergency years from 1975-77 it was the authoritarian regime/command politics duplex that was dominant. During this period food production increased and so did industrial production, over and above the fact that fewer man-days were lost. In the opinion of Rudolph and Rudolph all of these were the effects of an authoritarian regime. But there was a return to the democratic regime in 1977 and thus we find in the fourth phase from 1977 to 1984 an admixture of demand and command elements.

4

The Crisis of Governance

The interaction between demand and command politics may be useful in analyzing the increasing competition between rival political claimants in contemporary India. As James Manor said: "India has become increasingly democratic and increasingly difficult to govern" (Manor, 1988: 72). But it is important to note that if India is difficult to govern this may be seen either as an outcome of the increasing competition between rival political groups, or because authority has become so centralized that nothing really gets done though there is a seeming veneer of political stability. These two issues raise different sets of problems. Yet what the two nevertheless mutually reinforce is that the early dream in the years following 1947 has decidedly turned sour.

DEINSTITUTIONALIZATION

According to Kohli the decline of the Congress system has led instead to an "organizational vacuum at the core of India's political space" (Kohli, 1990: 6). The dominant political elites no longer practice a reconciliatory approach towards the newly emergent ones (ibid: 4). On the other hand, the so-called traditional "big men" have lost their grip over the political behaviour of those below them (ibid: 6). Thus the intercalation of the old political culture of elites with the new demand of democracy that was noticed several decades ago by Weiner and by the Rudolphs is significantly tempered, even countered, in the works of contemporary scholars like Kohli, and even by the Rudolphs themselves in their later work (1987). Kohli correctly points out that though the state has lost its capacity to govern, it is still a "robust social actor" (ibid: 10), and it should be treated as such. But

governance is not just regimentation, or rule, or the exercise of power, but requires the state to be sensitive to the inputs and aspirations of its people. Thus the tragic irony of India's politico-economic situation: "The state is highly centralized and omni-present, but the leverage of its leaders to initiate meaningful change has diminished. The main reason for this development is that authority has seldom run deep, and the authority structures have in recent years fallen into disrepair." (ibid: 16).

The roots of this decay again are traced to Mrs Gandhi, but it is also acknowledged that the demands coming from below for sharing power were increasing beyond the capacity of Mrs Gandhi's regime to handle. She reacted to them by blocking the access of rival claimants to power through the undermining of democratic institutions (ibid). Finally Kohli concludes, after an empirical survey of selected states, that there are four factors that have influenced the nature of political change in India: "(i) the deinstitutionalizing role of national and regional leaders; (ii) the impact of weak political parties; (iii) the undisciplined political mobilization of various caste, ethnic, religious and other types of groups; and (iv) the increasing conflict between the haves and have nots in the civil society" (ibid: 387).

While these observations are interesting and many will legitimately find little cause to disagree with them, the larger issue is: why has this crisis of governability come into being? If the answer is Mrs Gandhi's style of governance, then the corollary query could well be: what are the sociological attributes of this crisis? If it is accepted that authority structures in India never ran deep, as Kohli had earlier commented (ibid: 16), then the lack of efficacy on the government's part to initiate anything meaningful is to be expected, in which case it is not quite a crisis. But surely there is more to it. Kohli himself suggests that part of the answer may be in the hiatus between the haves and the have nots which has continued to grow in contemporary India (ibid: 387).

THE DOMINANT COALITION

Elsewhere in a research paper Frankel had commented that during the past 35 years middle castes and the forward castes have been progressively challenged by the much larger layer beneath

them (Frankel, 1988). This is evidenced for instance in the rise of the farmers' movements as well as in the demands of the Backward Castes for a greater share in the rewards of the organized sector through reservations (see also Hasan, 1989b: 130-40). Bardhan perhaps tries to provide a more comprehensive commentary on this process when he says that "the diverse elements of the loose and uneasy coalition of the dominant proprietory classes pull in different directions and when none of them is individually strong enough to dominate the process of resource allocation, one predictable outcome is the proliferation of subsidies and grants to placate all of them, with the consequent reduction in available surplus for public capital formation" (1988: 218).

Though this may sound very much like the traditional Marxist argument, Bardhan seems to depart significantly from the Marxists in at least one major way. His understanding of the dominant proprietary classes is interesting for it explicitly accepts a multiclass hegemony. This is quite different from the emphasis placed on a single dominant and critical class, (such as the bourgeoisie or the feudal nobility) as in most mainline Marxian perspectives. The dominant proprietary classes include the industrial bourgeoisie, the agrarian bourgeoisie, and professionals—primarily civilian, military and public bureaucracy personnel. Together these classes form the dominant coalition. But Bardhan is enough of a Marxist to recognize that these classes do not have identical interests and hence tend to pull in different directions. In this sense his argument is different from the power elite theory of C. Wright Mills. In Mills's understanding, the military, political and corporate elite form an united elite structure and do not exhibit contrary interests and aspirations. On the contrary, Mills argued, social relations, and inter-marriages tend to shore up the unity of this elite group.

To return to Bardhan, we are told further that because of these contrary pressures and exertions from within the dominant coalition, the state has had to rely on greater and greater allocations to itself in order to disburse favours and funds in exchange for political support. The greater the share of government resources in this connection, the less there is to go around for general social development (see Kohli, 1988: 15). This leads to greater unhappiness and frustration, though the style of Indian politics is seemingly consensual (Bardhan, op. cit., 219). The increasing

frustration and lack of satisfaction does not lie submerged in the consciousness of the people but surfaces all too readily. After all, to quote Bardhan again, "democracy has also put ideas in the heads of the lower classes..." (ibid: 221). Thus the personalization of power, the venality of public officers, and the increasing display of violence are sought to be understood by Bardhan through the conceptual formulation of the dominant coalition of the propertied classes.

In a similar vein, though with vastly different contentions, Achin Vanaik argues that India's "structural infirmities make decentralized brutality in the service of class oppressors almost inevitable..." (1990: 4). In a manner reminiscent of the Rudolphs, Vanaik considers India's political structure to be an "authoritarian democracy" (ibid). In this authoritarian democracy elections have been more of the plebiscitary kind (ibid). So far, quite clearly, the dreams have soured.

But Vanaik like Bardhan wants to reach out to the structural infirmities of the Indian polity. After reviewing Bardhan's understanding of the dominant coalition, Vanaik goes on to argue that there is however a problem in looking at the professionals as a class for their interests are linked to the expansion and consolidation of structures of education and administration. They have no interests that really unify them other than in their quest for more jobs (ibid: 21). The dominant coalition is therefore not a stable fixture (ibid: 25). Vanaik notices that in order to overcome the problems of governance the ruling classes rely more and more on Hindu nationalism in order to win legitimacy and to provide an attractive, even though it is a partial solution to the systemic demands that are made upon them (ibid: 146). As a footnote one might say that Nehru in 1961 explicitly forbade any recourse to majority communalism of this sort though this form of communalism may well be mistaken for nationalism by many (Noorani, 1990: 2417).

The authors influenced by Marxism (and this includes Bardhan and Vanaik) are, in the main, careful not to mention the mere fact of class rule and exploitation but are intent to provide crucial existence statements that can link the fact of class rule, exploitation and skewed development with growing unrest and the crisis of governance. Kaviraj too takes up the theme of the ruling coalition, but highlights how in countries like India the

reproduction of capital depends crucially on the state (1988: 2430). Even so it is capital that exercises the "directive function" to this coalition (ibid: 2431). In addition Kaviraj also insists that the bureaucratic elite should not be seen as a category quite straightforwardly subservient to the bourgeoisie. As a matter of fact this class provides the political intelligence to the bourgeoisie (ibid). Kaviraj in addition also accepts the fact that the members of the ruling coalition do not share equal power, much like Bardhan as we noted earlier. Yet, unlike Bardhan, he suggests that the crisis is not an abnormality of the system, for it emerges not out of the failure of the system to perform but by its very success (ibid: 2441). Vanaik would probably second this view.

CULTURAL CRITIQUES OF THE INDIAN STATE

Let us now move on to contributions which critically examine the crisis of governance of the Indian state (or its inability to be socially meaningful), from a cultural and ethical point of view. These critiques are informed by a consideration of India's history, of her cultural inclinations, and by her performance as a nation state over the past forty years or so. The most notable proponents of this view are Rajni Kothari, D.L. Sheth and Ashish Nandy, all quite significantly from the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, Delhi. To begin with, Kothari notes that it is important not to talk simply of crisis of governance (without using that term however) but to realize how the myriad diversities in India have been undermined and their interests stifled for the sake of unity at the centre. For the sake of national unity then the legitimacy of these diversities is negated (Kothari, 1988a: 2223). He too locates the sharpening of this problem to the time of Mrs Gandhi's governance. The gravamen of his charge rests on Mrs. Gandhi's brand of populism. While she appealed to the rural poor she relied essentially on a techno-managerial urban elite. Consequently, as discontent grew, she had no alternative but to protect her personal power by relying more and more on the techno-managerial elite (ibid: 2226). For peace and for social transformation we must realize, Kothari argues, that there is no quick technological solution (1988b: 91).

This kind of criticism, or specification of the crisis of the Indian political structure, is certainly a very distinctive characteristic of scholarship of the late eighties. According to this view the state's increasing reliance on the urban upper classes resulted in a gradual bifurcation of the country into two Indias—one cornering all the resources and the other left to fend for itself. This dualism, it may be noted, is not an unanticipated consequence, but is written into the very design of the new development strategy, the new technological paradigm and the new conception of national endeavour (ibid: 2227).

Kothari blames this dualism for the growing criminalization of politics and for the repression and intimidation of large masses of people who in order to survive must stay out of this vicious and self seeking political process (Kothari, 1984: 216-18). Economically too the continuing economic stagnation arises simply because of the refusal of the ruling elite to expand the internal market which would necessitate the initiation of redistributive policies. In this and other ways the authenticity of India's cultural traditions is also being undermined, indeed uprooted, by the all-hegemonising state (ibid: 221). He therefore sees the hope for the future lying with non-party activists who operate in non-governmental organizations which are voluntary in character and outside the persuasive powers of the technocratic centre (ibid). This does not mean that Kothari wishes to replace the state, but in fact he would like a more viable state structure that would be sensitive to the civil society (1988c: 71). To sensitize the state, a new socio-economic coalition should be created through grass-root initiatives so that new institutional structures may develop (ibid: 109-110).

D.L. Sheth emphasizes the nature of these grass-root initiatives in India at greater length (Sheth, 1984: 259-262). The initiatives at the popular grass-root level must take place outside the governmental agencies and should not hanker after the routine electoral tussles for power. Only thus can these grass-root initiatives address the misery of the majority. Hence, to return to another paper by Kothari, the real counter-trends are not to be located in the traditional confrontations between the haves and the have nots (Marxist style, perhaps?), nor in the space that is traditionally occupied by trade unions, but by counter cultural movements that have an altogether different paradigm, viz.,

non-party activity. It is essential to advocates of this perspective to question the role of the state as a mobilizer and as an agent of modernization. The state, according to Kothari, has actually worked to marginalize the majority by being the principal carrier of technology and capitalism (Kothari, 1986: 211). The state is not the mediator (as seen in theories of the capitalist state), but has in fact betrayed the masses. The upper and middle classes "wallow" and affect a life style which is largely imported and alien to the masses who are left vulnerable to the play of market forces (ibid: 212).

Nandy very forcefully argues a similar point in his paper, "Culture, State and the Rediscovery of Indian Politics" (1984). In his opinion for the past 150 years the westernized middle class has been looking to the state first and adjusting their culture accordingly, believing all the while that this was a sign of political maturity. But Nandy argues it is more important to view the state and its activities from the standpoint of the indigeneous and authentic culture of the country. "This approach may regard the state as a protector, an internal critic or a thermostat from the culture but not as the ultimate pace setter for the society's way of life" (ibid: 2078). The fact that such a view of the state is gaining precedence is because the state has quite clearly become very oppressive and threatens the lives of the millions it has marginalized. Moreover, these marginalized sections are not willing to sit on the sidelines but are actively ratiocinating an alternative interpretation of their predicament: this alternative is however alien to the terms used in state-centred scholarship and to the myrmidons of modernization (1984: 2080). Even the so-called Hindu reformers of the 19th century were actually yielding to statist directives when they wanted a political space for the Hindus within the terms of the Hindu religious discourse. Thus these advocates of indigenous traditions were not really anti-west nor anti-Islam. "They were only anti-British and anti-Muslim in the Indian context" (ibid: 2079-2980).

In a later paper called "The Political Culture of the Indian State," Nandy pushes this argument further. In this he argues, much like the arguments of Kothari and Kaviraj which we encountered earlier, that the bourgeoning peasant movements and the movements for self affirmation by the minorities come about not because of the failure of the nation state but because of its

very success (1989: 2). Moreover, the "culture of Indian politics has in recent years depended more and more on a mix of Indian high culture and the metropolitan culture of the nation-state. The traditional dialectic of the Brahminic and the non-Brahminic, the classical and the folk, the textually prescribed and the customary practice has been bypassed" (ibid: 9). Consequently, where there was diversity now we find only a "scaled down homogeneity" (ibid: 11) and a "constant search for grand technological and organizational feats as evidence of the cultural superiority of the new elites" (ibid). Sadly enough the opposition parties too share the same ambitions and participate in an identical pursuit of homogenization (see also Nandy, 1987: 155).

In these essays one finds the assertion that the Indian nation state is not a failure, nor really in a crisis, but the problems it faces regarding meaningful governance emerge from its very success. The fact that millions are marginalized in India is because the Indian nation state functions on the basis of an oppressive culture totally unsuited for the authentic aspirations and outlooks of its people. The only viable solution, therefore, is to opt for an alternative political process led, as Kothari opined, by non-party activists. I should also mention that the similarity of this view of politics with the position of Michel Foucault is too close to go unmentioned. Foucault too had argued that politics of the nation state has its own in-built compulsions which compels people to strive for power over others. This is equally true for those who fight for the cause of human rights as it is for those who wish to deny them.

This led Foucault to retreat into the politics of the self where the individual refuses to buy into political ideologies, no matter what their hue, or how lofty and people-oriented they might appear to be. Foucault believes that only by protecting one's integrity in this fashion is it possible to protect oneself from becoming an instrument of power seekers. This is how Foucault came close to recommending the Nietszchean model of a hero, who is essentially a lonely figure, steadfast only to personal ideals, whether or not they have society's approbation. In this sense, both Nandy and Kothari are quite different from Foucault in spite of some surface similarities. Not only have they arrived at their position quite independently of Foucault, but they also believe that any improvement in the lot of the people can come

about, not through micro-politics, but through collective non-party activism led by voluntary organizations. It is true that like Foucault, Nandy and Kothari have no faith in political parties in general. Foucault however went much further in discounting all forms of organized political activity, including the voluntary Non-Government Organization (NGO) variety. Foucault found ultimate virtue in the frustration of organized and orchestrated political maneouvers by countless instances of micro-politics committed separately by individuals.

THE EXCEPTIONAL CASE: WEST BENGAL

Collective non-party activism may be held up as the hope of the future but its viability is yet to be ascertained. Its spontaneous appeal however lies in the fact that there is widespread pessimism and dissatisfaction with the performance of the Indian state. Atul Kohli however finds amidst all this hopelessness one exceptional case and that is West Bengal. This is probably because Kohli is taking a more charitable view and asking the question: given the existing structures of political and social domination how can one best effect redistributive policies and uplift the conditions of the poor?

In his book *State and Poverty in India* (1987), Kohli studies the potentialities for redistributive capitalist development in three Indian states, viz, Karnataka, UP and West Bengal. Of the three Kohli pays special attention to the West Bengal situation. He concludes that the best results in redistributive capitalist development come from West Bengal though it is run by a party that calls itself communist, but is, in fact, social democratic. This left-handed compliment notwithstanding, Kohli nevertheless, commends the West Bengal government for some of its exceptional features. This government is characterized by a coherent leadership, an ideological commitment to exclude the propertied classes from direct participation in the governance of the state, by a pragmatic attitude to the entrepreneurial classes which are non-threatening in character to the political authorities, as well as by a party and political organizational apparatus that is both centralized and decentralized (ibid: 10). The Karnataka government did next best but it lacked two important characteristics: it

was linked to the propertied classes, and organizationally its redistribution took place in an ad hoc fashion (ibid). The UP Janata government did the worst for it possessed none of the crucial features of the West Bengal government. Kohli's analysis of the successes of the West Bengal government makes interesting reading for it tells us about the processual aspects of the CPI(M)'s functioning in West Bengal. It also gives us an in depth analysis of the Operation Barga movement in West Bengal which was the lynchpin of the CPI(M)'s rural strategy in that state (ibid: 130 ff).

In conclusion one might say that the studies examining the functioning of the Indian state begin with the assumption that the dreams of the Independence heroes have been more or less in vain. Even so the discussions on this matter take divergent positions. While some believe in the crisis of governance, others feel it is the success of a technocratic minded institution that has brought about the present denouement in Indian politics. It also needs to be mentioned in this section that very little explicit work has been done by political sociologists and anthropologists on the violation of democratic rights in India over the years. It may be recalled that Bardhan, Vanaik and Kothari (to name a few) have referred to this issue but it has never been the centre piece of their scholarship. The reports produced by the various democratic rights organizations certainly provoke one to sociologically treat these documents as primary material, but so far little has happened in this direction. One important contribution in this connection however needs to be mentioned and that is the volume edited by Prof. A.R. Desai entitled *Violation of Democratic Rights in India* (1986). Though this book is a collection of reports written at various times by different democratic rights activists and organizations, their handy accessibility in a book form coupled with Desai's hortatory introduction may set a trend for the future.

5

Ethnicity and Politics of India

As we mentioned earlier, given the spate of ethnic movements and unrest of one sort or another, in large parts of India, it is not at all surprising that many political sociologists and social anthropologists paid attention to this feature of our polity. One must also add that the term ethnicity has come to stay in contemporary academic works which discuss the political usages of primordial identities. Perhaps Urmila Phadnis put it best when she said that though ethnicity was a "portmenteau" concept it conveyed a certain distinct image, and imagery is very important. In her view cultural pluralism and minority consciousness were no better terms and they perhaps conveyed less than the concept of ethnicity (Phadnis, 1989: 241-242).

Of all the images the term ethnicity exudes, the most powerful and vivid I believe, is the portrayal of the ethnic "outsider." In a tense ethnic situation the attempt always is to paint the ethnic rival as one who does not quite belong to the mainstream and is thus not an authentic member of the society. The Shiv Sena in Bombay strove to ideologically present the South Indians in the city not only as migrants but also as unauthentic Indians for many of them may have once supported the Dravida Kazhagam's call for the secession of Tamilnadu from India many years ago.

Hindu communalists find the Muslims a most convenient target to label as outsiders, though they have also, in recent years, condemned the Sikhs in similar fashion. It is not as if Sikhs and Muslims merge as one in Hindu characterizations though they may both share the stigma of being "anti-national". Each portrayal and image of the "other" is always drawn with very specific colours. If the Muslims are "outsiders" because of their beef eating ways (among many other features), then the Sikhs are traitors because they want to disarticulate Hinduism from within

by proclaiming themselves as belonging to an entirely different denomination. It is also the case that the characterization of a community may change over time. The Sikhs were once regarded as the guardians of Hinduism before they began to be seen as renegades. The Shiv Sainiks initially attacked the South Indians and later made friends with them and turned against the communists instead. The Muslims too, for a brief while in 1984, were considered to be relatively harmless by Hindu protagonists, as compared to the Sikhs, till the affair in Ayodhya in 1992 made them the unambiguous target of Hindu wrath once again. Often an ethnic group may want to be seen as "outsiders" and thus as "insiders" of another core from which the others are excluded. This, for instance, is the case with the proponents of Khalistan in Punjab.

CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND THE INDIAN NATION STATE

Ethnicity and cultural differences always attracted scholarship on the sub-continent. When India was striking for independence there was a substantial body of opinion which believed that India would be unable to function as a cohesive unity because of the diversity of religions, languages, castes and creeds that inhabit this land mass. Incredibly, as India became independent, the centripetal forces did not lose out, and there was a gradual acknowledgement that perhaps India would remain a unity. Nehru's colourful phrase, "unity in diversity," became the key words: they held out a promise as much as they hoped to describe the unity that was welded during the struggle for independence.

The partition of India did not quite shake this fundamental belief. On the contrary, perhaps the trauma of the partition helped consolidate the overwhelming importance of remaining as one. The partition was viewed as a national tragedy, and over the years there has been no mainstream political organization that has advocated another partition. Interestingly, even the DMK in Tamil Nadu whose express programme earlier was to secede from North India, accepted, in the early 1950s, that the freedom of India has not just the freedom of North India, but of all India—including the South.

The first signs of mass mobilization on ascriptive grounds occurred in the 1950s with the demand for unilingual provinces. Incidentally the desirability of unilingual provinces was accepted by the Congress in the 1920s, and as a matter of fact, Congress branches were known provincially on the basis of linguistic divisions, at least the major ones. The accession of unilingual provinces with the State Reorganization Commission brought about an end to these demands in the fifties, except in the case of Punjab where the issue was ultimately resolved in 1966. The south had already been apportioned on the linguistic principle; Maharashtra and Gujarat were also carved out of what used to be Bombay province, only the situation in Punjab remained contentious for a much longer time. It is necessary to know some of this in order to appreciate the background to the contemporary unrest in the north west (see also Phadnis, 1989: 249-52).

One of the major complicating factors in the Punjab imbroglio was the religious division between the Hindus and the Sikhs. The Sikhs demanded that Punjab too be divided on a linguistic basis and that the Punjabi speaking part of Punjab be clearly separated from the Hindi speaking part of the province. But the Hindus of Punjab who also spoke Punjabi did not list Punjabi as their mother tongue. Instead the census enumerators were told that their mother tongue was Hindi. In all likelihood this was born out of a fear of another partition, and of a minority complex which had worried the Hindus of the Punjab all along. In the pre-partition days the Muslims were a majority in undivided Punjab.

Anyhow, after several years of agitation, Punjab was divided into 3 provinces: The Punjabi speaking Punjab, and the states of Haryana and Himachal Pradesh. However, the curious feature of this reorganization was that Haryana and Punjab still shared Chandigarh as the state capital. This was the source of agitations in the 80s, i.e., well after the demand for Punjab was acceded to (Das Gupta in Kohli, ed., 1988: 151). Additionally, for the first time now the Sikhs were a majority in the newly reorganized Punjab.

However, before the Punjab problem came upon us in the 80s, we had a taste of another variety of ethnicity, viz., nativism. Its first manifestation in independent India was with the Shiv Sena which came up in the late sixties and is with us even today. The

agitation in Assam which grew in the 1970s was also nativist in character but wider in terms of its regional spread. In these agitations the fundamental right to settle freely anywhere as per the constitution ran up against opposition. The nativist movements demanded that the so-called "sons of the soil" of a particular province should be given overwhelming preference in jobs and other economic opportunities over those who had migrated to that province (or state) from another part of India.

But by far the scholarship on ethnicity has been conditioned in the 80s by the strident demand for secession and for Khalistan by Sikh militants. The issue of religious fundamentalism which was never seriously considered in the past was now claiming considerable attention. In the closing years of the decade, V.P. Singh's declaration to implement the Mandal Commission recommendations on a nation wide scale led to riots in the streets and academic articles in the press and in learned journals. Finally, on account of all this, there have also been fresh attempts to understand the nature of the centripetal and centrifugal forces operating in India. Analytical studies on nation states and the nature of their binding power have surfaced once again.

On the issue of the nature of the Indian state, indeed on the nature of nation-states as such, there have been contributions by many. Noteworthy among them are Achin Vanaik (1990), Gupta (1990), Oomen (1990a), Bhatt (1989), and Madan (1987). Achin Vanaik has probably paid the greatest attention to this subject, though his views, as we shall see, are close to Gupta's which appeared around the same time.

Vanaik begins by quoting Benedict Anderson who argues that nationalism is a "collective state of mind" (1990: 5), and it would be unwise to link it, as Stalin did, to a gross objective factor like language (ibid). But in India, Vanaik points out, the "(L)inguistic community as a linguistic community did not so much precede the rise of nationalist consciousness and nationalist struggle as develop along with and through it" (ibid: 6). In other words, according to Vanaik, the political awareness of belonging to a linguistic community came into its own under the aegis of the national movement. This is a very striking point, and one must pay due attention to it. Indeed, Vanaik goes on to say, it is not language,but religion that has been a very powerful contender for nationhood, to wit, the emergence of Pakistan. Language on

the other hand has not spurred such demands for separation, or for the establishment of sovereign nationhood, as for most Indians, linguistic consciousness coexists non-antagonistically with national consciousness (ibid: 7, see also Oomen, 1990b: 173). Therefore to call a linguistic community a nationality gives a "principled character to the general conflict between centre and the states" (Vanaik, 1990: 7). It also makes it appear that the nation states should collapse along the lines that demarcate linguistic regions.

This mode of reasoning is reminiscient of Hans Kohn's celebrated position that nationalism is a state of mind. Anderson's work, *Imagined Communities* has recently given a fillip to this line of thinking. The imagining of India as a national community, Vanaik believes, is also a state of mind. Sub-national identities too exist but these subsequent identities, like casteism, regionalism, linguistic identity, etc., are "often of as recent vintage as the national identities they are supposed to oppose" (ibid: 119). Instead of seeing the conflict between the centre and the state in cultural and ethnic terms, it should rather be examined as an economic and political problem (ibid: 127). Quite unlike the USA, the federation in India came into being after the formation of the nation state. The federated units had no independent character of their own in the past.

Gupta (1990) argues similarly, focusing on the fact that in the linguistic movements and in the sons of the soil agitations, the Centre was never really threatened. Indeed, for Gupta the recent round of regional movements should not be seen in solely cultural terms though the Centre would perhaps like it to be viewed thus. The Punjab agitation which began with very secular demands, like Chandigarh, water redistribution and territorial demarcation, had over the years been ethnicized by the Centre to the extent that there was a time when Sikh extremists were seen to hold the key to the problem. The abrogation of the Rajiv-Longowal accord, the killing of Sikhs in 1984 in Delhi and elsewhere, gave the Sikhs a minority consciousness they never possessed earlier. Gupta's final position is that cultural differences by themselves have not threatened the nation states so far (see also Oomen, 1990a: 17; 1990b: 169, 182). On the contrary the tendency of the Centre, particularly the Congress, to ethnicize regional

demands is a greater threat. Vanaik too would agree with this view (Vanaik, 1990: 143; see also Vanaik, 1988: 2278-89).

PUNJAB

The recent problem in Punjab has obviously drawn a lot of attention. Apart from the factual reports and analyses of the situation in the north-west certain important analytical issues have also been enlivened. One issue, as we mentioned earlier, is the ethnicization of the problem by the centre for partisan ends. Essays in *Punjab: The Fatal Miscalculation* (1985) bring together a host of facts to show that it was not in the nature of Sikhism or Akali politics that extremism and political dissatisfaction should characterize contemporary Punjab. This point is strengthened somewhat indirectly by Harish Puri elsewhere when he notes that in the Punjabi Suba movement under Fateh Singh there was hardly any religiosity at all. In fact the 1962 election manifesto of the Akali Dal made no reference to Sikh, Khalsa or panth (1988: 306). It is therefore essential to ask why such terms have become common currency in Sikh politics from the 1980s on. There are of course economic factors at work, like the Green Revolution (ibid, and D'Souza, 1982), but one should not overlook the cynical political manipulations by the Congress when in state power that also exacerbated political bitterness among the Sikhs. Manor makes this point more generally across the board as overall feature of the Congress Party in the seventies (1983: 727).

The communal situation in Punjab has also led several authors to re-examine certain general conceptual categories in social sciences as well. Gobinder Singh in an essay called "Pressure Group Politics in Punjab—The Case of SGPC" demonstrates how the Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee (SGPC) is not like a western pressure group for it does not confine itself to religious matters alone (1988:157). (Dushkin makes a similar point with reference to caste association of Karnataka; see Dushkin, 1980: 1551). J.S. Gandhi examines how a party like the Akali Dal which would otherwise be considered as a straightforward communal party was nevertheless, under Badal in the 1970s, negotiating between secular legitimacy and populist religious appeals (1988:

258-261; see also Harish Puri, 1988: 313). Gandhi believes that both religion and secularism are useful tools that all parties use for their political benefit (ibid: 263). This is an important observation for it alerts us to guard ourselves against the naive assumption that religious and sectarian/communal appeals are only made by non secular organizations. The manner in which the centre ethnicized the Punjab issue (as we noted earlier), or the Congress party's reaction to the Shah Bano judgement (as we shall soon see) which sparked off Hindu-Muslim confrontations, are further illustrations of this point.

SECULARISM AND ITS PROSPECTS IN INDIA

While both Vanaik and Gupta seem to emphasize the importance of the idea of India and how cultural differences need not necessarily lead to grave political crises (see also Wallace, 1988: 4), Madan takes a different line though he does not exactly address the same question. The main query for Madan is: Can secularism survive in India, nay, in all of South Asia? His answer is an emphatic "No." In Madan's view: "(I)n the prevailing circumstances secularism in South Asia as a generally shared credo of life is impossible, as a basis for state action impracticable, and as a blue print for the foreseeable future impotent" (1987: 748). To emphasize his point he refers to the Muslim outrage in India over the Shah Bano affair and of Sikh militancy in the Punjab (ibid: 749). According to Madan, South Asian religions have a hierarchical relationship between the religious and the secular (ibid: 751), and he quotes Gandhi in this connection when the father of the nation said that for him "every, the tiniest, activity is governed by what I consider to be my religion" (ibid: 752). It is for this reason Madan avers that the religious realm encompasses the secular realm in South Asia (ibid: 753), and that secularism is a "gift of Christianity" (ibid: 754). Secularism, Madan argues, has been spawned for over three centuries in the western world, and that this trait cannot simply be lifted as a modular phenomenon and applied elsewhere. There is therefore, a not insignificant difference in outlook between Vanaik and Gupta, on the importance of culture (and of cultural differences) in determining political and secular life.

D.L. Sheth argues that a new theory of the nation state needs to emerge in India, one that is not dependent on a text-book understanding of the western nation states. If one goes by western oriented theories then every ethnic group must have its own state. Yet Sheth argues it is important for third world countries like India to discover their own "endogeneity" (sic). This endogeneity is not a recreation of past orders, but a certain "autonomy and control over the forces of order and change..." (Sheth, 1989: 625). Unfortunately, there is no clear understanding of what constitutes this endogeneity. The overall project that Sheth advocates is one where the civil society incorporates the state (ibid: 626). This civil society is not the religious realm that Madan believes encompasses the secular, nonetheless Sheth opines, the civil society can have its authentic endogeneity.

Rajni Kothari takes this matter even further. He argues that ethnicity "is a response-including reaction—to the excesses of the modern project of shaping the whole humanity (and its natural resource base)..." (1989: 16). In this sense for Kothari, a new spectre is haunting the modern world—the spectre of the "assertion of cultures" (1989: 15). Ethnic upsurges then are a consequence of the homogenizing trend of modern states and of their technological/educational imperatives. He links the ethnic movements with the movements of marginalized people and of those seeking indigeneous authenticity (ibid).

Approaching the problem of homogenization very differently, Oomen too argues for cultural pluralism in India, or else the alternative very simply is "culturocide" (1990a: 135). Moreover he adds, the tendency to force a manufactured Hindu mainstream is inauthentic, for it does violence to the Indian reality (1990b: 164). Instead, Oomen argues, language, has more legitimacy than religion has (1990a: 54), and therefore language should be the basis for administrative restructuring of India (1990: 17, 124-36). In Oomen's opinion, it is unreasonable to believe that movements for cultural identity constitute a threat to the nation-state (ibid: 178, 1990b: 163, 169, 182). Obviously for Oomen, further provincial demarcations on finer linguistic distinctions are in order, and would be all to the good for the stability of the nation-state. This obviously means that we must re-examine our understanding of the nation state and reformulate it along non-European lines (1990a: 32 ff), where language

was the principal driving force behind the creation of nation-states.

Likewise the existing understanding of secularism too needs to be re-examined. Kothari believes that we have fallen prey to the Western notion of secularism where all religions and cultures are pushed aside by the state. A more authentic version of secularism from Kothari's point of view is the Asian variant which sees the state as a neutral entity—neutral to all religions and possessing no religion of its own (ibid: 20). Nandy believes this feature indeed characterized India's past. He writes: "It is in the nature of traditional India to maintain a certain openness of cultural boundaries, permeability which allowed new influences to flow in and be integrated as a new set of age old traditions" (1987: 153).

Against the above argument which postulates that ethnicity is an outcome of the success of the modern state, Gail Omvedt argues in a paper entitled "Hinduism and Politics" that the rise of religious ideologies in politics, specifically the BJP and the VHP and so on, is a consequence of the recent failures of secular and socialist forces (1990: 729). She also takes this opportunity to point out to liberal scholars that India's past was not characterized by tolerant multi-culturalism but by hierarchy which was clearly emphasized in every aspect of life (ibid: 726).

Notwithstanding criticisms of the kind Omvedt offers it is noteworthy that the rather romanticized view of Indian tradition offered by Kothari and Nandy has found many sympathizers. Amongst them are social historians who should have perhaps been more wary of such postulates given the fact that they handle historical data more intimately. If in tradition there were no firm cultural boundaries then what do we make of the caste system, or, indeed, of the Bhakti movements that arose in medieval India against orthodoxy and sectarianism? And yet, historians like Gyanendra Pandey (1990: 16, 199 and passim) and Harjot Oberoi (1994: 44ff) make the claim that pre-modern India "was a universe free of fixed identities" (see ibid: 56).

Apart from the mass of historical evidence on the confrontations between communities, between sects, between religions (including Hindus against Buddhists) there is also a wealth of anthropological literature that demonstrates the awareness of distinction between people even in pre-literate societies. It is true

that many of the tribal divisions that exist today are quite recent in origin, which however does not mean that there were no such divisions in the past. It is by now well known, in social anthropology at least, that through rites of passage (such as those of birth, adulthood, marriage, death, etc.) communities make known their differences from each other. This tendency seems to be a human universal and every culture both sponsors and thrives on such social differentiations. For this reason it is difficult to accept the view of a conflict-free Indian tradition which has been variously offered by scholars such as Kothari, Nandy, Pandey or Oberoi. What can yet be maintained is that identities change over time and that new identities are constantly being created. This is an ongoing process, as the section on Sikh militancy above adumbrates, but this should not be taken to imply that identities at any point of time are free-floating, inchoate and unknowable.

THE MAKING OF ETHNICITY

We may now take up another distinctive strand in contemporary works on ethnicity, viz., the concern with how ethnic movements emerge and gain salience in our social and political lives. Of course, if one takes a primordial view and believes that ethnicity has its own logic and will naturally evolve into ethnic politics, them to a large extent there is no need to study this aspect at all. As a matter of fact Paul Brass made a strong and pointed critique of this position in his own works. He takes the instrumentalist position as opposed to the primordialist one (1991: 16).

The distinction in Brass between the primordialist and the instrumentalist point of view is very important. Brass had earlier criticized Francis Robinson when the latter stated that the two nation theory out of which Pakistan emerged was in fact embedded in Islamic religion. In other words, the outcome had to be so—there was just no other alternative. Brass, on the contrary believes, that religion by itself does not exercise such a determining influence over politics. Quite on the contrary, one should instead study the manner in which religion is used very instrumentally by political agents. This criticism by Brass of Robinson could apply to Juergensmeyer (1988) as well. Juergensmeyer

argues that Bhindranwale's charisma developed from the core of Sikh tradition. But Brass's opposition to this position has several rather interesting consequences.

Brass draws our attention to the fact that ethnic identities are variable, and hence his larger anti-primordialist point: there is nothing inevitable about an ethnic conflagration (1991: 14). Traditions are invented by elites, who, to use Lasswell's understanding, are "those who get the most of what there is to get" (ibid). In Brass's view, the military officers, professionals, the landed and urban middle classes, are all members of the elite category. When ethnic identities are created and released by these manipulating elites, the identities are not pristine in character but are significantly distorted for combative purposes. The elites manipulate beliefs and values and distort them in order "to select only those which are politically useful rather than central to the belief system of the people in question" (ibid: 17). A little earlier he made the telling comment: "Elites seeking to mobilize the ethnic group against its rivals or against the centralizing state, strive to promote a congruence of multiplicity of the group's symbol" (ibid: 15-16). Ethnic identities are thus consciously created and therefore they are also reversible (ibid: 16; see also Van der Veer, 1987: 299).

If one accepts Brass's position, even in its barest outlines, then the consequences of this view are considerable. It not only goes against Madan's argument that religion determines politics, but states rather forcefully that the religious or ethnic markers of identification that are politically relevant are outcomes of elite manipulation. In a curious way we have, with Brass, politics subsuming and encompassing religion and culture. Brass also shakes the earlier anthropological notion on the durability of cultural traditions. There are however some problems with Brass's views. To begin with Brass does not have anything to say of the manner in which the state ethnicizes issues. This is perhaps an unkind cut for elsewhere Brass does mention how centralization and "unprincipled intervention" have made the Punjab issue so much worse. But this matter is not theoretically integrated into his analysis. Secondly, his understanding of the elite is far too commodious and wide—almost everybody is an elite. The focus should perhaps have been on how some people become political elites through successful manipulation of ethnic symbols.

In her comprehensive work on ethnicity in South Asia, Urmila Phadnis argued that ethnicity is a manifestation of social conflict and for that reason it is found mostly in the developing world (1989: 243). It is therefore not as if people in the developing world are naturally predisposed towards ethnic identities, but rather that ethnic issues became salient because of the cracks and strains in the secular sphere (ibid:243). Phadnis also believed that the colonial boundaries that the developing world inherited did not respect the ethnic frontiers but rather criss-crossed them (ibid: 246). That is probably why, in her opinion, it was all the more difficult for the new states to get their nationhoods "off the ground" (ibid: 246-247). Though there is a continuity here between Brass and Phadnis with respect to the view that ethnicity is not an independent variable, Phadnis however veered towards a rather pessimistic position when she declared that mass politics will be increasingly ethnic in future (ibid: 260).

Veena Das (1990) and Imtiaz Ahmad (1984) discuss how rivalries fuel communal movements. In addition, Das also points out how modern cities, as against traditional cities, have a large floating population whose members are all too ready to act as rioteers in a communal incident (Das, 1990: 12). Das develops her position from an empirical study on the Sikh killings in 1984 in Delhi. Imtiaz Ahmad examines Hindu-Muslim strife and concludes that communalism is clearly directed, goal oriented action emerging to a large extent from rivalries occasioned by the "new-found economic clout" and "greater cultural and social visibility of the Muslims" (Ahmad, 1984: 905). Communal riots nowadays are not only more gory but are also planned affairs (ibid: 904). Ahmad also notes that communal riots no longer take place in small qasbas but in developing commercial and industrial centres (ibid). In these centres the Muslims are slowly becoming small entrepreneurs in their own right and are not just artisans. The element of economic rivalry enters the picture for Hindus see their traditional interests as being threatened by enterprising Muslims. This clash of economic interests, Ahmad argues, accounts for most Hindu-Muslim clashes.

Zoya Hasan's examination (1989) of the controversy around the Shah Bano case is also analytically interesting. The fact that judgements granting maintenance to Muslim women were allowed by judges in the past and that these did not lead to any

uprising, is the point of departure of Hasan's analysis. The question then naturally is why did the Shah Bano case generate the kind of controversy that it did? In answering this question Hasan takes us not only to Brass's contribution of fabricated and distorted identity-building by elites and professional communalists, but she also points out the role of the government at the centre (an issue that Brass tends to overlook) in the making of this unfortunate communal situation. Hasan argues that in the later Indira Gandhi years the communal situation had escalated to such an extent that the minorities felt threatened nation wide, and that is why the Muslims fell prey to fundamentalist pressures (Hasan, 1989: 45).

To make matters worse it was patently clear that in order to assuage the Hindu communalists on the government's reversal of the Supreme Court judgement on the Shah Bano case, the Babri Masjid issue was opened up by Rajiv Gandhi (ibid: 48).

On the Ayodhya front too we have a detailed presentation by Peter van der Veer (1987) as to how bit by bit the Ayodhya issue was built up by the BJP and VHP. This is a kind of story that vindicates Brass's instrumentalist position. Van der Veer details how from the Ekatmatoyajna of 1983 onwards the VHP has gradually gained in strength, and how it has steadfastly worked towards making a clear demarcation between "we Hindus" and "they Muslims" (1987: 292). Interestingly, various independent orders of sadhus spoke at VHP rallies on the Ayodhya issue without raising the question of the deep differences that separate different Hindu sects. Vaishnavites, Shaivites and Tantrists all sat together in Ayodhya even though they have had a long history of competition and conflict (ibid: 293). This goes Brass's way too, for we see how new identities are cobbled together quite deliberately.

PREFERENTIAL POLITICS AND NATIVISM

The Shiv Sena was probably the first full blown nativist movement to occur in independent India. The Shiv Sainiks in Bombay complained that the South Indians were taking away jobs that should have gone to "native" Maharashtrians. This movement was a violent one led along semi-fascist lines. Gupta's book-

length work on the Shiv Sena (Gupta, 1982) details how the Sena came into being, its ideological structure, as well as the socio-economic causes for its emergence. The peculiar demographic structure of Bombay where approximately only 41 per cent of the population are Maharashtrians, and where Maharashtrians are proportionately less represented than the South Indians in white collar jobs, gave the Shiv Sena's call a ring of authenticity. Gupta also details how the Shiv Sena gradually changed its position to become what it is now, that is, an organization principally devoted to fighting communists and Muslims. Gupta also points out how the Shiv Sena forged a new Maharastrian identity among the Marathi speaking youth of Bombay, but was unable to swing the youth in other metropolitan areas of Maharashtra because these other areas did not share Bombay's peculiar demographic profile.

The Assam agitation also drew a lot of attention. Here again one finds that the Assamese speaking people felt threatened first by Bengali domination and then by the increasing numbers of Bangladeshi refugees. Amalendu Guha's article entitled "Little Nationalism Turned Chauvinist" (1980) gives us a window to the occurrences in Assam during the critical years 1979-80. This should be read along with Sanjib K. Baruah's piece on the same subject (1980). Baruah believes that the movement in Assam was a genuine attempt at self expression, or even of sub-nationalism, by the Assamese civil society. The argument in this connection is with respect to the legitimacy of such a claim. Guha argues that the Assam movement is principally a chauvinist movement though he does not doubt that the demographic and occupational profiles of Assam have laid the seed bed for such nativist uprisings.

Nativist movements, whether in Bombay or Assam or Telengana, exhibit some common features. Weiner and Katzenstein (1981) survey this field and point out the importance that demographic imbalance and migration play in stoking nativist fires. The so-called "natives," whether they be Maharashtrians in Bombay, or Assamese in all of Assam, feel threatened by the sheer magnitude of migration which make them into numerical minorities in what they consider to be their own home. The most agitated of the natives are those who belong to the middle class and they take the lead in these nativist movements. This is

certainly true in the first phase of a nativist uprising, but gradually other socio-economic sections get involved for a variety of reasons. For instance, the working class in Bombay and the agrarian population of Assam were significantly swayed by nativist appeals, though in the initial articulation of the respective nativisms there was little in them to motivate either the proletariat of Bombay or the rural populace of Assam.

Gupta (1982) believes that in the case of the Shiv Sena several factors combined to enlarge the appeal of the Sena such that it could also attract the working class of Bombay. To begin with Bal Thackeray, the Shiv Sena leader, was able to establish source credibility with his middle class followers such that when he turned them against the communists the faithfuls happily obliged him (ibid. 188). Together with this we should also take into account the many deliberate concessions made by the government and by industrial houses to the Shiv Sena which made it a very attractive option to the restive and dissatisfied working class population of Bombay (ibid: 176-180). While the modalities of the Assam movement's spread to rural areas is less clear, the fact that the Assam agitationists turned much of their venom from the Bengali middle class to the Bengali Muslim migrants from Bangladesh, certainly played a decisive role in taking the movement to the villages of Assam. The migrants from Bangladesh were agriculturalists and this, in all likelihood, threatened the native Assam peasants, who saw large tracts of land going over to the hands of "outsiders".

It is important to take into account the socio-economic factors at each stage in the career of such nativist movements, and indeed, of all ethnic movements, for they demonstrate all too clearly the mutability and transitory nature of the so-called ethnic phenomena. Our earlier discussion of the debate between the primordialists and the instrumentalists may be recalled in this connection.

ANTI-RESERVATION MOVEMENTS

A note must be made of the flow of articles after the announcement in 1980 by the Central Government to implement the Mandal Commission recommendation which effectively

reserves 50 per cent seats in government and educational institutions on the basis of caste. According to the Mandal Commission even the socio-economic Backward Castes need protective and positive discrimination. While one group of intellectuals argue that the Mandal Commission implementation is just, for the backwards are indeed under privileged, another group believes that the recommendations are retrograde in nature. As yet few papers have appeared which sociologically examine the consequences or the processual implications of the Mandal Commission proposals. But those interested may consult Sheth (1987), K.S. Chalam (1990), and Kancha Ilaiah (1990). In particular one may read with profit Chalam's piece for he discusses the history of the reservation policy over the years with regard to costs and efficiency (1990). Perhaps the most significant work on this subject is by Marc Galanter entitled *Competing Equalities* (1984). This volume surveys the evolution of preferential policies with respect to caste reservations in great detail. The author demonstrates how politicians over time yielded to pressures from different caste representatives (primarily those belonging to the Scheduled Castes and Backward Castes) to make reservations a permanent feature of public policy and to constantly enlarge the enumerated lists of Scheduled Castes and Backward Castes. Contrary to popular opinion, it was not easy to decide on the Scheduled Caste list, for the concept of "untouchability" was not practised in the same way in different parts of the country. Thus while the practice of segregation and untouchability was very marked in peninsular India, it was more diffused in the North (ibid: 130). In addition there are certain castes which are considered as untouchables in one province but not in the other. For example, the Dhobis are untouchables in UP but not in Bombay, the Khatiks are untouchables in Punjab but not in UP and the Dusadh caste carries no stigma of pollution in MP but does so in Bihar (ibid 141-2).

The making of a list for Backward Classes faced even greater difficulties. It was not clear if education or urban employment should be an index of backwardness, or whether a composite of the two with other variables should be considered (ibid: 169-72, and passim). All these are important background phenomena for understanding the aftermath of the Mandal recommendations.

In the years to come one can look forward to an increase in

academic engagement on the social consequences of "Mandalism" (as it is often referred to), but there is a good deal of interesting work which has already been done with respect to the ways Backward Classes have pressed for reservations at the state or provincial levels, and the kind of resentment they have aroused. Through these studies one can gauge the nationwide political imperatives behind the Mandal recommendations, while awaiting full-fledged scholarship on the subject. For instance the anti-reservation movement in Gujarat in 1985 received a lot of attention from academics. Shah (1990b), Wood (1990), and Mitra (1987) have, among others, commented on this issue. Though this agitation took place in 1985 and only at the Gujarat state level, it nevertheless helps us to understand some of the fervour behind the later uprising that followed the decision by the Central Government in 1990 to implement the Mandal Commission recommendations on a national scale.

Shah's study of the Gujarat agitation is against the background of the rise of the Gujarat Kshatriya Sabha under whose aegis some of the upwardly mobile backward castes had assembled. Shah is only too aware of the fact that reservations, whether for the SC, STs, or for the Backward Castes, have only helped a small section from these communities (1990b: 144). This is also true of Bihar where the leading backward castes are the Yadavas and Kurmis, or even of Karnataka where the Lingayats and Vokkaligas are Backward Castes and yet politically and economically very powerful (ibid: 116). Yet, Shah believes, that it should also be mentioned that in spite of their political and economic dominance, the Backward Castes are in general less educated than the upper (or forward) castes (ibid: 116).

Wood's analysis (1990: 116) of the Gujarat agitation of 198 against the upward revision of reserved seats for Backward Castes initiated by Madhavsinh Solanki, the then Chief Minister of Gujarat, pays greater importance to the political alliance between the Kashatriyas, Harijans, Adivasis and Muslims (KHAM) and the pressures this alliance faced from the forward caste after it was so convincingly voted to power in March 1985. By July 5 of the same year, Solanki had to resign because of month of unrest led by the forward castes (ibid: 163). This makes one reconsider some of the facile conclusions one often rushes into with regard to caste loyalties in politics. The Karnataka experi

ence is also a pointer in this matter for we find that the backward caste alliance that Devraj Urs had promoted with Mrs Gandhi's encouragement came apart after his death. In fact, with Gundu Rao, his successor, the dominant castes came to the fore once again (Natraj, 1990: 184-85).

Subrata Mitra's paper on the anti-reservation movement in Gujarat again goes over much of the same ground. Mitra begins by taking note of the fact that the Hindu upper strata are forming a new "pan-India majority communalism" (1987: 293). This section is socially and intellectually very influential and would like to open the debate on secularism. These upper caste members not only would like to see the reaffirmation of Hindu values externally, such as with respect to Muslims, but would also like to effect the reaffirmation of these values with respect to the internal (read caste) organization of Hindu society as well (ibid).

Against this background Mitra analyses the move made by the Gujarat Government to partially implement some of the Mandal Commission's recommendations in 1980. This decision served to provoke the restive upper castes and led to the anti-reservation movements that spread through Gujarat that year. But behind the acceptance of the Mandal recommendations was the political calculation that the Kshatriya, Harijan, Adivasi and Muslim (KHAM) alliance would be a winning one that would be further consolidated by the implementation of the Mandal Commission's recommendations (see also Wood, 1990: 146-157).

The agitation which began against reservation in 1980 was against Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, but in 1985 the agitation was directed against reservations in favour of Other Backward Castes. The movement grew in strength ultimately forcing Madhavsinh Solanki, the architect of the KHAM strategy, to resign (ibid: 330-33). Mitra attributes the growing insistence on the broadening of reservation to the upward mobility of the scheduled castes and tribes and the Backward Classes. In this article Mitra comes through as an advocate of reservations for in his opinion reservations break the link between caste and occupation. He also notes that there has been a transition in our polity from Congress-style one party dominance to a system that "encourages the articulation of political demands that are more sectional" (ibid: 308). The implication of this is that the upwardly mobile castes are now getting to be assertive and the political

demand for broadening reservations is, therefore, a consequence to be respected. Mitra's paper takes us back to our earlier discussion on the nature of transition in Indian politics, as well as to the question: how reliable, or durable, are caste calculations in politics? If the KHAM strategy brought Solanki to power why was it not able to sustain him there?

When asking questions of this order it would also be worth one's while to take a more contemplative view of preferential politics and reservation policies. In this connection Myron Weiner's paper on "The Political Consequences of Preferential Policies" (1983) cannot be overlooked. Weiner conceptually breaks down the various units of the debates around preferential politics, and what is more his paper comparatively assesses preferential politics in America and India. The comparison is valid for in the end, Weiner believes, the consequences of preferential politics or reservation based politics are the same even though the cultural settings of India and America are so different. This is especially in respect of inter-community tensions that follow the implementation of preferential politics (ibid: 40). Weiner also brings to our notice that most Americans, according to public opinion polls, object to reservations and quotas though they may support other methods to advance equality. (ibid: 41). This, as we know is very similar to the Indian situation.

The Mandal fall-out brought some of these matters into sharper focus. The spirit behind reservations for Scheduled Castes and Tribes aim to obliterate social barriers to equal opportunity. The question that is being asked after Mandal by a majority of intellectuals is whether these recommendations privilege certain castes in perpetuity or whether they protect castes from discrimination. It is likely that in the years to come sociologists will examine the social consequences of the Mandal recommendations in the light of this question. What such investigations will also entail is a closer look at the philosophy behind reservations and affirmative action and it is hoped that sociologists will play an active role in this regard as well. After all, they will have a lot to contribute with their first-hand studies on and experience of this issue.

6

Rural Agitation and the Farmers' Movement

As we had mentioned earlier, the farmers' movement erupted in west UP in a very novel way, generating a significant amount of academic interest. This does not mean that the farmers were flexing their muscles for the first time, but that the specific features of the rural west UP agitation enlivened the analytical and conceptual frameworks with which rural sociologists and anthropologists work.

While we shall pay greater attention to farmers' movements, there have been some studies of the agrarian labourers and the rural poor as well, but they have not been significant either analytically or numerically. Partha Mukherji's paper of Naxalbari peasant movement (1987) has important consequences for the study of social movements and need not concern us here directly. Pradhan Prasad's examination (1987) of agrarian violence in Bihar reaffirms his earlier position that the spate of agrarian violence in Bihar is an outcome of the struggles going on between the rural oligarchy and the direct producers. He also restates his well known position on the hold of feudal relations in Bihar.

Harry Blair's paper on the rising kulaks of Bihar (1980) while not directly addressed to the farmers' movement makes the point that the countryside in Bihar is going to see more aggression in the years to come. He also believes that the rise of the Backwards in Bihar has taken place for the so-called Forwards of Bihar lack the industry and motivation for profit maximization which the so-called Backwards possess (ibid: 64-72). In a manner of speaking these are the characteristic features of those farmers who have adopted agitational methods to press for their interests all over the country. Whether it be Bihar, UP, Maharashtra, or Karnataka, the important point is that the agrarian castes are the

ones in the forefront of agitations demanding more concessions from the Central Government (see also Hasan, 1989b: 130).

MAHENDRA SINGH TIKAIT AND SHARAD JOSHI

Tikait's rise to prominence in the 80s overshadowed Sharad Joshi's meteoric rise to public notice in the 70s. As a matter of fact, there are not very many full length works or even proper research articles on Joshi, while Tikait has already generated several papers and there are many others in the pipeline. Ironically enough, it is Tikait's emergence that has renewed scholarly interest in Sharad Joshi.

One of the reasons Tikait attracted so much attention was the obdurate rural mentality which Tikait and the Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU) under him seemingly exhibited. This apparently came in the way of urban intellectuals establishing a dialogue with Tikait and with the west UP farmers. Tikait openly shunned and ridiculed political parties and their ideological proclamations, used very unorthodox means of mass mobilization, and yet scored repeated successes. The peasants of west UP have not paid their electricity bills for over eight years now and they still have not been penalised by successive governments. All this leads one to conclude unambiguously that rural bigotry or not, Tikait has been eminently successful in west UP.

This success has led many scholars to go back to the notion of primordial loyalty that exists among the rural folk as a significant, if not the most significant, explanatory variable. The fact that Tikait is a leader of a clan (among other clans) of the Jats of west UP prompted this line of enquiry even more. On the other hand, in the case of Sharad Joshi in Maharashtra such issues never quite came to the fore as Joshi was a member of the urban elite who chose to lead a rural movement in Maharashtra. Joshi also made popular the so-called distinction between Bharat vs. India (Lennenberg, 1988: 449) though he himself is not a rural person. Tikait, on the other hand, who is a rural person, does not seem to be too keen on the Bharat vs. India dichotomy. To Tikait this is another species of ideological posturing (Gupta: 1988: 2695). Quite predictably again, Tikait is quite content to be localised in west UP and does not have any interest in striving for a unity of

farmers' organizations all over India. Joshi, on the contrary, is keen on an all-India front of farmers. This has led Dhanagare to remark that Tikait leads an organization characterized by a political populism. He quite frankly sides with the efforts of Joshi and believes that Tikait will do more harm than good to the farmers' cause (Dhanagare, 1991: 104-122). In conclusion, it must be said that Tikait and the BKU revived earlier debates in peasant studies on the efficacy of ideologies in peasant movements, on the viability of outside leadership, and on the scope of economism in such agitations. The farmers' movement of the 1980s also drew serious attention to the fact that the green revolution has created a restive populace who want more modern industrial inputs and infrastructural facilities to come their way but are constrained by larger structural impediments such as those inherent in the green revolution programme itself.

THE "BULLOCK CAPITALISTS"

An awareness of this kind took a while to gel amongst academics. After Independence when rich peasants and better-off tenant cultivators became owner proprietors, the seed bed, so to say, was ready. Punjab, Maharashtra, coastal Andhra, and Haryana were the principal carriers of the revolution. As a consequence of the green revolution it was now feasible to do well on as little as three acres of land, provided one had irrigation facilities. But, as Nadkarni shows in his fascinating book *Farmers' Movement*, while agricultural production increased, more and more sectors were being drawn into the orbit of the green revolution. More tractors were bought, more fertilizers employed, more pumpsets purchased, in short there was more of everything. But after a while the surplus in production began to taper off, and even at this late stage the industrial goods were only reaching a small proportion of the rural elite (Nadkarni, 1987: 48-57). In terms of trade too, the farmers contend that they have suffered. Farmers argue that the price of total input as percentage of agricultural output has significantly increased over the green revolution years (ibid: 52).

An interesting feature that has come to light in the wake of the farmers' movement is that while the farmers seem to shun

political parties and, at least in one significant case, an all-India combine, the cause of the rural poor, on the other hand, is carried forward by national parties usually belonging to the left (see Oomen: 1985: 147). Concomitantly, we must also notice that the enemies of Tikait and Joshi are not the local overlords, or the nearby magistrates, so much as the national and state governments against whom they are petitioning and agitating. In the case of the rural poor and their all India political organizations the enemy seems primarily to be the local oligarch, overlord, or capitalist farmer.

This assertion of the so-called rising Kulaks has forced analyses of the 80s to move from agricultural labourers and capitalist landlords to what Rudolph and Rudolph call the "bullock capitalists" (1987: 335). According to the Rudolphs the bullock capitalists are "advantageously placed by their objective circumstances to become the hegemonic agrarian class" (ibid: 342). Geographically, bullock capitalists are dominant in the northern, western, and upper southern states in contrast to eastern, lower southern and central states (ibid). Bullock capitalists are not small or marginal land owners. They are able to hold on to their land, employ labourers, invest in high yielding seeds and are beneficiaries of the green revolution. Yet at the same time they depend on family labour and have deep rural roots. In contrast to large landowners who suffered a decline in land under their control between 1954-55 and 1970-71, the proportion of bullock capitalists remained stable and the amount of land under their control in fact increased (ibid: 343). Mahendra Singh Tikait and the votaries of BKU would be ideal examples of what the Rudolphs call the "bullock capitalists".

B.S. Baviskar's important contribution on the politics of sugar co-operatives in Maharashtra convincingly demonstrates how small growers (some with less than 3 acres) are developing into a class of entrepreneurs in Maharashtra, thanks to the sugar co-operative movement (1980: 187-195). Though these co-operatives are run by the large landholders, the smaller growers are sufficiently numerous and politically active in the co-operatives to force them to be run on democratic lines. In this connection Baviskar also draws attention to the fact that most of the farmers, big and small, are of the Maratha caste, and that too aids the assertion of equality amongst the members of the co-operatives.

MAHARASHTRA AND WEST UP: A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

Comparing Maharashtra with west UP would also be fruitful for bringing out some of the nuances associated with peasant castes and their contemporary high political profile. In this connection it would be worthwhile to analyse how the Marathas of Maharashtra and the Jats of west UP have employed the political resources now available to them. Such a comparison might also help us to understand why the BKU in west UP is so distinctive in character.

Though there is no study that explicitly takes on such a task we are fortunate to have individual pieces which highlight either the Maratha case or the case of the west UP Jats. Jayant Lele's work on the manner in which the Marathas have strategically used their social position to remain hegemonic is very useful. In Lele's view the High Marathas form a hegemonic elite (1981: 45) that is spread all over Maharashtra and is not concentrated in any one region (ibid: 114). These High Marathas are those who have lineage connections with erstwhile patilki and deshmukhi offices (ibid: 56) and they do not admit the Kunbis as full Marathas even though the latter would like to be so considered (ibid). The stranglehold of these hegemonic High Maratha elites over wealth and resources is also politically very relevant (ibid: 204). Through alliances this hegemonic class "integrates the lowest unit of the political economy of the village into the national" (ibid: 200). Somewhat modifying Baviskar's position, Lele argues that though in appearance it would seem as if democracy is freely operating in an open arena, in reality—it is mainly elite rule (ibid: 114).

The situation in rural Maharashtra is thus (i) where the High Marathas (not just Marathas) have political and social predominance over the entire linguistic region; (ii) they strike alliances with lower peasant castes both at the village and national level; (iii) they do not believe that other Marathas (the non High ones) are equal to them, nor do they see in Maharashtra other castes with whom they might share the same varna category.

The scenario is quite different among the Jats of west UP. Here there are no High Jats or Low Jats: they are all Jats, and they are all equal. In addition, the Jats, believe that other owner-proprietor cultivating castes like Gujars, Rajputs, Ahirs and Sainis are

equal to them for they come from the same Kshatriya varna, (Madson, 1991: 352). I think it should also be noted that the Tyagis are considered as equals (on a political plane) by the Jats for they too belong to a cultivating and landowning caste even though they may formally claim to belong to the Brahman varna. Such a situation on the whole is quite different from the Maratha case where the High Marathas acknowledge no equal in their linguistic region. Paradoxically though the Jats believe in equality among themselves they have nothing but contempt for the non-landowning castes and see no reason to politically integrate with them. This again is in contrast to the Maharashtra case where, as Lele points out, the High Marathas successfully integrate the Malis, Dhangars, Kolis and other non Marathas (Lele, 1981: 56; 200-204) under their overall hegemony. A Jat on the other hand would exhibit no interest in aligning with members of the lower caste for they belong to an inferior varna (see also Byres, 1986: 139-89).

The west UP Jats first came to political prominence under Charan Singh and the Bharatiya Kranti Dal (see ibid, and Brass, 1980: Hasan, 1989b). The Bharatiya Kranti Dal (BKD) was formed in 1969 and its strategy from the beginning was to cultivate the Backward Castes (Hasan, 1989b: 130; Brass, 1980: 19). The accusation against the BKD in fact was that it was out to create a Jat enclave within the state (Hasan, ibid: 134). Charan Singh, however, hoped to integrate all the Backward Castes who had become owner-proprietors after the land reforms, and at one point even went on to say that he was "an old Yadav" (ibid: 140).

The BKU of the late 1980s depends on the same support base as had, earlier, the BKD. As Paul Brass points out, the BKD support structure was largely made up of peasant proprietors who owned around five acres and more and was limited to the wheat growing areas, i.e., to west UP (1980: 19, 27). Incidentally, in contrast to Maharashtra there were very few big capitalist farmers among the Jats, or Tyagis, or Gujars, of west UP. The Jat egalitarianism and status equality is further strengthened by the kind of economic homogeneity that prevails among them in west UP.

If one takes the analytical consequences of this comparison between the west UP Jats and High Marathas further, then it should not be too difficult to imagine why the BKU is not keen

on becoming part of an all-India farmers' combine, or even spreading out to Oudh and east UP. The BKD too, as we have noticed earlier, had not fared well outside west UP. One can now also comprehend why the urgency to go beyond the Jat land of this region is not there with the BKU either. The Jats and other peasant proprietors of west UP are owner-cultivators (they call themselves Kashtakari jatis) and thus have interests quite different from large capitalist landowners or ex-feudal landlords. Clearly there is still a lot that one can gain on the subject of farmers' mobilization by examining Maharashtra and west UP in a comparative perspective.

THE "SUBALTERNS"

Finally, and on a very different key, we must make special mention (even if only in passing) of the important contribution made to peasant studies and rural protest by the school of "subaltern" scholars led by Ranajit Guha. Though most of the works of this genre are not sociological and anthropological, but historical, it needs to be noted that there is a marked interest in anthropology amongst these "subaltern" historians. An important work of this school is by none other than Ranajit Guha (1983) who sets out to demonstrate the power of his methodology in his examination of the elementary aspects of peasant insurgency. Shunning the usual reliance on government archival material, Guha instead attempts to study peasant insurgents in pre-independence India somewhat anthropologically by trying to get the view of the "subalterns," of the tribals and peasants, of what they thought were the conditions around them, and how they articulated their aspirations. The emphasis is on the "subaltern" voice and on their point of view. Guha distinguishes between the criminal and the insurgent by pointing out that the insurgents are not criminals as their so-called acts of defiance are all public acts. The solidarity that the peasant movements are able to strike are indigeneously and very self-consciously arrived at. The transmission of rebel messages too took the traditional format and that is why it was very effective. Rumours and prophecy also played their role in transmitting news of rebellion to distant places. Further there was an aspect of territoriality which blended with

bonds of blood to provide added emotional appeal to rural mobilizations, but also restricted their geographical spread. They were limited thus to regions and could never transcend local boundaries.

Here we have history inspired by anthropology, and this cross-fertilization has been all to the good. It helps us to understand, among other things, how much the situation has changed in the last few decades in rural India though, superficially, there seems to be a great deal of continuity. For example, when one looks at the BKU in west UP, one gets the impression that the rural masses are still yoked to tradition and parochialism, exactly as they were in traditional or colonial India. But below this apparent facade of changelessness, we find that there is a world of difference in the way rural peasants mobilize today from what used to be the case in earlier times. Take the BKU once more. It is true that the organization is still limited to west UP, but it is not as if it is not active at the national level. The BKU's politics are informed by considerations which are supralocal, its targetted opponents are the state and national governments. Now with all the controversy regarding Dunkel regulations, BKU activists are concerned about international developments too. Moreover, if the BKU has chosen thus far to limit itself to west UP, it is not because its access is structurally limited, but rather because it has taken a considered political decision in this direction in order to optimize its capabilities. Hence, there is a return to bonds of blood and territory, but it is not as if these primordial attachments were constraints in the first instance.

The constraints the BKU faces are of a different order. The owner-proprietors of west UP need a forum to voice their economic demands, but do not feel an identical need for a new political party. The BKU has also to take into consideration the kind of political culture and activism which are feasible and generally effective in contemporary India. Thus while it has pushed the permissible limits time and again it has simultaneously used ideology and rhetoric, drawn from the national political mainstream, to neutralize such excesses. Sharad Joshi's union in Maharashtra quite clearly broke ranks with traditional formats of agitation, but that does not mean that the movement was any the less rural. The fact that Joshi and Tikait have emerged as popular leaders in different parts of the country invites political

sociologists to comprehend the contrasting features of Maharashtra and UP, rather than be mired in issues such as ruralism vs urbanism, and so forth. Such concerns deflect us from issues that have relevance for political sociology, and give prejudice and popular perceptions greater play than what they, sadly enough, already have.

7

Conclusion: Political Sociology in India

This takes us back to where we began, viz., to the question of political sociology.

As the earlier pages demonstrate, political sociology in India has quite liberally drawn from various streams of scholarship in sociology — Weberian, Durkheimian and Marxian. In this retrospection on the contemporary and emerging trends within the sub-discipline, it is quite clear that the basic themes of political sociology have been deepened and enriched by scholarship on India. The works referred to here are all of critical concern to political sociology for they raise issues which are central to it.

The changing political scenario of India in recent decades, especially after 1975, made the question of legitimacy a very important area of investigation. The problem that came to exercise the minds of several scholars, especially Mrs Gandhi's ascendence, was how the winning or the losing of legitimacy by a regime can alter the rules of the game across the board. It is not as if the re-emergence of the Gandhi family was accomplished through undemocratic means, but during this period some quite substantial changes were brought about due to the extraordinary presence of Mrs Gandhi on India's political stage. In other words what would perhaps have been considered politically illegitimate, though not quite illegal, was now no longer taken to be so, which obviously has implications for the political culture of India as a whole.

These changes in the political culture were accompanied by the emergence of newly relevant political actors who were mainly rural in origin. Unlike the early years after Independence, the urban educated literati cannot any longer legislate on behalf of the rural people. The rural-based political activists come from backgrounds that would have restricted their mobility in earlier years, but because of the general development of modernization

and secularization they have now a dominant voice both regionally and nationally.

The combined effect of Emergency and post Emergency rule, as well as the rise of the rural voice, has led to the undermining of certain institutionalized forms of politics in recent years. It cannot be denied that nepotism, corruption, casteism and communalism, have invaded certain political quarters that were hitherto considered to be secular and rational-legal. Even so this has not brought about a crisis in the system for there seems to be a general acceptance of certain codes of political behaviour. The most important being the reliance on adult franchise, which many thought was a fragile institution here. Instead elections have so far worked in keeping dictatorial rule at bay, and neither has it allowed complacency to develop among the dominant political parties. In fact what is most interesting is to observe how new institutions develop in India, and what consequences they have on the polity of the country. For example, the development of new caste and class alliances, the transformations brought about with respect to the notion of communalism and secularism, both in theory and practice, and the changing character of political parties, are some of the new institutional developments whose causes and consequences need to be considered deeply.

It is also very revealing to examine the manner in which the Indian state and society have responded to cultural diversity as well as to threats of secession. In hindsight we are now more comprehensively aware of the strength of the centripetal sentiments that bind the country together. This however does not preclude the use of divisive politics, but at the end of the day national unity is still considered sacred. It is also true that this pan-nationalist sentiment can be, and has been, used to foment community clashes between Sikhs and Hindus, and between Hindus and Muslims. But through all this if we do not keep in mind the peculiar nature of this centripetal sentiment in the society at large then our analysis would be unfinished, and would lack a depth perspective.

As one looks back on recent trends in political sociology one realizes how important it is to appreciate the specifics of Indian politics. Democracy in India has aroused a whole new set of expectations, resulting not only in the aggravation of certain existing conflict situations, and in the creation of new ones, but

also, on the positive side, allowing for the emergence of new political classes. Thus while the dream of 1947 has soured to a certain extent it is incontrovertible that our democracy is no longer an experiment but has struck deep roots, and in this process, turned the soil over in several unanticipated ways. The farmers' movement is an example of this phenomenon, and it needs to be understood against this broader canvas, and not simply in an abstract fashion by employing categories from the terms of trade debates, or from more conceptual frameworks like those proposed by mobilization theories or by cost-benefit analyses.

Nowhere are the specifics of Indian politics more clearly visible than in the study of ethnicity. This is because India is a multicultural nation state and thus the moral underpinning of our state structure is naturally quite unique. Ethnic conflicts have to be understood in this context, and not simply in terms of warring communities, nor, as often, is the case, as a prelude to the eventual balkanization of India. In fact it would be more appropriate to suggest that what we, as academics, are practising is a study of polity and society *in* India and not *of* India. India demands that we do not forget her specifics and her unique combinations.

As we come to the end of our analyses of the recent trends and developments in political sociology and political anthropology *in* India we must admit that there may be some disagreements on the range and themes of the literature cited here. Though this is an inescapable hazard it is still hoped that the foregoing pages will help us to appreciate more comprehensively the substantive scholarly achievements in this sub-discipline. This should also provide us with some helpful cues as to what should be our agenda for research in the years to come. It would be presumptuous to lay out in advance such an agenda for this must be worked out individually, and in the context of events that surround us. To encourage a contrary prescription would be inimical to research and would diminish its scholarly output. For instance, very few of us could have predicted in the 1970s that such exceptional trends would develop in our area of concern with respect to studies on ethnicity and farmers' movements. But what is indubitable is that in the years to come our understanding of the political sociology in India will enlarge and

deepen very substantially: this at least is what the past trends, including the most recent one, have given us to expect.

THE ROAD AHEAD

In contrast to the fast and furious flow of political events in the seventies and eighties, the nineties seem to be much more placid. However, as the political machine was over-heated in the past decade, it predictably led to a lot of controversy and polemics in the press and in academic writings as well. As the previous pages demonstrate, Punjab, the Babri Masjid, and even the Bharatiya Kisan Union, forced political sociologists to re-examine many of their received theoretical and conceptual structures. The pressure to analytically reformulate along lines opened up by experience was indeed both compelling and urgent. The debates were not just restricted to the academia but were pouring in from outside and thus could not be left unattended. From the time of Narasimha Rao's ascendance there has been a general cooling down of the political system. There is no charismatic figure in the firmament to enthuse passions. Neither is there any real or perceived threat to the nation state at present. The urge to pronounce boldly, and perhaps a trifle loudly, will therefore be considerably tempered in the years to come. Judging from the past few years it is most likely that academics will get a reprieve from the tumultous events of the previous decades and may perhaps be better disposed towards taking a long view of things. Consequently, the concern with more routine issues will tend to dominate the works of political sociologists in the remaining years left of the nineties.

As political sociologists have tended to respond to happenings around them, one may expect them to contribute in the following areas in the years to come. The crisis of governance will receive a new twist because of the introduction of liberalism and, with it, the open market as part of state policy. The multifarious impact of liberalization on the polity is bound to generate a great degree of enthusiasm. There are already a few contributions on this subject and one may safely predict that there will be many more in the near future (see Kothari 1995). Ethnicity will continue to fascinate scholars but this time it will not be Punjab but

the Shiv Sena that will arouse their interest. The Mandal Commission recommendations have already inspired several exercises, and one may safely predict a further refinement of work in this area. As far as rural India is concerned, the farmers' movement will also continue to attract scholarship, but this time perhaps sociologists will find the organizational constraints to rural activism more appealing than the sound and fury of mobilization. But first the impact of liberalization and the emerging problems of governance.

THE IMPACT OF LIBERALIZATION

In previous sections mention was made of how the early visions and expectations of the nationalist movement were belied in the seventies and eighties leading to a kind of crisis in governance. Personalized politics became quite the order of the day without however becoming dictatorial, or without the system losing its legitimacy. But certain institutions fared rather poorly as they were increasingly susceptible to vested interests and political pressures from the outside. In addition, the use of religion, caste and other primordial passions was increasingly resorted to in the ordinary run of politics. While these features did not escape the attention of lay commentators and political sociologists, the philosophy of secularism and self-reliance was still officially adhered to till the late 1980s. Secularism is still holding out in some key sectors, even though communalists of all descriptions are giving it new connotations every day (without, however, a full public disavowal). But there has been a much greater consensus in the nineties for abandoning the programme of self-reliance and socialism. We can assume that one of the central pillars of the Nehruvian era has now fallen.

The surprising feature is the lingering belief among many that liberalization is also effective in fighting poverty. While socialism had the alleviation of the poor as its central platform, this is far from being the case under the dispensation of liberalization. As a result there have to be other indices to judge the effectiveness of this new approach to the national economy. In the meanwhile, liberalization has won votaries and opponents, the former way ahead in numbers over the latter. Very often, however, caution

needs to be exercised when computing the figures for those who are in favour of liberalization. Many of those advocating liberalization and privatization do so in respect of sectors other than the ones in which they are employed.

The impact of liberalization on trade unionism is quite noticable. There will be greater pressure exercised by both foreign and Indian investors to soften union laws and make them more friendly towards entrepreneurs. While such demands were made in the past as well, the overall political climate did not allow any watering down of labour laws in favour of management. As Stanley Kochanek observed in the 1970s, business houses were awarded low prestige (1974:198), for which reason "(p)ublic policy [in India], in its distributive, redistributive, and regulatory aspects tends to inhibit, limit, or circumscribe private sector activity" (ibid:87). The situation is now quite different. There is no intellectual or political energy left in socialist and left-wing positions which leaves the terrain more or less wide open to changes in both labour laws and in trade union practice. Whether or not resistances against liberalization will surface is yet to be seen, but at any rate opposition towards it will probably not be articulated from familiar socialist perspectives. This brings us to the issue of political culture.

One important consequence of the general acceptance of the principles of economic liberalization will most certainly be in the region of political culture. In an earlier chapter it was mentioned that India's success as a democracy was often attributed to the fact that the old elite was only gradually replaced by the new elite without any serious destabilization of the political process. Now with liberalization another generation of elites has come up. This group draws most of its cues from international business and finance, and from the principles of consumerism. It is likely that this may create different kinds of tensions between the elites and the rest, and may also increase the distance between these two strata. At any rate, the earlier view that India's political culture was an unique blend of the rural and the urban, where the rural and urban elite co-existed, and where the rules of the game gradually percolated down to create sub-sets of elites and intermediaries (Pye and Verba 1965: 18-20), will need serious revision. It will be interesting to see how international codes of

business and official conduct will be realized in a setting such as India, and particularly so in the political domain.

THE POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES OF THE MANDAL COMMISSION

At this point it is essential to distinguish the liberalism of the old school with the new liberalism of today. In many ways the contemporary notions of "liberalization" actually partake more of new liberalism than that of the old. In old fashioned liberalism, the most important feature was to free the individual from all kinds of traditional fetters which had the potential of holding the person back from being fully rational in the economic sphere. As a result of the success of liberalism of the earlier period, most modern nation-states, and this includes India, have legally done away with all forms of traditional barriers towards the free development of the individual, such as those of race, caste, or religion. Liberalism in the past however paid little attention towards uplifting the poor. This is because it believed that such amelioration would come about in the long run if the economy and society functioned freely along the lines of rational capitalism and individual enterprise.

Sociologists in the nineteenth century understood what liberalism could do to social moorings and community solidarities, and hence they warned against the "iron cage of bureaucracy," as did Weber, or against the "pathological" forms of division of labour, as did Durkheim. These issues have already been alluded to in the first chapter and therefore need not be repeated here. Nevertheless, it is essential to recall that though liberalism could not ignore the disruptive forces of pure individualism, it was still powerless to do anything about it. This helplessness is visible in both Durkheim and Weber, for which reason Marxism and socialism had a permanent niche and committed partisans the world over. Talcott Parsons was one of the first sociologists who took on the socialist challenge four square. He argued that a liberalism that privileges the individual is in no way negative or something to be shamefaced about, so long as there are consensual value patterns in society. The search then was to shore up these consensual formulations, and Parsons achieved this by delving deep into the American belief that everybody can, and

should, make a difference, and law and custom must together encourage this disposition.

But as time went on, it was realized, even in America, that it was becoming increasingly difficult to meet the needs of the poor and the under-privileged through the principle of free enterprise. Many countries in Europe had come to this conclusion much earlier. Accordingly they had made room for welfarism and social security within their political systems. It must nevertheless be admitted that welfarism of this sort ceded significant ideological ground to socialist policies without however fully yielding to socialism.

America was one of the first countries to launch on new liberalism as a social policy, without really calling it by such a name. New liberalism still abides by free enterprise, but it acknowledges the importance of primordial bondings, such as of race and religion, but in an entirely different way. No longer does race or religion, or any other ascriptive characteristic debar individuals from freedom to pursue economic opportunities, but they now function as ready-made categories through which economic programmes are mediated. Hence weightages are now given to certain cultural groups in jobs and educational opportunities through the principle of affirmative action. This should be distinguished from the policy of reservation as first enunciated in India, where the ultimate goal was to remove caste-based discrimination completely, and indeed the caste system itself.

But the contemporary political mood in India is not for the eradication of caste or for the gradual lessening of its importance in the public sphere. Instead there is greater enthusiasm today than ever before for caste-based political mobilizations in every arena of statecraft. The spirited endorsement of the Mandal Commission by a large number of so called "Backwards" is an indication of the fact that:

(i) Reservation of Scheduled Castes and Tribes have met with demonstrable success, no matter how limited the spread of beneficiaries may have been.

(ii) Adult franchise works to the extent that it is politically impossible to discount those who are economically poor, as everybody has equal voting rights and is willing to exercise them. This is why it has become impossible to work out the original reservations policy which had a time bar, as that

might bring about disaffection among the politically active SCs and STs. Reservations have therefore become privileges in perpetuity.

(iii) Thirdly, the newly-ascendent rural classes who were initially satisfied by land reforms and by the dismantling of the zamindari system, now feel hemmed in by the sheer inertia of rural production. They too want to move into cities and augment their incomes over and above getting a slice of urban consumerism. In other words, opinion has shifted in the main from a concern with equality of opportunity to equality of result.

Very often this shift is seen as being inimical to liberalism, but that is far from true. Multiculturalism, and affirmative action in the United States, also function on a similar logic. In America, of course, there is no such drive to go to the city, as it is in the overwhelmingly rural India, but certainly the precept of equality of results is equally dominant in the American policy of affirmative action. It is not necessary then that caste, or race or religion be eradicated as a consequence of liberalism, but may in fact be strengthened to function as pressure groups. This tendency has occasionally been mistaken for traditionalism, which it patently is not (see also Kothari 1995). Now policy mediations can take place through cultural representatives without directly featuring in the individual. Modern states find this to be a far easier way of conducting political negotiations, especially when dealing with the problems of the under privileged. In fact, the category of the poor or the "people" is effaced, and replaced by communities of various kinds and denominations. In the Indian case, for instance, programmes are increasingly being initiated for the "Backwards" or Scheduled Castes, and not slotted directly for the category of the poor. It is difficult to foretell what such kinds of political activism and inputs into the system will do to the society as a whole, but it will certainly leave telling, and perhaps irreversible, effects on the style and content of public policy-making and conflict resolution. Undoubtedly, this will bring about a downgrading of the notion of citizenry, as it has been understood till now. Like the working class, the concept of the public or the citizen, will need to be re-worked in the years to come. While much of this re-articulation will be fashioned slowly from daily political practice, sociologists should anticipate some o

these events at the conceptual level, privileged as they are by sociological literature about comparable issues elsewhere in the world.

ETHNICITY: PUNJAB AND KASHMIR

After over a decade of violence, Punjab has, today, quite dramatically become one of the most peaceful provinces of India. The fact that the militancy in that region was brought under control in a few months in 1992 clearly demonstrates that secessionism was never a mass movement in Punjab. The Sikhs in general felt humiliated, but were not ready yet for another partition. Their partisanship with the militants was more vicarious than actual, or participatory.The popular Sikh mood of the eighties and early nineties was bristling with hurt and anger following the large scale massacre in 1984 of members of their community. It is this factor more than any ideological involvement with the militants' programme that gave the Khalistanis credibility with the general Sikh population. For many scholars this was not easy to discern, as propaganda and counter-propaganda had rent the air making it difficult for clear-headed analyses to emerge. Punjab's quiescence today also demonstrates the durability of the sentiments that make up the Indian nation-state. Had it not been for the abundance of this sentiment in Punjab it would have certainly gone the Kashmir way by now.

That Punjab has ceased to be a trouble spot does not mean that India is free of ethnic tensions. Kashmir continues to seethe, but so far, to my knowledge, there has been no significant academic contribution that is new on this subject. The fact that Kashmir is now reacting to decades of Congress, and by implication, the Centre's, political high-headedness is by and large accepted by most scholars. But theoretically and analytically no new light has been shed in this field. The high level of political tension and uncertainty in Kashmir is also an inhibiting factor to field-based research projects in that area. Hopefully, in the years to come, this impediment will be overcome making it possible for new and challenging researches to take place in this northern-most province of India. For instance, it would be interesting to observe how the much-vaunted notion of Kashmiriyat has fared in the

context of the political tensions in the valley. There have already been several scholarly works on the Kashmiriyat phenomenon, but they are largely relating to the past and are somewhat nostalgic in character. There is lot of scope for a new direction of research on this theme.

"HINDU" POLITICS AND THE RETURN OF SHIV SENA

The re-emergence of the Shiv Sena is bound to excite a lot of attention among political sociologists. Though this organization has been around for some time now, it has certainly come up with surprises in recent years. In this process many of its earlier characteristics have undergone some transformation. It still remains a highly jingoistic, and "nationalist" party, but no longer confined only to Bombay. When the Shiv Sena emerged in 1966 it was a distinctly Bombay-based phenomenon. Outside the Bombay-Thane industrial belt, the Shiv Sena had hardly any following. Time and time again the Sena tried to move into rural areas and to other cities of Maharashtra but met with little success. This was because the identity of the Shiv Sena was very closely linked to the demographic specifics of Bombay. Inspite of being the capital of Maharashtra, the Maharashtrians only make up about 43 per cent of the population of this metropolis. The Maharashtrians are neither among the wealthiest communities in the city, nor do they dominate it culturally. For these reasons the Shiv Sena will always have a berth among the Maharashtrians of Bombay, and particularly among those in the lower-middle rungs.

The reasons for the Shiv Sena's popularity in Bombay were so intimately associated with the demographic features of the city that for many years it could not make a significant dent in any other region or city of Maharashtra. Neither Pune, nor Nagpur has the kind of demographic structure that Bombay has. The question therefore is: how has the Shiv Sena been able to overcome its localized confines and capture power today on a Maharashtra-wide basis? Can it also become a national party tomorrow?

The rise of the Shiv Sena has given secularists a great shock, but perhaps for the wrong reasons. It is not as if the majority of

Hindus have only recently become cultural chauvinists. The fact that there are so many sympathizers of the RSS ideology in parties other than the BJP should make one realize that chauvinism is not restricted to certain overt forms of political articulations alone. Indeed this mental set may be a much more general phenomenon. Thus while the Congress under Nehru was winning election after election, it cannot be said as a corollary that the people of India also shared Nehru's views on the RSS or the Hindu Mahasabha. These two factors are quite distinct.

Obversely, whenever the RSS, or the Shiv Sena, wins an election, this should not imply that they now have a permanent basis, or that their voters have only recently been communalized.

If one looks at the career of political parties over the past forty years and more, it is clear that no political organization can hope to be permanently ensconced, no matter how propitious the electoral base may be. Even the Shiv Sena has lost Municipal elections in the past, and particularly after 1975 it had to struggle hard to stay afloat.

Political fortunes are therefore highly mutable. The Akali Dal which came to power in Punjab with over 43 per cent votes in 1977 went down miserably to the Congress in 1980 barely managing to scratch about 23 per cent of the total votes cast. This inspite of the fact that while it was in power the Akali Dal moved the Anandpur Sahib Resolution, and also filed a case in the Supreme Court on the sharing of water with Haryana and Rajasthan. Ironically, it was precisely these factors that helped it to win favour again with the people of Punjab from 1983 onwards. Politics is therefore a competitive field, constantly open to swings in fortunes.

Likewise, now that the Shiv Sena has come to power in Maharashtra with the 1995 state elections, this does not mean that the people of Maharashtra have become permanent votaries of the Sena. But having said that, it is important to go on and ask how has the Shiv Sena been able to project itself outside its earlier parochial limits? The answer to this question should not be sought within the Shiv Sena alone, but should be analyzed keeping in mind the entire field of competitive politics. The rise or fall of political parties takes place in this wider context, for which reason one should resist the temptation to seek answers to questions of this sort on a sectional, or singular basis.

From 1985 onwards the Shiv Sena has been talking about Hindutva, but it has only recently been able to successfully cash in on it. Obviously, Hindutva is not the magic mantra that it is often made out to be. The fact that the so-called secular parties have lost their credibility must also be taken into account when explaining the success of the Shiv Sena. When the Sena stopped victimizing the South Indians after 1970 or thereabouts, it immediately chose the communists and the Muslims as its most hated targets. The communists did not seem to matter as the 1980s wore on. Datta Samant had already dealt a crushing blow to left trade unionism in Bombay. Only the Muslims remained as worthy enemies for the Shiv Sena, and it lost no opportunity to vilify them as anti-nationals and as partisans of Pakistan.

This was not a very new or novel idea. The RSS has been saying similar things for a long time. The newness of the Shiv Sena's attack comes from the fact that it is ready and willing to deal retaliatory blows all the way and not be constrained by RSS ideals of Hindu manhood. This is the differentia specifica of the Shiv Sena, which is why it is useless to hope that this organization will become a moderate outfit one day. If this were to happen, the Sena would become something else: a factor that Bal Thackeray is acutely aware of.

The emergence of the Shiv Sena all over Maharashtra is to be accounted for by the fact that it is distinctly different from the other known and tested political parties in the region. From the Janata Dal to the Congress, all the other parties are in disgrace. Shiv Sena promises a new beginning, and hence its current appeal. It is difficult to say how long it will be able to sustain itself in this enviable position, but what cannot be doubted is that it will be constantly pressured to prove itself, and this cannot be done simply by beating up minorities, but by actual performance on the secular economic front. Minority-bashing cannot be a full-time occupation because its appeal is limited only to times of tension and insecurity. As Hindus dominate India, it is inconceivable that cultural chauvinism and minority persecution by themselves can keep an organization viable over long periods of time: or, at least this is what past experience leads us to believe.

In the nineties, parties like the BJP, and even the Shiv Sena, will assume a dominating presence precisely because of the lack of any worthwhile alternative. In addition, it must also be noted

that both the BJP and the Shiv Sena, along with other organizations like the Vishwa Hindu Parishad and the Bajrang Dal, are consciously working towards creating a homogeneous community of Hindus. Though this may seem like a very tall order, given the serious divisions of caste and region in India, it cannot however be denied that these Hindu organizations have made a beginning on this account. In the past the RSS was known for its pro-Brahmin slant, even though it was always anti-caste in its official pronouncements. But it nevertheless possessed a distinctly elitist flavour because its membership was largely Brahmin and upper caste, and also because it gave salience to a high moral life style which was a mixture of continence, physical exercise, and awareness of the classics.

The Shiv Sena may have shown the other Hindu organizations the way out of this elitist and self-circumscribing circle in which they were trapped. From the very beginning the Sena was strongly anti-caste, for which reason it was caught in a bind when it opposed the Dalits over the publication of Ambedkar's *Riddles of Hinduism*. Predictably the Shiv Sena blamed the Muslims for creating this tension between caste Hindus and the Dalits. In fact a cover illustration of the *Marmik* (the official organ of the Shiv Sena) shows the two friends making up much to the displeasure of the Muslims or the "green vultures" (see Ghosh 1995:30).It may be recalled that when the Shiv Sainiks opposed the Dalit Panthers in the 1970s it was ostensibly because they believed that the Panthers were objectively aiding the communists in Bombay and elsewhere in Maharashtra.

Among the Shiv Sena there is no pretence anywhere of Hindu high culture. The Shiv Sena has a large number of Backward Castes in it. But it also has Marathas, Brahmins and CKPs in important positions. Bal Thackeray himself belongs to the Chandraseni Kayastha Prabhu (CKP) caste, and lauds his father's involvement in the 1930s Non-Brahmin movement of Maharashtra. By all accounts the BJP is enlarging its membership too among the lower castes and has been quite successful thus far. To what extent it will succeed in creating a base among the Backwards and Scheduled Castes will also be a phenomenon to look out for in the future. If these Hindu organizations are able to carry such a programme through it will have far-reaching repercussions on the political scenario. It might also bring to surface differences

within their ranks which are economic in character, and at the same time eat into the ranks of the Janata Dal and the Bahujan Samaj. Future studies will probably pay greater attention to this factor and not simply rely on the earlier notion that Hindu organizations are necessarily biased in favour of the upper castes.

FARMERS' MOVEMENTS

In earlier pages it was mentioned how the BKU, led by Mahender Singh Tikait, opened up a whole new dimension of research on agrarian mobilization. The BKU, however, is now beginning to show signs of ennui, fatigue and lack of direction. More importantly, it is increasingly becoming a Jat organization, and has already alienated the Muslims and the other peasant castes, such as the Gujars and the Tyagis from its fold. Tikait still remains the supremo in this Union, but the sway of the BKU has significantly diminished even in its west UP stronghold.

This transformation of the BKU is however not without some analytical interest for those sociologists who are interested in this subject. If the BKU's sudden and dramatic rise to power sparked off a series of studies, its relatively low profile too should arouse academic curiosity, particularly the manner in which it is now primarily limited to the Jats of west UP.

From the very beginning the BKU has studiously avoided political parties to the extent that on one occasion it even disallowed Charan Singh's widow from speaking from its podium. It has kept up this anti-party position for all these years. Its constitution too very clearly emphasises its "arajnaitik" (or non-political) position. But perhaps because it has refused to participate through modern political forums, it is increasingly pressured to resort to traditional forms of mobilization. Khap chaudhuries, or clan heads, are now important cogs in the BKU organization, for the BKU now increasingly relies on khaps for its mobilizational activities. This has led it to become more Jat-oriented, resulting in the alienation of the other peasant castes of the area. The Gujars too have clan-like organizations, but such a structure is practically absent amongst the Tyagis. Even in the case of the Gujars, khaps do not play as important a role as they do among the Jats. Besides, khaps, by their very logic, operate best within a caste

and not so effectively outside it. One significant outcome of this process has been the selective revival in west UP of khap and kinship ties, and the assertion of traditional authority in the realm of family, marriage and succession.

Farmers are also well organized in other states of India such as Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, and most notably, in Maharashtra. Like west UP, the Maharashtrian experience with respect to farmers' mobilization has received a lot of attention. In this connection Maharashtra affords a diversity of expression: there are the sugar cooperatives, and then there is the Shetkari Sangathana led by Sharad Joshi.

The sugar cooperatives have been extensively studied (for instance by Baviskar, 1980) and it is clear that the authority of these cooperatives is derived from the superior social position that their chairmen have held for generations as Deshmukhs and Patels. While the membership in these cooperatives is open to all farmers who cultivate cane, it is the bigger shareholders who have the clout. The cooperatives are however not organs of terror and naked class domination. They are well-run and efficient organizations: they are profitable both to the big and small shareholders.

The Congress party has traditionally been dominant in these cooperatives, not because the cooperatives worked their way into the party, but because the leading families of these organizations were Congress people to begin with. The chairmen and other important functionaries of the cooperatives did not emerge as significant political actors because of their links with the Congress, they were always politically significant in their own right. In fact, one might say that it was that the Congress that rode on *their* shoulders in west Maharashtra. The interesting development in this regard is that in contemporary times both the BJP and the Shiv Sena are trying to break the stranglehold of the Congress in this region. The Sena-BJP strategy in this respect is to induct members of Backwards Castes into the boards of these cooperatives, in order to wrest control from the traditional bosses. The game plan might or might not succeed. It will not be as easy as it appears from a distance, for a large number of small shareholders have done well under the existing type of patronage capitalism and would not like to upset the apple cart. Therefore, if the Shiv Sena and the BJP succeed, it is also very likely

that these cooperatives too might be irreversibly damaged as flourishing concerns. The outcome of this tussle should certainly be very interesting and worthwhile for political sociologists.

Sharad Joshi's Shetkari Sangathana is apparently running out of steam. His attempts to snatch the limelight from Tikait was, as is well known, not very successful. In recent years he has tried to mobilize support around the Dunkel draft but without much profit. In 1994 he also launched a new political party—Swatantra Bharat—but so far it has not hit the front page. Yet it would be too early to scratch Joshi out for he is quite adept at seizing whatever political opportunity comes his way. It must also be admitted that the fact that he is an outsider of sorts in rural Maharashtra has not seriously hampered his style of functioning. He has managed to convert his non-rural background into an asset, for he is free to pick up causes from all over and not be limited as Tikait is to a certain class and region in west UP. A full-fledged comparative study of Tikait and Sharad Joshi would certainly be a very welcome addition to the existing literature on rural mobilization.

The issues and themes listed above are the probable areas where one might expect contribution from political sociologists in the very near future. These areas are significant not so much because they will overwhelm all other themes by the sheer number of pages and printed material, but because they are challenging issues which will help in the conceptual refinement of the sub-discipline. Whether it is the impact of liberalization, or the rise of Hindu politics, or the farmers' movement, on each occasion, problems that are eminently sociological in character are brought to the fore. The critical emphasis in all such cases is on the question of authority and not just naked power. For this reason, all brands of political persuasion must function within parameters considered to be legitimate by the society. The contours of legitimacy are not fixed either, and that is why political cultures are always prone to dynamism. Nevertheless, at each point in time the rules of legitimacy seem firmer than what they, in fact, are. These rules, notwithstanding their inherent changeability, nevertheless act as curbs to restrain all brands of political activism in their quest for legitimate authority.

As political cultures and their accompanying rules of legitimacy are outcomes of unique combinations of individual nation

states it is essential to pay attention to these singularities. Much as political sociology is indebted to a universal body of concepts and theorizations, each of these must be sensitive to the live realities of individual societies if they are to be meaningful. The themes and issues raised in the earlier pages, as well as the view that we have of the road ahead, all demonstrate that political sociology as a sub-discipline can enrich, and has enriched itself by paying attention to the specifics of the field. It is for this reason that the emphasis in this volume has consistently been on political sociology *in* India and not *of* India.

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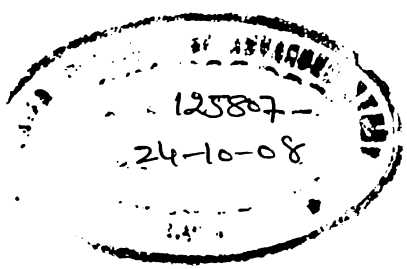

Politics in India is often understood in terms of exceptions. This is because Indian polity reflects the social diversity of India, and is a meeting point of a many-layered past and a self-conscious present. This book argues that these specifics do not necessarily imply an abandonment of universal categories, for the Indian experience, properly studied, often results in the enrichment of analytical concepts. This is also why it is more appropriate to study political sociology *in* India rather than *of* India. It is with this perspective that the author reviews recent contributions in the field of political sociology. As political sociologists working on India have always responded to critical political events in the country they have constantly pressured the sub-discipline to enlarge its scope and frame.

This study spans the years beginning from the late 1970s to the early years of the 1990s: from the Emergency and its fallout to the Punjab crisis and the Mandal recommendations. Particular attention has been paid to those works which have made significant contributions to knowledge in the area. Students and teachers of sociology and political science may also benefit from the opening section of the book which clarifies the relationship between sociology and its sub-discipline, political sociology.

Dipankar Gupta is currently Professor in the Centre for the Study of Social Systems, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. He has also worked in the Centre for Social Studies, Surat, and in the Department of Sociology, University of Delhi. His most recent publication is *The Context of Ethnicity: Sikh Identity in a Comparative Perspective* (OUP, 1996). He is currently work[illegible] in Uttar Pradesh.

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