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Social Movements in India

Poverty, Power, and Politics

Edited by

Raka Ray and Mary Fainsod Katzenstein

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Introduction

In the Beginning, There Was the Nehruvian State

Raka Ray and Mary Fainsod Katzenstein

My only excuse for taking up poverty as an area of concern so late in my life, despite my knowing that it is a vast and complex subject, is that those who should be concerned about it are moving further away from either diagnosing and analyzing the phenomenon of poverty and the new depths of destitution and untold human suffering to which it has sunk, or providing new thresholds of understanding which can enable the poor themselves to overcome it.

—Rajni Kothari¹

Not only is the persistence of widespread undernourishment in India—more than in all other regions in the world—quite extraordinary, so is the silence with which it is tolerated, not to mention the smugness with which it is sometimes dismissed. . . .

Given our democratic system, nothing is as important as a clearer understanding of the causes of deprivation and the exact effects of alleged policy remedies that can be used. Public action includes not only what is done for the public by the state, but also what is done by the public for itself. It includes what people can do by demanding remedial action and through making governments accountable. I have argued in favour of a closer scrutiny of the class-specific implications of public policies that cost the earth and yet neglect—and sometimes worsen—the opportunities and interests of the underdogs of society. The case for protesting against the continuation of old disadvantages has been strong enough for a long time, but to that has to be added the further challenge of resisting new afflictions in the form of policies that are allegedly aimed at equity and do much to undermine just that. The case for relating public policy to a close scrutiny

Scholars concerned with the decline of the Nehruvian state and the failure of its promise to the poor have not paid much attention to social movements as actors who may buffer, accelerate, ameliorate, and challenge the shifting agendas of the state. The Marxist argument highlights the significance of the capturing of state power by dominant societal interests as the decisive issue determining social outcomes. Thus, Pranab Bardhan, for example, argues that compromises and conflicts among dominant interests such as industrial capitalists, rich farmers, and urban white collar and public sector officials have shaped the political economy in India. This prompted, in his view, an accommodationist politics which failed to seriously undertake land reform, and therefore left intact the root of the real issue of poverty. The problem here is the capture of the state by elite interests.

There is another long tradition in the study of Indian politics that situates the failure of poverty remediation in the failure of state capacity, in state de-institutionalization, or in the weak-strong character of state institutions. Scholars in this tradition such as Atul Kohli focus on issues of governability and in particular, on the relationship of political parties to the state. Thus the state's failure to govern and to minister effectively to its poor is, by and large, a consequence of the post-Nehru decline of the Congress Party.⁸ Others, such as Pratap Mehta and Kanchan Chandra, point to failures of intra-party democracy, which leads to factionalism and ultimately disunity and poor governance.⁹ Precisely because the Nehruvian state was interventionist, its role in development was crucial, and its diminishing effectiveness a cause of great concern. Failure to deliver services (especially for the poor) due to a failure of governance, then, is what explains the ultimate downfall of the anti-poverty commitments of the Nehruvian state. Thus, had the state been sufficiently institutionalized, the picture of Indian politics and Indian poverty would look very different today. The problem, then, is de-institutionalization.

A third answer, offered by pro-market scholars such as Ashutosh Varshney and Jagdish Bhagwati, is that the problem of effective poverty alleviation lies precisely in the excessive democratization of the Indian polity. As Varshney argues, "democracies by themselves don't remove poverty, economic strategies do."¹⁰ He argues that democratic pressures from below prompt politicians to choose short-term redistributive strategies rather than more effective indirect long-term poverty alleviation strategies such as trade liberalization. Varshney concludes, in effect, that the sort of market-driven economic reforms that do best at removing poverty are more likely to be undertaken by authoritarian than by democratic or populist regimes. Thus in democracies market reformers need to convince politicians that markets are simply better in the long run, and this is no easy task. The problem here is the capture of the state by voters—the excess of democracy.

Finally, a now increasingly popular answer stems from postcolonial scholars such as Ashis Nandy and Partha Chatterjee. In essence, they argue that

the Indian state, arrogating to itself the supreme power of the land, imposed upon the Indian people a nationalism that rode roughshod over all other identities,¹¹ a secularism that was incompatible with the importance of religion in India,¹² and a socialism which, in its focus on industrial development, excluded most of rural India.¹³ The rise of the Hindu Right, then, is a backlash, a reaction to the exclusions and incompatible ideologies of the Nehruvian project. The problem here is cultural incompatibility, or in Sudipta Kaviraj's succinct phrasing, one of "alien provenance."¹⁴

All four arguments pay attention, in individual ways, to the crucial links between the state and society and grapple with the questions that most haunt India today, the manifest failure of the nation to offer adequate food, shelter, security and respect to its poorest citizens. There is, however, a lurking consensus that unites these four otherwise disparate theoretical approaches and that is that the key actors in the Indian drama are the state, competitors of the state, and economic elites. The role assigned to poor and non-elite sections of society is to be governed and to suffer from poor governance. They vote and are at worst dysfunctional to smooth governance or at best are of crucial importance as voting blocs in a democracy, but no more. They react, in the end, in primordial ways, turning to identities of caste and religion to reject the state and its failure to represent them or to give them what they need.¹⁵ While "dramatic confrontations between the dominant and dominated" have merited attention, few scholars have actually considered these confrontations, and the organizations that do the confronting, as key actors in postcolonial India's political world.¹⁶ Following subaltern studies, more attention has been paid in the recent past to insurgent consciousness and daily acts of resistance, including the observation that while these actions may indeed have constraining effects on authority, they are not necessarily conscious political acts.¹⁷ Thus while resistance on the part of the subaltern has come to be seen as a regular feature of Indian politics,¹⁸ strangely, with a few notable exceptions, the significance of organized political action has been minimized in such analyses.¹⁹

The role of social movements in India has been documented in numerous individual case studies of ethnic, language, gender, environmental, and other movements. There are, however, surprisingly few studies of social movements in India that range across the political landscape or endeavor to track the changing character of social movement cohorts in relationship to particular issues or institutions over time. One scholar who casts a wide net is Ghanshyam Shah. In his early work, Shah classifies movements by the degree of their transformative intent or consequence, identifying movements as revolts, rebellions, reformist, or revolutionary.²⁰ However, in later studies, Shah endeavors to build in the possibility of seeing movement activism in more dynamic terms by categorizing movements by their preeminent subject-actors whose organizing efforts may shift over time.²¹ This effort to understand changing

cohorts of movement actors is taken up also by Gail Omvedt in one of the most compelling analytical overviews to date of the changing character of social movements in India. In *Reinventing Revolution*, Omvedt argues that the most important shift in movement politics has been conceptual: In response to changing governance and ascendant societal shifts, she contends, a class of “new social movements” emerged (in the 1970s) that defined exploitation and oppression in relationship to traditional Marxism “. . . but [had] clear differences with it.”²² The “vanguardship” of the working class was repudiated, she states, in favor of a more plural organizing base located in caste, gender, and other socio-economic identities. At the same time, inequality and oppression were still the reigning ideas driving the organizational momentum.

This book builds on Shah’s and Omvedt’s analyses to make a more temporally and conceptually comprehensive set of claims. Where Omvedt, writing in 1993, depicts a single landmark shift in social movement strategy and identity, we propose in this volume a periodization of three distinct time frames. The essays here range across three phases (1947–1966; 1967–1988; 1989–the present) which we see as distinct cohorts of movement activism. This framework is based on the importance of social movement response in India to the shifting master frame of the state (from state to market; from secular and social democracy to religious nationalism coupled with liberalization). We build on Shah and Omvedt in arguing also for a broader conceptualization of social movement strategies. The shifting master frame has entailed for social movements not only a choice in what Shah notes as degrees of movement “radicalism” or of what Omvedt²³ speaks of as changing movement conceptualizations—the enlarging out from class conceptualizations to other understandings of movement identities. This shift in master frame has also galvanized the development of a highly variegated set of movement strategies. Indeed, the chapters in this book suggest we identify five quite distinct responses, ranging from the repudiation of the Nehruvian master frame—its repudiation, dilution, adaptation, and reconfiguration—to its adoption/espousal. In the sections that follow, we first delineate the character of the Nehruvian master frame, providing an overview of the movement responses. We then turn to a more detailed description of the three periods of social movement development, and conclude with some observations about what lessons emerge in aggregate from the analyses of the movements since Independence.

THE MASTER FRAME OF DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISM

Whether in India or elsewhere, social movement politics are invariably shaped by master frames. In Germany, for instance, for the 1968 generation, the disassociation from the imprint of fascism was an ideological imperative

that reverberated strongly two decades after World War II. In the United States, the master frame of civil rights informed much feminist activism and the organizing of other movements that fought discrimination throughout the 1970s and into the next decades as well. In India, the intersection of the massive mobilization of the nationalist movement under Gandhi’s leadership with Nehru’s very different visionary commitment to democratic socialism following Independence set the terms of movement politics from the earliest days of post-1947 politics.

In the decades prior to Independence, both communist and socialist activists brought issues of economic justice to the fore of Congress party debates, and Nehru himself, albeit more in his earlier than in later years, made issues of economic subsistence and well-being for India’s poor a central part of his writing and speeches. Gandhian populism, central to the nationalist movement, and the leadership of B. R. Ambedkar which gave prominence to the debates over untouchability, propelled issues of equality and social justice into the political limelight. Heated debates among Gandhi, Nehru, Ambedkar, and Ram Manohar Lohia focused on the manifestations and causes of Indian poverty and the policies that would best serve the needs of the most deprived.²⁴

During the pre-Independence period and Nehruvian years (from Independence until a few years past Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru’s death in 1964), the twin discourses of poverty alleviation and development, with its attendant contradictions, came to occupy the status of a dominant social script. The Directive Principles of State policy held out a promise that the state would attempt to maintain a minimum standard of living for all its citizens. Indeed, as Rajni Kothari has argued, poverty removal came to be seen as a political task, and one that was necessary to the development of a healthy democracy.²⁵ Yet the language of democratic socialism continued to stand in tension with the pressures of capitalist development.²⁶ Given the tension between building a capitalist, independent economy on the one hand and redistributive equality on the other, though there was much talk about reducing poverty through land reform and progressive taxation, in the first three Five Year Plans it was assumed that “sustained high rates of growth” would be the principal means to alleviate poverty.²⁷ Rather than undertaking sweeping redistributive changes, the poverty alleviation strategies that were undertaken were piecemeal, and great care was taken to avoid losing the support of the propertied classes. It was thus the bureaucracy which was entrusted with the task of administering redistribution.²⁸

During this phase, Nehru and the Congress, the party of independence, of “nationalism,” “democracy,” and “secularism,” spoke in the name of the nation and all interest groups. Despite little actual poverty alleviation, social movements were more or less quiescent. During the period of the Nehruvian state, from 1947 until the mid-1960s, much political activism that sought to

represent particular groups emerged in the form of political parties and/or social movements from within the body of the state/Congress party. Thus labor, among other movements, was incorporated within the parent body of Congress, and tamed in the process. This phase coincided with the height of the developmental state and its modernist hubris (dams as the new temples of India). During this period, with the exception of periods of communist activism, distributive movements made few disruptive demands. In the classic formulation about what Rajni Kothari called the Congress Party system, Robert L. Hardgrave writes, “[o]rganized groups emerged from the Congress umbrella as distinct parties [and social movements] but each left within the Congress an ideologically congruent and sympathetic faction. Thus each of the opposition parties, the Jan Sangh, Swatantra, the Socialists, and the Communists—retained access to the Congress that provided it with an influence disproportionate to its size.”²⁹ Despite this influence, it also followed that many of these newly emergent groups expected to work in alliance with the Nehruvian state and continued to take their ideological cues from the priorities of their erstwhile parent.

The one force that stood outside this dominant discourse, that resisted discussion of rights and poverty, and countered it with unity of blood and the importance of the non-material was the early ideology of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), as Tanika Sarkar points out in this volume. It was the one voice, though faint, that was heard outside the Nehruvian social democratic compact.

Within just a few years after Nehru’s death in 1964 and through the late 1980s—referred to here as the second phase—the language of class and of poverty amelioration reverted to a mere strategy in the grab bag of populist/electoral resources rather than to a prevailing presumption of official discourse. By the late sixties, the Mahalanobis Commission found no reductions in inequalities of wealth, health, or consumption in the course of two decades of independence. In accordance with a much rehearsed account, by 1967 the Indian state had entered what can arguably be called a crisis of deinstitutionalization. Three years after Nehru’s death, the Congress Party lost its majority in eight states in the 1967 elections and secured a bare popular majority in the parliamentary elections. The splits in the Communist Party (1964 and 1969), the other major political force that had highlighted poverty alleviation, led to a decline in their hitherto crucial presence, and their institutional weakness was accompanied by their inability to speak in one voice.³⁰ By the early seventies, poverty had risen sharply, and development economists and international agencies came to question the idea that macro-economic factors would solve the problem of growing poverty, advocating instead “direct attack” (e.g. poverty alleviation programs). Prime Minister Indira Gandhi then initiated her famous “garibi hatao” (destroy poverty) scheme to garner popular support in the impending 1971 and 1972 elections, which she used as leverage to concentrate power in her hands.³¹ Gandhi

recreated the Congress as a more personalistic vehicle, thus destroying the old institutional base of the Congress Party,³² leading to massive protests against her rule and to the Emergency of 1975. The class populism of Indira Gandhi’s Prime Ministership, however, was short lived, giving way to a pluralization of debates (about caste, ethnic, tribal, and gender identities). By the 1990s, the politics of religious nationalism and the ascendance of economic liberalization began to displace the discourse of economic justice within the bureaucratic offices and legislative chambers of national-level politics. Despite this fragmentation of the left and the deinstitutionalization of the Congress, or perhaps because of it, new political formations came into being during the seventies and eighties. With the loss of the legitimacy of the Congress came a decline in confidence in the state. The state could now no longer be trusted to deliver services or to act in good faith.

In this third phase (from the late 1980s to the present), there is a striking change in political discourse with the emergence of the twin forces of the market and religious nationalism from minority to dominant voices. Precipitated by the 1991 foreign-exchange crisis, Indian trade and industrial policies shifted quite dramatically from state-led to market-driven capitalist growth. Key changes include reduction of governmental controls, encouragement of imports, greater autonomy of private investment, and a sharp decline in emphasis on the public sector.³³ Tariffs fell from 300 percent in 1990–1991 to less than 40 percent in 1997–1998. Bureaucratic controls were dismantled: the import licensing scheme for all but some consumer goods was abandoned and the industrial licensing scheme effectively dismantled.³⁴ The state has withdrawn from many of the previously unquestioned policies of welfare provision such as food and agricultural subsidies and some ration/food programs. Economic liberalization has been accompanied by the massive NGO-ification of civil society arguably crowding out some of the more protest-oriented forms of organizing within the social movement sector. In the eyes of some, as the state has moved to relinquish its responsibilities towards the poor, NGOs increasingly function as no more than “global soup kitchens” of the New World Order.³⁵

In terms of poverty alleviation, the reports are mixed: Viewed from the baseline of the 1970s, the percentage of India’s population that is poor has declined, literacy has risen, and morbidity and mortality have diminished. But India has not seen the inroads into poverty which much of East and Southeast Asia have witnessed over the last decades. According to a recent report of the World Bank, an institution inclined not to overestimate the incidence of poverty, “every third person in India still lived [in 1993–1994] in conditions of absolute poverty meaning that India had 50% more poor than all of Sub-Saharan Africa.”³⁶ Since the 1990s, as the Bank report citing India’s National Sample Survey goes on to observe, there has been only a slight decrease in poverty despite the period of high growth in the mid-1990s.³⁷

Alongside these transformative economic changes to a more market-driven economy has been a tectonic shift in governance. Beginning in the late 1980s, Indian politics has seen the sudden rise of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the ascendance of a Hindu nationalist ideology. Moving from two to eighty-five parliamentary seats between 1984 and 1989, the Hindu right-wing BJP was catapulted onto the national political map where it remained as the ruling party at the national level until May 2004, and offered the most comprehensive challenge to the Nehruvian state agenda in India's post-Independence history. The BJP envisions a polity based on the commonalities of Hinduness and the incorporation of non-Hindu communities within a unitary political entity displacing the idea of a secular state based on rights. Amrita Basu writes that the BJP's vision of nationhood is "best expressed in the concept of Hindurashtra (nation-state), a term its leadership constantly uses."³⁸ Whatever may be the meaning to the BJP of a Hindu nation-state, there is no question about the virulent anti-secularism that is at the core of the party ideology. The rise of the BJP and the actions which propelled it to power have been amply documented.³⁹ As these accounts show, the political issues of the past four years have not revolved around the liberal reforms so quickly put into place or issues of poverty or equity, but, rather, nuclear bombs, wars against Pakistan, pogroms against Muslims in Gujarat, the possibility of finding the remnants of Ram's temple under the Babri Mosque, and the rewriting (Hinduizing) of history textbooks.⁴⁰

In this volume we look at Indian politics and society from the perspective of organized social actors—its political parties, mass organizations, labor unions and non-governmental groups—as well as the social movements that make up an unusually thriving sector of Indian political and social life. We do so because we believe that without a consideration of their role in the making of the nation's successes and failures, the picture is incomplete and distorted. Almost every major Indian policy has been debated, challenged, or supported by a slew of organized groups of constituents. While political parties are often assigned this role in India precisely because they are at the interface of citizens and the state, the role of mobilizing and organizing constituents has been effectively and systematically undertaken by mass based organizations affiliated with parties, mass-based organizations not affiliated with parties, as well as by smaller non-profit organizations and collectives. These organizations range from Maoist groups operating in the countryside to established service providers such as the All India Women's Conference (AIWC), and from the large and messy coalitions around the Narmada Dam issue to the highly organized political party affiliated labor unions.⁴¹ What role have social movements played thus far in the amelioration of poverty, in addressing the needs of its poorest constituents? What has shaped their responses to these issues, and what shifts in focus, discourse, or strategy, in this era of marketization and nationalism, have they been able to adopt?

What does this master frame mean for social movements in India? Social movements, by and large, do not embrace this frame cynically, but neither does this frame determine their agendas in any direct or simple causal form. Rather, their approach towards the poor is negotiated between the ideals (framing norms) and the exigencies of institutional and daily politics. Movements are not blank slates on which master frames are imprinted; master frames, rather, function as a template of accountability to which movements bring their own histories, distinctive constituencies and ideologies. Master frames are broad categories that allow for multiple interpretations; they are thus malleable by interpretation as well as by change. Indeed, they may be transformed in times of crisis or may evolve over time.⁴²

Some scholars have argued that social movements in India have seen themselves defined by a commitment to ending inequality and economic injustice, whatever the range of issues they take up. Ramachandra Guha writes, for instance, that unlike its counterpart movement of the West, the "dominant thrust of the environmental movement in India focuses on questions of production and distribution within human society."⁴³ The concern in India, Guha maintains, is with "the use of the environment and who should benefit from it; not with environmental protection for its own sake."⁴⁴ This kind of assertion is a familiar one even outside the domain of environmental politics in India. This is evident in the organizations often held up as exemplifying an archetype of activist politics—as with the widely heralded NGO, SEWA (the Self-Employed Women's Association in Ahmedabad), depicted in one description as an "organization with an Indian soul" whose "vision and language" is itself produced by the poor women who stand to be its organizational beneficiaries.⁴⁵ As an overarching framework, poverty alleviation long functioned as a template through which critiques of movement politics were regularly generated. That some group can or cannot speak for the "toiling masses" was the recurrent claim by or charge against a particular organization of rural laborers or peasant farmers or environmental or women's groups. Revealing, too, is the way that even those organizations outside the dominion of "progressive" politics at least into the 1980s insisted on their credentials as the voice of India's poor. In its early years, even the religious nationalist BJP, for instance, in a 1980 "Statement of Commitments" declared, "the ideology of the BJP would be, broadly speaking, that of Gandhian socialism. Bread, freedom and employment are the Gandhian first principles."⁴⁶

The idea that movements should be measured by their accountability to social justice norms is in India broadly thought to be the signatory principle of movement organizing. Whether or not movements have met this standard, there was for many years after Independence wide agreement among both activists and the scholarly community that was itself engaged in what is often termed "progressive" politics, that social movements must serve the

foundational imperatives of ameliorating the ravages of poverty and inequality. Even if they have not actually served the needs of the poor, some scholars argue, they gained legitimacy through speaking in their name. Thus in a recent anthology on India's democracy, economist Pranab Bardhan says, "All the lobbies, of course, speak in the name of the poor."⁴⁷ Given the change in master discourse, however, this volume asks whether this analysis of social movements is too static. Do all lobbies still speak in the name of the poor? Which social movements still do, and under what circumstances do they do so? If we think of the discourse of poverty alleviation and class as serving the function of a master frame within movement politics in India, what then of the social movements once the master narrative of democratic socialism has faltered and well after the Nehruvian years have come to an end and nationalism in the guise of Hindutva has become the dominant discourse?⁴⁸

PHASE I: SOCIAL MOVEMENTS UNDER NEHRUVIAN SOCIAL DEMOCRACY: DILUTION, COMMITMENT, AND REPUDIATION

In post-Independence India, there has been no period in which the awareness of inequality and commitment to its reduction has been more a matter of state concern than during Nehru's prime ministership; and yet, ironically, in this very period those movements that were most able to advance a strong redistributive agenda were able to do so largely by opposing the state rather than by seeking state sponsorship or alliance. During the period of Nehru's prime ministership, social movement leaders for the most part seemed to have understood the political choices they faced in largely binary terms—as either falling in with or standing outside the class and poverty agenda of the Nehruvian state. As the Guru and Chakravarty chapter of this book shows, the Nehru government overrode Ambedkar's argument that caste was the social basis of poverty in India rather than class. In later decades, social movements pursued a greater plurality of strategic choices seeking out a multiple set of middle options (the reinterpretation of rather than the accommodation to or rejection of the reigning state ideologies, autonomy from but not full repudiation of the state). But in the first decade and a half after Independence, political activism came to be either subsumed by or insistent on a full disassociation from the institutional power of the Nehruvian state, and the ideological lines were also, concomitantly, more sharply drawn. In other words, the discursive repertoire available to social movements were frame commitment—a determination to sustain a movement's redistributive goals; frame dilution—a dilution of a movement's redistributive goals; and frame repudiation—a rejection of redistributive goals.

Three of the movements portrayed in this book capture what was emblematic of this early post-Independence period. Vivek Chibber describes

organized labor as allowing its own political agenda to be assimilated by the Congress Party's priorities. Organized labor was in some ways more typical than atypical of much movement politics of the period that saw the independent voices of the women's movement, the cooperative movement, and other activist groups often overpowered by the dominant strength of the state and the Congress party, and their own agendas appropriated and deflected by the discourse of Nehruvian social democracy.

By contrast, Tanika Sarkar's chapter on the Hindu "right" (the RSS and what later came to be called the Sangh Parivar) reveals the ways in which Hindu nationalism, in this period of time, was marginalized by the dominant master narrative, both excluded by as well as self-exiled from the governing ideologies and institutions of the 1950s era.

But perhaps most revealing of all were the "redistributive social struggles" in Kerala about which Patrick Heller writes. In Kerala, the mobilization of a worker-peasant-tenant alliance in the 1950s pushed the social democratic Nehruvian agenda farther to the left than Nehru's Congress Party had ever intended. By opting out institutionally (as did the Hindu nationalist organizations) and remaining outside the Nehruvian umbrella but by adhering to a redistributive agenda (which Hindu nationalists did not), the Kerala movement became a foremost exponent of combating poverty in the early post-Independence period. It was the competitive mobilization in Kerala that fostered this more redistributive movement and party politics—conditions not present in the one-party dominant structure of national politics in the Nehruvian era.

Between Independence and 1964, "the Congress System," named as such by Rajni Kothari,⁴⁹ meant that much of the ideological and organizational opposition to the Congress Party operated from within the party itself. Sardar Patel's death in 1950 weakened the chances of the conservative elements within the Congress overtaking Nehru in any contest over leadership. The influence of the left within Congress had, similarly, been diluted by several events—the Communist Party of India's refusal to support the "Quit India" movement against the British (seen by many as deeply disloyal to the nationalist cause,⁵⁰ and the 1948 Patel-initiated amendment that prohibited Congress members from also holding membership in another organization (designed to undercut the influence of the socialist membership within the Congress). Gandhi's assassination, in addition, had for the years after Independence fully delegitimized the influence of Hindu forces within the Congress. None of this is to say that conservative or leftist forces were silenced within Congress. Indeed they did counterbalance each other to some degree, with Nehru conceding far more to the conservative forces than advocates of a stronger land reform, collectivist, and redistributive agenda sought and more to the role of government planning and regulation than the business or industrial flank of the Congress Party desired.

The immediate post-Independent period, Vivek Chibber argues in his chapter on organized labor, set the terms for social movement activism for a long time to come. Chibber contends that 1947-1950 was a "critical moment" in which the Industrial Truce Conference, in particular, signified Indian labor willingness to settle for class accommodation rather than compromise, thus weakening itself and its ability to represent the needs and interests of the majority of the working class. This failure, Chibber writes, was due in part to the strength of the employers and their offensive, the state's class bias, and labor's strategic mistakes such as their agreement to demobilize. As a result of this compromise, the industrial relations regime was tilted heavily towards capital, collective bargaining was discouraged, multiple unions hampered plant-level collective action, and unions at the national level were split into warring federations dependent on state patronage. Labor gave up its organizational independence and chose inclusion in policy agencies over mobilization. Thus, even at the moment of formation of the Nehruvian state, perhaps because of the co-occurrence of the state's emergence and the birth of the labor movement, labor became more dependent on than autonomous of state and party interests leading to a future trajectory in which labor was "destined" to remain subordinate.

Chibber's narrative captures the experience of a number of movements of the post-Independence period. Although perspectives on these claims could no doubt be contested, both the cooperative movement and the women's movement could arguably be depicted as having similarly succumbed to the strong hand of the Nehruvian state. In their edited book on the Indian Cooperative Union and its role in the Cooperative Movement, L. C. Jain (the founder along with Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya of the Indian Cooperative Union) and Karen Coelho record the early struggles between the cooperative movement and the state. "Astoundingly," Jain writes, "the State itself, which had chosen cooperatives to be an important vehicle, became in a sense its rival and competitor."⁵¹ The ICU started, Jain writes, with handloom cooperatives, only to see the government launch its own Handloom Development Corporation. Instead of fostering self-management, the state assigned civil servants to administer the cooperative enterprises. Writing on one of the success stories of the cooperative movement, the Kheda district dairy project, Coelho comments on how the cooperatives' successes relied on the dominant place of the landowning caste of the region and, "contrary to expectation, the landless or the very poor did not figure prominently among the beneficiaries."⁵² The goal of the cooperative movement, of freeing the poor from the "local regimes that held them oppressed—from the zamindar, the moneylender and the trader, the clutches of caste, class and communal systems" had to be significantly modified with time.

The experience of the women's movement in this early period reflects, in some similar but also some different ways, the hegemonic place of the Con-

gress Party and the State. The largest women's organization of the period was the All India Women's Conference (AIWC), founded in 1927 at the initiative of Margaret Cousins and with the organizational impetus of a broad cast of leaders. Even from the beginning, the many-layered and regional diversity of the movement including of the AIWC itself makes it difficult to generalize about the movement's strategy and goals, but it is revealing (as Geraldine Forbes reports) that Cousins used her address to the membership in 1936 to invoke Nehru's critique of the movement's superficiality and the need for it to address "root causes."⁵³ Although, as Forbes writes, some of the local branches had addressed issues of poor women—"supporting peasant women, teaching untouchables, encouraging political involvement"⁵⁴—in general the national level organization did not make class inequalities or poverty central to the development of Conference programs or mobilizational campaigns.⁵⁵ Many decades later, it was the women in organizations that had distanced themselves from the Congress and the State—the women of the agrarian Telengana and Tebhaga movements, women who composed the National Federation of Indian Women (NFIW), founded in 1954 and associated with the Communist Party of India, who took on the dual struggle of establishing women's rights within their own organization and prioritizing poverty as an issue affecting women. As with Chibber's argument about the labor movement in the early years of Independence, the close nexus of movement and state probably weakened the radical agenda of the cooperative movement; and while it may have strengthened the attention to poverty of the moderate wing of the women's movement, it still remained the case that those who prioritized class inequalities and poverty remained more distant from Congress and the state.

Although Chibber's discussion of organized labor at the time of Independence and the claim dilution, which he argues followed labor's incorporation within Nehruvian social democracy, is representative of a range of social movements of the time, the chapters in this book on the mobilizational alliance in Kerala and on the growth of Hindu nationalism are distinct cases. Both, however, are in some sense examples of "repudiation"—movements which refused incorporation or even cooperation with the state. Heller's discussion of the Kerala case shows how this autonomy allowed a movement to commit itself to a redistributive agenda, whereas that by Sarkar registers how this institutional autonomy led to a mobilizational practice that had little to do with class equality.

Heller's chapter is instructive as a critical "outlier" case. What has made Kerala a successful example, both by Indian and by global standards, of a region where the interests of the poor are addressed is the particular synergistic relationship between the state and social movement politics. State responsiveness is triggered by mobilized pressures from below, which are in turn fostered by state policies. Kerala's achievements (measured by key social

indicators like literacy and mortality) have been more favorable to the poor because of the post-1947 history in which Kerala has been a highly mobilized society. Social movement activism has kept the state responsive to the needs of broad sectors of the population, and in turn the state has both delivered goods and services and has provoked further political involvement. As Heller observes, "There are probably few examples in the world where the causal link between organized social movements and significant redistributive and social gains is as strong as in Kerala." If Chibber is right about there being early critical moments that direct movements towards commitment to redistribution rather than the dilution of these goals, the Kerala case provides an affirmation of this lesson. Right from the mid-1950s, a tenant-worker-peasant alliance was mobilized by the Communist Party that stood resolutely outside the Nehruvian umbrella. Indeed when the Communist Party of India (CPI) won the 1957 state legislative elections, its ministries were dismissed by Nehru and President's Rule was imposed for the first time in India. But there is another lesson from Heller's discussion that is different from the "critical moment" argument advanced by Chibber: What has kept the redistributive process alive in Kerala is the continuous pattern of popular mobilization. As Heller observes, Kerala's is a history of "acute conflict and recurrent episodes of social mobilization." In contrast to, in Heller's words, "Nehruvian high modernism, [where] top-down planning became the instrument of choice," Kerala has had a history of "pressure from social movements and a vocal civil society for state action."

Tanika Sarkar's chapter on the RSS shows us that there was, even in the Nehruvian period, at least one organized movement which rejected the anti-poverty stance of the state. The chapter considers, at the outset, several alternative interpretations of the Hindutva "combine"—which has spoken in many different voices allowing for apparent simultaneous and contradictory postures. Hindutva is seen by some as the "fruit of the same womb: of communalism—the byproduct of "zealous nation-worship." For others it is merely an expression of violence (sometimes seen as the "systematic intimidation of non-Hindus) that is sometimes local in nature, sometimes broader, arising out of class contradictions. Going beyond this, some see Hindutva as "basically a bourgeois pathology propped up by global capitalism and served by an aggressive and militaristic lumpenproletariat." While this last interpretation is basically plausible, it is sometimes understood in too simplistic ways, remaining "mired in the realm of mechanical causality." Sarkar's own approach is to identify the caste and class interests within the Hindutva "formation" that oppose the liberal and secular commitments to social equality and to the basic tenets of democratic representation themselves.

The immediate period after Independence was in some sense a "critical moment" in which claim repudiation comes to define the Jan Sangh's (precursor of the BJP) politics. With the banning of the RSS following the assassination of Gandhi by one of its members, appeals to religiously-based

Hindu identity were temporarily discredited. But the institutional constraints and opportunities shifted with time, as Heller argues. As long as the Nehruvian polity held sway, the Jan Sangh had little chance of winning substantial electoral support and little reason to broaden its support base. With shifts in the political order, the 1964 death of Nehru and the decline of Congress, the opportunity to secure electoral power led the Sangh to think more strategically about appealing in word if not in deed to the large banks of low-caste groups in the electorate. The paradox with which this section began—the less close a movement was to being incorporated within the Nehruvian democratic framework, the more committed it could be to a radically redistributive politics—is not undercut by the narrative of the Sangh. What the post-Independence history of the Sangh does elucidate is that autonomy could also be used to foster a politics that ran counter to the egalitarian pledges of the Nehruvian government.

PHASE II: SOCIAL MOVEMENTS DURING DE-INSTITUTIONALIZATION: STRATEGIC ADAPTATION

Between 1964 and 1984, social movements in India entered what can be considered a transitional phase, one in which the ideological underpinnings of poverty alleviation still reigned supreme, but when the institutional vehicle thus far expected to carry out the project—the Congress—was crumbling. The new movements whose origins post-dated the birth of the nation fostered quite a different movement politics from that of the Nehruvian era. Some saw the collapse of the Congress-dominated state and the dilution of the social democratic Nehruvian idealism as both an opportunity and a reason to seek the full capture of state power. Some movements, such as civil liberties movements, and the women's movement, distrustful of the state, sought to occupy a societal space where they could function more autonomously. The politics of poverty, at least at the beginning of this period, was still the unchallenged master frame, but the conception of and activism around it in this new era was far more differentiated. At a time when institutional strength seemed to be replaced by a personalized power (in the person of Indira Gandhi), social movement politics mushroomed in multiple forms in India's political field.

With the disillusionment with Nehruvian policies of development, fueled in part by growing regional and sectoral inequalities, segments of Indian society came to believe that neither the political parties of the Center nor of the Left adequately represented the interests of all excluded groups. Until this moment in the late 1960s, there had been little effective opposition, except for the movements based on linguistic identity that played a part in the formation of new states between 1947 and 1966. The Communist Party split into

the CPI and the Communist Party of India (Marxist), or the CPI(M), largely over the relationship to the national state in 1964, and from within the radical ranks of the CPI(M) burst forth the Naxalite upsurge (1967–1973). Starting with a tribal uprising in Naxalbari, in northern Bengal, and spreading to a number of rural areas around the country, Naxalism was shaped not only by agricultural crisis and drought, but also by the image of China as the revolutionary center, and inspired by New Left uprisings around the world.⁵⁶

Naxalism was a major break with the politics of Nehruvian socialism, asserting instead an aggressive, pro-peasant Maoism. In 1972, the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha, the All-Assam Students Union, the Self-Employed Women's Association, various regional farmers association, the Chipko movement, and the Dalit Panthers were all formed.⁵⁷ Civil liberties organizations, people's science movements, and a range of other organizations followed, and a revolution in Indian politics was underway. While these movements may not fit comfortably under the Western European notion of new social movements, given their strongly material agendas, they are new in that they challenged the categories of traditional Marxism, and were populated by groups ignored by it. The organizational vehicles for these groups varied widely. Some were small, autonomous, urban groups, others, mass-based rural groups, and yet others were radical wings of political parties. What needs to be emphasized here is that though these movements were marked by organizational variation and innovation, they retained their connection to the master frame's commitment to the poor.

We call the dominant discursive mode of this period "frame multiplication." The larger movements with a national presence soon came to be represented by groups of many kinds. Both the women's movement and the dalit movement, for example, could count autonomous groups, wings of political parties (in the case of the women's movement), political parties (in the case of dalits), unions, rural mass-based organizations, and social work/service organizations within their fold. Thus there was considerable within-movement variation in attention to the needs of the poor. The papers in this section, Mary John's essay on the women's movement and Guru and Chakravarty's on the dalit movement, show that during this period, despite organizational variation, the language of class could be challenged but not ignored.

In their study of dalits, Guru and Chakravarty argue that dalits have faced unparalleled injustices and failed promises in independent India. The extent and depth of historical and contemporary experiences of poverty and abjection shape the contours of dalit politics today. And yet, dalit politics has taken quite different organizational forms, and these have implications for the extent to which the politics deals with poverty. The loosely organized but militant Dalit Panthers, for example, who emerged in Maharashtra in 1972, articulated powerfully through a predominantly class-based frame the necessity of fighting against dalit poverty and for dignity. This class-based

framework, they argue, shifted only in the late eighties when the "Mandal Commission recommendations were resuscitated by V. P. Singh's government at the national level. Caste became an overtly political issue with significant electoral incentives for political parties mobilizing on that basis. Caste questions began to occupy center stage in national debates about modernity and citizenship in India." With this came mobilization in terms of caste identity, and the creation of organizations and electoral strategies based on caste.

While dalit activism was shaped by electoral imperatives, the women's movement was able to act more freely precisely because it lacked that imperative. While some segments of the women's movement (especially the urban groups) came to be easily branded as middle class and westernized, as Mary John's chapter shows, the movement remained anchored to the master frame, even as it modified and embraced alternative frames. Some mass based organizations and unions such as SEWA dedicated themselves explicitly to women of the poorest sections of society. Autonomous women's organizations, formed explicitly to counter the subordination of women's interests to political parties, and which saw themselves as part of an international women's movement, introduced the possibility of an agenda that was not strictly within the master frame, but continued to exist in a complex relationship to inherited categories of Nehruvian socialism.

The women's movement of the seventies and early eighties received considerable attention for its campaigns against dowry and for tougher rape legislation. While these campaigns were carried out in the name of all women, particular attention was nevertheless paid to the needs of poor women. The movement as a whole continued to address itself to the failed promises of the Indian state, and devoted considerable attention not just to newer issues of violence against women but to the spheres in women's work, its measurement, problems of undervaluation, declining work participation rates, grassroots organizing, and so on (John, this volume). The extent to which various organizations made poverty-related claims was not uniform, as particular organizations made their own compromises with the Nehruvian master frame and the other allies and discourses to which they felt accountable. The argument here is not, in fact, that all women's organizations successfully mobilized and represented the poor, but rather that in order to establish themselves as legitimate, they had to explicitly retain a commitment to the poor.

This explicit commitment to the poor was not limited to the women's movement and dalit movements of this time, but indeed extended to other movements such as the environmental movement, as Ram Guha's work and Amita Baviskar's chapter here show. And yet, as we shall see, the grip of the master frame noticeably slips in the late eighties. In this transitional phase, we see the emergence of new frames; but the poverty frame still has a firm

grip even as institutional autonomy enables the emergence of alternative frames. But in this transitional period, the power of the frame and the space occupied by movement politics were able to block, at least for a while, the rights framing of the agenda. Up until the mid 1980s, as Gail Omvedt so accurately put it, "all the movements were concerned to stress exploitation and contradiction (some sections of society living off the labor and benefiting from the enslavement or poverty of the rest): they [saw] this as historically created; they projected the possibility of the establishment of a nonexploitative casteless, nonpatriarchal, nonlooting sustainable society. They [all saw] themselves as somehow fighting to create this."⁵⁸

PHASE III: SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IN THE AGE OF THE MARKET AND RELIGIOUS NATIONALISM

Between 1984 and 2000, the twin impulses of Hindu nationalism and neo-liberalism fundamentally altered the face of politics in India. The country witnessed two prime ministerial assassinations, the rise and fall of the V. P. Singh government, as well as several other short-lived governments. Two events marked the first signs of the breakdown of the Nehruvian triumvirate of democracy, secularism, and socialism. The first was the furor over the Muslim Women's Bill (1984), which grew in strength and passion even as the BJP used the bill to appropriate the feminist demand for a uniform civil code. The second, which is worth some consideration in the context of poverty alleviation, was the unexpectedly powerful upper caste protest against V. P. Singh's attempt to implement the findings of the Mandal Commission in 1990 through the reservation of 27 percent of jobs in the public sector for Other Backward Castes. This fierce and public agitation threw into crisis the hitherto unchallenged assumption that affirmative action policies were a legitimate means of improving the lives of those who had historically been discriminated against.

In what is often called the Mandal-Masjid sequence of events, the agitations were followed by the now infamous procession of Rama's chariot (*ratna yatra*) which signaled the ascendance of the BJP and majoritarian Hindu politics. The destruction of the Babri Mosque (1991), the Bombay riots (1992), and the establishment of a BJP-headed coalitional government (1998) soon followed. The BJP emerged as the winner in the multiple attempts to reconstruct India politically following the decline of the congress system⁵⁹ and the loss of faith in the Nehruvian master frame. The parties of the left appeared, until the 2004 elections, to be moribund and the associated organizations of the BJP—the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) and RSS—now reign as the most powerful and energized social movements. The fragmented political field of the seventies and eighties, marked as it was by de-

institutionalization, has been replaced by a new institutionalization, coupled with twin ideologies of market and Hindu nationalism.

Internationally, the global neo-liberal agenda has met with some opposition (the massive anti-World Trade Organization [WTO] rallies in Seattle and beyond), but has generally been undertaken with remarkable rapidity in countries around the world, including India.⁶⁰ With the shift towards liberalization accelerated in 1991 but begun earlier, there has been a remarkable ideological transformation for many bureaucrats and some sectors of the "intelligentsia" who have come to place far greater faith in the market, in entrepreneurship, and in the private sector, with a much reduced role for the state. Has a concomitant shift occurred among social movement activists? Does the proliferation of non-governmental organizations reflect a process of decentralization in the movement sphere that parallels the one that is taking place in the market? Has the market come, if not to displace the state, then to occupy a now-competing discourse among activist groups that address the needs of the poor? To what extent has the turn towards the global and the economically liberal pushed social movements away from the poor? Faced with the remarkable ideological swing toward markets and the dismantling of state subsidies and guarantees, with an apparent turn away from the poor, social movements increasingly react in one of three ways—frame reconstitution, frame commitment, and frame replacement.

NGOs in India have consistently adjusted their relationship with the state and to poverty through the three phases, from supporting the state by providing welfare and relief immediately following independence, to a more sharply oppositional role in the second phase, and now to its present "uneasy partnership" as they accept money from both selected state and global sources even as they continue to oppose other parts of the state. Through the case studies of three NGOs in Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, and West Bengal, Kudva shows that the effectiveness of an NGO in poverty alleviation depends not only on its organizational capacity and flexibility, but also, ironically, on the extent to which the state within which it is located is sympathetic to a pro-poor politics. Thus, while SHARE failed in Tamil Nadu, both because of its lack of flexibility and the absence of a pro-poor alliance in the state, the government-initiated and flexible Mahila Samakhya is partially successful in Karnataka, though blocked by entrenched anti-poor alliances. In West Bengal, where the ruling coalition is not actually sympathetic to NGOs, its pro-poor stance and the efficacy of local institutions enables the Nari Bikash Samiti to flourish.

The dominant sectors of the farmer's and biotechnology movements have reconstituted their claims in keeping with the shift towards markets. The environmental movement has also reconstituted its claims in keeping with its alliances with transnational NGOs. The CPI(M) and the Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishad (KSSP) have renewed commitment to their claims as electoral

imperatives and a highly mobilized populace forces them to continually expand democracy. And finally, the RSS's rejection of Nehruvian ideologies is now backed by the new institutional structures of neo-liberalism.

For the farmer's movements and the movements around genetically modified organisms (GMOs), as Ron Herring and Gail Omvedt show, farmers are concerned with their material improvement, and often speak about the poor, but there has been a remarkable shift in the analysis of poverty. Omvedt argues that between the 1980s, when "the farmers' movement spoke with one voice, though many accents on the issue of rural poverty and exploitation" and the 1990s, there emerged competition between two major politically autonomous farmer's organizations which hinged not on whether one group cared about poor farmers or not, but rather on the sources of and solutions for farmer poverty. The declared winner, Sharad Joshi's Shetkari Sanghatana, presents a pro-liberalization and pro-technology view which contrasts sharply not only with the other farmer organizations, but also with farmer movements in the past. Farmer poverty is seen as caused by urban elites, and by the state, which holds on to knowledge and technology while purporting to protect the farmers. Farmer prosperity will come when farmers have access to technology and knowledge and can keep the surplus in the village. The farmer is presented as a rational entrepreneur who only needs the government to step out of the way. Thus, in a remarkable reversal of social movement analysis of the past, the market is the solution and the state is the problem. The parameters of debate have shifted dramatically.

Ron Herring's essay on the struggle around genetically modified organisms indicates a similar dynamic. Here, we see the state promoting biotechnology in the name of the poor, but with little real pro-poor political discourse. At the same time, there is an ideological division between those who could potentially form a pro-poor rural coalition. Herring explores the tension between the Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha (KRRS)—Shetkari Sanghatana mentioned by Omvedt, focusing closely on their position toward transgenic seeds. Opposition to transgenic crops is articulated in the name of sovereignty, nature, and health, while pro-transgenic crop discourse appears to be by and large an assertion of middle farmer rights to wealth and lower debt. Together, Herring and Omvedt argue that despite the opposition to transgenic seeds and Bt cotton, and the state's inability to enforce biosafety provision, the farmers themselves are increasingly embracing these seeds. Thus in the farmer's movement at least, the market appears to have triumphed.

Amita Baviskar's account of the environmental movement brings to the fore the role of transnational actors in affecting the possibility of poor people's movements. Her account makes clear that the label of "environmental" movement is, in fact, quite arbitrary, and has more to do with a) the nature of capital that a movement confronts and b) the nature of alliances it cultivates. While the environmental movement of the seventies did indeed assert

a "red" agenda, in keeping with the master discourse, in the late eighties and nineties, the strength of that discourse has waned. Claims over resources now get reconstituted not as claims about equity but as claims about environmental protection. This form of claim is particularly effective when the issue involves global capital, such as the Sardar Sarovar Dam on the Narmada River, precisely because international financial institutions such as the World Bank are susceptible to pressure from the transnational actors of the environmental movement.⁶¹ These transnational actors, who inhabit the metropolitan areas of the North, in turn, are stirred by images of indigenous dwellers of the South who are keepers of the earth, rather than by images of poor people who demand their right to a living. Left out in this strategy of claims-making, Baviskar thus eloquently argues, are the poorest of the poor who have no land, and no "indigenous" tradition. Thus the strategy of claim reconstitution may be, in the end, costly for the poor.

The remarkable development in Kerala, of a party-led grassroots movement for democratic and decentralized planning, shows that it is possible to use the discursive shift away from centralization to create a corresponding institutional shift that yet retains a commitment to the poor. The new campaign for decentralization is the latest innovation in this distinctive state-society dynamic. Propelled by the KSSP, a movement within a movement, the state has devolved a large percentage of its development budget on localities, thus "re-embedding the state" again in civil society. What Heller calls the "dense tapestry" of Kerala's civil society combines with a stable competitive electoral dynamic to push the CPI(M) to continually mobilize the masses. In this regard, what distinguishes the CPI(M) ruled state of West Bengal from Kerala may well be that the CPI(M) has governed West Bengal without a break, and with little viable competition, from 1977 to today. In Kerala, on the other hand, the Congress and CPI(M), locked in intense competition, trade off electoral victories, and thus the CPI(M) in Kerala must remain innovative and responsive to its constituents. This in turn makes the social movement elements of the party stronger than the corporatist and political elements of the party, unlike the national labor movement of the Nehruvian period, and unlike the labor movement in West Bengal today. The example of Kerala shows, above all, the most successful strategies for democratization are carried out with twin impulses from above and below.

The changes in discursive and institutional terrain in this period has enabled the RSS to gain in momentum and strength. From the very beginning, the RSS has sought to remain outside of the Nehruvian frame, offering the commonality of blood to counter the new nation's talk of rights, and a critique of materialism to offset discussions of poverty. In this new phase, with political opportunity structure on their side, they have, with renewed energy, repudiated the claims of the Nehruvian state. Those segments of the middle classes who wavered between them and Nehruvian ideals now live in a world where much of that ideal

is, as Tanika Sarkar puts it, “dismissed as a failure” whose roots can be traced back to “the philosophy of the public sector.” Instead of a critique of class inequality, the RSS offers cultural nationalism with a clear “alien” villain—the Muslim—as the explanation for the ills that befall the nation and its deprived. Thus it appears that the institutions and ideologies have come together to enable the RSS not only to assert their own claims more vigorously, but to now push the BJP government to the right much as the Communists attempted to push the Congress to the left in the early years. However, as Sarkar and other scholars note, there is a tension between the BJP government’s wholehearted embrace of liberalization and the RSS concerns with India’s economic autonomy. In this regard, the party seems to have the upper hand at present, but an uneasiness remains. In this unease may lie the seeds of a potentially new paradigm shift.

Perhaps the most energized yet complex evolution has occurred in the dalit movement in this phase. The movement has adapted itself in different ways to the twin pressures of Hindu nationalism and neo-liberal globalization. In the state of Uttar Pradesh, the dalit-based Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) engages in a complex series of negotiations with the Bharatiya Janata Party, sometimes acting as its electoral ally and sometimes as its foe. As identity politics grows in strength, the BSP has access to power for the first time. Historic indeed that a political party whose constituents are dalit should be so close to power in India’s largest state. It appears that while the BJP needs the BSP to appear legitimate to all Hindus, not just upper caste Hindus, the BSP needs the BJP to approach the possibility of power. As it enmeshes itself in electoral logic, the BSP focuses increasingly on visible markers of cultural recognition rather than the economic demands. At the same time, this third phase has seen a proliferation of dalit-oriented NGOs who seek poverty amelioration through self-help programs, and who strongly advocate human rights. Many such organizations are linked to transnational anti-racist movements, and so bring the question of dalit rights to international attention.

CONCLUSION

The focus of this volume has been on the ways in which state–society relations have shifted as India has moved from the state-led development characteristic of Nehruvian “dirigiste” democracy to the newly emerging market-driven economy and to a polity in which religious nationalism has emerged as a preeminent force. The springboard of this book’s analysis is the comment by Ramachandra Guha (1997) in which he described the distinctiveness of (environmental) protest politics characteristic of India and of other nations of the “South” as the insistent combining of the politics of red and green. Ideas and identities about environmental protest, he said, were enmeshed in a com-

mitted redistributive politics. This dual accountability—to the norms of redistribution and to the specific (environmental/gender/caste/tribal, etc.) goals of a particular movement politics—was widely accepted by social movement activists as a faithful self-description. Indeed, Gail Omvedt’s *Reinventing Revolution* effectively named the post-Nehru 1970s and 1980s as the invention of this dual politics blending class ideology with the identities and issue specificities of social movement activism.

From the vantage point of over a decade later, and seen across three different time periods between Independence and the present, we come in this volume to a different set of emphases.

Through the three-phase periodization that organizes the chapter accounts in this volume, we see that the process of pulling away from a redistributive politics was already well underway during the Nehru era itself. As Chibber’s essay notes, the radicalism of labor’s goals was diluted through its appropriation by Congress Party hegemony. As Sarkar’s essay describes, the forebears of the BJP, rather than conforming to the democratic socialist praxis of mainstream (Congress Party) politics, was long at work creating the ideational foundation of a religious populism. And, as Heller’s essay so vividly records, it was only in a situation where party organizations firmly located themselves both to the left of and organizationally outside the Nehruvian Congress umbrella that an undiluted anti-poverty politics was fueled.

The standing-on-two-legs that Guha and Omvedt⁶² draw our attention to during the post-Nehruvian period rings true; a number of progressive movements did seek to combine a politics of class with other issues and identities, weaving the dual sets of concerns into their language and practices. But we understand the significance of this mixture of issues in somewhat different terms. Whereas it might have been expected that the forces leading to a dilution of the social movement’s redistributive concerns would have accelerated with the death of Nehru in 1964, unleashing in full force the proliferation of movements with concerns that diverged far from the Nehruvian language of democratic socialism, this did not happen. Instead, the 1970s and 1980s became witness to the endurance of an (albeit earlier diluted) class and anti-poverty politics. The Nehruvian master frame endured beyond the lifetime of its “master,” leaving the movements at least discursively accountable to redistributive goals.⁶³ The environmental, women’s, and dalit movements persevered throughout the two decades subsequent to Nehru’s death, to make claims that invoked the importance of keeping anti-poverty goals in view. They did so in a myriad of different ways which makes any attempt at pronouncing the acceleration or deceleration of an anti-poverty politics a conceptual impossibility. As the John, Baviskar, and Guru and Chakravarty chapters show, the women’s, environmental, and caste movements of the late 1960s through the 1980s sought to negotiate their way between material and status concerns, ways of sometimes representing and sometimes involving the poor, calculations about alliances with the state or with an oppositional set of other interests and organizations.

They sometimes adapted, sometimes reconceptualized their objectives to accommodate new constituencies and new electoral imperatives, and even as their claims and practices proliferated, poverty concerns were rarely out of sight or hearing. From the vantage of the present day, what bears emphasizing in this period is that there was in fact less a uniformity of "practice" and more a widely shared "conscience" that social movements took with them out of the early social democratic ethos of Nehruvian state politics.

But by the 1990s (the third phase we describe), there is less adherence to the rhetorical requisites of an anti-poverty politics. The language of anti-poverty has emerged in the media again in the wake of the BJP's startling electoral defeat. Yet it is clear that anti-poverty is no longer seen as the motivator for policy, but rather as a modifier or check on pure market economics. The rationales that social movements utilized to argue for clean air, for trade policies that would admit or bar GMOs, for higher prices for farm products find legitimation in language that is no longer as fully laced with populist, anti-poverty language. The Guha argument can be supported with images of the more equity-focused concerns of the Indian environmental movements and the trope of a strongly benefit/distributive justice-conscious activism. There are still Medha Patkars protesting the displacement of impoverished villagers who practice civil disobedience in the face of the rising waters of the Narmada Dam. But there is also, and with increasing visibility, important movement activism (see Baviskar's and Herring's chapters in this volume) that is reconstituting their demands to accord with changing times in ways that often do not foreground the concerns of the poor. And it bears emphasizing that the more powerful movements of the day, represented by the BJP/RSS, have been able to substitute religious populism for class politics.

The redistributive agenda that emerges from the interaction between social movements and the state in India generally bears little resemblance to the Kerala experience in which competitive party politics and popular mobilization have produced significant land reform and a process of decentralization that has encouraged further popular participation. With the waning influence of Nehruvian democracy, the regular invocation of an anti-poverty politics is no longer routine. But social movement politics, perhaps more than any other institutional space (the courts, the parliament, even party politics) is a domain in which the language of anti-poverty remains extant. Whether these movements can survive as abeyance structures—the holding vessels for the egalitarian conscience of India—remains to be seen.

NOTES

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1. Rajni Kothari, *Growing Amnesia. An Essay on Poverty and the Human Conscientiousness* (New York: Viking, 1993), 1.
2. Amartya Sen, "Hunger: Old Torments, New Blunders," *The Little Magazine* 2, no. 6, Internet edition: <http://www.littlemag.com/hunger/aks.html>.
3. On Tebhaga, see Asok Majumdar, *Peasant Protest in Indian Politics. Tebhaga Movement in Bengal* (New Delhi: NIB Publishers, 1993); Rabindra Nath Mandal, *The Tebhaga Movement in Kakdwip* (Kolkata: Ratna Prakashan, 2001); Peter Custers, *Women in the Tebhaga Uprising. Rural Poor Women and Revolutionary Leadership (1946-47)* (Calcutta: Naya Prokash XII, 235 S., 1987). On Telengana, see Stree Shakti Sanghatana, *"We Were Making History": Women and the Telengana Uprising* (London: Zed Books, 1989); Carolyn M. Elliott, "Decline of a Patrimonial Regime: The Telengana Rebellion in India, 1946-51," *Journal of Asian Studies* 34, no. 1 (1974): 27-47; and I. Thirumalai, "Peasant Class Assertions in Nalgonda and Warangal Districts of Telengana, 1930-1946," *Indian Economic and Social History Review* 31, no. 2 (1994): 217-38.
4. On language-based movements, see Robert D. King, *Neburu and the Language Politics of India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1977), and Jyotirindra Das Gupta, *Language Conflict and National Development; Group Politics and National Language Policy in India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970).
5. On Naxalism, see Sumanta Banerjee, *In the Wake of Naxalbari: A History of the Naxalite Movement in India* (Calcutta: Subarnarekha, 1980). On Sati, see John Stratton Hawley, ed., *Sati, The Blessing and the Curse: The Burning of Wives in India* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993). On the Rath Yatra and other related events, see Sarvepalli Gopal, ed., *Anatomy of a Confrontation: The Babri Masjid-Ramjanmabbumi Issue* (London: Zed Books, 1993); Thomas B. Hansen, *The Saffron Wave. Democracy and Hindu Nationalism in Modern India* (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1999); Christophe Jaffrelot, *The Hindu Nationalist Movement and Indian Politics, 1925 to the 1990s* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998).
6. Rashida Bhagat, "The Spectre of Starvation," *Frontline* 18, no. 21 (13-26 October 2001).
7. While this assumption has suffered a temporary setback with the widely held perception that the BJP's electoral defeat in May 2004 has been due precisely to the failure of the market to improve the lives of most Indians, the general policies set in motion in the past decade are unlikely to change substantially with the new Congress government under the stewardship of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh.
8. Atul Kohli, *The State and Poverty in India: The Politics of Reform* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).
9. Kanchan Chandra, "The Ethnification of the Party System in Uttar Pradesh and Its Consequences," in *Indian Politics and the 1998 Election; Regionalism, Hindutva and State Politics*, ed. Ramashray Roy and Paul Wallace (New Delhi and Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1999), 55-104; Devesh Kapur and Pratap Mehta, "India in 1998: The Travails of Political Fragmentation," *Asian Survey* 39, no. 1 (January/February 1999).
10. Ashutosh Varshney, "Democracy and Poverty," *Conference on World Development Report*, 1999.
11. Ashis Nandy, *The Savage Freud and Other Essays on Possible and Retrievable Selves* (New Delhi: Oxford, 1995). Partha Chatterjee, "The Nationalist Resolution of

the Women's Question," in *Recasting Women: Essays in Colonial History*, ed. Kumkum Sanghari and Sudesh Vaid (New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1989).

12. Ashis Nandy, "The Political Culture of the Indian State," in *Politics and the State in India; Readings in Indian Government and Politics*, vol. 3, ed. Zoya Hasan (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2000).

13. Akhil Gupta, *Postcolonial Developments: Agriculture in the Making of Modern India* (Chapel Hill: Duke University Press, 1998).

14. Sudipta Kaviraj, *Politics in India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997).

15. Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Rethinking Working-Class History: Bengal 1890-1940* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989).

16. Douglas Haynes and Gyan Prakash, *Contesting Power: Resistance and Everyday Social Relations in South Asia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 1.

17. See the series of Subaltern Studies edited by Ranajit Guha, published by Oxford University Press.

18. Haynes and Prakash, *Contesting Power*, 1.

19. Sumit Sarkar, among others, does indeed pay attention to organized movement politics outside the Congress Party, during the struggle for India's independence. See Sumit Sarkar, *Modern India, 1885-1947* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989).

20. Ghanshyam Shah, *Protest Movements in Two Indian States: A Study of the Gujarat and Bihar Movements* (Delhi: Ajanta Publications, 1977).

21. Ghanshyam Shah, *Social Movements in India; A Review of the Literature* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1990).

22. Gail Omvedt, *Reinventing Revolution: New Social Movements and the Socialist Tradition in India* (Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 1993), xv.

23. Omvedt, *Reinventing Revolution*.

24. For a flavor of the debates, see the letters Nehru wrote to Gandhi, countering Gandhi's critique of industrialism with his own critique of capitalism. Sarvepalli Gopal, ed., *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, vol. 3 (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1972), 3-5. Gandhi on trusteeship (the rich should treat their riches as a trust for the people) versus Nehru who thinks it impracticable. In Nehru's own words: "If an industry cannot be run without starving its workers, then the industry must be closed down. If the workers on the land have not had enough to eat, then the intermediaries who deprive them of their full share must go." Jawaharlal Nehru, *India's Freedom* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1962), 15-16.

25. Kothari, *Growing Amnesia*.

26. Francine Frankel, *India's Political Economy, 1947-1977; The Gradual Revolution*. (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1978).

27. A. Vaidyanathan, "Poverty and Development Policy," *Economic and Political Weekly* (26 May 2001): 1807-22.

28. Sudipta Kaviraj, "The Modern State in India," in Hasan, ed., *Politics and the State in India*.

29. Robert L. Hardgrave Jr. and Stanley A. Kochanek, *India: Government and Politics in a Developing Nation*, fifth edition (Fort Worth, Texas: Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1993), 197.

30. Kaviraj, "The Modern State."

31. Hasan, ed., *Politics and the State in India*, 388.

32. Kohli, *State and Poverty in India*.

33. Hasan, *Politics and the State in India*, 388.

34. Rob Jenkins, *Democratic Politics and Economic Reform in India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

35. Alan Fowler, "Capacity Building and NGOs: A Case of Strengthening Ladles for the Global Soup Kitchen?" *Institutional Development* 1, no. 1: 18-24.

36. The comparison is not just with East Asia. According to a World Bank report, the proportion of Indonesia's population living in poverty dropped from 58 percent to 8 percent between 1970 and 1993. "India Shows Mixed Progress in the War Against Poverty," World Bank News Release No. 98/1449SAS, 1997.

37. Though there are many conflicting reports, there seems to be reasonable consensus over the following pattern: Rural poverty rose from perhaps 40 to 56 percent between 1961 and 1973-4, and declined to perhaps 34 percent in 1988-89. See Terence J. Byres, "Introduction," in Byres, ed., *The State, Development Planning and Liberalization in India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998), 24-25. For a discussion of estimate methods, see Kaushik Basu, "Has Poverty in India Declined?" *Business Standard* (23 January 2003).

38. David Ludden, ed., *Making India Hindu: Community, Conflict and the Politics of Democracy* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1966).

39. See Ludden, *Making India Hindu*; Yogendra K. Malik and V. B. Singh, *Hindu Nationalists in India. The Rise of the Bharatiya Janata Party* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1994); and Jaffrelot, *The Hindu Nationalist Movement and Indian Politics*.

40. On the speed and stealth of economic reforms, see Jenkins, *Democratic Politics*.

41. On women's movements, see Nandita Gandhi and Nandita Shah, *The Issues at Stake: Theory and Practice in the Contemporary Women's Movement in India* (New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1992); Raka Ray, *Fields of Protest: Women's Movements in India, 1800-1990* (New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1993). On environmental movements, see Madhav Gadgil and Ramachandra Guha, *This Fissured Land: An Ecological History of India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1992); Amita Baviskar, *In the Belly of the River: Tribal Conflicts over Development in the Narmada Valley* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996). On Naxalites, see Sumanta Banerjee, *India's Simmering Revolution: The Naxalite Uprising* (London: Zed Books, 1984); Achin Vanaik, *The Painful Transition: Bourgeois Democracy in India* (London: Verso Books, 1996). On Indian labor unions, see E. A. Ramaswamy, *Worker Consciousness and Trade Union Response* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1988).

42. See Rita Noonan's discussion of gender politics in Chile, for example, in Rita K. Noonan, "Women against the State: Political Opportunities and Collective Action Frames in Chile's Transition to Democracy," *Sociological Forum* 10:81-111. The diffusion of human rights norms internationally has also affected the political language with which many countries now speak of minority claims, as Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikkink explore in *Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics* (Ithaca, N. Y.: Cornell University Press, 1998); see also Julie Stone Peters and Andrea Wolper, eds., *Women's Rights, Human Rights: International Feminist Perspectives* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

43. Ramachandra Guha, "The Environmentalism of the Poor," in *Between Resistance and Revolution; Cultural Politics and Social Protest*, ed. Richard G. Fox and Orin Starn (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1997), 35.

44. Guha, "Environmentalism," citing Anil Agarwal, "Human-Nature Interactions in a Third World Country," *The Environmentalist* 6, no. 3: 167.
45. Kamla Chowdry, "The Frontyards and Backyards of Development: Dissent and the Voluntary Sector," in *A Common Cause: NGOs & Civil Society*, ed. Anuradha Maharishi and Rasna Dhillon (New Delhi: National Foundation for India, 2002), 48.
46. Partha S. Ghosh, *BJP and the Evolution of Hindu Nationalism: From Periphery to Centre* (New Delhi: Manohar Publishers & Distributors, 1999), 280.
47. Pranab Bardhan, "Sharing the Spoils: Group Equity, Development and Democracy," in *The Success of India's Democracy*, ed. Atul Kohli (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 226-241.
48. "Master frames are to movement specific collective action frames as paradigms are to finely tuned theories. Master frames are generic; specific collective action frames are derivative." David Snow and Robert D. Benford, "Master Frames and Cycles of Protest," in *Frontiers of Social Movement Theory*, ed. Aldon Morris and Carol Mueller (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1992), 138. See also Erving Goffman, *Frame Analysis* (New York: Harper Colophon, 1974); David Snow and Robert D. Benford, "Ideology, Frame Resonance, and Participant Mobilization," in *International Social Movement Research* 1 (Greenwich, Conn.: JAI Press; 1988), 197-217.
49. Rajni Kothari, "The Congress 'System' in India," *Party System and Election Studies*, Occasional Papers of the Centre for Developing Societies, No. 1 (Bombay: Allied Publishers, 1967).
50. Frankel, *India's Political Economy*, 62.
51. L. C. Jain and Karen Coelho, *In the Wake of Freedom: India's Tryst with Cooperatives* (New Delhi: Concept, 1996), 18.
52. L. C. Jain, citing Shanti George, "Cooperatives and Indian Dairy Policy: More Anand than Pattern," and B. S. Baviskar, "Dairy Cooperatives and Rural Development in Gujarat," in *Who Shares? Cooperatives and Rural Development*, ed. D. W. Attwood and B. S. Baviskar (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1988).
53. Geraldine Forbes, *Women in Modern India; The New Cambridge History of India*, IV, no. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 81.
54. Forbes, *Women in Modern India*, 83.
55. On the AIWC, see Aparna Basu and Bharati Ray's *Women's Struggle: A History of the All India Women's Conference, 1927-1990* (New Delhi: South Asia Books, 1990), and Radha Kumar, *The History of Doing: An Illustrated Account of Movements for Women's Rights and Feminism in India, 1800-1990* (Delhi: Kali for Women, 1993). Radha Kumar remarks on the "noticeable presence of women in works' movements" and describes the 1930 conference in Gwalior at which a special session on "labour" questions was held in which resolutions were passed on the needs of factory workers and an inquiry into the conditions of women mine workers was sought (1993, 69-70).
56. Vanaik, *The Painful Transition*.
57. Omvedt, *Reinventing Revolution*, 47.
58. Omvedt, *Reinventing Revolution*, 314.
59. Atul Kohli, *Democracy and Discontent; India's Growing Crisis of Governability* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).
60. While the BJP government has been instrumental in pushing forward economic liberalization, it has not been without opposition from its affiliates, particularly

the RSS. See Baldev Raj Nayar, "The Limits of Economic Nationalism in India: Economic Reforms under the BJP-led Government," *Asian Survey* XL, no. 5 (2000): 792-815.

61. Keck and Sikkink, *Activists beyond Borders*.

62. Guha, "Environmentalism," and Omvedt, *Reinventing Revolution*.

63. Discussing this accountability, Jane Mansbridge writes about the way in which groups that may not be connected by membership or authority structures nevertheless may feel themselves to be beholden to a collective discourse through a shared set of norms and shared language. Jane Mansbridge, "What Is the Feminist Movement?" in *Feminist Organizations; Harvest of the Women's Movement*, ed. Myra Marx Ferree and Patricia Yancey Martin (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995).