

Student Politics in Gujarat: 1967 – 1985

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Abstract

This thesis is an attempt to write a history of student politics between 1967 and 1985 in Gujarat, India, and while doing so, understand the role played by it in the rise of the *Sangh Parivar* (Sangh) in the state. While there were a number of other factors at play, it is the role of student politics, regarding which there has been little research, in aiding the Sangh's expansion and development up to this point that is sought to be examined.

Using primarily, hitherto unexamined, written official and non-official sources in English, Gujarati, and Hindi the thesis attempts to, in the first two chapters, provide a comprehensive history of student politics in Gujarat between 1967 and 1985. From this, in Chapter 3, certain characteristics of student politics during this time are sought to be established such as the unorganised nature of student politics, an aversion to "politics" being prevalent even in the most political of agitations, the decline in influence, over time, of progressive groups within the student body and the role of police action in escalating student protests. Chapters 4 and 5 focus on the Sangh, its relationship with student politics and its interventions in Gujarat respectively. Chapter 4 explores the organisation of the ABVP, its position in the Sangh's organisational structure as well as the strategies and tactics employed for the organisational expansion of the ABVP, focusing especially on the ways in which service activities were utilised and the image of the ABVP being "non-political" and an "organisation with a difference" was sought to be built. Chapter 5 explores the interventions of the Sangh in student politics of Gujarat. The tactics utilised for its early expansion, the claims related to its involvement in the Navnirman Agitation which form a central part of Sangh hagiography, the increasing influence of the Sangh in student politics after the Navnirman Agitation and the methods utilised by the Sangh in engaging with the

two anti-reservation agitations, with a particular focus on the student component of these agitations are sought to be understood.

The thesis argues that student politics contributed in various ways and at different times to the rise of the Sangh- from allowing it to re-gain legitimacy to creating conditions for it to escalate what was initially a minor student protest into an agitation involving widespread caste and communal violence lasting almost six months.

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List of Abbreviations

ABVP	Akhil Bhartiya Vidyarthi Parishad
AES	Ahmedabad Education Society
AGNS	Akhil Gujarat Navrachna Samiti
AISF	All India Students' Federation
ASC	Arts and Science Colleges
BJP	Bhartiya Janata Party
BJS	Bhartiya Jana Sangh
BLD	Bhartiya Lok Dal
BSF	Baroda Students' Federation
CM	Chief Minister
Cong (O)	Congress (Organisation)
Cong (R)	Congress (Requisition)
CoP	Commissioner of Police
CPI	Communist Party of India
CPM	Communist Party of India (Marxist)
CYSS	Chatra Yuva Sangharsh Samiti
EBC	Economically Backward Classes
GAVS	Gujarat Anamat Baithak Virodhi Samiti
GSF	Gujarat Students' Federation
GU	Gujarat University
GUATA	Gujarat University Area Teachers' Association

GVS	Gujarat Vidyarthi Sangh
KMLP	Kisan Mazdoor Lok Paksh
LD	Lalbhai Dalpathbhai College of Engineering
LE	Lukhdhirsinhji Engineering College
LSS	Lok Sangharsh Samiti
MISA	Maintenance of Internal Security Act
MJP	Maha Gujarat Janata Party
MNS	Maha Gujarat Naujuvan Sangh
MSU	Maharaja Sayajirao University
MSUSU	Maharaja Sayajirao University Students' Union
NSUI	National Students' Union of India
NYS	Navnirman Yuvak Samiti
PM	Prime Minister
PVS	Pragatisheel Vidyarthi Samiti
RSS	Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh
SC	Scheduled Castes
SEBC	Socially and Educationally Backward Classes
SFI	Students' Federation of India
SGU	South Gujarat University
SPU	Sardar Patel University
ST	Scheduled Tribes
SU	Saurashtra University
UGC	University Grants Commission
VC	Vice Chancellor

VMS	Vidyarthi Madhyastha Samiti
VYSS	Vidyarthi Yuvak Sangram Samiti
YLS	Yuvak Lagni Samiti

Introduction

The following thesis is a historical study of student politics and the rise of the *Sangh* in Gujarat between 1967 and 1985.

This chapter, divided into five sections, introduces, and discusses the key components of the thesis. Section I lays out the broad scope of the enquiry and defines the site of the study. In particular, Section I introduces the ‘student’, a visible and versatile actor who often appears at important junctures in modern world history. This section also introduces the *Sangh Parivar* (Sangh), a hierarchical “family” of militant Hindu nationalist organisations whose eventual aim is to transform India into a Hindu state; and it paints a picture of Gujarat, a state in Western India that witnessed student agitations and the near-simultaneous rise of the Sangh between 1967 and 1985. Section II seeks to define unambiguously ‘students’, the primary subjects of the study as distinct from ‘youth’. The different terms utilised while exploring the politics of students are noted, and the chapter justifies and explains the use of the term ‘student politics’ as a central concept for the study. The boundaries of ‘student politics’ are defined, and the section touches briefly on a number of factors important for understanding and contextualising student politics. These include the multi-class nature of the student body, how students were neither ‘incipient elite’ nor ‘proletarianised’, varying political tendencies and the importance of organisation. Section III introduces the different oeuvres of literature that the thesis engages with and to which it seeks to contribute. This includes works on student politics in various regions and countries, and particularly those that focus on Indian and on right-wing student politics. In addition, there is a vast literature on the Sangh, although this literature has not generally paid much attention to the Sangh’s student constituent.

Stepping back somewhat further, a considerable body of literature focuses on the politics of Gujarat during the period under study. Section IV deals with the official, non-official and Sangh sources that were examined for the writing of the thesis. In providing an overview of the sources, the section also discusses how these sources were read and the limitations of the documentary material. The final section provides a brief outline of the thesis and its arguments.

Section I Scope

Students, over the last two centuries, often appear as visible actors at times of great social or political upheaval, albeit playing starkly different roles. One finds students on both sides of the barricades during the uprising of 1848 in France¹ and Germany². While they were on the front lines during the Russian revolution of 1905³ and were the most visibly active section of the 1968 rebellions in advanced capitalist countries in North America and Western Europe⁴, during the inter-war period some students were also fervent supporters of Right-wing movements throughout Europe⁵. Similarly, just as there are examples of students participating in anti-imperialist movements such as the May 4th Movement in China and being prominent members of anti-colonial

¹ Karl Marx, 'The June Revolution', *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, accessed 23 December 2021, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/06/29a.htm>.

² Priscilla Robertson, 'Students on the Barricades: Germany and Austria, 1848', *Political Science Quarterly* 84, no. 2 (1969): 367–79.

³ E.J. Hobsbawm, 'Intellectuals and the Class Struggle', in *Revolutionaries: Contemporary Essays*, by E.J. Hobsbawm, 1994th ed. (London: Phoenix, 1973), 245–66.

⁴ Todd Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage*, *The Journal of American History* (New York: Bantam Book, 1987); Martin Klimke and Joachim Scharloth, eds., *1968 in Europe: A History of Protest and Activism, 1956-1977* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

⁵ Hobsbawm, 'Intellectuals and the Class Struggle'.

movements⁶, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa⁷, conversely there are also cases of them being a part of death squads in Indonesia that carried out the genocide of hundreds of thousands of Communists in the mid-1960s⁸.

In India, before independence, students were part of the anti-colonial mass movements led by Gandhi and the Indian National Congress, proponents of revolutionary terrorism as well as supporters of the nascent Communist movement. They could also be found in the ranks of Hindu and Muslim fundamentalist organisations like the Hindu Mahasabha and the Muslim League⁹. After independence, students continued to play contrasting roles, involving themselves in and associating with movements and politics of various hues. They were a part of the movement against the Emergency¹⁰ as well as contributors to violent ultra-left movements¹¹. Students came to be an important part of the leadership and support base of the Sikh separatist Khalistan¹² movement and ethno-nationalist Assam¹³ movement in the 1970s and 80s. Organisations of both the left and the right attempted

⁶ Philip G. Altbach, 'Perspectives on Student Political Activism', *Comparative Education* 25, no. 1 (1989): 98.

⁷ L. Zeilig, *Revolt and Protest: Student Politics and Activism in Sub-Saharan Africa* (London: IB Tauris & Company, 2007).

⁸ E Aspinall, 'Indonesia: Moral Force Politics and the Struggle Against Authoritarianism', in *Student Activism in Asia: Between Protest and Powerlessness*, ed. M.L. Weiss and E Aspinall (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), 153–79; S Sapiie, 'Student Activism and Strategic Identity: The Anti-Communist Student Action Front (KAMI) in West Java, Indonesia, 1965-1966', in *The Third World in the Global 1960s*, ed. S. Christiansen and Z.A. Scarlett (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2013), 182–97.

⁹ While there are other works, Anil Rajimwale, *History of Student Movement in India: Origins and Development (1920-1947)* (New Delhi: Manak Publications, 2001); and Anil Rajimwale, 'Student Movement in India in the Nineteenth Century', *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* 49, no. 1988 (1988): 343–48 provide a comprehensive overview of all the various tendencies in student politics in pre-Independence India mentioned above.

¹⁰ Gyan Prakash, *Emergency Chronicles: Indira Gandhi and Democracy's Turning Point* (New Delhi: Penguin Viking, 2018).

¹¹ Biplab Dasgupta, *The Naxalite Movement* (Bombay: Allied Publishers, 1974).

¹² Hamish Telford, 'The Political Economy of Punjab: Creating Space for Sikh Militancy', *Asian Survey* 32, no. 11 (1992): 969–87.

¹³ Meeta Deka, *Student Movements in Assam* (New Delhi: Vikas Publications, 1996).

and at various points succeeded in mobilising mass support amongst students. In the present day, student politics continues to be a keenly contested space with many forces and organisations attempting to intervene. This thesis, recognising the multifarious roles that students are capable of playing, attempts to write a history of student politics between 1967 and 1985 in Gujarat and to understand the role that student political movements played in the rise of the *Sangh Parivar* in the state.

The genesis of the Hindu Nationalist movement in India can be traced to the end of the nineteenth century¹⁴. While there were numerous individuals and organised proponents who subscribed to variations of this ideology the focus of this thesis is the *Sangh Parivar* (Sangh), which has for a long time been its most significant flag-bearer. The central aim of the Sangh's ideological and political project is the transformation of India into a Hindu Rashtra. The RSS's second chief, M.S. Golwalkar produced "the official version of its concept of Hindu nation"¹⁵. According to this understanding, a nation was an indissoluble whole of five unities- country, race, religion, culture and language. The Hindu nation was said to satisfy all these conditions and having always existed, the task was to revive and revitalise it. This was to be done through the development of a unified Hindu identity based on the myth of a shared culture, language and history of all Hindus while preserving caste hierarchies and the simultaneous demonisation of the Hindu Nation's "other"- Muslims, Christians, Communists etc¹⁶. Aijaz Ahmed notes that "the politics of hate" embedded in the

¹⁴ Jyotirmay Sharma, *Hindutva: Exploring the Idea of Hindu Nationalism* (New Delhi: Penguin Books India, 2011).

¹⁵ Shamsul Islam, 'Introduction', in *Golwalkar's We Or Our Nationhood Defined*, ed. Shamsul Islam (New Delhi: Pharos, 2017), 14.

¹⁶ Pralay Kanungo, *RSS's Tryst with Politics: From Hedgewar to Sudarshan* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2017), 127.

Sangh's project sets out to undo the "traditions of secularism, democracy, and socialism"¹⁷. For non-specialists further interested in understanding the overall aims, objectives and strategies of the Sangh in transforming India, discussions in the works of Goyal¹⁸, Kanungo¹⁹ and Ahmed²⁰ may be useful.

The Sangh began as a single organisation in 1925, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). Since independence the RSS has spawned a plethora of affiliated Hindu Nationalist organisations engaging various constituencies: eg., the Akhil Bhartiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) as a student front, the Bhartiya Jana Sangh (BJS) and later the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) as parliamentary-electoral fronts, the Bhartiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS) as a trade union, the Bhartiya Kisan Sangh (BKS) as a peasant front, and Durga Vahini for women, all drawing their legitimacy²¹ from the RSS²². A marginal force in most parts of the country for many decades after independence, since the mid-1980s the Sangh emerged as an important player on the national political scene. It witnessed a meteoric rise both in organisational and electoral terms on the back of successful communal²³ mobilisations and its electoral front was able to form and run a government from 1999 to 2004. Although voted out of power in 2004, it returned to form the government in 2014 and was in an even stronger position after elections in 2019. While the later rise of the Sangh, nationally, is apparent, the Sangh

¹⁷ Aijaz Ahmad, *Lineages of the Present: Ideology and Politics in Contemporary South Asia* (London: Verso, 2000), 288.

¹⁸ D.R. Goyal, *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh* (New Delhi: Radha Krishna Prakashan, 1979).

¹⁹ Kanungo, *RSS's Tryst with Politics: From Hedgewar to Sudarshan*.

²⁰ Ahmad, *Lineages of the Present: Ideology and Politics in Contemporary South Asia*.

²¹ W Andersen and S Damle, *The Brotherhood in Saffron: The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and Hindu Revivalism* (London: Westview, 1987), 143.

²² For more, see 'Annexure One: List of Organisations Created by the RSS' in Shamsul Islam, *Hindu Nationalism and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh* (New Delhi: Media House, 2017).

²³ Here 'communalism' as is commonly understood in the South Asian context as being an attempt at constructing religious identities and inciting ill will amongst different religious 'communities'.

had far earlier made significant gains in some parts of the country. In Gujarat, often called a “laboratory” for the Hindu Nationalist project of the Sangh was already by 1985 it was one of the most important political actors. It is this early rise and the role played by student politics in facilitating the Sangh’s ascension that is a central object of study in this thesis.

The geographical focus of this study is Gujarat, a state located in the Western part of India. The state of Gujarat consists of a number of hugely disparate regions: the desert region of Kutch, bordering Pakistan, to the north-west; the heavily industrialised northern and central region which includes important cities such as Ahmedabad and Baroda; the Saurashtra peninsula, with the cities of Bhavnagar and Rajkot in the south-west; and the southern and eastern parts which include the port city of Surat as well as a majority of the tribal population of the state. For much of its history, however, Gujarat was “submerged within larger political jurisdictions or broken up into smaller ones”²⁴. It was in the latter condition at the time of the advent and expansion of colonial rule between the mid-eighteenth and the mid-nineteenth centuries. During the colonial period, more than 80 per cent of the region was divided into over 300 princely states- Baroda, Kutch, Junagadh, and Bhavnagar being the larger ones- subjected to indirect rule through British agents. The remainder, including important cities like Ahmedabad and Surat, were part of the large Bombay Province of British India that was directly governed. With independence and partition, the states of Kutch and Saurashtra were formed from some of the princely states, while others were absorbed into Bombay state. In 1956, Kutch and Saurashtra ceased to exist, as a large bilingual Bombay

²⁴ J. R. Wood, ‘British versus Princely Legacies and the Political Integration of Gujarat’, *The Journal of Asian Studies* 44, no. 1 (1984): 67.

state was formed. The formation of a bilingual state provoked agitations in both Gujarati- and Marathi-speaking regions; this eventually resulted in the bifurcation of the state and the creation of Gujarat and Maharashtra as separate states on 1 May 1960.

Between 1967 and 1985, Gujarat witnessed a number of student-led agitations, with varied political leanings, that on occasions destabilised state governments and on two occasions successfully ousted Chief Ministers (CM). The period began with two agitations, one at Bhavnagar and the other at Ahmedabad which contributed to bringing the state government to the brink of collapse in mid-1967. In January 1974, a protest against rising mess bills by students at an engineering college in Ahmedabad snowballed into a statewide agitation involving a large section of the population motivated by a plethora of grievances against the government including rising prices, food scarcity, electoral malpractice, and corruption. During the contemporaneously named Navnirman Agitation, the agitators demanded and secured, first, the resignation of the CM and subsequently the dissolution of the State Legislative Assembly. Following this, Gujarat also witnessed two major student led-agitations, in 1981 and 1985, against policies related to affirmative action in higher educational institutions. While the first of these, which lasted almost four months, did affect 18 out of the 19 districts in Gujarat and included attacks on backward groups, the second one was even more intense, involving six months of brutal caste and communal rioting resulting in hundreds of deaths. The second agitation ended only after the newly elected CM resigned.

There was, between 1967 and 1985, a perceptible shift in terms of nature and content of student politics as the period which began with the prominence of left-wing student

organisations in 1967 ended in 1985 with anti-reservation riots and the ABVP as the predominant force in student politics. Although the part played by student politics in Gujarat during the major agitations is often acknowledged²⁵, the organisation, political tendencies and transformation of student politics during this time have neither been comprehensively studied nor fully understood.

Gujarat was not only witness to a number of student-led agitations, during this period, there was a broader rise of the Sangh. While other organisations were far stronger, the Sangh at the beginning of the period under study, was starting to make inroads into Gujarat politics and saw its first major expansion around the 1969 with the riots in Ahmedabad. Following the riots, the Sangh managed to make significant electoral and organisational gains as the BJS won many local body seats and the RSS increased its membership²⁶. By the time of the Navnirman Agitation, aided by the demise of the Swatantra Party, decline of left parties, and its own organisational and electoral expansion, the Sangh emerged as an opposition force, second only to the Cong(O). Following the Navnirman Agitation, the BJS contested Assembly elections as part of the “*Janata Morcha*” (People’s Front)²⁷ which went on to form the government and won 18 out of the 40 seats that it contested. Although, in the face of the KHAM²⁸ combination stitched together by the Congress in the 1980 and 1985 elections the Sangh was not able to gain in terms of seats, there was a steady increase in its vote

²⁵ Eg. G. Shah, ‘The Upsurge in Gujarat’, *Economic and Political Weekly* 9, no. 32/34 (1974): 1429–54; O Shani, *Communalism, Caste and Hindu Nationalism: The Violence in Gujarat* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

²⁶ For more see Chapter 5 p. 311 - 315.

²⁷ For more, see Chapter 1, p. 137 - 139.

²⁸ KHAM stood for Kshatriya, Harijan, Adivasi, Muslim, considered to be socially, politically, and economically backward communities. For more, see J.R. Wood, ‘Congress Restored? The “KHAM” Strategy and Congress (I) Recruitment in Gujarat’, in *State Politics in Contemporary India: Crisis or Continuity*, ed. J.R. Wood (Boulder: Westview, 1984), 197–228.

share. Meanwhile, from 1981 onwards, there was also a spate of communal rioting in the state as the Sangh grew organisationally²⁹. It was the 1985 anti-reservation agitation and riots which took place both before and after the elections that year, as Shani notes, that marked “the beginnings of a shift” from “Congress dominance” to the “triumph” of the Sangh in Gujarat³⁰. While there were a number of other factors at play, this thesis will focus on the part played by students and student politics in aiding the Sangh’s expansion and development.

The thesis asks the following questions: –

- a) What were the significant developments and changes in the nature and content of student politics in Gujarat between 1967 and 1985?
- b) What made student politics in Gujarat conducive to successful interventions from the Sangh?
- c) What were the myths built by the Sangh regarding its interventions in student politics in Gujarat and what was the actual form that these [the interventions] took?
- d) How did student politics, the conditions created by it and the Sangh’s interventions in it aid its [the Sangh’s] rise in Gujarat?

Section II Relevance in the Present Political Context

Despite the subject matter of the thesis being historical in nature the thesis is very much a product of contemporary impulses and is of relevant to the present. The original ideas of this thesis were conceptualised in 2014 and 2015 in the time

²⁹ See Chapter 5, p. 356 – 359.

³⁰ Ornit Shani, ‘The Rise of Hindu Nationalism in India: The Case Study of Ahmedabad in the 1980s’, *Modern Asian Studies* 39, no. 4 (2005): 862.

immediately preceding and succeeding the victory in the parliamentary elections of the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA).

While the Sangh and its ideologues had always endeavoured to spread a Hindutva history, being in control of the state, greatly enhanced the Sangh's ability to successfully propagate its versions of history. Having attempted to do so during its first stint at the helm (1999-2004), since coming to power in 2014, the Sangh took up the task of re-writing history post-hate. As a progressive journal noted, within months of forming the government, "historical revisionism" had "attained a certain kind of urgency" and the "blurring of the lines between fact and myth" had been "expedited like never before"³¹. In addition to the bizarre, false and almost laughable, but no less dangerous statements, about the past being made by top government functionaries including the PM, who traced plastic surgery and genetic science to ancient India, as well as calls to "rewrite" India's history according to "our [Sangh's] own viewpoint" by the Home Minister³², there have been systematic attacks particularly on school curriculums at both the national and state levels.

Between 2014 and 2018, during the first term of the BJP in power, 1334 changes were made to the NCERT³³ textbooks utilised by schools affiliated to the Central Board of Secondary Education³⁴. In its second term, a number of topics that did not fit into the Sangh's narrative including references to 2002 Gujarat riots, Mughal rule in the 16th

³¹ 'Orgy of Myth Making', *Frontline*, 28 November 2014, <https://frontline.thehindu.com/the-nation/orgy-of-myth-making/article64763371.ece>.

³² Express News Service, 'Amit Shah Has a History Lesson: Don't Blame Others, Rewriting It Our Responsibility', *The Indian Express*, 18 October 2019, <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/amit-shah-has-a-history-lesson-dont-blame-others-rewriting-it-our-responsibility-6075169/>.

³³ National Council of Educational Research and Training

³⁴ C. Jaffrelot and Pradyumana Jairam, 'BJP Has Been Effective in Transmitting Its Version of Indian History to Next Generation of Learners', *The Indian Express*, 16 November 2019, <https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/education-ours-and-theirs-6121982/>.

and 17th centuries, the Naxal movement and excerpts from the poems of revolutionary poet Faiz Ahmed Faiz were dropped from NCERT textbooks³⁵. BJP ruled states have also followed a pattern of propagating Sangh myths, deleting uncomfortable issues and personalities, while at the same time smuggling the Sangh into the syllabus. For instance, in Karnataka, the National Education Policy (NEP) curriculum recommendations made by a committee in Karnataka traced the origin of the Pythagoras theorem³⁶, Fibonacci series and the discovery of the duration of the lunar cycle to ancient India³⁷. Similarly, in Haryana, another BJP ruled state, a history textbook sought parachute the RSS into India's struggle for independence, claiming that the organisation and its founders played a "positive role" in "awakening cultural nationalism and freedom struggle". There was even a laudatory mention of the RSS's founder Hedgewar as being an important part of the freedom struggle³⁸. While in Gujarat, six books of Dinanath Batra, a specialist in re-writing history according to "the canons of Hindu nationalism", were prescribed as compulsory reading³⁹.

In this context of furious myth making and narrative building that has been undertaken since the Sangh came to power, the present thesis which attempts to examine and

³⁵ Scroll Staff, 'Paragraphs on Gujarat Riots, Chapter on Mughal History Removed from NCERT Textbooks', 17 June 2022, <https://scroll.in/latest/1026397/paragraph-on-gujarat-riots-chapter-on-mughal-history-removed-from-ncert-textbooks>.

³⁶ Sruthy Susan Ullas, 'Pythagoras' Theorem Has Vedic Roots: Karnataka Panel', 10 July 2022, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/bengaluru/pythagoras-theorem-has-vedic-roots-karnataka-panel/articleshow/92775392.cms>.

³⁷ Nikhila Henry, 'Karnataka NEP Recommendations: Caste Erasure, Puranic Bharata, and Moon's Wives', *The Quint*, 12 July 2022, <https://www.thequint.com/south-india/karnataka-national-education-policy-recommendations-caste-erasure-puranic-bharata-and-moons-wives>.

³⁸ Vivek Gupta, 'Haryana: Class 9 History Book Blames Congress for Partition, Lauds RSS, Hedgewar, Savarkar', *The Wire*, 12 July 2022, <https://thewire.in/education/haryana-class-9-history-book-blames-congress-for-partition-lauds-rss-hedgewar-savarkar>.

³⁹ Rahi Gaikwad, 'Dinanath Batra's Books Are a Must-Read in Gujarat Schools', *The Hindu*, 25 July 2014, <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/Dinanath-Batra-man-behind-pulping-of-Wendy-Doniger%E2%80%99s-book-is-must-read-in-Gujarat-schools/article60361322.ece>.

repudiate some of the Sangh's many claims, based on a careful examination of available sources is of particular relevance.

In addition, the Sangh coming to power in 2014 was accompanied, nationally by an uptick in student protests, especially at so called elite universities. The first of the major ones was against the appointment of a Sangh functionary, Gajendra Chauhan, as the Chairperson of the prestigious Film and Television Institute of India (FTII). There were major protests by the students at the institute and a strike which lasted 140 days which received support from students in other parts of the country as also and those in the film fraternity⁴⁰. Soon after, when in October 2015 the UGC, under the guidance of the central government, decided to discontinue a financial support programme available to MPhil and PhD students at some fifty odd central universities and "centres of excellence", protests were initiated by students at JNU, Delhi at the offices of the UGC, dubbed the "Occupy UGC Movement". These later spread to other cities and protests were organised at the UGC's regional offices at Kolkata, Allahabad, Pune and Varanasi⁴¹. Another large outburst of student protest followed the suicide of a Dalit scholar, Rohit Vemula, at the University of Hyderabad, in which the Sangh through the ABVP, the local MP and the MHRD Minister at the time were held responsible by students for Vemula's death⁴².

⁴⁰ Aparna Bose, '10 Biggest Students' Protests in History of Independent India', 8 January 2020, <https://www.theindianwire.com/events/biggest-students-protests-in-independent-india-266169/>.

⁴¹ Kritika Sharma Sebastian, "Occupy UGC" Stir Spreads across India', *The Hindu*, 3 November 2015, <https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Delhi/occupy-ugc-stir-spreads-across-india/article7835175.ece>.

⁴² Zeeshan Shaikh, 'FTII, HCU, JNU, Fergusson, NIT and Now Jadavpur: 6 Protests That Expose Modi Government's Failure to Understand Students', *India.Com*, 7 May 2016, <https://www.india.com/news/india/ftii-hcu-jnu-fergusson-nit-and-now-jadavpur-6-protests-that-exposes-modi-governments-failure-to-understand-students-1166795/>.

Close on the heels of these protests, on 9 February 2016, at JNU, the ABVP interrupted an event organised by ultra-left students and groups claiming that the event was 'anti-national' and anti-India slogans had been raised. Following this, mobile-camera videos of the same were circulated in television media but were later found to be doctored. The uproar led to the arrest of three Left student politicians, including the JNU Students' Union president, Kanhaiya Kumar, invoking the section 124 A (sedition) and 120B (criminal conspiracy)⁴³. The arrests were followed by large scale protests in the university, on the streets of Delhi as well as demonstrations of global solidarity⁴⁴. Student protests against the Sangh's activities continued into the second term of the BJP with the most major one being their involvement in the agitation against the heavily criticised Citizenship Amendment Act and the National Population Register. Beginning from the major universities in Delhi, the protests spread to other parts and students faced brutal action from the police in both Delhi and UP⁴⁵.

Given the manner in which they have been covered in the contemporary press both by their supporters and detractors it would be easy to confuse students resisting authoritarian Hindutva policies, actions and politics of the government under certain conditions as evidence that Indian students are an intrinsically democratic or progressive group, inherently hostile to the Sangh. While it is not unusual for students to transcend the boundaries of their social backgrounds and end up practicing progressive politics, this is not always seen to be the case. This thesis, which presents

⁴³ Prabir Purkayastha, 'Violence Against JNU Is an Attack on the Indian Nation', 18 February 2016, <https://www.newsclick.in/india/violence-against-jnu-attack-indian-nation>.

⁴⁴ "JNU Events Signal Culture of Authoritarian Menace", 16 February 2016, <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/JNU-events-signal-culture-of-authoritarian-menace/article14084416.ece?homepage=true>.

⁴⁵ A L I Chougule, 'The Changing Face of Student Protests', 20 January 2020, <https://www.freepressjournal.in/analysis/the-changing-face-of-student-protests>.

umpteenth illustrations of students and student politics not being attracted to progressive politics but quite to the contrary both directly and indirectly supportive of and beneficial to the Sangh, acquires a special relevance in the present context.

Section III Key Concepts

This section is an attempt to discuss, define, clarify, justify and define the terms, concepts and categories that are utilised in the study.

Students

As visible young actors through much of modern history, students are often conflated with 'youth'. This study, while recognising that students are often young argues for the maintenance of a distinction between 'student' and 'youth'.

Youth, as numerous studies have established is a social category whose meaning is routinely reconstructed for political and pragmatic reasons by the state, political parties, international organisations, NGOs, and young people, including students⁴⁶. These constructions vary according to the historical context in which they are used and the purposes for which they are deployed. Such constructions of youth, necessarily include within their ambit only certain groups of young people, while others, whose interests might vary or be at odds with them are either ignored, excluded from, or subsumed within this category. For instance, in fascist Italy, the government

⁴⁶ For more, see J. Comaroff and J. Comaroff, 'Reflections on Youth: From Past to the Postcolony', in *Makers & Breakers: Children and Youth in Postcolonial Africa*, ed. A Honwana and F De Boeck (London: James Currey, 2005), 19–30; Deborah Durham, 'Disappearing Youth: Youth as a Social Shifter in Botswana', *American Ethnologist* 31, no. 4 (2004): 589–605; L. Neyzu, 'Object or Subject? The Paradox of "Youth" in Turkey', *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 33, no. 3 (2001): 411–32.

projected itself as the embodiment of 'youth'⁴⁷. The fascist concept of youth stripped 'youth' of all its historical or sociological connotations and made it assume a purely symbolic dimension⁴⁸. As a result, vast majority of young people were excluded from the discourse, and they came to be represented by "a social and cultural elite"⁴⁹. In Turkey youth as a category in public discourse underwent a significant amount of change. The early definition of 'youth' (1923-50) connoted *educated youth* who embodied the nation, with the development of a student movement in the 1950s and 1960s, 'youth' came to mean *rebellious students* who were a threat to the nation, and eventually in the period after the 1980s, 'youth' were viewed as *apolitical consumers*⁵⁰. In apartheid South Africa, "youth" was synonymous with young black men to whom were attributed terror and violence⁵¹ and in 2000s Botswana, public discourse presented youth as a problem that needed solving⁵². Youth is in this manner a "hazily defined"⁵³ and malleable category whose content varies on the historical and political context.

Most significantly for the thesis, youth, might or might not include students. It can be the case that student organisations and leaders, aware that students form a minority in their age cohort, in an attempt to widen their support base, portray themselves as

⁴⁷ M Antliff, 'Machine Primitives: Philippe Lamour, Germaine Krull, and the Fascist Cult of Youth', *Qui Parle* 13, no. 1 (2001): 72.

⁴⁸ L. Malvano, 'The Myth of Youth in Images: Italian Fascism', in *A History of Young People in the West: Stormy Evolution to Modern Times*. Vol. 2, ed. G. Levi and J. Schmitt (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1997), 233.

⁴⁹ B. Wanrooij, 'The Rise and Fall of Italian Fascism as a Generational Revolt', *Journal of Contemporary History* 22, no. 3 (1987): 422.

⁵⁰ Neyzu, 'Object or Subject? The Paradox of "Youth" in Turkey'.

⁵¹ Comaroff and Comaroff, 'Reflections on Youth: From Past to the Postcolony'.

⁵² Durham, 'Disappearing Youth: Youth as a Social Shifter in Botswana', 590.

⁵³ A Honwana and F De Boeck, 'Introduction: Children and Youth in Africa', in *Makers & Breakers: Children and Youth in Postcolonial Africa*, ed. A Honwana and F De Boeck (London: James Currey, 2005), 4.

representatives not just of students but of young people at large, i.e., 'youth'. They, may in this way, partake in and encourage the conflation between 'student' and 'youth'. This conflation comes at the expense and erasure of non-student sections of that demographic. This was seen to be the case of the Nepalese student movement of the 2000s⁵⁴. In contrast, there are examples of students, as was the case in Indonesia⁵⁵ and Zambia⁵⁶, not aspiring to the category of youth. Instead, they attempted to distinguish themselves from other young people in order to press for exceptional concessions as well as defend their declining position against further depredations. Similarly, the state, contingent on the political and historical context, also conflates and separates 'students' and 'youth'. It is common to find the difference in the material conditions between students and non-students being exploited by the state during times of student protest. Focusing on and portraying students as a privileged minority that share very little with other young people, governments can characterise student protest as elite, in the process discrediting its legitimate demands and even mobilise 'youth' against students. Zimbabwe is a case in point, where in order to counter the influence of the student politics, the government cultivated the support of rural and unemployed young people by setting up "youth programmes"⁵⁷. In Egypt, in the 1940s, soldiers of the riot police drawn from very poor backgrounds are noted to have viewed students as privileged and were, therefore, not hesitant in taking stern steps against

⁵⁴ Amanda Snellinger, "'Let's See What Happens': Hope, Contingency, and Speculation in Nepali Student Activism", *Critical Asian Studies* 48, no. 1 (2016): 32–34.

⁵⁵ Aspinall, 'Indonesia: Moral Force Politics and the Struggle Against Authoritarianism'; Sapiie, 'Student Activism and Strategic Identity: The Anti-Communist Student Action Front (KAMI) in West Java, Indonesia, 1965-1966'.

⁵⁶ M. Burawoy, 'Consciousness and Contradiction: A Study of Student Protest in Zambia', *British Journal of Sociology* 27, no. 1 (1976): 78–98.

⁵⁷ L. Zeilig, 'Student Politics and Activism in Zimbabwe the Frustrated Transition', *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 43, no. 2 (2008): 215–37.

them⁵⁸. Meanwhile, in the Congo, in the 1970s, the decline of living conditions for students was justified and welcomed⁵⁹. On the other hand, student protest has also been pejoratively branded as ‘youth protest’ by the state. This has been done in a context where there exists a “diffuse sense of hostility towards young people”, allowing the state to accuse them of being the source of “all manner of disorders and aberrations”⁶⁰. Thus, while there are times that youth come to exclusively mean students, at others, they are completely excluded, or attempt to exclude themselves, from this category.

The above is a recognition of how ‘youth’ comes to be defined and redefined in varying contexts and has an influence on the political behaviour of young people. Given this, while students are usually young, given the ways in which youth comes to be defined there is little to be gained in considering students as synonymous with youth. Despite this, there are works regarding students and student politics that do not distinguish between ‘youth’ and ‘student’. In studies such as Douglas⁶¹, Sloan⁶², Zewde⁶³, and Jeffrey⁶⁴, to name a few, ‘youth’ and ‘student’ as terms and categories are used almost

⁵⁸ A Abdalla, *The Student Movement and National Politics in Egypt: 1923-1973* (London: Al Saqi Books, 1985).

⁵⁹ P. Monaville, ‘The Destruction of the University: Violence, Political Imagination, and the Student Movement in Congo-Zaire, 1969-1971’, in *The Third World in the Global 1960s*, ed. S. Christiansen and Z.A. Scarlett (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2013), 34.

⁶⁰ Giovanni Levi and Jean Claude Schmitt, eds., *A History of Young People in the West: Stormy Evolution to Modern Times Vol. 2* (Harvard University Press, 1997), 6.

⁶¹ S.A. Douglas, *Political Socialization and Student Activism in Indonesia* (Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1970).

⁶² J. Sloan, ‘Revolution on the National Stage: Mexico, the PRI, and the Student Movement in 1968’, in *The Third World in the Global 1960s*, ed. S. Christiansen and Z.A. Scarlett (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2013), 171–81.

⁶³ B. Zewde, *The Quest for Socialist Utopia: The Ethiopian Student Movement, 1960-1974* (Woodbridge: James Currey, 2014).

⁶⁴ C. Jeffery, *Timepass: Youth, Class, and the Politics of Waiting in India* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010).

interchangeably. In contrast, the present study seeks to clearly define the group of people that are its subjects.

In this thesis, students are an unambiguously defined category, independent of their age or whether they seek to be identified as youth or not. Students are defined as persons who were enrolled in higher education institutions (eg. polytechnics, colleges, and universities), in order to gain post-school diplomas and degrees of various sorts. In doing so the study does not assume that students are a homogeneous body or that “students will normally view themselves primarily as students when it comes to acting collectively”⁶⁵. While student identity is continually defined and reconstituted through the political acts of students, questions related to the construction of student identity are not the primary focus of the study. To utilise youth and students interchangeably inhibits a better understanding of both and this thesis limits itself to an examination of students and student politics.

Student politics: Definitions and critique

Previous literature has used different terms to refer to the main subject matter of this thesis. Some refer to the “student movement”, but of these, only some, such as Altbach⁶⁶, define it. Most works, however, do not elaborate on their understanding of ‘a movement’, and they may use the term while exploring student political activity over an extended period⁶⁷. During the period under study, while there were major and minor

⁶⁵ E Aspinall and M.L. Weiss, ‘Understanding Student Activism’, in *Student Activism in Asia: Between Protest and Powerlessness*, ed. M.L. Weiss and E Aspinall (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), 9.

⁶⁶ “...that segment of the student community which has organized itself for political or social action”. Philip G. Altbach, ‘The Transformation of the Indian Student Movement’, *Asian Survey* 6, no. 8 (1966): 448.

⁶⁷ Abdalla, *The Student Movement and National Politics in Egypt: 1923-1973*; A.K. Baruah, ed., *Student Power in North-East India: Understanding Student Movements* (New Delhi: Regency Publications,

agitations, it is not possible to speak of a longer “student movement” of the kind examined in the literature; nor was there necessarily a consistency across different episodes of agitation.

Similarly, while the term “student activism” is frequently utilised⁶⁸, very rarely is it defined. It could refer to collective political action, individual actors, or students with certain political orientations, its meaning left to be understood from the context in which it is utilised. Important exceptions are Aspinall and Weiss who define “student activism” as “collective action by university students directed toward (and often against) the ruling regime”⁶⁹. However, as is the case for Altbach⁷⁰, student activism is presumed by Aspinall and Weiss⁷¹ to be ‘oppositional’. Identifying the state as the target would rule out, in the context of this thesis, a great deal of relevant activity. Further there is no accepted definition of a “student activist” - are all students who participate in student protests, to whatever extent, student activists, or are only those who ‘lead’ or are

2002); S. Federici, ‘The New African Student Movement’, in *A Thousand Flowers: Social Struggles Against Structural Adjustment in African Universities*, ed. S. Federici, C.G. Caffentzis, and O. Alidou (New Jersey: African World Press, 2000), 87–112; Sloan, ‘Revolution on the National Stage: Mexico, the PRI, and the Student Movement in 1968’; Jean-Pierre Worms, ‘The French Student Movement’, *Comparative Education Review* 10, no. 2 (1966): 359–66; Rajimwale, *History of Student Movement in India: Origins and Development (1920-1947)*.

⁶⁸ Klimke and Scharloth, *1968 in Europe: A History of Protest and Activism, 1956-1977*; S.M. Lipset, *Rebellion in the University: A History of Student Activism in America* (London: Routledge and K. Paul, 1972); Kate Murphy, ‘Student Activism at the University of New England in Australia’s “Long 1960s”’, *Journal of Australian Studies* 43, no. 2 (2019): 174–87; Murphy, ‘Student Activism at the University of New England in Australia’s “Long 1960s”’; E. Wight Bakke, ‘Roots and Soil of Student Activism’, *Comparative Education Review* 10, no. 2 (1966): 163–74; Philip G. Altbach and Patti Peterson, ‘Before Berkeley: Historical Perspectives on American Student Activism’, *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 395, no. Students Protest (1971): 1–14; Philip G. Altbach, ‘From Revolution to Apathy: American Student Activism in the 1970s’, *Higher Education* 8, no. 6 (1979): 609–26; D. Hodgkinson, ‘The “Hardcore” Student Activist: The Zimbabwe National Students Union (ZINASU), State Violence, and Frustrated Masculinity, 2000–2008’, *Journal of Southern African Studies* 39, no. 4 (2013): 863–83.

⁶⁹ Aspinall and Weiss, ‘Understanding Student Activism’, 2.

⁷⁰ Philip G. Altbach and Gail Paradise Kelly, eds., *Education and the Colonial Experience* (Transaction Books, 1984), 98.

⁷¹ Aspinall and Weiss, ‘Understanding Student Activism’, 19–20.

particularly active to be considered activists? The phrase has remained ambiguous and imprecise. Another body of literature refers to “students and politics”⁷² which places the focus on moments of larger changes, including the toppling of or severe challenges to governments, in which students were involved. As is the case with some works on student activism, this approach tends to emphasise students’ engagement with high politics; campus politics, of great importance in the present context, is relegated to the background. In trying to develop a “general theory”, Boren uses the term “student resistance” through which he tries to fit many forms of student activity over a period of five centuries into a narrative of “resistance”⁷³. This too cannot be applied as student politics of this period was often not a politics of “resistance” but one that was often geared towards a protection of the status quo.

Specifically in the Indian context, the most popular term, particularly favoured by governments and educational administrators is “student indiscipline”⁷⁴. As the thesis neither shares the state and educational authorities’ patronising view of students nor concurs with their “diagnosis” of the “problem”, this is ruled out.

Given these issues, “student politics”, a relatively neutral term, offers the present study the maximum scope in order to develop a nuanced understanding of its subject matter. As Hazary noted, in the Indian context,

⁷² Philip G. Altbach, ‘Students and Politics’, *Comparative Education Review* 10, no. 2 (1966): 175–87; Seymour Martin Lipset, ‘Editorial’, *Comparative Education Review* 10, no. 2 (1966): 129–31; D.K. Emerson, *Students and Politics in Developing Nations* (London: Pall Mall Press, 1968); W.J. Hanna and J.L. Hanna, ‘Students as Elites’, in *University Students and African Politics*, ed. W.J. Hanna (New York: Holmes & Meir Publishers, 1975), 23–48.

⁷³ M.E. Boren, *Student Resistance: A History of the Unruly Subject* (New York: Routledge, 2001).

⁷⁴ This was noted by both Lipset, ‘Editorial’; Philip G. Altbach, ‘Student Politics and Higher Education in India’, *Daedalus* 97, no. 1 (1968): 254–73.

“Student politics is a generic term having diverse manifestations. It has such dimensions as student attitudes and orientations, student political behaviour and power; student unrest; movements and activism; constructive activities of students, methods of organisation and mobilisation, student leadership patterns, campus electoral behaviour and the inter-relationship of student political activity with the educational and political systems”⁷⁵.

This study seeks to not limit itself to either to only those episodes where students impinge on state-level politics or to student activity that is campus centric. Within the ambit of student politics shall, the thesis considers a variety of activities ranging from student participation in union elections, student protests around “student issues”, often considered to be of little relevance, such as fee hikes, improper living conditions etc. as well as involvement in state level electoral politics and mass agitations that include other sections of the population. Although the focus here is not on individual students, they do appear from time to time in the study. Following from the above, those students who played a somewhat more prominent role in student politics, shall be referred to as “student politicians” rather than “activists” or “leaders” with this being neither a comment on their popularity within the student body nor on their importance outside it.

There is a final issue, that of the existence (or non-existence) of a “student consciousness” or the development of a “student identity” as a prerequisite to consider student activity as *student* politics. Although this is not a primary consideration within the literature on student politics, the point needs to be addressed. Burawoy⁷⁶ asserts the existence and importance of a “student consciousness” to Zambian student politics

⁷⁵ Subas Chandra Hazary, *Student Politics in India* (New Delhi: South Asia Books, 1987).

⁷⁶ Burawoy, ‘Consciousness and Contradiction: A Study of Student Protest in Zambia’.

and Obadare⁷⁷ studies the impact of the transformation of a “student identity” on student politics in Nigeria touches upon this point. However, it is Aspinall and Weiss⁷⁸ who argue for a differentiation between “student mobilisation qua students” and that done by students. According to them, there are: students who mobilise as students on the basis of a “shared collective student identity”; students who mobilise but are “spurred by identification with some other collective identity”; and students who do not mobilise at all. While recognising “student” as both an individual and collective identity, only the conditions under which the collective identity becomes “productive of student activism”⁷⁹ are studied.

In this thesis, however, it makes little sense to follow Aspinall et al. in emphasising the centrality of “student mobilisation qua students” or of “student” being the primary identity around which mobilisation takes place. In the Indian case this would leave out much of student politics. Students have frequently mobilised other students, but with another identity (or identities) being equally important. This was true during the Anti-Reservation agitations examined in the thesis; in this case the student the student identity was one among several identities – crucially including the Hindu and upper caste identities – that, were important in the mobilisation of students. The case of student politics in the states of North-East India is also important to note. In that case, powerful student organisations drew not only on student identities but also on community identities like the All Arunachal Pradesh Students’ Union⁸⁰, Khasi Students’

⁷⁷ E. Obadare, ‘White-Collar Fundamentalism: Interrogating Youth Religiosity on Nigerian University Campuses’, *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 45, no. 4 (2007): 517–37.

⁷⁸ Aspinall and Weiss, ‘Understanding Student Activism’, 23.

⁷⁹ Aspinall and Weiss, ‘Understanding Student Activism’, 19–23.

⁸⁰ C. Prasad, ‘Students’ Movements in Arunachal Pradesh and the Chakma-Hajong Refugee Problem’, *Economic and Political Weekly* 42, no. 15 (2007): 1373–79.

Union⁸¹ and All Tai Ahom Students' Union⁸². At the same time, mobilisation of other sections of the population by student politicians, as was the case during the Navnirman Agitation and the Assam Movement, cannot be excluded from student politics. Further, attempts to locate an autonomous student politics – where students mobilise other students as students – obscures the divisions within the student body as well as the competing groups and tendencies that fight for dominance over it. Thus, without insisting on the development of a “pure” student identity or on “student mobilisation qua students”, this thesis includes a broader set of activities. Politics involving students and the participation of students in mass agitations led by other groups are all included as a part of “student politics” within this thesis.

Finally, fundamental elements that underlie the analysis are laid out below.

In the heyday of student politics in the 1960s, some on the left viewed the working class as “co-opted” and sought to replace it, by taking students to be a “class”, a “new proletariat” that would occupy the place of the old⁸³. While the thesis views student politics from a broadly Marxist perspective, it does not consider students to constitute a class. As Baruah asserts, to apply a Marxist understanding to the study of student politics it is “not necessary to claim that the students constitute a class” but to “recognise that they come from various classes”⁸⁴.

⁸¹ V. Sirnate, ‘Students versus the State: The Politics of Uranium Mining in Meghalaya’, *Economic and Political Weekly* 44, no. 47 (2009): 18–23.

⁸² M. Phukan, *Student Politics in Assam: A Study of All Tai Ahom Students' Union* (New Delhi: Anshah Publishing House, 2005).

⁸³ John Rowntree and Margaret Rowntree, ‘The Political Economy of Youth: Youth as a Class’, *Our Generation* 6, no. 1–2 (n.d.): 1–36.

⁸⁴ A.K. Baruah, ‘Approches to the Study of Student Movements in the North-East India’, in *Student Power in North-East India: Understanding Student Movements*, ed. A.K. Baruah (New Delhi: Regency Publications, 2002), 1–20.

Through most of human history, education was formally restricted to the ruling class with the “labouring classes” being “disallowed from learning”. Students are therefore a fairly homogeneous group in terms of their class origins. With the emergence of capitalism and the development of productive forces the “confines are broken”⁸⁵. The ruling classes are forced to open the universities to a wider section and recruit from outside their own ranks making the modern student body a multi-class group. This is not to suggest that all groups are proportionately represented; the extent of representation of different groups within the student body must be taken into account while attempting to understand student politics. The width of the social base of students is contingent on a number of factors- especially the requirements of the ruling classes and the level of capitalist development. These factors play a pivotal role in shaping the student body and must be studied in their specific historical context. While accounting for the unevenness of access to education, the fact remains that students in a society where there is even a minimal development of capitalism are drawn from a multitude of classes and strata. This puts them in a unique position. Given the complexity of student class backgrounds, this thesis does not treat students as constituting a separate class, but neither does it treat students as existing independently of classes. Instead, it takes students as a multi-class body having an “undeniably specific nature”⁸⁶.

Universities in much of the global south were established during the colonial period to serve a very specific function – that of providing the colonial state with trained

⁸⁵ Sitaram Yechury, ‘Education & the Ruling Class’, *The Marxist* 3, no. 4 (December 1985): 1–23.

⁸⁶ Eduard Batalov, *The Philosophy of Revolt: Criticism of Left Radical Ideology* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1975).

personnel with which to govern. As a result, the spread of higher education during this time remained limited to a small section of the population. Students were a “tiny minority” in these countries at the time of independence. By virtue of being an educated minority in newly independent countries, they were supposedly, “destined for power and responsible for exercising their political power even while they were students”⁸⁷. It is, thus, common for studies to view students in the period immediately following independence in many countries of Africa⁸⁸ and Asia⁸⁹ as “prospective members of the elite”⁹⁰ or an “incipient elite”⁹¹.

This, however, was not the case in India which had a somewhat different trajectory of the development of higher education than most colonies. Here, even during the colonial period there was a sizeable student body, multiple large universities in different regions, periods of great expansion of higher education, and relatively high native involvement and control⁹². As early as the late 19th century, only fifty years after the establishment of the first colleges in India, prospects of employment as well as the nature of the employment were already matters of concerns for students and recent

⁸⁷ Philip G. Altbach, ‘Student Politics in the Third World’, *Higher Education* 13, no. 6 (1984): 638.

⁸⁸ Senegal, L. Zeilig, *Revolt and Protest: Student Politics and Activism in Sub-Saharan Africa* (London: IB Tauris & Company, 2007); Zimbabwe, D. Hodgkinson, ‘The “Hardcore” Student Activist: The Zimbabwe National Students Union (ZINASU), State Violence, and Frustrated Masculinity, 2000–2008’, *Journal of Southern African Studies* 39, no. 4 (2013): 863–83; Mali Zeric Kay Smith, “From Demons to Democrats”: Mali’s Student Movement 1991–1996’, *Review of African Political Economy* 24, no. 72 (1997): 249–63; and Zambia, M. Burawoy, ‘Consciousness and Contradiction: A Study of Student Protest in Zambia’, *British Journal of Sociology* 27, no. 1 (1976): 78–98.

⁸⁹ Aspinall and Weiss, ‘Understanding Student Activism’.

⁹⁰ Seymour Martin Lipset, ‘University Students and Politics in Underdeveloped Countries’, *Comparative Education Review* 10, no. 2 (1966): 134.

⁹¹ Hanna and Hanna, ‘Students as Elites’, 23; Altbach, ‘Perspectives on Student Political Activism’, 107–8; C.A. Rootes, ‘Student Radicalism: Politics of Moral Protest and Legitimation Problems of the Modern Capitalist State.’, *Theory and Society* 9, no. 3 (1980): 475–76; Altbach, ‘Students and Politics’.

⁹² For detailed accounts on the development of Indian higher education see J.P. Naik and Syed Nurullah, *A Students’ History of Education in India (1800–1973)*, Sixth Revised Edition (Delhi, 1974); Suresh Chandra Ghosh, *The History of Education in Modern India: 1757–2012*, Fourth Edition (Hyderabad: Orient Blackswan, 2019).

graduates. With a massive expansion of higher education during the late colonial period, and productive forces not being able to keep pace with the growing student body, students were by no means guaranteed jobs or social positions. Following independence, Commissions inquiring into higher education⁹³ noted the poor condition of students, both during their time at university and in their subsequent search for employment. Even Altbach, a champion of the idea of an “incipient elite” acknowledged that this was “less true in India than in the other developing countries”⁹⁴.

While not an “incipient elite”, students during the period under study were far from what has been called in the context of post-structural adjustment states in the 1980s and 1990s, “proletarianized”⁹⁵. Students in higher education in India, continued to be a small minority even within their age group, drawn primarily from different sections of the middle-class. They were a relatively economically, socially, and politically privileged group that was, as is evidenced in the thesis, treated with some limited deference by the state. Allegations of state repression against them had the potential of snowballing into wider protests, involving other sections, against governments. Students during this time cannot be viewed as either an incipient elite or proletarianised.

The focus of this study on student politics is not simply on students in general but also on the political divisions or groupings within the student body, which often come to be

⁹³ See *The Report of the University Education Commission 1949* (New Delhi: Ministry of Education, Government of India, 1962); D.S. Kothari, *Report of the Education Commission (1964-66): Education and National Development* (New Delhi: Ministry of Education, Government of India, 1966).

⁹⁴ Philip G. Altbach, *Student Politics in Bombay* (London: Asia Publishing House, 1968), 209.

⁹⁵ Silvia Federici, Constantine George Caffentzis, and Ousseina Alidou, eds., *A Thousand Flowers: Social Struggles Against Structural Adjustment in African Universities* (Africa World Press, 2000); Zeilig, *Revolt and Protest: Student Politics and Activism in Sub-Saharan Africa*.

reflected by student politicians and organisations. Being a multi-class group with uncertain future class affiliation, students have links with various classes, and are simultaneously open to the influence of ideas of these classes, resulting in fairly varied political tendencies. By recognising the relative strengths of the tendencies that an assessment regarding the political shifts in student politics can be made.

Further, the thesis considers the role of organisation as fundamental to the understanding both student politics and the Sangh. In terms of student politics in India, while there are a range of unorganised groups, alliances, committees, and individual leaders, active in student politics are also groups with shared ideas. Such groups or organisations often have a programme that defines their aims, worldview, and proposed course of action, as well as, a constitution that defines their structure, while laying out the rules and regulations to be abided by their members. The organisation of student politics in this way can potentially take place at multiple levels – at the primary level of a college or a university, at a regional or state-level with component units in various colleges and universities acting in an ostensibly coordinated manner, or at a national level with units in different states. These organisations are not to be confused with “student unions” which are official, statutory, and often elected representative bodies for whose control these organisations usually contest.

Student organisations differ also in the very form that their organisation takes. There are some which are exclusively student organisations, “autonomous” groups, either unitary or federal at various levels of higher education or region, that do not share any organisational links with non-student organisations. Others share ties with organisations of different classes and political parties, thus forming a part of a larger network of alliances. Through links to a larger political-organisational network there is

a possibility of what Mahiyaria⁹⁶ calls the “transferability of political gains” amongst these groups. Broadly, the “transferability of political gains” is taken to mean that gains made in any component of the political-organisational network can be “devoted to accruing gains in another”. Thus, student organisations if they are associated with the larger network, substantially increase their organisational, financial, mobilizational, and ideological potential. Equally, it is possible for such student organisations to contribute to the success of the political project in which the wider network is engaged. They do so by, among other things, linking students – an important section of the population – in an organised manner to the larger political network.

There are however different ways in which student organisations in India are incorporated into this network. They can be direct fronts of political parties, e.g., the NSUI for the Congress. They can also be independent organisations allied to the similarly independent yet partisan organisations- SFI’s relationship with different mass and class organisations. Being associated with the larger network in different ways, the nature and extent to which political gains are transferred, varies. The specific form taken can be determined by understanding the position of the student organisation in a particular political-organisational network. Therefore, in attempting to understand the role of student politics in the rise of Sangh, the organisational structure of the RSS and the Sangh, and the position of the ABVP within it are elaborated on in Chapter 4.

On use of terms and phrases

⁹⁶ Aparna Mahiyaria, ‘Right Wing and Street-Theatre: From Censure to Co-Option’, *Studies in Theatre and Performance* 41, no. 3 (2021): 305–20.

Before proceeding further, given the different ways in which certain other terms and phrases, some even with specific legal meanings, have been employed by the sources as well as the literature on the subject, it is necessary to note how they have been utilised in the thesis.

First, terms such as 'left' and 'progressive' which have been applied here to political tendencies, might appear odd to some readers and they deserve some explanation. These are not meant to be a value judgement on student politics; instead, they refer to an acknowledged tendency with specific characteristics in the Indian context. In referring to the existence or decline of left and progressive tendencies, the thesis is speaking of organisations, groups, and individual politicians that, within student politics were associated with politics challenging the established structures, hierarchies, and inequalities, of among others caste, class, and gender.

Second, the politics of Hindu authoritarianism has been variously referred to as 'Hindu Nationalism'⁹⁷, 'communalism'⁹⁸, 'religious nationalism'⁹⁹ or 'Hindu fundamentalism'¹⁰⁰. The reasons behind the choices of terminology are varied and often obscure. However, this is a vast debate far beyond the scope of the thesis. The primary focus in this thesis is the political-ideological project of the RSS, and its Sangh, i.e., the re-engineering, re-organisation, or re-construction of society for the establishment of a Hindu Rashtra. While many different terms have been assigned

⁹⁷ Shani, *Communalism, Caste and Hindu Nationalism: The Violence in Gujarat*; Nikita Sud, *Liberalization, Hindu Nationalism and the State: A Biography of Gujarat* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2012).

⁹⁸ Bipan Chandra, *Communalism in Modern India* (Har Anand Publications, 2008).

⁹⁹ Peter van der Veer, *Religious Nationalism: Hindus and Muslims in India* (University of California Press, 1994).

¹⁰⁰ Sumit Sarkar, *Beyond Nationalist Frames: Postmodernism, Hindu Fundamentalism, History* (Indiana University Press, 2002).

even to this, each with their distinct flavour, for the purpose of this thesis the political-ideological project of the Sangh is referred to as Hindutva.

Third, as noted earlier, Gujarat, as a state has existed only since 1 May 1960. While the thesis does not directly deal with happenings prior to state formation, it does refer back to and trace the history of political and educational developments in the then administratively divided segments. The term “Gujarat region” is used here to refer to the entire area that became the state of Gujarat in 1960, irrespective of contemporary political and administrative divisions.

Fourth, the terms- ‘arrest’ and ‘detain’ are used interchangeably in the press. Although these are terms with distinct legal meanings, the press often obscures the differences. It is possible to find, on many an occasion, detentions under sections of the law which do not allow for arrests at all, being referred to as such. Moreover, detentions would legally be required to be of a milder kind, typically not exceeding 24 hours. These should not be conflated with arrests that would be more severe on those whom they were meted out and would require much longer legal procedures. In this thesis, the terms are used, where possible, in their specific legal sense. This requires at times a re-interpretation of original source material, as will be clear.

Fifth, despite being one of the most commonly used terms in the study of modern societies it is almost impossible to arrive at a universally agreed upon definition of politics. With the Sangh’s the promotion of the ABVP as a non-political organisation¹⁰¹, it is necessary to distinguish the usage of politics and the political by the author and that by the Sangh. With respect to the thesis, similar to other works on politics in India,

¹⁰¹ See Chapter 4, Section III

the understanding of politics and the political is not restricted simply to partisan and electoral politics or governance and a set of institutions¹⁰². While including these, a much wider set of organisations, activities, and issues, including student politics, with the defining feature being their relationship with the state, are understood as having the potential of being political.

This is distinct from the usage of politics and political by the Sangh. As is discussed in Chapter 4, for the ABVP, in most cases, being “non-political” meant denying any links with the parliamentary projections of the Sangh- the BJS and the BJP¹⁰³. On occasion, participation in student union elections came to be considered as being political and in projecting a non-political image, the ABVP did not officially participate in them for certain periods of time. How the ABVP being a part of the Sangh makes it a partisan organisation and the duplicitous nature of the ABVP’s non-participation in student union elections is further elaborated in Chapter 4¹⁰⁴. Other activities and issues taken up by the ABVP even if they brought it directly into conflict with the state, of which numerous instances are subsequently discussed, were not considered to be political in the Sangh’s lexicon.

Section IV The Literature: Student Politics, Gujarat and Sangh

Student Politics

While there had been, prior to the 1960s, student uprisings and student involvement in mass movements, academic studies regarding these had been few and far between.

¹⁰² Rajni Kothari, *Politics and the People : In Search of a Humane India* (New Delhi: Ajanta Publications, 1989); Sudipta Kaviraj, ed., *Politics in India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997).

¹⁰³ See Chapter 4, Section III.

¹⁰⁴ See Chapter 4, Section III.

As Lipset, in the editorial of a special issue of *Comparative Education Review* on student politics in 1966, in all probability, the first of its kind, noted, “relatively little attention” had been paid to the “role of students as a dynamic force in educational and political change” and it was “Berkeley”¹⁰⁵ that “acted as a catalyst... for scholarly interest in student agitation and political organizations”¹⁰⁶. The 1960s saw a sudden growth of interest in student politics, accompanied by a slew of writing about the “student movement”. Attempts were made to understand the nature and causes of student protest, the causes for them and their potential for driving social and political change. For a while, student politics “stimulated an outpouring of analyses by social scientists, journalists, government commissions, and others”¹⁰⁷. Some observers argued that the working class, in advanced capitalist countries had lost its revolutionary potential as it had been co-opted into the capitalist system and students would now play the role of a vanguard class¹⁰⁸. Meanwhile, official commissions, particularly in the United States, attempted to understand and suggest remedies for “campus unrest”¹⁰⁹. A bibliography published in 1970 listed about 1800 works on student politics¹¹⁰ which gives a sense of the extent of the literature produced during this time. The interest, however, did not last very long. As student politics in advanced

¹⁰⁵ Berkeley refers to student protests over “free speech” at the University of California, Berkeley in 1964. For more see Robert Cohen, *Freedom’s Orator: Mario Savio and the Radical Legacy of the 1960s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

¹⁰⁶ Lipset, ‘Editorial’, 129.

¹⁰⁷ Altbach, ‘From Revolution to Apathy: American Student Activism in the 1970s’, 606.

¹⁰⁸ Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society* (Routledge and K. Paul, 1964); Rowntree and Rowntree, ‘The Political Economy of Youth: Youth as a Class’.

¹⁰⁹ See for instance, ‘Congress Looks at the Campus: The Brock Report on Student Unrest’, *AAUP Bulletin* 55, no. 3 (1969): 327–36.

¹¹⁰ Philip G. Altbach, ed., *The Student Revolution: A Global Analysis*, 1970.

capitalist countries dissipated by the mid-1970s, there was a “dramatic shift away from writing about students”¹¹¹.

This is not to suggest that no significant works on student politics were produced after its heydays in the Western academy. Literature did and does continue to be produced, albeit with much less alacrity, about students in different countries or regions. The peculiarity of this literature, however, is its insular nature. Barring some exceptions¹¹², important works and debates in the study of student politics have been rooted to certain nation-states, or regions at best. Other scholars have noted that there has been “relatively little theoretical or comparative research”¹¹³. It would not be incorrect to say that there is no “global literature” on student politics but only a variety of regional literatures.

A large amount of literature continues to be devoted to student politics in advanced capitalist countries. On student politics in the United States there are works such as Altbach and Peterson¹¹⁴ on early student politics, Cohen on student politics in the inter-war period¹¹⁵, Gitlin’s popular work focusing on 1968 in the United States¹¹⁶, Altbach and Cohen on the post-sixties transformation¹¹⁷ and Marshall on students in the civil rights movement in the early 1960s¹¹⁸. On Europe, there are major studies that focus

¹¹¹ Philip G. Altbach, ‘Introduction: Student Activism in the Seventies’, *Higher Education* 8, no. 6 (1979): 606.

¹¹² Eg. Boren, *Student Resistance: A History of the Unruly Subject*.

¹¹³ Aspinall and Weiss, ‘Understanding Student Activism’.

¹¹⁴ Altbach and Peterson, ‘Before Berkeley: Historical Perspectives on American Student Activism’.

¹¹⁵ Robert Cohen, *When the Old Left Was Young: Student Radicals and America’s First Mass Student Movement, 1929-1941* (Oxford University Press, 1993).

¹¹⁶ Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage*.

¹¹⁷ Philip G. Altbach and Robert Cohen, ‘American Student Activism: The Post-Sixties Transformation’, *The Journal of Higher Education* 61, no. 1 (1990): 32–49.

¹¹⁸ James P. Marshall, *Student Activism and Civil Rights in Mississippi: Protest Politics and the Struggle for Racial Justice, 1960-1965* (Louisiana State University Press, 2013).

on 1968 such as those by Tismaneanu¹¹⁹ as well as Klimke and Scharloth¹²⁰. With students playing a prominent role in the emergence of Australia's new Left, there are works devoted to student politics during the "long sixties"¹²¹ but there are also studies of later student movements and agitations¹²².

Some significant literature focuses on student politics in the global south. On student politics in Latin America there are early studies on university students¹²³ as well as more recent work on methods used to break student agitations in Puerto Rico¹²⁴, the politics of death in the student politics of Guatemala¹²⁵. Several studies have examined Mexican students' involvement in politics at various times¹²⁶. Regarding East Asia, there are significant studies on the student movement of 1973 in Thailand¹²⁷, numerous works that examine different periods and aspects of student politics in Indonesia¹²⁸ and an important edited volume on student politics which includes works

¹¹⁹ Vladamir Tismaneanu, ed., *Promises of 1968: Crisis, Illusion and Utopia* (CEU Press, 2011).

¹²⁰ Klimke and Scharloth, *1968 in Europe: A History of Protest and Activism, 1956-1977*.

¹²¹ Lewis D'AVIGDOR, 'Participatory Democracy and New Left Student Movements: The University of Sydney, 1973-1979', *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 61, no. 2 (2015): 233–47.

¹²² Tim Briedis, "'I'm Never Coming Back from That Trip': The 1994 ANU Occupation and Student Protest Beyond the 1960s", *Journal of Australian Studies* 43, no. 2 (2019): 188–202.

¹²³ Arthus Liebman, Kenneth N. Walker, and Myron Glazer, *Latin American University Students: A Six Nation Study* (Harvard University Press, 1972).

¹²⁴ Meather Vrana, 'Revolutionary Transubstantiation in "The Republic of Students": Death Commemoration in Urban Guatemala from 1977 to the Present', *Radical History Review*, no. 114 (Fall 2012): 66–90.

¹²⁵ Vrana, 'Revolutionary Transubstantiation in "The Republic of Students": Death Commemoration in Urban Guatemala from 1977 to the Present'.

¹²⁶ Sloan, 'Revolution on the National Stage: Mexico, the PRI, and the Student Movement in 1968'.

¹²⁷ Ruth-Inge Heinze, 'Ten Days in October – Students vs. the Military: An Account of the Student Uprising in Thailand', *Asian Survey* 14, no. 6 (1974): 491–508; Robert Zimmerman, 'Student "Revolution" in Thailand: The End of the Thai Bureaucratic Polity?', *Asian Survey* 14, no. 6 (1974): 509–29.

¹²⁸ Sapiie, 'Student Activism and Strategic Identity: The Anti-Communist Student Action Front (KAMI) in West Java, Indonesia, 1965-1966'; Peter Lang Ag, Chapter Author, and Peter Lang, 'Chapter Title : Intellectual Identity and Student Dissent in Indonesia in the 1970s Intellectual Identity and Student Dissent in Indonesia in the 1970s', 2017; Douglas, *Political Socialization and Student Activism in Indonesia*.

on most major nations and territories of the region¹²⁹. With students playing a particularly important role not only in the anti-colonial struggles but also in the post-independence periods in numerous African nations, a relatively large amount of academic interest has been generated. There are important works on student involvement in African politics¹³⁰, in Egypt between the 20s and 70s¹³¹, on the changing perception of students in Mali¹³² and student protest in Zambia¹³³. More contemporary works include Hodgkinson¹³⁴ who examines the part played by students in opposition politics in Zimbabwe through a unique gender lens and Zeilig's broadly Marxist study on students in sub-Saharan Africa¹³⁵. Federici et al.¹³⁶ focus on the student politics of the period after Structural Adjustment and attempt to counter the criticism of it being "corporatist". Mann focuses on Sudan in the late 2000s to understand how marketisation and development of higher education changed the role and function of the university with it no longer being the breeding ground for political elites¹³⁷. Hodgkinson's work on student politics in post-2000 Zimbabwe utilises the concept of 'political studenthood' to explain how students were not passive participants

¹²⁹ Meredith L. Weiss and Edward Aspinall, eds., *Student Activism in Asia: Between Protest and Powerlessness* (University of Minnesota Press, 2012).

¹³⁰ W.J. Hanna, *University Students and African Politics* (New York: Holmes & Meir Publishers, 1975).

¹³¹ Abdalla, *The Student Movement and National Politics in Egypt: 1923-1973*.

¹³² Smith, "From Demons to Democrats": Mali's Student Movement 1991-1996'.

¹³³ Burawoy, 'Consciousness and Contradiction: A Study of Student Protest in Zambia'.

¹³⁴ Hodgkinson, 'The "Hardcore" Student Activist: The Zimbabwe National Students Union (ZINASU), State Violence, and Frustrated Masculinity, 2000-2008'.

¹³⁵ Zeilig, *Revolt and Protest: Student Politics and Activism in Sub-Saharan Africa*.

¹³⁶ Federici, Caffentzis, and Alidou, *A Thousand Flowers: Social Struggles Against Structural Adjustment in African Universities*.

¹³⁷ Laura Mann, 'Wasta! The Long-Term Implications of Education Expansion and Economic Liberalisation on Politics in Sudan', *Review of African Political Economy* 41, no. 142 (2014): 561-78.

in the changes taking place in higher education but actively contesting the subjectivities that were being created for them¹³⁸.

Important as these studies are, the contexts of their inquiries are vastly different from that of the present thesis. There are major differences in terms of politics and economic structures and systems and the trajectory of their development in India. The historical development of higher education and with it that of the student section and student politics is also drastically different from those of the studies mentioned above. Thus, while they are significant contributions to the understanding of students, higher education and student politics in Africa, their conclusions are not directly relevant to the present thesis.

Within the literature, students have frequently been assumed to be an inherently progressive section, left-wing¹³⁹, anti-status quo¹⁴⁰, oppositional¹⁴¹, and anti-establishment¹⁴². Historically, however, as different works have recognised, this was not the case. In East Asia, students ran the “gamut from stridently socialist to right wing, religiously identified, ethnicist, and more”¹⁴³. In Germany, even before the Nazis came to power, by 1931, they had a majority in student councils in most German universities. The German Students’ Union was the first national organisation that fell

¹³⁸ D. Hodgkinson, ‘Remaking Political Studenthood: Zimbabwean Student Activism during the 2000s “Crisis”’, in *The Oxford Handbook of Zimbabwean Politics*, ed. Miles Tendi, JoAnn McGregor, and Jocelyn Alexander (Oxford University Press), accessed 1 April 2023, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198805472.001.0001>.

¹³⁹ Zewde, *The Quest for Socialist Utopia: The Ethiopian Student Movement, 1960-1974*. Lipset, ‘Editorial’; Seymour Martin Lipset, *Rebellion in the University* (Little, Brown and Company, 1972).

¹⁴⁰ Lipset, *Rebellion in the University*.

¹⁴¹ Burawoy, ‘Consciousness and Contradiction: A Study of Student Protest in Zambia’; Aspinall and Weiss, ‘Understanding Student Activism’; Boren, *Student Resistance: A History of the Unruly Subject*.

¹⁴² Altbach, ‘Student Politics in the Third World’; E. Shils, ‘Indian Students: Sadhus Rather than Philistines’, *Encounter* 17, no. 3 (1961): 16.

¹⁴³ Aspinall and Weiss, ‘Understanding Student Activism’, 19.

to the Nazis¹⁴⁴. Conservative religious movements also played an important role in Pakistan from the 1970s onwards; a significant number of students attracted to Islamic revivalist movements¹⁴⁵; similarly, in Egypt, students were prominent supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood immediately after the World War II¹⁴⁶.

The characterisation of students as having an inherent predilection for certain political tendencies has had an influence on the literature on student politics. As Aspinall and Weiss, self critically note, works on student politics “may tend to privilege comparatively radical and/or leftist” ones¹⁴⁷. There do exist a few important studies on right-wing student politics, and in the German context, we have the works of Giles¹⁴⁸ whose focus is particularly on Nazi student politics, Steinberg¹⁴⁹ who traces the history of German student politics from the student fraternities of the nineteenth century to the Nazi takeover, Karl¹⁵⁰ and Zorn¹⁵¹ who compare student politics of the 1960s and 1970s with that of the Weimar years. These are in addition to studies of “white collar fundamentalism” in Nigeria¹⁵², the anti-communist students in Indonesia¹⁵³, fascist

¹⁴⁴ Geoffrey J. Giles, *Students and National Socialism in Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985).

¹⁴⁵ Matthew J. Nelson, ‘Embracing the Ummah: Student Politics beyond State Power in Pakistan’, *Modern Asian Studies* 45, no. 3 (2011): 565–96.

¹⁴⁶ Altbach, ‘Student Politics in the Third World’, 649.

¹⁴⁷ Aspinall and Weiss, ‘Understanding Student Activism’, 19.

¹⁴⁸ Geoffrey J. Giles, ‘University Government in Nazi Germany: Hamburg’, *Minerva* 16, no. 2 (1978): 196–221; Giles, *Students and National Socialism in Germany*.

¹⁴⁹ Michael Stephen Steinberg, *Sabers and Brown Shirts: The German Students’ Path to National Socialism, 1918-1935* (University of Chicago Press, 1977).

¹⁵⁰ W. Karl, ‘Students and the Youth Movement in Germany: Attempt at a Structural Comparison’, *Journal of Contemporary History* 5, no. 1 (1970): 113–27.

¹⁵¹ Wolfgang Zorn, ‘Student Politics in the Weimar Republic’, *Journal of Contemporary History* 5, no. 1 (1970): 128–43.

¹⁵² Obadare, ‘White-Collar Fundamentalism: Interrogating Youth Religiosity on Nigerian University Campuses’.

¹⁵³ Sapiie, ‘Student Activism and Strategic Identity: The Anti-Communist Student Action Front (KAMI) in West Java, Indonesia, 1965-1966’.

groups in Italian universities¹⁵⁴ and pan-Islamist student organisations in Pakistan¹⁵⁵. As a study of student politics that was frequently right-wing and pro-status quo, this thesis builds on these earlier studies.

An influential branch in the literature, beginning with Lipset and Altbach, who pioneered this approach, to more recent works of Weiss and Aspinall, has sought to understand the factors that enable students to play a direct role in politics or 'have a substantial political impact'¹⁵⁶ in 'third world'¹⁵⁷ or 'underdeveloped'¹⁵⁸ countries. The arguments made by some of the works of this category are summarised here.

It was claimed that in the third world, there was a "lack of established political institutions and structures"¹⁵⁹, political systems were "poorly institutionalised"¹⁶⁰ and less "dense"- the mass media were weaker, parliamentary systems "often ineffective or non-existent" and the "myriad of interest groups typically found in the western industrial nations" were missing¹⁶¹. It was thought to be easier for an "organised group" such as students to "have a direct impact on politics"¹⁶². Further, because students were involved in anti-colonial struggles, "the political tradition [of student rebellion] then engendered" had "persisted into independence"¹⁶³. They were recognised as a "part of the political system" and students were "expected to participate in politics and

¹⁵⁴ Luca La Rovere, 'Fascist Groups in Italian Universities: An Organization at the Service of the Totalitarian State', *Journal of Contemporary History* 34, no. 3 (1999): 457–75.

¹⁵⁵ Nelson, 'Embracing the Ummah: Student Politics beyond State Power in Pakistan'; Iqbal Haider Butt, *Revisiting Student Politics in Pakistan* (BARGAD, 2009).

¹⁵⁶ Aspinall and Weiss, 'Understanding Student Activism', 4.

¹⁵⁷ Altbach, 'Student Politics in the Third World'.

¹⁵⁸ Lipset, 'University Students and Politics in Underdeveloped Countries'.

¹⁵⁹ Altbach, 'Student Politics in the Third World', 650; Altbach, 'Perspectives on Student Political Activism', 107.

¹⁶⁰ Philip G. Altbach, 'At Large: Student Power: Politics and Revolution', *Change* 31, no. 5 (1999): 57.

¹⁶¹ Altbach, 'Student Politics in the Third World', 637.

¹⁶² Altbach, 'Student Politics in the Third World', 651.

¹⁶³ Lipset, 'University Students and Politics in Underdeveloped Countries', 134.

activism”¹⁶⁴. Students were, considered to be “prospective members of the elite”¹⁶⁵ or an “incipient elite”¹⁶⁶. They were, supposed to be a “uniquely mobilisable group”¹⁶⁷ because of the concentration of students in a university campus¹⁶⁸. They were also, it was argued, one of the few “politically articulate” groups in third world societies and were the “conscience” of their societies¹⁶⁹. Students were supposed to be under “the pull of modern ideas” and the largest “Western-oriented” groups in developing countries¹⁷⁰. All these factors were said to contribute to the political potency of students. These generalisations inform recent scholarship¹⁷¹ and have also had an impact on the study of student politics in India being repeated frequently in the influential works by Altbach¹⁷²¹⁷³, Weiner¹⁷⁴ and Hazary¹⁷⁵.

Insights of this literature are likely relevant in the African or Southeast Asian context; they are, however, not applicable to India. First, post-independence political institutions and structures in India cannot be characterised as being less “dense” or “poorly institutionalised”- there was a strong media, effective parliamentary systems and numerous strong unions and organisations of different sections of the population. Second, following independence students were not “expected” to participate in politics

¹⁶⁴ Altbach, ‘Student Politics in the Third World’, 650–51; Altbach, ‘Perspectives on Student Political Activism’, 107–8; Altbach, ‘At Large: Student Power: Politics and Revolution’, 57.

¹⁶⁵ Lipset, ‘University Students and Politics in Underdeveloped Countries’, 134.

¹⁶⁶ Hanna and Hanna, ‘Students as Elites’, 23; Rootes, ‘Student Radicalism: Politics of Moral Protest and Legitimation Problems of the Modern Capitalist State.’

¹⁶⁷ Altbach, ‘Student Politics in the Third World’, 638.

¹⁶⁸ Altbach, ‘At Large: Student Power: Politics and Revolution’.

¹⁶⁹ Altbach, ‘Perspectives on Student Political Activism’, 107–8.

¹⁷⁰ Altbach, ‘The Transformation of the Indian Student Movement’.

¹⁷¹ Aspinall and Weiss, ‘Understanding Student Activism’.

¹⁷² Altbach, ‘The Transformation of the Indian Student Movement’; Altbach, ‘Student Politics and Higher Education in India’.

¹⁷³ 1966, 1968

¹⁷⁴ Myron Weiner, *The Politics of Scarcity: Public Pressure and Political Response in India* (Asia Publishing House, 1963).

¹⁷⁵ Hazary, *Student Politics in India*.

but quite to the contrary, as Mazumdar has noted, student participation in politics was considered undesirable¹⁷⁶. Third, as discussed earlier, at no point were students in independent India, while being a minority, an “incipient elite”¹⁷⁷. Fourth, even the argument regarding the unique mobilisation potential of student because of co-residence does not hold in the present context. In Gujarat, higher education was almost entirely a non-residential affair and there was only one residential university in the state. GU, by far the largest university, throughout the period, had very limited residential facilities. Fifth, far from being considered the ‘conscience’ of society, students were, as noted in Chapter 3 an undisciplined group that needed to be controlled¹⁷⁸. Sixth, to consider students a “Western-oriented” group with “modern” ideas would also be completely inaccurate. Students and student groups prescribing to traditional conservative ideas are a significant part of student politics that is examined by the thesis. The conclusions of this literature regarding what enables students to play direct roles in politics are, thus, not applicable to the present context. Additionally, as is subsequently noted, between 1967 and 1985 in Gujarat it was also not the case that students were extraordinarily politically active as compared to other groups and classes.

In the case of India, it bears emphasising that much of the literature on student politics was produced prior to 1975. The attempt in many early works was to understand “student indiscipline”, assign causes for it and provide solutions, in the process making numerous generalisations about students and student politics. Thus, Shils in an early

¹⁷⁶ Surajit Mazumdar, ‘The Post-Independence History of Student Movements in India and the Ongoing Protests’, *Postcolonial Studies* 22, no. 1 (2019): 16–29.

¹⁷⁷ See Introduction, Section II

¹⁷⁸ See Chapter 3, Section IV

and extremely influential work argued that with the expansion of education there were more students from “rural backgrounds” and from sections that had “less of the traditional, indigenous, or Westernised respect for learning” and it was these students that were more eager to participate in politics and cause unrest¹⁷⁹. He also asserted the importance of “sexual vacuum” to the recurrence of student unrest, suggesting that because Indian students had a mind which could not “attach itself to intellectual objects” and “a libido” which was “prevented from attaching itself to sexual objects” they took the direction of “rebellion, blind, causeless rebellion”¹⁸⁰. Similarly for Di Bona, the most successful student leaders were the ones from “agrarian backgrounds” who were “at odds with the entire nature of Indian higher education”¹⁸¹ and for Satya Sundaram student unrest was the outcome of “sexual problems” and an “inherent aggressiveness” of “juveniles”¹⁸². In contrast Reddy argued against considering students from rural areas and from sections that were “not used to respecting learning” as “responsible for unrest among the students”¹⁸³. For Weiner the “indiscipline” was a reflection of a “breakdown in communication”¹⁸⁴ between students and educational authorities. Andersen and Pant attributed students’ “disposition towards violence” to their “inability to cope with a new environment”¹⁸⁵.

¹⁷⁹ Shils, ‘Indian Students: Sadhus Rather than Philistines’, 16.

¹⁸⁰ Shils, ‘Indian Students: Sadhus Rather than Philistines’, 20.

¹⁸¹ J. Di Bona, ‘Indiscipline and Student Leadership in an Indian University’, *Comparative Education Review* 10, no. 2 (1966): 317.

¹⁸² I. Satya Sundaram, *Student Unrest in India* (Machilipatnam: Sree Nandini Press, 1976).

¹⁸³ P.H. Reddy, ‘Indian Student Rebellion: Some Neglected Factors’, *Economic and Political Weekly* 4, no. 7 (1969): 357–60.

¹⁸⁴ Weiner, *The Politics of Scarcity: Public Pressure and Political Response in India*, 172.

¹⁸⁵ Walter Andersen and Alok Pant, ‘Student Politics at Allahabad University. I’, *Economic and Political Weekly* 5, no. 23 (1970): 910–16.

Amongst those that wrote about student politics in India, it was Altbach who maintained a consistent interest and produced multiple works that remain influential. For Altbach the “student movement” in India could be divided into two phases, before and after independence¹⁸⁶. During the first phase, students were supposed to have taken an active part in the “political life of the nation” through participation in the national movement. Student politics was “outward looking”, “using the campus as a base of operations and recruitment” but “aiming their agitational campaigns at issues in the broader society”¹⁸⁷. The militancy of pre-independence student politics was attributed mainly to the “small and homogenous student community”, “educational emphasis on liberal arts” and “high status after graduation”¹⁸⁸. Compared to this, during the second phase, it was asserted that the student movement had “all but collapsed” and that the major pre-independence student organisations had lost their grip over the student community. With independence, student politics had lost its *raison d’être*. Moreover, the attitude of the Congress towards student participation in politics also changed, and as broader segments of the population being brought into higher education had meant that the student body had lost its homogeneity and there were those who lacked a tradition of political activism¹⁸⁹. These were supposed to be the factors that explained the absence of mass student organisations and the focus on local issues in Indian student politics¹⁹⁰. As Surajit Mazumdar notes, however, such

¹⁸⁶ Altbach, ‘The Transformation of the Indian Student Movement’.

¹⁸⁷ Philip G. Altbach, ‘Student Movements in Historical Perspective: The Asian Case’, *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 1, no. 1 (1970): 75.

¹⁸⁸ Altbach, ‘The Transformation of the Indian Student Movement’, 452.

¹⁸⁹ Altbach, ‘Student Politics and Higher Education in India’, 262.

¹⁹⁰ Altbach, ‘Student Politics in the Third World’.

generalisations, although they “may contain more than a grain of truth” are “incomplete even as descriptions of concrete reality and are not very illuminating analytically”¹⁹¹.

A newer literature has arisen in recent years focusing on contemporary student politics in India. One example is Jeffery’s work on how ‘class’ was constituted among students in western UP around the early 2000s¹⁹². The past few years have seen a resurgence in interest in student politics perhaps inspired by events at elite universities in early 2016¹⁹³. This work has focused on trends in student politics after 2014¹⁹⁴, the *Hokkolorob* movement at JU, Kolkata¹⁹⁵, “minority, agency and voice” in student protests at Delhi in early 2016¹⁹⁶, aspects of contemporary JNU student politics¹⁹⁷, protests in public universities focus on the events at JNU and HCU in 2016¹⁹⁸ as well as on the “university as a site of resistance” focusing on the Telangana Movement and agitations at JNU and HCU¹⁹⁹.

This thesis benefits from the insights and analytic approaches of the recent literature, but it returns to examine the earlier period. To a large extent, the period prior to 1985 differed fundamentally from what followed, making it awkward to apply today’s analytic

¹⁹¹ Mazumdar, ‘The Post-Independence History of Student Movements in India and the Ongoing Protests’.

¹⁹² Craig Jeffrey, ‘Timepass: Youth, Class, and Time among Unemployed Young Men in India’, *American Ethnologist* 37, no. 3 (2010): 465–81; Jeffery, *Timepass: Youth, Class, and the Politics of Waiting in India*.

¹⁹³ See Epilogue and Conclusions, page 397, for more.

¹⁹⁴ Suman Gupta, ‘Postcolonial Studies Indian Student Protests and the Nationalist-Neoliberal Nexus’, 2019.

¹⁹⁵ Supriya Chaudhuri, ‘On Making Noise: Hokkolorob and Its Place in Indian Student Movements’, *Postcolonial Studies* 22, no. 1 (2019): 44–58.

¹⁹⁶ Rosinka Chaudhuri, ‘Questions of Minority, Agency and Voice: Student Protests in India in 2016’, *Postcolonial Studies* 21, no. 3 (2018): 338–49.

¹⁹⁷ Jean-Thomas Martelli, ‘The Spillovers of Competition: Value-Based Activism and Political Cross-Fertilization in an Indian Campus.’, *South Asia Multidisciplinary Academic Journal*, no. 22 (2019).

¹⁹⁸ Pramod Nayar, ‘Public Protest, Public Pedagogy and the Publicness of the Public University’, *Postcolonial Studies* 22, no. 1 (2019): 30–43.

¹⁹⁹ Gaurav Pathania, *The University as a Site of Resistance: Identity and Student Politics* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2018).

frame. The implementation of the National Education Policy from 1985 onwards and the economic liberalisation completely changed the landscape of higher education in India. Students were confronted with different concerns, questions and issues that necessarily had an impact on student politics. With this being the case, the recent studies on contemporary student politics are of limited relevance to the present thesis. The thesis is a contribution to the literature on student politics of the period prior to 1985, which is currently limited to primarily contemporary or near contemporary analyses.

Student Politics and the Sangh

The focus of works on student politics in the colonial period in India is typically on left or nationalist student organisations with students during this time overwhelmingly seen as progressive or an “adjunct” of the national movement²⁰⁰. Studies have covered most major student endeavours related to the anti-colonial and left movements beginning with the first participation of students in protests in the late nineteenth century and including the Swadeshi Movement²⁰¹, Non-Cooperation²⁰² and Quit India²⁰³. Research has also described their participation in socialist organisations like

²⁰⁰ R.K. Roy, *Scholar Rebels: Gandhian Nationalism and the Emergence of Student Politics in Bengal: 1920 – 44* (Kolkata: Progressive Publishers, 2013).

²⁰¹ Roy, *Scholar Rebels: Gandhian Nationalism and the Emergence of Student Politics in Bengal: 1920 – 44*; V.S. Nair, *Swadeshi Movement: The Beginnings of Student Unrest in South India* (New Delhi: Mittal Publications, 1985).

²⁰² Sumit Sarkar, *Modern India*, Ninth Edition (New Delhi: Pearson, 2014).

²⁰³ Rajimwale, *History of Student Movement in India: Origins and Development (1920-1947)*.

the *Naujawan Bharat Sabha*²⁰⁴, revolutionary terrorism²⁰⁵, the formation and splits in all India student organisations, particularly the AISF²⁰⁶.

The focus on progressive student groups of different kinds, with this being the pre-dominant form of student politics, is to an extent justified, it was still the case that there was still a sizeable section of the student body which was neither left nor nationalist. We are told that since its foundation the RSS had a “strong element of student support”²⁰⁷, it was also given its own building inside the BHU campus in 1938²⁰⁸, after the Quit India movement both Muslim and Hindu communal organisations including the RSS are supposed to have been “quite active among the students”²⁰⁹, there were also other Hindu nationalist student organisations like the Hindu Rashtriya Sena and the Hindu Students’ Federation²¹⁰ which existed at the time and it has been noted that as early as 1947, RSS backed candidates won student union elections in Allahabad University²¹¹. The existence of such groups or political tendencies within the pre-independence student body are, however, noted only in passing by most academic studies dealing with the period and we know very little about their organisation, demands and activities.

²⁰⁴ S.K. Mittal, ‘The Role of Meerut College in the Freedom Struggle of India’, *Social Scientist* 7, no. 4 (1978): 35–56; S.K. Mittal and I. Habib, ‘Towards Independence and Socialist Republic: Naujawan Bharat Sabha: Part One’, *Social Scientist* 8, no. 2 (1979): 18–29; S.K. Mittal and I. Habib, ‘Towards Independence and Socialist Republic: Naujawan Bharat Sabha: Part Two’, *Social Scientist* 8, no. 2 (1979): 31–40.

²⁰⁵ Sarkar, *Modern India*.

²⁰⁶ Rajimwale, *History of Student Movement in India: Origins and Development (1920-1947)*.

²⁰⁷ Altbach, ‘The Transformation of the Indian Student Movement’, 449.

²⁰⁸ Anil Baran Ray, *Students and Politics in India: The Role of Caste, Language, and Region in an Indian University* (South Asia Books, 1978), 28.

²⁰⁹ Altbach, *Student Politics in Bombay*.

²¹⁰ Altbach, ‘The Transformation of the Indian Student Movement’, 451; Altbach, *Student Politics in Bombay*, 19.

²¹¹ J. Di Bona, ‘Elite and Mass in Indian Higher Education: The Case of Allahabad University’, in *Turmoil and Transition: Higher Education and Students Politics in India*, ed. Philip G. Altbach (New York: Basic Books, 1969), 314.

Following independence, right-wing student politics, especially that which was close to the Sangh, became increasingly important, however, the academic literature produced on the subject is scant, at best. Some early studies recognised a new trend of “popular nationalism” based on “cow worship, vegetarianism, respect for parents, and caste” at Allahabad University in the 1950s²¹². The ABVP was noted to have participated in elections there as part of alliance that was supportive of the BJS in the late 1960s²¹³, Oommen²¹⁴ noted the significant support the ABVP had at Delhi University (DU) in the early 1970s and Jayaram in his piece mentioned the role of the ABVP in the Bihar Movement as well as in clashes with Naxal student groups in Hyderabad²¹⁵. For none of these works however, was this form of student politics the primary focus.

It was only Altbach and Ray who paid somewhat greater attention to the Sangh. Ray, in his study on the multiple agitations at BHU between 1955 and 1966 argued that the popularity of the RSS and ABVP at BHU, could to a large extent be attributed to the government’s efforts to “depoliticise” students by dissolving the student union which ended up creating a “political vacuum” that was filled by the ABVP and the RSS “with its convenient location on the university campus”²¹⁶. In Altbach’s work²¹⁷, the ABVP was mentioned as being “one of the most important” student organisations in India at

²¹² Di Bona, ‘Elite and Mass in Indian Higher Education: The Case of Allahabad University’, 317.

²¹³ Walter Andersen and Alok Pant, ‘Student Politics at Allahabad University. II’, *Economic and Political Weekly* 5, no. 24 (1970): 942.

²¹⁴ T. K. Oommen, *Student Unions in India: An Introduction* (New Delhi: Vishwa Yuvak Kendra, 1970).

²¹⁵ N. Jayaram, ‘Sadhus No Longer: Recent Trends in Indian Student Activism’, *Higher Education* 8, no. 6 (1979): 683–99.

²¹⁶ Ray, *Students and Politics in India: The Role of Caste, Language, and Region in an Indian University*, 180.

²¹⁷ Philip G. Altbach, “Rightist Swing Among Indian Students: The Vidyarthi Parishad and the Indian Student Movement,” *Peace News*, No. 1493 (February 5, 1965) unavailable even with the author.

the time²¹⁸. He noted that while the ABVP attempted to maintain that it was a “non-political organisation” with a focus on “social service and cultural activity”, the “communalist views” of “many” of its members were “evident”²¹⁹. In his study of student politics in Bombay he noted that the organisation was “clearly political” with a “number of right wing political leaders” having “acknowledged their debt” to the ABVP²²⁰. Although, their works contain some relevant insights, the period covered by both Ray and Altbach ends around 1968.

The task of understanding the role of the Sangh in student politics, the functioning or organisation of the student front of the Sangh, or the role of students in furthering its political project particularly after 1968 was, never taken up. This is significant because, it was only after this that the Sangh and the ABVP were forced to involve themselves overtly and publicly in student politics, due to a number of factors.

This leaves only a minor literature on the Sangh and its involvement in student politics – primarily works produced by academics closely involved with it. Much of this literature blurs into the self-portrayal of the movement. It draws on interviews with members of the Sangh or uncritically reproduces information from Sangh sources²²¹. This thesis relies on a broader range of source material, including historical texts, to provide a more fully documented account of the Sangh’s involvement in student politics. By doing so, it contributes both to the literature on student politics and to literature on the Sangh itself, as discussed below.

²¹⁸ Altbach, ‘The Transformation of the Indian Student Movement’.

²¹⁹ Altbach, ‘The Transformation of the Indian Student Movement’, 456–57.

²²⁰ Altbach, *Student Politics in Bombay*, 155–60.

²²¹ Andersen and Damle, *The Brotherhood in Saffron: The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and Hindu Revivalism*; Binodinand Jha, *Student Organizations and Politics: A Case Study of the Akhil Bhartiya Vidharthi Parishad* (New Delhi: Inter-India Publications, 1998).

The Sangh

A vast amount of literature is devoted to the study of the Sangh and Hindu nationalist politics. Works like Sharma²²², Zavos²²³ and Gould²²⁴ focus on different aspects of the development of Hindu Nationalism in the colonial period. There are studies which focus on the various constituents of the Sangh such as Kanungo²²⁵ on the RSS and its politics, Baxter²²⁶ on the BJS, Sarkar and Butalia²²⁷ on women in the Sangh as well as a volume edited by Jaffrelot which includes studies regarding numerous Sangh affiliates²²⁸. Some works focus on particular regions or states such as Jaffrelot on Central India (specifically Madhya Pradesh)²²⁹ and Brass on North India²³⁰. Those that explore the Sangh's interventions and relationship with politics include Corbridge and Harriss²³¹ who view the rise of the Sangh as an "elite revolt" as well as the works like

²²² Sharma, *Hindutva: Exploring the Idea of Hindu Nationalism*.

²²³ John Zavos, *The Emergence of Hindu Nationalism in India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000).

²²⁴ William Gould, *Hindu Nationalism and the Language of Politics in Late Colonial India* (Cambridge University Press, 2004).

²²⁵ Kanungo, *RSS's Tryst with Politics: From Hedgewar to Sudarshan*.

²²⁶ C Baxter, *The Jana Sangh: A Biography of an Indian Political Party* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1969).

²²⁷ Tanika Sarkar and Urvashi Butalia, *Women and Right-Wing Movements: Indian Experiences* (Zed Books, 1995).

²²⁸ C. Jaffrelot, ed., *The Sangh Parivar: A Reader* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005).

²²⁹ C. Jaffrelot, *The Hindu Nationalist Movement and Indian Politics, 1925 to the 1990s: Strategies of Identity-Building, Implantation and Mobilisation (with Special Reference to Central India)* (London: Hurst, 1996).

²³⁰ P.R. Brass, *Theft of an Idol: Text and Context in the Representation of Collective Violence* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).

²³¹ S Corbridge and J Harriss, *Reinventing India: Liberalization, Hindu Nationalism and Popular Democracy* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000).

Varshney²³², Sarkar²³³ and Brass²³⁴ who explore the violent manifestations of the Sangh's politics.

However, even within such a wide variety of studies on the Sangh that cover every important aspect and frontal organisation, the Sangh's projection into student politics as also the role of student politics and its relationship with the Sangh have remained largely unexplored. This is perhaps the case because of a combination of factors. As is discussed in Chapter 4, the Sangh goes through great pains to project the image of the ABVP as a non-political organisation with a difference. The lack of scholarly focus could be viewed as a success of this strategy of appearing innocuous while still contributing to the Sangh's development. While the Sangh has been involved in student politics almost since its inception and students have played a role in its survival and development at critical junctures²³⁵, they have often not been visible components of its rise. Therefore, perhaps, students have generated interest than more immediate causes such as communal rioting. Alongside these, the general tendency to view students and student politics as inherently progressive could also be seen as contributing to the absence of literature on the Sangh and student politics. These speculations could be further substantiated through research focusing on the nature of academic enquiry into the Sangh.

²³² Ashutosh Varshney, *Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life: Hindus and Muslims in India* (Yale University Press, 2002).

²³³ Sumit Sarkar, 'The Fascism of the Sangh Parivar', *Economic And Political Weekly* 28, no. 5 (30 January 1993): 163–67.

²³⁴ Brass, P.R., *The Production of Hindu-Muslim Violence in Contemporary India* (University of Washington Press, 2005).

²³⁵ See Chapter 4, Section

It must be recognised that the thesis does not have as its sole focus the organisation and politics of the all-India ABVP. It is also not a study of the overall relationship of the Sangh with students and student politics on a national scale. This being the case, how the larger field of study of the Sangh and the Hindu Right might be affected by the inclusion of students and student politics are important questions that extend beyond the practical scope and the central focus of this thesis and may be explored by other wider studies concerned with understanding the national level ABVP, its organisation and relationship with the Sangh, the functioning of the ABVP in the states, as also the Sangh's disparate other interventions in student politics over a longer period of time.

Given this however, the present thesis does contribute to the literature on the Sangh and student politics²³⁶ as also the existing work on the Sangh's affiliates²³⁷ and the Sangh's rise in Gujarat²³⁸. It lays out broadly the manner in which the Sangh seeks to project the ABVP as an organisation with a difference, questions some of the claims of the Sangh with respect to the ABVP's history, and attempts to understand, in the specific context of Gujarat how and in what manner student politics aided the rise of the Sangh. In doing so, it endeavours to be a starting point for further exploration into different aspects of the ABVP and Sangh's strategy and tactics as well as into the potential role played by student politics in aiding the Sangh's rise in other contexts.

²³⁶ Altbach, *Student Politics in Bombay*; Di Bona, 'Elite and Mass in Indian Higher Education: The Case of Allahabad University'; Ray, *Students and Politics in India: The Role of Caste, Language, and Region in an Indian University*.

²³⁷ Jaffrelot, *The Sangh Parivar: A Reader*.

²³⁸ Ghanshyam Shah, 'BJP's Rise to Power', *Economic And Political Weekly* 31, no. 2/3 (13 January 1996): 165-167+169-170; Shani, *Communalism, Caste and Hindu Nationalism: The Violence in Gujarat*.

Within the literature on the Sangh, there are some works that are particularly relevant to the thesis. First, there are studies which seek to counter the narratives propagated by the Sangh and to expose those aspects of its organisation, ideology and functioning that it attempts to keep secret. The work of former RSS member, D.R. Goyal, reveals a number of aspects of the Sangh's functioning and also includes sections of the RSS Constitution, which is still not readily available²³⁹. The work of Islam based on RSS and other Sangh documents counter numerous myths propagated by the Sangh²⁴⁰. Noorani's study goes into detail in examining the link between the RSS and the BJP and the "division of labour" between these organisations in furthering their political project²⁴¹. Even in these works, however, the Sangh's claims regarding the ABVP remain largely unexamined.

Second, there are studies that explore the organisational structure and functioning of the Sangh. Ahmad has written on the important role played by the different frontal organisations of the Sangh in the furthering its political project²⁴². Kanungo sets out in great detail the organisational structure, functioning and hierarchy of the RSS²⁴³. Mahiyaria introduces the concept of transferability of political gains, in trying to understand how the Sangh gained organisationally from interventions in Delhi University street theatre, between 2015 and 2017²⁴⁴. The thesis relies on the literature

²³⁹ Goyal, *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh*.

²⁴⁰ Shamsul Islam, *RSS Primer Based on Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh Documents* (New Delhi: Pharos, 2014).

²⁴¹ A. G. Noorani, *The RSS and the BJP: A Division of Labour* (New Delhi: Leftword Books, 2000).

²⁴² Ahmad, *Lineages of the Present: Ideology and Politics in Contemporary South Asia*; Aijaz Ahmad, *On Communalism and Globalization: Offensives of the Far Right* (New Delhi: Three Essays Collective, 2004).

²⁴³ Kanungo, *RSS's Tryst with Politics: From Hedgewar to Sudarshan*.

²⁴⁴ Mahiyaria, 'Right Wing and Street-Theatre: From Censure to Co-Option'.

of the Sangh's organisation but also attempts to contribute to it in the historical context of student politics in Gujarat.

Third, there is literature that focuses on the "service" or "welfare" activities in which the Sangh participates. Beckerlegge explores the RSS "tradition of selfless service"²⁴⁵. Thachil tries to understand the role of Sangh affiliates such as the Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram and Vidya Bharti that offer educational and other services to adivasis in the electoral rise of the BJP in Chhattisgarh²⁴⁶. Jaffrelot contends that the success of Hindu Nationalism in the 1990s could only partially be attributed to "radical and populist mobilisation strategies" and it was also necessary to understand it as the success of what he calls the "social welfare strategy"²⁴⁷. While the role of service has been noted in these contexts, the thesis focuses on the ABVP and argues that service activities were a means of organisational growth as also an important part of building and maintaining its image as a non-political, "organisation with a difference".

Gujarat

Scholarly works on different aspects of Gujarat, its politics, society, economy, history and culture are many and varied²⁴⁸. With its focus on history and politics of the state, the thesis relies on and engages with a variety of important works such as Yagnik and Sheth whose 'The Shaping of Modern Gujarat' is a concise and accurate account of

²⁴⁵ Gwilym Beckerlegge, 'Saffron and Seva: The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh's Appropriation of Swami Vivekananda', in *Hinduism in Public and Private: Reform, Hindutva, Gender and Sampraday*, ed. Anthony Copley (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003).

²⁴⁶ Tariq Thachil, 'Embedded Mobilization: Non-State Service Provision as Electoral Strategy in India', *World Politics* 63, no. 3 (2011): 434–69.

²⁴⁷ C. Jaffrelot, ed., 'Hindu Nationalism and the Social Welfare Strategy', in *The Sangh Parivar: A Reader* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005), 211–24.

²⁴⁸ See Edward Simpson, *Society and History of Gujarat since 1800: A Select Bibliography of the English and European Language Sources* (New Delhi: Orient Blackswan, 2011).

over two thousand years in the region's history²⁴⁹. Wood's studies on the political integration of Gujarat²⁵⁰ and on the working of the Congress strategy of mobilising oppressed sections, referred to as KHAM, in the 1980s²⁵¹ are important contributions. Regarding Ahmedabad, which was for the entire period the political epicentre, there is the pioneering work of Gillian²⁵² as well as later works by Spodek²⁵³ and Yagnik²⁵⁴ which are histories of the city and in these the events covered by the thesis are noted. A number of studies are almost exclusively devoted to communal violence and the rise of the Sangh in the context of Gujarat. There are studies of individual riots during the period under study such as Shah on the 1969 communal violence in Ahmedabad, the rioting in 1973 which included both communal and food riots²⁵⁵ as well as those regarding the anti-reservation rioting that are mentioned below. There are also major works regarding the 2002 riots²⁵⁶, however, these are only tangentially important to the present thesis. Works that focus on the overall rise of the Sangh include Shah who, in multiple studies²⁵⁷, historically traces the BJP's eventual electoral rise till the mid-1990s. Of particular note is also Sud's "biography" of Gujarat which explores the

²⁴⁹ Achyut Yagnik and Suchitra Sheth, *The Shaping of Modern Gujarat: Plurality, Hindutva and Beyond* (New Delhi: Penguin Books India, 2005).

²⁵⁰ Wood, 'British versus Princely Legacies and the Political Integration of Gujarat'.

²⁵¹ Wood, 'Congress Restored? The "KHAM" Strategy and Congress (I) Recruitment in Gujarat'.

²⁵² K.L. Gillian, *Ahmedabad: A Study in Urban History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968).

²⁵³ Howard S. Spodek, *Ahmedabad: Shock City of Twentieth Century* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2011).

²⁵⁴ Achyut Yagnik, *Ahmedabad: From Royal City to Megacity* (New Delhi: Penguin Books India, 2011).

²⁵⁵ G. Shah, 'Anatomy of Urban Riots: Ahmedabad 1973', *Economic and Political Weekly* 9, no. 6/8 (1974): 233–40; Ghanshyam Shah, 'The 1969 Communal Riots in Ahmedabad', in *Communal Riots in Post-Independence India*, ed. Asghar Ali Engineer (Hyderabad: Sangam Books, 1984), 175–208.

²⁵⁶ Ward Berenschot, *Riot Politics: Hindu-Muslim Violence and the Indian State* (New York: University of Columbia Press, 2011); Ghanshyam Shah, 'Caste, Hindutva and Hideousness', *Economic And Political Weekly* 37, no. 15 (13 April 2002): 1391–93; Howard S. Spodek, 'In the Hindutva Laboratory: Pogroms and Politics in Gujarat, 2002', *Modern Asian Studies* 44, no. 2 (2010): 349–99.

²⁵⁷ Ghanshyam Shah, 'Tenth Lok Sabha Elections: BJP's Victory in Gujarat', *Economic And Political Weekly* 26, no. 51 (21 December 1991): 2921–24; Shah, 'BJP's Rise to Power'; Ghanshyam Shah, 'The BJP's Riddle in Gujarat: Caste, Factionalism and Hindutva', in *The BJP and the Compulsions of Politics in India*, ed. T Blom Hansen and C. Jaffrelot (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998).

rise of communalism and the Sangh in the state²⁵⁸. The thesis seeks to locate itself within and engage with this body of work produced on the politics and history of Gujarat of the post-independence period.

In terms of student politics, there are significant contemporary and near contemporary accounts of the Navnirman Agitation. Among these can be included Wood²⁵⁹, who considered the Navnirman Agitation along with the Bihar Movement to be a part of a larger “extra-parliamentary opposition” to Indira Gandhi. Jones and Jones²⁶⁰ in their two works argued that while students were the most visible section of the Navnirman Agitation it was politics within the university involving the university and college teachers unions and the CM that burst forth into a mass movement with this union playing the central role. Shah’s²⁶¹ study published immediately after the agitation ended remains the most widely referred to. The agitation is considered to be a “middle-class movement” from which a number of oppressed sections were absent, and it is asserted that the Sangh completely usurped the agitation. The more recent works on the agitation includes that Sanghvi²⁶², which is based entirely on the aforementioned works and Bhagat-Ganguly²⁶³, a primarily narrative account that summarises writing on the subject.

²⁵⁸ Sud, *Liberalization, Hindu Nationalism and the State: A Biography of Gujarat*.

²⁵⁹ J.R. Wood, ‘Extra-Parliamentary Opposition in India: An Analysis of Populist Agitations in Gujarat and Bihar’, *Pacific Affairs* 48, no. 3 (1975): 313–34.

²⁶⁰ D.E. Jones and R.W. Jones, ‘Urban Upheaval in India: The 1974 Nav Nirman Riots in Gujarat’, *Asian Survey* 16, no. 11 (1976): 1012–33; D.E. Jones and R.W. Jones, ‘The Scholars’ Rebellion: Educational Interests and Agitational Politics in Gujarat’, *The Journal of Asian Studies* 36, no. 3 (1977): 457–76.

²⁶¹ Shah, ‘The Upsurge in Gujarat’.

²⁶² N. Sanghvi, ‘From Navnirman to the Anti-Mandal Riots: The Political Trajectory of Gujarat (1974-1985)’, in *Gujarat Beyond Gandhi: Identity, Conflict and Society*, ed. N. Mehta and M. Mehta (New Delhi: Routledge, 2011), 20–39.

²⁶³ Varsha Bhagat-Ganguly, *Protest Movements and Citizens’ Rights in Gujarat* (Shimla: Indian Institute of Advanced Studies, 2015).

Similarly, regarding the two anti-reservation agitations there are important contemporary commentaries. For the first, we have Desai²⁶⁴ who viewed the agitation as an attempt by Patidars to extend their dominance into the sphere of education, Bose²⁶⁵ who asserted that the 1981 agitation the most socially mobile sections among those getting the benefit of reservations were the main targets of the agitation and Yagnik's²⁶⁶ particularly important critiques of the anti-reservation agitation and agitators' claims and demands. For the second, Patel²⁶⁷ saw the agitations as a "debacle of populist politics" that had been practiced by the Congress, Roy²⁶⁸ viewed the outcome of the agitation as being against the interests of the backward castes and Engineer who brought out the aspects of communal violence that were a part of the agitation²⁶⁹. These are in addition to the longer studies such as Wood²⁷⁰ who concluded that despite the resignation of the Chief Minister the agitation had ended in a stalemate as the Congress, which was dominated by representatives of oppressed groups, remained in power. Shah²⁷¹ examined both anti-reservation agitations and viewed them as a struggle within the middle class in Gujarat, with upper and middle castes opposing reservations and lower caste middle class groups supporting them.

²⁶⁴ I.P. Desai, 'Anti-Reservation Agitation and Structure of Gujarat Society', *Economic and Political Weekly* 16, no. 18 (1981): 819–23.

²⁶⁵ P.K. Bose, 'Social Mobility and Caste Violence: A Study of the Gujarat Riots', *Economic and Political Weekly* 16, no. 16 (1981): 713–16.

²⁶⁶ Achyut Yagnik, 'Spectre of Caste War', *Economic And Political Weekly* 16, no. 13 (28 March 1981): 553–58; Achyut Yagnik, 'Second Phase in Caste War', *Economic And Political Weekly* 16, no. 22 (30 May 1981): 977–78.

²⁶⁷ Sujata Patel, 'Debacle of Populist Politics', *Economic and Political Weekly* 20, no. 16 (1985): 681–82.

²⁶⁸ A.K. Roy, 'Anti-Reservation Movement: A Political Assessment', *Economic and Political Weekly* 20, no. 32 (1985): 1343–44.

²⁶⁹ Asghar Ali Engineer, 'Communal Fire Engulfs Ahmedabad Once Again', *Economic And Political Weekly* 20, no. 27 (6 July 1985): 1116–20.

²⁷⁰ J.R. Wood, 'Reservations in Doubt: The Backlash Against Affirmative Action in Gujarat, India', *Pacific Affairs* 60, no. 3 (1987): 408–30.

²⁷¹ G. Shah, 'Middle Class Politics: Case of Anti-Reservation Agitations in Gujarat', *Economic and Political Weekly* 22, no. 19/21 (1987): AN155–72.

Although covering only Ahmedabad city, Shani's works are the most significant and detailed studies of the 1985 agitation and communal rioting. The literature and the major arguments regarding the Navnirman Agitation and the two anti-reservation agitations are dealt with in greater detail while discussing the relevant agitations.

With this in mind a few points regarding the literature that the study engages with and seeks to contribute to must be noted. First, while there are works that attempt to understand the rise of the Sangh in Gujarat, with the partial exception of studies on the Navnirman Agitation, students are missing from this story. The growing influence of the Sangh on student politics as well as the reverse remains unexplored. Acknowledging that there were equally or even more important groups and classes, discussed in the existing literature, that aided this rise, the role played by students and student politics does merit a systematic analysis. Second, outside of the three major agitations- Navnirman and the two anti-reservation agitations- the literature does not deal with student politics. There exists no study which analyses the changes in student politics in the state. This thesis, while writing a history of student politics in Gujarat, using the available sources, focuses not only on moments that are considered conventionally important, but also on a broader set of developments in student politics, over an extended period. Third, previous literature has not tended to dig very deeply, with respect to student involvement, organisation and activities. By focusing on students within the larger agitations, the thesis seeks to deepen the existing understanding of the agitations as well.

Section V Sources

Fieldwork for this study was conducted between June and December 2016. It involved collection of written material in English, Gujarati and Hindi from various sources

including official and semi-official archives as well as private collections at Ahmedabad, Gandhinagar, and New Delhi. Chief amongst these were- 1) National Archives of India (NAI), New Delhi; 2) Nehru Memorial Museum and Library (NMML), New Delhi; 3) Gujarat State Archives (GSA), Gandhinagar; 4) Gujarat Vidyapith Library (GVL), Ahmedabad; 5) Indian Institute of Management Library (IIMA), Ahmedabad.

Although, the sources mentioned below provided rich material for the writing of the thesis, certain source related limitations were faced. First, with student organisations themselves existing only for short periods of time, archiving was not a leading priority. Documentation of these groups was highly ephemeral. Therefore, to know what students themselves were saying during this time, one has to depend on the few pamphlets and publications that have been preserved in government or personal archives. Second, given the absence of any archives of material produced by students themselves, other sources such as reports in the press and in official communication acquire greater importance. It is possible that student protests and agitations that were taking place at the local level either lacked any mass support, were not disruptive in any way with the university functioning normally, and involved no clashes among student groups or with the police. These could have been considered not newsworthy or important enough to be mentioned in government reports. It would have been ideal to have ways to study such student activity of lesser intensity; this would help in developing a richer understanding of student politics during this period. By the nature of the available source material, however, this thesis will miss student politics that were not viewed as disruptive or worthy of official note. Third, although the study attempts to provide as broad a picture as possible about student politics by covering all the universities in the state, this was not always possible. As the richest sources were

available for Gujarat University, located in Ahmedabad, and student politics there, there is an unequal division in focus with other universities being examined whenever the sources allowed. Fourth, the difficulty of accessing the RSS weekly in Gujarati, *Sadhana*. Examination of this would have greatly added to the analysis attempted in the thesis. After two attempts to secure access to the archive proved unsuccessful, given the prevailing political conditions and the researcher's precarious position, it was considered prudent to not pursue the matter further. The thesis instead draws on the English language organ of the RSS, that could be freely accessed at NMML.

Finally, why the thesis is based entirely on an examination and analysis of written material and does not rely on any interviews of participants or witnesses must be, to an extent, explained. Firstly, it proved to be particularly difficult to trace and interview enough number of people associated with student politics to be able to provide a state-wide view of student politics over a relatively long period. In contrast, written official and non-official sources such as Governor's Fortnightly and Monthly Reports, Reports of Commissions of Inquiry and contemporary newspaper reports, discussed subsequently, provided rich material with a wide geographic and temporal spread. The utilisation of these sources allowed for the thesis to produce an account of student politics that was not entirely limited to important centres or major agitations.

Secondly, while there were some semi-structured interviews conducted with persons who were student politicians at the time of the major agitations discussed in the thesis, these threw up questions of memory and the construction of the past based on the present political climate in the state of Gujarat. Although interesting and important, these questions did not fall within the purview of the present study and would have changed the nature of the study. Even these interviews are, therefore, not utilised.

Official Sources

One of the major contributions of this thesis is the examination of hitherto unutilised sources, a majority of which are located in the GSA. Amongst these can be included a variety of confidential correspondence between different government departments and the Governor; notes prepared for cabinet meetings on issues relevant to the thesis; correspondence between universities and the Governor, who was the Chancellor of most universities in the state²⁷²; and most significantly, the Governor's fortnightly, monthly, and annual reports. In the Indian federal system, it is the Governor who is the nominal head of a federal unit and the President who is the constitutional head of the Indian Union. While the President is indirectly elected, the Governor is an unelected representative of the Central government in the state. During the period under study, as a representative of the Centre, the Governor regularly conveyed to the Central government the goings on in the state in the form of regular reports that covered a wide range of issues including law and order, activities of political parties, communal activities, labour issues and most importantly student activities. In the earlier part of the period considered by this thesis, reports were produced fortnightly; from April 1978 onwards, reports were monthly. Sections of these reports were written on the basis of information provided by the concerned government departments and those related to the aforementioned issues were based on intelligence provided by the different branches of the police²⁷³. Similarly, annual conferences were organised in which all Governors participated and presented reports on the political, economic, and administrative happenings in their respective states over the preceding year. In

²⁷² Apart from Gujarat Vidyapith and MSU.

²⁷³ This was confirmed by high-ranking police officer who wished not to be named in the thesis.

addition to the fortnightly, monthly, and annual conference reports in many instances the information provided to the Governor's secretariat for the compilation of these reports is also available. Both the reports and the information provided for their compilation, are rich sources which have until now remained untapped. They are particularly important for the thesis because of the state-wide scope of their content as well as the fact that these reports are a consistent feature for the entire period. This thesis draws heavily on this material to construct a broad account of student politics in the state.

Other official sources, frequently mentioned in works related to Gujarat, have also been utilised. Amongst these are reports of Commissions of Inquiry related to the National Emergency²⁷⁴ and communal rioting²⁷⁵ as well as reports of national and state Committees and Commissions on issues related specifically to education which provide an understanding of the conditions within higher education as also offer statistics related to students. These include, among others, annual reports of the University Grants Commission (UGC), district-wise educational statistics in Gujarat, Reports of National Education Commissions²⁷⁶, reports regarding reservation for backward sections²⁷⁷, university reforms²⁷⁸ and college finances²⁷⁹.

²⁷⁴ J.C. Shah, *Shah Commission of Inquiry: Interim Report I* (New Delhi: Government of India, 1978).

²⁷⁵ Eg. V.S. Dave, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Incidents of Violence and Disturbances That Took Place at Various Places in the State of Gujarat since February, 1985 to 18th July, 1985: Volume I* (Gandhinagar: Government Central Press, 1990).

²⁷⁶ Eg. D.S. Kothari, *Report of the Education Commission (1964-66): Education and National Development* (New Delhi: Ministry of Education, Government of India, 1966).

²⁷⁷ Eg. C.V. Rane, *Report of the Socially and Educationally Backward Classes [Second] Commission: Gujarat State 1983* (Rajkot: Government Press, 1984).

²⁷⁸ Eg. S.R. Dongerkery, *Report of the Commission on Modernization of University Acts* (Ahmedabad: Education and Labour Department, Government of Gujarat, 1972).

²⁷⁹ Eg. Samuel Paul, *Grant-in-Aid to Affiliated Colleges in the State of Gujarat: Report of Committee on College Finances 1977* (Ahmedabad: Government of Gujarat, 1977).

An examination of official sources greatly aided in telling the story of student politics during this period. In the absence of student organisational records, apart from contemporary newspapers and periodical, government documents were the only other source containing details of student politics. These documents often include student activities that may not have captured the attention of the media especially during periods where there were no large student agitations but are nonetheless important for an understanding of student politics. The official documents reveal the government's interpretations of the causes of student unrest and its view of potential solutions or actions that could be taken.

Non-Official Sources

Apart from the official sources mentioned above, a variety of non-official sources have also been utilised. There is literature produced by student organisations. This literature included pamphlets meant for public circulation, memoranda and letters submitted to the various state and educational authorities, and submissions to different Commissions of Inquiry. Although not well archived and few in number, some were found in the GSA while others in private archives and provided valuable insight into the issues raised, and activities carried out by students of the time. Non-Sangh partisan papers, i.e., publications of important political parties and non-student associations which often reported and took positions on student politics in Gujarat. Publications such as Congress *Partika* (in Gujarati) of the Congress (O)²⁸⁰, *Adhyapak* of the Gujarat University Area Teachers' Association (GUATA)²⁸¹ and *Majoor Sandesh*

²⁸⁰ The Congress (O) was a major player in Gujarat politics until 1977.

²⁸¹ For more on the union see Jones and Jones, 'The Scholars' Rebellion: Educational Interests and Agitational Politics in Gujarat'.

of the Textile Labour Association²⁸² (TLA) were therefore examined. Daily newspapers in Gujarati and English were also examined. While the Times of India, in English and Sandesh, in Gujarati were examined for the entire period, other daily newspapers such as the Indian Express, Gujarat Samachar and Jai Hind were also consulted. In attempting to piece together a history of student politics in Gujarat during the period under study, newspapers, and periodicals- both national and local- were important resources. The three main agitations, Navnirman and the two anti-reservation agitations, widely reported in the press and smaller student agitations that resulted in direct conflict with educational administrations and the state, were frequently covered by the media. Along with other sources, coverage in daily newspapers assisted in establishing timelines of major agitations and understanding the goings on in student politics during the periods between the agitations.

Sangh Sources

Considering that the rise of the Sangh forms a major part of the thesis, a variety of documents generated by the Sangh were also examined. These could be categorised as ABVP publications, *Organiser*, Miscellaneous Sangh Publications and published “academic” works. About these Sangh sources a few comments are in order. While the ABVP in Gujarat claimed that all its records of the period understudy had been lost, some pamphlets produced by it as well as memorandums submitted to the government were discovered in GSA. These were used to understand the kinds of issues and the manner in which these were taken up by the organisation. Also examined were ABVP’s versions of its history which were available on the

²⁸² The TLA was the largest workers’ union in Gujarat and the positions taken by it during the major agitations were therefore significant.

organisation's website. The English language organ of the RSS, *Organiser*, was thoroughly examined, for the period between 1960 and 1993. This magazine contains a wealth of material, with numerous editorials, opinion pieces and articles written by important Sangh functionaries belonging to various Sangh affiliates. Some address subjects relevant to the thesis; others deal with topics related specifically to student politics. Some pieces are authored (or at least attributed) to ABVP office-bearers of the time. Digital and print publications of Sangh affiliates including the RSS, BJS and BJP as well as writings and speeches of Sangh ideologues such as Golwalkar²⁸³ and Deoras²⁸⁴ on subjects such as the importance of youth, students and organisation were studied. Writings such as that of Andersen and Damle²⁸⁵ on the RSS, or Jha²⁸⁶ on the ABVP, offer uncritical repetitions of the Sangh's version of itself. These were considered Sangh sources and read in much the same manner as the others.

The examination of these sources, at the fundamental level, allowed for an understanding of the issues raised by the ABVP and the Sangh's approach to students in general, as well as the positions taken by it with respect to a number of issues and events relevant to the thesis. Moreover, Sangh sources are replete with claims that can be contradicted other more reliable accounts. Certain narratives that suited the Sangh were being peddled in Sangh publications. This shows the sophistication and awareness with which the Sangh, already before 1985, was seeking to create contemporary narratives and mythologies. With this being the case, in Chapters 3 and

²⁸³ Madhavrao Sadashivrao Golwalkar was the second head of the RSS between 1940 and 1973 and is considered to be its most important ideologue.

²⁸⁴ Madhukar Dattatraya Deoras, also known as Balasaheb Deoras, followed Golwalkar as the head of the RSS and continued in that position until 1994.

²⁸⁵ Andersen and Damle, *The Brotherhood in Saffron: The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and Hindu Revivalism*.

²⁸⁶ Jha, *Student Organizations and Politics: A Case Study of the Akhil Bhartiya Vidharthi Parishad*.

4, there is an attempt to use Sangh sources, to understand the narratives that were being created and disseminated. The thesis also attempts to juxtapose these narratives with more objective accounts of the historical events, as a way to reclaim the historical record.

While the above provides a general understanding of the sources that have been utilised in writing the thesis, certain sources amongst these require a more focused discussion which has been taken up at various points in the thesis.

Section VI Division of Chapters

This thesis, containing a total of five chapters, in addition to the introductory and 'epilogue and conclusions' chapters is divided into two parts.

The first part consists of three chapters, of which chapters 1 and 2 are based on the sources mentioned above. These focus on the history of students and student politics during this period. These chapters, with certain exceptions are, chronologically structured. Chapter 1 covers the period between 1967 and 1975. The starting point of 1967 reflects the re-emergence of student politics after an almost decade-long hiatus following the end of the Mahagujarat movement (1956). The end point of 1975 is chosen to coincide with the formation of the Janata Morcha government after elections to the state Assembly. This chapter begins with the Saurashtra University and fee-hike agitations in 1967 and includes the second fee-hike agitation in 1971, the student political mobilisations of 1973, and the Navnirman Agitation of 1974. Thus, Chapter 1 covers all the major student agitations that took place during this time. The chapter also touches on numerous unorganised, and spontaneous protests and outbursts, which were arguably the most prominent elements of student political activity at the time. The chapter seeks to understand the nature and content of these unorganised

agitations. The chapter also makes note of the prevalence of divisions based on caste and religion within the student body during this time and examines some of the forms that they took. Chapter 2 covers the period from the imposition of the national Emergency in 1975 up until the end of the second anti-reservation agitation in 1985. In this chapter are considered student responses to the Emergency, which covered the entire gamut including opposition, passivity, and resistance. The chapter examines how, following the end of the Emergency, after a brief recovery, student politics returned to protests over local issues for the next three years. These were largely isolated episodes taking place in different universities and colleges. This changed with the arrival of a new government in 1980. At that point, students took part in opposition-led protests against the government on the issue of high prices and even supported an opposition-led agitation of the large peasantry. A key event during this period was an agitation in 1981, initiated by medical students over demands related to reservations in medical courses. This agitation witnessed a mass involvement of students as well as other section and political parties. The almost four-month long agitation included attacks on backward castes and engulfed most of the state in violence, bringing the government to the brink of collapse. Chapter 2 ends with an examination of the participation of students in another anti-reservation agitation, in 1985, which did succeed in securing the resignation of the Chief Minister.

The elections to the Gujarat legislative Assembly in 1975 have been chosen as the end of the events covered by the first chapter. This is not only because this marker offers a roughly even division of the period covered by the study, but also because the internal Emergency in India followed soon after these elections. The evidence points to a definite – though not dramatic change in the nature of student politics in Gujarat

following the Emergency. That moment also served as a turning point in the broader rise of the Sangh's fortunes.

Part I of the thesis concludes with a short chapter which attempts to elucidate some of the relevant features, characteristics, and themes implied by Chapters 1 and 2.

Part II examines the Sangh, and its relationship with student politics, with a particular focus on Gujarat. Chapter 4 first lays out the RSS's internal organisational structure and moves on to understanding the wider structure of the Sangh. Then, the ABVP's organisation and its role and position in the Sangh are noted. The rest of the chapter examines the strategies and tactics employed for the organisational expansion of the ABVP, focusing especially on the ways in which service activities were utilised and the image of the ABVP being "non-political" and an "organisation with a difference" was emphasised, while at times foregrounding its Hindutva agenda and an agitational image.

Chapter 5 focuses on the Sangh and its rise in Gujarat. In this, the attempt is to understand the multiple ways in which student politics and the Sangh's intervention in it, at different points, aided the organisational and electoral rise of the Sangh in Gujarat between 1967 and 1985. In doing so it takes up the complicated task of attempting to trace how, at times, the Sangh directly took actions to gain strength, while at other moments, the Sangh simply benefited from the conditions created by student politics.

Section VII Role of students in Gujarat Politics and the Sangh's rise

Although the thesis has as its focus students and student politics, the role played by them either in Gujarat politics during the period or in aiding the Sangh's rise is not overstated. In terms of Gujarat politics, students cannot be considered an

exceptionally politically active group. Students, as a matter of fact, as demonstrated in Chapters 1 and 2, remained a largely unorganised and localised group. The period witnessed far greater participation, involvement and political action from a variety of other groups. The urban working class²⁸⁷, the landless rural poor²⁸⁸, the large peasantry²⁸⁹, white collar workers such as bank and insurance workers²⁹⁰, caste based organisations like the Kshatriya Sabha²⁹¹, and even government and semi-government employees²⁹² were all politically active in the state. As various studies have shown, the activities of these groups had a great deal of influence on the political landscape of Gujarat, arguably more than students. The thesis focuses on students not because of the specificity of their roles or that their involvement in politics was greater compared to other groups. It does so due to the absence of any account of student politics of the period and when they did play a part. The production of an empirically sound account of student politics is, therefore, one of the primary tasks the thesis.

Similarly, the thesis does not in any way suggest that the rise of the Sangh in Gujarat took place only through student politics. It was often the case that student politics played no part in the rise of the Sangh. It also does not seek to further an understanding that current leaders of the BJP or the Sangh gained their power through

²⁸⁷ Jan Breman, *The Making and Unmaking of an Industrial Working Class: Sliding Down to the Bottom of the Labour Hierarchy in Ahmedabad, India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004).

²⁸⁸ Jan Breman, *Patronage and Exploitation: Changing Agrarian Relations in South Gujarat, India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974).

²⁸⁹ See Chapter 1, Section II.

²⁹⁰ Shah, 'Middle Class Politics: Case of Anti-Reservation Agitations in Gujarat'.

²⁹¹ G. Shah, *Caste Association and Political Process in Gujarat: A Study of Gujarat Kshatriya Sabha* (Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1975); A.H. Somjee, 'Social Cohesion and Political Clientelism Among the Kshatriyas of Gujarat', *Asian Survey* 21, no. 9 (September 1981): 1000–1010.

²⁹² Shah, 'Middle Class Politics: Case of Anti-Reservation Agitations in Gujarat'.

participation in student politics or in any way rose through the ranks in student organisations. The role of such individuals in student politics of the time is in most cases fabricated by the Sangh. The task of unravelling these narratives is a massive one that would require an entirely separate project. Most importantly, it must be recognised that for student politicians of the period, both Sangh and non-Sangh, as is evidenced in the thesis, it was not a simple progression, from 'student' politician to politician. No student politician of state-level significance has become a politician of state-level significance whose progress can be traced in such a manner. The thrust is instead that student politics – through their content, nature, and dominant tendencies – created, to whatever extent, conditions and opportunities that contributed to the Sangh's political rise.

The argument made, broadly, is that following its involvement in the 1969 riots, the Sangh, particularly the BJS and the ABVP, in an attempt to regain some legitimacy that had been lost, steered clear of communal issues and instead began to take up demands such as those related to price rise, food scarcity, and corruption. Further, with regard to the Navnirman Agitation, the Sangh was able to propagate a narrative regarding its own involvement and was successful in claiming the legacy of the agitation which went a long way towards allowing the BJS to regain some lost legitimacy and to claim a place as an important opposition party.

The importance of the Navnirman Agitation to the Sangh went beyond simple perceptions, as one of the fallouts of the agitation was the formation of the Janata Morcha electoral alliance, consisting of the non-Communist opposition parties. In the elections that followed the agitation, it was the BJS, although organisationally still much weaker than the Cong (O), which made the maximum electoral gains. After the

Navnirman Agitation, although the Sangh continued to intervene in it, student politics played little part in its overall expansion until after the election 1980 in which the Congress came to power having stitched together the KHAM alliance.

The 1981 anti-reservation agitation that was sparked off by protests at the Medical College at Ahmedabad ended up creating a wider unity of dominant castes and classes against the government. The Sangh although it did not directly expose itself as a part of the agitation was active in various ways, discussed subsequently, in process, gained politically from it. The agitation allowed for the newly formed BJP to come to the fore as the preeminent anti-Congress opposition party. While it did profit from the 1981 agitation it was the second agitation in 1985 that proved to be most beneficial. Compared to the agitation of 1981, the second agitation was greater in terms of its scope and the impact that it had on the Gujarat polity. The second agitation is widely acknowledged as signalling the end of KHAM and the simultaneous rise of the Sangh. The thesis argues that the Sangh, with its foothold in student politics and its wide network of organisations was able to transform what was initially a minor student protest into an agitation involving widespread caste and communal violence lasting almost six months. The final chapter of the thesis discusses in greater detail the multiple ways that student politics and the Sangh's intervention in it, at different points, aided the organisational and electoral rise of the Sangh.

Chapter 1 Students Politics in Gujarat 1967 - 1975

This chapter is divided into five sections. The first, briefly sketches the happenings in student politics of the colonial period and traces the development of higher education in Gujarat until 1975. The second examines the re-emergence of student politics and tries to understand the questions and issues that were taken up by students during this time. The focus of the third section is on the Navnirman Agitation, while the fourth examines the time leading up to the elections to the state Assembly in 1975. The fifth section attempts to understand how questions of caste and religion cropped up during the period covered by this chapter.

Section I Development of Higher Education and Early Student Politics

Higher education in the Gujarat region was a relatively late development with the first college, Gujarat Providential College, established only in 1860-61²⁹³. It was after 1915 and particularly during the decade before independence that there was an expansion of higher education in the region. The number of colleges increased from 8 in 1936 to 24 in 1947, with a total enrolment of over 11,000 students²⁹⁴. The largest colleges

²⁹³ This college shut down by 1872 and was restarted as the Gujarat College, under Indian management in 1879. Mahesh Verma, 'Gujarat University ane Gujaratna Uchh Shaikshanik Utkarshna Paanch Daayka: 1949-99: Ek Aetihashik Adhyan (in Gujarati) [Five Decades of Gujarat University and Higher Educational Upliftment of Gujarat: 1949-99: A Historical Study]' (Ahmedabad, Gujarat University, 2009), 13.

²⁹⁴ M.C. Chagla, *Report of the Gujarat University Committee* (Bombay: Government of Bombay, 1948), 3; Bureau of Economics and Statistics, Government of Gujarat, *Factbook on Manpower* (Ahmedabad: Bureau of Economics and Statistics, Government of Gujarat, 1973), 111–28.

were the older ones located in metropolitan centres like Baroda, Surat, and Rajkot, with Ahmedabad alone accounting for 38% enrolment²⁹⁵. The industrial bourgeoisie that had developed over the late colonial period, especially the millowners of Ahmedabad, because of the Gandhian influence as well as for their own purposes²⁹⁶, took an active interest in education through the Ahmedabad Education Society (AES) founded in 1936. The AES managed five large colleges in which were enrolled almost 55% of students in the district. While most colleges were still Arts, Science and Commerce (ASC) colleges, there were also two Law and Engineering, as well as one Medical college in the region²⁹⁷.

While there were no universities in the Gujarat Region at independence, by 1950 the Maharaja Sayajirao University (MSU), Baroda²⁹⁸ and Gujarat University (GU), Ahmedabad²⁹⁹ were established. This was followed by the incorporation of Sardar Patel University (SPU), Vallabhvidyanagar in 1955, the granting of deemed university status to Gujarat Vidyapith, in 1962-63 and the establishment of a small Ayurvedic University at Jamangar in 1965. In 1967, South Gujarat University (SGU), Surat and Saurashtra University (SU), Rajkot, were carved out of GU. Only a small Agricultural University was established between 1967 and 1975- the period covered by the present chapter. Alongside the formation of universities, the number of institutions rose from

²⁹⁵ Chagla, *Report of the Gujarat University Committee*, 15,28.

²⁹⁶ D.E. Jones and R.W. Jones, 'The Scholars' Rebellion: Educational Interests and Agitational Politics in Gujarat', *The Journal of Asian Studies* 36, no. 3 (1977): 461.

²⁹⁷ Chagla, *Report of the Gujarat University Committee*.

²⁹⁸ Directorate of Publicity, Government of Bombay, *Bombay Marches On ... Education* (Bombay: Directorate of Publicity, Government of Bombay, 1951), 20.

²⁹⁹ Directorate of Publicity, Government of Bombay, *Bombay Marches On ... Education*, 23.

24 in 1948³⁰⁰ to 221 in 1966-67. By 1974-75, the number was over 350³⁰¹. Similarly, from around 15,000 in 1950³⁰² the number of students in higher education increased to 1,09,860 in 1967-68³⁰³ and to about 2,59,000 by 1974-75³⁰⁴. A comparison of the rates of increase, based on UGC annual reports³⁰⁵, in the student body between Gujarat and the All-India average illustrates that it was one of the states in which higher education was expanding rapidly.

While considering the increase in student numbers and institutions, it must be noted that in terms of faculty and branches, it was ASC colleges and students enrolled in them that remained in a vast majority. Students in the ASC colleges increased in number from close to 1,00,000, in 1967³⁰⁶ to over 2,00,000, in 1976, representing more than 80% of the total student body for the entirety of the period³⁰⁷. The significant minorities were students enrolled in Law, Engineering and Medical courses each accounting for 4 to 5 percent³⁰⁸. Moreover, there was a steep increase in the numbers of private higher education institutions. Between 1960 and 1972, while the numbers of

³⁰⁰ Chagla, *Report of the Gujarat University Committee*, 3.

³⁰¹ Bureau of Economics and Statistics, Government of Gujarat, *Statistical Abstract Of Gujarat State 1979-1982* (Gandhinagar: Bureau of Economics and Statistics, Government of Gujarat, 1985), 114–15.

³⁰² Bureau of Economics and Statistics, Government of Gujarat, *Factbook on Manpower*, 118.

³⁰³ Chief Education Officer, *Shikshan Khatano Varshik Vahivati Aehval 1968-69 (in Gujarati) [Annual Administration Report of the Education Department 1968-69]* (Gandhinagar: Government Press, 1971), 23.

³⁰⁴ Bureau of Economics and Statistics, Government of Gujarat, *Statistical Abstract Of Gujarat State 1979-1982*, 114–15.

³⁰⁵ UGC: *Report For the Year 1966-67* (New Delhi: UGC, 1968), 57; UGC: *Report For the Year 1974-75* (New Delhi: UGC, 1976), 101.

³⁰⁶ D.S. Kothari, *Report of the Education Commission (1964-66): Education and National Development* (New Delhi: Ministry of Education, Government of India, 1966), 417.

³⁰⁷ Planning, Monitoring & Statistics Division, Ministry of Education & Culture (Department of Education), Government of India, *Educational Statistics District-Wise: 1976-77 (Vol. (XVI) Gujarat* (New Delhi: Planning, Monitoring & Statistics Division, Ministry of Education & Culture (Department of Education), Government of India, 1982), 115–16.

³⁰⁸ Bureau of Economics and Statistics, Government of Gujarat, *Factbook on Manpower*; Planning, Monitoring & Statistics Division, Ministry of Education & Culture (Department of Education), Government of India, *Educational Statistics District-Wise: 1976-77 (Vol. (XVI) Gujarat*, 28, 115.

institutions, run by the government and universities increased from 17 and 16 to 23 and 27 respectively, boosted by a liberal grant-in-aid policy, those under private management went from 69 to 217³⁰⁹. Issues related to privately managed colleges such as high fees and the proliferation of vested interests in university politics were to be of great significance during this time.

With the increase in colleges, higher education was no longer confined to metropolitan centres. At the time of independence, Ahmedabad district had accounted for 33% of colleges in the state; but during the period covered by this chapter, this number was consistently around 15%³¹⁰. The spread of colleges became more even and by 1966-67, there was more than one institution of higher education in eighteen out of the nineteen districts of Gujarat³¹¹. However, when viewed through the lens of student enrolment matters appear a little different. A majority of new colleges, especially those in rural and semi-urban areas were small and did not account for many students. The bulk of the student population, 70 to 80 percent, between 1967 and 1975 continued to reside in urban centres where older and larger colleges were situated³¹². Amongst universities, GU was by far the largest university, consistently accounting for over 50% of students and affiliated institutions³¹³. Apart from the political importance of

³⁰⁹ Bureau of Economics and Statistics, Government of Gujarat, *Factbook on Manpower*.

³¹⁰ Planning, Monitoring & Statistics Division, Ministry of Education & Culture (Department of Education), Government of India, *Educational Statistics District-Wise: 1976-77 (Vol. (XVI) Gujarat*.

³¹¹ Directorate of Education, Government of Gujarat, *Education in Gujarat State 1968-69: Statistical Epitome as on 31st March 1969* (1973: Government Press, Rajkot).

³¹² Directorate of Education, Government of Gujarat, *Education in Gujarat State 1968-69: Statistical Epitome as on 31st March 1969*, 258; Planning, Monitoring & Statistics Division, Ministry of Education & Culture (Department of Education), Government of India, *Educational Statistics District-Wise: 1976-77 (Vol. (XVI) Gujarat*, 110–14.

³¹³ Based on annual reports of GU and the UGC between 1967 and 1976

Ahmedabad itself, the concentration of higher education to a large extent explains the disproportionate influence of student politics at GU.

The expansion of education was taken advantage of primarily by various sections of the middle-class, some of whom that had hitherto been outside the sphere of higher education, as well as by some among the large and middle peasantry. Higher education, however, was still beyond the reach of much of the population. The number of students per 1000 of the population was 5.1 in 1968³¹⁴. Even in their own age group, persons between the ages of 17 and 24, those enrolled in higher education accounted for only 3.9% in 1976³¹⁵. The proportion of students belonging to Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe was unsurprisingly small in 1966-67- around 3 and 2.5 percent respectively³¹⁶. As a result of government policies these numbers increased to around 7 and 4 percent by 1974-75³¹⁷. While organised opposition to the policy of reservation as a major issue within student politics did not emerge until the 1980s, signs of the underlying tensions were visible even in how these small demographic changes were received.

With higher education not firmly established in the Gujarat region at the turn of the century, students were not active during the Swadeshi Movement and there was no student organisation of note until the establishment of an Ahmedabad branch of the

³¹⁴ Directorate of Education, Government of Gujarat, *Education in Gujarat State 1968-69: Statistical Epitome as on 31st March 1969*, 11–13.

³¹⁵ Ministry of Education and Social Welfare Government of India, *Education in India 1974-75* (New Delhi: Government of India, 1978).

³¹⁶ Statistics & Information Division, Ministry of Education & Social Welfare, Government of India, *Progress of Education of Scheduled Castes & Scheduled Tribes 1966-67* (New Delhi: Statistics & Information Division, Ministry of Education & Social Welfare, Government of India, 1973), 18, 59.

³¹⁷ Ministry of Education and Social Welfare, Government of India, *Progress of Education of Scheduled Castes & Scheduled Tribes 1974-75* (New Delhi: Ministry of Education and Social Welfare, Government of India, 1978), 32,62.

Students' Brotherhood in 1910³¹⁸. It was only in 1920, with the Non-Cooperation Movement, that student politics first emerged in the region and the small student body actively participated in it³¹⁹. Following this, students remained active in politics in some form or the other until the end of the colonial period. Students were a part of both the Civil Disobedience and Quit India Movements, some students even losing their lives to police firing during the latter. There was also a month-long strike at Gujarat College after students were penalised for skipping exams to attend a protest against the Simon Commission. This was one of the longest student strikes in the country, at the time, GV Mavlankar, India's first speaker, represented the students as their lawyer and the college was forced to back down as the strike received public support³²⁰.

Following independence, students were particularly active in the agitation for a separate Gujarat state. The States Reorganisation Commission, formed in response to demands for the creation of states on a linguistic basis, submitted its report in 1955 recommending, among other things, the existing Bombay State remain bilingual with the further inclusion of Saurashtra and Kutch States³²¹. This was opposed, by both the Gujarati and Marathi speaking populations. On 8 August 1956, a day which had symbolic importance because of the Quit India Movement, students led a procession at Ahmedabad in support of the demand for a separate state was fired on by police, resulting in the deaths of five students. The police repression sparked off protests that attracted the support of different sections of the population. The ensuing agitation was

³¹⁸ Anil Rajimwale, *History of Student Movement in India: Origins and Development (1920-1947)* (New Delhi: Manak Publications, 2001), 60–61.

³¹⁹ Rajimwale, *History of Student Movement in India: Origins and Development (1920-1947)*, 197.

³²⁰ Rajimwale, *History of Student Movement in India: Origins and Development (1920-1947)*, 198–201.

³²¹ For more on the integration of different regions of Gujarat into the Indian Union see J. R. Wood, 'British versus Princely Legacies and the Political Integration of Gujarat', *The Journal of Asian Studies* 44, no. 1 (1984): 65–99.

called the *Mahagujarat* (Greater Gujarat) Agitation³²². The central government eventually gave in to the demand and new states of Gujarat and Maharashtra were created on 1 May 1960.

Having played an important role in the *Mahagujarat* Agitation, after state formation there was a brief lull in student politics in Gujarat. There were sporadic incidents primarily over issues related to examinations. For instance, in December 1965, students in Jamnagar demanded leniency in examinations because they had faced continuous blackouts during the war with Pakistan earlier in the year³²³ and in October 1966 post-graduate students at GU abstained from classes protesting a change in the pattern of question papers³²⁴. Incidents such as these were, however, few and far between. This changed in 1967 and a long period of student activity began.

Section II Re-emergence of Student Politics 1967-1972

Establishment of Saurashtra University and the Fee-hike Agitation 1967

Two simultaneous agitations following the summer academic break in 1967 marked the beginning of a tumultuous period in Gujarat student politics. The Navnirman Agitation has for obvious reasons, overshadowed all other developments, and little attention is paid to student politics prior to it. However, there are earlier antecedents in student politics between 1967 and 1972; these are of interest in their own right, but also because they provide context and understanding of the Navnirman Agitation.

³²² For a recent study on the politics around martyrdom during Mahagujarat see Riho Isaka, 'Stories of "Martyrs" in the Maha Gujarat Movement', *International Journal of South Asian Studies* 7 (2015): 87–108.

³²³ 'Students Meet Governor', *The Times of India*, 18 December 1965.

³²⁴ PTI, 'Gujarat Students Boycott Classes', *The Times of India*, 8 October 1966.

One agitation was related to the question of where the headquarter of the new SU to be created out of GU³²⁵, was to be located. In discussing the details of the agitation as well as the forces that were at play, the thesis relied on previously unutilised material such as reports in the contemporary press, government records, confidential official correspondence and the material provided in a report of a Commission of Inquiry into an incident of police firing during the agitation.

Deciding between Rajkot and Bhavnagar, both educationally and politically important centres in Saurashtra, proved to be a difficult task for the Congress government. In 1964, a Committee under the VC of GU recommended that the university be established at Bhavnagar³²⁶. However, the recommendation of the Committee was ignored and in May 1967, when the university was established, the government announced that the headquarter would be Rajkot³²⁷.

This decision caused outrage across party lines in Bhavnagar, including within the ruling party. Five Congress MLAs from Bhavnagar district, including the chief whip of the Congress in the Gujarat Legislative Assembly, resigned in protest³²⁸. An All-Party Action Committee was formed and Bhavnagar town became the epicentre of protests. While the Action Committee primarily comprised of representatives of political parties active in the district, the Congress, Swatantra Party, the CPI and the BJS, it also

³²⁵ Another university that was created as a result of this division was the South Gujarat University at Surat.

³²⁶ Secretary to the Governor, 'Location of the University in Saurashtra Region', 6 July 1964, U. No. 0086503, GS XI/64, File No. 1, 4-5, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

³²⁷ J.M. Sheth, *Report on The Incidents and Police Firing at Mahuva Town in Bhavnagar District on the 14th July, 1967* (Ahmedabad: Government of Gujarat, 1968).

³²⁸ Tol News Service, '3 Congress MLAs Quit', *The Times of India*, 9 June 1967; Tol News Service, 'H.Desai Emerges as "real Strong Man" of the State', *The Times of India*, 6 September 1967.

included some students³²⁹. The Committee gave calls for strikes, indefinite fasts, and other protests, which were rarely peaceful and often involved student led rioting. A mob that included former Congress members and students even burned down the Bhavnagar District Congress Committee office³³⁰.

The agitation did not remain confined to Bhavnagar town alone but spread to other towns in the district that had significant student populations with more such action Committees being formed and much of May and July of 1967 saw violent protests and *bandhs*. At some places the issues taken up went beyond the location of SU. For instance, at Mahuva, the action Committee which included students, protested against the “anarchy prevailing in the civil supply department”³³¹. A Mahuva bandh was organised, and shop keepers were instructed to co-operate with “student-friends” to ensure its imposition³³². Police atrocities also became a major issue for students and there were allegations of brutal lathi charges and the wanton use of tear gas shells. With the death of a sixteen-year-old student in an altercation with the police matters escalated further and there were student processions as well as stoning of educational institutions, government offices and even police stations³³³.

By August, the government which did not have a very large majority, was facing a stiff test in the Assembly from the *Swatantra* Party, the primary opposition, and the Bhavnagar dissidents. There were rumours of horse-trading and plans of toppling the

³²⁹ Tol News Service, ‘Another Day of Mob Fury in Bhavnagar: DCC Is Dissolved’, *The Times of India*, 24 May 1967.

³³⁰ Tol News Service, ‘Another Day of Mob Fury in Bhavnagar: DCC Is Dissolved’.

³³¹ Sheth, *Report on The Incidents and Police Firing at Mahuva Town in Bhavnagar District on the 14th July, 1967*, 23.

³³² Sheth, *Report on The Incidents and Police Firing at Mahuva Town in Bhavnagar District on the 14th July, 1967*.

³³³ Tol News Service, ‘Mobs on Rampage in Mahuva and Bhavnagar’, *The Times of India*, 16 July 1967.

ministry³³⁴. There was a simultaneous, wide-spread fee-hike agitation by students at Ahmedabad, discussed below. Fighting on many fronts, the government reached a compromise with the Bhavnagar agitators. Both Bhavnagar and Rajkot were made headquarters of the new university³³⁵ and this system continued until a separate Bhavnagar University was established in 1978.

While the agitation over the location of SU was raging at Bhavnagar, students at Ahmedabad were demanding a roll back of tuition fees. As noted earlier, there had been an increase of colleges under private management. In 1967, out of the 177 affiliated colleges in Gujarat only 21 were managed by the government and 19 by the universities. The rest were privately managed and enrolled 67% of all students³³⁶. A majority of these privately managed colleges received grants-in-aid to varying degrees, to cover expenses of running the institutions. While earlier, colleges were allowed greater control over fees and amount of surplus made, following changes, from May 1965 onwards, colleges affiliated to GU had to get prior approval to increase fees above a certain level³³⁷. When in May 1967, the government withdrew this limitation, privately managed colleges, most of them located in Ahmedabad, immediately attempted to increase fees. Their case was that the several increases in DA rates announced by the government in 1966-67 coupled with rising prices of consumables and laboratory materials had increased the financial burden on them.

³³⁴ Tol News Service, 'H.Desai Emerges as "real Strong Man" of the State'.

³³⁵ The Vice Chancellor would be at Rajkot while a pro-Vice Chancellor was stationed at Bhavnagar.

³³⁶ Bureau of Economics and Statistics, Government of Gujarat, *Factbook on Manpower*, 112; L.R. Desai, *Binsarkari Collejone Sahayak Grant Aapvana Prashn Ange Tapaas Karva Sarkare Neemeli Samitino Aehvaal (in Gujarati) [Report of the Commission Appointed by the Government to Inquire into the Question of Grant-in-Aid to Private Colleges]* (Ahmedabad: Government Press, 1968), 23.

³³⁷ N.G. Shelat, *Report of the Committee on College Finances 1971* (Gandhinagar: Government Central Press, 1971), 1–2.

They had, therefore, been forced to increase tuition fees by Rs. 20 for the following year³³⁸. This attempted increase in tuition fees was the trigger for a students' agitation in May 1967.

At Ahmedabad, students formed a "Fee Rise Resistance Committee" and "launched" an agitation³³⁹. During the agitation, students, most particularly in the older parts of Ahmedabad city, attempted to disrupt public life. They went on hunger strikes, led protest marches, and attacked buses and college buildings. Almost five hundred students managed to successfully *gherao*³⁴⁰ an important bus terminal in Ahmedabad for many hours³⁴¹. Most colleges and schools remained shut and those that didn't were attacked by "violent student mobs" ³⁴². Along with this, university teachers and opposition parties, especially the left-leaning *Mahagujarat Janata Parishad* (MJP)³⁴³, supported the agitating students. With the situation threatening to go out of hand the government was forced to intervene. Days before the students planned to shut down the city, it offered them a compromise. It proposed that a committee be set up to look into the issue while it would pay the colleges Rs. 10 per student per year provided they reduced fees by the same amount. After initially rejecting the offer, the Resistance Committee was convinced by some leaders of the opposition to accept it and the *bandh* call was withdrawn³⁴⁴. While students had successfully managed to force the

³³⁸ Samuel Paul, *Grant-in-Aid to Affiliated Colleges in the State of Gujarat: Report of Committee on College Finances 1977* (Ahmedabad: Government of Gujarat, 1977), 5–6.

³³⁹ Tol News Service, 'Grant to Gujarat Colleges to Counter Fee Rise', *The Times of India*, 2 August 1967.

³⁴⁰ A *gherao* is a tactic of surrounding and preventing the intended target from leaving until demands are met. For more see Sugata Dasgupta, Ronen K. Bhattacharjee, and Surendra V. Singh, *The Great Gherao of 1969: A Case Study of Campus Violence and Protest Methods* (Orient Longman, 1974), 3.

³⁴¹ Tol News Service, 'Protesting Students Turn Violent in Ahmedabad', *The Times of India*, 27 June 1967.

³⁴² Tol News Service, 'Protesting Students Turn Violent in Ahmedabad'.

³⁴³ The MJP was a left-wing party led by trade-unionist Indulal Yagnik formed in 1956.

³⁴⁴ Tol News Service, 'Grant to Gujarat Colleges to Counter Fee Rise'.

government into intervening on their behalf, this was the only the first chapter in a longer struggle between students and administrations of private colleges that were looking to raise fees to ensure their profits remained unaffected.

These two agitations represented the re-emergence of student politics in Gujarat. They were an illustration of how protests over academic or relatively minor student issues could spill over to include issues that were relevant to other sections of the population, as was the case during the SU agitation. In that case, the political action did not remain restricted to the location of the university but extended to rising prices and food shortages, regarding which students and non-students protested together. They also illustrated the comparative ease with which a protest by students on what was exclusively a student issue could easily bring into play various other forces and create political instability.

Student Issues as Central to Political Activity

Between 1967 and 1972, while issues of state, national or international politics did occasionally have mobilising potential amongst students, this was not the norm. One such exception was, in 1969, on a call given by the Gujarat *Vidyarthi* Sangh/Senate (GVS)³⁴⁵, students at many colleges in Gujarat went on a token strike to protest the “ouster” of Morarji Desai from the cabinet and the central government’s “apathy” towards the Narmada and Mithapur projects. Students forced educational institutions to shut down and burned effigies of the PM³⁴⁶. Similarly, during the Bangladesh liberation struggle there were different forms of solidarity demonstrations in all

³⁴⁵ GVS was Congress affiliated and later chose to side with the Cong(O). Congress sources refer to it as ‘Senate’ while government sources call it ‘Sangh’.

³⁴⁶ Tol News Service, ‘Students Protest against Morarji’s Ouster’, *The Times of India*, 29 July 1967.

universities, some of them turning into violent confrontations, such as one at MSU. Here, students stayed away from classes in response to a call given by the union and attended a meeting in which they burnt effigies of Yahya Khan, Bhutto, and a Pakistani plane. They also condemned the blowing up of a hijacked Indian Airlines plane³⁴⁷. Following this, a march was taken out through the city. Students shouting anti-Pakistan slogans, clashed, first with a section of people in town, and then with the police. The police, eventually, resorted to firing and lobbing tear gas shells to disperse the crowd³⁴⁸. Such mobilisations were, however, rare, and isolated. Even at the level of state politics, it was only in 1973 that students attempted to consciously assert themselves.

Following the two large agitations of 1967 unrest and protest over student issues remained the mainstay of student politics. These were usually specific local issues, including academic matters of different kinds, that were directly related to students' lives. This included protests such as those over implementation and expansion of the ATKT system³⁴⁹. It took a student agitation for its implementation in SU in 1971³⁵⁰ and at MSU, students went on strike and attacked the university office demanding that students failing in two subjects should be allowed to keep term³⁵¹. Also included could be protests over attendance policy as was the case at SV Engineering College, Surat in 1970 where according to a report in the contemporary press, the administrative

³⁴⁷ DM, Baroda to Home Secretary, Gandhinagar, 'Wireless Message No.1/Misc/5 R/266/71', 2 November 1971, U. No. 0087405, 28-29, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

³⁴⁸ Tol News Service, 'Rioting Crowd Fired on in Baroda', *The Times of India*, 6 February 1971.

³⁴⁹ ATKT stands for Allowed to Keep Term. A system by which students who have failed a certain number of courses are not held back.

³⁵⁰ PTI, 'Students End Agitation', *The Times of India*, 27 May 1971.

³⁵¹ Secretary to Home Department (N.D. Buch), 'Secret D.O. No. V-2/Part 2(72)' (Gandhinagar, 6 December 1972), U. No. 0086926, Untitled File, 838-844, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

offices of the college were raided and “all the office records, answer papers... and furniture” was burned by students demanding the minimum attendance policy be scrapped and those barred from answering exam due to it be allowed to do so³⁵². While some protests were the result of long-standing educational grievances, there were others which were spontaneous outbursts over issues that were not strictly educational but still of importance to students. For instance, college students in Rajkot went on a three-day strike because a principal had “insulted” an elected student representative³⁵³. On another occasion, again at Rajkot, students struck for several days to protest the “injustice done to Rajkot” at a university sporting event³⁵⁴.

Away from the main centres of higher education, students agitated for their own set of demands. At Jamnagar, students threatened a *bandh* in demanding a medical faculty and the office of a Deputy Registrar to be located in the town³⁵⁵. At Junagadh, students demanded and secured the commencement of MSc classes with Chemistry as a subject³⁵⁶. At Lalan college, Bhuj, students went on strike for almost two weeks even securing the support of political parties to press the Gujarat University to make Bhuj, instead of Mandvi, the centre of all examinations in Kutch³⁵⁷.

With these protests being localised, it was possible for student demands to be of a contradictory nature, reflecting the absence of co-ordination and organisation within

³⁵² UNI, ‘Students Attack College near Surat’, *The Times of India*, 1 May 1970.

³⁵³ Tol News Service, ‘Strike Wave Hits Colleges in Saurashtra’, *The Times of India*, 28 September 1968.

³⁵⁴ Tol News Service, ‘Strike Wave Hits Colleges in Saurashtra’.

³⁵⁵ Tol News Service, ‘Jamnagar Students Told Not to Start Stir’, *The Times of India*, 21 August 1967.

³⁵⁶ Secretary to the Governor (A.D. Joshi to (Member of Parliament) N.R. Vekaria, ‘Untitled Letter’, 31 July 1971, U. No. 0087394, Correspondence with M.P.s & M.L.A.s, President rule-I 1971, 105-106, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

³⁵⁷ Home Department (Government of Gujarat), ‘Secret Brief Note on the Political Situation in Gujarat during the Current Year (1973) with Special Reference to Law and Order’, nd, 226–27, U. No. 0087303, G.S. XXVII/73, 226-230, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

student politics. Protests at MSU and SGU regarding English as the medium of instruction are particularly illustrative of this. Police entered the MSU campus to break up a violent student protest, arrested at least 20 students and injured several others. The students had been on strike for the preceding five days in support of their demand for the continuation of English as the medium of instruction at MSU which they believed was central to the special nature of MSU³⁵⁸. The protest was eventually withdrawn only after the CM of the state assured them that there were no plans to change the set-up of MSU³⁵⁹. Coincidentally, on the same day, police entered the SGU campus at Surat when an indefinite fast that the students were on, took a “violent turn”. This too resulted in multiple arrests and injuries to both students and police. Their demands, like at MSU, were soon acceded to by the government. However, unlike at MSU, students here had an anti-English position and saw it more as a hinderance to their progress rather than a tool for social mobility. Their primary demand was that for making passing in English non-mandatory for promotion³⁶⁰.

The picture that emerges from a study of the sources, both official and non-official, is one of student politics divided into colleges and universities each functioning in their own domain, having their separate, specific, and sometimes contradictory demands. Further, there is no evidence of significant partisan student organisations, with a state-wide presence, nor is there evidence of attempts by official student unions to connect or organise at an all-Gujarat level.

³⁵⁸ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret F.R. No. 112’, 4 September 1972, U. No. 0087330, Untitled File, 289-295, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

³⁵⁹ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret F.R. No. 112’.

³⁶⁰ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret F.R. No. 112’.

Despite being restricted in terms of issues and largely unorganised, given the historical conditions, student politics of the time, did play a significant role. While their demands were localised, it did not mean, as we have already noted above, that matters were always resolved at the level of the college or university. Student protests often ended in altercations with the police, and this meant that matters could escalate and even go so far as the state Assembly. This was the case, when police entered MSU campus and lathi charged students protesting the building of a wall on campus, injuring not only students but also the staff including even the pro-Vice Chancellor. This matter was raised in the Assembly and an inquiry by the Inspector General of Police, ordered³⁶¹. There were also cases of interventions from the governor and cabinet ministers, who stepped in to resolve issues to ensure that matters did not escalate. In one case students even managed to get an audience with the PM over a local issue. Students at the Jamnagar Medical college, in June 1967, demanding the transfer of a professor, having led violent protests³⁶², threatening to organise a strike and hold black flag demonstrations during the PM's visit to the town, succeeded in securing the positive intervention of the CM and PM in the matter³⁶³. Thus, although not directly concerned with the goings on of state or national politics, politics over student issues witnessed political intervention that ended up making these protests political. Given

³⁶¹ Tol News Service, 'M.S. Varsity to Close down for a Week', *The Times of India*, 21 July 1969; Tol News Service, 'Police Action beyond Limit in Baroda Admitted', *The Times of India*, 13 August 1969; PTI, '25 Hurt in Baroda Stir', *The Times of India*, 24 July 1969.

³⁶² PTI, 'Students on Fast', *The Times of India*, 1 August 1967; Tol News Service, 'Students Go on Strike Again: Jamnagar Protest', *The Times of India*, 14 September 1967.

³⁶³ Tol News Service, 'Students Give up Black Flag Plan', *The Times of India*, 30 September 1967.

the social composition of the student body, for the majority of students this was most likely their first experience of political conflicts³⁶⁴.

Fee-Hike Agitation 1971

The Committee formed as a result of the student agitation against the 1967 fee-hike submitted its report in March 1968, strongly recommending that the fee structure in privately run colleges be regulated by universities to which they were affiliated. While the university acts of SGU and SU already contained such a provision, the GU Act of 1949 did not³⁶⁵. Following this, it was only the “leftist student organisations and opposition parties”³⁶⁶ that routinely took up the issue of high fees and non-implementation of the Committee’s recommendations³⁶⁷. In August 1969, the left opposition, particularly the CPM and student organisations such as the *Mahagujarat Nawjuvan* Sangh (MNS), Gujarat Students’ Federation (GSF) and the *Pragatishil Vidyarthi* Sangh (PVS), even organised a successful strike that saw the closure of all educational institutions in Ahmedabad³⁶⁸. Notably, the strike was opposed, without much success, by the GVS “owing allegiance to the Congress” as claiming that the government was taking “steps to reduce fees”³⁶⁹. Sustained student pressure, particularly from the left, eventually led to the passage of an amendment to the GU

³⁶⁴ Manishi Jani revealed in a personal interaction that up till that point he had been away from any form of politics, and it was through the anti-fee hike agitation that he was first introduced to student politics as an undergraduate student at H.K. Arts College.

³⁶⁵ Education and Labour Department (K Branch), ‘Note for Discussion in Cabinet Meeting: On the Question of Amendment to the GU Act, 1949 for the Regulation of Fees Being Charged from Students at Affiliated Colleges’, 3 November 1969, U. No. 0086922, Untitled File, 141-143, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

³⁶⁶ Tol News Service, ‘Call for Strike in Ahmedabad Colleges’, *The Times of India*, 8 August 1969.

³⁶⁷ Tol News Service, ‘Call for Strike in Ahmedabad Colleges’; Tol News Service, ‘Gujarat Student Strike May Be Indefinite’, *The Times of India*, 2 September 1969.

³⁶⁸ Tol News Service, ‘Strike by Doctors and Students in Ahmedabad’, *The Times of India*, 9 August 1969.

³⁶⁹ Tol News Service, ‘Call for Strike in Ahmedabad Colleges’.

Act in 1970 that stipulated that any fee hike by private colleges had to first be sanctioned by the university.

Despite this, in April 1971, claiming that the Chancellor's Award³⁷⁰ which guaranteed a revision of pay scales and payment of arrears to all college and university teachers, irrespective of date of appointment would increase the financial burden on colleges, many private ASC, and Law colleges in Ahmedabad, decided to raise fees without seeking approval from GU. In this, they were backed by a union of privately managed colleges- the Society of Higher Educational Institutions³⁷¹ (SHEI) of which Kasturbhai Lalbhai, a millowner, head of the AES and GU Senate member, was the President.

In response, a statement was issued by the left-leaning GSF, stating that if the fee hike was not withdrawn, student organisations would mobilise against it³⁷². With the fee hike remaining in place, students and student organisations began protests which took the form of *dharnas* within colleges as well as at the GU campus. A section of students at GU formed a joint committee to co-ordinate the agitation; this was named the *Vidyarthi Madhyastha Samiti* (Students' Central Committee) (VMS). A delegation of student politicians who were a part of this Committee met with the Governor, the Minister of Education, and the SHEI, threatening to carry on with the agitation and resort to more drastic measures³⁷³. They were assured by the Governor, also the

³⁷⁰ A longstanding dispute between teachers and managements been settled by a form of arbitration with the Governor and his decision, with him being the Chancellor of GU was referred to as the 'Chancellor's Award'. For more see Jones and Jones, 'The Scholars' Rebellion: Educational Interests and Agitational Politics in Gujarat'.

³⁷¹ SHEI was formed in 1970 to represent the interests of private college managements and carry out negotiations with the Governor in pay disputes between teachers and managements.

³⁷² Staff Reporter, 'University to Implement Lalbhai Report', *The Times of India*, 24 April 1971.

³⁷³ Secretary to the Governor, 'Untitled Note Regarding Meeting with Student Politicians of GU', 9 May 1971, U. No. 0086719, G.S. XIII/71, 2, GSA, Gandhinagar, India; Secretary to the Governor (A.D. Joshi to Vekaria, 'Untitled Letter', 31 July 1971.

Chancellor of GU, that no colleges would be allowed to raise fees without the consent of the University. He made a public statement, in this regard, warning the SHEI that the grants of those colleges that did not comply would be withheld³⁷⁴. On their part, college managements threatened to shut down colleges if the fee-hike was not sanctioned³⁷⁵.

In the midst of this, the GU Syndicate, set up a Committee³⁷⁶ chaired by N.G. Shelat, a retired High Court Judge, to inquire as to whether the fee hike was justified or not. Students' and teachers' organisations were dissatisfied with the composition of the Committee which had no representation from their numbers but included two persons who were trustees of the private colleges that had raised their fees³⁷⁷. The Committee received numerous representations, even from those that opposed its composition, and submitted its report to the GU's statutory bodies by 20 May. It recommended, among other things, a nominal increase in fees in some science colleges and in those arts colleges that offered more than 10 major subjects but also recommended ending the policy of charging uniform laboratory breakage charges from each student and laboratory charges for mathematics students³⁷⁸. When the report was placed before the Syndicate, most recommendations were accepted but the fee hike was rejected- a decision that was welcomed by student organisations³⁷⁹.

³⁷⁴ Governor of Gujarat, 'Secret F.R. No. 81', 17 May 1971, 81, U. No. 0087329, Untitled File, 65-70, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

³⁷⁵ Staff Reporter, 'Threat by Colleges "a Hasty Step"', *The Times of India*, 11 May 1971.

³⁷⁶ The other members of the Committee were Jhinabhai Desai, Ranjit Shastri and Ishwarbhai Patel (ex-VC of SPU).

³⁷⁷ Staff Reporter, 'Teachers Attack Fee Rise Panel', *The Times of India*, 18 May 1971.

³⁷⁸ Governor of Gujarat, 'Secret Weekly Report', 24 May 1971, U. No. 0087329, GS D.O. XIII/1970/71, 279-281, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

³⁷⁹ Staff Reporter, 'No Fee Rise in City Colleges', *The Times of India*, 21 May 1971.

The SHEI, after not being allowed to raise fees, followed through on its threat and stopped admissions to science colleges for the academic year 1971-72³⁸⁰. Student politicians of the VMS immediately went on hunger strike in front of the residence of President of the SHEI³⁸¹. At the same time, another action committee consisting of student and non-student volunteers belonging to the Cong (R), CPI, CPM and Praja Socialist Party went on hunger strike, barely 500 meters away, in front of Rajbhavan, the Governor's Residence³⁸². The combined effect of these was that the government was forced to intervene on behalf of the students. Another Committee, once again under the chairpersonship of N.G. Shelat, (Shelat (II) Committee), was formed. Unlike the first one, which had been formed by GU, the Shelat (II) Committee was constituted through a government order with a wider purview including not only the fee hike in Ahmedabad but also the question of non-government college finance in Gujarat³⁸³. In forming the Committee, the government agreed to give additional grants to colleges in dire need for that academic year but also instructed the managements to start admissions and withdraw the fee-hike³⁸⁴. With admissions open and the fee-hike revoked students also withdrew their agitation.

Organisations and Tendencies

Material related to the fee-hike agitation of 1971 including submissions to the two Shelat Committees and the reports themselves, read along with government notes,

³⁸⁰ Governor of Gujarat, 'Secret Weekly Report'.

³⁸¹ Staff Reporter, 'Stir Threat by City Student Leaders', *The Times of India*, 23 May 1971.

³⁸² Staff Reporter, 'Governor Critical of College Closure', *The Times of India*, 24 May 1971.

³⁸³ Government of Gujarat Resolution No. NGC. 1371/K 3 June 1971

³⁸⁴ Shelat, *Report of the Committee on College Finances 1971*, 11; Governor of Gujarat, 'Secret F.R. No. 82', 31 May 1971, U. No. 0087329, Untitled File, 98-105, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

contemporary press reports, the Dongerkery Commission Report³⁸⁵ shed some light on important aspects of student politics especially those related to important contemporary student demands, tendencies, and development of student organisations.

In terms of the student organisations and groups there were partisan student organisations of which four seem to be most active towards the end of this period. These were the ABVP of the RSS, the PVS that seemed to have shared a close relationship with the CPM, AISF having fraternal links to the CPI and the GVS which was the student wing of the Cong (O). From the above-mentioned sources, it is clear that none of these organisations had a state-wide presence, but each had areas of influence. Apart from GU where all were active albeit not to the same degree, the PVS was also active at SGU and to some extent at SU; GVS had a base at SGU, AISF at SU and the ABVP while active at SGU had a significant presence at SU. There were also small student groups that revolved around one or two student politicians with ambiguous political inclinations. Amongst these could be included a *Rashtriya Vidyarthi* Sangh (National Students' Organisation), led by one K.H. Godani who was the General Secretary of a science college in Ahmedabad³⁸⁶ and a *Rashtriya Vidyarthi Mandal* led by Pramod Shah³⁸⁷.

Having noted this, given the paucity of sources related to partisan and non-partisan organisations, while they do crop up sporadically it was not possible to follow their

³⁸⁵ See Chapter 1, Section III.

³⁸⁶ K.H. Godani to Governor of Gujarat, 'Memorandum Regarding the Fee-Hike', 26 May 1971, U. No. 0086719, G.S. XIII/71, 95-98, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

³⁸⁷ Noted as having given oral and written testimony to the Dongerkery Commission S.R. Dongerkery, *Report of the Commission on Modernization of University Acts* (Ahmedabad: Education and Labour Department, Government of Gujarat, 1972).

progress throughout the period under study in the thesis, consistently and minutely over shorter periods. As part of the thesis, it was only possible to note or sum-up the changes or transitions that occurred during these times.

Around the time of the second fee-hike agitation, another kind of student group also began to gain in prominence- the joint committees. These would go on to play an important role, so it is worth considering the origins of these committees.

The VMS was formed in 1971 to co-ordinate protests against the fee-hike and was one such organisation. It is best described as a “joint committee” that provided a rallying point for a student body that was largely unorganised. Formed when the agitation was initiated, it neither had any formal organisational structure nor any consistent political or ideological positions. It did not have formal membership and was for all intents and purposes a collective of student politicians and small groups that coordinated the agitation. It included those who were part of elected bodies, at the college or university level. Thus, of its four most prominent leaders, three were elected representatives, of their college unions while the fourth was a member of the university senate from the graduate law constituency³⁸⁸. Being informally organised, within it were accommodated representatives from other student organisations like J.V. Momin of the GVS or Nanu Vaidya of the College Students’ Union as well as others who were individual politicians. The VMS was, as we shall see, organisationally, a precursor to the NYS.

As discussed, student politics in Gujarat during that time presented a picture of disparate protests isolated in their universities and colleges. In the absence of strong

³⁸⁸ Secretary to the Governor, ‘Untitled Note Regarding Meeting with Student Politicians of GU’.

state-level organisations, it was committees like the VMS that provided a common rallying point for students. The VMS became the face of another agitation the following year. After protests against an increase in SSC examination fees in different cities³⁸⁹, the VMS called for an all-Gujarat strike demanding an “inquiry into malpractices in schools and colleges, end to commercialisation of education, raising of EBC limit from 2400 to 4800”³⁹⁰. While the agitation was soon called off, the VMS at least for a short time made students appear to be a better co-ordinated, state-wide force attempting to make common cause over issues that affected them.

The influence of the VMS on the student body and student politics must also not be overstated. Formed haphazardly and functioning in an ad hoc manner with minimal formal structure or organisation and real members, its ability to exercise control was limited. The primary reason for the agitation being withdrawn was that although it appeared that the VMS was in command, in terms of actual influence, its power went little beyond Ahmedabad. Even during the fee-hike agitation it was amongst those who admitted, to the Shelat (II) Committee that their influence on students was limited.

Submissions made to the Governor and both the Shelat Committees, that are available, also reveal the manner in which student organisations and politicians approached the question of the fee-hike. In examining these, one finds a remarkable similarity among different organisations. Apart from opposing the fee hike almost all submissions took the opportunity to make supplementary demands related to the state of higher education. Most organisations addressed at least one of the contemporary

³⁸⁹ PTI, ‘Bhavnagar Strike’, *The Times of India*, 30 November 1968; Chinu Panchal, ‘Student Unrest in Saurashtra: Official Ambivalence’, *The Times of India*, 5 December 1968.

³⁹⁰ UNI & PTI, ‘Gujarat SSC Fee Cut’, *The Times of India*, 3 August 1972.

issues in student politics such as the EBC income limit, the problem of educated unemployment³⁹¹, better hostel facilities, and provision of cheaper mess food³⁹².

Almost all the major organisations, rejected the management's argument that the fee-hike was due to the increase in teachers' salaries. They argued that the financial problems of the universities resulted from corruption in higher education. The *Shikshanik Brashtachar Virodhi Samiti* (Committee to Oppose Corruption in Education], a group that included primarily teachers but also some students, in its submission, refuted the claim of the managements and argued instead that it was their "greed" that had led to the fee-hike, noting that "some of the education societies in Ahmedabad used to make huge profits from the fees charged to students and never talked of a decrease in fees then but were talking of increasing fees today when their profits have decreased a little"³⁹³. It went on to allege, giving the example of NavGujarat College, that there were colleges that had been started for the express purpose of making huge profits through unfair means and charging exorbitant fees to students³⁹⁴. In attacking college managements, the case of NavGujarat College was cited by other student organisations³⁹⁵ as well as the GUATA³⁹⁶. In the submissions of the VMS³⁹⁷ and the ABVP³⁹⁸ one finds a similar emphasis on corruption in higher

³⁹¹ ABVP, 'Untitled Memorandum', 18 May 1971, U. No. 0086719, G.S. XIII/71, 36, GSA, Gandhinagar, India; VMS, 'Untitled Memorandum', 16 May 1971, U. No. 0086719, G.S. XIII/71, 22-27, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

³⁹² MNS and PVS to Chairman, Gujarat University Fee Hike Committee, 'Untitled Memorandum', 18 May 1971, U. No. 0086719, G.S. XIII/71, 40-43, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

³⁹³ Mahendra Shah, Convenor, Shikshanik Brashtachar Virodhi Samiti, 'Submission Regarding Fee Hike', 12 May 1971, U. No. 0086719, G.S. XIII/71, 37-39, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

³⁹⁴ Mahendra Shah, Convenor, Shikshanik Brashtachar Virodhi Samiti, 'Submission Regarding Fee Hike', 12 May 1971.

³⁹⁵ Godani to Governor of Gujarat, 'Memorandum Regarding the Fee-Hike', 26 May 1971.

³⁹⁶ Staff Reporter, 'Panel Report on Fee Rise', *The Times of India*, 17 May 1971.

³⁹⁷ VMS, 'Untitled Memorandum', 16 May 1971.

³⁹⁸ ABVP, 'Untitled Memorandum', 18 May 1971.

education. Taking up the issue of corruption in colleges, students placed themselves on a collision course with a rising force in Gujarat politics – Chimanbhai Patel, the CM at the time of the Navnirman Agitation and its first target. The Navnirman Agitation is dealt with in the next section.

While there was a wide consensus that the state and college managements should have primary responsibility for delivering higher education, there was a slight divergence on the role of private enterprise in education. Here the left-progressive tendency distinguished itself. For the ABVP, the VMS and many others, while the state was to bear certain responsibility, fifty percent according to the VMS, they did not demand the abolition of private educational institutions. They argued that students and parents too should shoulder certain amount of load in funding higher education. However, for organisations like the *Rashtriya Vidyarthi* Sangh which saw “no reason to have managements in colleges as that is not a business”³⁹⁹ and they demanded a nationalisation of education and the PVS and MNS, who in a joint submission, argued that “all the land, buildings and equipment that are required for education belong to private trusts and individuals who have done nothing but profit from them ... the government should ensure that these are handed over to it”⁴⁰⁰. While a left-progressive tendency could be discerned in view of higher education, even this was not very well defined. Nevertheless, as student politics started to get drawn into the network of wider politics by engaging with issues such as political corruption and price rise, conditions were created for political divisions to become increasingly pronounced.

³⁹⁹ Godani to Governor of Gujarat, ‘Memorandum Regarding the Fee-Hike’, 26 May 1971.

⁴⁰⁰ MNS and PVS to Chairman, Gujarat University Fee Hike Committee, ‘Untitled Memorandum’, 18 May 1971.

Section III The Navnirman Agitation

1973: The Year of Unrest

The Congress split into two parties in 1969, one led by Indira Gandhi known as the Congress (Requisition) (Cong (R)) and the other, which included a number of powerful older regional leaders, called the Congress (Organisation) (Cong (O)). Following the split, in most states the Cong (R) emerged as the more powerful group. Gujarat, the home state of one of the Cong (O)'s most prominent leaders, Morarji Desai, was an exception. Here, despite the split, the Cong (O) retained control of the state government and in the 1971 Lok Sabha elections, that the Cong (R) swept, Gujarat accounted for eleven of the sixteen seats the Cong (O) won across the country. Following the elections however, many MLAs defected and by May 1971, having lost his majority, CM Desai of the Cong(O), resigned. Elections to the Assembly were held in 1972 in which the Cong(R) won 140 out of 168 seats.

Deciding who the CM would be, however, proved to be a complicated task⁴⁰¹. At the time, the three chief contenders were Chimanbhai Patel, Ratubhai Adani and Kantilal Ghia. Instead of being chosen by MLAs in Gujarat, the CM ended up being picked by the PM and some of her trusted aides in Delhi who chose Ghanshyam Oza, by all accounts, a non-entity in Gujarat politics. While he was supported by Adani and the GPCC, President Jhinabhai Darji, both Ghia and Chimanbhai opposed his appointment. This meant that the party, by 1973 was split into two broad factions. One loyal to the party centre and Indira Gandhi which controlled the leadership of the state

⁴⁰¹ The following account of Congress infighting is based largely on J.R. Wood, 'Extra-Parliamentary Opposition in India: An Analysis of Populist Agitations in Gujarat and Bihar', *Pacific Affairs* 48, no. 3 (1975): 313–34; G. Shah, 'Anatomy of Urban Riots: Ahmedabad 1973', *Economic and Political Weekly* 9, no. 6/8 (1974): 233–40.

party organisation. The second faction which had the support of a majority of MLAs with its leaders Chimanbhai and Ghia were backed by the large-peasant and industrialist lobbies respectively. While the dissidents first worked covertly, by the middle of 1973, the Ghia-Chimanbhai faction revolted and openly defied the central leadership.

In June 1973, in what was a major embarrassment to the central leadership, 70 Cong (R) MLAs, were taken by Chimanbhai and Ghia to Panchvati Farms, a private farmhouse, near Ahmedabad where they declared their opposition to Oza continuing as CM stating that this had not been the wish of the state legislature party had imposed on them by the central leadership. On 27 June, Oza resigned leaving a headless ministry. With Oza gone and both Chimanbhai and Ghia, having chief-ministerial ambitions, they fell out. Ghia received Adani's and the central leadership's support, but Chimanbhai insisted on a vote to decide the issue. This demand was, grudgingly, acceded to and observers from the AICC were sent to Ahmedabad to conduct elections on 14 July, which Chimanbhai, not without much controversy, won, to become the CM.

Apart from the Cong (R) infighting, 1973 saw an upswing in student activity in the state. In March, BCom students at GU walked out of exam centres protesting "tough questions", "ransacked the university buildings and manhandled the vice-chancellor" following which authorities acceded to their demand of a re-examination⁴⁰². At a special convocation, SU students shouted slogans demanding "jobs and not degrees". They began heckling when the VC began his address and what followed was

⁴⁰² V Gangadhar, 'Deep-Rooted Student Discontent Led to Mass Agitation', *The Times of India*, 13 February 1974.

according to an account in the contemporary press, “a running dialogue” between him and the students⁴⁰³. In September, students went on strike at Ahmedabad demanding the postponement of their exams so that they could participate in flood relief activities⁴⁰⁴. In early December, some five hundred students from Petlad, around eighty kilometres from Ahmedabad, marched to GU and attacked its buildings protesting the suspension of their principal⁴⁰⁵. Although these protests were no doubt important, causing considerable distress to the administration, what set that year apart was the active interest taken by a section of students in state-level party politics.

While the Panchvati Farm Incident or *Prapanchvati* [a play on words], as it came to be popularly known, created pressure on the central leadership, it also created the conditions for students to intervene in party politics in the state. Following the toppling of the government, by July, organisations like the *Madhyastha Nagrik Samiti* (Central Citizens Committee, *Nagrik Samiti*) and the VMS started protesting “rising prices and the political situation in the state”⁴⁰⁶. Student organisations chose 12 to 14 July, the dates on which AICC observers would visit the city to settle the leadership question in the party, to organise programmes and protests. Different kinds of protests were called for by student organisations including a strike in all educational institutions in Ahmedabad for three days. The *Nagrik Samiti* organised a tableau in the city with sheep as the feuding Cong (R) politicians. While the original plan was to have 139 sheep to represent an equal number of Cong (R) MLAs, they were allowed only five.

⁴⁰³ UNI, ‘Students Demand Jobs’, *The Times of India*, 13 March 1973.

⁴⁰⁴ UNI, ‘Central Team in Gujarat to Study Flood Loss’, *The Times of India*, 20 September 1973.

⁴⁰⁵ ‘Petlad Collegena Vidyarthiono Gu. Uni. Par Hinsak Hamlo (in Gujarati) [Violent Attack by Petlad College Students on GU]’, *Sandesh*, 4 December 1973.

⁴⁰⁶ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret F.R. No. 7’, 19 July 1973, U. No. 0087331, FR from Jan 1973 to December 73, 98-102, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

Some students dressed as shepherds represented the leaders of the warring factions. This entertaining tableau formed part of a rally, which based on reports in the media, comprised of more than a hundred students and some teachers⁴⁰⁷. In addition to the strike in educational institutions, student organisations had also called for an Ahmedabad *bandh* to protest “political infighting in the ruling party and to highlight the demands of the student community”⁴⁰⁸. While the *bandh* was total in colleges and schools, multiple sources attest that it did not gain the support of the wider population. The Governor’s fortnightly report on the political situation in the state termed the bandh “a complete flop” and things remained peaceful for most of the day. The “trouble”, according to the government, started only at night when rumours began to spread, and mobs began attacking buses, schools, and looting shops⁴⁰⁹. Rioting in Ahmedabad continued for three days and included food riots with people looting shops selling essential commodities as well as attacks on shops and establishments motivated by communal ill-feeling⁴¹⁰. The three days of student protests and the *bandh* in Ahmedabad did contribute to the political instability but there is no evidence that directly links the riots to students or organisations that were protesting political corruption. The riots did, however, bring student involvement in politics to an abrupt halt. But, with conditions in the state deteriorating rapidly, students soon reappeared. Another clash, that set the stage for the Navnirman Agitation, was over the Vice Chancellorship of GU between the new CM, Chimanbhai and the GUATA. Chimanbhai had made his way to the pinnacle of state politics through university politics. He was

⁴⁰⁷ Tol News Service, ‘He Who Bleats the Loudest’, *The Times of India*, 13 July 1973, sec. 1.

⁴⁰⁸ Tol News Service, ‘Ahmedabad Bandh Partial’, *The Times of India*, 15 July 1973.

⁴⁰⁹ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret F.R. No. 7’.

⁴¹⁰ For more on the 1973 riots see Shah, ‘Anatomy of Urban Riots: Ahmedabad 1973’.

the President of MSUSU and after working as a Professor had founded an education society and a college of which he became the principal, beginning his foray into GU politics⁴¹¹. The proliferation of private institutions between 1960 and 1971⁴¹², particularly of “Arts and Commerce” colleges had been pioneered by Chimanbhai by either directly establishing colleges through his trust or indirectly by acting as a broker between the government and private managements seeking to capitalise on the grant-in-aid policy. In this way, Chimanbhai ended up exercising control over a large number of principals.

The two main elected statutory bodies of GU at the time were the Senate and Syndicate. The Senate was arguably the most crucial as it elected the VC and some members of the Syndicate were elected from within the Senate. Significantly, *all* Principals of affiliated colleges were its ex-officio members, with no limit to their number⁴¹³. In comparison, the number of teachers was limited to 28 and students had no representation. With the establishment of newer colleges, principals who were members of the Senate kept increasing and by 1970 principals alone had an absolute majority accounting for 131 of the total 254 members⁴¹⁴. This meant that with his control over the managements of new colleges, Chimanbhai was able to call the shots in the Senate and control the election of VCs⁴¹⁵.

In his forays in university politics, Chimanbhai was opposed by the GUATA, which was formed in 1962 to protect teachers of GU and affiliated colleges, from unfair practices

⁴¹¹ Jones and Jones, ‘The Scholars’ Rebellion: Educational Interests and Agitational Politics in Gujarat’.

⁴¹² See Chapter 1, Section I.

⁴¹³ Dongerkery, *Report of the Commission on Modernization of University Acts*.

⁴¹⁴ Dongerkery, *Report of the Commission on Modernization of University Acts*, 22.

⁴¹⁵ Jones and Jones, ‘The Scholars’ Rebellion: Educational Interests and Agitational Politics in Gujarat’, 464.

followed by many private institutions that had started to mushroom at the time. The GUATA had been demanding the revision of the University Acts to make the structure of the statutory bodies more equal⁴¹⁶. Due to this pressure, the Dongerkery Commission was formed to “modernise” the different university acts in the state. In its report, submitted in 1971, it noted the disproportionate representation of principals and made a number of progressive recommendations for the revision of all University Acts in the state including, a maximum limit on members from the principals’ constituency and student representation.

The Commission’s recommendations were not immediately implemented. The term of the sitting VC was due to expire at the end of November 1972, and a date was set for the election of a new VC, under the provisions of the old Act. When a resolution that proposed either granting an extension to the VC or keeping elections in abeyance was rejected by the Syndicate, the GUATA went on fast inside the GU compound to stall election proceedings⁴¹⁷. The GUATA withdrew its protest only after they had been assured by the Education Minister that the tenure of the VC who would be elected would last only until fresh elections were held under the amended act. As a result, Ishwarbhai Patel, universally recognised as Chimanbhai’s man, was elected VC of GU.

As one of the last major acts of the Oza ministry, the GU Act was amended in February 1973⁴¹⁸. Amongst the recommendations incorporated were in the composition of the

⁴¹⁶ Dongerkery, *Report of the Commission on Modernization of University Acts*, 18.

⁴¹⁷ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret F.R. No. 118’, 7 December 1972, U. No. 0087330, Untitled File, 419-33, GSA, Gandhinagar, India; Secretary to Home Department (N.D. Buch), ‘Secret D.O. No. V-2/Part 2(72)’.

⁴¹⁸ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret F.R. No. 124’, 5 March 1973, U. No. 0087331, FR from Jan 1973 to December 73, 51-55, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

GU Senate (which was renamed the Court), the number of seats for principals was limited to 35, the seats for teachers were raised to 48. The act provided for 12 student representatives and the total number of seats were lowered from 258 to approximately 146⁴¹⁹. The Syndicate, now called the Executive Council was also modified to consist of 20 members, of whom 11 would be elected by the Court.

Although the Act was passed in February, the VC, by approaching the courts, managed to stall elections⁴²⁰. By the time he resigned in June 1973⁴²¹, his benefactor, Chimanbhai had become the CM. In elections to the Senate that were finally held in October the GUATA was able to get most of the students and teachers that it supported elected to the Court but not to the Council. Its candidate for VC also lost to Ishwarbhai, 55-81⁴²². It was alleged that Chimanbhai had used his position as CM to influence the votes of “special constituencies” such as registered graduates, community representatives etc⁴²³, in addition to instructing the ex-officio government members to vote for his candidate. Following as it did on the heels of Prapanchvati, this interference in university affairs, for a large section of students, further tarnished Chimanbhai's image.

Against this backdrop of tension over university politics, there were also emerging tensions over living conditions and the economy. During 1973, price increases were

⁴¹⁹ The exact number differed because former VCs residing in Ahmedabad were considered ex-officio members of the Court.

⁴²⁰ Governor of Gujarat, 'Secret F.R. No. 4', 1 June 1973, U. No. 0087333, Untitled File, 42-44, GSA, Gandhinagar, India; Governor of Gujarat, 'Secret F.R. No. 126', 3 April 1973, U. No. 0087333, Untitled File, 26-29, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

⁴²¹ Governor of Gujarat, 'Secret F.R. No. 5', 18 June 1973, U. No. 0087333, Untitled File, 45-48, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

⁴²² *Proceedings of the Gujarat University Court 18-10-1973* (Ahmedabad: Gujarat University Press, 1973).

⁴²³ Jones and Jones, 'The Scholars' Rebellion: Educational Interests and Agitational Politics in Gujarat', 472.

being felt across Gujarat. Table 1, based on the estimate published in the Congress *Patrika*, the organ of the Cong (O) in Gujarati, has a comparison of prices between 1969 and 1973. Most contemporary sources, including government ones⁴²⁴, suggest that there was a doubling in the price of important commodities between 1969 and 1973, this source one was chosen for matters of convenience.

Table 1⁴²⁵

Commodity (20 Kg)	1969 Prices (in Indian Rupees)	1973 Prices (in Indian Rupees)
Wheat	22	46
Rice	35	72
Bajra (Millet)	18	34
Jowar (Sorghum)	15	30
Dal	30	65
Groundnut Oil (10 Kg)	36	75

Despite a bumper crop that year, a withdrawal of state control over industry allowed merchants to raise prices as well as freely export groundnut oil causing a steep

⁴²⁴ According to official figures also, there was an increase between 1972 and 1974 Rice 113.3%; Wheat 77.2%; Jowar 78.3%; Groundnut oil 91.5% for the Index numbers of retail price for agricultural commodities. Bureau of Economics and Statistics, Government of Gujarat, *Statistical Abstract Of Gujarat State 1979-1982*, 77–79.

⁴²⁵ Prabhakar Khamar, '1969 Thi 1973 Sudhinu Vadapradhanna Sashan Nu Sarvayyu [An Assesment of the PM's Rule from 1969 to 1973]', *Congress Patrika*, 26 January 1974.

increase in prices. This was accompanied by rumours of corruption, black marketeering and deals struck by Chimanbhai with the groundnut oil lobby. The state Civil Supplies Minister refuted the allegations, claiming that the “precarious” situation in the state, due to rising prices was because the Central Government, with its eye on elections in UP in February 1974 had made “drastic” cuts to the state’s allotment of food grains. He claimed, the allotment had been 1.14 lac tonnes during May and June which had been gradually cut over succeeding months falling to 15,000 tonnes by December⁴²⁶. Whatever the truth, it was the state government and particularly Chimanbhai who were held responsible for the price rise. By the end of December, food shortages and rising prices had become a sensitive issue and political parties and unions across the spectrum organised protests over this. With price rise affecting food bills in college messes, students joined other sections in these protests. At Rajkot, students participated in an anti-price-rise protest organised by the *BJS* and tried to storm the municipal corporation building⁴²⁷. Even the Cong (R) and CPI student bodies led a march to the office of the Civil Supplies Minister demanding “adequate quantities of food grains at reasonable prices”⁴²⁸.

Further, an attempt by the government to stem rising prices of rice backfired as the large and middle peasantry in Saurashtra and South Gujarat regions, who were staunch supporters of Chimanbhai, were up in arms against a levy imposed on paddy for this purpose. Under the leadership of a farmers’ organisation, the *Khedut Samaj*, and with the support of some opposition parties as well as sections within the Cong

⁴²⁶ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret F.R. No. 18’, 7 January 1974, U. No. 0087339, FR Jan 1974-Dec 1974, 2-10, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

⁴²⁷ ‘41 Hurt in Rajkot Lathi Charge’, *The Times of India*, 2 December 1972.

⁴²⁸ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret F.R. No. 17’, 17 December 1973, U. No. 0087331, FR from Jan 1973 to December 73, 196-200, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

(R), they launched an agitation against the levy at Bardoli⁴²⁹. The agitation involved violent protests as well as clashes between landowning peasants and *halpatis*- the landless agricultural labourers. In these, one person was killed, in Surat district, and *Khedut Samaj* leaders arrested⁴³⁰. Thus, as 1973 drew to a close, Gujarat was a veritable political tinderbox.

Events of the Agitation

Students, as noted previously, had started to protest against high food bills that had been caused by the food shortages and rising prices. The most important amongst these were the ones in December, at Lalbhai Dalpatbhai College of Engineering (LD), Ahmedabad, and Lukhdhirsiji Engineering College (LE), Morbi. At Morbi, where bills had risen by almost Rs. 80, students protested violently against the increase and the college was shut down for an indefinite period⁴³¹. At LD, not only was the mess bill Rs. 30 more than in November, students, as confirmed later by the government, were also issued a notice asking them to pay Rs. 45 in addition to the Rs. 80 that they had already deposited at the beginning of the term. Here too, students protested the charges, however, LD, unlike the LE was not shut down. With issues still unresolved, on 3 January students at LD called for a strike which snowballed to become the Navnirman Agitation.

The 3 January strike was a raucous affair. For possibly the first time in the institution's history, the administration asked the police to enter the college to break up the

⁴²⁹ The agitation continued until the middle of January and was withdrawn as the Navnirman Agitation grew more powerful and trained its guns on Chimanbhai.

⁴³⁰ Governor of Gujarat, 'Secret F.R. No. 18'.

⁴³¹ Governor of Gujarat, 'Secret F.R. No. 18'.

protests. According to reports in the press, there was an unusually brutal lathi charge and the police fired tear gas shells at the students inside the campus. “Eight truckloads” of policemen were said to have cordoned off the area, forcibly entered hostels and arbitrarily arrested over three hundred students from their rooms⁴³². Police entering the campus and treating students in this manner, as discussed later, was not a frequent occurrence in Gujarat. There was widespread condemnation of police action and the following day, protests spread to colleges across the city. Students at the hostels of MG Science, LM Pharmacy, and HL Commerce colleges, located in the GU area, attacked milk vans, and vandalised the mess⁴³³. A large group of students, marched first to the police station and then to the Cong (R) office, demanding the release of the arrested students⁴³⁴.

Alongside these protests against the police action, further violent protests led by students, political parties and trade unions, targeting the government on the issue of food shortage and high prices, continued unabated. According to a Governor’s fortnightly report, the “general pattern” of these protests was of an “attack on grain/oil godowns, looting of provision stores, damaging public properties such as buses, milk booths, bus-stops and attacking police station (sic) and houses of Congress MLAs”⁴³⁵. The BJS called for a Rajkot *bandh* while the Cong (O) shut down Surat⁴³⁶. At

⁴³² Staff Reporter, ‘Students Go on Rampage in City’, *The Times of India*, 4 January 1974.

⁴³³ Staff Reporter, ‘Students Go on Rampage Again’, *The Times of India*, 5 January 1974.

⁴³⁴ Staff Reporter, ‘326 City Students Released’, *The Times of India*, 5 January 1974.

⁴³⁵ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret F.R. No. 18’.

⁴³⁶ Tol News Service, ‘Cong(O) Call for Surat Bandh Today’, *The Times of India*, 10 January 1974; Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret F.R. No. 19’, 18 January 1974, U. No. 0087339, FR Jan 1974-Dec 1974, 11-16, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

Ahmedabad, the “14th August *Shramjivi Samiti*”⁴³⁷ (14th August Committee of Working People AUGCOM), a Marxist dominated organisation, call for a *bandh*, supported by the students, on the issues of price rise and scarcity brought the city to a standstill⁴³⁸. Protests were not limited to big cities with sixteen towns across the state observing a *bandh* on 12 January⁴³⁹. At Baroda, MSU students looted grain shops and go-downs alleging inadequate ration being provided to their mess and this devolved into what, the Times of India referred to as “the worst-ever food riots in Baroda”⁴⁴⁰. In addition to this, on 13 January, there was “the first open revolt” from within the party against the Chimanbhai ministry as some 25 Congress MLAs demanded the imposition of President’s Rule⁴⁴¹.

The government in response to the protests unleashed the police on the agitators. By 12 January, the police had already, by official estimates, fired 248 rounds at Ahmedabad, Baroda, Modasa, Visnagar, Dohad and Unjha resulting in 12 people killed and 57 injured⁴⁴². While police atrocities would get far worse later on in the agitation, even in the initial stages, demands for judicial inquiries into “police firing and excesses” were being made by “sections of the people and Press”⁴⁴³.

As protests continued, students attempted to provide coherent leadership to the agitation. Following a meeting with the CM on 8 January, student representatives from

⁴³⁷This was a body of 64 mainly white-collar trade unions formed on the eve of a strike on 14 August 1972 and was led by a left-wing journalist, G.Y. Patel. ‘Goal of Gujarat: The Makers of Revolution Speak to JANATA’, *JANATA*, 28 April 1974, 17.

⁴³⁸ Staff Reporter, ‘Curfew in Parts of City’, *The Times of India*, 10 January 1974.

⁴³⁹ ‘A Note on the Recent Mass Movement in Gujarat (Confidential and for the Exclusive Reference of the Members of the Working Committee of Congress (O))’, *Congress Bulletin*, April 1974, 53.

⁴⁴⁰ Tol News Service, ‘Origin of Baroda Trouble Shrouded in Mystery’, *The Times of India*, 12 January 1974.

⁴⁴¹ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret F.R. No. 19’.

⁴⁴² Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret F.R. No. 19’.

⁴⁴³ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret F.R. No. 19’.

GU, formed the *Yuvak Lagni Samiti* (Youth Solidarity Committee, YLS) and called for a strike in educational institutions the following day. The call was immediately supported by the AUGCOM, CPM and the Socialist Party. There was a meeting of elected student representatives of GU affiliated colleges and student Senate members. Having resolved to link up their struggle against high mess bills with the issues of the people- price rise, food scarcity, corruption etc. students met with Purshottam Mavalankar, an Independent MP from Ahmedabad, dissolved the YLS and formed, on 11 January⁴⁴⁴, the *Navnirman Yuvak Samiti* (Navnirman Youth Committee, NYS)⁴⁴⁵. The NYS, at the time of its establishment consisted of the elected student representatives and Mavlankar as the President of the advisory committee⁴⁴⁶. To “coordinate and intensify” the agitation, a joint action committee of the AUGCOM, NYS and Vidyarthi-Nagrik Sangh was also created⁴⁴⁷. The NYS upon its formation, focused its attention on the CM⁴⁴⁸ and “declared in unequivocal terms” that “they would not be satisfied” until the ministry had resigned⁴⁴⁹.

With a lull in activity during *Uttran*⁴⁵⁰ the authorities looked to restart educational institutions. This proved naïve. In response, the NYS ignoring, Mavlankar’s advice, called for an “educational boycott” from 16 to 25 January alongside week-long protests that included meetings, processions and gheraos⁴⁵¹. In response to their call, on 17

⁴⁴⁴ There are differing versions with respect to the date of the NYS’ foundation. These range between 9 and 13 January.

⁴⁴⁵ Staff Reporter, ‘City Students to Continue Stir’, *The Times of India*, 16 January 1974.

⁴⁴⁶ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret F.R. No. 19’.

⁴⁴⁷ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret F.R. No. 19’.

⁴⁴⁸ ‘A Note on the Recent Mass Movement in Gujarat (Confidential and for the Exclusive Reference of the Members of the Working Committee of Congress (O))’, 51.

⁴⁴⁹ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret F.R. No. 20’, 3 February 1974, U. No. 0087339, FR Jan 1974-Dec 1974, 17-23, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

⁴⁵⁰ A popular kite flying festival in Gujarat, celebrated annually on 14 January.

⁴⁵¹ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret F.R. No. 19’; Staff Reporter, ‘City Students to Continue Stir’.

January, a “300-strong” group of students attacked GU and set fire to the record room. They then gheraoed the VC and “ransacked” his office⁴⁵². In a special session, the GU Executive, controlled, as noted, by pro-Chimanbhai forces, condemned the students’ actions, decided to keep the university open and asked for police protection⁴⁵³. Mavlankar, because his advice had not been followed, resigned and with his exit the NYS became and remained an exclusively student body⁴⁵⁴.

Apart from brute force, the government tried different means to break the agitation. Following the gherao of the VC, Manishi Jani and Umakant Mankad, President and Secretary of the NYS, were detained under MISA⁴⁵⁵ and other prominent members of the NYS immediately went underground. In this situation, a meeting of GSs of colleges controlled by Chimanbhai was convened by the CM. Here they and two other student politicians who were not a part of the NYS signed an agreement that they would let classes function normally from the next day and in return the those detained would be released⁴⁵⁶. Following the release of the detained students, however, in protest, the agreement was torn outside the university Senate Hall, and it was decided that the agitation continue⁴⁵⁷. The following day, 18 persons were detained under MISA including the convenor of the AUGCOM, several CPM leaders and the NYS President⁴⁵⁸.

⁴⁵² Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret F.R. No. 19’.

⁴⁵³ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret F.R. No. 19’.

⁴⁵⁴ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret F.R. No. 19’.

⁴⁵⁵ Staff Reporter, ‘Student Leaders Held’, *The Times of India*, 18 January 1974.

⁴⁵⁶ Staff Reporter, ‘Student Leaders’ Assurance to CM’, *The Times of India*, 19 January 1974.

⁴⁵⁷ Staff Reporter, ‘Student Leaders Repudiate Agreement’, *The Times of India*, 21 January 1974.

⁴⁵⁸ Staff Reporter, ‘18 Held under MISA in Ahmedabad’, *The Times of India*, 22 January 1974.

New *samitis* (committees) were formed at Baroda, Valsad and Surat where protest actions were organised⁴⁵⁹. At the behest of the Surat Samiti, students marched to the residences of Cong(R) MLAs and at one such march the police used 150 tear gas shells to disperse the students⁴⁶⁰. At Ahmedabad too, apart from the central NYS there were local samitis which called for daily programmes and protests. Although not always under the control of the NYS, a point discussed later, they did however contribute to making the agitation more militant. Near Ellis bridge, in Ahmedabad, a group of students, responding to the call of one such local samiti, surrounded and attacked the car of the state Finance Minister while some 1500 students hijacked 36 buses and attempted to lead them in a procession to the CM's house⁴⁶¹. There were almost daily clashes between police and student protestors in which firing was often resorted to and by 30 January, 40 people had been killed due to this, according to official estimates⁴⁶².

It was the Gujarat Bandh on 25 January that turned the tide decisively against Chimanbhai. The call for a bandh to protest rising prices and 'police excess' was first given by the AUGCOM on 11 January⁴⁶³. As the Governor's fortnightly report noted, support from various quarters for the bandh kept pouring in such that on the eve of the bandh, almost all associations, unions and political parties were in its favour⁴⁶⁴. The only notable exceptions were the Gandhian mill workers' union the TLA and the Sangh, including the BJS⁴⁶⁵. The absence of the TLA is not directly relevant to the

⁴⁵⁹ ToI News Service, 'Navnirman Samity in Three More Cities', *The Times of India*, 19 January 1974.

⁴⁶⁰ Governor of Gujarat, 'Secret F.R. No. 19'.

⁴⁶¹ Staff Reporter, 'Students Hijack 6 Buses', *The Times of India*, 24 January 1974.

⁴⁶² Governor of Gujarat, 'Secret F.R. No. 20'.

⁴⁶³ Staff Reporter, 'Gujarat Bandh on January 25', *The Times of India*, 12 January.

⁴⁶⁴ Governor of Gujarat, 'Secret F.R. No. 20'.

⁴⁶⁵ Governor of Gujarat, 'Secret F.R. No. 19'.

study and the absence of the Sangh is dealt with in Chapter 5. The bandh itself was almost complete as much of the state was shut down. There were street battles between people and the police. At Ahmedabad, people, according to an official report, “tried to take over 200 shops dealing in food-grains, edible oils and other provisions”⁴⁶⁶. As a result of the bandh, apart from the major cities, forty-three small towns, accounting for two-thirds of the state, were under curfew for 37 hours⁴⁶⁷. By 28 January, at Ahmedabad, in what was an unprecedented move at the time, the army was brought in to ensure that the curfew was properly imposed⁴⁶⁸.

Following the bandh, Cong (R) MLAs became targets for the agitators, and they were attacked or gheraoed, as a governor’s fortnightly report puts it, “irrespective of the group (faction) to which they belonged”⁴⁶⁹. Unique protests were also organised and to secure mass participation. Of these, the most popular was the joint call by the NYS and GUATA to people living in Ahmedabad city to go to their terraces at 8 PM, 4 February, and bang their vessels, symbolising a “*mrutyu ghant* (death knell)” of the Chimanbhai government⁴⁷⁰. On 3 February, an estimated eight thousand college teachers went on strike, demanding the release of those detained under MISA and for the “right to hold peaceful processions and demonstrations”⁴⁷¹. In last-ditch attempts to save the Chimanbhai ministry, the government announced measures such as rushing of food grains to deficit areas, accepting some longstanding demands of

⁴⁶⁶ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret F.R. No. 20’.

⁴⁶⁷ ‘A Note on the Recent Mass Movement in Gujarat (Confidential and for the Exclusive Reference of the Members of the Working Committee of Congress (O))’, 52–53.

⁴⁶⁸ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret F.R. No. 20’.

⁴⁶⁹ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret F.R. No. 20’.

⁴⁷⁰ ‘Amdavad Shehere Indiketi Sashanno Vagadelo Mrutyughant (in Gujarati) [Ahmedabad City Sounds the Death Knell of the Government]’, *Sandesh*, 5 February 1974.

⁴⁷¹ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret F.R. No. 21’, 19 February 1974, U. No. 0087339, FR Jan 1974-Dec 1974, 24-28, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

university and college teachers and launching an emergency food production programme⁴⁷².

Matters came to a head on 7 and 8 February as the Union Home Minister was sent to Gujarat as an emissary of the Central Government. On the day of his arrival, three Ministers and one Deputy Minister⁴⁷³ sent a 15-point “chargesheet” to the CM. They charged their own government of having lost “complete credibility with the people of Gujarat” and listed many factors including the mishandling of affairs related to the Home, Civil Supplies, Revenue and Education Departments. Specifically emphasised was the misuse of MISA, Defence of India Rules (DIR) and utilisation of force against peaceful protestors⁴⁷⁴.

Additionally, a plan to hold negotiations among students, the central envoy and the CM, backfired. The meeting was to take place at Rajbhavan and include those NYS members who had been released specially to participate in negotiations as well as ones who had gone underground. However, when the latter group of students reached the gates of Rajbhavan they were first beaten and then detained under MISA⁴⁷⁵. A senior Cong (R) MLA from Ahmedabad, Maganbhai Barot, resigned in protest at this “betrayal”. Thus, faced with staunch opposition outside and the possibility of a full-scale organisational revolt within, the AICC instructed Chimanbhai to resign, this he did on the evening of 9 February to celebrations across the state.

⁴⁷² Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret F.R. No. 21’.

⁴⁷³ Amul Desai, Divyakant Nanavati, Amarsingh Chaudhry and Navinchandra Raval,

⁴⁷⁴ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret F.R. No. 21’.

⁴⁷⁵ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret F.R. No. 21’.

Following the resignation, agitators detained under MISA were released and some groups that had been a part of the agitation against the CM took a step back. Foremost amongst these were the Cong (R) dissidents who had been working against their own government. With the CM gone and the party still with a majority in Assembly, the dissidents sought to take control. Some sections within the GUATA in the initial days after the CM's resignation attempted to back pedal on the demand for the dissolution of the Assembly. While it had been one of the demands of its strike, with Chimanbhai gone, the strike was withdrawn, and teachers promised to go back to work by 18 February. A group within the leadership went on a fast at the GU campus for the restoration of peace and normalcy in the state as well as re-starting education⁴⁷⁶.

However, the NYS supported by the AUGCOM, and most opposition parties persisted with the demand for the dissolution of the Assembly which ensured that the agitation did not dissipate. While the government tried to placate them, by promising to "contain mess bill at a reasonable level", providing extra food grains and oil to hostels at low rates, the NYS, on 12 February, broke with the teachers and announced that it would "not only continue the stir" until the Assembly was dissolved but also make it "more virulent"⁴⁷⁷. Some within it stated that their programmes from then on would "not necessarily be non-violent"⁴⁷⁸. Jayprakash Narayan (popularly known as JP) who visited the state a day after the ministry fell also exhorted students to continue with their "youth revolution"⁴⁷⁹. All Cong (O) MLAs submitted their resignations from the

⁴⁷⁶ Governor of Gujarat, 'Secret F.R. No. 21'.

⁴⁷⁷ Governor of Gujarat, 'Secret F.R. No. 21'; Secretary Education and Labour Department, 'Problems of the Students, Teachers and Non-Teaching Staff Discussed with Their Representatives and Decisions Taken', n.d., U. No. 0087406, File No. illegible, 6-7, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

⁴⁷⁸ Governor of Gujarat, 'Secret F.R. No. 21'.

⁴⁷⁹ Governor of Gujarat, 'Secret F.R. No. 21'.

Assembly, on 15 February, en bloc and in person to the speaker at Gandhinagar. The Governor's report of that fortnight, uncharacteristically acknowledged that the groups calling for the dissolution of the Assembly had the support of a "large section of the people" who believed it to be the "only remedy"⁴⁸⁰. This meant that by 15 February, the GUATA clarified that although it had only ended the strike but it was still a part of the Navnirman Agitation and would continue to participate in protests. Similarly, the Cong (R) dissidents, including the former CM, Oza, publicly supported the demand⁴⁸¹.

Alongside the unending cycle of food rioting, clashes with the police, deaths from police firing⁴⁸² and protests against police excesses, the NYS and "other agitating organisations" attempted to secure the dissolution of the Assembly by using different methods of "pressure or coercion" to get MLAs to resign⁴⁸³. The NYS called for a "militant social boycott" of MLAs that included cutting off water and power supplies to their homes⁴⁸⁴. Medical students at Ahmedabad took a procession to the home of a former minister and tried to make him to wear a necklace made of bones⁴⁸⁵. The Baroda Students' Federation (BSF) launched a programme of "keeping MLAs awake" by shouting slogans all night outside their residences⁴⁸⁶. Students accompanied a Cong (R) MLA from Kalol to Gandhinagar in trucks to ensure that he handed over his resignation to the speaker⁴⁸⁷. The NYS threatened the GPCC President to either

⁴⁸⁰ Governor of Gujarat, 'Secret F.R. No. 22', 5 March 1974, U. No. 0087339, FR Jan 1974-Dec 1974, 32-38, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

⁴⁸¹ PTI, 'Oza Favours Dissolution', *The Times of India*, 15 February 1974.

⁴⁸² Governor of Gujarat, 'Secret F.R. No. 22'.

⁴⁸³ Governor of Gujarat, 'Secret F.R. No. 21'.

⁴⁸⁴ Staff Reporter, 'Student Leaders Call for Militant Action', *The Times of India*, 15 February 1974.

⁴⁸⁵ Staff Reporter, 'Students Allege Amul Beat 'em Up', *The Times of India*, 16 February 1974.

⁴⁸⁶ Staff Reporter, 'Move to Keep MLAs Awake', *The Times of India*, 16 February 1974.

⁴⁸⁷ 'Student "escort" for MLA', *The Times of India*, 16 February 1974.

resign from the Assembly or leave the city⁴⁸⁸. The students' efforts at intimidating MLAs in these ways proved to be highly effective. By 5 March, of the 168 members of the Assembly, 60 had resigned.

Amongst those who had resigned were Chimanbhai and his "staunchest supporters". Chimanbhai had been instructed to resign as party leader but instead chose to resign with his followers from the Assembly itself leading to his expulsion from the Cong (R) for 6 years. Following this, Chimanbhai began to support the demand for dissolving the Assembly. With his involvement, his supporters within the large and middle peasantry, who had been opposed to the agitation while he was CM, began supporting it⁴⁸⁹.

Not just MLAs, even Cong (R) members of local bodies faced the ire of students. Within a week of the fall of the ministry, "hundreds of students" at Baroda twice forced themselves into the budget session of the Municipal Corporation, gheraoed Cong (R) Councillors and demanded their resignations. With the entire opposition in the Corporation having resigned, students also opposed the proposed extension to its term and instead demanded that it be superseded⁴⁹⁰. By 5 March, most opposition and Cong (R) members had resigned from all four Municipal Corporations. The Baroda and Rajkot Corporations where all Councillors had resigned had been superseded while the bodies at Ahmedabad and Surat where nearly all had resigned were kept in suspended animation but faced certain supersession⁴⁹¹.

⁴⁸⁸ 'Samiti Asks Darji to Quit City in 24 Hours', *The Times of India*, 20 February 1974.

⁴⁸⁹ This included the Khedut Samaj which had withdrawn its own agitation when the students targeted Chimanbhai. Governor of Gujarat, 'Secret F.R. No. 22'.

⁴⁹⁰ Governor of Gujarat, 'Secret F.R. No. 21'.

⁴⁹¹ Governor of Gujarat, 'Secret F.R. No. 22'.

Alongside the programmes for forcing elected representatives to resign, organisations and associations of various sections of the working people demanded the dissolution of the Assembly. Groups as varied as sanitation workers, watchmen of municipal schools, university non-teaching staff, casual typists and press photographers all took out processions, petitioned the governor or went on strike. “Various business associations in Ahmedabad” voluntarily shut down their shops between 23 and 25 February, taxi and auto rickshaw drivers observed a one-day bandh, and on 28 February architects and engineers took out a procession to Rajbhavan. Lawyers practicing at various courts at Ahmedabad boycotted courts between 27 February and 3 March⁴⁹².

Crucially, the demand received the “full support” of government employees, both central and state. They submitted a memorandum to the Governor, stating that while they “were not aligned with any political party” nor did they have “anything to do with politics” it was not possible for them to “alienate themselves from the people”⁴⁹³. In a move coordinated by the AUGCOM, on 1 March these employees, to “press for their demand for dissolution of the Assembly and in protest against price rise and police atrocities” went on a day’s casual leave⁴⁹⁴. This later extended into a full-fledged strike that lasted until the end of the agitation, during which the family members of the agitating staff also went on relay hunger strikes. The strike of government employees brought administrative work to a complete standstill and proved to be a crucial factor that forced the Central government to intervene and bring about a quick resolution.

⁴⁹² Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret F.R. No. 22’.

⁴⁹³ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret F.R. No. 22’.

⁴⁹⁴ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret F.R. No. 22’.

In March, some representatives of the NYS and students went to Delhi to try and negotiate with the central government⁴⁹⁵. In Delhi they took out a silent march, met with the President and staged a protest that led to the arrests of some 200 students. The visit to Delhi became a contentious issue even before the leaders had left as they were gheraoed at the Ahmedabad airport at the time of their departure. Most of the central leadership of the NYS remained in Delhi from the 6 to 13 March during which time attempts were made by the Sangh to malign the leadership as well as to assert greater control over the agitation. This, however, shall be discussed in Chapter 5.

While the NYS representatives were in Delhi, in Gujarat the agitation continued with meetings, processions, fasts, hijacking public vehicles, attacks on police, barricading roads, attacks on banks, burning effigies, presentation of memoranda and pressuring MLAs to resign⁴⁹⁶. On 11 March, Morarji Desai, went on a fast-unto-death demanding immediate dissolution of the Assembly⁴⁹⁷.

With Desai's health deteriorating and 95 MLAs, including 68 from the Cong (R) having resigned, the Assembly was finally dissolved on the night of 15 March⁴⁹⁸. By this time 95 people had been killed in police firing, 200 injured by it and some 5000 more by police lathi charge⁴⁹⁹. The Governor's report described the reaction to the Assembly's dissolution as follows:

⁴⁹⁵ A team of NYS leaders had already gone to Delhi in mid-February but nothing had come out of meetings there.

⁴⁹⁶ Governor of Gujarat, 'Note on the Law and Order Situation, for the Period Ending 15th March 1974', 16 March 1974, U. No. 0087409, Material for FR, 1974, 34, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

⁴⁹⁷ Governor of Gujarat, 'Secret F.R. No. 23', 20 March 1974, U. No. 0087339, FR Jan 1974-Dec 1974, 39-44, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

⁴⁹⁸ Governor of Gujarat, 'Secret F.R. No. 23'.

⁴⁹⁹ 'A Note on the Recent Mass Movement in Gujarat (Confidential and for the Exclusive Reference of the Members of the Working Committee of Congress (O))', 59.

“...people came out in the streets the same night and celebrated the event with great jubilation. There was a huge procession on the next day. There were similar processions in many cities/towns. There were (sic.) however, some incidents of hijacking of buses, trucks etc. by students and others who came out in large numbers to join what they called victory procession.”⁵⁰⁰.

Life started to return to normal in state and as the violence abated, the curfews imposed on most towns and cities were withdrawn. The government decided to re-open all colleges, which had been shut for almost three months, on 18 March and prepare for annual examinations. As institutions re-opened, the government noted that “students made their appearance, held meetings to condole the death of those who were killed in police firing, and went away”⁵⁰¹. The government was confident that by 21 March, “some kind of normal functioning” would resume and it was expected that, although some students and political parties were “creating some difficulty”, the NYS leadership, which was thought to be “fully in favour” of colleges re-opening, would ensure that institutions functioned normally⁵⁰².

This was not the case as student agitation began again with the demand for “mass-promotion”- promotions without examinations. About eight hundred students made a bonfire of university furniture at the GU campus, students boycotted classes and there were noted to be “dissensions” in the “NYS group” on the issue of mass-promotion⁵⁰³. A Baroda Students’ Action Committee submitted a no exam memorandum to the

⁵⁰⁰ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret F.R. No. 23’.

⁵⁰¹ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret F.R. No. 23’.

⁵⁰² Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret F.R. No. 23’.

⁵⁰³ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret F.R. No. 23’; Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret F.R. No. 24’, 5 April 1974, U. No. 0087339, FR Jan 1974-Dec 1974, 45-52, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

Governor⁵⁰⁴ while at SU because of the pressure brought on him for cancellation of examinations by the agitating students the VC resigned. Due to mounting pressure, GU announced that exams would be made optional except for all exams in final year for all courses and all exams in some courses like Medicine and Engineering. As GU crumbled, other universities followed suit and announced similar concessions⁵⁰⁵.

These concessions did not satisfy students who next demanded a complete cancellation of all examinations. They pressed for the scrapping of both compulsory examinations as well as ones that students would have the option of attending without them affecting their promotion- this led to more protests. Students at Ahmedabad, returning from an NYS meeting demanding the cancellation of SSC and all final year exams attacked police *chowkies* (outposts) and were fired on resulting in the death of one student⁵⁰⁶. Trainee teachers demanded automatic promotions and relaxations in the final year exams and when these were not granted, some went on hunger strike outside the District Education Officer's offices at Rajkot and Ahmedabad⁵⁰⁷. Pre-medical students went on strike and attacked colleges demanding that they too be given automatic promotion⁵⁰⁸.

These protests over exams, however, failed to mobilize support from other sections of the public. The broad coalitions that had supported students only a few weeks previously were notable for their silence in regard to these new demands. At a meeting

⁵⁰⁴ UNI, 'Gujarat No Test Stir Turns Violent', *The Times of India*, 23 March 1974.

⁵⁰⁵ Directorate of Education, Government of Gujarat, 'Background Note for the Citizen's Council Meeting on 31-3-1974', 28 March 1974, U. No. 0087415, G.S. XIII (51) 74, 17-21, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

⁵⁰⁶ 'Gujarat: After the Turmoil', *Link*, 31 March 1974.

⁵⁰⁷ Directorate of Education, Government of Gujarat, 'Background Note for the Citizen's Council Meeting on 31-3-1974'.

⁵⁰⁸ PTI, 'College Stoned', *The Times of India*, 26 March 1974.

of VCs on 3 April it was decided that “no further changes should be made and that a finality should be brought to whatever decisions had already been taken by the Universities and other Examination Boards”⁵⁰⁹. In this way, while they managed to partially secure their demands, without any external support and with the government standing firm, further protests simply fizzled out.

Existing Understanding about the Agitation

The Navnirman Agitation was a watershed event for Gujarat as well as a key moment in national politics. A number of significant contemporary and near contemporary analyses remain influential in terms of their understanding of the agitation. Amongst these are Wood⁵¹⁰, whose study covering both the Navnirman Agitation and the Bihar Movement considered these as representing “extra-parliamentary” opposition whose ultimate target was Indira Gandhi. He argued that the two agitations were the “most meaningful opposition” faced by the PM since the 1971 elections. Wood, largely based on Shah’s account, discussed below, asserted that although the NYS was “supposedly the apex body” it “exerted little control over events”. This, however, is not an entirely accurate assessment. Although the Navnirman Agitation could be considered to have played an important extra-parliamentary role it was not part of a wider “Indira hatao” Movement. Having secured the dissolution of the Assembly, students were not interested in attacking the central government, instead they immediately limited themselves to the demand of mass-promotions. Further, during Indira Gandhi’s visit

⁵⁰⁹ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret F.R. No. 24’.

⁵¹⁰ Wood, ‘Extra-Parliamentary Opposition in India: An Analysis of Populist Agitations in Gujarat and Bihar’.

to the state, months later when the Bihar Movement was raging, calls for protest from some organisations received a cold response from them⁵¹¹.

Another view of the *Navnirman* Agitation is that it was not a student-led agitation at all, but one led by the GUATA⁵¹². According to Jones and Jones, it was a power struggle between the GUATA and Chimanbhai that eventually burst forth in the form of a mass movement claiming Chimanbhai as its victim. Though students were the most visible section, it was university teachers that gave leadership to the agitation at crucial junctures. The *Navnirman* Agitation should, therefore, be considered a “teachers’ revolt”. While Jones and Jones illustrate the importance of university politics in the context of the Navnirman Agitation, the role played by the teachers in general and the GUATA in particular is greatly overstated. Although the GUATA played an active part prior to Chimanbhai’s resignation and used its organisation to great effect, as noted earlier, after the fall of the ministry the organisation was internally divided about the demand for the dissolution of the Assembly. While it eventually took a clear position, because of its ambivalence, arguably, it never regained its previous level of influence.

The most thorough contemporary study of the agitation and by far the most widely accepted in academic circles is by Ghanshayam Shah⁵¹³. It was, according to him, disillusionment with the government among sections of the middle-class, spiralling prices, the scarcity of essential commodities coupled with lack of basic amenities in urban areas that led to the agitation. Starting off with economic goals, these got side-

⁵¹¹ See Chapter 1, Section IV.

⁵¹² D.E. Jones and R.W. Jones, ‘Urban Upheaval in India: The 1974 Nav Nirman Riots in Gujarat’, *Asian Survey* 16, no. 11 (1976): 1012–33; Jones and Jones, ‘The Scholars’ Rebellion: Educational Interests and Agitational Politics in Gujarat’.

⁵¹³ G. Shah, ‘The Upsurge in Gujarat’, *Economic and Political Weekly* 9, no. 32/34 (1974): 1429–54.

lined through the intervention of different interest groups which had as their aim only Chimanbhai's resignation and the dissolution of the Assembly. Shah contended that in the final analysis it was an "urban middle-class movement" that saw participation of mainly middle-class professionals and students and the absence of the organised working class and the landless labourers in the countryside. While a number of Shah's conclusions and arguments like the impulse behind the agitation or the nature of the groups that participated in it, still hold, others which have a direct bearing on the thesis are examined below.

The most recent analyses are three. One by Sanghvi⁵¹⁴ whose retelling of the agitation is based on the earlier works, includes factual errors and concludes that because the prominent student politicians of the time did not emerge as leaders later "the movement proved to be a total waste". The others by Bhagat-Ganguly do little more than narrate the happenings during the agitation and provide a summary of scholarly writing about the agitation. These add little to the existing understanding of the agitation and are not dealt with in great detail below.

Finally, most studies regarding the Navnirman Agitation note the creative forms of protest, that had what Shah referred to derisively, as a "stunt or symbolic value"⁵¹⁵. Seen from today's perspective, however, the more theatrical elements of the protests might be viewed as interesting in themselves and worthy of more serious study.

⁵¹⁴ N. Sanghavi, 'From Navnirman to the Anti-Mandal Riots: The Political Trajectory of Gujarat (1974-1985)', in *Gujarat Beyond Gandhi: Identity, Conflict and Society*, ed. N. Mehta and M. Mehta (New Delhi: Routledge, 2011), 20–39.

⁵¹⁵ Shah, 'The Upsurge in Gujarat', 1449.

A deeper inquiry into the nature and reasons behind the NYS's more unorthodox manner of protests, as also a number of other aspects related to the agitation, regrettably, cannot be undertaken within the limited time and space of a doctoral thesis whose sole focus is not the Navnirman Agitation. However, it would be beyond the scope of this thesis to probe more in depth the nature and reasons behind the NYS's unorthodox style of protests, as also a number of other aspects related to the agitation.

Tendencies

During the Navnirman Agitation it became possible to mobilise students for demands that were explicitly political. However, in addition to the strong tradition of being non-political in student politics, discussed in Chapter 3, the developments of the recent past had an impact on students and student organisations. The political instability over the previous three years and particularly the brazen horsetrading in 1973 meant that during the agitation there remained a strong aversion to party politics amongst students. A contemporary commentator made note of multiple incidents where politicians or students thought to be close to political parties were not allowed to address gatherings, some were even expelled or suspended from samitis on the grounds that they were tainted by partisan affiliations⁵¹⁶. It was thus the case that student politicians attempted to publicly appear non-political, and parties were expected to keep a distance from student protests and gatherings. Even the group within the NYS that worked closely with the AUGCOM was vocal in its condemnation of political parties and claims of being non-political. This attitude is clearly discernible

⁵¹⁶ V Gangadhar, 'Centre Alienating Gujarat Students, Opposition Benefits', *The Times of India*, 16 March 1974.

from a perusal the few publications of this group that have survived⁵¹⁷. Such a rejection of politics only further strengthened over time and remained pervasive within student politics in Gujarat during the entire period under study including at times of other major agitations with obviously political demands.

The rejection of politics in this manner, while important, must not be mistaken as being evidence of the absence of political tendencies within the Agitation in general and student politics in particular. As discussed, political parties as well as unions, associations, groups of different strata with varying political leanings were involved, in varying capacities, with the agitation. This included partisan student organisations such as the GVS, GSF, ABVP and the AISF which directly represented the political tendencies of their parent or fraternal organisations. The position of most of these partisan student groups to intervene directly was made precarious as they had to contend with the growing suspicion among students of political parties. The Cong (O) in its report on the agitation admitted as much, stating that due to this the GVS was forced to “relegate” itself “to the background”⁵¹⁸. This could be considered as being equally applicable to most other partisan organisations. Parties and their student organisations did however attempt to remain active during the agitation and often worked closely with those within the NYS. There were also “independent” student politicians who, while not forming formal associations with political parties and continuing to pay public lip-service to the idea that they were “non-partisan”, freely

⁵¹⁷ Jevanlal Jayramdas, *Vidhansabha Nu Visarjan, Garibinu Visarjan Ane Sukhi Samaaj Nu Sarjan (in Gujarati) [Dissolution of the Vidhan Sabha, Dissolution of Poverty and the Construction of a Prosperous Society]* (Mukesh Parikh etc., 1974); G.Y. Patel/Joint Action Committee (?), *Tankho 6* (Joint Action Committee of the AUGCOM, NYS and Yuva Nagrik Samiti, 1974).

⁵¹⁸ ‘A Note on the Recent Mass Movement in Gujarat (Confidential and for the Exclusive Reference of the Members of the Working Committee of Congress (O))’, 47.

associated with all kinds of factions, parties, and groups. Therefore, even these ostensibly independent student leaders were on many occasions, representative of varying political tendencies. The different tendencies became increasingly demarcated as the agitation progressed.

Of these, while many could be seen within the NYS leadership itself, there were some who did not find a place in it and functioned outside the official group. Moreover, with the Sangh and its role in student politics is examined later, the analysis here, limits itself, mainly to an elaboration of other prominent tendencies during that time. In doing so, it first challenges Shah's division of student politicians into two groups- 'radicals' and 'rebels'⁵¹⁹. According to him, the radicals were "consciously pro-poor" while the rebels were simply "anti-authority" who sometimes did or said things that harmed the agitation. The major flaw with this categorisation is that it leaves out a very important category of student politician, one that was neither "consciously pro-poor" but also not "anti-authoritarian" in the same way as the rebels. These were popular student politicians that represented different varieties of politics that could not be considered by any stretch "consciously pro poor" or having any "radical" agenda. Mukesh Patel, an important and visible face of the NYS executive Committee who was close to conservative social and political leaders, can be considered the archetype of such a student politician. Thus, in examining the varying tendencies, the thesis does not utilise the rebel-radical dichotomy but seeks to understand the fundamental political differences among student politicians and their manifestations during and immediately after the agitation.

⁵¹⁹ Shah, 'Anatomy of Urban Riots: Ahmedabad 1973', 1447.

The primary division was between those supportive and opposed to the Navnirman Agitation. While the agitation had widespread support, there did exist various groups which at different points of time were either opposed to or did not actively participate in it. This included student supporters of the Cong (R) who were a part of the *Chhatra Parishad* hastily formed to counter the agitation, as well as pro-Chimanbhai students who had opposed the agitation but later joined it after Chimanbhai also began to demand the dissolution of the Assembly. With regards to the ABVP, although it did at times not actively participate in the agitation, with its unique tactics, discussed in Chapter 5, cannot be included in this category. Leaving aside those groups that opposed the agitation, the major division between those that supported the agitation are explored below.

The distinction that emerges is between those that although still supporting the agitation, were allied to different parties (and factions) of the ruling classes i.e., the Cong (O) and dissidents within the Cong (R) and progressive tendencies with student politicians and organisations that were “genuinely striving for political solutions”⁵²⁰. With regards to the former, within the NYS leadership there were those that came to associate themselves with these tendencies during and immediately after the agitation. Amongst these could be included those from the NYS that were close to the Cong (O) and its variety of conservatism like Mukesh Patel and Rajkumar Gupta. They were known to be close to Ravishankar Maharaj and were with Morarji Desai on the day that he broke his fast at Gujarat Vidyapith following the dissolution of the

⁵²⁰ Suneet Chopra, ‘Political Consciousness of the Student Movement in India’, *Social Scientist* 6, no. 10 (1978): 67.

Assembly⁵²¹. The anti-Chimanbhai factions within the Cong (R) also made their way into NYS and were represented by its leaders such as Umakant Mankad, Nirupam Nanavati, and Sagar Rayka.

Representatives of the varying strands of progressive student politics were those student politicians of the left partisan organisations such as Arun Mehta and Sabir Khalani at Bhavnagar, Kanti Patel at Ahmedabad and Bhagirath Shah who were involved in the Navnirman Agitation but not a part of the central NYS executive Committee. Within the NYS it was the group led by Manishi Jani that sought to extend the limits of student politics. In doing so, this section of students forged closer links with other associations and unions, most significantly, the AUGCOM. In the early days of the agitation itself, a joint action committee consisting of the AUGCOM, the Nagrik Samiti and the progressive section of the NYS was formed. In this, a leading part was played by the left-wing journalist G.Y. Patel and Manishi Jani and the committee began to publish pamphlets under the name *Tankho*, meaning spark, a reference to Lenin's *Iskra*.

The pamphlet often carried the prices prescribed by the NYS for the sale of essential commodities⁵²², political poetry⁵²³ and calls to students to carry-on agitational activities⁵²⁴. Pertinently also the writings in *Tankho* are a clear indication that this section of the NYS did not want their politics to be limited only to students but wanted to extend it to include many other groups, strata and classes of the population. Thus,

⁵²¹ Tol News Service, 'Early Gujarat Poll Urged', 17 March 1974.

⁵²² G.Y. Patel/Joint Action Committee (?), *Tankho* 2 (Joint Action Committee of the AUGCOM, NYS and Yuva Nagrik Samiti, 1974), 2.

⁵²³ G.Y. Patel/Joint Action Committee (?), *Tankho* 4 (Joint Action Committee of the AUGCOM, NYS and Yuva Nagrik Samiti, 1974).

⁵²⁴ G.Y. Patel/Joint Action Committee (?), *Tankho* 2.

at one point, while acknowledging that it was the students that were leading the agitation, they say that they were doing so for the “people” of Gujarat. Among the “people” they include – “the working class, agricultural labourers, teachers, clerks, apprentices, students, youth who have been denied access to education, hotel-boys, hawkers, children working in scooter and cycle shops, mothers and sisters that run households with less than Rs. 500 income”⁵²⁵. This section was neither trying to limit student politics but instead aligned itself with other progressive groups and associations against the big merchants, landlords, industrialists, hoarders, smugglers, politicians, and their bureaucrats who were “sucking them dry”⁵²⁶. Moreover, while the demand for the dissolution of the Assembly was significant to them, it was not an end in itself. They, in fact, warned against the pitfalls of containing student politics in this manner.

“Now (following the dissolution of the Assembly), paid agents of the black marketeers and the hoarders, those who hold black money and smugglers will once again appear before us in a new dress. Will we then forgive and forget? These illusionists of the ballot box will try and pass off their sleight of hand as sincere service! Will we be so naïve as to fall for that? No, No, absolutely not!”⁵²⁷ (Translated from Gujarati)

Their interest, they said was not a simple change of government or a particular election which “might bother the oppressive Congress”. They were fighting alongside the “oppressed people” who were “waiting for a new society”.

⁵²⁵ G.Y. Patel/Joint Action Committee (?), *Tankho* 6.

⁵²⁶ G.Y. Patel/Joint Action Committee (?), *Tankho* 6.

⁵²⁷ G.Y. Patel/Joint Action Committee (?), *Tankho* 6.

It is difficult to assess the extent of support for the politics espoused by this faction of the NYS had during the Navnirman Agitation is difficult to judge. However, given the state of affairs immediately after the end of the agitation, even if it was at one point, the “creation of a new society” was not a priority for a majority of students.

Organisation

The Agitation brought together broad coalitions of actors, with varying backgrounds and institutional structures. The focus of this thesis is specifically on student organisation.

Although comparable to preceding joint committees like the VMS, the NYS had a somewhat better formal structure of leadership including designated office bearers and an Executive Committee for decision making. Its office bearers included Manishi Jani (President) who was the only student member of the GU Syndicate, Raj Kumar Gupta (Vice President), Ashok Dhabhuwala and Shailesh Shah (Joint Secretaries) who were elected members of the GU Senate, as well as Umakant Mankad (Secretary) who was General Secretary of the largest Law College in the state. The Executive, apart from other elected members of the GU Senate like Bharat Gadhvi and Shailesh Dhruv, and Alankar Naik, General Secretary of LD Engineering, Mukesh Patel, member of the GU Board of Student Welfare and Sagar Rayka, General Secretary of LD Arts.

Although the thesis shares the views of Shah and Wood regarding the NYS’s organisational weakness, it would be wrong on that basis to dismiss the NYS as irrelevant. In the context of the Agitation, the NYS ended up playing an important role as the organisation that could command the widest support. Prior to the incidents at LD, protests against price increases and food scarcity had been scattered and fragmented. But with the repression at LD and the subsequent breadth of protests,

different streams began to come together as part of a somewhat coherent agitation. In this context, it was the NYS, albeit hastily formed, that received the widest support. Unlike other groups and forces whose support waxed and waned, the NYS maintained a constant presence and during the course of the agitation. Multiple attempts were made by different forces including the BJS, Cong (O), Cong (R) dissidents, the GUATA, and even Chimanbhai himself to either capture or lead the agitation in directions that were most suitable to them. Although there were factions within the NYS leadership group, it remained a fairly united body and not under the influence of any one faction or outside force. The NYS, working in this manner, ensured that at no point was any other force able to overtly influence the agitation and the NYS remained most prominent voice during this time. Having noted the importance of the NYS, its organisational limitations must also be mentioned.

Foremost among these limitations, the NYS consisted primarily of students at GU. Although superior in its ability to have a state-wide influence than prior joint committees, its direct influence was limited to students to Ahmedabad and surrounding areas. In other major educational centres, there existed student groups that were strong and led the agitation there. This included the Study and Struggle Alliance at Surat, the AISF at Bhavnagar, and the BSF, Youth for Socialist Action and Students' Action Committee at Baroda. While they were never in a position to challenge the NYS in its role as being the central actor of the Navnirman Agitation, they were strong enough to not be directly controlled by it. Therefore, although some of these groups did coordinate closely with the NYS, they did not function as its branches but in a more autonomous manner.

Over and above this, it cannot be presumed that being elected student representatives of the Senate, or their College Unions, meant that those who were a part of the NYS, automatically, enjoyed mass student support. This was primarily due to the structure of student representation followed in GU at the time. Unlike MSU, GU did not have a directly elected university-wide students' union. Direct elections in which all students could vote took place only for unions in individual colleges affiliated to the university. Although there were popular student politicians at that level, their influence, at most times, remained limited to their colleges. The important office-bearers of the NYS were those who had been elected to University Senate. They too, did not represent the general student population as the elections for these positions were divided according to faculty and were indirect, with colleges and university departments choosing student representatives to vote on behalf of their student bodies. Therefore, being elected student representatives was not necessarily an indication of the student leaders' popularity amongst the general student population.

Moreover, following the formation of the NYS, as the agitation continued, local and regional samitis came to be established. It would seem that this was the NYS attempting to expand its reach. While initially this was the case, as the agitation progressed the control of the NYS over local samitis increasingly loosened. At the ward level, there were reports in the contemporary press of "several parallel *Navnirman Samities* ... formed by interested parties"⁵²⁸. Some leaders of the NYS, after the agitation had ended, even publicly admitted that there had been as many as 473 samitis operating in the state with no central organisation⁵²⁹. The NYS was not

⁵²⁸ 'Fascist Tactics in Gujarat', *Link*, 24 February 1974.

⁵²⁹ 'Goal of Gujarat: The Makers of Revolution Speak to JANATA', 23.

able to control the proliferation of local samitis which were used by various forces to expand their influence over the agitation. Chief among these, as is discussed in Chapter 5, was the Sangh.

Although better organised than the joint committees that preceded it, the NYS was not very different from them when it came the absence of a mass organisational structure. While it managed to secure more support from students than any other group in the past, this spontaneous support did not foster the creation of an organisation. The NYS remained, like its predecessors a grouping, of student politicians, each with their own agenda and personal followers. Failing to evolve formal structures of membership and organisation or a constitution and programme the NYS was unable to consolidate in any way on the massive support that it had received from students during the agitation. Throughout its existence, it had neither members nor activists, only followers. With no political or ideological core, the only uniting factor for its followers were the demands, first of the resignation of the CM and later the dissolution of the Assembly.

While it had maintained at least a superficial unity throughout the agitation, soon after the dissolution of the Assembly, it devolved into a group of quarrelling “leaders”. Rivalries, which had always existed, came to the fore and supporters of different “leaders” attacked each other. Jani while addressing a press conference at a hotel was surrounded and forced to run away while Mankad was manhandled at a meeting to felicitate him⁵³⁰. There were problems regarding fund collection, position on the

⁵³⁰ ‘Navnirman Samiti Split on Stir’, *The Times of India*, 19 March 1974.

railway strike⁵³¹ and over publication of *Navnirman* journals⁵³². By late June, many from the NYS Executive, including Jani outside whose house there had been demonstrations and a fast, as well as Shailesh Shah had resigned⁵³³. What was left of the NYS, to regain popularity, tried to launch a “third phase” of the agitation, around June, over high prices but failed⁵³⁴. The NYS continued to exist till the following year, but student politicians left, re-joined, and left again with such frequency that it was difficult to keep track of who was a part of the NYS and who had been expelled or had resigned. During the year that followed, there were multiple attempts to “revive” and “revitalise” the NYS by first trying to mobilise again over high prices and later lead an agitation for the setting up of a “martyrs’ column” in the GU campus⁵³⁵. Both received very little support from students and the NYS as an organisation ceased to be of any relevance, with only its name retaining some symbolic value.

Section IV Aftermath of the Agitation: 1974-1975

The months following the *Navnirman* Agitation and the resolution of the mass-promotion issue were relatively uneventful in terms of student politics. By the government’s account, this remained a “comparatively very quiet” time that witnessed only a few isolated incidents of student unrest⁵³⁶. Students in an epilogue to the mass-promotion agitation walked out of examinations centres complaining against difficult

⁵³¹ Stephen Sherlock, ‘Railway Workers and Their Unions: Origins of 1974 Indian Railways Strike’, *Economic And Political Weekly* 24, no. 41 (1989): 2311–22.

⁵³² V Gangadhar, ‘Gujarat Student Campaign Fades: Bickering Breaks Out’, *The Times of India*, 25 June 1974.

⁵³³ L.K. Sharma, ‘Gujarat Campaign for Cleaner Politics Loses Steam’, *The Times of India*, 3 June 1974.

⁵³⁴ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret F.R. No. 29’, 24 June 1974, U. No. 0087339, FR Jan 1974-Dec 1974, 73-77, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

⁵³⁵ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret F.R. No. 43’, 21 January 1975, U. No. 0087339, FR Jan 1974-Dec 1974, 152-156, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

⁵³⁶ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret F.R. No. 36’, 8 October 1974, U. No. 0087339, FR Jan 1974-Dec 1974, 112-117, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

question papers⁵³⁷. There were also attempts to organise protests against price rise and hoarding by left organisations on at least two occasions⁵³⁸ and a “*Monghwari Hatao Samiti*” (Get Rid of High Prices Committee)⁵³⁹ organised a programme of releasing gas balloons with a “*Monghwari Capsule*” (High Prices Capsule) symbolising how prices had reached the moon. These however were reported to have failed to secure more than a token response from students.

By October 1974, the government observed that the “student front had become alive again” and that students were trying to “stage back their appearance on the political scene” by “picking up small issues and beginning with strikes in schools and colleges”⁵⁴⁰. College students in at least three districts boycotted their mid-term examinations⁵⁴¹. At SGU, the “Study and Struggle Alliance” boycotted the convocation, held a black flag demonstration, and blocked the road to the venue⁵⁴² and at MSU new graduates protested against the “tight job market”⁵⁴³. The VC of SU resigned first in January 1975, was convinced to withdraw his resignation by the government, but resigned again in April, largely due to student unrest. In February 1975, students in North Gujarat formed an action committee and went on strike demanding a separate university for the region⁵⁴⁴. These, largely localised protests, with their focus mainly

⁵³⁷ ‘Student Stir over “tough” Exam’, *The Times of India*, 9 June 1974; Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret F.R. No. 29’.

⁵³⁸ ‘130 Held in Ahmedabad’, *The Times of India*, 6 October 1974; Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret F.R. No. 34’, 7 September 1974, U. No. 0087339, FR Jan 1974-Dec 1974, 102-105, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

⁵³⁹ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret F.R. No. 29’.

⁵⁴⁰ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret F.R. No. 36’.

⁵⁴¹ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret F.R. No. 40’, 6 December 1974, U. No. 0087339, FR Jan 1974-Dec 1974, 133-139, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

⁵⁴² (Home Department 17-12-1974: 787)

⁵⁴³ ‘Secret: Report on the Law and Order Situation for the Period Ending 15th December 1974’, 17 December 1974, U. No. 0087409, Material Received from GAD for FR, 774-776.

⁵⁴⁴ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret F.R. No. 45’, 22 February 1975, U. No. 0087329, Untitled File, 163-168, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

on student issues were similar to those of the pre-Navnirman period. The only agitation of note was one at Gujarat Vidyapith. Led by Kanu Bhavsar, a student politician closely associated with the NYS, students staged a 76-day agitation demanding the reinstatement of a professor of comparative literature⁵⁴⁵. Very little, regrettably, could be found in the sources regarding this.

On 18 March, only days after the Gujarat Assembly had been dissolved, students in Bihar enforced a gherao of the Bihar Assembly, attacking vehicles and blocking all roads leading up to it during the Budget Session, sparking the Bihar Movement. A month earlier, at a conference organised by the Patna University Students' Union, different groups and organisations had come together to form a Bihar *Chattra Sangharsh Samiti* (Students' Struggle Committee, CSS). While demands that the students made were initially related to education and mess food, in manner similar to Gujarat, they began demanding the resignation of the CM and the dissolution of the Assembly. Soon they approached JP, to lead the agitation. He called on the students to put their education on hold and join in a quest for what he called "Total Revolution"⁵⁴⁶.

In Gujarat too there were a number of organisations, existing and newly formed, in Gujarat, whose sympathies lay with JP and the Bihar Movement. Among the already existing organisations were the BSF, at Baroda that was close to the Socialists, the ABVP and the *Tarun Shanti Sena*. There was also, what was left of the NYS, which was initially Shailesh Shah, Bharat Gadhvi, Kanu Bhavsar and Ashok Dhabuwala who

⁵⁴⁵ Governor of Gujarat, 'Secret F.R. No. 48', 7 April 1975, U. No. 0087329, Untitled File, 190-194, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

⁵⁴⁶ Ghanshyam Shah, *Protest Movements in Two Indian States: A Study of the Gujarat and Bihar Movements* (New Delhi: Ajanta Publications, 1977).

“re-joined” the NYS in order to revitalise it and launch fresh programmes to support JP⁵⁴⁷. Shah however left the NYS to move closer to the Cong (R). Amongst the new groups was the *Yuva Sangharsh Samiti* (Youth Struggle Committee, YSS) that also included some from the old NYS and Yuva Bharat, close to the Cong (O), another group formed by Mukesh Patel and Ashok Dhabhuwala, after they had again left the NYS⁵⁴⁸. A branch of the CSS was formed which was similar to the one in Bihar, and had representation from the ABVP, the Tarun Shanti Sena and others.

These student organisations tried to mobilise in support of the agitation that had begun in Bihar. It is clear, however, from a perusal of contemporary press and government reports that initial attempts to mobilise students in “sympathy with the people’s struggle in Bihar” secured only a limited response from students⁵⁴⁹. The ABVP and *Tarun Shanti Sena* did, to this end, attempt to organise meetings, processions and a “*chetna divas* (awareness day)”⁵⁵⁰. These remained isolated incidents and token protests. The newly formed YSS at Ahmedabad called for a strike in all educational institutions to enable students to go to Delhi for a rally in support of the Bihar Movement in October. Although some students went to Delhi, the strike call did not meet with much success⁵⁵¹. A call for “death knell” given by a group calling itself the “Indira *Tadipar* (Expel) Committee” on the eve of the PM’s visit to Ahmedabad as well as a strike call given by the NYS and CSS, similarly, did not have much of an impact⁵⁵². That students

⁵⁴⁷ General Administration Department, *Six Months of President’s Rule in Gujarat* (Gandhinagar: Government Central Press, 1974), 21.

⁵⁴⁸ General Administration Department, *Six Months of President’s Rule in Gujarat*, 21.

⁵⁴⁹ UNI, ‘Ahmedabad Echoes Bihar Agitation’, *The Times of India*, 5 October 1974.

⁵⁵⁰ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret F.R. No. 40’.

⁵⁵¹ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret F.R. No. 37’, 21 October 1974, U. No. 0087339, FR Jan 1974-Dec 1974, 118-122, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

⁵⁵² Tol News Service, ‘Death Knell Call on Eve of PM’s Visit Ignored’, *The Times of India*, 8 November 1974.

in general were not too concerned about either JP or the Bihar Movement was further evident during JP's visit to Gujarat in January 1975. During the visit, he frequently faced resistance from audiences that were not always acquiescent to his ideas. For instance, at a public meeting in Ahmedabad he severely criticised the student leadership of the NYS and said that they had remained satisfied with a "trivial achievement". This and the fact that he refused to openly condemn Chimanbhai made the student audience "restive" and they were reported in the press to have "frequently indulged in catcalls and snide remarks". He eventually ended his fifty-minute-long speech "abruptly" as he "felt" the audience "was not interested" in what he had to say⁵⁵³.

After having dissolved the Assembly, the central government had been dragging its feet on the matter of holding fresh elections citing drought, food shortages and continuing relief work as reasons for the delay⁵⁵⁴. Having failed to secure significant support for the Bihar Movement, opposition forces turned their focus on this issue. It was during JP's second visit to Gujarat in March 1975 that activity was initiated among the pro-JP groups and the *Lok Sangharsh Samiti* (People's Struggle Committee, LSS) under the advice of JP was formed on 22 March 1975. The LSS had in its Executive, according to a Home Department note, representatives of various groups and political parties, most prominently the Lok Swaraj Andolan, Lok Shakti Sangathan Cong (O), BJS, Bhartiya Lok Dal, individual activists and workers like radical humanist

⁵⁵³ Tol News Service, 'Not Interested in Gujarat Poll: JP', *The Times of India*, 18 January 1975.

⁵⁵⁴ Communication between the Cong(O) and the Centre on the issue can be found in file U. No. 0087383, p. 147 to 239 onwards at GSA, Gandhinagar.

Chandrakant Daru and poet Umashanker Joshi and most significantly in the context of the thesis, three students⁵⁵⁵.

The LSS and pro-JP opposition parties took up the demand for early elections and they were joined in by student outfits like the CSS, BSF, YSS, and even KMLP students⁵⁵⁶. According to the government's estimate, it was the "youth and students" that provided muscle for the movement⁵⁵⁷. The CSS claiming the support of 70 other student "organisations", including the entire non-CPI opposition, "various youth and voluntary bodies" like the BSF and NYS, and the MSUSU "launched" an agitation in Baroda by holding three public meetings⁵⁵⁸. Here, the speakers allegedly said that to get the government to accept their demand "essential supplies such as water, electricity, etc. to the residences of Cong (R) MPs should be cut off, they should be gheraoed, buses should be hijacked, and force used against the police". At the end of these meetings students attacked buses, police personnel and police *chowkies*⁵⁵⁹. The MSUSU organised an "All Fools Convention" to celebrate *Holi* in which mock Congressmen were paraded on donkeys and there was a *gherao* of a Union Minister from Gujarat⁵⁶⁰. The LSS observed 6 April as "Removal of Emergency Day" and demanded the withdrawal of Presidents Rule, early elections, and the constitution of

⁵⁵⁵ Home Department (Government of Gujarat), 'Note on the Political Situation in Gujarat (Between March 6 to 26, 1975)', March 1975, U. No. 0087306, Home Department Confidential, 10-17, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

⁵⁵⁶ Home Department (Government of Gujarat), 'Note on the Political Situation in Gujarat (With Special Reference to Law and Order) for Governor's Conference to Be Held at New Delhi on 4th and 5th April, 1975', March 1975, U. No. 0087417, 37-39, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

⁵⁵⁷ Home Department (Government of Gujarat), 'Note on the Political Situation in Gujarat (Between March 6 to 26, 1975)'.

⁵⁵⁸ Tol News Service, 'JP-Type Agitation in Gujarat', *The Times of India*, 24 March 1975.

⁵⁵⁹ Tol News Service, 'JP-Type Agitation in Gujarat'.

⁵⁶⁰ 'Union Minister in Baroda Gheraoed', *The Times of India*, 27 March 1975.

a popular government to face the situation of scarcity⁵⁶¹. Between 10 and 12 April at Ahmedabad, there was police firing during protests leading to the injuries to six persons⁵⁶². While students provided “muscle” for the demand for early elections, their participation was not what it had been during the Navnirman Agitation. Support for the demand for early elections amongst students, remained limited mainly to Ahmedabad and Baroda. It was eventually, once again, Morarji Desai’s worsening health, after he had gone on another fast-unto-death that forced the Central government, on 15 April, to concede the demand for elections.

The major players in the elections were, the Cong (R) which even after its government had been toppled by the Navnirman Agitation was still the most significant party in the state; the Janata Morcha, an alliance formed after much wrangling consisting mainly of the Cong (O), the BJS, Socialist Party, Rashtriya Mazdoor Paksh and BLD; and the KMLP, formed by Chimanbhai, which was not a part of the Morcha. With the declaration of elections, while there were those that stayed away from the process, many student politicians who had been a part of the Navnirman Agitation attempted to secure a position for themselves with both the Morcha and the Cong (R). There was the case of the YSS that demanded it be made a part of the Morcha’s parliamentary board and the process of selection of candidates. It submitted a list of thirty-eight nominees, a majority of them students, who they considered to be worthy candidates. Two of its leaders, Manoj Raval and Rajkumar Gupta, both of whom had been a part of the NYS, went on a hunger-strike in support of these demands⁵⁶³. Soon, however,

⁵⁶¹ ‘Sumarry of the Resolution Submitted by the LSS to the Governor’, 6 April 1975, U. No. 0087382, 399-400, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

⁵⁶² Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret F.R. No. 49’, 20 April 1975, U. No. 0087340, GS XIII (246)/76, 44-47, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

⁵⁶³ Tol News Service, ‘Gujarat Youth Leaders on Fast’, *The Times of India*, 4 May 1975.

the hunger-strike was withdrawn, and it was declared that the YSS, dissatisfied with the process of selecting candidates would leave the Morcha and instead put up its own candidates⁵⁶⁴. Within days, Raval was expelled, the YSS returned to the Morcha and Gupta was given a Morcha ticket to contest from Kalupur, Ahmedabad⁵⁶⁵. Some student politicians were attempting to curry favour with the Cong(R)⁵⁶⁶ including prominent former NYS leaders Mankad and Shah⁵⁶⁷. Even though some were accepted into parties only a handful contested elections and on the whole, as contemporary observer noted, in the rough and tumble of electoral politics, student politicians had lost much of their importance.

The 1975 elections were the first time that elections in Gujarat returned a hung Assembly. The Cong(R) won 75 seats while the *Morcha* won 79, still short of a majority in the 182-member Assembly. In such a situation, it was Chimanbhai's KMLP having won twelve seats, that played kingmaker. The *Morcha* whose constituents had been part of the *Navnirman* Agitation against Chimanbhai accepted his support and formed the state government. This agreement, commonly referred to as "samjhoto (compromise)" had an impact akin to the Panchvati Farm Incident and led to further disillusionment regarding party politics among students.

In less than ten days of the Morcha coming to power the internal Emergency was imposed. The imposition of the Emergency brought an end to, arguably the most significant period in student politics in Gujarat. Chapter 2 of this thesis seeks to explore

⁵⁶⁴ Tol News Service, 'Yuva Samiti Leaves Janata Front', *The Times of India*, 5 May 1975.

⁵⁶⁵ Tol News Service, 'Janata Front Rewards MLAs Who Resigned', *The Times of India*, 8 May 1975.

⁵⁶⁶ Governor of Gujarat, 'Secret F.R. No. 50', 7 May 1975, U. No. 0087345, FR (O/C), GS XIII, (249) 76, 76-80, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

⁵⁶⁷ Governor of Gujarat, 'Secret F.R. No. 45'.

the path that student politics took until the end of the second Anti-Reservation Agitation in 1985.

Section V: Communalism and Caste in Student Politics

Communal Conflict

Organised student involvement in caste and communal rioting was not a feature of the period covered by this chapter. However, that is not to say that there was no student participation in communal riots or conflicts based on caste.

During this time, there is evidence of incidents of a communal nature in which a largely Hindu student body pit itself against either student or non-student Muslims. For instance, in September 1971, a fairly large altercation between two groups of students at the Arts and Science College, Kalol came to be classified by the police as one between “Hindu and Muslim students” which led to the arrest of “four Muslim boys”⁵⁶⁸. Similarly, in September 1973, while protesting the alleged molestation of two Adivasi girls by some “Muslim boys”, students at Modasa, indulged in arson and looting of Muslim establishments⁵⁶⁹. These incidents, however, were usually initiated by local events the consequence of local reasons and remained restricted to the college or town where they began.

The most significant involvement of students in communal rioting was during the 1969 riots. Witnesses to the Reddy Commission, including the VC of GU, attested to the part played by students in the riots and mentioned numerous instances of students

⁵⁶⁸ DM, Mehsana to Home Secretary, Gandhinagar, ‘Wireless Message’, 9 September 1971, U. No. 0087390, 144-145, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

⁵⁶⁹ Home Department (Government of Gujarat), ‘Secret Brief Note on the Political Situation in Gujarat during the Current Year (1973) with Special Reference to Law and Order’.

being a part of rampaging mobs, especially at Ahmedabad. Hamid Kureshi's book, a first-person account of the riots, also includes a narration of his encounter with a three hundred strong mob of students near the GU hostel area⁵⁷⁰. Outside the city too, there were instances like at Visnagar and Vijapur⁵⁷¹. At Visnagar, college students called for a strike to protest the killing of man by the police while he was attacking a *durgah* (shrine) at Mehsana. On the day of the strike, students from Mehsana who studied at the Science College at Visnagar, joined students from the town and went on a rampage attacking "Muslim establishments and factories". Similarly, at Vijapur, also near Mehsana, it was college students from neighbouring Pilwai who started the riot when they marched towards the town attacking Muslim shops and clashing with the police. These students were subsequently joined by people from the surrounding villages, and they attacked Muslim houses, shops and *durgahs*.

However, the nature of the student participation in the riots was different from what it would be just over a decade later. During the 1969 riots student participation was not part of any planned communal plot, according to the VC of GU. Instead, students seemed to have taken up arms due to a sense of insecurity created by rumours of "impending attacks" on hostels of Hindu students⁵⁷². Kureshi similarly noted how the students he encountered in the GU area were in their pyjamas and vests with many looking "exhausted"⁵⁷³. Another witness to the Commission, a Muslim barrister narrated an incident that, to an extent, corroborated this. Rumours had been circulated

⁵⁷⁰ Hamid Kureshi, *Agni Pariksha: An Ordeal Remembered*, trans. Rita Kothari (Orient Blackswan, 2018).

⁵⁷¹ P.J. Reddy, *Report: Inquiry into the Communal Disturbances at Ahmedabad and Other Places in Gujarat on and after 18th September 1969* (Gandhinagar: Government Central Press, n.d.), 253–54.

⁵⁷² Reddy, *Report: Inquiry into the Communal Disturbances at Ahmedabad and Other Places in Gujarat on and after 18th September 1969*, 213.

⁵⁷³ Kureshi, *Agni Pariksha: An Ordeal Remembered*, 3.

among Hindu students that Muslims were stocking up weapons in their houses. But the mob that had gathered to attack a housing colony dispersed after some students were invited to enter and check the truth behind the rumours⁵⁷⁴. The worn out, often scared students described by eyewitnesses, are a far cry from the blood thirsty students that not only participated in but were also active and primary instigators of all forms of barbarisms in the 1980s.

Caste-Related Incidents

As noted earlier, from the late 1960s onwards, a greater number of students belonging to SCs and STs became a part of the student body⁵⁷⁵. Although the number of students belonging to these groups was still small, the student body and college administrations did respond to even this change. Two separate incidents which illustrate this are examined below. The first incident was one in which a Dalit student [y] was rusticated from a hostel for indiscipline and insubordination in July 1971. According to the House Master's report the student had been found sleeping at 7:30 PM when he had been doing his rounds and had "replied rudely" to him [the house master]. For this he had been issued a memo and upon failing to respond, was rusticated from the hostel. He had been readmitted on the intervention of the President of the Gujarat *Harijan Sevak Sangh*, a Gandhian Dalit organisation, but according to the House Master his behaviour got worse. The House Master alleged that, not only was he rude and lazy, but more significantly had also started "instigating the students in the hostel against the management" and had initiated a signature campaign. He claimed that this had

⁵⁷⁴ Reddy, *Report: Inquiry into the Communal Disturbances at Ahmedabad and Other Places in Gujarat on and after 18th September 1969*, 213.

⁵⁷⁵ See Chapter 1, Section I.

been brought to his notice by “other students”, following which he verified it and immediately rusticated the student from the hostel⁵⁷⁶.

The second incident took place at the BJ Medical College Hostel in February 1972 and is even mentioned in the memoirs of the then Governor. While there are two versions of the incident – that of the caste Hindu students which came to be accepted by the administration, the police, and the government, and that of the Dalit student, D.S. Makwana, who was attacked – there are certain undisputed facts. These are, that caste Hindu students, mainly Patidars on failing to beat up a Dalit student set fire to all his belongings. The following day, Makwana, collected some Dalit student and non-student supporters and attacked the hostel blocks in which those responsible for the previous day's incident lived. In response the caste Hindu students, including the incumbent and ex-Presidents of the students' union staged a demonstration before the Dean. They demanded “measures for their security”, removal of the student from the hostel and criminal proceedings to be initiated against those people that had indulged in violence on the second day. They further decided to not only go on strike until their demands were met but also staged a march to the Governor's residence. It was only after they got a personal assurance from the Governor that more police would be posted at their hostel and police cases that had been filed for the second day's violence would not be withdrawn that they withdrew the strike⁵⁷⁷.

⁵⁷⁶ J.K. Boricha, House Master to Director of Social Welfare, Gujarat State, 'Cancellation of Admission of y from Narsinh Bhagat Chhatralaya, Ahmedabad', 23 July 1971, U. No. 0087386, 584-585, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

⁵⁷⁷ Director of Health Services to Chief Secretary to the Government of Gujarat, 'Threatened Strike at BJ', 19 February 1972, U. No. 0087402, 129-130, GSA, Gandhinagar, India; Dean, BJ Medical College, 'Report on Incident Which Occurred in the Boys Hostel of BJ Medical College, Ahmedabad', 17 February 1972, U. No. 0087402, 131-134, GSA, Gandhinagar, India; Dy. Commissioner of Police, Special Branch, 'Extract from Daily Report of Political, Labour and Misc. Affairs from the Dy. Commissioner, Special Branch, Ahmedabad', 18 February 1972, U. No. 0087402, 126-127, GSA,

This being the case, the initial reason for the attack on the Dalit student remains disputed. The college administration's reports were based entirely on conversations with the caste Hindu students, especially current and former elected representatives. Additionally, the police reports relied heavily on the college administration's report, as a result adding further weight to the caste Hindu students' narrative. According to this version, the Dalit student was having "undesirable relations with a girl of the Jain community which a group of students did not like because the girl used to visit Makwana at the hostel". The tipping point according to one of the reports was that Makwana had "represented [lied/pretended] to the girl that he was Jain" and when her relatives came to visit the hostel, they found this not to be the case. It was then that the relatives and some caste Hindu students got together and attempted to beat him up. On the other hand, in his representation to the Dean, Makwana rubbished these claims. He stated the following –

"These persons had no reason to attack or injure me and the only fault of mine is that I am a backward class student and very prominent in my community and also because I was joint secretary of the student wing of the Ahmedabad Medical Society and because of my victory at the student election they have been continuously bearing grudge against me and have been repeatedly threatening me to stop taking part in student and other allied activities."⁵⁷⁸

Gandhinagar, India; Shriman Narayan, *Those Ten Months: President's Rule in Gujarat* (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1973).

⁵⁷⁸ D.S. Makwana to The Dean, BJ Medical College & Hostel, Ahmedabad, 'Heinous Attempt of Murder and Incident of Loot, Arson and Rioting in the Hostel Premises', 15 February 1972, U. No. 0087402, 135-139, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

Now, in both incidents the educational authorities come across as clearly biased against Dalit students, this however, is only marginally important. What must be understood is that in both cases the affected parties were Dalit students who were politically active. While there were other factors involved, this seems to have been one of the important ones. In the first case, it was the hostel administration's fear of a politically active Dalit student and in the second case it was caste Hindu students that felt their monopoly of politics being challenged. Moreover, issues of Dalit students or caste issues were not taken up by student organisations and as evidenced from both these cases, they had to be taken up by non-student organisations of different sorts.

Moreover, even during the *Navnirman* Agitation, despite the general unity of different sections of the student and non-student population, there were occasional flareups that highlight the underlying divisions. For instance, at Ahmedabad there was a particularly jarring incident in which protesting students attacked an area populated primarily by Dalit mill workers (Majoor Gam)⁵⁷⁹. At Valsad, students clashed with adivasi supporters of Uttam Patel⁵⁸⁰. After the agitation ended there was an altercation between Hindu and Muslim students which saw the two groups indulging in retaliatory attacks at Degham, near Gandhinagar, with a major conflagration being avoided only because the police intervened quickly and arrested those involved⁵⁸¹.

While it is clear, that questions of caste and communalism did indeed crop up during this time, and while there were certainly caste-based groups in many colleges and universities, the effect of these incidents and depth of these divisions must also not be

⁵⁷⁹ Staff Reporter, 'Differing Versions on Majoor Gam Clashes', *The Times of India*, 20 February 1974.

⁵⁸⁰ Staff Reporter, 'Attack on Tribals Condemned', *The Times of India*, 5 March 1974.

⁵⁸¹ Governor of Gujarat, 'Secret F.R. No. 32', 8 August 1974, U. No. 0087339, FR Jan 1974-Dec 1974, 90-95, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

overstated. These do not appear to have been the dominant issues that came to preoccupy the students. Student politics during this time focused primarily on the issues that have been discussed through this chapter.

Conclusions

The period covered by this chapter witnessed the re-emergence of student politics after an almost decade long hiatus. Students would, during this time, agitate over a wide range of issues, but a primary feature of these protests was their unorganised nature. In terms of student organisations and political tendencies, while there was no powerful state-wide organisation there were those both of the left and right which has their pockets of influence in various regions and universities. There were also, during times of agitation, joint committees that emerged which sought to provide leadership at an all-Gujarat level. While they did play a role at critical junctures, especially during the *Navnirman* Agitation, their influence over students remained limited and their area of operations did not normally extend beyond Ahmedabad. Despite the existence of partisan student organisations, political tendencies for much of the period were not clearly demarcated. It was only from the middle of 1973 and particularly during the Navnirman Agitation that these tendencies came into conflict with each other.

For a significant part of this period, students remained cut off from each other, protesting in their own colleges and universities. Although not unimportant in the historical context, the early “struggles” of students were limited to “sporadic outbursts or merely restricted to the academic sphere”, it was “crisis conditions”, that had developed in 1973, as Chopra put it, which forced students to “oppose the state”⁵⁸².

⁵⁸² Chopra, ‘Political Consciousness of the Student Movement in India’, 57–58.

What resulted was the Navnirman Agitation during which the CM was forced to resign, and the state Assembly was dissolved. Following this, however, student politics returned to status quo ante, dropping all other issues including political corruption, high prices, even police excesses, and took up the sectional demand for mass-promotions. By the end of the period, elections had taken place in which students did not play a significant role and the cynical electoral “compromise” ensured that students moved further away from politics. The imposition of the Emergency and the government’s moves towards affirmative action brought about new questions and challenges for students and student politics. The next chapter explores how students responded to these new challenges and it traces the trajectory of student politics over the next decade.

Chapter 2 Student Politics in Gujarat 1975-1985

Covering the period between the imposition of the Emergency and the anti-reservation agitation of 1986, the present chapter is chronologically divided into six sections.

The first section briefly outlines some developments related to higher education during this period. The second section seeks to understand the impact of the Emergency on student politics and the range of student responses to it. The student politics in the years immediately following the end of the Emergency under the Janata government is examined section three. The fourth section is devoted to understanding the first anti-reservation agitation. The happenings in students politics between 1981 and 1985 are explored in section five. In section six, the second anti-reservation agitation and particularly student involvement in it are examined.

Section I Development of Higher Education

The average all-India annual increase in enrolment which had been 12% for the 1950s and 14% for the 1960s slowed to 4% during the 1970s⁵⁸³. While the annual growth increased slightly at the start of the new decade, in the years 1980-85, it still remained far below the level of the first two decades after independence. The period between 1975 and 1985, in Gujarat, was not an exception to the all-India trend. In 1974-75, excluding those in non-degree courses like pre-university or intermediate, there were

⁵⁸³ UGC: *Report For the Year 1981-82* (New Delhi: UGC, 1976), 15.

1,84,164 students enrolled in higher education⁵⁸⁴. This number increased only slightly, to 2,00,297⁵⁸⁵, in about the same period covered by this chapter. In fact, the total number of students in higher education, including pre-university, intermediate and diploma courses actually decreased from 2,59,000 to 2,10,000 during this period. The sharpest decline took place towards the end of the 1970s. Between 1974-75 and 1978-79 there was an average annual decrease of 1.3% in Gujarat compared to an all-India increase of 2.5%⁵⁸⁶. The number of higher educational institutions in the state also did not increase greatly- beginning at 353 and ending the period at 409⁵⁸⁷- there was no new Engineering college established between 1968 and 1983. There was also no major change in the organisation at the university level with only one small university being established at Bhavnagar (here after BU), carved out from SU. Therefore, in 1985, the number of universities in the state stood at nine.

The UGC in multiple reports attributed the drop in student enrolment to three main factors, all of which are applicable to Gujarat- the development of non-formal education, the economic situation in the country and the shift to a 10+2+3 system in education⁵⁸⁸. The low rate at which new colleges were established was primarily the result of the state government, based on the recommendations of multiple commissions, formulating stricter policies regarding grants-in-aid as well as affiliation. A by-product of this was a change in the size of ASC colleges, which accounted for around 80% of all institutions. In 1973-74 only 49.4% of ASC had more than 400

⁵⁸⁴ UGC: *Report For the Year 1975-76* (New Delhi: UGC, 1977).

⁵⁸⁵ UGC, UGC: *Report For the Year 1985-86* (New Delhi: UGC, 1991).

⁵⁸⁶ UGC: *Report For the Year 1978-79* (New Delhi: UGC, 1980), 39, 174.

⁵⁸⁷ Bureau of Economics and Statistics, Government of Gujarat, *Statistical Abstract Of Gujarat State 1979-1982* (Gandhinagar: Bureau of Economics and Statistics, Government of Gujarat, 1985).

⁵⁸⁸ Education and Labour Department, 'Administrative Problems with Which the Education Department Is Concerned', December 1977, U. No. 0087314, 13-15, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

students. This increased to 65.7% in 1976-77 and by 1979-80 about 72% of ASC colleges were those that enrolled more than 400 students⁵⁸⁹. While this was the case, GU continued to be the largest university, Ahmedabad the geographic centre of higher education and ASC faculties accounted for a vast majority of students and institutions.

As a share of the total 17-24 age group, however, students in higher education remained a small minority. According to the Education Department, Government of Gujarat, in 1985, in the 17–24-year age group, 4.8% of the age group within higher education were being catered to nationally, in Gujarat the number was slightly lower at 4%⁵⁹⁰. Of note was also the fact that reservations in higher educational institutions in Gujarat came to be progressively implemented through the 1970s. Reservations for SCs and STs in educational institutions, were based on the proportions of SC and ST groups in the population of a state which in the case of Gujarat were 7% and 13% respectively. It was reservations in post-graduate medical courses that became a flashpoint during the 1981 agitation and are discussed further in Section IV of this chapter. Apart from this, a further 10% seats were reserved, from 1978-79 onwards, for Socially and Educationally Backward Classes (SEBC) whose membership was decided based on the Report of a Commission set up in 1972. An increase in reserved seats for SEBC students was the primary grievance of the Anti-Reservation agitation in 1985 and is further examined in Section VI.

Section II Student Politics during The Emergency

⁵⁸⁹ UGC: *Report For the Year 1981-82*.

⁵⁹⁰ Department of Education, Government of Gujarat, *Challenge of Education- Reappraisal and Reformulation* (Gandhinagar: Department of Education, 1986), 18.

After elections to the state Assembly the Morcha accepted support offered to it by Chimanbhai Patel's KMLP, formed the government and B.J. Patel, a Cong (O) leader was sworn-in as the CM on 18 June 1975. While this was unfolding in Gujarat, on the national front, Indira Gandhi had been facing mass protests since 1974 which included the Navnirman Agitation, the Bihar Movement, and the Railway Strike. Having lost the government in Gujarat and facing widespread opposition, the PM was dealt a severe blow when the Allahabad High Court, found her guilty of electoral malpractice and barred her from holding any elected post⁵⁹¹. This proved to be the last straw and on the night of 25 June 1975 an internal Emergency under article 356 of the Indian Constitution that gave far-reaching powers to the Executive was imposed and many important opposition leaders were detained almost immediately. What followed were close to two years of abuse of power, clamping down on political opposition with arrests and persecution, violations of civil liberties, and muzzling of the press across the country.

When the Emergency was imposed it was the Morcha that was in power, making Gujarat, one of the only two major states, apart from Tamil Nadu, with a non-Cong(R) government. By February 1976, the Morcha's position started becoming tenuous as the KMLP, owing to dissensions and feuds, dissolved itself. On 12 March 1976, when the Civil Supplies Ministry's demand for funds was defeated on the Assembly floor, the CM resigned, and Gujarat was placed under President's Rule⁵⁹². While some from the Morcha and KMLP had, soon after the onset of the Emergency, switched to the

⁵⁹¹ Gyan Prakash, *Emergency Chronicles: Indira Gandhi and Democracy's Turning Point* (New Delhi: Penguin Viking, 2018).

⁵⁹² Governor of Gujarat, 'Secret F.R. No. 59', 13 September 1975, U. No. 0087340, GS XIII (246)/76, 92-95, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

Cong(R)⁵⁹³, with the advent of President's Rule, there were an exodus of defectors⁵⁹⁴. This meant that by April 1976, the Cong(R) had a majority in the Assembly⁵⁹⁵. However, owing to an internal power struggle⁵⁹⁶, it was only able to form a government under the leadership of Madhavsinh Solanki in late December 1976⁵⁹⁷.

The overall impact of the Emergency on Gujarat was comparatively mild. Even later government reports that were not sympathetic to the Emergency regime, noted a "more liberal trend than adopted in most of the other states"⁵⁹⁸. Not only was this true for when the state was under Morcha but also when it was under direct central rule, orders issued "adopted a far more liberal attitude in respect of detentions" and officers were cautioned "towards leniency"⁵⁹⁹. Despite this, there was still a marked difference in its severity during Morcha rule and President's/Cong (R) rule. It therefore best to examine these separately.

For the first nine months of the Emergency, it was the Morcha that remained in power and while in much of the country, there was a brazen use of preventive detention laws, especially MISA, to curb political opposition, this was not the case in Gujarat. There were no political detentions made under MISA for the entire nine months and this

⁵⁹³ Governor of Gujarat, 'Secret F.R. No. 59'.

⁵⁹⁴ Governor of Gujarat, 'Secret F.R. No. 72', 4 April 1976, U. No. 0087345, FR (O/C), GS XIII, (245) 76, 588-591, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

⁵⁹⁵ Governor of Gujarat, 'Secret F.R. No. 73', 22 April 1976, U. No. 0087345, FR (O/C), GS XIII, (245) 76, 606-612, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

⁵⁹⁶ Governor of Gujarat, 'Secret F.R. No. 76', 7 June 1976, U. No. 0087345, FR (O/C), GS XIII, (245) 76, 657-662, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

⁵⁹⁷ Governor of Gujarat to Madhavsinh Solanki, 'Invitation to Form Government', 23 December 1976, U. No. 0087416, GS/II/76, 293, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

⁵⁹⁸ Secretary to the Deputy Inspector General of Police, 'Critical Appraisal of Orders/Instructions Issued by Govt. of India, Gujarat in Respect of Detentions', 15 October 1977, U. No. 0086343, Material for Shah Commission, 32-34, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

⁵⁹⁹ Secretary to the Deputy Inspector General of Police, 'Critical Appraisal of Orders/Instructions Issued by Govt. of India, Gujarat in Respect of Detentions'.

policy was followed “even in respect of banned organisations despite a government of India directive to consider their detention”⁶⁰⁰. The government also followed a lenient policy that allowed public demonstrations against the Emergency. For instance, before a programme of civil disobedience by the LSS in July 1975, a wireless message to all DMs and the Ahmedabad Police Commissioner from the Home Secretary made the policy of the government clear “In response to this call, persons may commit breach of law... action should be taken only after the breach of law is actually committed and not in anticipation that a particular person is likely to commit a breach of law”⁶⁰¹. As a result, Gujarat, during this time, proved to be a safe haven for anti-Emergency oppositional activity. An All-India Civil Liberties Conference was held here in October 1975⁶⁰², as also was a significant conference in December 1975 where MPs of the Cong(O), BJS, BLD and the Socialist Party met and decided to function as a “Janata Front Bloc” in Parliament⁶⁰³. Compared to this, on the very first day of President’s Rule, it was decided to “consider preventive action against political persons”⁶⁰⁴. While there had been no persons detained under MISA for their political affiliations, in less than six months of President’s Rule, 315 “political workers” were detained, which included twenty students⁶⁰⁵. By the end of the Emergency the number of those detained under

⁶⁰⁰ Secretary to the Deputy Inspector General of Police, ‘Critical Appraisal of Orders/Instructions Issued by Govt. of India, Gujrat in Respect of Detentions’.

⁶⁰¹ Secretary to the Governor, ‘Note on Political and Administrative Situation in the State (for Governor’s Conference)’, March 1976, U. No. 0087312, 51-63, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

⁶⁰² Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret F.R. No. 62’, 5 November 1975, U. No. 0087340, GS XIII (246)/76, 103-107, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

⁶⁰³ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret F.R. No. 66’, 6 January 1976, U. No. 0087345, FR (O/C), GS XIII, (245) 76, 447-451, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

⁶⁰⁴ Office of the Deputy Inspector General, ‘Note on Replies to Questionnaire on Detentions under MISA and COFEPOSA by the Govt. of Gujarat’, 15 February 1978, U. No. 0086343, Material for Shah Commission, 92-117, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

⁶⁰⁵ Secretary to the Governor, ‘Note on Political and Administrative Situation in the State (for Governor’s Conference)’.

MISA on political grounds in Gujarat, according to the Shah Commission, was “approximately 600”⁶⁰⁶. With political preventive detentions and the extensive use of Section 144 of the CrPC being the order of the day, organising protests and programmes against the Emergency became considerably more difficult. Having noted this, student responses to the Emergency which covered the spectrum from opposition to support to passivity and the overall influence that the Emergency had on student politics in Gujarat are understood below.

Opposition to the Emergency in Gujarat, while the Morcha was in power, came primarily from umbrella groups. The most major such group was the LSS that had been formed in March 1975 to carry on the “national movement for total revolution” and had taken up the demand of early elections to the Gujarat Assembly⁶⁰⁷. As noted earlier, while superficially non-partisan, its 29-member Executive was especially dominated by the main constituents of the Morcha- Cong(O), BJS and BLD. Being close to the Morcha, during the time that it was in power, the LSS functioned without fear of political persecution, was particularly active and publicly voiced its opposition to the Emergency. Unencumbered by preventive detention and government reprisal, the LSS was able to organise public protests, public meetings, and processions across the state.

In contrast, despite having favourable conditions in which to function, students were not a major part of the opposition to the Emergency that flourished in Gujarat during Morcha rule. There is no evidence of strikes, protests or demonstrations organised by

⁶⁰⁶ J.C. Shah, *Shah Commission of Inquiry: Third and Final Report* (New Delhi: Government of India, 1978), 61.

⁶⁰⁷ See Chapter 1, Section IV.

students against the Emergency. Not only was there little autonomous action by students, but they do not appear to have been significant participants in the wider anti-Emergency movement either. Although, the LSS executive included three students, neither they, nor other student politicians and organisations that were close to the Morcha able to enlist mass student support. That student support to anti-Emergency actions was lagging is clear from the fact that as late as February 1976, leaders of the LSS were still contemplating the problem of trying to “enlist students in their agitation”⁶⁰⁸.

President’s Rule only made matters worse as the policies regarding methods to deal with political opposition changed overnight and it became increasingly difficult to conduct public protests and demonstrations. In the face of persecution, although the Cong (O) made attempts with limited success at organising protests⁶⁰⁹, the LSS virtually disappeared, and there are no mentions of it in government reports after April 1976⁶¹⁰.

The fall of the Morcha government and its effect on anti-Emergency groups precluded the possibility of enlisting mass support from students. Events surrounding a “Gujarat Janata Morcha Yuvak Sammelan” (Gujarat Janata Morcha Youth Convention) held in November 1976 are an apt illustration of the conditions under which students and youth who were opposed to the Emergency were functioning. The original plan of

⁶⁰⁸ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret F.R. No. 70’, 4 March 1976, U. No. 0087345, FR (O/C), GS XIII, (245) 76, 557-562, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

⁶⁰⁹ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret F.R. No. 81’, 20 August 1976, U. No. 0087345, FR (O/C), GS XIII, (245) 76, 758-762, GSA, Gandhinagar, India; Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret F.R. No. 82’, 7 September 1976, U. No. 0087345, FR (O/C), GS XIII, (245) 76, 773-776, GSA, Gandhinagar, India; Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret F.R. No. 88’, 7 September 1976, U. No. 0087345, FR (O/C), GS XIII, (245) 76, 883-888, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

⁶¹⁰ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret F.R. No. 86’, 8 November 1976, U. No. 0087345, FR (O/C), GS XIII, (245) 76, 837-840, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

student politicians, some of whom had been active during the Navnirman Agitation and were then allied to the Morcha, was to hold the conference in Ahmedabad. Having got word of the plan, the administration, imposed section 144 across the city, and the students were forced to shift the venue to a village on the outskirts of the city. Even though it was being held at a different location, the police managed to break up the conference and arrest some of the attendees soon after it had started⁶¹¹. Due to such incidents as well as the overall atmosphere of political persecution, students as a group continued to remain aloof as before and active opposition that had been limited to student politicians, also decreased considerably.

Students cannot be considered to have been an entirely anti-Emergency group during this time. According to one observer, an important reason for the anti-fee hike agitation in 1977 not securing the support of other sections was that there had been a significant number of student politicians and students that had indulged in “pro-Congress activities during the Emergency”⁶¹². Amongst these could be included student politicians who had joined the Cong(R) just before the state Assembly elections in the hopes of contesting elections for the party as well as those who joined it during the Emergency like former NYS leader Rajkumar Gupta who had won from a seat in Ahmedabad supported by the Morcha⁶¹³. Additionally, there were the AISF of the CPI and the NSUI of the Cong (R) that sought to present the Emergency in a favourable

⁶¹¹ '[Invite for] Gujarat Janata Morcha Yuvak Sammelan', 16 November 1976, U. No. 0087158, Important top secret reports, GS/XXIV/B/4, 131, GSA, Gandhinagar, India; Office of Commissioner of Police, Special Branch, Ahmedabad to Secretary to the Government of Gujarat, Home Department (Special), 'Secret: Activities of Janata Morcha and Shrii Piloo Modi (MP-BLD)', 22 November 1976, U. No. 0087169, Imp Top Secret Papers, Commissioner of Police, Vol. II, 115-117, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

⁶¹² 'Restive Students', *The Times of India*, 14 June 1977.

⁶¹³ Governor of Gujarat, 'Secret F.R. No. 80', 5 August 1976, U. No. 0087345, FR (O/C), GS XIII, (245) 76, 687-692, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

light. The pro-Emergency student politicians and groups were understandably more active after the fall of the Morcha government when they were given a free rein by the ruling dispensation. The government and the Emergency were promoted quite often through organising cultural programmes into which pro-Emergency messages would be slipped. The AISF, for instance, organised a volleyball match and a film show to celebrate the 57th anniversary of the Russian Revolution and took the opportunity to “propagate in favour of the 20-point Economic Programme of the Prime Minister”⁶¹⁴. However, like the opposition to the Emergency, this too did not extend much beyond token programmes and activities of these groups and student politicians.

Both active support and opposition to the Emergency were thus, restricted to a small section of students. For the majority of students, questions like “re-establishment of democratic values”, “civil liberties” or “fundamental duties” and the “20-point programme” were less important and urgent than their immediate concerns. The times that students did agitate in larger numbers it was over student issues. Though fewer than in previous years, these protests, unlike those programmes related to the Emergency, involved boycotts, and strikes that witnessed mass participation. For instance, in September 1975, students at GU demanded that their examinations be rescheduled for after Diwali. There were violent protests for over two weeks to press for this demand⁶¹⁵. Similarly, in October, at HL, Ahmedabad students demanding the management reinstate their Principal, destroyed “college property worth Rs.

⁶¹⁴ Office of Commissioner of Police, Special Branch, Ahmedabad to Secretary to the Government of Gujarat, Home Department (Special), ‘Activities of CPI’, 5 November 1976, U. No. 0087158, Important top secret reports, GS/XXIV/B/4, 110, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

⁶¹⁵ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret F.R. No. 60’, 3 October 1975, U. No. 0087340, GS XIII (246)/76, 96-100, GSA, Gandhinagar, India; Samachar, ‘Plan to Get Rid of Copying- and Exams’, *The Times of India*, 11 April 1976.

60000”⁶¹⁶. At SU, some 800 Law students boycotted their examinations demanding the withdrawal of police from the campus and that no examination charge be levied⁶¹⁷. Such protests, however, lasted until the Morcha government was in power.

With the Morcha government gone, and in the face of the government crackdown, student protests of this manner more or less disappeared. While in 1975, mass copying and resistance to strict invigilation had been a serious enough issue, that in some places the police had to be roped in to ensure the smooth conduct of examinations⁶¹⁸, following the imposition of President’s Rule, in 1976, stricter measures were accepted by students with only a few cases of them “venting their resentment” and university exams were conducted peacefully⁶¹⁹. When students, at rare occasions did protest, as at SV College, Surat, they were unsuccessful in getting the authorities to accede to their demands. In this case, under threat of losing an academic year they were humiliated into signing undertakings “endorsed by their parents/guardians” that they would not behave in “such an indisciplined (sic.) manner”⁶²⁰. A government note on the “Political Situation in the Gujarat” around July 1976 accurately captured the state of student politics during this time:

“...with the commencement of the new academic year [1976-77], all schools and colleges have commenced their normal working... The tendency of showing resentment at the slightest possible excuse and taking law into their own hands is now

⁶¹⁶ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret F.R. No. 60’.

⁶¹⁷ Tol News Service, ‘Rajkot Law Students Boycott Exams’, *The Times of India*, 23 October 1975.

⁶¹⁸ Samachar, ‘Plan to Get Rid of Copying- and Exams’; PTI, ‘Action against Copying in Saurashtra Varsity’, *The Times of India*, 18 November 1975.

⁶¹⁹ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret F.R. No. 73’.

⁶²⁰ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret F.R. No. 75’, 20 May 1976, U. No. 0087345, FR (O/C), GS XIII, (245) 76, 648-653, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

totally absent; so much so that the refusal of permission, to elect student representatives, by the college authorities and the increase in the hostel accommodation charges effected by the M.S. University, Vadodara have been accepted by them without any grouse”⁶²¹

Although not a watershed event, like it was for student politics in some parts of the country, the Emergency did have a significant impact on its development in Gujarat. To begin with, on the parliamentary front with the formation of the Morcha government and student displeasure with the involvement of Chimanbhai matters were still unfolding. One can only speculate, had the Emergency not intervened, whether or how students would have lodged their protest, how much support they would have received from other sections and how politically significant would the opposition have been. However, the imposition of the Emergency, and restrictions on political activities, meant that tendencies and trends that had grown stronger since the end of the Navnirman Agitation got further cemented. Thus, it was the case that during this time the student body withdrew further from participation in active politics and did not venture beyond taking up student issues in an unorganised manner. Similarly, the Emergency proved to be particularly detrimental to the different left and progressive tendencies that had made their mark during the Navnirman Agitation but had been in decline ever since. Given the conditions of student politics they were unable to find much support within the student body. Beyond this, of particular interest to this thesis, remains the case of the study is the Sangh, that was particularly singled out for

⁶²¹ ‘Secret Note on the Political Situation in Gujarat’, 9 July 1976, U. No. 0087416, GS/II/4 (11)76, 87-116, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

political persecution during the Emergency. The impact of the Emergency on the Sangh is discussed in Chapter 5.

Section III Student Politics under Janata and Congress Governments

Janata

In January 1977, the Emergency was relaxed, political prisoners including important opposition leaders released and elections to the Lok Sabha scheduled for March. In the lead up to the elections, a number of non-Communist opposition parties came together to form the Janata Party (Janata). The Janata consisted of all parties that had formed the Morcha in Gujarat augmented by other parties that did not have a presence in the state. Unlike the Morcha, the Janata was not a coalition but a party formed through a merger of other parties and with its formation, parties like the BJS and Cong(O) ceased to exist. The Janata won over 300 seats in the elections while the Cong(R) was reduced to just over 150. In Gujarat, out of the 26 Lok Sabha, 16 were won by the Janata, including Morarji Desai who became the PM, and 10 by the Cong(R).

Changes that were taking place at the centre during the first half of 1977 had their effect at the state level. The Cong(R) government under Solanki, formed at the end of December 1976, was forced to immediately contend with defections as soon as the Lok Sabha was dissolved in January 1977 and in the lead up to the parliamentary elections the support for the Cong(R) in the Assembly reduced from 104 to 97 MLAs. The results of the elections led to a further erosion of its majority as, in addition to the defections from the Cong(R) to the Janata, a group of former KMLP MLAs also withdrew their support. Although the Ministry survived one no-confidence motion,

through dubious means⁶²², when faced with another trust motion and having the confirmed support of only 85 MLAs in a house that had an effective strength of 177, rather than be defeated on the floor, the Ministry resigned on 8 April. On 11 April 1977, a Janata Ministry was sworn in with B.J. Patel once again made the CM⁶²³.

With the lifting of Emergency restrictions, there was some student activity that had political overtones. When the Education Minister went on an unplanned visit to the hostels of LD, he was gheraoed by a group of students who shouted pro-Janata slogans, stoned and burned his car. He was eventually forced to escape in an auto-rickshaw⁶²⁴. Pro-Janata students also disrupted an election meeting of the Cong(R) candidate from Baroda, who was also the Chancellor of MSU, and then fought a pitched battle with the police⁶²⁵. While students also participated in electoral canvassing, after the Lok Sabha elections in March 1977 and the formation of the Janata state government the following month, pro-Janata student groups in particular and students in general seemed to have stayed away from electoral or party politics. There were stray instances like a violent demonstration against Indira Gandhi when she visited Ahmedabad⁶²⁶ or a protest by the NSUI, in which some members as a symbolic gesture rose from the viewing gallery in the state Assembly, threw pamphlets

⁶²² A no-confidence motion moved by Babubhai Patel came up on 28/3. On 26 and 27 the Congress took 66 MLAs to Mount Abu. During the debate, the opposition demanded it be continued for another day. The CM said that it should only be extended for 90 minutes. The acting speaker accidentally declared that the opposition amendment had more support. The mistake was corrected, the opposition walked out and the no-confidence motion was defeated 92-0.

⁶²³ Governor of Gujarat, 'Secret F.R. No. 96', 4 April 1977, U. No. 0087349, FR Sent to President and Prime Minister, O/C, No. 90-113, 96-101, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

⁶²⁴ Office of Commissioner of Police, Ahmedabad to Addl. Chief Secretary, Home Department (Special), 'Activities of the Students of L.D. Engineering College, Ahmedabad', 7 February 1977, U. No. 0087169, Imp Top Secret Papers, Commissioner of Police, Vol. II, 138, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

⁶²⁵ Special Correspondent, 'Probe Ordered into Baroda Incident', 6 March 1977.

⁶²⁶ Governor of Gujarat, 'Secret M.R. No. 21', 10 July 1978, U. No. 0087352, GS XI/73/78, 216-228, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

into the hall and shouted pro-Indira slogans⁶²⁷, but these did not involve any significant numbers of students.

A vast majority of protests that accompanied the easing and later the withdrawal of the Emergency, noted by the press, centred around student issues, frequently bursting forth in a spontaneous and unorganised manner, taking the form of walk outs, strikes, gheraos and violent clashes with college authorities or the police⁶²⁸. After a year of peaceful examinations, there were serious altercations in April 1977. Facing “threats, assaults and manhandling of supervisors and university checking parties”, SU contemplated handing over, once again, the examination process to the police⁶²⁹. Later in the year, there were reports of graffiti on SU walls which read “Copying is our birth right”⁶³⁰ and by December the university had cancelled examinations in all branches apart from engineering and medicine because of “widespread malpractice and intimidation”⁶³¹. In December, some 3000 students went on strike at four colleges demanding that all students be allowed to attend a youth festival organised by SGU, forcing the university to cancel the programme⁶³². Apart from these issues, students also attempted to agitate over the conduct of union elections⁶³³, changes in bus

⁶²⁷ Staff Correspondent, ‘Pamphlets Thrown in Gujarat Assembly’, *The Times of India*, 19 September 1979.

⁶²⁸ V.V. John, ‘Outlook on the Campuses: Opportunity for a New Beginning’, *The Times of India*, 22 April 1977.

⁶²⁹ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret F.R. No. 97’, 21 April 1977, U. No. 0087349, FR Sent to President and Prime Minister, O/C, No. 90-113, 122-127, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

⁶³⁰ A.S. Abraham, ‘Unrest on the Campus I- A Profile of Discontent’, *The Times of India*, 18 August 1977.

⁶³¹ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret F.R. No. 112’, 6 December 1977, U. No. 0087349, FR Sent to President and Prime Minister, O/C, No. 90-113, 331-336, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

⁶³² Samachar, ‘Violence Closes University Fete’, *The Times of India*, 1 January 1978.

⁶³³ John, ‘Outlook on the Campuses: Opportunity for a New Beginning’; Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret F.R. No. 105’, 18 August 1977, U. No. 0087349, FR Sent to President and Prime Minister, O/C, No. 90-113, 235-232, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

schedules⁶³⁴, high fees for or inadequate supply of apparatus to laboratories⁶³⁵, scrapping or introduction of some subjects⁶³⁶ as well as questions that related specifically to medical students⁶³⁷.

One of the more major protests was another anti-fee hike agitation. In June 1976, during President's Rule, a committee had been set up to "examine the financial structure" of ASC and Law colleges that received grants-in-aid from the government⁶³⁸. The committee in its report, submitted in April 1977 recommended a hike as well as a standardisation of fees across colleges. By May, the Janata government accepted, with minor modifications, the recommendations, which left both managements and students displeased. In response to the more stringent grant-in-aid regulations, the AES, for a brief period, stopped admitting students to its older and more prestigious colleges⁶³⁹. Whereas the government's acceptance of an increase in fees led to protests from students. Towards the end of May, a joint committee, calling itself the *Vidyarthi Yuvak Sangram Samiti* (Students and Youth Action Committee, VYSS) was formed in Ahmedabad⁶⁴⁰. The VYSS called for strikes and bandhs in the city⁶⁴¹. The NSUI, called for the observation of an "anti-fee rise week" that included demonstrations and token fasts⁶⁴². The ABVP, despite being supportive of the Janata

⁶³⁴ Governor of Gujarat, 'Secret F.R. No. 107', 18 August 1977, U. No. 0087349, FR Sent to President and Prime Minister, O/C, No. 90-113, 256-262, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

⁶³⁵ Governor of Gujarat, 'Secret F.R. No. 107'.

⁶³⁶ 'Violence in Navsari Farm College', *The Times of India*, 28 October 1977.

⁶³⁷ Special Correspondent, 'Baroda Medicos' Strike Hits Hospital Services', *The Times of India*, 13 June 1977; Samachar, 'Students Hinder College Working', *The Times of India*, 9 April 1977.

⁶³⁸ Samuel Paul, *Grant-in-Aid to Affiliated Colleges in the State of Gujarat: Report of Committee on College Finances 1977* (Ahmedabad: Government of Gujarat, 1977), 4.

⁶³⁹ Governor of Gujarat, 'Secret F.R. No. 101', 21 June 1977, U. No. 0087349, FR Sent to President and Prime Minister, O/C, No. 90-113, 173-178, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

⁶⁴⁰ Governor of Gujarat, 'Secret F.R. No. 100', 6 June 1977, U. No. 0087349, FR Sent to President and Prime Minister, O/C, No. 90-113, 167-171, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

⁶⁴¹ Samachar, 'Ahmedabad Students' Stir against Fee Rise', *The Times of India*, 22 July 1977.

⁶⁴² 'Restive Students'.

government, given that a Cong(O) person was the Education Minister, also “held several public meetings to rally popular support” against the proposed fee-hike⁶⁴³. Students at MSU also formed an “anti-fee rise committee” with Narendra Tiwari, from the BSF, as its convenor⁶⁴⁴. Protests by this committee ensured that the MSU did not re-open after the summer on schedule and even when it did open, many students continued to boycott classes⁶⁴⁵.

The anti-fee hike agitation of 1977 was significant not because it occurred, but because it failed to generate much intensity or to garner popular support. While there were instances of student militancy such as an attack on the Education Minister, or the closure of MSU for some period, overall, student support for the agitation was limited. An Ahmedabad bandh call by the VYSS in support of twin demands of fee reduction and the holding college union elections was noted, by a Governor’s Fortnightly Report, more prone to exaggerating student protests, to be “a complete flop”⁶⁴⁶. Moreover, it appears to be the case that, unlike earlier anti-fee hike agitations that received the support of political parties and various sections of the population, the 1977 agitation did not. That students did not receive outside support for the protests, as mentioned earlier, was noted in the contemporary press. The government also on different occasions while the agitation was on-going, observed that “the response of the common people” to the agitation was poor⁶⁴⁷ and that despite organisations “holding meetings to create public opinion” they “had not got appreciable public

⁶⁴³ ‘Restive Students’.

⁶⁴⁴ Special Correspondent, ‘Baroda Varsity Students to Boycott Classes’, *The Times of India*, 11 July 1977.

⁶⁴⁵ Special Correspondent, ‘Baroda Varsity Students to Boycott Classes’.

⁶⁴⁶ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret F.R. No. 105’.

⁶⁴⁷ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret F.R. No. 102’, 6 July 1977, U. No. 0087349, FR Sent to President and Prime Minister, O/C, No. 90-113, 192-196, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

support”⁶⁴⁸. Thus, although protests against the increase in fees carried on intermittently until August, mainly at Ahmedabad and Baroda, in the absence of significant student or wider support, the agitation was unsuccessful.

After this initial upswing in student unrest in 1977, during 1978 and 1979, although students did agitate there was a decline in the intensity of student activity. There were minor student agitations and protests over a boycott of examination work by non-teaching staff⁶⁴⁹, the grant of ATKT to higher secondary students⁶⁵⁰, the usual “malpractice and corruption” in the conduct of examinations at various universities⁶⁵¹, the medium of instruction at MSU⁶⁵², the appointment or transfer of teachers⁶⁵³, the inclusion of Sanskrit as a compulsory subject⁶⁵⁴, and other “long pending demands of students”⁶⁵⁵. While students resorted to different forms of agitation to press for their demands what was significant, as the government noted, in a somewhat exaggerated manner the “police had not to use force to quell the agitating youths, throughout the period under reference [1978]”⁶⁵⁶. While this was not entirely accurate, it was true that the instances of police action against students were negligible and student protests

⁶⁴⁸ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret F.R. No. 101’.

⁶⁴⁹ Home Department (Government of Gujarat), ‘A Note on the Political Situation in the State with Particular Reference to Law and Order (December 1977 to February 1979)’, March 1979, U. No. 0087315, 48-55, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

⁶⁵⁰ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret M.R. No. 21’.

⁶⁵¹ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret F.R. No. 115’, 19 January 1978, U. No. 0087352, GS XI/73/78, 19-27, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

⁶⁵² Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret No. MR/3/SM’, 13 November 1978, U. No. 0087356, 26-34, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

⁶⁵³ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret No. MR/1/SM’, 21 September 1978, U. No. 0087356, 3-11, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

⁶⁵⁴ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret M.R. No. 12’, 9 August 1979, U. No. 0087353, GS X/1979-80, 36-39, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

⁶⁵⁵ Home Department (Government of Gujarat), ‘Statement Showing the Student and Labour Unrest in the State’, March 1979, U. No. 0087318, GS XXVI/8/80, 127, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

⁶⁵⁶ Home Department (Government of Gujarat), ‘A Note on the Political Situation in the State with Particular Reference to Law and Order (December 1977 to February 1979)’; Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, ‘Brief Note on Political and Administrative Situation in State with Special Reference to Law and Order’, March 1979, U. No. 0087315, 206-214, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

themselves were both fewer in number than earlier as also more peaceful. With this being the case, although there were over 250 incidents related to student agitation during that year, the government could still confidently claim that the student front was “fairly quiet”⁶⁵⁷. The following year saw a further decrease and according to the government no incident in 1979 “with respect to students had caused a major law and order problem”⁶⁵⁸. Moreover, in these protests, the absence of co-ordination and organisation among students at the state level was apparent. Even when over 10,000 students were involved in strikes, simultaneously, in September 1978, “it was not a widespread strike resulting from a single, united call by students”⁶⁵⁹. All of them were over “minor individual demands”⁶⁶⁰ and students remained isolated from each other protesting in their disparate locations.

The partial exceptions to this trend were medical students who continued to agitate in large numbers. During this period, students at BJ Medical College, Ahmedabad, protesting a hike in hostel fees, went on strike, “indulged in violent demonstrations” and clashed with the police. The strike was only called off after student politicians were given assurances by the CM⁶⁶¹. Again, at BJ, students went on strike for 11 days alleging that a Janata MLA had insulted a Junior Doctor⁶⁶² on duty⁶⁶³. While at MP

⁶⁵⁷ Home Department (Government of Gujarat), ‘Law and Order: 1978-80’, March 1980, U. No. 0087423, 63-82, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

⁶⁵⁸ Home Department (Government of Gujarat), ‘Law and Order: 1978-80’; Home Department (Government of Gujarat), ‘Notes for Governors/Chief Ministers Conference’, March 1980, U. No. 0087318, GS XXVI/8/80, 368-388, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

⁶⁵⁹ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret No. MR/1/SM’.

⁶⁶⁰ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret No. MR/1/SM’.

⁶⁶¹ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret M.R. No. 21’.

⁶⁶² Junior Doctor was not a strictly defined term and included persons ranging from medical students who were in the interning stage of their MBBS to Senior Residents/Registrars and all those in between. What was common to them was that each category received a stipend for services they rendered at hospitals.

⁶⁶³ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret M.R. No. 22’, 10 August 1978, U. No. 0087352, GS XI/73/78, 230-237, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

Shah Medical College, Jamnagar, students went on strike for over two weeks during which time they burnt hostel furniture and an ambulance to protest cancellation of admissions of 16 first year students. The strike was withdrawn after the government agreed to reconsider the decision⁶⁶⁴.

Particularly with respect to medical students there were instances where the question of caste served to unite a more or less homogenous medical student body against a minority of SC and ST students. A particularly glaring instance of this were protests which involved MBBS students, Junior Doctors, Housemen, and Registrars. They led protests, wore black ribbons, and abstained from work and classes demanding action against a Dalit post-graduate who had been accused by a Professor of attacking her. The student's account that he had been harassed previously on the basis of caste was ignored. It also did not matter that he had filed a complaint under the Untouchability Offences Act⁶⁶⁵. While there were incidents of this nature, it was the question of reservation, rooted in caste, that most agitated the medical students. The anti-reservationist protests of medical students that took place during this time are further discussed in the context of the first anti-reservation agitation in Section IV.

Congress

Having won the Lok Sabha elections, different parties that had dissolved to form the Janata, with their varying ideological positions, were at odds from the outset. By the middle of 1979, the Janata broke, and Morarji Desai having lost his majority resigned

⁶⁶⁴ Governor of Gujarat, 'Secret No. MR/3/SM'.

⁶⁶⁵ Office of Commissioner of Police, Special Branch, Ahmedabad to Secretary to the Government of Gujarat, Home Department (Special), 'Activities of Junior Doctors of Civil Hospital Ahmedabad Vis-a-Vis Medical Student of BJ Medical College, Ahmedabad', 22 November 1976, U. No. 0087169, Imp Top Secret Papers, Commissioner of Police, Vol. II, 126-127, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

as PM. Charan Singh, from the breakaway Janata Party (Secular) then became the PM for a short period receiving support from the various parties that had been formed out of the Cong(R), including the one led by Indira Gandhi- the Congress (Indira) (Congress)⁶⁶⁶. The support was almost immediately withdrawn, and elections were conducted in January 1980. The Congress returned to power with a large majority, winning over 350 seats while the different splinters of the Janata, were reduced to less than 100 seats combined. In Gujarat, the Congress did particularly well, winning 25 out of 26 seats. Moreover, soon after the disastrous results, the BJS faction that was still a part of the Janata, left the party and formed the BJP.

On returning to power, in February 1980, the Congress dismissed governments in nine Janata ruled states, including Gujarat, and decided to conduct fresh elections. It was during the state Assembly elections in May that the Congress implemented what was popularly known as the KHAM formula. KHAM stood for Kshatriya, Harijan (Dalit), Adivasi and Muslim, and was an electoral strategy to “assemble a minimum winning coalition” of these and other socially, economically and educationally backward groups. Constituencies were analysed for their caste and communal composition and wherever it “indicated that a candidate from one of the KHAM (or other deprived) groups might attract the minimal votes needed to win, such a candidate [was] nominated”⁶⁶⁷. In seeking to assemble such an electoral coalition, the Congress gave

⁶⁶⁶ A number of splinter groups had been formed out of the Cong (R) most of these did not exist for long and were of no significance to Gujarat politics. The Congress (I) led by Indira Gandhi was formed in 1978 after she was expelled from her party was recognised as the legitimate Indian National Congress by the election commission of India in 1984. While this was the case, the suffix continued to be used well into the 1990s. However, for the sake of brevity and given the fact that other Congress factions were little importance in Gujarat, the Indira Gandhi's Congress is referred to, in an admittedly anachronistic and somewhat inaccurate fashion, as the “Congress” and not Cong (I).

⁶⁶⁷ J.R. Wood, ‘Congress Restored? The “KHAM” Strategy and Congress (I) Recruitment in Gujarat’, in *State Politics in Contemporary India: Crisis or Continuity*, ed. J.R. Wood (Boulder: Westview, 1984), 197–228.

tickets in “less than two-fifths”⁶⁶⁸ to higher or middle caste candidates. The strategy was extremely effective as the Congress won 140 seats while the Janata was reduced to 21 seats. Following the Congress victory Solanki again became the CM, and his Ministry, a representative of the alliance that had brought the party to power, was stacked with those from KHAM communities.

Prior to the Assembly elections, student politics remained much as it had for the previous two years. Students continued to indulge in localised protests over minor issues. While some of these protests such as ones at LE College, Morbi over exemption from payment of term and hostel fees or at HL over difficult question papers⁶⁶⁹ turned violent with attacks on institutional property, buses and in the case of Morbi even government offices and the police stable⁶⁷⁰, they were soon contained and did not transform into larger agitations. An attempt by the NSUI to start an agitation over the increase of milk prices and the “unavailability of essential commodities” at Ahmedabad failed⁶⁷¹ as did another attempt by both the NSUI and the AISF over the issue of rising prices⁶⁷².

After the elections, one finds a change in the disposition of student politics. Protests and agitations over student issues led to considerably greater conflict between students and the government or administrations than in the immediate past. When a speeding bus nearly knocked down a student near the polytechnic campus of MSU, a mob of nearly 4000 students set fire to the truck and blocked traffic on the road for the

⁶⁶⁸ Wood, ‘Congress Restored? The “KHAM” Strategy and Congress (I) Recruitment in Gujarat’, 212.

⁶⁶⁹ Staff Correspondent, ‘Students Gassed in Ahmedabad’, *The Times of India*, 20 April 1980.

⁶⁷⁰ Staff Correspondent, ‘Ban Order in Morvi Areas’, *The Times of India*, 5 April 1980.

⁶⁷¹ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret M.R. No. 19’, 13 March 1980, U. No. 0087353, GS X/1979-80, 105-111, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

⁶⁷² Home Department (Government of Gujarat), ‘Law and Order: 1978-80’.

whole night, went on strike the following day and did not withdraw the agitation until they were assured by the district administration that heavy traffic would be diverted away from the college⁶⁷³. At MSU again, during the counting of the students' union election, the police entered the campus and hostels, beat up students and arrested some 200 of them⁶⁷⁴. A "minor altercation" between students, a bus driver and conductor at LD spiralled into a serious problem for the government as the police resorted to a lathi charge during which not only students but also the principal of the college was injured. The matter was brought up in the Assembly, students across the city went on strike and brought educational activity in Ahmedabad to a standstill⁶⁷⁵. In addition to this, some student presence was felt, albeit to a lesser extent, in an agitation of the large peasantry that were led by opposition parties who drew their support from those groups that were threatened by the KHAM coalition.

The price-hike agitation began in early August when the Ahmedabad unit of the Janata called on the people to protest against rising prices and a rogue Congress, "youth and student" leader, Atul Shah⁶⁷⁶, went on a fast unto death with similar demands⁶⁷⁷. Soon the BJP dove head-first into the agitation, holding public meetings and protests. Although the main centre of the agitation, which lasted until September, was Ahmedabad, it affected many parts of the state. Outside Ahmedabad there were, according to government estimates, 87 strikes, 9 processions, 65 'stone-throwings', 4

⁶⁷³ Samachar, 'Baroda Collector Bows to Students' Demand', *The Times of India*, 12 August 1980.

⁶⁷⁴ Staff Correspondent, '6 Cops Hurt in Baroda Stir', *The Times of India*, 23 August 1980.

⁶⁷⁵ Governor of Gujarat, 'Secret M.R. No. 27/SM', 18 November 1980, U. No. 0087364, GS/X/1980, 82-88, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

⁶⁷⁶ Atul Shah had been expelled from the Congress for anti-party activities. Governor of Gujarat, 'Secret M.R. No. 27/SM'.

⁶⁷⁷ Governor of Gujarat, 'Secret M.R. No. 25/SM', 19 September 1980, U. No. 0087364, GS/X/1980, 64-70, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

cases of arson and 10 people were killed in police firing⁶⁷⁸. The agitation also witnessed attempts by the opposition to break the KHAM unity with clashes between Dalits and Muslims taking place at Ahmedabad⁶⁷⁹. Moreover, in what is most significant in the context of this study was the involvement of students.

Prior to the election of the Solanki ministry, in the first half of 1980, there had been unsuccessful attempts by anti-Janata student organisations to launch agitations on the issue of rising prices. During the August agitation, however, students were noted to have been “actively involved in demonstrations, stone throwing, strikes and forcible closure of shops in various parts of the state”⁶⁸⁰. They had already been protesting about an increase in mess bills and hostel fees when the agitation began and “came out in support” of the anti-price rise agitation across the state⁶⁸¹. On 12 August, all schools and colleges in Ahmedabad remained shut in response to a bandh call given by “student leaders” and students went “around enforcing closure” of shops, businesses, and educational institutions⁶⁸². A few days later, students at LD, set fire to the rector’s bungalow, smashed open the doors of his house and made a bonfire of furniture⁶⁸³. Due to student unrest the government eventually shut down all educational institutions in Ahmedabad⁶⁸⁴. Students remained a part of the agitation till the end, and there were reports of police teargassing “student mobs” in Raipur and

⁶⁷⁸ Home Department (Government of Gujarat), ‘Governor’s Conference 1981: Notes for the Use of the Governor’, March 1981, U. No. 0087320, GS XXVI/9/1980, 16-22, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

⁶⁷⁹ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret M.R. No. 25/SM’.

⁶⁸⁰ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret M.R. No. 26/SM’, 22 October 1980, U. No. 0087364, GS/X/1980, 74-80, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

⁶⁸¹ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret M.R. No. 25/SM’.

⁶⁸² PTI, ‘Ahmedabad Mob Tear-Gassed’, *The Times of India*, 13 August 1980; Staff Correspondent, ‘Looting, Arson in Ahmedabad’, *The Times of India*, 15 August 1980.

⁶⁸³ Staff Correspondent, ‘Campus Rioting in Ahmedabad’, *The Times of India*, 20 August 1980.

⁶⁸⁴ Staff Correspondent, ‘Campus Rioting in Ahmedabad’.

Khadia as late as the middle of September, when they attacked buses and shops to protest high prices⁶⁸⁵.

Apart from the price rise agitation in urban areas, opposition leaders, particularly the Janata and former KMLP elements, began to mobilise those sections of the rural population whose dominant position was threatened by the success of KHAM, especially the large peasantry which consisted primarily of high and intermediate castes. A Krushi Rakshak Sangh (Farmer Protection Organisation, KRS) was formed in late October 1980 and there were attempts to rouse the peasantry against the rise in prices of farm inputs, inadequate power supply, unremunerative prices for farm produce and imposition of levy on groundnut oil⁶⁸⁶. There were over a hundred “very well attended” meetings and large rallies that were organised in different parts of the state. A lockdown programme of the Mehsana Collectorate, in November, ended in police firing at the deaths of 3 persons⁶⁸⁷. While the agitation dissipated by early January, the following year with a call for a “farmer’s march” from Ahmedabad to Gandhinagar that failed to evoke much response, there was some amount of student participation, which was not a common occurrence in student politics. There was at least one documented case of students supporting the KRS. This was at Rajkot where a hundred and fifty students were reported to have been detained while trying to shut down educational institutions in support of a KRS bandh⁶⁸⁸.

⁶⁸⁵ UNI, ‘Mobs Teargassed in Ahmedabad’, *The Times of India*, 21 September 1980.

⁶⁸⁶ Home Department (Government of Gujarat), ‘Governor’s Conference 1981: Notes for the Use of the Governor’; Home Department (Government of Gujarat), ‘Governor’s Conference 1981: Notes for the Use of the Governor’.

⁶⁸⁷ Home Department (Government of Gujarat), ‘Governor’s Conference 1981: Notes for the Use of the Governor’.

⁶⁸⁸ UNI, ‘310 Held in Rajkot: Bandh’, *The Times of India*, 2 December 1980.

While the price rise and peasants' agitations were important developments, it was the anti-reservation agitation initiated by medical students, in early 1981, that allowed for interventions from various forces and was the most significant challenge to the government.

Before moving to a substantial examination of the 1981 anti-reservation agitation, a few comments regarding the developments in student politics that between 1977 and 1980 are in order. As is clear from the above, for much of the period, while there was an initial upswing in political activity following the relaxation of Emergency restrictions, student politics was for the much of the period, limited to student issues and was also comparatively less militant and violent affair than it had been and would be in the future. After the Congress government came to power, however, students on a mass scale actively participated in opposition agitations against the government, setting the stage for the anti-reservation agitation. Significantly, apart from the involvement of some left student politicians in the failed fee hike of 1977 and the futile attempts by the AISF to lead a price rise agitation in early 1980, there are no references in the sources to left or progressive groups or tendencies during this time. While this is not to say that they were completely absent, but it does indicate that their relevance had reduced drastically during and that by the time of the anti-reservation agitation, left and progressive groups, were no longer powerful voices in student politics.

Section IV The Anti-Reservation Agitation 1981

Events of the Agitation

While reservations for SC, ST and SEBC students in Gujarat were generally 7, 13 and 10 percent respectively, there were variations depending on faculty, branch, stage,

and institutions of higher education. For instance, a lower percentage was reserved for SEBC in some post-graduate courses, while the SGU did not have a policy of reservations at all⁶⁸⁹. More significantly, there had been no reservations, even for SC and ST students, in both MBBS and post-graduate medical courses. These had been first implemented at the MBBS level between 1969 and 1971, with relative ease. However, the first attempt to provide reservations in post-graduate courses, in May 1975, at a time when Gujarat was under President's Rule, had failed. A strike at all four Medical colleges in the state forced the government to keep the order in abeyance⁶⁹⁰. After being elected, the Morcha government, implemented the order and for the first time 7 and 13 percent seats were reserved for SC and ST students in post-graduate medical courses⁶⁹¹. Unrest was temporarily avoided as the government promised to increase the total number of seats so as to compensate for those that would be reserved. However, the non-implementation of the promised 25% increase in seats by college authorities led to protests at BJ Medical, Ahmedabad in September 1977⁶⁹².

More changes were made to the pattern of reservations between 1978 and 1979. Among these were the implementation of SEBC reservations following the acceptance of the recommendations of the Baxi Commission. As a result, 10 and 5 percent seats

⁶⁸⁹ UGC, *Facilities to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in Universities and Colleges* (New Delhi: UGC, 1990).

⁶⁹⁰ Social Welfare and SC/ST Development Department, 'Statement 4: List of Points for Discussion with the Officials of State Govt. of Gujarat Regarding Disturbances in Gujarat', 30 August 1981, U. No. 0086911, Cabinet Meeting Papers, 1981, 468-475, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

⁶⁹¹ Social Welfare and SC/ST Development Department, 'Statement 4: List of Points for Discussion with the Officials of State Govt. of Gujarat Regarding Disturbances in Gujarat'.

⁶⁹² Social Welfare and SC/ST Development Department, 'Medical Students JR. Doctors' Agitation Against Reservation in Post-Graduate Medical Courses', 30 August 1981, U. No. 0086911, Cabinet Meeting Papers, 1981, 476-485, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

came to be reserved for SEBC students in both MBBS and post-graduate medical courses respectively⁶⁹³.

Important in the immediate context were the roster system and the carry forward and interchangeability of seats that were introduced in 1978 and implemented in January 1979⁶⁹⁴. Institutions were only required to provide 7 and 13 percent seats for SC and ST students within all post-graduate seats and not according to specialisations or departments. As a result, while the percentage of available reserved seats was often maintained, SC and ST seats were allocated to specialisations and departments for which there was less demand. In order to avoid this, it was decided that a roster be maintained according to which seats in specialisations and departments would be allocated from year to year⁶⁹⁵. Moreover, according to a government note, prior to 1979, the seats that could not be filled by suitable SC or ST candidates were neither interchangeable between the two categories nor could they be carried forward to the following year- they were filled as “open” seats⁶⁹⁶. In 1979, this was changed, and the system was made similar to the one followed for government employment- if there were unfilled seats, they would be interchangeable between SC and ST students and if even after this there were vacant reserved seats, they would be carried forward to the following year⁶⁹⁷. There were some protests in Medical colleges, regarding these

⁶⁹³ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret F.R. No. 119’, 12 May 1978, U. No. 0087352, GS XI/73/78, 160-169, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

⁶⁹⁴ Social Welfare and SC/ST Development Department, ‘Medical Students JR. Doctors’ Agitation Against Reservation in Post-Graduate Medical Courses’.

⁶⁹⁵ I.P. Desai, ‘Anti-Reservation Agitation and Structure of Gujarat Society’, *Economic and Political Weekly* 16, no. 18 (1981): 819–23.

⁶⁹⁶ Panchayats and Health Department, ‘Confidential Note for the Cabinet: Reservation of Seats for S.C./S.T. Candidates in the Pre-Medical and Dental Courses’, 27 November 1978, U. No. 0087422, Cabinet Meetings During Presidents Rule, Vol III, Items 55-109, 182-183.

⁶⁹⁷ General Administration Department, ‘Note for the Use of the Governor’, March 1981, U. No. 0087320, GS XXVI/9/1980, 168-176, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

changes, because of, as a Governor's report put it, "apprehensions in the minds" of students that these would result in there being almost no open seats left in a few years⁶⁹⁸, which gradually abated.

In conditions which were already polarised on caste lines, following protests regarding the brutal murder of a Dalit man and the subsequent arrests of upper caste suspects, at Jetalpur village, near Ahmedabad⁶⁹⁹, the first salvo of the anti-reservation agitation, was fired, on 31 December 1980, by MBBS students and junior doctors at BJ Medical when they met the Health Minister and submitted a memorandum in which they demanded:

- 1) Abolition of the reservation system for SC/ST etc at the post graduate level
- 2) System of 'carry forward' of unutilised seats should be abolished
- 3) Number of seats in reserved categories should decrease
- 4) Number of seats in unreserved categories should increase⁷⁰⁰

Not receiving what they considered an adequate response, they went on a "lightning strike" on 5 January while also attacking the office of the Director of Medical Research⁷⁰¹ and formed an Action Committee () of the Medical Students' Union and the Junior Doctors' Association (JDA)⁷⁰².

⁶⁹⁸ Governor of Gujarat, 'Secret M.R. No. 5', 13 January 1979, U. No. 0087359, Monthly Report O/C, 53-56, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

⁶⁹⁹ Governor of Gujarat, 'Secret M.R. No. 29/SM', 13 January 1981, U. No. 0087364, GS/X/1980, 101-108, GSA, Gandhinagar, India; Staff Correspondent, 'Condolence Meeting Turns Violent', *The Times of India*, 29 December 1980.

⁷⁰⁰ Social Welfare and SC/ST Development Department, 'Medical Students JR. Doctors' Agitation Against Reservation in Post-Graduate Medical Courses'.

⁷⁰¹ Social Welfare and SC/ST Development Department, 'Medical Students JR. Doctors' Agitation Against Reservation in Post-Graduate Medical Courses'.

⁷⁰² 'Agitation Has a Smack of Assam', *Link*, 29 March 1981.

In what appears to be an attempt to prevent the agitation from escalating further, on 9 January, the government first announced that it would abolish the carry forward system; then on 17 January decided that the interchangeability system would also be abolished. However, neither concession succeeded in curtailing the agitation. After the government had withdrawn its policy of carrying forward seats, on 12 January, all Medical colleges in Gujarat observed a strike⁷⁰³. Representatives of the medical students also met with the CM and not only pressed for the fulfilment of their other original demands, including a complete abolition of *all* reservations at the post-graduate level but also added new ones to the list. These included the abolition of an MSc (Medical) course, introduction of Residency system for junior doctors and expansion of hostel facilities. Similarly, on 17 January, the day that the government announced that it was willing to abolish the system of interchangeability, anti-reservationists at BJ set fire to government vehicles and called for an indefinite strike⁷⁰⁴. Although the agitation continued despite the government's attempts at placating students, even at this stage, it was limited primarily to medical students. While they resorted to "slogan shouting and attacking cars", staging demonstrations and processions none of these had ended in major confrontations with the police⁷⁰⁵.

It was between 21 and 26 January that the agitation began to gain in strength. During this time, students at the Baroda Medical college declared an indefinite strike⁷⁰⁶, enforced the closure of college offices and demanded that the dean, a Dalit, leave the premises. The Baroda agitators also marched through the main city streets, carrying,

⁷⁰³ Governor of Gujarat, 'Secret M.R. No. 29/SM'.

⁷⁰⁴ Social Welfare and SC/ST Development Department, 'Medical Students JR. Doctors' Agitation Against Reservation in Post-Graduate Medical Courses'.

⁷⁰⁵ 'Agitation Has a Smack of Assam'.

⁷⁰⁶ PTI, 'In Brief', *The Times of India*, 25 January 1981.

“an effigy made of a human skull and bones”⁷⁰⁷. At Ahmedabad, on 22 January, anti-reservationists blocked the entry of staff to BJ Medical college⁷⁰⁸. The following day, at BJ they hijacked a city bus, took it around nearby settlements populated mainly by Dalits and oppressed communities while shouting “insulting slogans” against them. There resulted an altercation between anti-reservationist students and the locals who “heavily stoned” the bus⁷⁰⁹. This was followed, on 24 January, by a confrontation between anti-reservationists who had set up camp at the BJ college gate and SC and ST students from the Medical college⁷¹⁰. There was a scuffle between the two groups during which property belonging to the anti-reservationists such banners, bed sheets and other items were set on fire⁷¹¹. This proved to be the tipping point and as news of these incidents spread, by 26 January there were what were termed by the press and government as “violent clashes” but what amounted in reality to attacks on Dalits and their homes and shops in many areas in Ahmedabad⁷¹².

The caste rioting, in which anti-reservationist students actively participated, soon spread to other parts of the state, and continued till the end of the agitation. It was primarily Dalits along with their houses and shops that were attacked, in both rural and urban areas. Although the worst affected were the districts of Ahmedabad, Baroda,

⁷⁰⁷ UNI, ‘Baroda Students Go on Rampage’, *The Times of India*, 24 January 1981; PTI, ‘In Brief’.

⁷⁰⁸ Social Welfare and SC/ST Development Department, ‘Medical Students JR. Doctors’ Agitation Against Reservation in Post-Graduate Medical Courses’.

⁷⁰⁹ ‘Agitation Has a Smack of Assam’.

⁷¹⁰ ‘Agitation Has a Smack of Assam’.

⁷¹¹ Although the government version lays the blame on the SC/ST students and states that they “issued threats”, given the precarious position that they found themselves in, this seems highly unlikely. Social Welfare and SC/ST Development Department, ‘Statement 4: List of Points for Discussion with the Officials of State Govt. of Gujarat Regarding Disturbances in Gujarat’; Social Welfare and SC/ST Development Department, ‘Medical Students JR. Doctors’ Agitation Against Reservation in Post-Graduate Medical Courses’.

⁷¹² Governor of Gujarat, ‘Remarks of the Governor of Gujarat, at the Conference of Governors Held on 14-15 March 1981’, 14 March 1981, U. No. 0087320, GS XXVI/9/1980, 112-117, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

Kheda, Sabarkantha, Junagadh and Mehsana, the government noted after the agitation, that there had been incidents of rioting in eighteen out of nineteen districts in the state⁷¹³. There were long periods of curfew imposed in the major cities, especially Ahmedabad and Baroda. By the time the agitation finally ended, in June, 34 persons had been killed⁷¹⁴.

Following the incidents at BJ, student politicians who had promised the government that the agitation would be withdrawn, reneged, claiming that they had not been able to get the General Body to pass such a resolution. In response, the government ordered the closure of all Medical colleges and the clearance of the hostels attached to them for six months⁷¹⁵. The deans were instructed to send out “show cause notices” to some 600 odd post-graduate students attached to the hospitals inquiring as to why their services as junior doctors should not be terminated⁷¹⁶. Students at LD went on a strike in support of the doctors⁷¹⁷ and calling the move “not only illegal, but undemocratic”, the CM convened a meeting of General Secretaries of all non-Medical colleges⁷¹⁸. There it was decided that all colleges – Medical and non-Medical – would go on an indefinite strike and if the order was still not revoked, they would resort to a phase-wise closure of schools⁷¹⁹. At Ahmedabad, on 31 January a call for a bandh met with partial success⁷²⁰ and on 2 February students, were reported to have gone

⁷¹³ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Remarks of the Governor of Gujarat, at the Conference of Governors Held on 14-15 March 1981’.

⁷¹⁴ Social Welfare and SC/ST Development Department, ‘Statement 4: List of Points for Discussion with the Officials of State Govt. of Gujarat Regarding Disturbances in Gujarat’.

⁷¹⁵ Social Welfare and SC/ST Development Department, ‘Medical Students JR. Doctors’ Agitation Against Reservation in Post-Graduate Medical Courses’.

⁷¹⁶ Staff Correspondent, ‘All Medical Colleges in Gujarat Shut’, *The Times of India*, 29 June 1981.

⁷¹⁷ General Administration Department, ‘Note for the Use of the Governor’.

⁷¹⁸ Staff Correspondent, ‘Violence Spreads in Ahmedabad’, *The Times of India*, 31 January 1981.

⁷¹⁹ Staff Correspondent, ‘Call for College Strike in Gujarat’, *The Times of India*, 30 January 1981.

⁷²⁰ Staff Correspondent, ‘Violence Spreads in Ahmedabad’.

“on a rampage” at the GU campus setting fire to books and furniture⁷²¹. Over the next few days, in response to calls given by the AC, large number of students and medical practitioners defied prohibitory orders and marched through the streets in support of their demands. This was in addition to the rioting in the city that continued in some form or the other since 26 January⁷²².

In other towns too, there were protests by different anti-reservationist groups. Anti-reservationists at MSU marched to the district collectorate where they were lathi charged by the police following which they “took to attacking buses and policemen”⁷²³. The MSUSU Vice President⁷²⁴ and General Secretary⁷²⁵ as well as 18 other students were arrested and the administration ordered the university shut till 7 February. In response students went on an indefinite strike. At Jamnagar, anti-reservationist medical students set fire to an ambulance and attacked the Medical college building⁷²⁶. Similarly at Surat, the local action committee also enforced a bandh while students from various colleges went on a relay hunger strike⁷²⁷.

Not only did non-medical students protest the government’s decision to shut Medical colleges, but they also came up with their own demands. On 3 February when students at LD went on an indefinite strike, they began to demand an end to all reservations in all educational institutions and government jobs⁷²⁸. There were protests in larger

⁷²¹ Staff Correspondent, ‘Army Alerted in Ahmedabad’, *The Times of India*, 2 February 1981.

⁷²² Staff Correspondent, ‘Violence Spreads in Ahmedabad’.

⁷²³ Staff Correspondent, ‘Army Alerted in Ahmedabad’; Staff Correspondent, ‘Gujarat Riots Continue’, *The Times of India*, 1 February 1981.

⁷²⁴ Nilesh Shukla

⁷²⁵ Hector Patel

⁷²⁶ Staff Correspondent, ‘Violence Snowballs in Gujarat’, *The Times of India*, 31 January 1981.

⁷²⁷ Samachar, ‘Vice Chancellor to Go on Fast’, *The Times of India*, 9 February 1981.

⁷²⁸ Staff Correspondent, ‘Gujarat Riots Continue’.

centres like Baroda, Surat, Bhavnagar, and Ahmedabad⁷²⁹. At Ahmedabad, the call for a bandh by GSs of the colleges of GU, on 7 February, for the abolition of reservations ended with rioting, a death in police firing and much of the city under curfew. Also, in smaller centres like Morbi⁷³⁰, Dabhoi⁷³¹ and Himmatnagar⁷³² there were protests which included bandhs, attacks on buses and the closure of educational institutions.

As the agitation grew, the government continued its attempts to reach a negotiated resolution. Two rounds of talks, one on 30 January and another on 10 February, with the AC failed. For this, the anti-reservationists blamed “backward class doctors” the “adamant attitude” of the government⁷³³. Students at MSU rejected the government’s offer to increase the number of seats at the post-graduate level to offset the “loss” of reserved seats⁷³⁴. There were, however, some negotiations which proved successful and on 11 February the government was able to get the Ahmedabad Medical Association (AMA) to withdraw its support to the agitating students and the association appealed to the AC to accept the government’s offer⁷³⁵. A section of the leadership at the Surat Medical college, on the same day, also reached an agreement with the government and in the presence of the CM and Home Minister agreed to call off their agitation. Unlike students at MSU, they accepted the government’s offer for an increase of seats at the post-graduate level as also a corresponding increase in the

⁷²⁹ Staff Correspondent, ‘7 Injured in Firing on Gujarat Mob’, *The Times of India*, 6 February 1981; Staff Correspondent, ‘One Killed in Ahmedabad Firing: Bandh’, *The Times of India*, 7 February 1981.

⁷³⁰ Staff Correspondent, ‘Ahmedabad Gets a Breather’, *The Times of India*, 11 February 1981.

⁷³¹ UNI, ‘Police Atrocities on Students’, *The Times of India*, 7 February 1981.

⁷³² Staff Correspondent, ‘Curfew Clamped on Baroda Areas’, *The Times of India*, 14 February 1981.

⁷³³ ‘Doctors’ Support to Students Off’, *The Times of India*, 11 February 1981.

⁷³⁴ Staff Correspondent, ‘Gujarat Riots Continue’.

⁷³⁵ ‘Doctors’ Support to Students Off’.

number of posts for housemen, registrars etc⁷³⁶. The VC of SGU broke his indefinite fast that he had been on since the beginning of the agitation and the Surat Medical college and its hostels were reopened⁷³⁷. Meanwhile the MSUSU also announced that it had decided to withdraw the agitation until violence in the city abated⁷³⁸.

The effect of these developments on the agitation must, however, not be overstated as the remainder of February saw a further escalation of caste rioting and student protests. The advice of the AMA was ignored by the AC which continued to agitate. Non-medical students who had begun agitating in earnest, on 14 February, formed a joint committee, called the *Gujarat Anamat Baithak Virodhi Samiti* (Gujarat Reservation Opposition Committee, GAVS) at Ahmedabad. The GAVS immediately called for an indefinite strike in schools and colleges seeking complete abolition of all reservations⁷³⁹. By 19 February, almost all educational institutions in Ahmedabad had joined the strike⁷⁴⁰. The AC, the following day, announced that it was looking to “intensify the stir and collaborate” with the GVAS⁷⁴¹ and a joint statement was released that they would not allow any educational institutions in the city to function until their demands had been met⁷⁴².

Apart from this, the agitation further intensified in other major cities in. At Surat, although the Medical college remained formally open, attendance was low and

⁷³⁶ Social Welfare and SC/ST Development Department, ‘Medical Students JR. Doctors’ Agitation Against Reservation in Post-Graduate Medical Courses’.

⁷³⁷ Staff Correspondent, ‘Govt. Order to Reopen Surat College’, *The Times of India*, 12 February 1981; Social Welfare and SC/ST Development Department, ‘Medical Students JR. Doctors’ Agitation Against Reservation in Post-Graduate Medical Courses’.

⁷³⁸ PTI, ‘Baroda Medicos Suspend Stir’, *The Times of India*, 16 February 1981.

⁷³⁹ PTI, ‘Firing in Baroda’, *The Times of India*, 15 February 1981.

⁷⁴⁰ Staff Correspondent, ‘Big Response to Ahmedabad Janata Curfew’, *The Times of India*, 19 February 1981.

⁷⁴¹ Staff Correspondent, ‘One Killed in Nadiad Firing’, *The Times of India*, 20 February 1981.

⁷⁴² Staff Correspondent, ‘Gujarat Stir Turning into Caste War’, *The Times of India*, 22 February 1981.

restricted mainly to those from oppressed backgrounds and while the agitation had, ostensibly, been withdrawn, on 18 February, Vidyarthi Pratinidhi Sabha (Students' Representatives Council, VPS), the official union of SGU, began an indefinite strike against reservations and SC, ST and SEBC students had to approach college authorities seeking police protection in order to attend classes⁷⁴³. At Baroda, the MSUSU "re-started" the agitation claiming that they had not withdrawn from it but only suspended it, momentarily⁷⁴⁴. With the Medical college shut, the union decided to start a parallel college, at a Shiv temple within the campus, calling it "Shantiniketan Medical College" which was "inaugurated" by the MSUSU Vice-President. Students further appointed a Dean, a Superintendent and Professors of the "college" and conducted daily classes⁷⁴⁵. Significantly, on 22 February, a meeting of "200 student leaders" at MSU unanimously adopted a resolution demanding the abolition of reserved seats in all university courses. The MSUSU moreover decided to coordinate with the GAVS and the AC to "launch a state level agitation"⁷⁴⁶. At Bhavnagar, the university building was twice set on fire by anti-reservationists⁷⁴⁷. In smaller towns like Bhadran, Kheda and Kalol, student anti-reservationist violence continued unabated⁷⁴⁸.

Moreover, towards the end of February, the government had started to detain various leaders of students and non-students under the National Security Act (NSA). The student politicians detained included the convenor, Bhasker Bhatt and joint convenors Gaurang Shah and Atul Shah of the GAVS as well as members of the JDA such as

⁷⁴³ Staff Correspondent, 'Gujarat Agitation', *The Times of India*, 19 February 1981.

⁷⁴⁴ PTI, 'Gujarat ST Buses Burnt', *The Times of India*, 17 February 1981.

⁷⁴⁵ Staff Correspondent, 'One Killed in Nadiad Firing'; Staff Correspondent, 'Gujarat Agitation'.

⁷⁴⁶ Staff Correspondent, 'Gujarat Stir Turning into Caste War'; Staff Correspondent, 'One Killed in Nadiad Firing'.

⁷⁴⁷ UNI, 'Varsity Building Set Ablaze', *The Times of India*, 20 February 1981.

⁷⁴⁸ PTI, 'Gujarat ST Buses Burnt'.

Ramesh Gandhi and Bharat Amin⁷⁴⁹. Among non-students detained under the NSA were leaders of the Janata and the BJP as well as a number of pro-reservationists with different political affiliations⁷⁵⁰. By the middle of March, however, the students were freed by the courts⁷⁵¹, while the government itself released many non-students⁷⁵².

While in February the anti-reservationist students had received support from different groups, in March upper caste government and semi-government employees began to agitate over their own reservation related demands⁷⁵³. Demanding the end to reservations and the roster system in government services mass casual leave was taken on 2 March and soon after, an *Akhil Gujarat Karmchari Anamat Nabudi Samiti* (All-Gujarat Government Employees Reservation Removal Committee, AGKANS) was formed⁷⁵⁴. According to a contemporary estimate, there was 70% participation in the protest and “work in most government offices...came to a standstill”⁷⁵⁵. The agitation of the government employees continued in fits and starts, a proposed strike, although it had the support from other organisations, failed to materialise⁷⁵⁶ but another programme for casual leave of “more than 100000 employees” in April, at Gandhinagar, was successful⁷⁵⁷. Some of these groups continued to agitate for their demands even after the students’ agitation had ended.

⁷⁴⁹ UNI & PTI, ‘3 Detained under NSA’, *The Times of India*, 22 February 1981.

⁷⁵⁰ Staff Correspondent, ‘No Let-up in Violence’, *The Times of India*, 17 March 1981.

⁷⁵¹ Legal Correspondent, ‘Courts Free Five Gujarat Stir Leaders’, *The Times of India*, 10 March 1981.

⁷⁵² Staff Correspondent, ‘No Let-up in Violence’.

⁷⁵³ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret M.R. No. 32/SM’, 15 April 1981, U. No. 0087364, GS/X/1980, 133-139, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

⁷⁵⁴ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Remarks of the Governor of Gujarat, at the Conference of Governors Held on 14-15 March 1981’.

⁷⁵⁵ Staff Correspondent, ‘Govt., Medicos Decide to Resume Talks’, *The Times of India*, 3 March 1981.

⁷⁵⁶ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret M.R. No. 32/SM’.

⁷⁵⁷ Staff Correspondent, ‘100,000 Gujarat Employees Take Mass CL’, *The Times of India*, 7 April 1981.

Rejecting another offer by the government in early March, the “working convenor” of the GAVS⁷⁵⁸, declared that the start of a new “phase of the agitation”⁷⁵⁹ which was “initiated” with a procession of “anti-reservation flame carriers” at Ahmedabad. Over a hundred of these were arrested for violating prohibitory orders⁷⁶⁰. At Baroda, a bandh was enforced by a joint action committee of junior doctors, medical students and the MSUSU⁷⁶¹. A bandh was also enforced at Bhavnagar by the action committee there and anti-reservationist students participated in relay fasts⁷⁶². At Surat, the VPS continued its indefinite strike which was joined by polytechnic students⁷⁶³. Despite the arrests of 22 medical students and junior doctors, from the Jamnagar Medical college campus, medical students continued their relay fast and non-medical students decided to “intensify the stir” and boycott exams⁷⁶⁴. In smaller centres, like Surendranagar, where students observed a “black day”⁷⁶⁵, and Nadiad, where a bandh was successfully enforced⁷⁶⁶, the anti-reservationist students remained active. In addition to this was a Gujarat bandh called by the GAVS on 26 March against “police atrocities”. The bandh received support from a number of non-student organisations including unions and associations of secondary and higher secondary teachers, LIC, RMS, telephone, post, telegraph, AMC and bank employees among others⁷⁶⁷. Although it was not entirely successful because the AGKANS, withdrew support at the eleventh

⁷⁵⁸ Nikhilesh Modh

⁷⁵⁹ Staff Correspondent, ‘Anti-Reservationists to Gherao MLAs’, *The Times of India*, 7 March 1981.

⁷⁶⁰ Staff Correspondent, ‘Anti-Reservationists to Gherao MLAs’; UNI, ‘Govt. Move to Scuttle Stir’, *The Times of India*, 8 March 1981.

⁷⁶¹ UNI, ‘Govt. Move to Scuttle Stir’.

⁷⁶² Staff Correspondent, ‘No Let-up in Violence’.

⁷⁶³ Staff Correspondent, ‘Police Officer Hurt in Stone-Throwing’, *The Times of India*, 14 March 1981.

⁷⁶⁴ UNI, ‘Govt. Move to Scuttle Stir’.

⁷⁶⁵ Staff Correspondent, ‘Police Officer Hurt in Stone-Throwing’.

⁷⁶⁶ Staff Correspondent, ‘No Let-up in Violence’.

⁷⁶⁷ Staff Correspondent, ‘Angry Mobs Stone Police in Ahmedabad’, *The Times of India*, 25 March 1981.

hour, almost all educational institutions remained shut and a number of cities and towns were brought to a standstill⁷⁶⁸.

It can be noted as an aside that in March, attempts were also made to spread the agitation to neighbouring states. According to one report in the contemporary press, students from Gujarat went to Mt Abu and urged students to support their agitation. The students there took out an anti-reservationist procession that turned violent. Similar anti-reservation processions were also reported to have been taken out in other towns of Rajasthan like Kota, Baran, Jalore, Sirohi, Udaipur and Jodhpur⁷⁶⁹.

With the situation in the state deteriorating, the central government sent its emissary⁷⁷⁰ to meet with the anti-reservationist medical students. Following two days of discussions it was decided to shift the site of the negotiations to Delhi. In scenes reminiscent of the Navnirman Agitation, on 24 March, there were attempts at Ahmedabad airport to block the student delegation representing the AC, which was to leave for Delhi, and they had to be provided police protection⁷⁷¹. Once at Delhi, the AC delegation held multiple rounds of negotiations, first with the PM and then with the CM, who had been summoned to Delhi by the PM. Although during these talks, a “four-point formula”⁷⁷² that included multiple major concessions to the anti-reservationists was proposed, it was not accepted by the AC and the negotiations broke down⁷⁷³. The failure of these negotiations too, was blamed on the “unbending and adamant attitude”

⁷⁶⁸ Staff Correspondent, ‘Bandh Violence in Ahmedabad’, *The Times of India*, 26 March 1981.

⁷⁶⁹ Special Correspondent, ‘Stir Spread in Rajasthan’, *The Times of India*, 11 March 1981.

⁷⁷⁰ Social Welfare and SC/ST Development Department, ‘Medical Students JR. Doctors’ Agitation Against Reservation in Post-Graduate Medical Courses’.

⁷⁷¹ Special Correspondent, ‘Medicos Wait as PM Reviews Gujarat’, *The Times of India*, 24 March 1981.

⁷⁷² Special Correspondent, ‘Medicos Wait as PM Reviews Gujarat’.

⁷⁷³ Special Correspondent, ‘PM Asks Colleagues to Study Issue’, *The Times of India*, 25 March 1981; Special Correspondent, ‘Gujarat Stir to Be Intensified: Delhi Talks on Reservation Fail’, *The Times of India*, 29 March 1981.

of a pro-reservation delegation led by young backward caste doctors that had gone to Delhi⁷⁷⁴.

With negotiations failing, the government again invoked the NSA and in the span of less than a week, detained many important student politicians. This time around however, in what was perhaps a thought-out policy, it continued to negotiate with the medical students, and only non-medical students were detained under NSA. While Bhasker Bhatt had already been arrested under charges of arson and looting⁷⁷⁵ it was student politicians like the MSUSU VP⁷⁷⁶, the convenor and co-convenor of an action committee at Surat⁷⁷⁷ who were detained under NSA.

Soon, in what proved to be the beginning of the end of the medical students' involvement in the anti-reservation agitation, students at the Jamangar Medical College, on 3 April, withdrew from the agitation and the government announced that it would reopen the college and hostels there⁷⁷⁸. The AC asserted that it was only "a few students" that had signed a statement withdrawing from the agitation and this too "under heavy pressure from the government"⁷⁷⁹. This initially did seem to be the case as on 6 April when the college and hostel reopened, according to a press report, "no student turned up"⁷⁸⁰ and in a manner similar to Surat, the agitation continued as before. The GAVS held a meeting of General Secretaries from "all over Gujarat" and

⁷⁷⁴ Staff Correspondent, 'Ball Now in CM's Court, Say Medicos', *The Times of India*, 30 March 1981; Special Correspondent, 'PM Asks Colleagues to Study Issue'.

⁷⁷⁵ Staff Correspondent, 'Medicos Decide to Intensify Stir', *The Times of India*, 11 March 1981.

⁷⁷⁶ PTI, 'Late News Baroda', *The Times of India*, 4 April 1981.

⁷⁷⁷ UNI, '3 Held in Surat under NSA', *The Times of India*, 4 April 1981.

⁷⁷⁸ Staff Correspondent, 'Medicos Deny Black-Out', *The Times of India*, 4 April 1981; Social Welfare and SC/ST Development Department, 'Statement 4: List of Points for Discussion with the Officials of State Govt. of Gujarat Regarding Disturbances in Gujarat'.

⁷⁷⁹ Staff Correspondent, 'Medicos Deny Black-Out'.

⁷⁸⁰ PTI, 'Pro-Reservationists Firm', *The Times of India*, 6 April 1981.

decided, to observe, 14 April, the birth anniversary of Bhimrao Ambedkar, as “martyrs’ day” to “pay homage” to all those killed during the agitation⁷⁸¹. Moves were made to merge the AC and the GAVS in order to form one co-ordinating body⁷⁸², the 100th day of the agitation was celebrated by the JDA with blood donation programmes at Medical colleges⁷⁸³ and a bandh was successfully enforced at Baroda demanding the release of the MSUSU Vice President⁷⁸⁴.

However, at the Medical college at Jamnagar, although a relay fast in support of the agitation continued, by 12 April, almost half the post-graduate doctors had reported for duty and the resident doctors who had been on strike had withdrawn the agitation⁷⁸⁵. On the same day, the JDA called for a general body meeting at Ahmedabad, attended by representatives from Baroda, Surat, and Jamnagar, where it was decided that junior doctors would go on indefinite fasts in these cities⁷⁸⁶. Soon after, the general body meeting, the AC was convinced by a prominent religious leader⁷⁸⁷ to put off the hunger strike and re-enter negotiations with the government⁷⁸⁸. Following an entire night of discussions between the government and twenty representatives from all five Medical colleges a 12-point agreement was reached and the AC “unconditionally called off their 102-day-old anti-reservation agitation” on 13 April⁷⁸⁹.

⁷⁸¹ Staff Correspondent, ‘Promotion sans Exam Opposed’, *The Times of India*, 5 April 1981.

⁷⁸² PTI, ‘Pro-Reservationists Firm’.

⁷⁸³ Staff Correspondent, ‘HSC, SSC Exams Put off in Gujarat’, *The Times of India*, 9 April 1981.

⁷⁸⁴ Staff Correspondent, ‘Baroda Bandh a Success’, *The Times of India*, 10 April 1981.

⁷⁸⁵ Staff Correspondent, ‘Incident-Free Day in Gujarat’, *The Times of India*, 12 April 1981.

⁷⁸⁶ Staff Correspondent, ‘Incident-Free Day in Gujarat’.

⁷⁸⁷ General Secretary of the All India Sadhu Samaj, Swami Harinarayannandji.

⁷⁸⁸ Staff Correspondent, ‘Medicos Withdraw Stir Following Accord’, *The Times of India*, 14 April.

⁷⁸⁹ Staff Correspondent, ‘Medicos Withdraw Stir Following Accord’; Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret M.R. No. 33/SM’, 15 May 1981, U. No. 0087364, GS/X/1980, 143-148, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

According to the agreement, colleges and hostels were to be reopened immediately, all students detained under NSA were to be released, the termination orders issued to resident doctors were to be cancelled, the stipends for all posts from post-graduate students to registrars increased, the strike period was to be adjusted with leave for the doctors and loss of terms for the students to be compensated. It was also agreed that additional seats would be created for those “lost” to the reserved category⁷⁹⁰. These concessions were in addition to the scrapping of interchangeability and carry forward of seats, which had already been conceded by the government early on during the agitation. The withdrawal of the agitation was, therefore, anything but “unconditional”.

While the President of the AC declared that their agitation had been a “victory” as it had succeeded in “attracting public attention to reservation problem”, medical students were roundly condemned by their co-agitators. The state government employees under the AGKANS and bank employees who had also been agitating criticised the “unconditional surrender” by the “opportunistic medicos”⁷⁹¹. The non-medical students were similarly incensed at this “betrayal”. The incarcerated GAVS President Bhatt who was to be released as part of the agreement between the AC and the government said that he did not require “the mercy of the government or the medicos”⁷⁹². The matter went beyond statements in the press. A crowd of 500, “comprising mostly students” set fire to the residence of the Secretary of the Gujarat JDA and there were attacks on some dispensaries at Ahmedabad⁷⁹³. Non-medical students also hung a portrait of Mrugesh Vaishnav, the AC President, in the GU area along with a slogan asking

⁷⁹⁰ Social Welfare and SC/ST Development Department, ‘Statement 4: List of Points for Discussion with the Officials of State Govt. of Gujarat Regarding Disturbances in Gujarat’.

⁷⁹¹ Staff Correspondent, ‘Medicos Withdraw Stir Following Accord’.

⁷⁹² Staff Correspondent, ‘Medicos Withdraw Stir Following Accord’.

⁷⁹³ PTI, ‘Non-Medicos Ire on Leaders’, *The Times of India*, 15 April 1981.

students “to teach a lesson” to the AC for “betraying” them⁷⁹⁴. When Vaishnav who had gone underground as a result of threats, resurfaced, he was according to a report in the press, “severely beaten and rendered unconscious” at the Ahmedabad railway station⁷⁹⁵.

On 13 April itself the GAVS announced that despite the withdrawal of the medical students, it would continue the agitation⁷⁹⁶. Bhatt, who was already on an indefinite fast, was joined by two of its members the following day⁷⁹⁷. A state level federation consisting of the GAVS, and non-student associations was formed with Bhatt as its President. Its “immediate objective” was purported to be “to provide a common platform to students and government employees”⁷⁹⁸. It was clear, however, that support for the agitation was waning and on 18 April in what was termed by the press, as a “second fatal blow” to the agitation, some 300000 panchayat employees who had been on strike withdrew⁷⁹⁹ and an Ahmedabad bandh on 22 April “failed to draw any impressive response”⁸⁰⁰. While the GAVS agitation was never officially withdrawn, it effectively ended at the end of April and as barring a few sporadic protests that did not involve a significant number of students, no major incidents related to anti-reservation took place after schools and colleges that had been shut for three months due to the agitation were, in May, declared shut for the summer⁸⁰¹.

⁷⁹⁴ PTI, ‘Non-Medicos Ire on Leaders’.

⁷⁹⁵ UNI, ‘Gujarat Leader Beaten Up’, *The Times of India*, 28 April 1981.

⁷⁹⁶ Staff Correspondent, ‘Medicos Withdraw Stir Following Accord’.

⁷⁹⁷ UNI, ‘29 Students Held in Ahmedabad’, *The Times of India*, 13 April 1981.

⁷⁹⁸ Staff Correspondent, ‘New Anti-Reservation Body in Gujarat’, *The Times of India*, 22 April 1981.

⁷⁹⁹ UNI, ‘Solanki for Thorough Study of Reservation’, *The Times of India*, 18 April 1981.

⁸⁰⁰ G.Y. Patel, ‘Wider Sweep in Second Phase of Gujarat Stir’, *The Times of India*, 30 April 1981.

⁸⁰¹ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret M.R. No. 34/SM’, 12 June 1981, U. No. 0087364, GS/X/1980, 152-156, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

In a manner similar to the Navnirman Agitation, by June, student focus shifted to securing mass promotions. The GAVS that had declared, in early April, that it did not want “the repetition of 1974” and “any move for mass promotion would be opposed”⁸⁰² was at best a mute spectator. The agitation to secure mass promotion spread to “almost all parts of the state”⁸⁰³. At SU, between 1 and 10 June, students at Surendranagar and Veraval decided to boycott exams and were soon joined by students at Jamnagar and Rajkot⁸⁰⁴. At Rajkot some students who had been on an indefinite fast had to be taken to the hospital while at Jamnagar students “hijacked a bus” and also staged a street play “ridiculing the university authorities”⁸⁰⁵. SU eventually succumbed to the pressure and on 14 June, announced mass promotion with optional examinations⁸⁰⁶. At Surat, leaders of the anti-reservation action committee exhorted students to boycott examinations⁸⁰⁷ and some 300 students were detained while attempting to take out a procession demanding mass-promotion⁸⁰⁸. The protests ended only when SGU accepted the students’ demands⁸⁰⁹. The GU Executive had initially passed a resolution deferring annual exams, however, in the face of protests, GU also declared mass promotion⁸¹⁰. While mass promotions were granted, it included students belonging to the same categories to whom it had been granted after the Navnirman Agitation⁸¹¹. The students who had not been given mass-

⁸⁰² Staff Correspondent, ‘Promotion sans Exam Opposed’.

⁸⁰³ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret M.R. No. 35/SM’, 10 July 1981, U. No. 0087364, GS/X/1980, 160-164, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

⁸⁰⁴ PTI, ‘Stir Revived in Gujarat’, *The Times of India*, 1 June 1981.

⁸⁰⁵ UNI, ‘Fasting Students in Rajkot Rushed to Hospital’, *The Times of India*, 11 June 1981.

⁸⁰⁶ UNI, ‘Mass Promotions in Saurashtra’, *The Times of India*, 14 June 1981.

⁸⁰⁷ UNI, ‘Gujarat Students to Boycott Exams’, *The Times of India*, 8 June 1981.

⁸⁰⁸ UNI, ‘Mass Promotions in Saurashtra’.

⁸⁰⁹ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret M.R. No. 36/SM’, 14 August 1981, U. No. 0087364, GS/X/1980, 168-172, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

⁸¹⁰ UNI, ‘Promoted sans Exams’, *The Times of India*, 13 June 1981.

⁸¹¹ See Chapter 1, Section III.

promotion, resorted to hunger strikes and demonstrations⁸¹², but the protests failed, ending an almost seven-month period of hectic student activity⁸¹³.

Existing Understanding about the Agitation

Wedged between the Navnirman Agitation and the much larger anti-reservation agitation of 1985, little scholarly attention has been devoted to the agitation of 1981. With respect to later works on Gujarat, while the agitation finds a mention in Shani's work as being the outcome of frustrations of "upper castes over reservations and the political achievements of the lower and backward castes"⁸¹⁴, given the focus of the book on 1985, little is added to the existing understanding. Although Ganguly devotes a chapter to a study of the agitation the analysis of the agitation itself relies heavily on older works.

There are some important contemporary and near contemporary commentaries on the 1981 agitation. Desai⁸¹⁵ in a piece written towards the end of the agitation argued that the agitation was an attempt by Patidars to extend their dominance into the sphere of education. Importantly, in this, a number of false claims made by the anti-reservationists that were fuelling the agitation were exposed. It is valuable in hindsight to identify these fictions. Yagnik's⁸¹⁶ reports are particularly important contemporary critiques of the anti-reservation agitation in which the reality of reservation, the

⁸¹² Governor of Gujarat, 'Secret M.R. No. 36/SM'; PTI, 'Curfew Continues in Ahmedabad Area', *The Times of India*, 17 June 1981; UNI, 'Gujarat Student Mob Turns Violent', *The Times of India*, 26 June 1981.

⁸¹³ Governor of Gujarat, 'Secret M.R. No. 36/SM'.

⁸¹⁴ O Shani, *Communalism, Caste and Hindu Nationalism: The Violence in Gujarat* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 71.

⁸¹⁵ Desai, 'Anti-Reservation Agitation and Structure of Gujarat Society'.

⁸¹⁶ Achyut Yagnik, 'Spectre of Caste War', *Economic And Political Weekly* 16, no. 13 (28 March 1981): 553–58; Achyut Yagnik, 'Second Phase in Caste War', *Economic And Political Weekly* 16, no. 22 (30 May 1981): 977–78.

hollowness of the anti-reservationist demands as well as the extent of violence that was unleashed on vulnerable sections of society are noted. Bose⁸¹⁷ based on an analysis of the incidents of violence concluded that it was the most socially mobile sections amongst those getting the benefit of reservations who were the main targets of the agitation. Shah⁸¹⁸ examined both anti-reservation agitations and viewed them to be a struggle within the middle class in Gujarat, with upper and middle castes opposing reservations and lower castes who gained economically, supporting them.

The following new analysis, although drawing on some of the data provided in earlier literature, incorporates newer sources, and focuses on the students' role in the agitation. From this, the thesis attempts to build on the work of these contemporary commentaries.

Rumours and Falsehoods

Rumours and falsehoods, some of them risible, played a large part in popularising the agitation amongst students as well as other sections. From the claim that reservations at the post-graduate level in medicine had been introduced so that the son of the then-governor could get admission⁸¹⁹ to allegations of police atrocities against agitating students, there were outright untruths as well as simple exaggerations. The reality of reservations in Gujarat – and also the nature of police intervention – are therefore, examined below.

⁸¹⁷ P.K. Bose, 'Social Mobility and Caste Violence: A Study of the Gujarat Riots', *Economic and Political Weekly* 16, no. 16 (1981): 713–16.

⁸¹⁸ G. Shah, 'Middle Class Politics: Case of Anti-Reservation Agitations in Gujarat', *Economic and Political Weekly* 22, no. 19/21 (1987): AN155–72.

⁸¹⁹ Inder Malhotra, 'Gujarat's Caste Conflict', *The Times of India*, 8 May 1981.

The implementation of reservations in higher education in Gujarat, as Table 2 illustrates, was woefully poor, the exception being representation of SC students in general education which according to the UGC was “fairly satisfactory”⁸²⁰.

Table 2 (Percentage of SC and ST seats utilised in General Education and Professional Institutions) ⁸²¹

Year	SC (7% reserved)		ST students (13% reserved)	
	Gen. Ed. (%)	Prof. (%)	Gen Ed (%)	Prof. (%)
1974-75	6.7	3.6	3.7	1.9
1975-76	7.4	3.7	4.3	2
1976-77	6.6	4.1	3.3	2.4
1977-78	6.7	5.1	4	2.7
1978-79	7.3	4.6	3.6	2.9
1979-80	6.7	4.9	3.8	3

Specifically with respect to medical education, according to the General Administration Department (GAD), in 1980 at government Medical colleges of the 570 students admitted for first year MBBS there were 41 (8%) SC, 37 (6.4%) ST and 17 (2.9%) SEBC students⁸²², clearly much lower than the required 25%. At the post-graduate

⁸²⁰ UGC: *Report For the Year 1981-82*.

⁸²¹ From, Progress of SC and ST Education Reports 1974-1981 Ministry of Education and Social Welfare, Government of India, *Progress of Education of Scheduled Castes & Scheduled Tribes 1974-75* (New Delhi: Ministry of Education and Social Welfare, Government of India, 1978); Ministry of Education and Social Welfare, Government of India, *Progress of Education of Scheduled Castes & Scheduled Tribes 1979-80* (New Delhi: Ministry of Education and Social Welfare, Government of India, 1988).

⁸²² Social Welfare and SC/ST Development Department, 'Statement 4: List of Points for Discussion with the Officials of State Govt. of Gujarat Regarding Disturbances in Gujarat'.

level, the GAD data proves the situation was even more dire as at no point since reservations were first implemented for different groups, were they fulfilled for any of them⁸²³.

The main demands of the medical students were also, to a large extent, founded on exaggerations and misrepresentations. They argued that the carry forward and interchangeability systems would eventually mean no seats left for open category students. The carry forward system however, as Desai explained, did not allow this because of certain checks that were in place⁸²⁴. With respect to the roster system, as has been noted earlier, the implementation of reservations was subverted to favour upper caste students with reserved seats shunted to courses that were less sought after or lucrative. It was to correct this that the roster system had been introduced. In demanding its abolition, the anti-reservationists were seeking to re-instate a system that was designed to favour them at the cost of other students.

Allegations of police atrocities aimed at portraying the anti-reservationists as victims served to garner support for their agitation. For instance, the GAVS was able to get GSs of many colleges across Gujarat to attend its “martyrs’ day” programme to “pay homage” to those who had lost their lives to police firing⁸²⁵. An end to “police excess” was one of the conditions made by the JDA to restart negotiations in April⁸²⁶. Similarly, the Baroda Bar Association formed a five-member committee to give “legal aid” to the anti-reservationists who were “victims” of police violence⁸²⁷. Also, the Gujarat bandh

⁸²³ Social Welfare and SC/ST Development Department, ‘Statement 4: List of Points for Discussion with the Officials of State Govt. of Gujarat Regarding Disturbances in Gujarat’.

⁸²⁴ Desai, ‘Anti-Reservation Agitation and Structure of Gujarat Society’.

⁸²⁵ Staff Correspondent, ‘Promotion sans Exam Opposed’.

⁸²⁶ Staff Correspondent, ‘HSC, SSC Exams Put off in Gujarat’.

⁸²⁷ Staff Correspondent, ‘Baroda Bandh a Success’.

in March⁸²⁸ that had the support of a number of non-student associations was a “protest against police atrocities”⁸²⁹.

While there were some instances where the police fired on caste Hindu rioters resulting in deaths and atrocities against anti-reservationist students, as was the case at Dabhoi and Bilia. Such instances were exceptions, and the general attitude of the police force, in which, there was very little representation of SCs and STs in positions of even the slightest power⁸³⁰, was to favour the agitators.

The police force, as Shah noted “which was responsible for protecting the victims... more often than not failed in its duty”. Despite having prior information, they would arrive at the “trouble spots” after Dalit houses had been set on fire or they had been beaten. He rightly asserts that, “even a casual analysis of the events” reveal “the partisan role of the police in the riots”⁸³¹. Not only did the police support the anti-reservationists, on a number of occasions during the agitation, “in league with the anti-reservationists” attacked and killed Dalits⁸³². Unions of PIs, PSIs and Constables were formed that passed resolutions demanding the scrapping of reservations and “openly declared support to the anti-reservation agitation”⁸³³. Thus, the reality of the situation was that a large section of the police force, contrary to the claim of the anti-reservationists was at the very least sympathetic to them with some even participating in the agitation.

⁸²⁸ See discussion above.

⁸²⁹ Staff Correspondent, ‘Angry Mobs Stone Police in Ahmedabad’.

⁸³⁰ Of the 740 officers of the rank of Police Inspector and above there were a total of 29 from SCs and STs. ‘Statement F: Percentage of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in Police Force as On 1/1/1980’, 1 April 1980, U. No. 0087423, 108, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

⁸³¹ Shah, ‘Middle Class Politics: Case of Anti-Reservation Agitations in Gujarat’.

⁸³² Staff Correspondent, ‘One Killed in Nadiad Firing’; Yagnik, ‘Spectre of Caste War’.

⁸³³ ‘Agitation Has a Smack of Assam’.

The false claims and allegations mentioned above were circulated, by the anti-reservationists, as facts within and outside the student body. In this endeavour they were aided by the local press, both English and vernacular, who were according to the government a “party to rumour mongering”⁸³⁴. From the initial days of the agitation when untruths regarding the system of reservation were spread to publishing rumours of Dalits “hordes” descending on upper caste localities as news, misrepresenting the intensity of the response to the bandh calls and giving exaggerated and incomplete accounts of police atrocities, according to Shah, local newspapers wrote “distorted news” and sometimes “fabricated... whole stories on the basis of rumours” in favour of the anti-reservationists. A fact-finding team of the Editors’ Guild of India that visited Ahmedabad at the time of the agitation, in a note to their national executive stated that they found “an element of bias and dereliction on the part of a section of the Ahmedabad Press in reporting the anti-reservation agitation”⁸³⁵.

Organisation and Leadership

Medical students were the first group to protest the reservation policy in Gujarat. While they sometimes co-ordinated with non-medical students, both MBBS students and post-graduates, were led by their own Action Committee consisting of their representatives. Moreover, their goal seemed to be the protection their own interests even if that came at the cost of non-medical students and once their sectional demands were met, the medical students withdrew from the agitation. It could be

⁸³⁴ Government of Gujarat, ‘An Ordinance to Provide, in Interest of Public Order for Control of Printing and Publication of Certain Matters, in the State- Statement of Reasons’ (1981).

⁸³⁵ V.S. Dave, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Incidents of Violence and Disturbances That Took Place at Various Places in the State of Gujarat since February, 1985 to 18th July, 1985: Volume I* (Gandhinagar: Government Central Press, 1990), 275.

argued that medical students were, during the agitation, somewhat separate from the general mass of students, especially in terms of organisation and leadership. Both the AC and GAVS, therefore, need to be examined in order to understand the organisation and leadership of the anti-reservation agitation.

The AC was formed by elected representatives of the JDA and the Medical Students' Union, it consisted of students and junior doctors of BJ, with the initial demands related to reservations in post-graduate medical courses. Although the agitation spread to other medical colleges in the state where similar committees were formed, the Ahmedabad AC remained the most significant. The AC was recognised by the government as being representative of the medical students in the state and its leaders were the ones invited for negotiations with the PM⁸³⁶ and it was this committee that called off the agitation of all medical students across the state. Unlike the GAVS that claimed to be leading a wider agitation, the AC had a more narrowly focused set of demands and a very clearly defined constituency. As the agitation progressed, the AC made other demands that were not related to the issue of reservations including better hostel facilities, implementation of the residency system etc.⁸³⁷ and having secured many of these demands, withdrew from the agitation. Following the withdrawal of the medical students, although the non-medical students of the GAVS attempted to carry on with the agitation, they did not succeed. Their failure, while indicative of the organisational weakness of the GAVS, discussed below, is also reflective of the importance of medical students to the agitation.

⁸³⁶ Special Correspondent, 'Medicos Wait as PM Reviews Gujarat'.

⁸³⁷ Social Welfare and SC/ST Development Department, 'Medical Students JR. Doctors' Agitation Against Reservation in Post-Graduate Medical Courses'.

Although there had been minor unrest at Engineering colleges over the issue of reservations in 1980, this had not amounted to much⁸³⁸. It was only after medical students began to agitate, that non-medical students took up the issue in a significant manner. The GAVS was formed which sought to coordinate an agitation for the abolition of reservations at all educational institutions. This committee was based out of Ahmedabad and many of its leaders were students at LD. It functioned independently of the AC, giving its own calls for bandhs, protests and marches while also conducting independent negotiations with the government both before and after the withdrawal of the AC. In keeping with its aspirations and demands, the GAVS had a wider and more numerous support base than the AC. Unlike the AC, which limited itself to the medical fraternity, it made efforts to coordinate with other unions and associations, of non-students, that had expressed support or were agitating for their own reservation related demands. It also attempted to enlist support from students of neighbouring states⁸³⁹. There was even a short-lived attempt at uniting the various groups participating in the agitation into a federation led by the GAVS⁸⁴⁰.

However, the support that it received from non-student groups that were a part of the anti-reservation agitation made the GAVS seem like a more potent force than what it actually was. Like other joint committees, it had little organisational presence or cadre base of its own, and as the non-student groups successively withdrew from the agitation, its weakness was exposed, and it quickly became irrelevant. Even in terms of student politics, while the GAVS seemed to be leading the agitation its own area of

⁸³⁸ Home Department (Government of Gujarat), 'Governor's Conference 1981: Notes for the Use of the Governor'.

⁸³⁹ See Chapter 2, Section IV.

⁸⁴⁰ See Chapter 2, Section IV.

influence did not exceed much beyond Ahmedabad and its surrounding areas. The agitation was led by different unions in the respective university centres- the MSUSU at Baroda, the VPS at Surat, and the SU union at Rajkot, and action committees at other smaller centres. These, while they had the same demands as the GAVS, did not function in coordination with either the GAVS or each other. It was thus the case that while the GAVS attempted to, unsuccessfully carry on with the agitation, the focus of students in general as well the unions in other universities shifted to the more immediate issue of securing mass-promotions.

While the AC and GAVS provided some form of leadership for the medical and non-medical students, the role played by elected student bodies of colleges and universities in the state needs to be noted. The agitation was one that was organised and led from within the regular fora of student politics. As mentioned above, the members of the AC were elected representatives of the unions of medical students and junior doctors, the GAVS included elected representatives from GU and at the other university centres, it was the elected unions that were leading the agitation. Even at the level of colleges, the agitation had significant support- frequently evidenced in the numerous meetings of GSs and class representatives convened by the AC and the GAVS that gave their approval to the agitation. As mentioned in the previous chapter the role of elected student representatives or unions must not be overstated as it is not always suggestive of popularity of student politicians or organisations⁸⁴¹. However, the fact it was elected unions and representatives that were providing the leadership to an agitation that was explicitly against and discriminatory towards an

⁸⁴¹ See Chapter 1, Section III.

entire section of the student body must be taken as indication of how marginalised and unimportant the students were who were the intended beneficiaries of reservations. It is clear that these marginalised groups had no effective representation in student politics and indeed were the targets of a widespread movement.

Evaluating the Politics of the Agitation

The anti-reservationists claimed that their motives were not petty and that their agitation was not directed against a particular section of the population. Their movement was simply against an ‘unjust’ government policy of which they were the victims. Even from a cursory examination of the writings, forms of protests and programmes of the anti-reservationists it becomes clear that this was not the case.

In an attempt to malign reservations, the anti-reservationists portrayed all those who availed of reservations as being unworthy. This tactic was used frequently by medical students, who evoked ‘public interest’ while demonising the beneficiaries of reservations. They condemned reservations, with no factual basis, and tried to build a narrative that “reservation doctors” were substandard and a threat to the lives and “pockets” of patients. As one anti-reservation rhyme put it

“The patients of these doctors have been wedded to death/Your health is in your hands/Wake up, think and support/Abolish reservations, save patients” (translated from Gujarati)⁸⁴².

⁸⁴² Bhanu Adhvaryu, ‘Anamat Na Prashne Aavu Narova Kunjarova (in Gujarati) [Neither Here, nor There on the Reservation Question]’, in *Rudraveena No Jhankaar (in Gujarati) [The Sound of the Rudraveena]* (Ahmedabad: Gujarat Khet Vikas Parishad, 1994), 32.

A pamphlet explaining the reason for the strike in the medical college went even further, characterizing those who were admitted to reserved seats as being worse than *yamraj* (the god of death), because he only took life while “these doctors” took the patient’s “money and life”⁸⁴³. When medical students marched through the streets of Baroda with human skull and bones⁸⁴⁴, they were making an argument that reservations were not only wrong, or unjust, but actually dangerous when applied to medicine.

Such propaganda was in addition to physical targeting of backward communities that were availing of reservations, especially Dalits during the agitation even at the level of students that took place in full public view. The general participation of students in caste rioting as well as some specific instances such as the hijack of a bus at BJ leading to attacks on locals and the clash with pro-reservationist students, from which the agitation escalated have already been noted. These were not exceptions and through the course of the agitation, students followed a similar pattern of planned provocation. Student processions were consciously taken through Dalit localities and ended in violent altercations. For example, when the President of the GAVS was released from jail, students marched through one such area, attacking and looting shops⁸⁴⁵. On another occasion two shops belonging to a Dalit Congress MP were burnt and looted after the GAVS “announced” two days prior that it would do so⁸⁴⁶. There were also attacks on students and institutions that refused to follow the diktats

⁸⁴³ Bhanu Adhvaryu, ‘Andolankarono-Ekvaar Nahi, Be Vaar Nahi, Tran Vaar Aabhar (in Gujarati) [Not One, Not Two but Three Thanks to the Agitators]’, in *Rudraveena No Jhankaar (in Gujarati) [The Sound of the Rudraveena]* (Ahmedabad: Gujarat Khet Vikas Parishad, 1994), 39.

⁸⁴⁴ UNI, ‘Baroda Students Go on Rampage’.

⁸⁴⁵ Staff Correspondent, ‘Medicos Decide to Intensify Stir’.

⁸⁴⁶ ‘Agitation Has a Smack of Assam’.

of the anti-reservationists. At Surat, students from oppressed communities who wanted to attend class during the strike called for by the anti-reservationists had to seek police protection⁸⁴⁷, while schools, in Dalit areas, that continued to function, were stoned, and forced to shut down⁸⁴⁸. Thus, from even this brief look at the words and actions of the anti-reservationist students it is clear that the students' agitation was, contrary to what was claimed, against the beneficiaries of reservations.

The rejection of politics that was a part of the Navnirman Agitation was important to this agitation as well with anti-reservationists insisting to the press that theirs was a 'non-political' agitation⁸⁴⁹. Apart from the ruling Congress party, which they routinely criticised and protested against, the anti-reservationists claimed that they were not associated with any political party and were carrying out the agitation for 'student interest', and in the case of medical students, even 'public interest'. At the same time, they sought to attack their opponents by pointing out their partisan associations, routinely blaming them for the continuation of the agitation and failure of multiple rounds of negotiations. Any attempt at opposing the anti-reservationists was delegitimised as being "anti-student" and "politically motivated"⁸⁵⁰.

The agitation did witness the involvement of political parties. Apart from the CPI and CPM that outrightly condemned the agitation⁸⁵¹ and Chimanbhai's Lok Dal, which gave it its full support⁸⁵², all other parties played a calculated role. The Congress was not

⁸⁴⁷ Staff Correspondent, 'Big Response to Ahmedabad Janata Curfew'.

⁸⁴⁸ Staff Correspondent, 'Police Officer Hurt in Stone-Throwing'.

⁸⁴⁹ Staff Correspondent, 'Call for College Strike in Gujarat'.

⁸⁵⁰ Staff Correspondent, 'Ball Now in CM's Court, Say Medicos'; 'Doctors' Support to Students Off'; Special Correspondent, 'PM Asks Colleagues to Study Issue'.

⁸⁵¹ Social Welfare and SC/ST Development Department, 'Medical Students JR. Doctors' Agitation Against Reservation in Post-Graduate Medical Courses'.

⁸⁵² Governor of Gujarat, 'Secret M.R. No. 32/SM'.

united in its condemnation of the anti-reservationists- it was only the Dalit and some pro-Solanki leaders who were vocal in their opposition, while most anti-Solanki factions tacitly supported it. A mirror image of this were the BJP and the Janata. With much of their electoral and organisational base amongst those sections that were participating in the anti-reservation agitation, they were supportive of the agitation. However, given the 'non-political' veneer of the agitation as also the fact that publicly supporting it meant alienation from those sections that were beneficiaries of reservations, these parties did not "openly support" but instead chose more discreet means of intervention⁸⁵³. As noted by different government reports, while making ambivalent statements about reservations, they provided "covert assistance" to the anti-reservationists⁸⁵⁴.

Another method of intervening and aiding the agitation was to raise the issue of "police atrocities" against anti-reservationists and "break-down of law and order" in the state. When the police were accused of shooting two Patel men at Bilia village near Mehsana, an opposition party delegation presented a memorandum to the Governor protesting police atrocities against anti-reservationists⁸⁵⁵ and the funeral party of the men was addressed by Chimanbhai and BJP leader Ashok Bhatt⁸⁵⁶. Similarly, the opposition got involved in the protests against the police having allegedly forced anti-reservationist student politicians at Dabhoi to "commit several demeaning sexual

⁸⁵³ Governor of Gujarat, 'Secret M.R. No. 32/SM'; Social Welfare and SC/ST Development Department, 'Statement 4: List of Points for Discussion with the Officials of State Govt. of Gujarat Regarding Disturbances in Gujarat'.

⁸⁵⁴ Governor of Gujarat, 'Secret M.R. No. 31/SM', 23 March 1981, U. No. 0087364, GS/X/1980, 122-129, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

⁸⁵⁵ Governor of Gujarat, 'Secret M.R. No. 31/SM'.

⁸⁵⁶ Bhanu Adhvaryu, 'Sawaal Samajik Buniyaadno (in Gujarati) [Question of the Social Foundation]', in *Rudraveena No Jhankaar (in Gujarati) [The Sound of the Rudraveena]* (Ahmedabad: Gujarat Khet Vikas Parishad, 1994), 61–64.

acts”⁸⁵⁷. The rumours of police brutality- how curfew pass holders had been paraded naked in an Ahmedabad locality and how court employees had been assaulted by the police – were utilised by the BJP and Janata to attack the government in the Assembly⁸⁵⁸. In protest against the “law and order situation in the state”, opposition MLAs walked out of the Governor’s address during the budget session⁸⁵⁹. Soon after, in sympathy with the anti-reservationists and to protest the government’s “mishandling of the situation”, these MLAs sang ‘Ramdhun’ in the state Assembly during the Finance Minister’s budget speech and were subsequently suspended from the House⁸⁶⁰. As a response they held a “Janata Assembly” at the Ahmedabad Town Hall, condemned police atrocities against anti-reservationists, blamed the government for the deteriorating law and order situation in the state and demanded the resignation of the Home Minister⁸⁶¹. Thus, although they did not directly expose themselves as part of the agitation, opposition parties, attempted and to a large extent succeeded through these methods in gaining as much mileage out of the agitation as possible.

Opposition to the Agitation

Within the student body, those who opposed the anti-reservation agitation were vastly outnumbered. Despite this, they did initially attempt to organise some sort of resistance. Soon after the medical students started their agitation, according to the GAD report on the agitation, a “counter agitation” was started by “SC/ST medical

⁸⁵⁷ UNI, ‘Police Atrocities on Students’.

⁸⁵⁸ Staff Correspondent, ‘BJP Men behind Gujarat Trouble’, *The Times of India*, 11 February 1981.

⁸⁵⁹ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret M.R. No. 31/SM’.

⁸⁶⁰ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret M.R. No. 31/SM’.

⁸⁶¹ Social Welfare and SC/ST Development Department, ‘Medical Students JR. Doctors’ Agitation Against Reservation in Post-Graduate Medical Courses’; Staff Correspondent, ‘Medicos Lay Siege to Assembly’, *The Times of India*, 19 February 1981.

students” and on 21 January, they even attempted to block the PM’s convoy at Ahmedabad⁸⁶². There was at the gates of BJ, as noted earlier, a confrontation between pro-reservation students and anti-reservationists camping at the gates. At Surat, some 400 Dalit “students and youth” including 30 women were arrested when they tried to take out a rally against the anti-reservation agitation⁸⁶³ while students at SGU went on a relay hunger strike that lasted until the end of February⁸⁶⁴. Some Dalit and SEBC students had, according to press reports, also flouted the strike call given by the SGU students’ union and launched a “counter-agitation” against the anti-reservationists for “giving a free hand to anti-social elements”⁸⁶⁵. There were also dissenting voices amongst non-identity groups including, the left-leaning, SFI and AISF, that took an unambiguous position regarding the agitation⁸⁶⁶. The reach and impact of these groups was, however, limited, and with there being no powerful state-wide organisations, there was little chance of there being a voice that could challenge the anti-reservationists on a non-identitarian basis.

The opposition from organisations of the small Dalit middle class that came together was only somewhat more effective and is beyond the purview of the thesis.

Although, the first anti-reservation agitation might not have had the same impact on wider politics as either the Navnirman Agitation or the anti-reservation agitation of 1985, it was a significant moment for student politics. The fault lines of caste that had

⁸⁶² Social Welfare and SC/ST Development Department, ‘Medical Students JR. Doctors’ Agitation Against Reservation in Post-Graduate Medical Courses’.

⁸⁶³ Staff Correspondent, ‘Army Alerted in Ahmedabad’.

⁸⁶⁴ Samachar, ‘Vice Chancellor to Go on Fast’.

⁸⁶⁵ Staff Correspondent, ‘Gujarat Agitation’.

⁸⁶⁶ Adhvaryu, ‘Anamat Na Prashne Aavu Narova Kunjarova (in Gujarati) [Neither Here, nor There on the Reservation Question]’.

always existed were fully exposed during the agitation and it left in its wake a highly polarised student body. As Adhvaryu noted, “the agitation created a divide amongst students [of different castes] who had grown close by virtue of studying together”⁸⁶⁷. In terms of political tendencies, the already weak progressive tendencies, organised and unorganised, all but disappeared. In the years between the two anti-reservation agitations, student politics remained largely unorganised with students involving themselves only with issues of immediate concern. The occasions on which students did participate in wider agitation, as shall be demonstrated, it was apparent that there had been a rightward shift.

Section V Between Agitations (1981-1984)

After the first anti-reservation agitation, up until December 1982, there was relatively less student activity. There were only a few spontaneous and unorganised outbursts related to immediate grievances or provocations which dissipated quickly. Amongst these could be included simultaneous strikes at LD and MG Science demanding postponement of examinations⁸⁶⁸, protests over “strict marking” in examinations at the Ahmedabad Polytechnic⁸⁶⁹ as also at the Engineering⁸⁷⁰ and the Ayurvedic⁸⁷¹ colleges at Surat, and protests at LD Engineering over “inadequate classrooms and teaching

⁸⁶⁷ Adhvaryu, ‘Anamat Na Prashne Aavu Narova Kunjarova (in Gujarati) [Neither Here, nor There on the Reservation Question]’, 33.

⁸⁶⁸ General Administration Department, ‘Secret Monthly Report on the Happenings in Gujarat during the Period from 21st September, 1982 to 20th October, 1982’, 6 November 1982, U. No. 0087363, Material for Monthly Reports, 227-236, GSA, Gandhinagar, India; Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret M.R. No. 51/S.M.’, 11 November 1982, U. No. 0087365, 55-61, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

⁸⁶⁹ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret M.R. No. 45/SM’, 6 May 1982, U. No. 0087365, 6-10, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

⁸⁷⁰ UNI, ‘Surat Students Turn Violent’, *The Times of India*, 26 March 1982.

⁸⁷¹ ‘Strike Over Tough Exam’, *The Times of India*, 7 July 1982.

staff”⁸⁷². Medical students on their part continued to agitate intermittently over the issue of reservations. A “Protest Day” call against SC/ST reservations by Junior Doctors at BJ in November 1981 led to more than 90% of junior doctors abstaining from duty⁸⁷³ and in February 1982, the Medical Students’ Union protested against the appointment of “semi-qualified doctors” who had availed of reservations, at government hospitals⁸⁷⁴.

Following the brief lull, starting with protests over the transfer of the Commissioner of Police (CoP), Baroda, discussed subsequently, till the end of 1984, for reasons which are not entirely clear, one finds a marked increase in student activity. In January 1983 alone, there were protests for a reduction in mess food bills, EBC limit, concessions for students to travel in ST buses, refund of examination fees for 1981 (when mass-promotion had been given)⁸⁷⁵.

While most protests were controlled with relative ease, there were also those which, although over student issues were better coordinated resulting in longer and more intense agitations, often witnessing the involvement of not only the police but also the government and the opposition.

Amongst these could be included, an agitation over the income limit for EBC students⁸⁷⁶, which given the involvement of the Sangh is discussed in chapter 5.

⁸⁷² Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret M.R. No. 43/SM’, 11 March 1982, U. No. 0087364, GS/X/1980, 234-237, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

⁸⁷³ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret M.R. No. 41/SM’, 12 January 1982, U. No. 0087364, GS/X/1980, 215-219, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

⁸⁷⁴ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret M.R. No. 44/SM’, 14 April 1982, U. No. 0087364, GS/X/1980, 241-245, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

⁸⁷⁵ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret M.R. No. 54/S.M.’, 14 February 1983, U. No. 0087365, 84-88, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

⁸⁷⁶ Staff Correspondent, ‘Income Limit up for Fee Concession’, *The Times of India*, 9 January 1983.

Another example can be found in a set of strikes in early 1983, first at BJ and later at the Jamnagar Medical College demanding an increase in post-graduate medical seats, to offset those “lost” to reservations⁸⁷⁷. In this case, the government ultimately had little choice but to intervene. A mass-promotion agitation at LD lasted for two weeks and included students burning “vehicles and furniture”. The LD students also received support from medical students at BJ who resorted to a sympathy strike and the administration, at the government’s behest, shut down the Engineering college⁸⁷⁸. At LE Morbi, demanding, among other things, the removal of their Principal, students indulged in largescale violence, went on a hunger strike, and only called off the agitation after meeting with and securing a personal assurance from the CM⁸⁷⁹. Simultaneously, at LD, Ahmedabad, students claiming that the Principal had “misbehaved” with them, went on strike, and gave a call for a city-wide “college bandh”. According to government sources, the bandh received a “near total response” in the city. As a result, the Principal was forced to go on leave by the government and a new appointment was made soon after⁸⁸⁰.

⁸⁷⁷ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret M.R. No. 55/S.M.’, 14 March 1983, U. No. 0087365, 93-98, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

⁸⁷⁸ General Administration Department, ‘Secret Monthly Report on the Happenings in Gujarat during the Period from 21st February, 1983 to 20th March, 1983’, 12 April 1983, U. No. 0087363, Material for Monthly Reports, 328-342, GSA, Gandhinagar, India; General Administration Department, ‘Secret Monthly Report on the Happenings in Gujarat during the Period from 21st March, 1983 to 20th April, 1983’, 12 May 1983, U. No. 0087363, Material for Monthly Reports, 348- 359, GSA, Gandhinagar, India; Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret M.R. No. 56/S.M.’, 16 April 1983, U. No. 0087365, 103-108, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

⁸⁷⁹ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret M.R. No. 4/83’, 10 November 1983, U. No. 0087366, KNC/1/340, 40-46, GSA, Gandhinagar, India; Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret M.R. No. 5/83’, 11 December 1983, U. No. 0087366, KNC/1/340, 159-169, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

⁸⁸⁰ General Administration Department, ‘Secret Monthly Report on the Happenings in Gujarat during the Period from 21st August, 1983 to 20th September, 1983’, 13 October 1983, U. No. 0087366, KNC/1/340, 106-115, GSA, Gandhinagar, India; Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret M.R. No. 5/83’.

There was also the case of an agitation at CN Fine Arts College, Ahmedabad where following constant friction, students began agitating against their Principal in September 1983 and two of them went on an indefinite hungerstrike which was withdrawn, after a compromise was reached later in the month⁸⁸¹. Protests resumed in January 1984 when students went on strike during which they indulged in violence on the college campus demanding that the Principal be removed⁸⁸². Citing violence, the management, shut down the college which students considered to be a “lock out” of the college and sought the support of political parties. A public meeting was organised which was attended by a city corporator belonging to the Janata and a Secretary of the Rashtriya Congress who was also Youth Congress Secretary. Although a settlement was reached with one section of students in the High Court, another section of students continued the agitation, blocking entry to the college and starting a hunger strike. Only after the intervention of the Education Minister who promised to “look into their grievances” was the agitation completely withdrawn⁸⁸³.

Apart from the protests and agitations mentioned above, during this time, students were involved in protests against the transfer of the Baroda CoP as well as against the Pension Bill.

Agitation for the Reinstatement of Jaspal Singh

⁸⁸¹ General Administration Department, ‘Secret Monthly Report on the Happenings in Gujarat during the Period from 21st November, 1983 to 20th December, 1983’, 13 January 1984, U. No. 0087366, KNC/1/340, 231-246, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

⁸⁸² General Administration Department, ‘Secret Monthly Report on the Happenings in Gujarat during the Period from 21st December, 1983 to 20th January, 1984’, 13 February 1984, U. No. 0087367, 25-37, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

⁸⁸³ General Administration Department, ‘Secret Monthly Report on the Happenings in Gujarat during the Period from 21st March, 1984 to 20th April, 1984’, 13 May 1984, U. No. 0087367, 157-169, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

From September 1981 onwards and particularly after April 1982, there were recurrent communal incidents at Baroda⁸⁸⁴. Despite major communal incidents⁸⁸⁵ occurring in the lead up to it, the recently appointed⁸⁸⁶ CoP, Jaspal Singh, allowed a divisive Hindu religious procession, to proceed through the city in late November 1982. Although the procession itself went off comparatively peacefully, in early December, there was a fresh bout of communal violence and the government decided to transfer Singh⁸⁸⁷. As violence continued, some parties and student politicians began protests against the transfer.

Students, in the government's estimate, were "very active"⁸⁸⁸ in the protests. Soon after news of the transfer broke, the General Secretary of MSU Polytechnic threatened a militant agitation if the transfer was not rescinded⁸⁸⁹. Although the government, on 18 December, shut down MSU⁸⁹⁰, an Action Committee that included the office bearers of the MSUSU was formed to lead the protests. The focus of the students' ire was the Home Minister, Prabodh Rawal, whom they blamed for Singh's transfer. A mock trial was held on campus, where Rawal was sentenced to death and his effigy

⁸⁸⁴ September 1981, Governor of Gujarat, 'Secret M.R. No. 38/SM', 15 October 1981, U. No. 0087364, GS/X/1980, 187-193, GSA, Gandhinagar, India. April 1982, Governor of Gujarat, 'Secret M.R. No. 45/SM'. May and June 1982, Governor of Gujarat, 'Secret M.R. No. 48/SM', 10 August 1982, U. No. 0087365, 31-34, GSA, Gandhinagar, India. August and September 1982, Governor of Gujarat, 'Secret M.R. No. 50/SM', 8 October 1982, U. No. 0087365, 44-53, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

⁸⁸⁵ Major incidents in October and November 1982 General Administration Department, 'Secret Monthly Report on the Happenings in Gujarat during the Period from 21st October, 1982 to 20th November, 1982', 4 December 1982, U. No. 0087363, Material for Monthly Reports, 237-247, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

⁸⁸⁶ Staff Correspondent, 'Gujarat Police Department Revamped', *The Times of India*, 1 September 1982.

⁸⁸⁷ General Administration Department, 'Secret Monthly Report on the Happenings in Gujarat during the Period from 21st November, 1982 to 20th December, 1982', 6 January 1983, U. No. 0087363, Material for Monthly Reports, 299-308, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

⁸⁸⁸ General Administration Department, 'Secret Monthly Report on the Happenings in Gujarat during the Period from 21st November, 1982 to 20th December, 1982'.

⁸⁸⁹ Staff Correspondent, 'Curfew in Baroda Relaxed', *The Times of India*, 19 December 1982.

⁸⁹⁰ Staff Correspondent, 'Curfew in Baroda Relaxed'.

hanged while on another occasion his effigy was burned⁸⁹¹. The protesting students also attempted to intimidate the local MP by surrounding his house and shouting slogans demanding the transfer be revoked⁸⁹². There was also a militant gherao of the Baroda Mayor, at the railway station⁸⁹³. In response, the government arrested some student politicians, who in turn went on an indefinite fast in jail⁸⁹⁴. Although the agitators claimed that they were looking to “widen the base of their agitation” and would soon receive support from SPU and SGU⁸⁹⁵, this did not happen and by January, the agitation had “gradually cooled down”⁸⁹⁶. A Baroda Bandh call given for 1 January proved unsuccessful⁸⁹⁷ and a peace committee of students opposing the agitation was formed⁸⁹⁸. Although some students undertook day long fasts in batches on 4 January, the pro-Singh students were by then “fast losing their grip over the student community”⁸⁹⁹. The government noted that the agitation, “as a consequence of lack of public support as also because of groupism among the students, the agitation gradually petered out”⁹⁰⁰.

⁸⁹¹ UNI, ‘Student Body Blames Raval: Baroda Riots’, *The Times of India*, 28 December 1982.

⁸⁹² Staff Correspondent, ‘Most Baroda Areas Calm’, *The Times of India*, 26 December 1982; General Administration Department, ‘Secret Monthly Report on the Happenings in Gujarat during the Period from 21st December, 1982 to 20th January, 1983’, 6 February 1984, U. No. 0087363, Material for Monthly Reports, 310-318, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

⁸⁹³ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret M.R. No. 53/S.M.’, 15 January 1983, U. No. 0087365, 73-80, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

⁸⁹⁴ PTI, ‘Violence on Baroda Campus’, *The Times of India*, 29 December 1982; UNI, ‘Protest by Baroda Varsity Students’, *The Times of India*, 2 January 1983.

⁸⁹⁵ PTI, ‘Violence on Baroda Campus’.

⁸⁹⁶ Staff Correspondent, ‘Most Baroda Areas Calm’; General Administration Department, ‘Secret Monthly Report on the Happenings in Gujarat during the Period from 21st December, 1982 to 20th January, 1983’.

⁸⁹⁷ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret M.R. No. 54/S.M.’

⁸⁹⁸ Staff Correspondent, ‘Army Leaving Baroda’, *The Times of India*, 3 January 1983.

⁸⁹⁹ Staff Correspondent, ‘Army Leaving Baroda’; Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret M.R. No. 54/S.M.’

⁹⁰⁰ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret M.R. No. 54/S.M.’

Singh, through his support for the procession and his attitude during the communal flareups, had ingratiated himself to certain sections of the population. He was later, according to reports in the press, felicitated by the organisers of the procession⁹⁰¹. Singh's attitude towards sections of the MSU students was also unusual. It was alleged that Singh often joined students on picnics and that he attended parties organised by MSUSU office-bearers. Also, following his transfer, Jaspal Singh immediately resigned from service, joined the BJP and contested elections from Baroda in the Lok Sabha elections of 1984⁹⁰². Moreover, the agitation was, one in which the Sangh, the Janata and student politicians close to the Janata took the lead. This leaves little doubt regarding either Singh's politics or the nature of the agitation against his transfer. That a section of students was involved and managed to continue the agitation for a long period is indicative of the support within the student body for such politics.

Agitation against the Pension Bill

On 4 April 1984, a bill granting pensions to retired MLAs was passed in the Gujarat Assembly. On the same day, in protest, a former MLA⁹⁰³, went on a fast-unto-death in front of the Mamlatdar's office at Nadiad⁹⁰⁴. Meanwhile, parties including the Janata, BJP, Rashtriya Congress and the Hindu Mahasabha as well as groups like the Lok Samiti, met on 13 April, formed a *Pension Pratikar Samiti* (Anti-Pension Samiti), to lead a "statewide movement"⁹⁰⁵. The Samiti which included "heads of state units of

⁹⁰¹ Inder Sawhney, 'Jaspal Singh under Cloud', *The Times of India*, 24 December 1982.

⁹⁰² *Statistical Report on General Elections, 1984 to the Eighth Lok Sabha: Volume I (National and State Abstracts & Detailed Results)* (New Delhi: Election Commission of India, 1985), 144.

⁹⁰³ Mahendra Desai

⁹⁰⁴ UNI, '3 Fasting Men Arrested', *The Times of India*, 20 April 1984.

⁹⁰⁵ Staff Correspondent, 'Gujarat Stir Panel on MLA Pension', *The Times of India*, 14 April 1984.

opposition parties and leaders of social institutions”⁹⁰⁶ and the former CM, B.J. Patel, and Hasmukh Shah as its President and Secretary respectively⁹⁰⁷ proceeded to “chalk out an agitational programme”⁹⁰⁸. The Samiti led agitation continued till the end of June⁹⁰⁹ with its constituents courting arrest⁹¹⁰, undertaking fasts, handing over memorandums, organising protests and public meetings in various districts⁹¹¹ and also enforcing a “near total”⁹¹² Ahmedabad Bandh on 1 May⁹¹³. While the Samiti attempted in vain⁹¹⁴ to make it an agitation “against corruption in every walk of life”⁹¹⁵, it did, however, succeed in getting the government to rethink the Pension Bill and it was not signed by the Governor until 1986⁹¹⁶.

Significantly, the agitation was successful, in the assessment of the contemporary press, in attracting “large numbers of middle class urban youths”, primarily students, who were “enraged at the very idea that MLAs should get a pension after their term [was] over”⁹¹⁷. To aid the main Samiti an anti-pension bill student committee was

⁹⁰⁶ Staff Correspondent, ‘Gujarat Stir Panel on MLA Pension’.

⁹⁰⁷ General Administration Department, ‘Secret Monthly Report on the Happenings in Gujarat during the Period from 21st March, 1984 to 20th April, 1984’.

⁹⁰⁸ General Administration Department, ‘Secret Monthly Report on the Happenings in Gujarat during the Period from 21st March, 1984 to 20th April, 1984’.

⁹⁰⁹ General Administration Department, ‘Secret Monthly Report for the Month of April, 1984’, 15 May 1984, U. No. 0087367, 137-155, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

⁹¹⁰ Tol News Service, ‘150 Anti-Pension Protesters Court Arrest in Gujarat’, *The Times of India*, 5 May 1984.

⁹¹¹ General Administration Department, ‘Secret Monthly Report on the Happenings in Gujarat during the Period from 21st April 1984, to 20th May, 1984’, 6 June 1984, U. No. 0087363, Material for Monthly Reports, 142-158, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

⁹¹² ‘No Pension for MLAs’, *The Times of India*, 9 May 1984.

⁹¹³ General Administration Department, ‘Secret Monthly Report on the Happenings in Gujarat during the Period from 21st April 1984, to 20th May, 1984’.

⁹¹⁴ General Administration Department, ‘Secret Monthly Report on the Happenings in Gujarat during the Period from 21st May, 1984 to 20th June, 1984’, 11 July 1984, U. No. 0087363, Material for Monthly Reports, 157-167, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

⁹¹⁵ Tol News Service, ‘Rally against MLA’s Pension’, *The Times of India*, 24 May 1984.

⁹¹⁶ The act was repealed in 2001 and in the interim period no pension was paid to any former MLAs.

⁹¹⁷ ‘No Pension for MLAs’.

formed on 26 April⁹¹⁸. Members of this committee, according to information in government reports, were student and youth politicians belonging particularly to the Janata and the BJP, with Rajkumar Gupta, a student politician during the Navnirman Agitation as its coordinator⁹¹⁹. As a build up to the bandh called by the Samiti, the students' committee called for a bandh on 30 April in "labour areas" of Ahmedabad⁹²⁰. Although the bandh received "little response"⁹²¹, following it, the "strength" of the students' committee was noted to have grown "by leaps and bounds"⁹²² and students not only participated in demonstrations, processions and protests⁹²³ but were also active in "organising programmes of agitation against the pension bill"⁹²⁴.

The politics that the agitation, in which students were active participants and later organisers, represented, must also be recognised. Not only was the agitation led by a Samiti dominated by the Janata and BJP, but also as an Editorial in the Times of India put it,

"Many of its [the agitation's] local leaders are the same men who had led an anti-Harijan programme two years ago" and "... the anti-pension committees include representatives of several rising social groups which are suspicious of the political process of democracy itself"⁹²⁵.

⁹¹⁸ Tol News Service, 'Ahmedabad Bandh a Total Flop', *The Times of India*, 1 May 1984.

⁹¹⁹ General Administration Department, 'Secret Monthly Report on the Happenings in Gujarat during the Period from 21st April 1984, to 20th May, 1984'.

⁹²⁰ Tol News Service, 'Ahmedabad Bandh a Total Flop'.

⁹²¹ General Administration Department, 'Secret Monthly Report on the Happenings in Gujarat during the Period from 21st April 1984, to 20th May, 1984'.

⁹²² 'No Pension for MLAs'.

⁹²³ Tol News Service, '150 Anti-Pension Protesters Court Arrest in Gujarat'.

⁹²⁴ General Administration Department, 'Secret Monthly Report on the Happenings in Gujarat during the Period from 21st April 1984, to 20th May, 1984'.

⁹²⁵ 'No Pension for MLAs'.

The involvement of students in the anti-pension bill agitation, just as their association with the Jaspal Singh protests, can be viewed as evidence of significant support within the student body for the politics that those behind the agitations represented, the Janata and the BJP in particular.

Organisations

In terms of student organisations of the non-Sangh parties, while some were active in student politics during this time, their influence on the larger student body seems to have been limited. The factional fights within the Congress were reflected within the NSUI, which sometimes emerged in the form of defections or physical confrontations among student politicians. This was the case in August 1983, when the President, and the General Secretary of the NSUI were beaten up by a rival group that alleged that there were irregularities in the organisation that the two had not dealt with despite complaints⁹²⁶. The Congress on its part attempted to use being in power to attract students to its fold. A convention was organised to discuss the problems of students and youth under the Presidentship of the GPCC President, where most major figures in the government came to speak⁹²⁷. These seem to have been in vain as students were a significant part of the opposition protests against the Congress government mentioned above. Moreover, when the Rashtriya Congress was formed from within the Congress, in December 1982, the state secretary of the NSUI along with 500 of its members pledged support to the breakaway group⁹²⁸. Although the Rashtriya

⁹²⁶ General Administration Department, 'Secret Monthly Report on the Happenings in Gujarat during the Period from 21st July, 1983 to 20th August, 1983', 5 September 1983, U. No. 0087366, KNC/1/340, 80-89, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

⁹²⁷ General Administration Department, 'Secret Monthly Report on the Happenings in Gujarat during the Period from 21st August, 1983 to 20th September, 1983'.

⁹²⁸ Staff Correspondent, 'Gujarat Cong-I Rebels to Form New Party', 6 December 1984.

Congress managed to attract a portion of the NSUI, it did not make an impact on student politics. A call by its student wing for an educational bandh, which “met with little response”, in connection with student issues like subsidised food and the raising of the EBC limit, was one of its few contributions to student politics⁹²⁹. Of the Non-Sangh parties, it was the Janata, its student front and student politicians associated with the party that were most active during this period. The Gujarat Chhatra Parishad of the Janata, took up demands related to “food bills, examination fees, free education to children of unemployed mill hands and employment to unemployed”⁹³⁰ and Janata student politicians, apart from the Jaspal Singh protests of which they were a prominent part, were seen to be active during minor agitations at MSU as well. Amongst all partisan organisations, it was the Sangh that was the most active and organised force during this period intervening in student politics in a number of ways and this is further explored in Chapter 5.

Section VI The Anti-Reservation 1985

Events of The Agitation

To understand adequately the anti-reservation movement, it is useful to return to the origins of reservations within the state of Gujarat. In August 1972, the Oza government to “ascertain social and educational backwardness of various castes, races, tribes in the state” and to recommend who could be considered deserving of “special treatment”, set up the Baxi Commission. In its report, submitted in February 1976, the

⁹²⁹ General Administration Department, ‘Secret Monthly Report on the Happenings in Gujarat during the Period from 21st August, 1983 to 20th September, 1983’.

⁹³⁰ General Administration Department, ‘Secret Monthly Report on the Happenings in Gujarat during the Period from 21st June, 1984 to 20th July, 1984’, 11 August 1984, U. No. 0087363, Material for Monthly Reports, 168-177, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

Commission identified 82 “castes/classes/groups” as SEBC and recommended certain “benefits/concessions” to be provided to them”. These included, amongst other measures, reservation of 10% seats in Engineering, Technical, Medical, Dental, Agricultural and Veterinary institutions and 5% posts in Class I and II government services⁹³¹. These recommendations were accepted by the Janata government in April 1978⁹³². Almost immediately, representations were made by groups seeking to be included in the list of backward classes. To examine these claims and also to assuage anti-reservationists following their agitation, in April 1981, another Commission was appointed by the Solanki government. The Rane Commission as it was called, submitted its report in October 1983. It recommended that an increase in reserved seats, which at the time varied between 5% and 10% for SEBC, to 28%. The Commission also took the view that caste should not be the basis for reservation, but instead reservations should be based on economic criteria: for those in specified occupations, but with an income limit⁹³³. For over a year, not much attention was paid to the Rane Commission’s report. It was only on 10 January 1985, with Assembly elections in the state due, that the cabinet took a decision regarding the recommendations. While the increase in reserved seats to 28% was accepted, the Commission’s criteria for judging backwardness was rejected on the premise that in doing so the Commission had gone beyond the scope of its terms of reference. To reconsider the question of what groups should be included in the SEBC list, a new

⁹³¹ Ministry of Social Welfare, Government of Gujarat, ‘Measures for Welfare of Socially and Educationally Backward Classes and Economically Backward Class’, March 1979, U. No. 0087315, 104-122, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

⁹³² Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret F.R. No. 119’.

⁹³³ C.V. Rane, *Report of the Socially and Educationally Backward Classes [Second] Commission: Gujarat State 1983* (Rajkot: Government Central Press, 1984), 79–87.

Committee under the Chairpersonship of MP Harubhai Mehta was appointed on 11 January 1985.

Although news that the government had decided to increase reservations for SEBC “got publicity in the press”⁹³⁴ there were no immediate adverse reactions from students and on 22 January, the date for elections to the state Assembly were set as 5 March. It was on 6 February that, as a witness to the Dave Commission put it, the “first salvo against the new reservation policy was fired” at Morbi⁹³⁵. Students at the Industrial Training Institute there went on a day long fast and those at LE College went on a flash strike and took out a procession in the town⁹³⁶. The anti-reservation agitation which in this way started at Morbi soon spread to other educational centres and involved students and guardians. From 18 March onwards, following a bandh call by the anti-reservationists, there was widespread communal rioting especially at Ahmedabad and Baroda. The agitation continued till July when a settlement was reached between the government and the anti-reservationists. The following narration of the happenings of the agitation is primarily based on the report and material related to the Dave Commission, that was appointed to inquire into the riots as well as reports and accounts in the contemporary press.

Students at Morbi who continued their protests by boycotting classes were joined, on 12 February, by students at LD, Ahmedabad. Over the next few days, students at

⁹³⁴ Dave, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Incidents of Violence and Disturbances That Took Place at Various Places in the State of Gujarat since February, 1985 to 18th July, 1985: Volume I*, 202.

⁹³⁵ Dave, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Incidents of Violence and Disturbances That Took Place at Various Places in the State of Gujarat since February, 1985 to 18th July, 1985: Volume I*, 202–4.

⁹³⁶ Dave, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Incidents of Violence and Disturbances That Took Place at Various Places in the State of Gujarat since February, 1985 to 18th July, 1985: Volume I*, 160.

Ahmedabad led processions and attacked buses while protesting the increase in reserved seats⁹³⁷. On 16 February, a private meeting of student politicians including some elected Senators, studying Engineering, Medicine, and Dentistry, was held and it was decided to lead an organised agitation against reservation of seats in those disciplines⁹³⁸ and they called for a boycott of preliminary examinations that were to begin on 18 February⁹³⁹. While the boycott itself was only partially successful, as half the colleges did manage to conduct examinations⁹⁴⁰, students at all medical and Dental colleges of Ahmedabad, after going on a day long token strike decided to go on an indefinite strike from 22 February and Engineering students resolved to do the same from the following day⁹⁴¹.

From 19 February onwards, the agitation intensified as the anti-reservationists, at Ahmedabad, organised themselves under a committee calling itself “The All-Gujarat Education Reform Agitation Committee” (EARC). With students of “almost all”⁹⁴² schools and colleges in Ahmedabad observing a strike during which there were multiple incidents of burning buses and clashes with the police, on 20 February, the government shut down all colleges and departments of GU indefinitely⁹⁴³. Soon after,

⁹³⁷ V.S. Dave, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Incidents of Violence and Disturbances That Took Place at Various Places in the State of Gujarat since February, 1985 to 18th July, 1985: Volume III* (Gandhinagar: Government Central Press, 1990), 159.

⁹³⁸ Dave, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Incidents of Violence and Disturbances That Took Place at Various Places in the State of Gujarat since February, 1985 to 18th July, 1985: Volume I*, 202, 213-216; PTI, ‘Gujarat Students on War Path’, *The Times of India*, 20 February 1985.

⁹³⁹ Dave, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Incidents of Violence and Disturbances That Took Place at Various Places in the State of Gujarat since February, 1985 to 18th July, 1985: Volume I*, 202–3.

⁹⁴⁰ Dave, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Incidents of Violence and Disturbances That Took Place at Various Places in the State of Gujarat since February, 1985 to 18th July, 1985: Volume I*, 202.

⁹⁴¹ Dave, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Incidents of Violence and Disturbances That Took Place at Various Places in the State of Gujarat since February, 1985 to 18th July, 1985: Volume I*, 203.

⁹⁴² Dave, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Incidents of Violence and Disturbances That Took Place at Various Places in the State of Gujarat since February, 1985 to 18th July, 1985: Volume I*, 213.

⁹⁴³ ToI News Service, ‘Colleges Closed in Ahmedabad’, *The Times of India*, 21 February 1985.

the hostels of LD and BJ were also vacated⁹⁴⁴. In response, anti-reservationist students at GU went on an indefinite strike, burning effigies and conducting mock trials of the government⁹⁴⁵. The newly formed EARC further called for an “Ahmedabad Bandh” on 25 February in favour of a “total abolition” of reservations in education and other fields⁹⁴⁶. Although not complete, the bandh, which included incidents of stone pelting on shops, buses, and government offices⁹⁴⁷, received support from important non-student associations like various Bar Associations as well as the Gujarat Medical Association⁹⁴⁸.

Towards the end of February, the agitation also extended in geographical spread and student involvement. At MSU Polytechnic, students who were agitating about power failure during examinations also started to protest against the change in the reservation policy⁹⁴⁹. Soon, students from other faculties also became involved and they resorted to hunger strikes, attacks on buses as well as throwing “burning rags” at slums populated by Dalits, Adivasis and Muslims and as a result, on 26 February, MSU was shut down for a week⁹⁵⁰. At Mehsana, students brought out processions

⁹⁴⁴ Tol News Service, ‘Anti-Reservation Bandh Planned’, *The Times of India*, 23 February 1985.

⁹⁴⁵ Dave, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Incidents of Violence and Disturbances That Took Place at Various Places in the State of Gujarat since February, 1985 to 18th July, 1985: Volume I*, 213.

⁹⁴⁶ Tol News Service, ‘Anti-Reservation Bandh Planned’.

⁹⁴⁷ Dave, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Incidents of Violence and Disturbances That Took Place at Various Places in the State of Gujarat since February, 1985 to 18th July, 1985: Volume III*, 163–64.

⁹⁴⁸ Dave, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Incidents of Violence and Disturbances That Took Place at Various Places in the State of Gujarat since February, 1985 to 18th July, 1985: Volume I*, 202–4.

⁹⁴⁹ Dave, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Incidents of Violence and Disturbances That Took Place at Various Places in the State of Gujarat since February, 1985 to 18th July, 1985: Volume I*, 174.

⁹⁵⁰ Dave, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Incidents of Violence and Disturbances That Took Place at Various Places in the State of Gujarat since February, 1985 to 18th July, 1985: Volume I*, 174–80.

against reservations, formed a committee and gave a call for a North Gujarat Bandh⁹⁵¹. Engineering students at Bhavnagar went on strike, led processions, ransacked the main market, and attacked the police⁹⁵². Similarly, at Rajkot, anti-reservationists set fire to a number of buses following which, on 22 February, academic activities were suspended at SU⁹⁵³. Even at smaller centres such as, Bharuch⁹⁵⁴, Gandhinagar⁹⁵⁵, Visnagar⁹⁵⁶, Kalol and Kadi⁹⁵⁷ as well as towns in Kutch⁹⁵⁸, students agitated, through means of strikes, boycotts, processions, demonstrations and attacks on buses and public property. In one such, particularly brutal incident at Nadiad, anti-reservationists set fire to a bus which eventually resulted in the deaths of 3 persons⁹⁵⁹.

Amidst this, claiming that it wanted to ensure that Assembly elections were carried out peacefully the EARC, on 3 March, announced that it was suspending its agitation until the declaration of election results on 7 March⁹⁶⁰. While stray incidents of anti-reservationists attacking buses and university property did take place⁹⁶¹, this period was relatively uneventful. However, any hopes that the anti-reservationists harboured

⁹⁵¹ Dave, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Incidents of Violence and Disturbances That Took Place at Various Places in the State of Gujarat since February, 1985 to 18th July, 1985: Volume I*, 167; Tol News Service, 'Anti-Reservation Bandh Planned'.

⁹⁵² Dave, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Incidents of Violence and Disturbances That Took Place at Various Places in the State of Gujarat since February, 1985 to 18th July, 1985: Volume I*, 173.

⁹⁵³ Dave, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Incidents of Violence and Disturbances That Took Place at Various Places in the State of Gujarat since February, 1985 to 18th July, 1985: Volume I*, 160; Tol News Service, 'Gujarat Colleges Closure Challenged', *The Times of India*, 22 February 1985; Tol News Service, 'Anti-Reservation Bandh Planned'.

⁹⁵⁴ Dave, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Incidents of Violence and Disturbances That Took Place at Various Places in the State of Gujarat since February, 1985 to 18th July, 1985: Volume I*, 171.

⁹⁵⁵ Tol News Service, 'Anti-Reservation Bandh Planned'.

⁹⁵⁶ Dave, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Incidents of Violence and Disturbances That Took Place at Various Places in the State of Gujarat since February, 1985 to 18th July, 1985: Volume I*, 167.

⁹⁵⁷ Tol News Service, 'Colleges Closed in Ahmedabad'.

⁹⁵⁸ Tol News Service, 'Anti-Reservation Stir: Fresh Arson in Gujarat', *The Times of India*, 2 March 1985.

⁹⁵⁹ Tol News Service, 'Reservation Stir Hots Up', *The Times of India*, 1 March 1985; UNI, 'Gujarat Stir Revived', *The Times of India*, 9 March 1985.

⁹⁶⁰ Samachar, 'Bus Burnt', *The Times of India*, 4 March 1985.

⁹⁶¹ Tol News Service, 'Gujarat Peaceful on Poll-Eve', *The Times of India*, 5 March 1985.

of a change of government following the elections were brought to naught as the Congress returned to power. It won an unprecedented 149 out of 182 seats⁹⁶², including over a hundred from KHAM communities⁹⁶³ and Solanki once again became the CM.

Following Solanki's re-election, between 8 and 11 March, meetings were held at Ahmedabad that were attended by anti-reservationist student politicians from different parts of the state⁹⁶⁴. It was decided to continue the agitation, the EARC was rechristened the *Akhil Gujarat Navrachna Samiti* (All Gujarat Rebuilding Committee, AGNS) and an allied committee which would carry out propaganda in addition to agitational activities called *Navrachna Jagrutikaran Pagla Samiti* (Navrachna Samiti-Awareness Front, NJPS) was formed⁹⁶⁵. Through these committees the anti-reservationists declared their intention to ensure that educational institutions in the state did not reopen⁹⁶⁶ and that they would boycott examinations which were scheduled to begin on 18 March. People were urged to observe a "black day" when the new Congress Ministry was to be sworn in⁹⁶⁷ and a call for a Gujarat Bandh as well as sounding of the death knell of reservations was given for 18 March⁹⁶⁸. Around

⁹⁶² This continues to be the highest number of seats won. (ECI Report 1985)

⁹⁶³ Asghar Ali Engineer, 'Communal Fire Engulfs Ahmedabad Once Again', *Economic And Political Weekly* 20, no. 27 (6 July 1985): 1116.

⁹⁶⁴ Dave, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Incidents of Violence and Disturbances That Took Place at Various Places in the State of Gujarat since February, 1985 to 18th July, 1985: Volume I*, 174, 202–4.

⁹⁶⁵ UNI, 'ABVP Backs out of Stir', *The Times of India*, 18 March 1985; Dave, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Incidents of Violence and Disturbances That Took Place at Various Places in the State of Gujarat since February, 1985 to 18th July, 1985: Volume I*, 202–4.

⁹⁶⁶ Dave, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Incidents of Violence and Disturbances That Took Place at Various Places in the State of Gujarat since February, 1985 to 18th July, 1985: Volume I*, 202, 213.

⁹⁶⁷ UNI, 'Gujarat Stir Revived'.

⁹⁶⁸ Dave, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Incidents of Violence and Disturbances That Took Place at Various Places in the State of Gujarat since February, 1985 to 18th July, 1985: Volume I*, 214.

the same time, an association of anti-reservationist parents and guardians called the *Akhil Gujarat Vali Mahamandal* (All Gujarat Parents and Guardians Federation, Vali Mandal) was formed. This association, whose character will be discussed subsequently, quickly became one of the most influential voices of the agitation. One of the Vali Mandal's first acts was to immediately declare its full support for the students' bandh call and their programme of boycott of examinations⁹⁶⁹.

With anti-reservationists restarting protests there were multiple developments prior to the 18 March Gujarat Bandh. There were attacks on buses at various centres including Ahmedabad⁹⁷⁰, Valsad, Patan, Amreli, Surat⁹⁷¹ as well as at Rajkot, where during an anti-reservationist attack, a bus conductor was burned alive⁹⁷². Complete bandhs were enforced at Baroda and Bharuch, anti-reservationists led processions at MSU and at Ahmedabad they attacked colleges⁹⁷³. In a bid to pacify the anti-reservationists, the government after a meeting with "leading educationists and social workers" decided, on 16 March, to reschedule examinations to 25 March and put the implementation of the increase in seats in abeyance for a year⁹⁷⁴. The AGNS, however, not satisfied with the concessions, declared that the agitation had "reached its peak" and "withdrawal would be slur on them"⁹⁷⁵. It announced that the programme for 18 March would continue and the AGNS, along with the Vali Mandal, which also publicly supported

⁹⁶⁹ Dave, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Incidents of Violence and Disturbances That Took Place at Various Places in the State of Gujarat since February, 1985 to 18th July, 1985: Volume I*, 214.

⁹⁷⁰ Dave, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Incidents of Violence and Disturbances That Took Place at Various Places in the State of Gujarat since February, 1985 to 18th July, 1985: Volume III*, 166.

⁹⁷¹ Tol News Service, 'Buses Target of Gujarat Students', *The Times of India*, 10 March 1985.

⁹⁷² Tol News Service, 'Busmen's Strike in Ahmedabad', *The Times of India*, 12 March 1985.

⁹⁷³ Tol News Service, 'Cop Dies in Quota Stir', *The Times of India*, 15 March 1985.

⁹⁷⁴ Tol News Service, 'Gujarat Defers Quota Plan', *The Times of India*, 17 March 1985.

⁹⁷⁵ UNI, 'ABVP Backs out of Stir'.

continuing the agitation, to emphasise this, led large processions of students and parents at Ahmedabad⁹⁷⁶.

Up until this point during the anti-reservation agitation there had been no incidents of a communal nature. This changed on 18 March, the day of the Gujarat Bandh. Barring some sloganeering, attempts at forcing shops to shut down and attacks on buses and banks, the bandh itself was relatively peaceful⁹⁷⁷. It was around the time of sounding the “death knell” that trouble began at Ahmedabad. A minor incident of stone pelting from a Hindu majority area onto adjoining Muslim majority Naginapol at Ahmedabad during which a Muslim boy was injured, set events in motion⁹⁷⁸. The Sangh and other Hindu Nationalists outfits had a different version of events which is discussed later on in the thesis. The situation quickly devolved into full scale rioting in most parts of Ahmedabad including in the Western suburbs, which was not a frequent occurrence. By the following day, 6 people had been killed in the clashes and police firing, indefinite curfew was imposed on parts of Ahmedabad and the army was brought in to take control⁹⁷⁹.

The government, following the outbreak of communal violence at Ahmedabad, on 23 March, detained three AGNS leaders under the NSA⁹⁸⁰⁹⁸¹. This, unsurprisingly, did little to deflate the anti-reservationists and protests were soon organised on the issue

⁹⁷⁶ UNI, ‘ABVP Backs out of Stir’.

⁹⁷⁷ Dave, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Incidents of Violence and Disturbances That Took Place at Various Places in the State of Gujarat since February, 1985 to 18th July, 1985: Volume III*, 178–87; Tol News Service, ‘Quota Rioting in Gujarat’, *The Times of India*, 19 March 1985.

⁹⁷⁸ V.S. Dave, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Incidents of Violence and Disturbances That Took Place at Various Places in the State of Gujarat since February, 1985 to 18th July, 1985: Volume II* (Gandhinagar: Government Central Press, 1990), 4.

⁹⁷⁹ Tol News Service, ‘Shoot-at-Sight Order in Ahmedabad’, *The Times of India*, 20 March 1985.

⁹⁸⁰ PTI, ‘Saurashtra Bandh Peaceful’, *The Times of India*, 27 March 1985.

⁹⁸¹ Amit Desai Kanu Patel Vivek Patel

of the detention of the student politicians. Commercial markets, shops, nationalised banks, and some government offices remained shut in Bharuch, Valsad and Surat on a call by the SGU action committee⁹⁸² and at Bhavnagar, shops and businesses observed a day long bandh demanding their release⁹⁸³. At Ahmedabad, 600 junior doctors went on an indefinite strike⁹⁸⁴, the Gujarat Medical Teachers' Association passed a resolution and student Senate members of GU, at the annual meeting, walked out in protest, against the detentions⁹⁸⁵. At a state level meeting the Vali Mandal declared that it would "gherao ministers and MLAs", launch a "Jail Bhara" (Fill the Jails) agitation, "picket examination centres and adopt novel agitational method, as was done during the Nav Nirman andolan (agitation)..." to secure its reservation related demands as well as the release of those detained under NSA⁹⁸⁶.

Asserting that it had "nothing to do" with the communal riots that had broken out following the Gujarat Bandh, the AGNS continued its protests⁹⁸⁷. At Baroda, women anti-reservationist students handed out bangles to the public at large⁹⁸⁸ and programmes such as that of Anamat Boot Polish⁹⁸⁹, calling the police emergency

⁹⁸² PTI, 'Teenage Girl Dies in Gujarat Firing', *The Times of India*, 25 March 1985.

⁹⁸³ PTI, 'Saurashtra Bandh Peaceful'.

⁹⁸⁴ Dave, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Incidents of Violence and Disturbances That Took Place at Various Places in the State of Gujarat since February, 1985 to 18th July, 1985: Volume I*, 213; Tol News Service, 'Medicos on Strike in Ahmedabad', *The Times of India*, 28 March 1985.

⁹⁸⁵ Tol News Service, 'Medicos on Strike in Ahmedabad'.

⁹⁸⁶ Tol News Service, 'Ministers, MLAs to Be Gheraoed', *The Times of India*, 8 April 1985.

⁹⁸⁷ Tol News Service, 'Shoot-at-Sight Order in Ahmedabad'.

⁹⁸⁸ Dave, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Incidents of Violence and Disturbances That Took Place at Various Places in the State of Gujarat since February, 1985 to 18th July, 1985: Volume III*, 138.

⁹⁸⁹ Dave, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Incidents of Violence and Disturbances That Took Place at Various Places in the State of Gujarat since February, 1985 to 18th July, 1985: Volume III*, 140.

number to demand an end to “police suppression”⁹⁹⁰ and Anamat Garba⁹⁹¹ were organised. At Ahmedabad anti-reservationists burned effigies⁹⁹², which included the burning of a “king size” effigy of termination notices by Junior Doctors, that had been issued to them for having gone on strike⁹⁹³. Medical students went on a relay hunger strike⁹⁹⁴ and a programme of releasing 182 balloons “praying to god to give wisdom to all MLAs” was conducted⁹⁹⁵. At Rajkot, anti-reservationists decided to boycott examinations and medical students at Surat went on an indefinite strike⁹⁹⁶.

Despite the continuing protests by the anti-reservationists, by early April, there were signs that the situation was returning to normal. There were fewer incidents of communal violence, the army was withdrawn from Ahmedabad and there was a decline in the support to the programmes of the AGNS and Vali Mandal. A Gujarat Bandh, called by them, following a clash with pro-reservationists and the police at a meeting at Ahmedabad, on 9 April, evoked, even according to the sympathetic press, a “poor response”⁹⁹⁷. At Baroda, Rajkot, Kutch, Jamnagar, Bhavnagar, and Junagadh

⁹⁹⁰ Dave, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Incidents of Violence and Disturbances That Took Place at Various Places in the State of Gujarat since February, 1985 to 18th July, 1985: Volume III*, 140.

⁹⁹¹ Dave, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Incidents of Violence and Disturbances That Took Place at Various Places in the State of Gujarat since February, 1985 to 18th July, 1985: Volume III*, 144.

⁹⁹² Dave, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Incidents of Violence and Disturbances That Took Place at Various Places in the State of Gujarat since February, 1985 to 18th July, 1985: Volume III*, 199.

⁹⁹³ Tol News Service, ‘Gujarat Exam Boycott On’, *The Times of India*, 6 April 1985.

⁹⁹⁴ PTI, ‘Violence Again in Ahmedabad’, *The Times of India*, 5 April 1985.

⁹⁹⁵ UNI, ‘Gujarat Agitation Takes New Turn’, *The Times of India*, 1 April 1985.

⁹⁹⁶ Tol News Service, ‘Reservation Policy to Be Reviewed: Solanki’, *The Times of India*, 14 March 1985.

⁹⁹⁷ Tol News Service, ‘Poor Response to Gujarat Bandh’, *The Times of India*, 10 April 1985.

“life was normal”. At places where the bandh was enforced, such as Ahmedabad, Surat, Valsad and some towns in Rajkot and North Gujarat, it was only partial⁹⁹⁸.

At this point, another outbreak of communal violence at Ahmedabad accompanied with allegations of police brutality provided fodder for continued unrest. On 16 April, following a call given by the AGNS for a “Jail Bharo” movement, “over 1000 students including women” courted arrest⁹⁹⁹. On the same day, began, what the Dave Commission considered the “darkest period” of communal rioting, seven persons were killed, twenty injured and the army brought back into Ahmedabad¹⁰⁰⁰. As rioting, arson and deaths continued over the next two days, the government released all the anti-reservationists detained under NSA, withdrew termination notices against junior doctors, replaced the police with army in sensitive parts of the city and agreed to order an inquiry into allegations of police brutality¹⁰⁰¹. Not satisfied with the concessions, the AGNS implemented a “near total” Bandh in the Western suburbs of Ahmedabad, during which large mobs, which included students, attacked the police¹⁰⁰².

Matters escalated even further when on 22 April a police constable accompanying a special investigation team appointed by the High Court to investigate allegations of police atrocities, was stabbed to death in the Khadia locality of Ahmedabad. What followed was absolute anarchy in the city. As word about the murder spread, the police

⁹⁹⁸ Dave, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Incidents of Violence and Disturbances That Took Place at Various Places in the State of Gujarat since February, 1985 to 18th July, 1985: Volume II*, 208; Tol News Service, ‘Poor Response to Gujarat Bandh’.

⁹⁹⁹ Dave, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Incidents of Violence and Disturbances That Took Place at Various Places in the State of Gujarat since February, 1985 to 18th July, 1985: Volume I*, 213; Tol News Service, ‘Seven Die in Police Firing’, *The Times of India*, 17 April 1985.

¹⁰⁰⁰ Tol News Service, ‘Seven Die in Police Firing’.

¹⁰⁰¹ Tol News Service, ‘Solanki Bows to Students’, *The Times of India*, 20 April 1985.

¹⁰⁰² Tol News Service, ‘Arson Spree in Ahmedabad’, *The Times of India*, 21 April 1985; Tol News Service, ‘Solanki Bows to Students’.

in Ahmedabad abandoned their posts and indulged in large scale violence in different parts of the city. A mob, which allegedly included police personnel, attacked the office of Gujarat Samachar- the most widely read Gujarati daily which had been accused of printing exaggerated accounts of police action against anti-reservationists- and set its press on fire¹⁰⁰³. As noted earlier, while these acts of the police were highlighted by the anti-reservationists, in the absence of the police, mobs of anti-reservationists in other parts of the city attacked Dalit localities and set hutments on fire¹⁰⁰⁴. At Juna Wadaj, “a mob of Hindus” threw stones on the roofs of Dalit houses and later set them on fire¹⁰⁰⁵, a mob of 600-700 anti-reservationists attacked Ambedkarnagar, looted, injured people and killed one woman¹⁰⁰⁶, while seventeen people were killed in the labour areas of Bapunagar and Rakhial¹⁰⁰⁷. Although the police returned to their posts by night-time, rioting and attacks on Dalits and Muslims continued unabated. Between 22 and 25 April there was, according to the Dave Commission, “destruction on a mass scale” and “more than 6000 Muslims” were rendered homeless¹⁰⁰⁸. Moreover, on 18 April, communal violence flared up for the first time at Baroda and following this, Baroda “had to be put under army control” on multiple occasion between 29 April to

¹⁰⁰³ Dave, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Incidents of Violence and Disturbances That Took Place at Various Places in the State of Gujarat since February, 1985 to 18th July, 1985: Volume I*, 244.

¹⁰⁰⁴ Dave, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Incidents of Violence and Disturbances That Took Place at Various Places in the State of Gujarat since February, 1985 to 18th July, 1985: Volume III*, 242–43; Tol News Service, ‘Worst Conflagration in Ahmedabad’, *The Times of India*, 24 April 1985.

¹⁰⁰⁵ Dave, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Incidents of Violence and Disturbances That Took Place at Various Places in the State of Gujarat since February, 1985 to 18th July, 1985: Volume III*, 241.

¹⁰⁰⁶ Dave, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Incidents of Violence and Disturbances That Took Place at Various Places in the State of Gujarat since February, 1985 to 18th July, 1985: Volume III*, 242.

¹⁰⁰⁷ Tol News Service, ‘Worst Conflagration in Ahmedabad’.

¹⁰⁰⁸ Dave, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Incidents of Violence and Disturbances That Took Place at Various Places in the State of Gujarat since February, 1985 to 18th July, 1985: Volume I*, 213–16.

17 July¹⁰⁰⁹. During this period there were, according to official estimates, 328 communal incidents in the city¹⁰¹⁰. There were also violent anti-reservationist demonstrations in Surat, and by 30 April, all three cities were under the army.

Alongside multiple communal flareups at Ahmedabad and Baroda, during which close to 30 people were killed, for much of May, anti-reservation protests and violence also continued. The AGNS attempted to gherao the CM¹⁰¹¹ and anti-reservationists at Ahmedabad attacked the car of Congress MP Harubhai Mehta¹⁰¹². Junior doctors across the state continued with their strike and there was a “near total” bandh, on 17 May, at Baroda, called for jointly by the AGNS and the Baroda Medical Council and at Nadiad, a multiple day bandh ended with anti-reservationists throwing acid bulbs at CRPF patrols¹⁰¹³. The anti-reservationists called for an Ahmedabad bandh on 30 May and further threatened to gherao all 182 MLAs¹⁰¹⁴.

Additionally, during this time, various sections of state government employees, began agitating over their own reservation related demands. After a minor protest in early April, the Gujarat Secretariat and Allied Offices Staff Association went on an indefinite strike on 1 May. Various other state government employees went on mass casual leave on 3 May and on an indefinite strike on 6 May. While most of these strikes,

¹⁰⁰⁹ Dave, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Incidents of Violence and Disturbances That Took Place at Various Places in the State of Gujarat since February, 1985 to 18th July, 1985: Volume I*, 174–75.

¹⁰¹⁰ Dave, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Incidents of Violence and Disturbances That Took Place at Various Places in the State of Gujarat since February, 1985 to 18th July, 1985: Volume I*, 174–75.

¹⁰¹¹ Tol News Service, ‘Gujarat Govt. Staff Stop Work’, *The Times of India*, 2 May 1985.

¹⁰¹² Dave, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Incidents of Violence and Disturbances That Took Place at Various Places in the State of Gujarat since February, 1985 to 18th July, 1985: Volume III*, 264.

¹⁰¹³ Tol News Service, ‘Violence Unabated in Baroda’, *The Times of India*, 20 May 1985.

¹⁰¹⁴ Tol News Service, ‘Army Offers Help: Gujarat Exam’, *The Times of India*, 3 June 1985.

excepting that of Panchayat employees, were withdrawn on 7 May following a settlement with the government, by early June citing non-compliance by the government, the strikes re-started¹⁰¹⁵. Some of these carried on until the end of August, well after the students had withdrawn their own agitation.

Negotiations between the government and anti-reservationists, represented by the Vali Mandal, the AGNS and the NJPS had taken place and broken down on multiple occasions since the middle of May. When a third round of talks failed, on 31 May, leaders of the AGNS and the NJPS blamed the state government. A leader of the NJPS alleged that during the negotiations, “two Congress ministers”, had “whipped out revolvers and threatened the student leaders with dire consequences”¹⁰¹⁶. While in a telegram sent to the PM, the NJPS claimed that “a Congress MLA and a party worker” had taken out their guns and “threatened to kill” the President of the NJPS¹⁰¹⁷. True or not, these allegations were utilised by anti-reservationists to further the agitation as the Bhavnagar Samiti demanded an apology within 48 hours, failing which it threatened to gherao all MLAs in Saurashtra¹⁰¹⁸ and the AGNS gave a call for a Gujarat Bandh for 7 June¹⁰¹⁹. This Bandh call received support from various associations including those of cinema exhibitors, bars of income tax and criminal lawyers as well as GU employees¹⁰²⁰. At the same time, from 5 June onwards at Ahmedabad, “100-odd associations of traders” consisting of “nearly” 1,50,000 “traders

¹⁰¹⁵ Dave, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Incidents of Violence and Disturbances That Took Place at Various Places in the State of Gujarat since February, 1985 to 18th July, 1985: Volume I*, 204.

¹⁰¹⁶ Tol News Service, ‘Gujarat Bandh Call Withdrawn’, *The Times of India*, 2 June 1985.

¹⁰¹⁷ Tol News Service, ‘Army Offers Help: Gujarat Exam’.

¹⁰¹⁸ Tol News Service, ‘Gujarat Bandh Call Withdrawn’.

¹⁰¹⁹ Tol News Service, ‘Army Offers Help: Gujarat Exam’.

¹⁰²⁰ Dave, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Incidents of Violence and Disturbances That Took Place at Various Places in the State of Gujarat since February, 1985 to 18th July, 1985: Volume I*.

and businessmen” observed a five-day bandh in support of the agitation and against police brutality¹⁰²¹. Although the Gujarat Bandh did not have an impact in Saurashtra, it was, reportedly, complete at Mehsana, Surendranagar, Bhuj and Jamnagar and at Ahmedabad, at least 9 people were killed in firing by the army as mobs attacked government vehicles and even entered a bank¹⁰²².

In a bid to diffuse the situation, on 9 June, the government announced, concessions to the anti-reservationists including ordering a judicial inquiry into allegations of police excess, release of two student politicians who had been held under NSA and endorsement of a resolution of the central government’s decision to postpone the implementation of increase in seats till a consensus was reached¹⁰²³. These, were once again, rejected by the Vali Mandal and AGNS who called the government’s offer “inadequate, ambiguous and misleading” and accused the CM of indulging in “skulduggery” as he had only “vaguely” said that a judicial commission would be appointed. They demanded that instead of postponing the increase, it should be “withdrawn unconditionally”¹⁰²⁴.

Throughout June, the unending cycle of communal violence and deaths in police and army firing continued. Significantly, on 20 June, in an already volatile situation, the annual Rathyarta¹⁰²⁵, “in defiance of all instructions”, was taken out using cows and elephants to break police and army barricades, resulting in communal clashes, and firing by the army which left at least 7 dead as well as sporadic incidents of rioting over

¹⁰²¹ Tol News Service, ‘Gujarat Hike in Quota Put Off’, *The Times of India*, 10 June 1985.

¹⁰²² Dave, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Incidents of Violence and Disturbances That Took Place at Various Places in the State of Gujarat since February, 1985 to 18th July, 1985: Volume III*.

¹⁰²³ Tol News Service, ‘Gujarat Hike in Quota Put Off’.

¹⁰²⁴ Tol News Service, ‘Solanki Offer Rejected’, *The Times of India*, 11 June 1985.

¹⁰²⁵ A Hindu religious procession.

subsequent days¹⁰²⁶. The army was called out in Baroda and violent incidents were reported from Surat and Jamnagar. In this atmosphere, the AGNS and Vali Mandal, on 25 June, announced “fresh agitational programmes” and asked people to “prepare themselves for a long struggle ahead”¹⁰²⁷. Programmes of jail bharo and gheraos of MLAs were carried out and a Gujarat Bandh was called for 8 July- the day on which schools were set to reopen¹⁰²⁸.

Meanwhile, Solanki had visited the PM at Delhi, on 20 June where it was rumoured, as Wood also noted, that he had been given fifteen days to bring the situation under control or resign¹⁰²⁹. Following the rioting during the Rathyatra, an AICC delegation arrived in Ahmedabad and gave an adverse report of Solanki’s handling of the agitation and rioting. Facing pressure from all sides – both within and outside the party – and unable to stem the tide of caste and communal violence- the death toll went over two hundred by 5 July¹⁰³⁰- Solanki resigned as CM on 6 July and was replaced by Home Minister, Amarsingh Chaudhry.

The Vali Mandal and the AGNS, following the resignation of the CM, went ahead with the Gujarat Bandh claiming that it was to celebrate “victory day”¹⁰³¹. While the intention of the anti-reservationists was to continue their protests, the agitation gradually began to lose steam and the communal violence, some relapses notwithstanding, began to subside. By 18 July, a settlement was reached with the new government and signed

¹⁰²⁶ Dave, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Incidents of Violence and Disturbances That Took Place at Various Places in the State of Gujarat since February, 1985 to 18th July, 1985: Volume I*, 120.

¹⁰²⁷ Tol News Service, ‘Gujarat Govt. Will Not Quit’, *The Times of India*, 26 June 1985.

¹⁰²⁸ Tol News Service, ‘Solanki Scotches Rumours of Exit’, *The Times of India*, 28 June 1985.

¹⁰²⁹ J.R. Wood, ‘Reservations in Doubt: The Backlash Against Affirmative Action in Gujarat, India’, *Pacific Affairs* 60, no. 3 (1987): 424–25.

¹⁰³⁰ Wood, ‘Reservations in Doubt: The Backlash Against Affirmative Action in Gujarat, India’, 424–25.

¹⁰³¹ Tol News Service, ‘Schools Boycott Plan Stays’, *The Times of India*, 8 July 1985.

by Shankarbhai Patel and Vivek Patel of the Vali Mandal and AGNS, respectively¹⁰³². The four point agreement was that an 18% increase would not take place until a 'national consensus' had been reached, the existing 10% reservation would also be reviewed in 1987, there would be a judicial inquiry into allegations of police brutality, all arrested and detained students would be released and all cases against them would be dropped¹⁰³³.

While a group within the AGNS and NJPS sought to carry on the agitation, expelling leaders associated with the agreement and calling for an Ahmedabad Bandh for 22 July, they could not do so, as the bandh failed to evoke a significant response¹⁰³⁴. A "majority of leaders" of this "splinter group" of the AGNS, on 30 July, signed an agreement with the government to end the agitation and although a "handful of leaders" "walked out" of the negotiations, they did not continue to agitate¹⁰³⁵.

Existing Understanding about the Agitation

The 1985 agitation generated some important contemporary and near contemporary reports and commentaries. Amongst these can be included Engineer's report that brought out the aspects of communal violence that were a part of the agitation¹⁰³⁶. In contrast, Roy focused on the anti-reservation policies themselves. He argued that the anti-reservation agitation was an indication of the "developing character of the Indian polity" and predicted that the final accord that the government reached with the anti-reservationists would have a "powerful influence" in shaping the reservation policy in

¹⁰³² Tol News Service, 'Leaders Split on Ending Stir', *The Times of India*, 20 July 1985.

¹⁰³³ Tol News Service, 'Leaders Split on Ending Stir'.

¹⁰³⁴ Tol News Service, '10 Die as Police Fight Mobs', *The Times of India*, 22 July 1985.

¹⁰³⁵ Tol News Service, 'Gujarat Splinter Group Toes the Line', *The Times of India*, 31 July 1985.

¹⁰³⁶ Engineer, 'Communal Fire Engulfs Ahmedabad Once Again'.

the country as a whole¹⁰³⁷; Patel's commentary on the agitation written immediately after the violent phase in April that viewed the agitation as a "debacle of populist politics" and blamed the Congress of playing opportunistic games and being incapable of handling the situation¹⁰³⁸; as well as another report written along with Iyengar noted that the opposition was fanning the flames¹⁰³⁹.

These narrow commentaries take their place next to more comprehensive works about 1985. There is Wood for whom the motivation behind "launching" the agitation was the feeling that Solanki "would be unstoppable at either the ballot box or in the Assembly". He, however, concludes that "neither side could claim victory" at the end of the agitation because although the anti-reservationists had "demonstrated that they had the power to... remove the government...", their success was "illusory" because Solanki was replaced by Chaudhary, who was an adivasi and the Congress, which was dominated by representatives of oppressed groups, remained in power¹⁰⁴⁰. Compared to this, there is Shah who examined both anti-reservation agitations (1981 and 1985) as struggles within the Gujarati middle class and concluded that "by and large" the agitations "succeeded in their objectives as the government conceded their demands"¹⁰⁴¹. The success of the agitation was attributed to the fact that on the one hand, a vast majority of SC, ST and SEBC were divided, ignorant about the government policies and the middle class amongst them was also small and divided.

¹⁰³⁷ A.K. Roy, 'Anti-Reservation Movement: A Political Assessment', *Economic and Political Weekly* 20, no. 32 (1985): 1343.

¹⁰³⁸ Sujata Patel, 'Debate of Populist Politics', *Economic and Political Weekly* 20, no. 16 (1985): 681–82.

¹⁰³⁹ Sujata Patel and Iyengar Sudarshan, 'Violence with a Difference', *Economic And Political Weekly* 20, no. 28 (13 July 1985): 1174–75.

¹⁰⁴⁰ Wood, 'Reservations in Doubt: The Backlash Against Affirmative Action in Gujarat, India', 425–26.

¹⁰⁴¹ Shah, 'Middle Class Politics: Case of Anti-Reservation Agitations in Gujarat', AN-155.

Additionally, the increase of reserved seats had been a “half-hearted political measure” with the government not serious about implementing it, the police and the bureaucracy had been sympathetic to the anti-reservationists and the “press and intellectuals” had “justified the demands” of the agitators¹⁰⁴². Shani’s work is a detailed study and the most important recent contribution towards understanding the agitation. Its focus is on Ahmedabad city and it describes the historical development of the city and the ways in which this had an impact on the “shaping of group identities and relations”¹⁰⁴³. Through an analysis of the official version of the riots as well as non-government sources and oral testimonies there is an attempt to understand the development of caste and communalism in the 1980s in Gujarat.

A number of works mentioned above provide broad timelines of events of the agitation. Given that none focus on student politics, even in the most detailed works, students, effectively disappear following the first outbreak of communal violence. The account, provided above and the analysis below, foregrounds, the activities of students for the whole of this tumultuous period. This is done through reading sources that are commonly utilised while studying the agitation in a manner that focuses on students and also through previously unexamined ones. In doing so, it seeks to contribute to the existing understanding of the agitation by focusing on an important segment whose role has hitherto been only, at best, partially examined.

Evaluating the Politics of the Agitation

¹⁰⁴² Shah, ‘Middle Class Politics: Case of Anti-Reservation Agitations in Gujarat’, AN-171.

¹⁰⁴³ Shani, *Communalism, Caste and Hindu Nationalism: The Violence in Gujarat*, 18.

While anti-reservationists, ably supported by the press created the impression that there would be very few seats remaining for “caste hindus”, this was far from the truth¹⁰⁴⁴. The Dave Commission giving the example of reservations at Medical Colleges between 1981 and 1985, noted that “factually speaking”, the quota, enhanced by the Baxi Commission was “never utilised to its maximum”¹⁰⁴⁵. Tables 3 and 4, further illustrate the reality of reservation with respect to medical and engineering seats, which were the most sought after and the primary bone of contention.

Table 3¹⁰⁴⁶ Engineering Seats (Reserved and Utilised)

Year	Reserved Seats		Unreserved Seats		% Filled Seats	
	Allotted	Filled	Allotted	Filled	Reserved	Unreserved
1982-83	663	269	1477	1841	12.17	87.83
83-84	680	320	1591	1951	14.09	85.81
84-85	439	250	1114	1309	16.09	83.91

Table 4¹⁰⁴⁷ Medical Seats (Reserved and Utilised)

¹⁰⁴⁴ Dave, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Incidents of Violence and Disturbances That Took Place at Various Places in the State of Gujarat since February, 1985 to 18th July, 1985: Volume III*, 141; Dave, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Incidents of Violence and Disturbances That Took Place at Various Places in the State of Gujarat since February, 1985 to 18th July, 1985: Volume I*.

¹⁰⁴⁵ Dave, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Incidents of Violence and Disturbances That Took Place at Various Places in the State of Gujarat since February, 1985 to 18th July, 1985: Volume II*, 7–8.

¹⁰⁴⁶ Based on Dave, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Incidents of Violence and Disturbances That Took Place at Various Places in the State of Gujarat since February, 1985 to 18th July, 1985: Volume III*, 12; Dave, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Incidents of Violence and Disturbances That Took Place at Various Places in the State of Gujarat since February, 1985 to 18th July, 1985: Volume I*, 86–87.

¹⁰⁴⁷ Dave, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Incidents of Violence and Disturbances That Took Place at Various Places in the State of Gujarat since February, 1985 to 18th July, 1985: Volume II*, 8.

	SC		ST		SEBC	
Year	Seats	Utilised	Seats	Utilised	Seats	Utilised
1981	41	34	73	37	58	20
1982	42	27	73	40	58	24
1983	39	38	71	33	55	29
1984	39	30	71	18	55	21
1985	40	28	74	23	57	17

During this agitation, as was the case during the first, anti-reservationists, while claiming that they were peaceful, indulged in violent activities. There were numerous instances of attacks on banks and markets, that have been noted earlier, during which anti-reservationists indulged in looting. Attacks on police parties, throwing burning rags or acid on them, were a regular occurrence in the narrow lanes of Ahmedabad city- a long list of these can be found in the appendices to the Dave Commission's Report¹⁰⁴⁸. Buses were also made a target and not only were hundreds set on fire, on more than one occasion, passengers and drivers were injured or killed. At Baroda, early on in the agitation, drivers and passengers were injured as anti-reservationists stoned tourist buses¹⁰⁴⁹. While near Rajkot, in a gruesome act, a bus conductor was "tied to a seat in the bus with nylon rope by a group of students and set a fire after pouring kerosene on his body"¹⁰⁵⁰. This was in addition to the incidents such as at Nadiad and Rajkot

¹⁰⁴⁸ Eg. Dave, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Incidents of Violence and Disturbances That Took Place at Various Places in the State of Gujarat since February, 1985 to 18th July, 1985: Volume III*, 177,215.

¹⁰⁴⁹ Dave, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Incidents of Violence and Disturbances That Took Place at Various Places in the State of Gujarat since February, 1985 to 18th July, 1985: Volume I*, 174–80.

¹⁰⁵⁰ Tol News Service, 'Busmen's Strike in Ahmedabad'.

that have been referred to above. Although the AGNS regularly “condemned” and “disowned any responsibility” for all violent activities¹⁰⁵¹, as noted by the CoP, Baroda in his submission to the Dave Commission:

“The programmes announced were on Gandhian lines but those carried out were not. The principal objective all along was to cause disorder...The declared policy of all these people [students, parties, Vali mandal] was the carrying out of the agitation on Gandhian line. However, the outcome of their actions, as a rule, was a resort to violence by the participants. Needless to say, that none of them would have openly canvassed for violence”.¹⁰⁵²

Similarly, in much the same manner as the first agitation, there was a demonisation of those availing of reservations and attacks on backward sections, albeit with greater intensity.

Of the multiple memorandums submitted by the anti-reservationists¹⁰⁵³, the one sent to the PM on 23 March, reproduced in the press, is an ideal example of the portrayal of reservations and its beneficiaries in a most unfavourable light. In the memorandum, the anti-reservationists claimed to be agitating for “the reestablishment of meritocracy and the right to pursue excellence”. The increase in reserved seats was characterised as “unjustified, unreasonable, and absurd” and the idea that “keeping reserved seats for the backward would uplift their standard and help them to integrate with the mainstream of Indian middle class” was “preposterous”. It was asserted that those

¹⁰⁵¹ Tol News Service, ‘Anti-Reservation Stir: Fresh Arson in Gujarat’; Tol News Service, ‘Cop Dies in Quota Stir’.

¹⁰⁵² Dave, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Incidents of Violence and Disturbances That Took Place at Various Places in the State of Gujarat since February, 1985 to 18th July, 1985: Volume I*, 183.

¹⁰⁵³ Tol News Service, ‘Saurashtra Bandh Partial’, *The Times of India*, 3 March 1985.

availing of reservations “would not be as efficient, intelligent and clever as their counterparts who have been admitted on the basis of merit only”. The PM was, rhetorically asked if he would have half the doctors on his panel from “these reserved classes”. Reservations were further criticised for bringing about a “sudden and *undeserved* [emphasis added] change in the status quo of the society” and giving “them” a “false sense of security and contentment” which were “the enemy of a progressive and competitive society”. The “unnatural” policy was likened to “a single polluting chemical factory” which would upset “the ecology of the whole surrounding natural environment”, “pollute, corrode, and ultimately destroy the very social fabric of Indian society”. Reservations produced not only “one bad professional” but a “nexus of *incompetent nincompoops* at a higher decision making and administrative level” who would “ultimately paralyse the whole nation”. The agitation was a “last ditch attempt by the students and people of Gujarat to defend meritocracy”¹⁰⁵⁴.

While this was communicated to the PM in English, an anti-reservationist pamphlet, in Gujarati, quoted in the Dave Commission report, put it in coarser terms, leaving little doubt regarding the nature of the agitation. Addressing Patels and asking them to unite in fighting Muslims, Dalits and Thakores, it said

“Do you forget that these insignificant people used to pick up our filth? Those who have been doing this work for many years have today become our bosses in big offices and banks through reserved seats”¹⁰⁵⁵(translated from Gujarati)

¹⁰⁵⁴ ‘What the Agitationists Say’, *Link*, 21 April 1985.

¹⁰⁵⁵ Dave, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Incidents of Violence and Disturbances That Took Place at Various Places in the State of Gujarat since February, 1985 to 18th July, 1985: Volume III*, 21.

Despite their claims that they had “nothing against the backward community”¹⁰⁵⁶ the activities that students participated in during the agitation prove otherwise. Particularly illustrative of the casteist nature of the agitation was an incident that took place on 7 April at Ahmedabad. Here, after pro-reservationists garlanded a statue of Zaverchand Meghani¹⁰⁵⁷ and took a pledge to fight for their “rightful dues”, anti-reservationists removed the garland from the statue. Considering the statue to have been “unsanctified” by the touch of Dalits, the anti-reservationist students proceeded to “purify” the statue by sprinkling it with “holy water”¹⁰⁵⁸.

There were also, during the agitation numerous attacks by anti-reservationists on lower caste and Muslim localities such as at Surat where a “20000 mob of anti-reservationists set fire to a hutment colony” or at MSU where hostel students threw burning rags from their hostels onto a neighbouring slum primarily populated by Dalits, tribals and Muslims¹⁰⁵⁹. These were in addition to the multiple incidents at Ahmedabad, particularly in April that have been noted earlier.

Unlike the first agitation, the second one witnessed multiple bouts of severe communal violence. In the numerous studies regarding 1985 the focus has been on students’ involvement in anti-reservation violence rather than on communal rioting. In these, there is an implicit understanding of students as being part of the anti-reservation agitation and an assumption that the communal violence involved other groups. In the

¹⁰⁵⁶ Dave, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Incidents of Violence and Disturbances That Took Place at Various Places in the State of Gujarat since February, 1985 to 18th July, 1985: Volume I*, 178.

¹⁰⁵⁷ A Gujarati Literary Icon.

¹⁰⁵⁸ Dave, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Incidents of Violence and Disturbances That Took Place at Various Places in the State of Gujarat since February, 1985 to 18th July, 1985: Volume III*, 204.

¹⁰⁵⁹ Dave, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Incidents of Violence and Disturbances That Took Place at Various Places in the State of Gujarat since February, 1985 to 18th July, 1985: Volume I*, 176–77.

Dave Commission report, this is explicit with a clear demarcation made between incidents related to the anti-reservation agitation and communal rioting. This is to a certain extent understandable as it was sections other than students that were more prominently involved in the communal violence. The AGNS, on its part also tried to distance itself from the communal riots- following the first outbreak at Ahmedabad on 18 March, it told the press that it “nothing to do” with the violence”¹⁰⁶⁰ and in June it claimed that even though it had not given any programmes for many days the violence had continued, which proved that it did not have anything to do with it¹⁰⁶¹. Against these protestations, however, it is necessary to note that students did participate in communal rioting with anti-reservationist student politicians arrested or wanted for abetting communal violence¹⁰⁶². This was particularly the case between 16 and 24 April at Ahmedabad when there was a complete breakdown of law and order as programmes which began ostensibly against reservations and police brutality devolved into attacks on minorities¹⁰⁶³.

While the anti-reservationists claimed in the press to be non-political, similar to the first agitation, they were explicitly opposed to the Solanki government. In the early days of the agitation there were attacks on the houses of Congress leaders¹⁰⁶⁴ and by early April the AGNS and Vali Mandal decided to gherao MLAs and initiate a Navnirman

¹⁰⁶⁰ Tol News Service, ‘Shoot-at-Sight Order in Ahmedabad’.

¹⁰⁶¹ Tol News Service, ‘Gujarat Govt. Will Not Quit’.

¹⁰⁶² Dave, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Incidents of Violence and Disturbances That Took Place at Various Places in the State of Gujarat since February, 1985 to 18th July, 1985: Volume I*, 180–82.

¹⁰⁶³ For details of offences committed during this time Dave, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Incidents of Violence and Disturbances That Took Place at Various Places in the State of Gujarat since February, 1985 to 18th July, 1985: Volume III*, 214–60.

¹⁰⁶⁴ Dave, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Incidents of Violence and Disturbances That Took Place at Various Places in the State of Gujarat since February, 1985 to 18th July, 1985: Volume III*, 160; Dave, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Incidents of Violence and Disturbances That Took Place at Various Places in the State of Gujarat since February, 1985 to 18th July, 1985: Volume I*, 88.

type agitation against the government¹⁰⁶⁵. Moreover, anti-reservationist students were connected to opposition parties that were intervening in the agitation not only through the issue of police excess, discussed below, but in more tangible ways. As Patel and Iyengar noted, by the beginning of the second phase of violence the BJP “seemed in command” and its “powerbase”, Khadia, became “the centre of activity”¹⁰⁶⁶. The Baroda CoP accused the agitators of having “family terms” with Jaspal Singh, who had by then joined the Janata¹⁰⁶⁷, and “plan[ing] the agitation together”. Moreover, it was a fact that a rally of “nearly 3000 people” called for by the AGNS and Vali Mandal was led by Singh and Manubhai Patel (a Rajya Sabha MP)¹⁰⁶⁸ and that the Chhatra Janata was explicitly a part of the agitation¹⁰⁶⁹.

Allegations of police excess and protests against use of repressive measures, as was usually the case, were part of the second anti-reservation agitation as well. These provided fodder for anti-reservationists to continue the agitation as also garner wider support. For instance, a common anti-police protest action involved having many people dial the police emergency number and telling the police to stop “suppression” were organised and the anti-reservationists began to very early on start demanding judicial inquiries into police atrocities¹⁰⁷⁰. There is the example of the bandh at Ahmedabad by traders and businesses against police brutality. The detention of

¹⁰⁶⁵ Tol News Service, ‘Ministers, MLAs to Be Gheraoed’.

¹⁰⁶⁶ Patel and Iyengar Sudarshan, ‘Violence with a Difference’, 1175.

¹⁰⁶⁷ Dave, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Incidents of Violence and Disturbances That Took Place at Various Places in the State of Gujarat since February, 1985 to 18th July, 1985: Volume I*, 166.

¹⁰⁶⁸ Tol News Service, ‘Army Fires on Baroda Mob’, *The Times of India*, 22 April 1985.

¹⁰⁶⁹ Tol News Service, ‘Busmen’s Strike in Ahmedabad’.

¹⁰⁷⁰ Dave, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Incidents of Violence and Disturbances That Took Place at Various Places in the State of Gujarat since February, 1985 to 18th July, 1985: Volume III*, 139.

AGNS leaders under the NSA¹⁰⁷¹ also resulted in bandhs in a number of cities that were supported by traders, small businesses, shop keepers and some government employees, strikes at hospitals and resolutions passed by the GU syndicate. Particularly important was the April rioting during which the police were accused of attacking people and setting the Gujarat Samachar press on fire. Following the rioting, anti-reservationist students demanded that the CM “accept moral responsibility” for the “police atrocities” and resign¹⁰⁷². Further, political parties utilised the issue of police atrocities to intervene in the agitation at different points. Thus, B.J. Patel, the former CM, accused the police of having “surpassed all previous records of harassing people” and Shankarsih Vagehla, BJP, contended that the acts of the police would have put “Hitler to shame”. It was alleged that the police were acting “under orders” from the CM and the Home Minister to “terrorise people into submission”. For unleashing the police on innocent people and not being able to control the law-and-order situation in the state the opposition demanded the CM’s resignation¹⁰⁷³.

Organisation and Leadership

A few points with respect to the leadership and organisation of the agitation need to be noted. First, it was the AGNS, with whom the government chose to negotiate was the central actor with respect to students. Following protests at Morbi, students at Ahmedabad gave a call to boycott preliminary examinations and formed the AGNS to agitate against, first, the increase in SEBC seats and almost immediately after, “total abolition” of reservations¹⁰⁷⁴. The organisation initially consisted of elected student

¹⁰⁷¹ UNI, ‘Late News: Ahmedabad’, *The Times of India*, 19 April 1985.

¹⁰⁷² Tol News Service, ‘Solanki Bows to Students’.

¹⁰⁷³ Tol News Service, ‘Solanki Bows to Students’.

¹⁰⁷⁴ Tol News Service, ‘Anti-Reservation Bandh Planned’.

representatives from Engineering, Medical, Dental and Pharmacy colleges of Ahmedabad and some student Senators but soon expanded to include representatives from other faculties. The AGNS remained in this form until the agitation was suspended for the Assembly elections. Following the resumption of the agitation there were modifications in the organisation and leadership of the agitation and the AGNS base expanded to include student politicians from other parts of the state and an organisation dedicated to conducting propaganda for the anti-reservationists called the NJPS was formed.

Second, despite formally being a state-wide grouping, in much the manner of other such committees, the AGNS had little control over the goings on, in parts of the state other than Ahmedabad. At different educational centres, other committees were formed and these carried out independent programmes and protests. Even those committees that were somewhat formally connected with the AGNS such as the ones at Surat and Baroda remained autonomous in their functioning¹⁰⁷⁵. There were also the official student unions such as MSU, SU and SGU which had their own spheres of influence beyond the reach of the AGNS. Third, following the resignation of the CM, the AGNS declared its intention to continue the agitation but in less than ten days due to lack of support it was forced to reach a settlement with the government. The inability to continue the agitation, indicates the dependence of the AGNS on the support of more organised student and non-student groups. When they withdrew from the agitation, the AGNS on its own could not achieve much.

¹⁰⁷⁵ Dave, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Incidents of Violence and Disturbances That Took Place at Various Places in the State of Gujarat since February, 1985 to 18th July, 1985: Volume I*, 166,209.

Finally, there were a number of non-student organisations that participated in the anti-reservation agitation in varying capacities. Some, like lawyers and traders protested in solidarity with anti-reservationist students. Others such as different kinds of government employees agitated over their own reservation related demands. A significant non-student group was the Vali Mandal, formed sometime between 8 and 11 March, with Shankerbhai Patel, as its President. This group, worked closely with the AGNS and was able to exercise a considerable amount of influence on the agitation. It was present at the multiple rounds of failed negotiations and the settlement with the government was signed not only by the Convenor of the AGNS but also the President of the Vali Mandal¹⁰⁷⁶. While the Vali Mandal claimed to be a group of concerned parents and guardians, it was in fact, as Wood pointed out, one that represented high and intermediate caste opinion¹⁰⁷⁷.

During the second anti-reservation agitation there was some opposition to the anti-reservationists. Some of it was led by factions from within the Congress that had an electoral base amongst those groups that were under attack. The party's Harijan Cell at Ahmedabad threatened to launch a counter-agitation, the Shanti Sena led by a Congress MLA began a programme in support of the reservation policy and demanded the detention of anti-reservationists under NSA¹⁰⁷⁸ and another MLA of the party was involved with a group called the *Anamat Hitrakshak Samiti* (Committee for the Protection of Reservation) that decided to take steps to counter the agitation¹⁰⁷⁹.

¹⁰⁷⁶ Tol News Service, 'Leaders Split on Ending Stir'.

¹⁰⁷⁷ Wood, 'Reservations in Doubt: The Backlash Against Affirmative Action in Gujarat, India', 424.

¹⁰⁷⁸ Tol News Service, 'Gujarat Panel on Quota Soon', *The Times of India*, 2 April 1985.

¹⁰⁷⁹ Tol News Service, 'Bandh, Boycott of Exams in Gujarat', *The Times of India*, 9 April 1985.

Opposition also came from pro-reservationist groups that were typically identity based and frequently middle class in composition consisting of educated and employed members of backward communities. A critique of the identity centric and/or middle-class opposition to the anti-reservation agitation is far beyond the scope of this thesis. What is most pertinent is that accounts of student resistance are absent from all sources that have been examined here. While that must not be taken to mean that there was no opposition to the agitation within the student body, this does indicate that whatever resistance that must have existed was even weaker than during the agitation of 1981.

Conclusions

The period covered by this chapter began with the imposition of the Emergency in 1975. While student responses to the Emergency ran the entire gamut from opposition to support, the most prevalent, particularly after the fall of the Morcha government in 1976, was passivity. After the Emergency was relaxed and later withdrawn, there was an initial upswing in student unrest in 1977. During 1978 and 1979, while students did agitate there was a decline in the intensity of student activity and these protests continued to be over student issues and mainly of a localised nature. Following the election of the Congress in 1980 students played an active role a price rise agitation and, were even present, albeit to a lesser extent, in an agitation of the large peasantry, both of which were led by the opposition parties. While reservations had been a persistent issue in student politics, it was in 1981 that the first anti-reservation agitation burst forth following protests by medical students. The agitation which lasted for over four months ended up destabilising the government while also leaving in its wake a polarised student body in which the already weak and unorganised left and

progressive tendencies all but disappeared. While for much of the time prior to the second agitation students were involved in smaller protests, they were also a part of wider politics through the agitation for the reinstatement of the Baroda CoP and another against the Pension Bill. It was in 1985 that an agitation initiated by students that involved months of caste and communal rioting led to resignation of the newly elected Chief Minister bringing an end to the almost two-decade long period covered by this thesis. In the following chapter, major trends, and aspects of student politics, that have been noted in the two preceding chapters are sought to be explored in a more methodical manner. Having done so, the remainder of the thesis is devoted to understanding the Sangh and its interventions in student politics in Gujarat.

Chapter 3 Reviewing Student Politics in Gujarat 1967 - 1985

The previous two chapters have been an attempt to tell the story of student politics in Gujarat between 1967 and 1985. During the course of these chapters certain trends, tendencies, characteristics, transitions, and some other aspects related to student politics were touched upon. This short chapter seeks to lay out and summarise these aspects. The focus is particularly on the ways in which the history of the period made student politics conducive to the interventions of the Sangh. My argument is both that the political events of the period opened an opportunity for the Sangh to engage in student politics and to gain a foothold in student politics; and also, that the Sangh eagerly seized on student politics as a path towards broader influence. The first section focuses on a tendency that surfaced at times in student politics an outward or superficial aversion to 'politics' and claims of being 'non-political'. This tendency is discussed as being particularly prevalent in Gujarat student politics during the period examined by the thesis. The second section notes the level and state of organisation in student politics. The third section notes the gradual decline of left and progressive tendencies in student politics. In section four, it is the treatment of students by governments and educational authorities that is the focus while section five examines the role played by repressive measures in student politics.

Section I Being “non-political”

Aversion, antagonism antipathy or rejection of politics as well as attempts to be appear non-political have a strong and longstanding tradition within Indian student politics that

can be dated back to the colonial period. The Academic Association, described by Rajimwale as the “first student organisation functioning in an organised and regular manner” founded in 1828 as well as other contemporary organisations of Bengali students were explicitly “non-political”¹⁰⁸⁰, within the Students Literary and Scientific Society “all political and religious subjects were strictly excluded”¹⁰⁸¹ and the popular Students’ Brotherhood, supported by colonial officials focused on “social and cultural work”¹⁰⁸². Surendranath Banerjee, as early as 1875, noted how “indifference to politics” was the “prevailing attitude of the students’ mind”¹⁰⁸³. Even after the Swadeshi Movement, that witnessed participation from students, when the question of forming an all-India student organisation was first discussed around 1910, the majority opinion was that such an organisation should “[leave] aside political questions”¹⁰⁸⁴ and that “politics be strictly debarred”¹⁰⁸⁵. Despite the development of the national movement, as Rajimwale noted, an “allergy to politics” was “quite common” during this time¹⁰⁸⁶. This anathema to politics was recognised at the first AISF Conference in 1936 where it was conceded that the organisation playing an active part in politics would, given the widespread aversion to politics amongst students, “restrict the basis” of the AISF¹⁰⁸⁷. As Surajit Mazumdar noted, an aversion to politics was prevalent during the colonial period despite, the promotion of “political mobilisation of students” by a “wide range of

¹⁰⁸⁰ Anil Rajimwale, ‘Student Movement in India in the Nineteenth Century’, *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* 49, no. 1988 (1988): 344.

¹⁰⁸¹ Rajimwale, ‘Student Movement in India in the Nineteenth Century’, 346.

¹⁰⁸² Anil Rajimwale, *History of Student Movement in India: Origins and Development (1920-1947)* (New Delhi: Manak Publications, 2001), 60–61.

¹⁰⁸³ Rajimwale, *History of Student Movement in India: Origins and Development (1920-1947)*, 27.

¹⁰⁸⁴ Rajimwale, *History of Student Movement in India: Origins and Development (1920-1947)*, 64–65.

¹⁰⁸⁵ Rajimwale, *History of Student Movement in India: Origins and Development (1920-1947)*, 65.

¹⁰⁸⁶ Rajimwale, *History of Student Movement in India: Origins and Development (1920-1947)*, 67.

¹⁰⁸⁷ Prabodh Chandra, *Student Movement in India* (Lahore: All-India Students’ Federation, 1938), 54–55.

social and political forces”¹⁰⁸⁸. Those sections from which students were largely drawn, at the time, were also “relatively positively inclined towards student politics”¹⁰⁸⁹. With independence, however, the participation of students in politics was no longer “desirable” to the classes that had led the national movement¹⁰⁹⁰ and there was a “conscious promotion of the *political idea* [emphasis added] that students should be involved in ‘nation-building’ rather than politics”¹⁰⁹¹. Alongside this, was the overall process of “strengthening of social attitudes within the Indian middle and upper classes, which worked towards depoliticisation”. Amongst the sections from which the students were drawn, “politics” became a “dirty word” that involved only the “self-interested and the corrupt”¹⁰⁹². As a result, the antipathy towards students’ participation in politics, both within and outside the student body, that had existed during the colonial period, only strengthened after independence. While there was this overall trend and Gujarat was no exception to it, developments in the state politics, mentioned earlier¹⁰⁹³, ensured that for the entire period there remained within student politics a particularly strong antipathy towards politics.

This was visible in the issues and demands that students raised during the period under study. Between 1967 and 1985, while students agitated over a wide range of demands the ones that chiefly concerned them were those over issues that were of

¹⁰⁸⁸ Surajit Mazumdar, ‘The Post-Independence History of Student Movements in India and the Ongoing Protests’, *Postcolonial Studies* 22, no. 1 (2019): 16–29.

¹⁰⁸⁹ Mazumdar, ‘The Post-Independence History of Student Movements in India and the Ongoing Protests’.

¹⁰⁹⁰ Suneet Chopra, ‘Political Consciousness of the Student Movement in India’, *Social Scientist* 6, no. 10 (1978): 54–55.

¹⁰⁹¹ Mazumdar, ‘The Post-Independence History of Student Movements in India and the Ongoing Protests’.

¹⁰⁹² Mazumdar, ‘The Post-Independence History of Student Movements in India and the Ongoing Protests’.

¹⁰⁹³ See Chapter 1, Section III, Section IV.

direct academic concern or real or perceived, immediate slights or grievances. Student protests rarely began with or were organised around overtly political demands and issues. There were a few exceptions of minor protests such as one over the removal of Morarji Desai from the cabinet, demonstrations over the Bangladesh war of liberation¹⁰⁹⁴ and a major one against horse-trading in 1973¹⁰⁹⁵. However, most attempts to organise students over such demands met with limited success. For instance, multiple attempts by pro-JP groups to mobilise students in support of the Bihar Movement, even though this was immediately after the Navnirman Agitation failed to evoke a response from students¹⁰⁹⁶. Student involvement in the opposition-led protests for immediate elections for the Gujarat Assembly in 1975 was limited¹⁰⁹⁷ and for the entire period of the national Emergency, despite there being favourable conditions for the first nine months, students remained largely politically inactive¹⁰⁹⁸.

Moreover, the larger agitations of the period that went on to be politically significant also began as protests over student issues such as fee-hikes, location of a university, high mess bills and reservations. Even during these, the attempt was to make themselves and the agitation appear non-political. Thus, as discussed in Chapter 1, during the Navnirman Agitation, the Panchvati Farm incident and the brazen horse-trading of the previous year¹⁰⁹⁹ ensured that the rejection of politics remained strong. It was therefore the case that all factions of the student leadership publicly claimed to be non-political and there were instances of expulsions for appearing to be close to

¹⁰⁹⁴ See Chapter 1, Section II.

¹⁰⁹⁵ See Chapter 1, Section III.

¹⁰⁹⁶ See Chapter 1, Section IV.

¹⁰⁹⁷ See Chapter 1, Section IV.

¹⁰⁹⁸ See Chapter 2, Section II.

¹⁰⁹⁹ See Chapter 1, Section II.

political parties. Similarly, as noted in Chapter 2, at the time of the first anti-reservation agitation, the anti-reservationists insisted that they were uninterested in politics and that the agitation was being carried out in “student” and “public” interest while at the same time accusing their opponents of being “politically motivated”. The case of the 1985 agitation was also the same with anti-reservationists maintaining that the agitation was a non-political one that was in no way connected to any political parties.

With the ABVP claiming to be a non-political organisation and going to great lengths to maintain this image, as is discussed in Chapter 4, such a rejection of politics, that was deep-rooted and pervasive, was particularly beneficial to the Sangh and the ABVP. The precise manner in which the antipathy to politics in the context of Gujarat proved advantageous to the ABVP and the Sangh and how they successfully managed to intervene in student politics is explored in Chapter 5.

Section II Unorganised nature of Student Politics

In terms of organisation within student politics, there were partisan organisations that were allied or affiliated to various groups that were a part of state-level politics in Gujarat. During the course of the previous two chapters, we have encountered the MNS, GSF, SFI, PVS and AISF, partisan organisations close to the communist parties. The GVS, Chhatra Janata and NSUI affiliated to parties such as the Cong(O), Janata and Congress as well as the ABVP of the RSS. The influence of these partisan organisations, however, was limited both geographically and temporally. While they had their pockets of influence most, with the partial exception of the ABVP towards the end of the period, did not have a state-wide presence. Moreover, the left organisations were strong only until 1974 while organisations of the Janata and Congress became relevant around 1980 onwards. It was only the ABVP, while the not always the most

dominant organisation, that can be considered to have remained active throughout the period.

In the absence of a state-wide organisation, student politics in Gujarat, for the most part, remained localised, divided and isolated both in terms of its demands and protests.

While this was generally the case, there were on occasion, larger agitations that involved students from across the state. During times of such agitation, groups, referred to here as “joint committees”, were formed immediately prior to or soon after the agitations had begun. These groups provided some form leadership and coordination, were highly visible in the press, and it was with them that governments chose to negotiate. Amongst these organisations can be included, the VMS formed to oppose the fee hike in 1971, the YLS formed after the police action against students at LD Engineering in 1974, the NYS, relatively better organised, that replaced the YLS and led the Navnirman Agitation, the GAVS of the non-medical students during the first anti-reservation agitation and the AGNS formed at the time of the 1985 agitation. With minor variations they shared a number of organisational characteristics. They had minimal internal organisation- no formal programme, constitution, or mass membership, no cadre base and were for all intents and purposes groupings of student politicians and representatives of student organisations with their own agendas and personal followers that had come together over one or two specific demands. They were also limited in their geographical reach with all such committees being based out of Ahmedabad. While they provided a rallying point for students in the state, their real influence rarely extended beyond the city with smaller groups being influential in other educational centres. The committees, moreover, did not survive long after the

agitations ended and student politics remained, albeit with these temporary and partial exceptions, a localised and disparate affair.

During the period covered by the study there were times when students resorted to unusual modes of protest. This was the case during the 1973 protests against political corruption but most prominently during the Navnirman Agitation. Through the course of the agitation a number of more unorthodox methods of protest and propaganda were preferred which were claimed to not have been used anywhere else in the country till that time¹¹⁰⁰. These included mock operations, rallies consisting of dogs, donkeys and mice, mock trials, immersion of blood-stained stones representing the corrupt MLAs, all night slogans to keep MLAs awake¹¹⁰¹. While Shah referred to these derisively as protests with only “stunt or symbolic value”¹¹⁰², one may speculate that in resorting to them, the NYS was compensating for the lack of organisation and cadre base on which it could consistently depend. The protests therefore may be viewed as a unique attempt by the NYS to make up for its inability to use traditional methods to sustain interest and enlist the support of students and other sections in the agitation. This said, it must be remembered that while these protests were often seem to be successful in mobilising numbers, they did not increase the NYS’s organisational strength. Beyond this, the sources are scant regarding the more theatrical modes of protest during other student protests and agitations. It is therefore difficult to make any assessment on the efficacy and rationale behind their utilisation or what the utilisation of such modes might imply for the level of organisation.

¹¹⁰⁰ ‘Gujarat Agitation at a Glance’, *JANATA*, 28 April 1974.

¹¹⁰¹ ‘Gujarat Agitation at a Glance’, *JANATA*, 28 April 1974.

¹¹⁰² G. Shah, ‘The Upsurge in Gujarat’, *Economic and Political Weekly* 9, no. 32/34 (1974): 1449.

The generally unorganised nature of student politics at most times and the organisational weakness of the joint committees during times of larger agitations meant that there was an opportunity for more organised forces, of which the Sangh was one, to intervene in student politics and benefit from student-led agitations in Gujarat.

Section III Decline of Left and Progressive Student Politics

Between 1967 and 1985 there was a noteworthy change that took place in student politics. Left and progressive politics went from being a relevant force to a complete non-entity. Early on, there was a distinct presence of left and progressive forces in student politics. As has been noted in Chapter 1, the period immediately following the anti-fee hike agitation of 1967 it was left student organisations close to parties such as the MJP and the CPM that pursued the matter of the Lalbhai Committee recommendations regarding fees in higher education¹¹⁰³. Similarly, it was the GSF that was the first organisation to oppose the proposed fee hike in 1971 and students close to the communist and socialist parties were part of the group that went on a hunger strike in front of the Governor's residence during the second phase of that agitation¹¹⁰⁴. The presence of left and progressive tendencies could also be discerned from the submissions made to the different Commissions during this time¹¹⁰⁵. Further, during the Navnirman Agitation, apart from the partisan student politicians and organisations of the left there were progressive student politicians within the NYS who worked

¹¹⁰³ See Chapter 1, Section II.

¹¹⁰⁴ See Chapter 1, Section II.

¹¹⁰⁵ See Chapter 1, Section II.

closely with the AUGCOM and attempted to lead the agitation towards goals beyond the dissolution of the Assembly¹¹⁰⁶.

However, following the end of the Navnirman Agitation one finds left and progressive politics in a sharp decline. There was little support found amongst students for either the progressive sections of the NYS leadership or left partisan groups for wider issues that they attempted to take up immediately after the agitation. The Emergency was a further blow as much student activity came to a halt. This was followed by the failed fee hike agitation in 1977 and attempts in vain at raising the issue of price rise in 1980¹¹⁰⁷. While some groups did attempt to put up resistance during the first anti-reservation agitation, as noted in Chapter 2, this was to no avail and following the agitation, the already weak progressive tendencies, organised and unorganised, all but disappeared. By the time of the 1985 agitation, the presence of left and progressive tendencies was negligible within student politics and the agitators faced little opposition from them.

While a discussion on the factors, including the aversion to politics, the decline to irrelevance of the left parties in Gujarat politics, and the many failings of the non-partisan and unorganised progressive student politicians and groups, that most likely led to this decline would be a rewarding exercise, it can regrettably not take place within the limited space of this thesis. Suffice to note here, that the weakness of the left and progressive forces for much of the period, meant that the Sangh did not have to contend with, what have traditionally been its strongest opponents.

¹¹⁰⁶ See Chapter 1, Section III.

¹¹⁰⁷ See Chapter 2, Section III, and Section IV.

Section IV Conservative Approach of Governments and Educational Authorities towards Student Politics

In pursuing their demands, students utilised various methods of agitation, violent and non-violent, such as strikes, demonstrations, gheraos, bandhs, and attacks on university property and personnel. In dealing with students, governments and university administrations also resorted to both repressive and non-repressive methods. The non-repressive measures included concessions, conciliation, negotiation, and attempts to solve student problems; more repressive approaches included criminal cases, detention of students under stringent acts, and police measures.

Whether it was due to their social backgrounds and fear of provoking wider outrage amongst groups that students came from, or that issue based, and unorganised politics did not present a real threat to the status quo, or a combination of these and other factors, in containing student unrest, while they did utilise a variety of measures, governments and educational authorities, took a discernibly more watchful and conservative approach. That such an approach was followed in dealing with students is not founded on the claim that repressive measures were *never* used against students. Based on archival material, the attempt here is to establish that in handling student unrest, there was a preference for the use of measures other than repressive ones and even on occasions that repressive measures were utilised, the manner in which they were implemented could be considered conservative.

From the late 1960s, in Gujarat, governments and educational authorities frequently discussed the “growing indiscipline among students” which was “posing a big problem

before educationists”¹¹⁰⁸. These discussions about which different factors were considered to be at the root of the “indiscipline” and varying remedies suggested, are one indication that it was non-repressive disciplinary measures that were relied on by governments and educational authorities. In these discussions a variety of suggestions were made, including that the formation of “Parent Associations” would provide “right type of guidance to students” and could “help tone up discipline” on campus¹¹⁰⁹. The understanding was also, as noted, in a confidential report by a contemporary Deputy Director of Information, that a majority of students were peaceful, there was only “a group of students” that “indulge[d] in agitations in order to maintain their leadership”¹¹¹⁰ and that “unless driven to an extreme, not much support could be commanded by rowdies”¹¹¹¹. In order to limit the influence of these “professional student politicians” who were “pursuing their narrow interests”, the government considered restricting the length of student life to a maximum of five years¹¹¹². Student union elections were thought to be another source of indiscipline. The conduct of student union elections allegedly witnessed “much rowdyism” and a “lot of expenditure”¹¹¹³. Steps towards indirect elections and a low age limit for contesting were also contemplated as a solution to this¹¹¹⁴.

¹¹⁰⁸ ‘Minutes of the Second Meeting of Vice-Chancellors Held at Raj Bhavan at 10.30 a.m. on Sunday the 6th December, 1970’, 6 December 1970, U. No. 0086528, GS XI, 36-44, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

¹¹⁰⁹ ‘Minutes of the Second Meeting of Vice-Chancellors Held at Raj Bhavan at 10.30 a.m. on Sunday the 6th December, 1970’.

¹¹¹⁰ ‘Minutes of the Second Meeting of Vice-Chancellors Held at Raj Bhavan at 10.30 a.m. on Sunday the 6th December, 1970’.

¹¹¹¹ Deputy Director of Information, ‘The Weekly Feedback: No. 25’, 31 January 1975, U. No. 0087378, 271-272, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

¹¹¹² Staff Correspondent, ‘Malpractices in Exams: PM for Toughness’, *The Times of India*, 18 October 1978.

¹¹¹³ Deputy Director of Information, ‘The Weekly Feedback: No. 25’.

¹¹¹⁴ ‘Minutes of the Second Meeting of Vice-Chancellors Held at Raj Bhavan at 10.30 a.m. on Sunday the 6th December, 1970’.

Combined with the above, believing student grievances related to campus life, living as well as academic conditions, to be one the root cause of student indiscipline, governments and educational authorities advocated and to an extent practiced an approach that looked to resolving these issues. It was thought that a “lot of unhappiness could be averted” if “basic amenities” were maintained and “promises, if made” were implemented¹¹¹⁵ and that a “redressal of all genuine grievances”, “without delay” would “nip the mischief [student indiscipline] in the bud”¹¹¹⁶. Following the Navnirman Agitation, this idea got further solidified and the Secretary of Education and Labour strongly argued that despite a “general complaint regarding the management of hostels” and the high food bills as well as “specific complaints” being made to VCs, by students regarding their grievances, “no action was taken [prior to the Navnirman Agitation]”¹¹¹⁷. The non-redressal of these grievances was considered to be the most significant factor that caused the agitation, a number of changes were proposed and made. Apart from a whole host of changes regarding the management of hostels and messes¹¹¹⁸, there was also a push towards separating the Education and Labour Departments so as to give greater focus to student issues and for the creating a post of a Public Relations Officer in the Education Department to “look into individual grievances and pay personal attention in getting them settled”¹¹¹⁹. In keeping with this understanding of solving student issues, one finds educational authorities, throughout

¹¹¹⁵ Deputy Director of Information, ‘The Weekly Feedback: No. 25’.

¹¹¹⁶ ‘Minutes of the Second Meeting of Vice-Chancellors Held at Raj Bhavan at 10.30 a.m. on Sunday the 6th December, 1970’.

¹¹¹⁷ Education and Labour Department, ‘A Background Note for the Cabinet Meeting’, 20 March 1974, U. No. 0087418, 376-390, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

¹¹¹⁸ Directorate of Education, Government of Gujarat, ‘Background Note for the Citizen’s Council Meeting on 31-3-1974’, 28 March 1974, U. No. 0087415, G.S. XIII (51) 74, 17-21, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

¹¹¹⁹ Education and Labour Department, ‘A Background Note for the Cabinet Meeting’.

this period, as noted in Chapters 1 and 2, also frequently conceded to student demands ranging from those related to examinations and living conditions to the removal or reinstatement of staff. Moreover, in a number of cases when college or university administrations did not relent to student pressure, as noted in the preceding two chapters, governments intervened on the side of students.

The conservative approach of administrations and governments was clear when it came to the utilisation or lack thereof of repressive measures. To begin, with there seemed to be a reluctance to use such measures against students. When, in order to press for their demands, students took recourse to violent means, there were numerous cases, including ones that involved serious incidents of attacks on university property and personnel which could have constituted substantive offences under Indian law that did not result in repressive action against them. While all incidents of this kind are too numerous to mention here, amongst the major examples can be included, when students “raided the administration offices” and “burnt all the office records, answer papers... and furniture...” at SV Engineering, Surat¹¹²⁰. Also, when students at Ahmedabad protesting against tough questions in 1973 “ransacked the university buildings and manhandled the vice-chancellor”¹¹²¹. Similarly, students at the Government Polytechnic College demanding that there be no exams for semesters 1 and 3, set fire to the car of the director of technical education¹¹²². In another incident, hostel inmates at MSU who had been protesting against the warden for according to them, “the encouragement of groupism in the hostel”, set fire to a part of the warden’s

¹¹²⁰ Samachar, ‘Violence Closes University Fete’, *The Times of India*, 1 January 1978.

¹¹²¹ V Gangadhar, ‘Deep-Rooted Student Discontent Led to Mass Agitation’, *The Times of India*, 13 February 1974.

¹¹²² Staff Correspondent, ‘Education Chief’s Car Set Ablaze by Students’, *The Times of India*, 27 November 1980.

house and later locked the warden and his family in the house¹¹²³. In none of these cases, is there a record of any action being taken either by the university or government.

This being the case, repressive measures were indeed on many occasions utilised against students. There were detentions, arrests, and preventive detentions as well as police action through lathi charges, lobbing of tear gas shells, and firing. Even in the use of such measures, however, a conservative approach can be discerned. The assessment regarding the severity of the utilisation of repressive measures against students is based on an examination of the sources that have been surveyed while writing this thesis. It was clear while examining the sources, even without meticulously noting down each instance of their utilisation, that certain methods and measures were used with far greater frequency against students than others.

In terms of legal action, it was detention for the violation of section 144 of the CrPC, which is not a substantive offence under Indian law, that was the most commonly utilised measure against agitating students. This meant that detained students were, in most cases, released in a matter of hours¹¹²⁴. When criminal cases were filed and arrests made, outside the larger agitations, it was not uncommon for them to receive almost immediate bail even for gheraos of VCs, such as at GU¹¹²⁵ and the Agricultural university¹¹²⁶, with cases dropped soon after. During the Navnirman Agitation, barring a few related to extremely serious offences, all cases were withdrawn soon after it

¹¹²³ Staff Correspondent, 'Violence Rocks Campus of M.S. Varsity', *The Times of India*, 24 September 1979.

¹¹²⁴ A maximum of 24 hours.

¹¹²⁵ UNI, 'Student Leaders Held', *The Times of India*, 31 March 1975; PTI, 'Gujarat Student Leaders Released on Bail', *The Times of India*, 2 April 1975.

¹¹²⁶ UNI, '5 Students Held', *The Times of India*, 10 October 1979.

ended¹¹²⁷ and a withdrawal of cases was part of the settlements during the two anti-reservation agitations. The preventive detention acts such as MISA and NSA, with the exception of the Navnirman Agitation, were also utilised sparingly against students. Those detained under these acts during the two anti-reservation agitations, were released while the agitations were on-going either by the courts or by governments themselves in order to carry out negotiations¹¹²⁸.

With respect to police action, evidence of a conservative approach towards dealing with students cannot come from official instructions or communication to the police as there were no clearly established protocols regarding methods to be used against students. The Gujarat Police Manual of the time, which contained instructions regarding how protests by different sections should be handled, made no mention of students. There are also no contemporary government documents or correspondence regarding when and the manner in which the police was to be used in controlling student indiscipline. It is therefore, only from an examination of the various instances that the police were used, and the measures utilised by them against students, as mentioned in the Fortnightly and Monthly reports of the Governor as well as in the contemporary press, that the conservative approach becomes apparent.

To begin with, there was a general reluctance, across most of the country, to send the police into educational campuses. Even the National Police Commission “notice[d] with concern” “a tendency on the part of the police to wait for a request from the

¹¹²⁷ ‘Subjectwise Note on Action Taken by Concerned Department’, 1974, 127–28, U. No. 0087419, 71-240.

¹¹²⁸ See Chapter 2, Section IV.

University authorities before intervention”¹¹²⁹. Gujarat was not an exception to this and police entering educational campuses remained a rare occurrence throughout the period under study. From an examination of the available sources, one finds that on the occasions that the police did enter campuses it was the least severe measure in its arsenal that was employed– the lathi charge. There were a handful of occasions on which a lathi charge having failed to disperse students, that tear gas shells were lobbed by the police and there was only one incident of police firing on campus¹¹³⁰. Even when student protests spilled onto the streets, while there was a slightly greater use of tear gas, this measure was resorted to mainly when students were one component of protesting crowds such as during the SU agitation or the Price Hike agitation (1980). Apart from these, over almost twenty years, there were only stray instances in which the police fired tear gas shells at student protesters even outside campus.

It is the relative disuse of police firing against students despite the number of student protests that turned violent and spilled onto the street that is noteworthy. Apart from the three major agitations, there were three cases of police firing on students outside the campus- during the SU agitation, at Modasa¹¹³¹ and at MSU¹¹³². During the first a student was killed while there were no reports of injuries or deaths during the other two. In comparison, during this period in Gujarat, police firing was routinely used as

¹¹²⁹ Dharmavira, *Sixth Report of the National Police Commission* (New Delhi: Government of India, 1981).

¹¹³⁰ Tol News Service, ‘Police Open Fire on Baroda Students: 2 Hurt’, *The Times of India*, 18 December 1969.

¹¹³¹ Home Department (Government of Gujarat), ‘Secret Brief Note on the Political Situation in Gujarat during the Current Year (1973) with Special Reference to Law and Order’, nd, U. No. 0087303, G.S. XXVII/73, 226-230, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

¹¹³² Tol News Service, ‘Rioting Crowd Fired on in Baroda’, *The Times of India*, 6 February 1971.

measure in controlling public agitation, even against white collar employees. From the Governor's Fortnightly and Monthly Reports, Reports at Governor's Annual Conferences¹¹³³ as well as the numerous Commissions of Inquiry regarding incidents of police firing, it is clear that most years witnessed at least one instance of police firing, to use the government's pet phrase, to "disperse unlawful Assembly", even that of white collar employees, with these usually resulting in injuries and sometimes also in deaths. There was for instance a large bank employees' agitation for better pay and working conditions in December 1978 continuing into January 1979 during which 3 persons were killed in police firing¹¹³⁴. The fact that, in comparison, incidents of police firing against students were few and far between is remarkable and is clearly indicative that students were treated with greater deference by the state.

Note must also be made of the methods used by the police during the three major agitations when the police were unarguably at their most brutal. While the first and second anti-reservation agitations which were student led agitations witnessed a large number of deaths in police firing, this needs to be qualified. During the first agitation, there were hardly any incidents of police firing on student agitators, the majority were against non-students. No anti-reservationist students were killed as a result of police firing and police firing was not even raised as an issue by the anti-reservationists. Similarly, it is clear from the records of the Dave Commission that during the 1985 agitation, police seldom fired on anti-reservationist students and the major incidents of police firing were against rioting mobs, that comprised of both students and non-

¹¹³³ 'Agenda Item 4: Re-Orientation to Be Effectuated in the Approach and Behaviour of Police towards Member of Public', 1980, U. No. 0087318, GS XXVI/8/80, 306-315, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

¹¹³⁴ Home Department (Government of Gujarat), 'Law and Order: 1978-80', March 1980, U. No. 0087423, 63-82, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

students, following the outbreak of communal violence¹¹³⁵. During both these agitations the methods used against student protesters remained lathi charges, tear gas shells and large-scale detentions during protests. During the Navnirman Agitation, however, one finds a partial exception to the conservative approach in the treatment of students. At the time of the agitation, police were unleashed on protesting students and there was a liberal use of police firing against them. As a result, a large proportion of those killed or injured in police firing were students¹¹³⁶.

Given the above discussion, it can be concluded that during the period under study, barring partially during the Navnirman Agitation, students were treated with deference and their protests were handled with relative restraint by governments and educational authorities.

Section V Role of Repressive Measures in Escalating Student Protests

Despite a more conservative approach being adopted in dealing with students and student politics, repressive measures, and allegations of police atrocities, real or perceived, played a significant part in student politics. At the primary level, they often had the effect of increasing and widening student involvement in protests and agitations. This was true, as we have noted how, from the SU agitation when it was the killing of a student and allegations of police brutality that resulted in increased student involvement. This was also the case of the Navnirman Agitation when it was through protests against the “brutal” police action and arrests that followed the mess

¹¹³⁵ V.S. Dave, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Incidents of Violence and Disturbances That Took Place at Various Places in the State of Gujarat since February, 1985 to 18th July, 1985: Volume III* (Gandhinagar: Government Central Press, 1990).

¹¹³⁶ See Chapter 1, Section III.

bill strike at LD Engineering, that students from other colleges first became involved and throughout the agitation incidents of police atrocities was an issue on which the NYS and other groups mobilised. Right up until the two anti-reservation agitations, when in addition to pressing for their other demands, groups such as the AC, GAVS, NJPS and the AGNS, as has been noted, successfully utilised allegations of police excess as well as preventive detentions and arrests of their leaders to mobilise student support¹¹³⁷ and held the government responsible for the actions of the police and demanded resignations of top ministers¹¹³⁸.

Further, as has been discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, much of student politics during the period under study was around issues that did not directly concern the government. These were conflicts between students and educational administrations. When repressive measures were utilised in dealing with such protests, there was the potential of escalation. That is, student protests due to the utilisation of repressive measures could end up acquiring greater proportions. The most obvious and extreme example of this is the Navnirman Agitation. However, apart from that there were other times at which minor student protests, although they did not transform into major agitations, did become a cause of concern for governments. A case in point was an MSU campus protest against the construction of a campus wall that worsened to such an extent due to police action against students that the issue was taken up in the Assembly and an inquiry to be conducted by an Inspector General of Police was ordered by the government¹¹³⁹. There was also the case of a minor agitation at the

¹¹³⁷ See Chapter 2, Section IV and Section VI.

¹¹³⁸ Tol News Service, 'Solanki Bows to Students', *The Times of India*, 20 April 1985.

¹¹³⁹ See Chapter 1, Section II.

Morbi Engineering College, noted earlier, for the removal of the Principal where police action against students led to an escalation of the matter. There were attacks on campus property and an indefinite hunger strike with matter only being resolved following intervention from the CM¹¹⁴⁰. Similarly, a “minor altercation” between students and bus staff at LD Engineering spiralled after police action, the matter was raised in the Assembly and there was a strike in all colleges in the city¹¹⁴¹.

Moreover, particularly during the two anti-reservation agitations, the utilisation of repressive measures by the government and allegations of police atrocities allowed for a variety of groups, including political parties to be involved in the agitations. During the first agitation, various non-student organisations including those of secondary and higher secondary teachers, lawyers, LIC, telephone, post, telegraph, AMC and bank employees to name a few protested police atrocities against students and in this manner supported the agitation. As noted earlier, having to balance support and opposition for the agitation, the opposition parties raised the issue of police excess in the Assembly disrupting it on many an occasion, visited homes of those injured or killed, addressed funeral parties, organised protests and utilised this issue to attack the government. Similarly, during the second agitation, a variety of groups including traders, small businesses, shop keepers, semi-government employees, school and university teachers protested the use of repressive measures against students and came out in support of the agitation. Here too, the parties of the opposition were involved in the agitation by taking up the issue of police atrocities, organising protests and demanding the resignation of the CM for having ordered the police excess. The

¹¹⁴⁰ See Chapter 2, Section V.

¹¹⁴¹ See Chapter 2, Section III.

Sangh was particularly vocal in allegations of police atrocities, the manner in which this served its ends is further discussed in Chapter 5.

Having noted these various aspects of student politics in Gujarat between 1967 and 1985, the next part of the thesis focuses on the Sangh. Chapter 4 explores relevant historical, organisational, and political aspects of the RSS, the Sangh and the ABVP. While Chapter 5 elaborates on to the interventions of the Sangh in Gujarat student politics and how these were beneficial to its rise in wider politics in the state.

Chapter 4 The Sangh and its relationship with Students

The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), together with its front organisations, collectively referred as the *Sangh*, have been for the entire post-independence period the most significant and powerful proponents of *Hindutva*. Prior to 1949, the RSS did not have a written constitution and knowledge of its internal organisation was limited to those within its fold. The organisation was banned on 4 February 1948, five days after Gandhi's assassination. The ban was withdrawn on 12 July 1949 only after the RSS adopted a written constitution, agreed to function "openly", and stay limited to the cultural field. Despite this agreement with the Indian government, the RSS remained present in Indian politics through the establishment of front organisations. Further, as Goyal, a former Swayamsevak, writing in the late 1970s noted, the RSS kept no records of membership or funding, and it was not possible to either prove with certainty who was a member of the RSS, who contributed what amount or was the total fund collection of the RSS¹¹⁴². The RSS, post-independence, as Aijaz Ahmad put it, remained a "semi-secret organisation"¹¹⁴³ and its internal organisation, methods of promotion and decision making, relationship with its front organisations all continued to be "shrouded in secrecy"¹¹⁴⁴. Taking this into consideration, the first section of this

¹¹⁴² D.R. Goyal, *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh* (New Delhi: Radha Krishna Prakashan, 1979), 182.

¹¹⁴³ Aijaz Ahmad, 'India: Liberal Democracy and the Extreme Right', *Indian Cultural Forum* (blog), 7 September 2016, <https://indianculturalforum.in/2016/09/07/india-liberal-democracy-and-the-extreme-right/?fbclid=IwAR3xDQcpP10jtEhrCXau60uoRcCRpikbJyoNroAsEVCTAwui4Fn3hFUPKE>.

¹¹⁴⁴ Aijaz Ahmad, *Lineages of the Present: Ideology and Politics in Contemporary South Asia* (London: Verso, 2000), 171.

chapter, therefore, seeks to elaborate on the organisational structures of the RSS and the dynamics of the Sangh.

Since very early on, students were a section that was considered important by the Sangh. The writings of Golwalkar on students and the problems of student indiscipline are instructive in this regard. For Golwalkar, students could be divided into three categories – those coming from backward sections, those from affluent sections and those who were the children of “people in average circumstances”. According to him, it was “the young folk” from the third “class” that formed “the bulk of our student population”. However, due to multiple reasons, including “present economic conditions” and the destruction of the institution called home, these students had been led astray by destructive forces and indulged in what was called student indiscipline. These students with an “otherwise good mental make-up” had unfortunately been marred by a “life of no hope but of only despair” were of great importance¹¹⁴⁵. Moreover, while being consistently critical of contemporary student politics, care was taken to not dismiss students as a group. Thus, Golwalkar, even while stating that because of the “atmosphere of destructive revolutionary forces youth life has been ruined” insisted that to call students “upand” [disruptive] was not only “wrong but also not productive”¹¹⁴⁶. For him the “real problem of the day was “to convert the huge youth community into virtuous citizens for great social construction”¹¹⁴⁷. Thus, in Golwalkar one finds the initial suggestions of the importance of students for the Sangh.

¹¹⁴⁵ M.S. Golwalkar, *Bunch of Thoughts* (Bangalore: Rashtrotthana Sahitya, 2000), 288–92.

¹¹⁴⁶ Adheesh Kumar, ed., *Shri Gururiji Aur Yuva (In Hindi) [Gururiji and Youth]*, n.d., 14.

¹¹⁴⁷ Kumar, *Shri Gururiji Aur Yuva (In Hindi) [Gururiji and Youth]*, 19.

Beyond this, following the ABVP's change in policy in the late 1960s, discussed below, borrowing from the terminology of the New Left, the Sangh began to refer to students as a "separate social class"¹¹⁴⁸ and "the last revolutionary reservoir"¹¹⁴⁹. It was argued that the importance of students emerged from the fact that they were the "second biggest organised force in the country" after "labour". Both were "equally militant and rebellious" and "proudly conscious" that they were "reservoirs of latent energy - inflammable at a moment's notice". It was further suggested that "student power" had a distinct advantage over the working class as they had "secret and open sympathisers and supporters in every home and cottage" and while the working class could continue strikes and gheraos only for a limited period because of responsibilities and domestic burdens, students were "free otherwise" with their guardians being able to "feed them for a long period of turbulent stirs". It was for this reason that "the gathering of protesting students [was] much more difficult to manage in contrast to one of ruffians or criminals or even of trade unions"¹¹⁵⁰. Given such an understanding of students, they came to form an important part of the Sangh's strategy during the period under study.

Despite this, within the vast literature devoted to the study of the Sangh, its relationship with students and the ABVP have not merited a systematic analysis. In contrast, the Sangh has never ceased to produce propaganda regarding the ABVP and present it in the light which suits its interests. The "true character" ABVP is supposed to be "ungraspable". The organisation is spoken of as having many facets, difficult to

¹¹⁴⁸ O.P. Kohli, 'ABVP- Potent Force for Social Change', *Organiser*, 20 July 1974.

¹¹⁴⁹ 'Police v/s Students', *Organiser*, 6 April 1974.

¹¹⁵⁰ 'Police v/s Students'.

understand, and impervious to analysis. As the concluding passages of a pamphlet, “60 years of ABVP”, put it,

“During the battle of Mahabharat when Lord Krishna showed Arjun his *virat swaroop* (most glorious form), Arjun was stunned to realise that he had been unable to grasp the *virat swaroop* of the same Krishna whom he had seen on a daily basis as a friend. The *swaroop* of the Vidyarthi Parishad is also like this. Many people think of the Vidyarthi Parishad only as an organisation that leads agitations to solve the problems of students. Some people think of it as a youth organisation, an organisation attached to a political party, one that takes out rallies or one that opposes terrorism. Few people know the *bahuaayami* (multifaceted) character of the Vidyarthi Parishad”¹¹⁵¹.

That task here is to examine the “true character” of the ABVP, which contrary to its claims, is very much “graspable”. In order to do so, the organisational structure of the ABVP and its position in the Sangh are laid out in Section II while the third and fourth section address how at times it is the agitational or Hindutva of the organisation that are foregrounded while on other occasions it is portrayed a peaceful “organisation with a difference”.

Section I Organisation of the Sangh and the RSS

Organisation is a central part of both RSS ideology as well as political strategy. As Goyal pointed out, “when a Swayamsevak is asked about the aim of the Sangh¹¹⁵² the one-word answer is ‘*Sangathan*’ (organisation)”¹¹⁵³. Hedgewar, the first chief of the

¹¹⁵¹ *Akhil Bhartiya Vidyarthi Parishad 60 Varsh (1949-2009) (in Hindi) [60 Years of the Akhil Bhartiya Vidyarthi Parishad]* (Akhil Bhartiya Vidyarthi Parishad, 1999), 27.

¹¹⁵² In this context taken to mean RSS.

¹¹⁵³ Goyal, *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh*, 175–76.

RSS asserted that “strength... comes only through organisation...and the Sangh¹¹⁵⁴ is carrying out this supreme task”¹¹⁵⁵. For M.S. Golwalkar, the RSS’s supreme ideologue, the work undertaken by the RSS was that of *Sangathan*¹¹⁵⁶. Similarly, Deoras, who was the head of the Sangh for the entirety of the period under study, “the mission” of the RSS was that of Hindu *Sangathan*¹¹⁵⁷. Thus, as Kanungo correctly stated, “ever since its inception”, “erecting a mighty organisation” was always “at the top of the RSS agenda”¹¹⁵⁸. Therefore, before attempting to understand the relationship of the Sangh to student politics, it is the internal organisation of the RSS and the structure of the family of organisations created by it that is understood below.

While it has been mentioned earlier, it must be reiterated that, although ‘Sangh’ and ‘RSS’ are commonly used interchangeably, for the purpose of this thesis, when the term Sangh is used by the author, it must be taken to mean, not only the RSS but the entire collection of organisations of which the RSS is the central authority.

To understand the organisation of the RSS it is necessary to understand, what Goyal calls, “the mystique of the *shakha* (branch)”¹¹⁵⁹. The shakha, which started in 1926, is the smallest and most fundamental unit of the RSS organisation. It has its own internal hierarchical structure, includes only male Hindu members, divided into groups according to age, called *svyamsevaks*, whose number does not usually exceed a

¹¹⁵⁴ In this context taken to mean RSS.

¹¹⁵⁵ Pralay Kanungo, *RSS’s Tryst with Politics: From Hedgewar to Sudarshan* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2017), 68.

¹¹⁵⁶ M.S. Golwalkar, *From Red Fort Grounds* (New Delhi: Asia Press, 1967).

¹¹⁵⁷ Balasahab Deoras, *Hindu Sangathan: The Need of the Nation* (New Delhi: Suruchi Sahitya, 1979), 3–4.

¹¹⁵⁸ Kanungo, *RSS’s Tryst with Politics: From Hedgewar to Sudarshan*, 68.

¹¹⁵⁹ Goyal, *Rashtriya Swyamsevak Sangh*, 175.

hundred¹¹⁶⁰. The shakha congregates daily and under the RSS flag, following the RSS prayer are conducted physical exercises and “Bhartiya” games, marches and drills with an emphasis on discipline, as well as sermons on “problems affecting the national life”¹¹⁶¹. The description of the shakha by Golwalkar is repeated ad nauseum in the Sangh’s many publications¹¹⁶² and the shakha is “eulogised as inspiring and soul-stirring”¹¹⁶³. Studies have shown that the shakha acts as a training and recruiting ground with its “main thrust” being on inculcating RSS ideology as well as creating and cultivating of a brotherhood among the svayamsevaks.

While playing a vital role in recruitment and indoctrination, the shakha is also the building block of the RSS’s internal organisational pyramid which, according to Goyal is as follows: the shakha at the local level followed a Town or Mandal (group of villages) Samitis (committees), either District or City Samitis, then a Vibhag (Division) or Prantiya Kendra (Provincial Centre) Samitis and finally a Prant (Province) Samiti each consisting of representatives from samitis below them¹¹⁶⁴.

There are then for the different states Prant Pratinidhi Sabhas which are deliberative bodies which exercise “no real power”¹¹⁶⁵. There is also a similar Akhil Bhartiya Pratinidhi Sabha (ABPS), at the central level, which meets once a year and consists of delegates chosen by the states. The “administrative power” is in the hands of the Central Working Committee and the RSS’s Sarkaryavah, General Secretary. In terms

¹¹⁶⁰ Kanungo, *RSS’s Tryst with Politics: From Hedgewar to Sudarshan*, 68.

¹¹⁶¹ M.S. Golwalkar, *Bunch of Thoughts* (Bangalore: Vikrama Prakashan, 1966), 333–34.

¹¹⁶² See for instance the same paragraph in *Sangh Darshan* (Bangalore: Printersall, 1967), 1; *RSS- A Bird’s Eye View* (Bangalore: Keshava Kripa, 1978), 5.

¹¹⁶³ Goyal, *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh*, 176.

¹¹⁶⁴ Goyal, *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh*.

¹¹⁶⁵ Kanungo, *RSS’s Tryst with Politics: From Hedgewar to Sudarshan*, 74.

of leadership positions, while constitutionally given a nominal position as the “the guide and philosopher”¹¹⁶⁶ of the RSS, it is the *Sarsanghchalak* who sits atop the RSS hierarchy and is the “real lord and master of the entire network”¹¹⁶⁷. The *Sarsanghchalak* is not elected but is chosen by the previous one and remains in the position until his death. Below him is the *Sarkaryavah* and is “generally acknowledged to be the *Sarsanghchalak*-in-waiting”¹¹⁶⁸. At all other levels of the RSS’s organisation from the *Mandal* to the *Prant* there are the positions of *Sanghchalak* and *Karyavah*. Although the former are given complete authority by the RSS constitution¹¹⁶⁹, they are “ornamental figureheads” and it is the latter who exercise power within the organisation¹¹⁷⁰. Moreover, while these positions are formally open for elections as both Goyal and Kanungo note, which, even if conducted, in the RSS set-up, are meant to be neither free nor democratic¹¹⁷¹.

Prior to independence, only the RSS and an organisation of women supervised by it, the *Rashtra Sevika Samiti*, formed in 1936 existed¹¹⁷². It was after independence that the *Sangh Parivar* with its numerous mass organisations came into existence. The first three major organisational projections of the RSS were the ABVP, the BJS and the BMS. Over time other important organisations were established such as the VHP in 1964, BKS in 1978 and Seva Bharti in 1979. This list of organisations is by no means exhaustive- Islam, refers to an RSS publication which lists as many as forty

¹¹⁶⁶ RSS constitution article 12 reproduced in Goyal, *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh*, 210.

¹¹⁶⁷ Goyal, *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh*, 184.

¹¹⁶⁸ Kanungo, *RSS’s Tryst with Politics: From Hedgewar to Sudarshan*, 75.

¹¹⁶⁹ RSS constitution article 16, reproduced in Goyal, *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh*, 212.

¹¹⁷⁰ Kanungo, *RSS’s Tryst with Politics: From Hedgewar to Sudarshan*, 75.

¹¹⁷¹ Goyal, *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh*, 183; Kanungo, *RSS’s Tryst with Politics: From Hedgewar to Sudarshan*, 74–75.

¹¹⁷² Tanika Sarkar, ‘Heroic Women, Mother Goddesses’, in *Women and Right-Wing Movements: Indian Experience*, ed. Tanika Sarkar and Urvashi Butalia (New Delhi: Zed Books, 1995), 184.

organisations created by the RSS¹¹⁷³. Padmaja Nair calls these organisations the ‘sectoral affiliates’ which according to her are a crucial component of RSS’s influence and ‘provide a foothold for the RSS in critical sectors, and hence a means of promoting the core agenda of the *Hindu Rashtra*’¹¹⁷⁴.

The RSS generates a body of full-time activists which is dedicated to expanding the organisational reach of the *Sangh*. These activists are called “pracharaks” (preacher/whole-timer) and it is the institution of the “pracharak” that is the “king-pin” of the RSS and indeed the Sangh’s organisational network¹¹⁷⁵. According to the RSS constitution pracharaks are “full-time workers” who “receive no remuneration” and their “mission is to serve the society through the Sangh”¹¹⁷⁶. While it is not mandated by the constitution, most pracharaks are unmarried and do not lead “the life of a householder”¹¹⁷⁷. Within the RSS organisation, pracharaks have their own hierarchical order with the Akhil Bhartiya Prachar Pramukh and the Sarkaryavah of the RSS appointing Prant pracharaks, who in turn appoint pracharaks of different units. There is no election for pracharaks, they are all selected and are “responsible only to the higher level pracharak” and not to “local shakha officers”¹¹⁷⁸. The pracharaks are thus, as Kanungo puts it, “a communication network outside the ‘constitutional’ system”¹¹⁷⁹.

¹¹⁷³ Shamsul Islam, *RSS Primer Based on Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh Documents* (New Delhi: Pharos, 2014), 38.

¹¹⁷⁴ Padmaja Nair, ‘Religious Political Parties and Their Welfare Work : Relations between the RSS , the Bharatiya Janata Party and the Vidya Bharati Schools in India’, *Religions and Development Research Programme*, no. Working Paper No. 37 (2009): 38.

¹¹⁷⁵ Goyal, *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh*, 182.

¹¹⁷⁶ RSS constitution article 17, reproduced in Goyal, *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh*, 213–213.

¹¹⁷⁷ Goyal, *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh*, 182.

¹¹⁷⁸ Goyal, *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh*, 182–83.

¹¹⁷⁹ Kanungo, *RSS’s Tryst with Politics: From Hedgewar to Sudarshan*, 79.

Significantly, pracharaks who “mostly work for the affiliates”¹¹⁸⁰ form the key link for the expansion of the RSS through front organisations as well as a means through which to exercise authority over them. Thus, when a new organisation is required to be formed “a suitable pracharak is detailed for it”¹¹⁸¹. In already existing organisations it is pracharaks who occupy key posts such as General Secretary and Organising Secretary while the “ceremonial ones” are reserved for trusted sympathisers and notables. Also, pracharaks working with front organisations are responsible to their superior pracharaks and not the organisation with which they are connected. It is, as Kanungo concludes, by manning crucial organisational positions of various affiliates “with its committed pracharaks” that the “RSS ensures organisational harmony and coordination”¹¹⁸². As a result of the institution of pracharak, as Andersen and Damle concede all of the fronts including its parliamentary front, the BJP, operate as “moral stepchildren of the RSS”¹¹⁸³.

Being controlled by the RSS in this manner, the different Sangh affiliates cannot be viewed as functioning autonomously. As Ahmad has argued, there is no “fundamental political difference among the fronts of the RSS”, there is simply a “a division of labour within a cluster of fraternal groupings” and the distinction amongst the fronts is not “real” but “merely procedural”¹¹⁸⁴. At the same time, the RSS is not a “simple cohesive organisation” but, having established the Sangh, a “well-integrated system of organisations”¹¹⁸⁵. Being organisationally enmeshed in this way, there is, a transfer of

¹¹⁸⁰ Kanungo, *RSS's Tryst with Politics: From Hedgewar to Sudarshan*, 79.

¹¹⁸¹ Goyal, *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh*, 184.

¹¹⁸² Kanungo, *RSS's Tryst with Politics: From Hedgewar to Sudarshan*, 84–85.

¹¹⁸³ W Andersen and S Damle, *The Brotherhood in Saffron: The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and Hindu Revivalism* (London: Westview, 1987), 143.

¹¹⁸⁴ Ahmad, *Lineages of the Present: Ideology and Politics in Contemporary South Asia*, 288–89.

¹¹⁸⁵ Kanungo, *RSS's Tryst with Politics: From Hedgewar to Sudarshan*, 85.

political gains amongst different affiliates of the Sangh- gains made in any component of the political-organisational network were often devoted to accruing gains in another. An illustration of this is the contribution of the Sangh's service affiliates such as Seva Bharti and Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram. First by allowing the Sangh to make inroads into constituencies that were inimical to it and then by converting the gains made by these affiliates into electoral success for the parliamentary front- the BJP.

Section II The Akhil Bhartiya Vidyarthi Parishad

Establishment

The Sangh's attempts to gain the support of youth and students as well as intervene in student politics pre-date the formation of the ABVP. Since its inception, RSS work focused on students and youth and seen as a foil to Muslim separatism, the RSS was also encouraged to conduct its activities at BHU, even being allotted a building within the campus in 1941¹¹⁸⁶. The ban placed on the RSS could be considered the immediate impetus for the formation of the ABVP. Andersen and Damle suggest that with no way of carrying out its activities, the RSS turned to its student members assigning pracharaks to work with them and "many of the front groups were established on campuses"¹¹⁸⁷. These groups, primarily in located in Delhi, Punjab, United Provinces, and Bombay were brought together and the ABVP was formed.

¹¹⁸⁶ Anil Baran Ray, *Students and Politics in India: The Role of Caste, Language, and Region in an Indian University* (South Asia Books, 1978), 28.

¹¹⁸⁷ Andersen and Damle, *The Brotherhood in Saffron: The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and Hindu Revivalism*, 117–19.

There is some discrepancy among Sangh sources regarding the foundation date of the ABVP. According to some, the “foundation date” of the ABVP is 9 July 1949¹¹⁸⁸ while others claim that the first ABVP convention was organised in 1948 but the organisation was registered on 9 July 1949¹¹⁸⁹. The most absurd amongst these is an ABVP pamphlet titled “Since 1949” which in contradiction to what its name might suggest, considers the “inception” of the ABVP to have been “somewhere” in 1948¹¹⁹⁰. While noting this discrepancy in Sangh sources, it would be safe to assume that the ABVP was formed at some point between 1948 and July 1949. The ABVP, according to Goyal, was originally conceptualised as a “substitute for the shakha”¹¹⁹¹. Very soon, however, it did not remain just that, but became, the Sangh’s “organisational projection”, into the domain of student politics.

Organisation

According to the ABVP Constitution, the primary unit of the ABVP’s organisational pyramid is the school, college, or university and is called the Vidyalaya Parishad. All the Vidyalaya Parishads of a particular town or city constitute a Nagar Parishad. These form the Pradesh Parishads (State Councils) and on top of the structure is the Kendriya Parishad (Central Council). All units, primary or otherwise, have both a General Council and an Executive Council. The General Council of the primary unit consists of all members of the ABVP of that unit while the General Councils of the units higher up in the hierarchy include representatives from units below them.

¹¹⁸⁸ Correspondent, ‘Vidyarthi Parishad Has 600 Branches’, *Organiser*, 9 March 1974; Correspondent, ‘Silver Jubilee Year of Vidyarthi Parishad’, *Organiser*, 4 May 1974; *Akhil Bhartiya Vidyarthi Parishad 60 Varsh (1949-2009) (in Hindi) [60 Years of the Akhil Bhartiya Vidyarthi Parishad]*.

¹¹⁸⁹ ‘History: Akhil Bhartiya Vidyarthi Parishad’, accessed 23 March 2018, <http://abvp.org/history>.

¹¹⁹⁰ ‘ABVP Since 1949’, accessed 18 March 2018, <https://www.abvp.org/ABVP/Since-1949>.

¹¹⁹¹ Goyal, *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh*, 104.

Although the General Councils technically elect some of the office bearers of their units, it is the Executive Councils, consisting of a select few nominated members, at each level of the organisational structure that hold the real power and make decisions related to the affairs of the organisation. In terms of leadership, the President and Secretary are elected by the General Councils while the office bearers such as the Vice President, Joint Secretary and Treasurer are appointed by the President.

This being the case a few aspects regarding the ABVP's organisational structure are of particular importance. In much the same manner as other Sangh affiliates, the RSS has a stranglehold on the ABVP's organisation. At the All-India level as Andersen and Damle concede, the senior organisation of the ABVP is "heavily RSS"¹¹⁹². Further, there is the office of Organising Secretary that exists at each level in the organisational hierarchy from the primary unit to the All-India body. This office of the Organising Secretary, in the ABVP as Jha, a Sangh source, asserts "is the most powerful one in the organisation"¹¹⁹³. As noted earlier, this office, in Sangh affiliates, is reserved for whole time RSS members and the case is no different for the ABVP. It is the All India Organising Secretary, who is an RSS whole-timer, with a "central team", which is an "extra-constitutional body" deciding all important policy matters and the other lower levels of the hierarchy whole-timers of the RSS orchestrate the organisations activities from the position of Organising Secretary¹¹⁹⁴.

¹¹⁹² Andersen and Damle, *The Brotherhood in Saffron: The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and Hindu Revivalism*, 123.

¹¹⁹³ Binodinand Jha, *Student Organizations and Politics: A Case Study of the Akhil Bhartiya Vidharthi Parishad* (New Delhi: Inter-India Publications, 1998), 37.

¹¹⁹⁴ Jha, *Student Organizations and Politics: A Case Study of the Akhil Bhartiya Vidharthi Parishad*, 38.

The ABVP identifies as “primarily a student organisation” but one that is “open to all sections of the educational community” ¹¹⁹⁵. Therefore, according to the ABVP constitution, while all students over the age of 12 are eligible to be members, all those non-students who are interested in the “educational problems of the country and in the welfare of students” can also become “associate members” of the organisation¹¹⁹⁶. It is thus the case that members and workers of the ABVP include “students, teachers as well as educationists”¹¹⁹⁷. What is worth noting is that not only are teachers included as members but also have a permanent position in the organisational structure of the ABVP. While RSS pracharaks, occupy the posts of General Secretary and Organising Secretary, although not constitutionally mandated, the offices of President and Vice President at all levels of the organisation are almost reserved for teachers so as to “guide” students¹¹⁹⁸. Significantly, at the All-India level, during the period under study, both Bal Apte and O.P. Kohli, both university teachers and important RSS functionaries, were the All-India Presidents of the ABVP¹¹⁹⁹.

Finally, the question of the transfer of political gains, of how the ABVP contributed to the Sangh and how the organisation benefit from being a part of a larger political-organisational network, needs to be broadly addressed. The primary task of the ABVP, just as any other Sangh affiliate is not organisational expansion for its own sake, but to further the Sangh’s political project. Apart from contributing through numbers to the

¹¹⁹⁵ Satish Marathe, ‘Vidyarthi Parishad Stands for “Lokniti” and Not “Rajniti”’, *Organiser*, 11 July 1977.

¹¹⁹⁶ Jha, *Student Organizations and Politics: A Case Study of the Akhil Bhartiya Vidharthi Parishad*, 36.

¹¹⁹⁷ O.P. Kohli, ‘ABVP- Potent Force for Social Change’, *Organiser*, 20 July 1974.

¹¹⁹⁸ Correspondent, ‘ABVP Leader Held under MISA Freed by Allahabad High Court’, *Organiser*, 29 March 1975; Jha, *Student Organizations and Politics: A Case Study of the Akhil Bhartiya Vidharthi Parishad*, 37–38.

¹¹⁹⁹ Our Correspondent, ‘Student Leaders Warn Indian Govt.’, *Organiser*, 28 September 1974; ‘Vidyarthi Parishad Puts up Massive Show of Student Power’, *Organiser*, 23 November 1974.

initiatives or agitations of other Sangh affiliates, as a primarily student organisation, the highest priority of the ABVP is that of “indoctrination” by “exposing” students to the Sangh’s ideology¹²⁰⁰. By doing so it both connects, what the Sangh considers to be an important section of the population, organisationally, to its politics while also creating new bearers for the political project¹²⁰¹. At the same time, being a part of the Sangh’s organisational network, the ABVP has access to organisational, financial, mobilisational and ideological resources of the entire Sangh. In the following chapter, we shall note some of the ways in which the ABVP through its interventions in student politics aided the development of the Sangh in Gujarat as also how being a part of the Sangh proved to be of importance for the ABVP.

Section III Agitational Role and Hindutva Politics

Not a great deal can be found in Sangh sources about the activities of the ABVP between its foundation and the late 1960s. This can perhaps be attributed to the fact, as Jha admits, that most of the activities of the ABVP in its first decade, were local and “lacked an All-India character”¹²⁰². The few Sangh sources that do mention this period do so to further a narrative of there being a drastic shift in policy and activities of the ABVP towards the end of the 1960s. The impression sought to be created is that the main activities of the ABVP were “constructive” and that “as late as the mid-1960s, the Vidyarthi Parishad tended to avoid campus politics and student protests”¹²⁰³.

¹²⁰⁰ Andersen and Damle, *The Brotherhood in Saffron: The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and Hindu Revivalism*, 120.

¹²⁰¹ Andersen and Damle, *The Brotherhood in Saffron: The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and Hindu Revivalism*, 120. Stress on how student activists trained in the Parishad join different fields of activity and are nationalists.

¹²⁰² Jha, *Student Organizations and Politics: A Case Study of the Akhil Bhartiya Vidyarthi Parishad*, 46.

¹²⁰³ Andersen and Damle, *The Brotherhood in Saffron: The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and Hindu Revivalism*, 119.

According to this narrative, it was only in the “mid-60s” that the ABVP took the decision to participate in student politics including in student union elections¹²⁰⁴. A later Sangh source pushes this date to around 1970¹²⁰⁵. This assertion, repeated ad nauseum, is a fundamental part of the Sangh’s version of the ABVP’s history. The reality was, however, as is the case with most claims made by the Sangh, somewhat different. Without explicitly publicising their involvement, the ABVP and the Sangh, all the while remained involved in student politics. At the time that the ABVP was formed, the Constitution of India being drafted, and the first demands made by the organisation were themselves, political. That this was the case is admitted in the ABVP’s writing of its own history where it is stated that the organisation’s first demands were that the name of the country be Bharat, the national anthem be Vande Matram and that all Indian languages be considered national language and Hindi be the “sampark bhasha” (link language)¹²⁰⁶. All of these were highly political and controversial demands. Further, studies by Di Bona and Altbach, mentioned earlier, asserted how during this time the ABVP, claims to the contrary notwithstanding, was “clearly political”. RSS backed candidates had also contested and won elections at Allahabad University from independence onwards and also participated in gheraos and protests¹²⁰⁷. Additionally, there was the involvement of the ABVP in rioting in multiple cities during the time

¹²⁰⁴ Our Correspondent, ‘ABVP to Keep Clear of Union Elections’, *Organiser*, 18 June 1978.

¹²⁰⁵ ‘ABVP Major Events’, accessed 23 March 2018, <http://abvp.org/major-events>.

¹²⁰⁶ *Akhil Bhartiya Vidyarthi Parishad 60 Varsh (1949-2009) (in Hindi) [60 Years of the Akhil Bhartiya Vidyarthi Parishad]*, 10.

¹²⁰⁷ J. Di Bona, ‘Elite and Mass in Indian Higher Education: The Case of Allahabad University’, in *Turmoil and Transition: Higher Education and Students Politics in India*, ed. Philip G. Altbach (New York: Basic Books, 1969), 131–71.

including at Jabalpur in 1960¹²⁰⁸, Aligarh in 1961¹²⁰⁹ and Allahabad in 1963¹²¹⁰ as well as the series of protests at BHU in the 1950s and 60s¹²¹¹. The ABVP, had thus, never not participated in student politics and the official decision to participate in agitations and elections was, therefore, not as much of “radical” alteration of “policy” as Sangh sources would have one believe¹²¹².

The “shift” that did occur was a tactical one. This was in all likelihood necessitated by the conditions that developed in student politics of the time. In the mid-1960s, there was upsurge in student protests and agitations over student issues such as poor living conditions, mess bills, teaching facilities etc. on campuses as attested to by numerous studies noted in the Introductory chapter. In addition to this, there was the involvement of students in wider politics through the Naxal Movement¹²¹³, the student agitation in Orissa¹²¹⁴, and the regrouping of left student bodies. Under these conditions, in a bid to remain relevant¹²¹⁵ and attractive to the active section of the student body, the earlier policy of not acknowledging the ABVP’s involvement in student politics was abandoned and instead there was an emphasis on student participation in politics

¹²⁰⁸ C. Jaffrelot, *The Hindu Nationalist Movement and Indian Politics, 1925 to the 1990s: Strategies of Identity-Building, Implantation and Mobilisation (with Special Reference to Central India)* (London: Hurst, 1996).

¹²⁰⁹ J. Di Bona, ‘Indiscipline and Student Leadership in an Indian University’, *Comparative Education Review* 10, no. 2 (1966): 306–19; Jaffrelot, *The Hindu Nationalist Movement and Indian Politics, 1925 to the 1990s: Strategies of Identity-Building, Implantation and Mobilisation (with Special Reference to Central India)*.

¹²¹⁰ Joseph Di Bona, ‘Indiscipline and Student Leadership in an Indian University’, *Comparative Education Review* 10, no. 2 (1966): 306–19.

¹²¹¹ Ray, *Students and Politics in India: The Role of Caste, Language, and Region in an Indian University*.

¹²¹² Andersen and Damle, *The Brotherhood in Saffron: The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and Hindu Revivalism*, 119.

¹²¹³ For more, see Biplab Dasgupta, *The Naxalite Movement* (Bombay: Allied Publishers, 1974).

¹²¹⁴ For more, see *Report of the Commission of Enquiry Orissa Students’ Agitation in 1964* (Home Department, Government of Orissa, 1966).

¹²¹⁵ That the ABVP’s official change in position was guided by this is to an extent even recognised by Andersen and Damle, *The Brotherhood in Saffron: The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and Hindu Revivalism*, 118–19.

alongside more direct, visible, and publicised interventions by the ABVP in student politics.

There was an emphasis on the agitational aspects of the ABVP and attempts to present it as an organisation that had a wide geographical presence, which would take up issues of students as well as those of “national” interest. To that end, soon after the “change of policy” an All-India student march was organised at Delhi in September 1970. It was claimed to have consisted of “over 5000 students”, of whom a thousand were supposed to have been from outside Delhi. According to *Organiser*, students marched through central Delhi and a thirty-member delegation submitted a National Charter of Student Demands to the Vice-President of India. A signature campaign was claimed to have been carried out in preparation for the march in all states in which the ABVP had branches¹²¹⁶. Moreover, in projecting itself as organisation whose interests were not limited to student affairs, the ABVP through the charter demanded not only participation in university administration, solving the problem of educated unemployment and “Indianisation of education” but also a “common civil code for all the citizens”, “manufacture of Atom Bomb” and regaining “lost territories occupied by enemy countries”¹²¹⁷. Even while accounting for the inflation in numbers, the successful organisation of the march was utilised by the ABVP and the Sangh to further build the image of the ABVP as the largest student organisation in the country that was interested in fighting for the rights and interests of students but also had concerns that were related to national and international politics¹²¹⁸. While doing so,

¹²¹⁶ ‘2,46,900 College Students Demand Right to Work and Vote at 18’, *Organiser*, 26 September 1976.

¹²¹⁷ ‘Poster of ABVP’s Chalo Delhi: Students’ Grand March to Rashtrapati Bhavan’, September 1970, U. No. 0086718, X/1/1970/Office of the GS,38, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

¹²¹⁸ Editorial, ‘Chhatra Shakti’, *Organiser*, 16 November 1974.

however, care was taken, to not over play the political turn, based on local context. The state level charter for Gujarat, given the conditions, judiciously, stayed away from any issue that was remotely political, focusing only on local student issues. This is discussed further in Chapter 5.

The ABVP, from 1969 onwards, began to issue statements in support of students who were demanding a greater role in university administration through the formation of unions and representation on statutory bodies¹²¹⁹. It also began to *openly* participate in numerous students' union elections. The Sangh's claim that the ABVP was by 1978, "a dominant factor in University elections" across the country¹²²⁰ is an exaggeration. Its limited geographical reach is evident from the victories cited by contemporary Sangh sources. The ABVP did, however, during this time, win elections at universities and colleges primarily in North India. Important amongst these were Rajasthan University¹²²¹, BHU¹²²², Lucknow University¹²²³, Jodhpur University¹²²⁴ as well as many colleges across UP¹²²⁵. Most significantly it won on multiple occasions at DU¹²²⁶. Here the system of direct elections had been implemented after a long struggle, in 1973 and given its location in the national capital was politically important.

¹²¹⁹ 'Vidyarthi Parishad Complains to Education Minister VKRV Rao against Vice-Chancellor Raj', *Organiser*, 8 August 1970; 'Mighty Meet of Vidyarthi Parishad', *Organiser*, 15 November 1969.

¹²²⁰ Our Correspondent, 'ABVP to Keep Clear of Union Elections'.

¹²²¹ Our Correspondent, 'Vidyarthi Parishad Leads in Rajasthan', *Organiser*, 26 October 1974.

¹²²² Correspondent, 'BHU Must Be Rid of Violence and Goondalism', *Organiser*, 5 June 1971.

¹²²³ 'Lucknow University Union Elects Vidyarthi Parishad Men as President & Secretary', *Organiser*, 20 September 1969.

¹²²⁴ Our Hyderabad Correspondent, 'Vidyarthi Parishad to Shun Power Politics, Work for Total Revolution', *Organiser*, 13 June 1977.

¹²²⁵ Our Correspondent, 'Vidyarthi Parishad Captures 110 Students' Unions in U.P.', *Organiser*, 2 February 1974.

¹²²⁶ 'The Importance of Delhi University Elections', *Organiser*, 8 September 1973.

Also, leaders of the Sangh and the ABVP began to advocate a more active, and sometimes political, role for “students” in pages of the *Organiser* as well as in other public fora. Slogans such as “*Chatr kal ka nahi aapitu aaj ka nagrik hai* (students are not citizens of tomorrow but of today)”¹²²⁷ and “*Chhatra Shakti Rashtra Shakti*” (Student Power Nation’s Power) were coined and terms like “social transformation”, “revolutionary process of social change” and “restoration of democracy” came to be frequently used to imply that the Sangh was not only amiable to student participation in politics but encouraging it. At its Silver Jubilee Conference in 1974, the All-India Vice-President of ABVP, Prof Bal Apte reportedly called upon students, whom he referred to as “educated youth citizens”, to “participate in the revolutionary process of social change”¹²²⁸. He asserted that organised students would “grow into a potent force for social change and smash the corrupt and anti-social elements”, “the slogan for the new-era”, therefore, was to be “Student Power-Nation’s Power”¹²²⁹. Writing as the All-India President of the ABVP, O.P. Kohli made the same point in more or less the same words, asserting that “educated young citizens” had “a significant part to play in the revolutionary process of social change”¹²³⁰. An editorial in *Organiser*, following the Navnirman Agitation, noted the participation of students, calling this a “fresh breeze” and stated that the involvement of students in politics should be welcomed¹²³¹. Another piece in the *Organiser* urged students to “intervene in politics” and “save democracy” as students were the ones who retained “some idealism and a

¹²²⁷ *Akhil Bhartiya Vidyarthi Parishad 60 Varsh (1949-2009) (in Hindi) [60 Years of the Akhil Bhartiya Vidyarthi Parishad]*, 11.

¹²²⁸ Correspondent, “‘Student Power Is Nation’s Power’- Prof. Bal Apte’, *Organiser*, 27 July 1974.

¹²²⁹ Correspondent, “‘Student Power Is Nation’s Power’- Prof. Bal Apte’.

¹²³⁰ Kohli, ‘ABVP- Potent Force for Social Change’.

¹²³¹ Editorial, ‘The Gujarat Revolution’, *Organiser*, 16 March 1974.

freshness of outlook”¹²³². Sangh leaders like Vajpayee explicitly encouraged students to get involved in politics with statements like “academic career and politics are not water-tight compartments” and that it was not possible to stay away from politics because “even if you try to remain aloof from politics, politics will not allow you to do so”¹²³³. This continued even after the Emergency, as Satish Marathe, All India Joint Secretary of the ABVP, wrote in *Organiser* in 1977 that students were to be the “vanguard of social transformation”¹²³⁴, the ABVP Executive in the same year “emphasised the importance of mobilisation of student power for all round transformation of the society”¹²³⁵ and the 1979 ABVP Conference resolved that it was “student power” which had “a great role to play” in the “strengthening of democratic institutions”¹²³⁶.

In addition to this agitational aspect, there were also numerous occasions on which the Hindutva politics of the ABVP also came to be foregrounded, albeit opportunistically and strategically moderated. Like other Sangh affiliates, it was the case that, as and when possible and required the organisation mobilised for explicitly Hindutva objectives. Apart from the communal rioting of which the ABVP was a part¹²³⁷, we find the ABVP taking up familiar issues of Sangh propaganda. Among these can be included the demand for a Uniform Civil Code (UCC)¹²³⁸, which was a constant since the ABVP came out with its first charter of demands in 1970. It was

¹²³² Vashitha, ‘Student Power Can Break the Vicious Circle’, *Organiser*, 3 August 1974.

¹²³³ ‘Atal Bihari Addresses Bombay Youth Rally’, *About Us*, 25 September 1970.

¹²³⁴ Marathe, ‘Vidyarthi Parishad Stands for “Lokniti” and Not “Rajniti”’.

¹²³⁵ Our Hyderabad Correspondent, ‘Vidyarthi Parishad to Shun Power Politics, Work for Total Revolution’.

¹²³⁶ ‘Vidyarthi Parishad Launches “Lok Abhiyan” to Educate the Voter’, *Organiser*, 16 December 1979.

¹²³⁷ See Chapter 4, Section III.

¹²³⁸ For more on the UCC see Peter Ronald Desouza, ‘Politics of the Uniform Civil Code in India’, *Economic And Political Weekly* 50, no. 48 (28 November 2015): 50–58.

particularly active in taking up the matter of the UCC in the aftermath of the Shah Bano case¹²³⁹. It accused the government and Muslim groups' of attempting to "whip up communal frenzy" in the name of Muslim Personal Law and demanded the implementation of a UCC as the only lasting solution¹²⁴⁰. The issue of "Bangladeshi Muslim infiltrators" became a consistent trope from the late seventies onwards. While supporting the Assam agitation, in a manner typical of the Sangh the ABVP claimed that "...that the agitation was neither communal nor anti-Bengal, nor secessionist but only against foreign infiltration". Adding that it could not be helped if "infiltrators were mostly Bengali speaking Muslims", while further accusing Muslim of leading a counter agitation with the "blessings of the Prime Minister" ¹²⁴¹. The issue of Muslim infiltration was used as a mobilisation issue by it also in states such as Bihar¹²⁴², Tripura, Rajasthan, and Gujarat¹²⁴³ as well as in cities with a significant Muslim presence such as Hyderabad¹²⁴⁴.

Similarly, when in 1981, the state government in UP decided to recognise Urdu as a second official language of the state, the ABVP led an agitation against it. There is a long history of Hindu and Urdu being co-opted by cultural nationalists, both Hindu and Muslim, to create polarisation, especially in UP. Urdu coming to be associated with Muslims, in protesting the recognition of Urdu as a state language, the ABVP was agitating against "minority appeasement". While it claimed to be opposing the

¹²³⁹ For the Shah Bano case see Asghar Ali Engineer, *The Shah Bano Controversy* (New Delhi: Orient, 1987).

¹²⁴⁰ Our Correspondent, 'New Education Policy Must Tackle Problems of Illiteracy, Poverty and Unemployment- ABVP', *Organiser*, 24 November 1985.

¹²⁴¹ Our Correspondent, 'ABVP for Constitutional Solution of Foreigners Issue', *Organiser*, 1 June 1980.

¹²⁴² Special Correspondent, 'Vidyarthi Parishad to Re-Enter Union Elections', *Organiser*, 19 June 1982.

¹²⁴³ Jha, *Student Organizations and Politics: A Case Study of the Akhil Bhartiya Vidharthi Parishad*, 48–53.

¹²⁴⁴ 'Foreign Transmitter in Osmania University', *Organiser*, 12 May 1985.

government's decision on the grounds that "the poor people of UP will have to bear the burden of financing" the change and that the "burden of learning an additional language" was "avoidable", at the same time it made allegations that portrayed the government, the police and Muslims as being allied on the issue against the peaceful protestors. It alleged that on the day of a bandh, in Banaras, a pro-Bandh procession was stoned from inside a mosque and the police, "instead of apprehending such persons, went up the mosque and fired upon the procession"¹²⁴⁵. Communal feelings were sought to be whipped up in this manner.

The ABVP was also a consistent critic of minority institutions – Christian and Muslim – and the special status accorded to them under the Indian Constitution. Its All-India Conference of 1980 warned against "the monopoly of foreign missionaries on the system of education in the tribal areas" and called on "student power to mobilise "tribal opinion" against it"¹²⁴⁶. Similarly, the ABVP's 1985 Conference "cautioned against the Christian communal activities"¹²⁴⁷. A regular focus of ire was the Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) which was called, among other things "All Muslim No University"¹²⁴⁸, "Mini Pakistan"¹²⁴⁹, "a den of communalism and a hotbed of intrigues and conspiracies"¹²⁵⁰. At times Muslim students and faculty of the university were accused of inciting riots and violence to get rid of Hindu students¹²⁵¹. Not limiting its criticism to

¹²⁴⁵ Correspondent, 'U.P. Observes Bandh to Oppose Urdu Decision', *Organiser*, 7 February 1982; Our Correspondent, 'ABVP Opposes Urdu Imposition on UP', *Organiser*, 27 January 1981.

¹²⁴⁶ Our Correspondent, 'ABVP to Work for Harijans, Tribals...', *Organiser*, 16 November 1980.

¹²⁴⁷ Our Correspondent, 'New Education Policy Must Tackle Problems of Illiteracy, Poverty and Unemployment- ABVP'.

¹²⁴⁸ 'Aligarh Is All Muslim and No University', *Organiser*, 28 August 1969.

¹²⁴⁹ 'Aligarh Muslim University Very Much Needs to Be Indianised', *Organiser*, 18 April 1970.

¹²⁵⁰ Aligarh Correspondent, 'The Agean Stables of Aligarh University Must Be Cleared', *Organiser*, 29 May 1971.

¹²⁵¹ Correspondent, 'Aligarh Muslim University Is Playing Politics with Riots', *Organiser*, 10 December 1978; Our Correspondent, 'AMU's Involvement in Recent Violence', *Organiser*, 20 May 1979.

specific universities, the National Executive of the ABVP, in 1985, demanded, a reconsideration of “the whole question of minority institutions” to curb their “separatist character”¹²⁵².

There was thus a strategic promotion of the political-agitational aspects of the organisation as well as the foregrounding of Hindutva demands. Concurrently, however, the image of the ABVP as distinct from other student organisations- “an organisation with a difference” was constantly sought to be maintained. It was not unusual for Sangh affiliates to at times foreground and fully embrace their Hindutva agenda while at other times to manufacture narratives in order to mask their core objectives. The RSS on occasion chose to ‘opportunistically associate and distance itself in public from the frontal organisations, even its own mouthpieces’¹²⁵³. The propensity of the ABVP to alternate between the extremism, noted above, and moderation, that is explored section III, is not unique to the organisation but is consistent with what has been noted about its parent organisation.

Section III ABVP: An “Organisation with a difference”

While the ABVP was, from early on¹²⁵⁴, projected as being different from other organisations, it was around the time of the so-called shift in policy that the phrase “organisation with a difference”¹²⁵⁵ to refer to it was popularised and routinely used during the period under study by Sangh sources to describe it.

¹²⁵² Our Correspondent, ‘ABVP’s Call for Withdrawal of Gujarat Agitation’, *Organiser*, 26 June 1985.

¹²⁵³ Shamsul Islam, *Hindu Nationalism and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh* (New Delhi: Media House, 2017), 88.

¹²⁵⁴ Philip G. Altbach, *Student Politics in Bombay* (London: Asia Publishing House, 1968).

¹²⁵⁵ ‘Morarji Desai Marvels at Vidyarthi Parishad’s Discipline’, *Organiser*, 7 January 1970.

A Non-Political Organisation

Before going into the ABVP's claims of being a non-political organisation, an important point must be noted. The written constitution adopted by the RSS, one of the conditions for lifting the ban on the organisation in 1949, states that 'the Sangh, as such, has no politics and is devoted purely to cultural work'¹²⁵⁶. In this vein, as Kanungo notes, the RSS leadership regularly denies that it is a political organisation and assert that it is a "cultural organisation that eschews political involvement"¹²⁵⁷. With politics falling within the RSS's definition of culture, as Tapan Basu et al.¹²⁵⁸ have demonstrated, and the formation of front organisations of the Sangh, as Goyal puts it, the RSS "is nothing if not political"¹²⁵⁹. While the RSS's claims of being non-political cannot be discussed here at length, it is worth mentioning that the portrayal of the ABVP as a non-political organisation, that is discussed subsequently, is somewhat different. Unlike the RSS, the ABVP was not forced to adopt a non-political approach, it was largely an attempt to differentiate itself from other student organisations while trying to capitalise on the long-standing tradition of being non-political in Indian student politics¹²⁶⁰. The ABVP's 'non-political' feint and its changes in policy had more to do with its primary constituency – students – than with the RSS's claims of being 'non-political'. Additionally, while the RSS has consistently shied away from being directly

¹²⁵⁶ D.R. Goyal, *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh* (New Delhi: Radha Krishna Prakashan, 1979), 207.

¹²⁵⁷ Pralay Kanungo, *RSS's Tryst with Politics: From Hedgewar to Sudarshan* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2017), 21.

¹²⁵⁸ Tapan Basu et al., *Khaki Shorts and Saffron Flags: A Critique of the Hindu Right* (New Delhi: Orient Blackswan, 1993).

¹²⁵⁹ Goyal, *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh*, 186.

¹²⁶⁰ See Chapter 3, Section I.

associated with agitations, although claiming to be non-political, the agitational aspect of the ABVP was, as noted earlier, frequently emphasised.

Despite forays into student and wider politics by the ABVP and the Sangh's emphasis on a political role for students, neither were fully embraced. The much-heralded shift in policy was accompanied by proclamations of reluctance and diffidence towards indulging in "power politics" or "Rajniti"¹²⁶¹. While there were attempts to make the Sangh appear as if it was in favour of student participation in politics¹²⁶², there were simultaneous expressions demanding an end to politics in the educational field¹²⁶³. It was asserted that politics had "entered into our veins and our blood", "all the evils [in education]" had their "roots in politics" and a "delinking of politics and education" was demanded¹²⁶⁴. This meant not only opposition to "political appointments and corrupt practices"¹²⁶⁵ but also the "involvement of students in politics"¹²⁶⁶. Even at its most explicitly political, when the ABVP was actively projected as being an important part of the Bihar Movement or following the Emergency when it openly "appealed" to "youth and student communities to work for the victory of the Janata Party"¹²⁶⁷, this image was sought to be maintained. It was emphasised that the organisation was not interested in "power politics" and that it was "non-political"¹²⁶⁸.

¹²⁶¹ Marathe, 'Vidyarthi Parishad Stands for "Lokniti" and Not "Rajniti"'.
¹²⁶² See Chapter 4, Section III.

¹²⁶³ 'Resolve to Fight Anti-National Forces', *Organiser*, 2 October 1970; Our Correspondent, 'ABVP Warns of Explosive Situation in Education Field', *Organiser*, 21 June 1981.

¹²⁶⁴ B.K. Kelkar, 'Revive the national education movement', *Organiser*, 29 December 1985.

¹²⁶⁵ 'Resolve to Fight Anti-National Forces'.

¹²⁶⁶ Our Correspondent, 'ABVP Warns of Explosive Situation in Education Field'.

¹²⁶⁷ Our Hyderabad Correspondent, 'Vidyarthi Parishad to Shun Power Politics, Work for Total Revolution'.

¹²⁶⁸ Our Hyderabad Correspondent, 'Vidyarthi Parishad to Shun Power Politics, Work for Total Revolution'.

At the level of student politics, a wholehearted participation in union elections, could be seen as being in contradiction to its image of a “non-political” student organisation. There were periods during which its “policy” was to not officially participate in union elections. During times that the ABVP did openly participate in union elections, the halo of being “non-political” was still sought to be maintained. Participation in the electoral process was couched in terms of being a necessary compromise that the ABVP had had to make for the overall benefit of the student community. It had fought elections “to prevent the forces of anarchy from capturing the unions” and provide “right type of leadership” so that the problems of the university could be solved “with constructive approach”¹²⁶⁹. Other student organisations contesting union elections were only interested in power while the ABVP would use students’ unions “to shape the national destiny on the basis of youthful aspirations in the best traditions of India’s culture and civilisation”¹²⁷⁰.

This being the case with student politics, involvement in wider politics in varying capacities came to be justified through the idea of “national reconstruction”. The claim was that the ABVP had, unlike other student organisations, a “distinct personality”, it was “national in character”¹²⁷¹ or a “nationalist organisation”¹²⁷². In its understanding, while the pre-independence meaning of nationalism was “driving out the foreigners”, the post-independence nationalism required one to be involved in “national reconstruction”¹²⁷³. Being a nationalist organisation its “objective” was therefore that

¹²⁶⁹ Kohli, ‘ABVP- Potent Force for Social Change’.

¹²⁷⁰ Correspondent, ‘Silver Jubilee Year of Vidyarthi Parishad’.

¹²⁷¹ Kohli, ‘ABVP- Potent Force for Social Change’.

¹²⁷² Marathe, ‘Vidyarthi Parishad Stands for “Lokniti” and Not “Rajniti”’.

¹²⁷³ Kohli, ‘ABVP- Potent Force for Social Change’.

of “national reconstruction”¹²⁷⁴. While this was repeatedly emphasised¹²⁷⁵ that the ABVP its meaning was left vague. A contemporary source, for instance, defined it as “reconstructing different aspects of our national life with a view to enabling the country reach the highest point of glory”¹²⁷⁶. While a later source stated that for the ABVP, “National Reconstruction” was “nothing but the social transformation and that is awakening the spirit of National Consciousness, Nation first attitude, unconditional love for the motherland “Bharat” and self-respect among the people”¹²⁷⁷. Being in this manner ill defined, it could include a variety of activities of the ABVP including participation in union elections, canvassing for the Janata Party as well as the state of electoral democracy and its more insidious Hindutva politics noted above. The ABVP’s forays into all form of politics, came to be justified as being attempts towards a non-political, “national reconstruction”.

Significantly also, other student organisations, it was alleged, were “launched as fronts of certain political parties”¹²⁷⁸ and were “mere shadows of their political bosses”¹²⁷⁹. “Party politics” was said to be “vitait[ing]” the “atmosphere of... educational centres”¹²⁸⁰ and it was “essential” to keep them “free from party politics”¹²⁸¹. The panacea to these

¹²⁷⁴ Kohli, ‘ABVP- Potent Force for Social Change’.

¹²⁷⁵ Our Hyderabad Correspondent, ‘Vidyarthi Parishad to Shun Power Politics, Work for Total Revolution’; Marathe, ‘Vidyarthi Parishad Stands for “Lokniti” and Not “Rajniti”’; Correspondent, “‘Student Power Is Nation’s Power’- Prof. Bal Apte’; Eknath Ranade, ‘Challenge before the Youth’, *Organiser*, January 1975.

¹²⁷⁶ Kohli, ‘ABVP- Potent Force for Social Change’.

¹²⁷⁷ ‘Hum Hai ABVP [We Are ABVP]’, accessed 4 April 2022, <https://www.abvp.org/ABVP/Hum-ABVP-hain>.

¹²⁷⁸ Editorial, ‘Chhatra Shakti’.

¹²⁷⁹ Correspondent, ‘Vidyarthi Parishad Training Students as “Citizens of Today”’, *Organiser*, 9 April 1974.

¹²⁸⁰ Our Special Correspondent, ‘Vidyarthi Parishad Wins Ten Universities’, *Organiser*, 14 November 1977.

¹²⁸¹ Satvik Marathe, ‘The Corruption in Our Universities’, *Organiser*, 5 September 1973.

ills was the ABVP, “an independent student body engaged in helping students”¹²⁸². It was routinely asserted, despite its clear organisational links with the Sangh, that the ABVP maintained a “strict aloofness from any political party affiliation”¹²⁸³, was neutral in matters of party politics and did not work “for or against any political party”¹²⁸⁴.

For the time that the BJS was in existence, accusations of the ABVP being its student wing were rebuffed. It was asserted that although the two “agreed on many matters”, the “agreement” was “more in the nature of agreement on perceived truth in national affairs than on *any organisational link-up* [emphasis added]”¹²⁸⁵. It was argued that the “Vidyarthi Parishad”, was “an independent and autonomous organisation of students” and having been “started independently”, “years before”, could not possibly be a student wing of the BJS¹²⁸⁶. During the Janata period, with the party constituent of the Sangh having merged with the Janata Party, the ABVP maintained its “unaffiliated” appearance by not formally joining a Janata aligned student or youth organisation, asserting that it would not be a part of “any front or platform which will directly or indirectly work as a wing of any political party”¹²⁸⁷. Following the formation of the BJP, in much the same manner as it did with respect to the BJS, it continued, and continues to this day, assert that it is not a “students’ wing” of the party¹²⁸⁸.

¹²⁸² Correspondent, ‘Vidyarthi Parishad Training Students as “Citizens of Today”’.

¹²⁸³ Kohli, ‘ABVP- Potent Force for Social Change’.

¹²⁸⁴ Our Correspondent, ‘Organising Students for Reconstruction of Society’, *Organiser*, 17 September 1978.

¹²⁸⁵ Editorial, ‘Chhatra Shakti’.

¹²⁸⁶ Editorial, ‘Chhatra Shakti’.

¹²⁸⁷ Rajat Sharma, ‘Janata Should Desist from Direct Involvement in Students Movement’, *Organiser*, April 1979.

¹²⁸⁸ Kanchan Srivastava, ‘Akhil Bhartiya Vidyarthi Parishad Is Not the Students’ Wing of BJP: Shreehari Borikar’, *DNA*, accessed 30 September 2022, <https://www.dnaindia.com/mumbai/interview-akhil-bhartiya-vidyarthi-parishad-is-not-the-students-wing-of-bjp-shreehari-borikar-2032512>.

It must be noted that while the ABVP was never officially a student wing of a political party, and it is necessary that this distinction be understood, it must also be recognised as disingenuous. In the context of the Sangh Parivar's organisational structure, the fact that the ABVP was not directly affiliated either to the Jana Sangh or the BJP is of little significance. With the RSS at the top of the Sangh hierarchy, it is through the leadership of the RSS that the different affiliates are organisationally closely linked and there is a transference of political gains amongst them. The ABVP was therefore, very much a partisan organisation.

To further reinforce the non-political status of the ABVP, the organisation freely associated with important non-Sangh individuals who were active in public life in different capacities. A wide range of persons were invited to participate in ABVP programmes and particularly at state or national organisational conferences and conventions. These included leaders of other political parties as also a number of prominent individuals who were not career politicians such as Morarji Desai¹²⁸⁹, Piloo Mody¹²⁹⁰, M.C. Chagla¹²⁹¹, V.M. Tarkunde¹²⁹² among others. The presence of these persons at ABVP programmes and their endorsements of the activities of the organisation were flaunted as confirmation of the truly non-political nature of the ABVP.

¹²⁸⁹ 'Morarji Desai Marvels at Vidyarthi Parishad's Discipline'.

¹²⁹⁰ 'Vidyarthi Parishad Conference', *Organiser*, 17 March 1973.

¹²⁹¹ Our Correspondent, '5000 Delegates Attend Vidyarthi Parishad Meet', *Organiser*, 6 November 1971.

¹²⁹² 'Vidyarthi Parishad Launches "Lok Abhiyan" to Educate the Voter'.

Thus, despite being closely linked with the RSS and participating in student and wider politics the ABVP's image of a non-political organisation was sought to be maintained through a combination of methods mentioned above.

The Role of Service Activities

With there being "many more things in a student's life than student politics" the ABVP, as an "organisation with a difference", attempted to "cater to these"¹²⁹³. In doing so, it had a "constructive" approach and organised "non-political" programmes and activities that targeted students in various ways. Among these were initiatives and schemes that were meant to provide financial or other forms of aid to students such as fellowship centres¹²⁹⁴, book and scientific equipment banks¹²⁹⁵, reading rooms¹²⁹⁶, free coaching¹²⁹⁷, running hostels¹²⁹⁸ and conducting entrepreneurs' workshops¹²⁹⁹. There were also programmes and activities such as felicitations for "first class first students"¹³⁰⁰ as well as music, debate and painting competitions held at an inter-college or inter-university level. The largest such event "Jallosh", organised in 1984, a "five-day cultural festival" with a number of competitions, claimed to have been attended by students from 75 colleges¹³⁰¹.

In addition to these, were activities that involved the participation of students as volunteers in its initiatives like "Students for Rural Reconstruction" (SFR) that began

¹²⁹³ Editorial, 'Well Done ABVP', *Organiser*, 25 June 1978.

¹²⁹⁴ Raj Kumar Bhatia, 'Silver Jubilee Year of Vidyarthi Parishad', *Organiser*, 4 May 1974.

¹²⁹⁵ Kohli, 'ABVP- Potent Force for Social Change'.

¹²⁹⁶ 'ABVP Observes Dr. Ambedkar's Punyatithi as "Samata Divas"', *Organiser*, 28 December 1980.

¹²⁹⁷ Correspondent, 'Vidyarthi Parishad Has 600 Branches'.

¹²⁹⁸ Correspondent, 'Vidyarthi Parishad Has 600 Branches'.

¹²⁹⁹ Eknath Ranade, 'Vidyarthi Parishad Holds Entrepreneurs Workshop', *Organiser*, 19 January 1978.

¹³⁰⁰ 'Morarji Desai Marvels at Vidyarthi Parishad's Discipline'; Editorial, 'Chhatra Shakti'; Kohli, 'ABVP- Potent Force for Social Change'.

¹³⁰¹ 'ABVP Curtain-Raiser for International Youth Year', *Organiser*, 13 January 1984.

in 1977 which was a “national project” that involved students going to “backward villages, urban slums, Harijan bustees and tribal areas” to first “undertake a study of these peoples’ problems and then help solve such problems”¹³⁰². There were also mobilisations of student volunteers for relief work, from time to time, in areas affected by floods, famines, droughts or other natural calamities¹³⁰³. Finally, in the arsenal of service activities was a programme launched in 1966 by the ABVP called the Student Experience in Interstate Living (SEIL) - “a unique venture for promoting, integration among youths from different states”¹³⁰⁴ as a part of which students from North-Eastern states lived with families in different parts of the rest of India for a year.

It is not uncommon for Sangh affiliates to utilise “service” or “welfare” activities to their advantage. The RSS itself has initiated and participated in service activities since its inception. Studies note its participation in controlling the Nagpur Ramnavmi celebrations and providing water to devotees as one of its first acts of “seva”. Following the ban, Golwalkar articulated the concept of “Positive Hinduism” which “enhanced the position of seva (service) as an organisational priority of the RSS”¹³⁰⁵ and it was through service activities that the Sangh sought to “rehabilitate the RSS and its affiliates in the eyes of India’s politicians and people”¹³⁰⁶. Service activities significantly have also been utilised by the Sangh to secure the support of sections – especially

¹³⁰² Our Correspondent, ‘New Vidyarthi Parishad Project: Students for Rural Reconstruction’, *Organiser*, 12 November 1977.

¹³⁰³ Correspondent, ‘Vidyarthi Parishad Has 600 Branches’; Ravindra Pawar, ‘Vidyarthi Parishad Boys Fight Drought in Maharashtra’, *Organiser*, 28 April 1973.

¹³⁰⁴ ‘Vidyarthi Parishad “My Home Is India” Meet Makes History in Gauhati’, *Organiser*, 15 January 1978.

¹³⁰⁵ Gwilym Beckerlegge, ‘Saffron and Seva: The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh’s Appropriation of Swami Vivekananda’, in *Hinduism in Public and Private: Reform, Hindutva, Gender and Sampraday*, ed. Anthony Copley (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003), 49.

¹³⁰⁶ Beckerlegge, ‘Saffron and Seva: The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh’s Appropriation of Swami Vivekananda’.

lower castes and adivasis – whose interests were inimical to its own. Studies¹³⁰⁷ have focused on the service-oriented affiliates of the Sangh like Seva Bharti, Vidya Bharti and the Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram which provide basic education, health care and other forms of aid among sections and in areas that other affiliates of the Sangh have been unsuccessful in accessing and have often been ignored by the state. By doing so, they assist in expanding the Sangh's sphere of influence in these constituencies. Thus, for Blom Hansen service activities were the Sangh's attempt to "transgress the middle-class "cocoon" and according to Jaffrelot, the social welfare strategy of the Sangh played an important part in the success of Hindu Nationalism in the 1990s¹³⁰⁸.

For the ABVP, projects like SEIL and SFR were not only a way to get students involved in the ABVP's activities but were held up as examples of how it was focusing on national integration and carrying out "non-political constructive work" making it a "unique student organisation"¹³⁰⁹. Service activities such as the organisation of competitions and festivals, book banks not only bolstered its image as a non-political organisation but allowed for it to attract students who were not necessarily interested in politics. This has been clearly demonstrated by Mahiyaria¹³¹⁰ in the context of a theatre festival that was organised at DU. Activities such as these allow for an engagement with the wider student constituency and bring them into, the ABVP's and the Sangh's organisational reach. Further, in the absence of the possibility of attracting

¹³⁰⁷ Thomas Blom Hansen, *The Saffron Wave: Democracy and Hindu Nationalism in Modern India* (Princeton University Press, 1999), 104; Tariq Thachil, 'Embedded Mobilization: Non-State Service Provision as Electoral Strategy in India', *World Politics* 63, no. 3 (2011): 434–69.

¹³⁰⁸ C. Jaffrelot, ed., 'Hindu Nationalism and the Social Welfare Strategy', in *The Sangh Parivar: A Reader* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005), 211–24.

¹³⁰⁹ 'Kurukshetra University Vice-Chancellor Commends Vidyarthi Parishad Work', *Organiser*, 13 February 1974.

¹³¹⁰ Aparna Mahiyaria, 'Right Wing and Street-Theatre: From Censure to Co-Option', *Studies in Theatre and Performance* 41, no. 3 (2021): 305–20.

students directly to its more extreme demands and often violent methods, the ABVP's service activities served as useful entry points. This was similar to the way in which the service affiliates that took "great pains to present themselves as 'apolitical' in order to gain access to communities distrustful of their political motivations"¹³¹¹.

Thus, while, as noted in Section II, there was an emphasis on the agitational aspects of the ABVP and it continued to indulge in Hindutva politics, there was, as discussed above, a simultaneous attempt to maintain a façade of the ABVP as a peaceful, non-political "organisation with a difference" through different means.

In the following chapter we shall now proceed to examine how the conditions created by student politics and the interventions of the Sangh in it, aided the rise of the Sangh in Gujarat.

¹³¹¹ Thachil, 'Embedded Mobilization: Non-State Service Provision as Electoral Strategy in India', 436.

Chapter 5 Student Politics and the Rise of the Sangh in Gujarat

The RSS, established at Nagpur in 1925 expanded rapidly in Maharashtra and Northern India through the 1930s and claimed to have over 1,00,000 members by the early 1940s¹³¹². However, in the Gujarat Region, according to Sud, the RSS was a late entrant with its branches in Saurashtra and the Gujarati speaking part of Bombay Province established only in 1940¹³¹³. Buoyed by the communal atmosphere around the time of independence, RSS membership grew to an estimated 4,00,000-5,00,000¹³¹⁴. The number, however, declined sharply due to the ban following Gandhi's assassination, and at when the ban was lifted in July 1949 membership, was estimated by Curran, to be around 1,00,000. By early 1951 it had increased again to over 6,00,000¹³¹⁵. Of these, Bombay State, accounted for 60,000, the majority of whom it can be safely assumed, were from the Marathi speaking part of the state¹³¹⁶. While the RSS did have a presence, in the Gujarat Region, in 1951, it was one of its smaller branches compared to ones such as Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Punjab¹³¹⁷. Through the 1950s, as noted by Sud, the RSS expanded through agitational activities over a ban on cow slaughter as well as service activities following

¹³¹² J.A. Curran, *Militant Hinduism in Indian Politics: A Study of the R.S.S.* (New York: International Secretariat, Institute of Pacific Relations, 1951), 14.

¹³¹³ Nikita Sud, *Liberalization, Hindu Nationalism and the State: A Biography of Gujarat* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2012), 132.

¹³¹⁴ Curran, *Militant Hinduism in Indian Politics: A Study of the R.S.S.*, 43–44.

¹³¹⁵ Curran, *Militant Hinduism in Indian Politics: A Study of the R.S.S.*, 43–44.

¹³¹⁶ Curran, *Militant Hinduism in Indian Politics: A Study of the R.S.S.*, 43–44.

¹³¹⁷ Curran, *Militant Hinduism in Indian Politics: A Study of the R.S.S.*, 43–44.

a devastating earthquake in Kutch¹³¹⁸. The war with Pakistan in 1965 gave further fillip to RSS that organised protests against “Pakistani aggression” and “India’s ostensibly soft stance”¹³¹⁹.

By this time, the key components of the Sangh, the BJS and the ABVP, had also been established. The ABVP, as discussed in Chapter 4, was founded at some point between 1948 and 1949, and while it did have a unit in Bombay state by 1955¹³²⁰, judging from official, non-official and even Sangh sources, it would appear that the ABVP was not a prominent or organised actor in Gujarat student politics. According to the Gujarat unit of the ABVP “in Gujarat it [the ABVP] was formally established (sic.) in 1964. The First founder member of ABVP-Gujarat was Shri Narandada Bhandari, who was a Swayam Sevak...”¹³²¹. The same source asserts that the ABVP was “re-established” in 1964, the implication being that it had once existed and then had ceased to do so. This inconsistency aside, it can be concluded that whether “established” or “re-established” in 1964, unlike in states such as Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, or Bihar, where the ABVP was an established force, at the beginning of the period under study, the ABVP was, in Gujarat, a relatively new entrant to student politics.

While the ABVP prior to 1965, was a non-entity, this was not the case with the BJS, established in 1951 which made gradual electoral gains. In the elections to the Bombay Assembly in 1957, it contested 5 seats in the Gujarat region, out of which all,

¹³¹⁸ Sud, *Liberalization, Hindu Nationalism and the State: A Biography of Gujarat*, 137.

¹³¹⁹ Sud, *Liberalization, Hindu Nationalism and the State: A Biography of Gujarat*, 137.

¹³²⁰ Philip G. Altbach, *Student Politics in Bombay* (London: Asia Publishing House, 1968).

¹³²¹ ABVP Gujarat, ‘About Us’, accessed 23 March 2018, <https://sites.google.com/site/abvpgujarat0/website-builder>.

barring Baroda, were in Saurashtra. Although it did not win in any of the seats, in all the Saurashtra seats it managed to secure sizable share of votes- between 19 and 34 per cent¹³²². In 1962, the first elections to the Gujarat Assembly were held. In these, while the BJS contesting in 26 seats forfeited deposits in 23, it did manage to put up respectable performances in Rajkot, securing 29% of votes, and Junagadh where it finished second¹³²³. Significantly also, it went ahead of the Hindu Mahasabha in terms of total votes secured. In 1963, the Congress was handed its first big defeat in Gujarat in a bye-election for the Rajkot Parliamentary seat by the Swatantra Party. In analysing the victory of the Swatantra Party, Rushikesh Maru, noted that while the factionalism within the Congress was the main reason for its defeat, another important factor was the involvement of the “disciplined group of volunteers from the local RSS and the Jan Sangh” in the election campaign¹³²⁴. Having made some gains because of campaigns during the war with Pakistan, the BJS managed to win a seat for the first time, in 1967 from Rajkot and finish in second place at six other seats¹³²⁵.

The Sangh was thus, at the beginning of the period under study, with the political-electoral decline of the Hindu Mahasabha not only the main standard bearer of Hindutva politics, but was also, with its pockets of influence, especially in Saurashtra, starting to make some inroads into Gujarat politics. It must be noted, however, that student politics played little part, in whatever gains were made by the Sangh during

¹³²² *Statistical Report on General Elections, 1957 to the Legislative Assembly of Bombay* (New Delhi: Election Commission of India, n.d.).

¹³²³ *Statistical Report on General Elections, 1962 to the Legislative Assembly of Gujarat* (New Delhi: Election Commission of India, 1962).

¹³²⁴ Rushikesh Maru, ‘Three Bye-Elections?III- Fall of a Traditional Congress Stronghold’, *The Economic Weekly* 17, no. 25 (19 June 1965): 995.

¹³²⁵ *Statistical Report on General Elections, 1967 to the Legislative Assembly of Gujarat* (New Delhi: Election Commission of India, 1967).

this time. Moreover, despite making gains, the Sangh was far from being a dominant force or even the main opposition to the Congress. The Swatantra Party was, by a great margin, the primary opposition party, at the time. It was the period after 1967 that witnessed the first substantial expansion of the Sangh in Gujarat.

This chapter, divided chronologically, into six sections discusses the multiple ways that student politics and the Sangh's intervention in it, at different points, aided its organisational and electoral rise in Gujarat between 1967 and 1985. The first section studies the years between 1967 and 1973 which were the years of the Sangh's first big expansion and attempts at politically rehabilitating itself after the 1969 Ahmedabad riots. The second section is completely devoted to understanding the Sangh's role in the Navnirman Agitation, the nature of its interventions and what gains were made by it through these. In the third section the Sangh's involvement in state level and student politics during the national Emergency, the period of Janata rule and in the lead up to the first anti-reservation agitation are delved into. The manner in which the Sangh approached the anti-reservation agitation of 1981 and how it sought to benefit politically from it is explored in section four. The fifth section notes the growing communal violence in the state after the anti-reservation agitation as also the role and involvement of students in opposition movements against the government. The final section is an attempt to understand the part played by the Sangh in the second anti-reservation agitation of 1985 which brought about the downfall of a Congress ministry.

In exploring the multiple ways, the Sangh gained from student politics and its interventions in it, a complicated task is taken up. It was sometimes the case that it was direct interventions from the Sangh in student politics that were to its benefit, the Navnirman Agitation for instance. At others, student politics and the conditions created

by it, not necessarily through the interventions of the Sangh, allowed the Sangh to pursue its interests and aided the growth of the Sangh, the case of the first anti-reservation agitation. At yet others student politics played no part in the Sangh rise, during the period of Janata rule. It was also not the case that the rise of the Sangh either organisationally or electorally was linear- there were reverses and setbacks.

While understanding the role of student politics in the Sangh's rise in the state, the transfer of political gains within the Sangh's organisational network which was beneficial to it must be recognised. While it was not the only source of interventions, the ABVP remained the Sangh's primary organisational projection in student politics. The ABVP both gained from its association with the Sangh and contributed to the Sangh's development at various points of time. From being a non-entity in student politics in 1964 to a well organised group by 1971 as also its re-emergence after the persecution of the Emergency can be attributed to the ABVP's association with a larger political network. At the same time, the organisation aided the Sangh's attempts at regaining legitimacy between 1969 and 1974. By creating parallel samitis and infiltrating existing ones during the Navnirman Agitation it allowed the Sangh to make substantial gains following the agitation. The ABVP being the most prominent force in student politics by 1985 greatly aided the Sangh's attempts at influencing the agitation to suit its ends.

Much of the Sangh's involvement in student politics came through the ABVP. But although the ABVP was the Sangh's organisational projection in student politics, it was not unusual for the Sangh to intervene in student politics through other means.

It also bears re-emphasising that the thesis does not mean to argue that the Sangh's rise should be understood as being *primarily* due to the conditions created by student

politics or to the Sangh's interventions in this space. There were many other factors that aided the Sangh's rise. The Sangh's involvement in student politics was, nonetheless, a significant channel through which the Sangh achieved its expansion in Gujarat, and this part of the story has not previously been adequately examined. This chapter follows some of the many threads that led to the rise of the Sangh, while process tracing the rise of the Sangh and exploring the role played by student politics in the Sangh's growth and political influence.

Section I Initial Gains 1967-1973

While student politics and the ABVP had little to do with the early development of the Sangh in Gujarat, this, began to change gradually, with the re-establishment of the ABVP in 1965.

As noted, around 1967 there was also a re-emergence of student politics in Gujarat beginning with the SU Agitation at Bhavnagar and the first Fee-Hike Agitation at Ahmedabad which occurred more or less simultaneously¹³²⁶. In documents related to both of these agitations there is no mention of involvement of the ABVP. This, however, did not mean that the Sangh was uninterested or unable to pursue its interests in student politics at the time. Thus, the Sangh, was particularly active in the one related to the establishment of SU. Given its relatively strong position in Saurashtra, the BJS was able to intervene in the agitation that had been initiated by dissident Congress politicians, even becoming a part of the Action Committee that was leading the agitation¹³²⁷. Moreover, involving itself in the agitation was beneficial to the

¹³²⁶ See Chapter 1, Section II.

¹³²⁷ See Chapter 1, Section II.

Sangh as it was able to make tangible organisational gains in Bhavnagar district, such as the establishment of some new branches of the BJS, as was noted, by an Enquiry Commission, to be the case at Mahuva¹³²⁸.

Service Activities

When Arun Oza, Organising Secretary, of the ABVP, first wrote to the Governor seeking an appointment regarding an important ABVP programme, discussed below, the Governor's Secretary sought information from the Dy. CoP, Ahmedabad about the organisation. In response, the Dy. CoP noted "The Parishad, although is not affiliated to any political party, however, most of the members of Parishad have leaning towards RSSS¹³²⁹ and Bhartiya BJS". Significantly adding, that "the Parishad is presently working in aid of poor students and supply them with free books"¹³³⁰. One finds here the key to understanding why the ABVP was not a prominent or visible part of agitations or protests in 1967. The ABVP seems to have focused on service activities to which its organisational expansion during this time can to a large extent be attributed. Even the memorandum submitted by the ABVP to the Governor introduced the organisation as being a "national level student organisation" whose primary aim was "awakening of national feeling in students and using their power in a constructive manner"¹³³¹.

¹³²⁸ J.M. Sheth, *Report on The Incidents and Police Firing at Mahuva Town in Bhavnagar District on the 14th July, 1967* (Ahmedabad: Government of Gujarat, 1968), 11.

¹³²⁹ In older government documents, Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh was often abbreviated to RSSS instead of RSS.

¹³³⁰ Secretary to the Governor, 'Sr.No. 5295', 28 August 1970, U. No. 0086718, X/1/1970/Office of the GS, 4, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

¹³³¹ Office of Dy. Commissioner of Police, Ahmedabad to Secretary to the Governor, 'Untitled Letter', 28 August 1970, U. No. 0086718, X/1/1970/Office of the GS, 26, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

That the Dy. CoP, despite recognising the organisation's ties with the Sangh, considered it to be an organisation that was providing "aid" to students, meant that the ABVP's image of an organisation that was primarily involved in service remaining, to a large extent, secure. Service activities would have, therefore, allowed the ABVP, as discussed in Chapter 4, to maintain its identity while still providing it with an opportunity to effectively engage and interact with students with the purpose of building its organisation.

Agitational Organised Force

In line with its national policy¹³³², the service activities of the ABVP in Gujarat were combined with efforts to position itself as an organisation that was interested in student issues and was willing to take the agitational route for it. It was the student march to Rajbhavan in September 1970, which marked the beginning of this.

This march was a part of the preparations for the March to Rashtrapati Bhavan at Delhi on 21 September 1970, organised by the All-India ABVP, mentioned in Chapter 4, where a "National Charter of Demands" would be submitted to the President¹³³³. As a build up to this, state units carried out mobilisation activity, signature campaigns, and some units, submitted their own charters of demands to their respective governors.

Unlike the unorganised and spontaneous student protests that dotted the landscape of Gujarat student politics, there is evidence of many months of planning having gone into organising the march. Preparations had started by July, when Oza wrote to the Governor informing him that a student protest march, culminating at Rajbhavan which

¹³³² See Chapter 4, Section III.

¹³³³ See Chapter 4, Section III.

would include the submission of a Charter of Demands in-person to him, was being organised¹³³⁴. Alongside, a signature campaign was initiated and the letter attached to the final charter of demands that was submitted to the Governor claimed that the charter had “the signatures of 50000 students out of 250000 students from six universities of Gujarat”¹³³⁵.

As noted by government sources, there was a definite inflation in the number of signatures¹³³⁶. This does not however negate the fact that preparatory activities had been taken up for an extended period and across universities by the ABVP. That such an exercise could be carried out is in itself an indication of its organisational growth in a relatively short time. Further, the organisational presence of the ABVP can be discerned from the composition of the delegation that sought to meet the Governor a few days prior to the planned march. Of “about nine representatives”, there was to be “one from each University of Gujarat”, All India President and Honorary Secretary of the ABVP, and the President of the state unit¹³³⁷. While having a presence in all universities must not be taken as evidence of its strength in each, it does suggest that the ABVP, even at this early stage, appeared to be better organised and have a greater geographical spread than most other student organisations. A further confirmation of this is that neither the march nor the charter of demands was dealt with in a flippant manner by the government. An 85-page file regarding the march was amassed. The

¹³³⁴ Arun Oza to Government of Gujarat, ‘Untitled Letter’, 12 August 1970, U. No. 0086718, X/1/1970/Office of the GS, 20-21, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

¹³³⁵ ABVP Office bearers to Governor of Gujarat, ‘Rashtriya Temaj Pradeshik Mangio Nu Aavedan [Charter of National and State Demands]’, 6 September 1970, U. No. 0086718, X/1/1970/Office of the GS, 29-34, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

¹³³⁶ Education and Labour Department, ‘Subject: ABVP’s National and State Charter of Demands’, 9 December 1970, U. No. 0086718, X/1/1970/Office of the GS, 72-74, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

¹³³⁷ ABVP Office bearers to Governor of Gujarat, ‘Rashtriya Temaj Pradeshik Mangio Nu Aavedan [Charter of National and State Demands]’, 6 September 1970.

only other student agitation, in the period prior to the Navnirman Agitation that merited similar treatment was the 1971 Fee-Hike Agitation¹³³⁸. The government also took up the demands of the ABVP with great seriousness and sent them to the universities as well as the Education and Labour Department for comments. It is, thus, clear that the ABVP, by this time, while not dominant, was beginning to emerge as an important and organised force in student politics in the state.

Although it might seem tangential here, while discussing its organisational development, two points must be noted at this point. First, that the ABVP and the Sangh, as early as 1971-72, were influential at SU. Letters written to the government in December 1972, by those disgruntled with the Pro-VC, J.B. Sandil are instructive in this regard. A letter written under a pseudonym to the Governor alleged that if Sandil were to continue in his post, the university would “go in the hands of JANSANGH [capitalised in original]”¹³³⁹. Another, by the President and General Secretary of the student union went even further. Written to the CM, it criticised Sandil’s “disrespectful” behaviour towards students, corruption and drinking but also alleged that he had helped the BJS and the ABVP in the university. According to them, he had utilised “university funds to organise ABVP programmes”, treated the official Students’ Union with “complete disrespect” while “providing all facilities to leaders of the Parishad”¹³⁴⁰.

¹³³⁸ See Chapter 1, Section II.

¹³³⁹ Syndicate Member to Minister of Education, ‘Untitled Letter’, 2 December 1972, U. No. 0086681, GS/X1/72, 23, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

¹³⁴⁰ President, Saurashtra Vidyarthi Sangh and General Secretary, University Central Students’ Union to Chief Minister, ‘Saurashtra University Na Nava Kulpatishrini Niyukti [Appointment of a New Vice Chancellor for Saurashtra University]’, 22 December 1972, U. No. 0086681, GS/X1/72,25-26, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

While the allegations may or may not be true, they are sufficient evidence of more than a nominal presence of the Sangh at SU.

Second, it must also be noted that while there is little doubt, as discussed above, that service activities did have a large part to play in the ABVP's early and rapid organisational development, mention must also be made of the most probable role of transfer of political gains in this process. First, the fact that the ABVP was able to organise a large-scale march is suggestive of support received by it from a larger organisational force with greater resources. Second, most tellingly, both the note by the Dy. CoP and letters written with regard to issues at SU refer to links between the ABVP and the BJS. This could also be viewed as indicative of the symbiotic functioning of the ABVP and the BJP at the time.

An examination of the major demands of its charter also suggests the direction that the ABVP was seeking to take with respect to its participation in student politics. The charter was split into state and national demands. The demands made by the ABVP at the state level were those related to the EBC income limit, the semester system, two related to ATKT and related to English eligibility. Taking up these demands allowed for the portrayal of the ABVP as an organisation that was willing to agitate for student demands. That it was only student issues that found their way to state charter, must also be read in conjunction with the attempts being made by other Sangh affiliates, particularly the BJS to rebuild the image of the Sangh, as discussed below, by focusing on non-controversial issues. While in the case of the BJS, this meant taking up demands such as rising prices and corruption for the ABVP the equivalent was a focus on student issues.

After the march to Rajbhavan, until the time immediately prior to the Navnirman Agitation the ABVP initiated one unsuccessful agitation. It also claimed participation in another that it was not involved in, that is the agitation for the passage and implementation of the GU Amendment Act, which, as discussed earlier was primarily the result of a teachers' agitation and there is little evidence that there was any great participation from students, let alone the ABVP¹³⁴¹.

EBC Agitation

While the demand for an increase in the EBC income limit to receive freeships had been a part of the charter of demands of both the ABVP and BJS in 1970, agitations around issue took place in the wake of the "parting gift" given by the Hitendra Desai ministry that was toppled in May 1971¹³⁴². When, following the imposition of President's Rule, Desai's 'gift' of free secondary education was reneged, the BJS and Cong(O) began to agitate with the issue of the EBC limit soon added as a demand by the BJS. Despite a successful school and college strike, organised by it in Ahmedabad, Rajkot, Bhavnagar, Bharuch and Vidyanagar¹³⁴³, the government stood firm on the issue¹³⁴⁴ and the agitation gradually petered out.

In August, the ABVP carried out its own protest programmes. There is evidence of protest rallies in the contemporary press over fourteen days with students from different parts of the state marching in Ahmedabad. The Times of India noted,

¹³⁴¹ See Chapter 1, Section III.

¹³⁴² Secretary to the Governor to Rasiklal Dave, 'Untitled Letter', 6 July 1971, U. No. 0087389, 163, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

¹³⁴³ PTI, 'Jana Sangh Stir in Gujarat for Free Education: 56 Held', *The Times of India*, 22 June 1971.

¹³⁴⁴ Secretary to the Governor to Secretary, Bhartiya Jana Sangh, Gujarat Pradesh, 'Mafat Madhyamik Shikshan Ane Collejo Ma Fee Maafini Maryada Vadharva Ange [Regarding Free Primary Education and Raising of Fee Waiver Limit]', 29 June 1971, U. No. 0087389, 148-149, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

regarding one of them, that “more than 50 students” were “arrested” near Rajbhavan who belonged to Rajkot, Gonda, Vallabh Vidyanagar and Visnagar colleges¹³⁴⁵. At the end of the fourteen days, there was a march through Ahmedabad of students from different districts that culminated at Rajbhavan. Representatives from the ABVP were, according to the governor’s biography allowed to meet with the Governor but their demands were not acceded¹³⁴⁶.

While the agitation failed to secure its demand, it does confirm the extent to which the organisation of the ABVP had developed since 1964. To be able to conduct even a token protest for fourteen days involving students from multiple districts in Gujarat was much beyond the scope of any student organisation in the state. The EBC agitation stands out also as an illustration of how the image of the ABVP as both an organisation that was non-political and yet active in agitating for student issues was sought to be maintained. During the BJS agitation, the ABVP remained inconspicuous- one finds no mention of it in Sangh sources, government records or even the contemporary press. Following the end of the that agitation, it began to conduct programmes of its own.

First Major Expansion

The Sangh which had expanded gradually over two decades, while denying it had anything to do with the riots in Ahmedabad in 1969, grew rapidly in their aftermath. The Organiser rebuffed allegations against the Sangh stating that “the people of Ahmedabad can only smile and wonder why riots break out in Ahmedabad where BJS

¹³⁴⁵ UNI, ‘Gujarat Students’ Stir’, *The Times of India*, 27 August 1971.

¹³⁴⁶ Shriman Narayan, *Those Ten Months: President’s Rule in Gujarat* (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1973), 61.

- and RSS - are weak, and not in a place like Delhi where they are strong”¹³⁴⁷. However, as Shah noted, while the Sangh stayed officially aloof, “workers, office-bearers and volunteers” of the RSS and the BJS played “an active part in the riots” in varying capacities¹³⁴⁸. Moreover, the role of the Sangh in the riots was widely known and it was also recognised by the Reddy Commission that investigated them. The Commission recognised the role of two important meetings by the Sangh, one by Golwalkar and another by Balraj Madhok, in 1968 and 1969 as well as the *Hindu Dharm Rakshak Samiti*¹³⁴⁹ (Committee for the Protection of Hindu Religion), formed according to the Commission at the behest of the BJS and headed by an old RSS man, in contributing to the heightening of communal feelings in Ahmedabad and eventual rioting as well as the role played by the BJS during the riots¹³⁵⁰. That the riots of 1969 were immensely beneficial to the Sangh is clear from the fact that immediately following the riots it gained both electorally and organisationally. In 1970, the BJS contested in 133 out of 273 civic body seats and managed to win an unprecedented 67 of them¹³⁵¹. Additionally, while not possible to substantiate, it must be mentioned that the Organiser claimed that the BJS had managed to secure a majority in six towns of Saurashtra¹³⁵². The RSS, according to the Home Department, in less than a year

¹³⁴⁷ ‘More about Ahmedabad’, *Organiser*, 11 October 1969.

¹³⁴⁸ Ghanshyam Shah, ‘The 1969 Communal Riots in Ahmedabad’, in *Communal Riots in Post-Independence India*, ed. Asghar Ali Engineer (Hyderabad: Sangam Books, 1984), 175–208.

¹³⁴⁹ There was, according to the Reddy Commission, “no doubt” that the HDRS formed at the suggestion and advice of BJS workers in Ahmedabad” and that “an old R.S.S. member” was “asked to become the convenor of the Samiti”. P.J. Reddy, *Report: Inquiry into the Communal Disturbances at Ahmedabad and Other Places in Gujarat on and after 18th September 1969* (Gandhinagar: Government Central Press, n.d.), 66.

¹³⁵⁰ Reddy, *Report: Inquiry into the Communal Disturbances at Ahmedabad and Other Places in Gujarat on and after 18th September 1969*, 216.

¹³⁵¹ Home Department (Government of Gujarat), ‘A Note on the Political Situation in the State’, November 1970, U. No. 0087296, GS XXVI/70, File No. 1, 6-11, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

¹³⁵² ‘Jana Sangh Bags Town after Town in Gujarat’, *Organiser*, 19 December 1970.

after the riots, increased its membership by “one third”¹³⁵³ and ended 1971 with the membership of well over 11,000¹³⁵⁴.

Although it made quick and substantial gains in the wake of the riots, there were rumours of the RSS being banned again¹³⁵⁵. To be seen as directly associated in this manner with rioting and maintaining a purely Hindutva image limited its ability to grow in mainstream politics of the time, as the example of the Hindu Mahasabha had shown. As a Home Department note from November 1970 suggested, the Sangh, set about trying to “project its image as patriotic [and] non-communal”¹³⁵⁶ in order to widen its influence.

Thus, following the riots, in another example of attempting the transfer of political gains, while the RSS continued its shakha activities, the attempts to rebuild the image of the Sangh were aggressively pursued by the BJS and the ABVP who focused on taking up numerous ‘secular’ demands. The BJS issued a 21-point charter of demands in April 1970. The issues taken up in the charter were non-communal ones related to price rise, drinking water, irrigation, employment, housing and electricity rates¹³⁵⁷. Following a long campaign and large rally, which in the *Organiser*’s hyperbolic words, was a kind that the state had “not seen... since 1947”¹³⁵⁸, the BJS submitted charter of demands to the Governor. Through much of the latter part of 1970, the BJS

¹³⁵³ Home Department (Government of Gujarat), ‘A Note on the Political Situation in the State’.

¹³⁵⁴ Home Department (Government of Gujarat), ‘A Note on the Political Developments in the State’, November 1971, U. No. 0087300, GS XXVI/71, File No. 1, 5-12, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

¹³⁵⁵ Home Department (Government of Gujarat), ‘A Note on the Political Situation in the State’.

¹³⁵⁶ Home Department (Government of Gujarat), ‘A Note on the Political Situation in the State’.

¹³⁵⁷ ‘Jana Sangh Resents Step-Motherly Treatment of Gujarat by GOI’, *Organiser*, 1970.

¹³⁵⁸ ‘Jana Sangh Resents Step-Motherly Treatment of Gujarat by GOI’.

organised agitations and bandhs on issues of “high prices of edible oil and bonus to mill workers in Ahmedabad and at some other places also in the State”¹³⁵⁹.

Similarly, as discussed above, in the time immediately following the 1969 riots the ABVP desisted from taking up controversial issues. Its most major activity in 1970 was organising towards its National March to Rashtrapati Bhavan and the state charter of demands raised five main issues, all of which were related to academic matters which made no reference to state or national politics. While it did not play a very active part in the anti-fee hike agitation of 1971, it did submit a memorandum to the Shelat Committee in which there was no discernible difference between the ABVP and other student organisations on either the issues that were taken up or the approach towards them¹³⁶⁰. It is clear from the above that the two important constituents of the Sangh, the BJS and the ABVP, following the Sangh’s involvement in the 1969 riots assiduously attempted to steer clear of communal issues and the BJS attempted to expand its influence on sections beyond the urban middle-classes.

In the 1972, the Cong(R) riding the pro-Indira wave swept the Assembly elections winning 140 out of 168 seats. The BJS, was however, able to win three seats, including one in North Gujarat outside its traditional base of Saurashtra. It also managed to increase its vote share to 9.29%¹³⁶¹. Although this was still much lower than that of the Cong(O), which became the largest opposition party with the decline of the Swatantra Party, the BJS was the third largest party in the state. The Cong(R) plagued with

¹³⁵⁹ Home Department (Government of Gujarat), ‘A Note on the Political Situation in the State’.

¹³⁶⁰ ABVP, ‘Untitled Memorandum’, 18 May 1971, U. No. 0086719, G.S. XIII/71, 36, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

¹³⁶¹ *Statistical Report on General Elections, 1972 to the Legislative Assembly of Gujarat* (New Delhi: Election Commission of India, 1972), 8.

factional in-fighting could not provide a stable government nor was it able to keep a check on rising prices and food shortages. The misrule by the Cong (R) led to endemic protests led by variety groups and parties, over a host of issues¹³⁶². Particularly important were the protests against the public in-fighting within the Cong (R), in 1973, in which student politicians who would play a leading part in the Navnirman Agitation were involved. Neither the BJS nor the ABVP were particularly active in these protests.

It was in December 1973 that the Sangh began its protests. The BJS took up the issue of poor water supply in Rajkot and enforced a bandh in the city. During the bandh, “BJS and student demonstrators”, most likely belonging to the ABVP, attempted to storm the Rajkot Municipal Corporation leading to injuries to 70 people including 30 police personnel. This was followed by arson and rioting in different parts of the city¹³⁶³. While the Organiser’s claim that a Gujarat Bandh “against high prices” had been called and was “responded to fully and peacefully in 110 places”¹³⁶⁴ is a massive exaggeration, following the Rajkot bandh, as evidenced from the Governor’s Fortnightly Reports of the time, there were some bandhs and protests organised by it in December 1973, over issues of rising prices, inadequate supply of food grains to fair price shops as well as the height of the Narmada Dam¹³⁶⁵.

Thus, in the lead up to the Navnirman Agitation, the protests led by the Sangh continued to be on non-communal issues. This being the case, it was the student led

¹³⁶² See Chapter 1, Section III.

¹³⁶³ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret F.R. No. 16’, 4 December 1973, U. No. 0087333, 98-102, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

¹³⁶⁴ Our Roving Correspondent, ‘Youth Revolt in Gujarat’, *Organiser*, 2 February 1974.

¹³⁶⁵ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret F.R. No. 18’, 7 January 1974, U. No. 0087339, FR Jan 1974-Dec 1974, 2-10, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

Navnirman Agitation in 1974 was particularly beneficial to the Sangh development in different ways.

Section II Intervention in The Navnirman Agitation

The Sangh sought to portray itself as being at the forefront of the Navnirman Agitation. Claims that the “famous NAVNIRMAN [capitalised in original] movement was started by ABVP”¹³⁶⁶ or that it played an “prominent”¹³⁶⁷, “active”¹³⁶⁸, “vanguard”¹³⁶⁹, “major” role¹³⁷⁰ in the “successful culmination of the Navnirman movement in Gujarat”¹³⁷¹ were and continue to remain a mainstay of the Sangh’s hagiography of the period. Additionally, given its importance to the political history of Gujarat, the first part of this section elaborates on the claims made by the Sangh regarding its, and particularly the ABVP’s, involvement in the Navnirman Agitation. At the same time, this narrative, which is sought to be furthered by the Sangh, is disputed and the nature of the Sangh’s engagement with the agitation is clarified. This has been done through the examination of sources including the Sangh’s *Organiser* from which one is able to trace the trajectory of the Sangh’s myth building and positions taken by it during the agitation that disprove its own later claims, contemporary newspapers that contain statements made by Sangh functionaries that reveal the stand of the Sangh particularly early on in the agitation as well as university and government records which contradict a number Sangh narratives. The second part examines the Sangh’s interventions in

¹³⁶⁶ ‘History of ABVP Gujarat’, accessed 23 March 2018, <https://sites.google.com/site/abvpgujarat0/>.

¹³⁶⁷ O.P. Kohli, ‘ABVP- Potent Force for Social Change’, *Organiser*, 20 July 1974.

¹³⁶⁸ Our Hyderabad Correspondent, ‘Vidyarthi Parishad to Shun Power Politics, Work for Total Revolution’, *Organiser*, 13 June 1977.

¹³⁶⁹ Editorial, ‘Chhatra Shakti’, *Organiser*, 16 November 1974.

¹³⁷⁰ ‘ABVP Major Events’, accessed 23 March 2018, <http://abvp.org/major-events>.

¹³⁷¹ Satish Marathe, ‘Vidyarthi Parishad Stands for “Lokniti” and Not “Rajniti”’, *Organiser*, 11 July 1977.

student politics in the aftermath of the agitation and in the third, the gains made by the Sangh during this time, particularly through its association with the Navnirman Agitation, are understood.

A primary part of the Sangh's narrative is that the ABVP had been active prior to the Navnirman Agitation. In an interview soon after the agitation ended, the All-India President of the ABVP, Prof Rajguru asserted that "not only had the ABVP played a constructive role during the agitation" it had "long before the agitation started", "tried its best to impress upon the State authorities the explosive nature of the situation due to mounting dissatisfaction in the student community" and even "suggested solutions"¹³⁷². The report in *Organiser* that first mentioned the ABVP claimed that the organisation had, before the agitation began, submitted a memorandum to the Education Minister, "urging her to supply oil, Vanaspati ghee and food-grains to the hostel-students at cheaper rates" and another to the CM at Rajkot "drawing his attention to the problems of the students"¹³⁷³. The government had, however, "ignored these problems of the students", there had been protests at LD Engineering, Ahmedabad and LE Engineering, Morbi over rising mess bills. Following this, the government, "instead of helping them adopted a repressive policy", the ABVP "strongly opposed" this and "organised *morchas* (procession) and meetings to condemn it and voice the feelings of the students". Because there was also "dissatisfaction among people of Gujarat" over other issues when the NYS "launched its agitation, it received

¹³⁷² Natwarlal Rajguru, 'Vidyarthi Parishad Stands for Navnirman', *Organiser*, 27 April 1974.

¹³⁷³ Devendranath Karnik, 'Vidyarthi Parishad Gives All-out Support to Gujarat Revolution', *Organiser*, 16 March 1974.

a Statewide (sic.) support". The ABVP, it was asserted, "gave its full support to the agitation and at many places spearheaded it" ¹³⁷⁴.

While claiming prior activism, as is evident in the above statements, there also an attempt to shift the focus away from LD, Ahmedabad to LE, Morbi which must be noted. While near contemporary accounts produced by the Sangh, mentioned above, at least mention, both LD and LE, later Sangh sources focus on the college at Morbi and completely leave out LD Engineering. In referring to the Navnirman Agitation, the current PM's website, for instance, makes no mention of the NYS or LD, choosing only to state "the discontent turned into public anger when in December 1973, a few students of the Morbi Engineering College protested against the exorbitant rise in their food bills. These protests soon gained widespread support and ignited a state wide mass movement against the government"¹³⁷⁵. Again, while referring to the Navnirman Agitation, Jha mentions only the protests at Morbi¹³⁷⁶. The ABVP's version of its history is even more explicit, stating that "protest for hike in canteen fees by students of Morbi Engineering College changed the History of India" and "this protest was transformed and the famous NAVNIRMAN movement *was started* [emphasis added] by ABVP"¹³⁷⁷. As noted earlier, by 1971, the Sangh and the ABVP were particularly influential at SU, to which the LE was affiliated whereas at LD, Ahmedabad, the Sangh, even according to its own sources, was missing. Locating the origins of the agitation in the Morbi

¹³⁷⁴ Karnik, 'Vidyarthi Parishad Gives All-out Support to Gujarat Revolution'.

¹³⁷⁵ Admin, 'Navnirman Movement (1974): When Student Power Rattled the Unhealthy Status Quo!', 15 June 2012, <https://www.narendramodi.in/navnirman-movement-1974-when-student-power-rattled-the-unhealthy-status-quo-3125>.

¹³⁷⁶ Binodinand Jha, *Student Organizations and Politics: A Case Study of the Akhil Bhartiya Vidharthi Parishad* (New Delhi: Inter-India Publications, 1998), 48.

¹³⁷⁷ 'History of ABVP Gujarat'.

protests can be understood as the Sangh's attempt to claim at least part of the credit for initiating the agitation.

Regarding these claims, it must first be noted that it was only after the agitation had ended that the Sangh began to build a narrative of the agitation originating from protests at Morbi. While the events at LD, Ahmedabad were referred to in *Organiser*, at the time the agitation was on going, the protests at Morbi were not¹³⁷⁸. Protests over the mess bill at Morbi took place in December 1973 and were limited to students and the town. They were amongst a number of such protests of students and non-students, on-going at the time¹³⁷⁹ to which no special significance need be attached. Further, in the contemporary sources examined, both Sangh and non-Sangh, there is no evidence of the protests at LD being either the direct outcome of those at Morbi or of organisational links between the two. At the same time, it is undeniable that it was the protest at LD in early January 1974 and the subsequent police action that were the impetus for the formation of the NYS and the beginning of Navnirman Agitation. The claim that it was at Morbi that the Navnirman Agitation was initiated is, therefore, not borne out by the facts.

The Sangh's claims of supporting the agitation since its inception, particularly with respect to the ABVP always having "remained in the forefront"¹³⁸⁰ also do not hold up to scrutiny. The attitude of both the ABVP and the BJS, to the Gujarat Bandh on 25 January 1974 confirm beyond a shadow of doubt that neither of the organisations were immediately involved in agitation. The call for a Gujarat Bandh was first given by the

¹³⁷⁸ Our Roving Correspondent, 'Youth Revolt in Gujarat'.

¹³⁷⁹ See Chapter 1, Section III.

¹³⁸⁰ Rajguru, 'Vidyarthi Parishad Stands for Navnirman'.

AUGCOM on 11 January¹³⁸¹. Soon, it received support from most trade unions, student organisations and opposition parties including the CPM, the CPI, Cong(O), and the Socialists. A joint action committee which included the NYS was formed and being one of the primary organisers of it, the NYS's programmes and protests were geared towards getting maximum support for the bandh call. During this time, the ABVP maintained a studied silence, not taking any position regarding the bandh. The BJS went a step further and explicitly stated in a news conference on 16 January that the party would not support the Gujarat Bandh¹³⁸². Its Secretary, speaking with the press, argued that the party had already "organised bandhs in 110 towns in Gujarat in the past one week" and that there "was no need now to organise 'special Gujarat bandh'"¹³⁸³. He further stated that the party "disapproved the decision taken by the Navnirman Samiti to continue their agitation"¹³⁸⁴. The BJS's refusal to participate in the Gujarat Bandh, its criticism of the NYS and the ABVP's inactivity with respect to the largest protest action organised by the NYS make it clear that the approach of the Sangh at least till the end of January was anything but supportive towards either the NYS or the Navnirman Agitation.

An examination of the timeline with regard to when the Sangh began to claim involvement in the agitation is also instructive of its approach towards the agitation. For almost a month, Organiser did not find it worthwhile to report an agitation that of which it later claimed was both led by its student front and was the most "vital part". It was only in the 26 January edition of Organiser that the agitation was mentioned but

¹³⁸¹ See Chapter 1, Section III.

¹³⁸² Governor of Gujarat, 'Secret F.R. No. 19', 18 January 1974, U. No. 0087339, FR Jan 1974-Dec 1974, 11-16, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

¹³⁸³ Staff Reporter, '73 Trade Unions Support Gujarat Bandh Call', *The Times of India*, 17 January 1974.

¹³⁸⁴ Governor of Gujarat, 'Secret F.R. No. 19'.

even at this point, only a few words were devoted to it in the editorial. There was no mention of any Sangh affiliates being active in the agitation, let alone having initiated or leading it¹³⁸⁵.

When in February the Sangh first attempted to promote its role in the agitation¹³⁸⁶, the preferred route was through highlighting the BJS and not the ABVP. This version attempted to connect the protests led independently by the BJS in December 1973 and early January 1974 to the beginning of the agitation. It was asserted that “the people of Gujarat” knew that the BJS was the “vanguard of their struggle for reasonable supplies at reasonable prices and no nonsense of corruption” and that “students” were “suddenly feeling” that the BJS alone was “able to articulate their agony and their urges”. In this report, agitating students were mentioned as “another significant part of the present crisis” with no reference made, even in passing, to the ABVP. Importantly also, though events at LD Engineering found a mention, Morbi, did not.

The narrative of the BJS leading the agitation was then dropped and *Organiser* spoke of the agitation initiated by “students” under the aegis of the NYS. The ABVP first came up in the pages of *Organiser* on 16 March¹³⁸⁷ when the Assembly had been dissolved and the agitation was virtually over. Given its propensity to promote even the smallest achievement, often non-achievements, of its affiliates, one would not find the ABVP or the agitation missing from the *Organiser* for such a long period. Instead, there was silence regarding the ABVP and the Navnirman Agitation which when examined in

¹³⁸⁵ Editorial, ‘A Question above the Country’, *Organiser*, 26 January 1974.

¹³⁸⁶ Our Roving Correspondent, ‘Youth Revolt in Gujarat’.

¹³⁸⁷ Karnik, ‘Vidyarthi Parishad Gives All-out Support to Gujarat Revolution’.

conjunction with the BJS's early public opposition to the NYS and the refusal of the Sangh to participate in the Gujarat Bandh, further contradict the Sangh's narrative regarding its role in the agitation.

Significantly, the Sangh claimed that "even though" the NYS was leading the agitation, it comprised of "representatives of different student organisations" including the ABVP¹³⁸⁸ and that when the NYS had been formed in Ahmedabad, Chandrakant Shukla who was the ABVP Pradesh Secretary, "was taken as a member of the Committee"¹³⁸⁹. The claim that Chandrakant Shukla or for that matter any other member of the ABVP found representation in the NYS leadership can be easily dispensed with by taking into consideration the following. As discussed in Chapter 1, after the police action at LD Engineering on 3 January, the YLS was formed and soon after, as more students joined the protests the NYS was formed with Jani and Mankad as its President and Secretary respectively¹³⁹⁰. The NYS Central Executive, consisted of elected student representatives to the GU statutory bodies and some General Secretaries of large, affiliated colleges¹³⁹¹. However, neither Shukla nor any other member of the ABVP were elected representatives. This is confirmed if one peruses the list of student members provided in the minutes of meetings of the GU Court¹³⁹². Student members of these bodies were those who had allied with the GUATA against the Ishwabhai-Chimanbhai nexus at GU¹³⁹³. In contrast, the ABVP was in fact

¹³⁸⁸ Karnik, 'Vidyarthi Parishad Gives All-out Support to Gujarat Revolution'.

¹³⁸⁹ Our Correspondent, 'Chandrajit Yadav Jittery at Parishad's Popularity', *Organiser*, 30 March 1974; Karnik, 'Vidyarthi Parishad Gives All-out Support to Gujarat Revolution'.

¹³⁹⁰ See Chapter 1, Section III.

¹³⁹¹ B.J. Patel, 'Gujarat Situation: A Note from Shri Babubhai J. Patel, President, GPCC (O)', *Congress Bulletin*, April 1974.

¹³⁹² *Proceedings of the Gujarat University Court 18-10-1973* (Ahmedabad: Gujarat University Press, 1973).

¹³⁹³ For the elections see Chapter 1, Section III.

supportive of Ishwarbhai Patel until at least as late as December 1972, when he was guest of honour at a student convention organised by its Ahmedabad unit¹³⁹⁴. It was, therefore, impossible that the ABVP was represented in the Central Executive of the NYS either through Shukla or anyone else as claimed by the Sangh.

According to the Sangh, the “enthusiastic young workers” of the Gujarat Unit of the ABVP were to have “played a notable role in the agitation”¹³⁹⁵. Prof Rajguru, asserted that when the “agitation started” the ABVP “took command of the situation and remained in the forefront” with “all the branches throughout the State” offering “popular and constructive non-violent programmes, which caught people's imagination”¹³⁹⁶. Similarly, the aforementioned report, claimed that in its “strong centres” like Rajkot, Baroda, Surat, Visnagar, Vadnagar, Mehsana, Bhavnagar and Morbi the ABVP units “lent their full support” to the NYS and played “an active role in organising meetings, demonstrations... and looking after fair distribution of oil, milk and other essential commodities”¹³⁹⁷.

It was emphasised that without the ABVP the Navnirman Agitation would not have survived. A report in the *Organiser*, written soon after the agitation ended reported how the ABVP playing such a “vital role” had caused “jitters in the leftist camp”¹³⁹⁸. The narrative that was, sought to be furthered was that it was the ABVP with its “well-knit organisation” was the “back-bone of the agitation” and “but for the massive support of the Parishad the agitation would not have spread so widely in the State”. The ABVP

¹³⁹⁴ ‘Vidyarthi Parishad Convention’, *Organiser*, 9 December 1972.

¹³⁹⁵ Karnik, ‘Vidyarthi Parishad Gives All-out Support to Gujarat Revolution’.

¹³⁹⁶ Rajguru, ‘Vidyarthi Parishad Stands for Navnirman’.

¹³⁹⁷ Karnik, ‘Vidyarthi Parishad Gives All-out Support to Gujarat Revolution’.

¹³⁹⁸ Our Correspondent, ‘Chandrajit Yadav Jittery at Parishad’s Popularity’.

had according to the Sangh, in “Ahmedabad alone” formed “about 20 committees in different parts of the city” and in other parts of the state “wherever the branches of the Samiti were formed, the Parishad helped its formation and conducted its activities”¹³⁹⁹. It was claimed that ABVP leaders had conducted “most” agitational activities in March when other NYS leaders were in Delhi and under their leadership the agitation had “gathered momentum” and “created its own impact”¹⁴⁰⁰.

Neither the formation of “branches” nor the role played by the ABVP, on which the claims of the ABVP being central to the Navnirman Agitation are based, were as innocuous and altruistic as Sangh sources would have one believe. While after the initial period of hesitance and inactivity, the ABVP, did become active from at least the middle of February there is evidence that the Sangh and the ABVP operated without any co-ordination and often in opposition to the NYS. Indulging in these activities, were a means for the Sangh to exploit the organisational weakness of the NYS in order to usurp control of the agitation, “influence its course”¹⁴⁰¹ and further its organisational objectives.

The organisational weakness and limitations of the NYS have been discussed in Chapter 1. As the agitation spread and local Navnirman Samitis began to emerge, while the central NYS did attempt to exercise some amount of control and co-ordination, in doing so, it met with only limited success. With the NYS not being able to fully control what local samitis were being established and the programmes that were being carried out by them, the Sangh sought to exploit this weakness. One way

¹³⁹⁹ Karnik, ‘Vidyarthi Parishad Gives All-out Support to Gujarat Revolution’.

¹⁴⁰⁰ Our Correspondent, ‘Chandrajit Yadav Jittery at Parishad’s Popularity’.

¹⁴⁰¹ Kohli, ‘ABVP- Potent Force for Social Change’.

in which this was done was by infiltrating local NYS samitis. Even the central leadership of the NYS, on more than one occasion admitted that it was aware that the Sangh was succeeding in its attempts to “infiltrate” its agitation in this manner and it also acknowledged that it was unable to stop these samitis initiating unauthorised programmes that were inconsistent with the plan of the central NYS¹⁴⁰².

Apart from infiltrating already existing samitis, the Sangh and the ABVP went about forming parallel ones. These would have names that included the term Navnirman, creating an impression that they were functioning in coordination with the NYS, but in reality, were not in any way linked to the central NYS. In areas of Ahmedabad where it had a strong presence such as Paldi, Khadia and Raipur, and in Saurashtra local Navnirman samitis were formed by the ABVP¹⁴⁰³. In addition, sectional samitis of, among others, young women (Navnirman Yuvati Samiti), children (Navnirman Bal Samiti) and home-makers (Navnirman Gruhani Samiti) were formed. Reports in the contemporary press make it clear that these samitis had no relationship with the NYS and ran out of an office in Paldi- the ABVP state-committee office. Not only this, but there was also even a report of a parallel NYS run out of the ABVP office at Paldi¹⁴⁰⁴. Having established samitis that while they bore the name of the NYS were loyal to the Sangh, the *Sangh* and the ABVP were able to conduct their own programmes and protests under the banner of the NYS. These committees also became a medium for

¹⁴⁰² Staff Reporter, ‘Sangh Agents Dominate Samiti’s Many Branches’, *The Times of India*, 6 March 1974; Staff Reporter, ‘Samiti Volunteers to Gherao MPs Too’, *The Times of India*, 14 March 1974; Staff Reporter, ‘Mushroom Growth of Samitis in the State’, *The Times of India*, 24 February 1974.

¹⁴⁰³ Staff Reporter, ‘Sangh Agents Dominate Samiti’s Many Branches’.

¹⁴⁰⁴ Staff Reporter, ‘Mushroom Growth of Samitis in the State’.

the Sangh and the ABVP to exercise influence over the agitation and if presented with an opportunity to usurp control from the NYS.

This was the case when in March some of the Central NYS visited Delhi. After previous shorter visits to Delhi to negotiate with the Central Government, on 2 March, Mankad announced that within “two or three days” an NYS team would visit Delhi to have further talks¹⁴⁰⁵. When on 4 March a team that included a number of members of the NYS Executive attempted to leave for Delhi, some were gheraoed at Khadia, Ahmedabad where the ABVP had established its own parallel committee and were not allowed to leave. Eventually it was only Mankad who boarded the train to Delhi but not before being mobbed at the Ahmedabad railway station¹⁴⁰⁶. These scenes were repeated the following day at the Ahmedabad airport and the NYS leadership was prevented from boarding a flight to Delhi¹⁴⁰⁷. This too, according to a contemporary observer was the handiwork of the ABVP and those close to the BJS¹⁴⁰⁸. Jani in a statement to press while not explicitly naming those involved strongly alluded that it was the Sangh that was responsible for the airport incident¹⁴⁰⁹.

Around the time of the Delhi visit, a slew of false information was spread through different means. For instance, an unsigned press note was circulated by those calling themselves “members of the Navnirman Yuvak Samiti” that claimed the cancellation of the trip as a success for “student forces”¹⁴¹⁰. Local committees from Sangh

¹⁴⁰⁵ Staff Reporter, ‘Navnirman Samiti to Send Team to Delhi’, *The Times of India*, 3 March 1974.

¹⁴⁰⁶ Staff Reporter, ‘Bid to Hold up Samiti Leaders’ Departure’, *The Times of India*, 5 March 1974.

¹⁴⁰⁷ Staff Reporter, ‘Samiti Team Not to Hold Talks in Delhi’, *The Times of India*, 6 March 1974.

¹⁴⁰⁸ V Gangadhar, ‘Centre Alienating Gujarat Students, Opposition Benefits’, *The Times of India*, 16 March 1974.

¹⁴⁰⁹ Staff Reporter, ‘Samiti Team Not to Hold Talks in Delhi’.

¹⁴¹⁰ Staff Reporter, ‘Samiti Team Not to Hold Talks in Delhi’.

strongholds in Ahmedabad issued statements that they would not be a party to any agreement reached in Delhi because those negotiating “had not been authorised by the people to do so”¹⁴¹¹. Press statements were also issued alleging that those in Delhi had been provided plane tickets by the Central government¹⁴¹². While this campaign of misinformation and allegations was taken up at the local level by issuing press statements through local committees and anonymous press notes, similar falsehoods were also spread by BJS leaders and reports in *Organiser*. After NYS leaders had reached Delhi, the BJS leader Vasantrao Ganjedragadkar told the press that air fare for these leaders was “paid by the personal secretariate (sic.) of the Prime Minister”¹⁴¹³. This same allegation was repeated in the pages of *Organiser*¹⁴¹⁴. The report in *Organiser* further alleged that while in Delhi, some of the NYS leaders including one who was “the son of a former Minister in the Chimanbhai Ministry” had met the Cong(R) leader Harihar Khambholja who had “...lavishly entertained the students to drinks and snacks” and that they had “got heavily drunk and talked a lot of rubbish”¹⁴¹⁵. The smear campaign against the NYS was accompanied with assertions that even if the government “succeeds in buying up a few individuals” new leaders would be thrown up, in a thinly veiled attempt at justify its own efforts at securing control over the agitation¹⁴¹⁶. One such attempt was made when most of the central leadership of the NYS was in Delhi on 12 March 1974.

¹⁴¹¹ Staff Reporter, ‘Not Authorised’, *The Times of India*, 5 March 1974.

¹⁴¹² Staff Reporter, ‘Sangh Agents Dominate Samiti’s Many Branches’.

¹⁴¹³ Staff Reporter, ‘Delhi Trying to Weaken Agitation’, *The Times of India*, 8 March 1974.

¹⁴¹⁴ Special Correspondent, ‘PM’s Bid to Trick Gujarat Students’, *Organiser*, 9 March 1974.

¹⁴¹⁵ A Correspondent, ‘Congi Bid to Woo Gujarat Students Continues’, *Organiser*, 16 March 1974.

¹⁴¹⁶ Editorial, ‘The Gujarat Revolution’, *Organiser*, 16 March 1974.

On 11 March, between 150 to 200 students, including some from the NYS Executive, were arrested for taking out a procession in Central Delhi¹⁴¹⁷. While there were many protests against the arrest in different parts of Gujarat¹⁴¹⁸, particularly significant in the present context was the meeting organised at the Football Ground at Kankaria, Ahmedabad. It was reported in the press that the meeting said that the meeting was “more or less controlled by BJS sympathisers” and V Gangadhar writing a week later in the Times of India, confirmed that it was the Sangh controlled Paldi local committee that had organised the meeting¹⁴¹⁹. While Nanu Vaidya and Vinod Kapasi, two former student politicians who had been kept out of the NYS because of their proximity to Swatantra Party politicians were invited by the organisers, the main speakers at the meeting were Chandrakant Shukla of the ABVP and Sonal Desai of the Navnirman Yuvati Samiti that functioned from the ABVP office. At the meeting the official NYS leadership who were in Delhi were fiercely criticised and it was demanded that they “return to Ahmedabad”¹⁴²⁰. Most significantly, up to this point, while there had been private meetings and conversations with opposition leaders of various hues, no leader of any political party had been invited onto a joint platform by the NYS. At this meeting, there was an attempt to get a particularly offensive BJS leader, Shambhu Maharaj, to address the meeting. Although students attending the meeting foiled this. The Paldi meeting was, as the Times of India noted, the Sangh’s attempt to usurp control of the agitation by taking “advantage of the absence of the central committee office-bearers”¹⁴²¹.

¹⁴¹⁷ Staff Reporter, ‘214 Samiti Men Held in Delhi’, *The Times of India*, 12 March 1974.

¹⁴¹⁸ Staff Reporter, ‘Samiti Call for Bandh’, *The Times of India*, 12 March 1974.

¹⁴¹⁹ Gangadhar, ‘Centre Alienating Gujarat Students, Opposition Benefits’.

¹⁴²⁰ Staff Reporter, ‘J.S. Leader Blesses Students’ Rally’, *The Times of India*, 13 March 1974.

¹⁴²¹ Staff Reporter, ‘J.S. Leader Blesses Students’ Rally’.

To sum up, the Sangh, including the ABVP was initially absent from the Navnirman Agitation, the BJS even opposed the NYS and the agitation. Having recognised the importance of the agitation to Gujarat as well as national politics, attempts were made through different means, as enumerated above, to exert an influence over it.

After the Agitation

Immediately after the dissolution of the state Assembly students turned their attention to the demand for promotion without examinations. Following close to two weeks of violent protests, the mass-promotion demand was largely granted and examinations, with certain exceptions, were made optional by all universities in the state¹⁴²². The role of the Sangh with respect to mass-promotion protests was typically ambiguous. In an interview with *Janata*, soon after the demand had been accepted, Oza claimed that the ABVP had “opposed the idea of promotion with examination”, that they had in fact “demanded” that examinations be conducted and the “present voluntary nature of examinations” was due to their efforts¹⁴²³. The All-India President of the ABVP, writing in *Organiser*, around the same time, however, did not take a definitive position on mass-promotion. It was simply said that the closure of academic institutions and mass-promotions was “inevitable” and while non-exempted students were spoken off as being in a “difficult position” but as the examinations were likely to be held at a later date this would give them “reasonable time for preparations”¹⁴²⁴. While the Sangh equivocated on the issue in public pronouncements, according to a contemporary observer the ABVP had taken “an extreme line on this issue [mass-promotion]”¹⁴²⁵ and

¹⁴²² For more on mass promotion protests see Chapter 1, Section IV.

¹⁴²³ ‘Goal of Gujarat: The Makers of Revolution Speak to JANATA’, *JANATA*, 28 April 1974, 23.

¹⁴²⁴ Kohli, ‘ABVP- Potent Force for Social Change’.

¹⁴²⁵ ‘The Left Vacuum’, *Link*, 31 March 1974, 14.

it was the case that the mass-promotion agitation was most violent and persistent at the Sangh stronghold of SU where the VC resigned because of the pressure brought on him for cancellation of examinations by the agitating students¹⁴²⁶.

Following the resolution of the mass-promotion issue, the ABVP, did attempt to remain active during the latter part of the 1974, organising its annual conference at Jamnagar. With the Bihar Movement having commenced, ABVP units in Saurashtra, particularly at Rajkot, Bhavnagar and Morbi in a bid to secure support for it, organised a “Chetna Din”¹⁴²⁷. Initial attempts at securing student support for the Bihar Movement, however, as we have seen, met with limited success.

The Navnirman Agitation ended with the dissolution of the state Assembly and the imposition of President’s Rule. With the expectation that elections would be held in the coming months, opposition parties, especially the Cong(O) and the BJS, in July 1974, began to, according to government reports, “actively” work towards “consolidating their positions by organising tours of their leaders”¹⁴²⁸. With elections not announced, in November 1974, the BJS, Cong (O) and KMLP all threatened to lead agitations if they were not held in February 1975. The central government ignoring these warnings, in February 1975 decided to extend President’s Rule in the state by another six

¹⁴²⁶ See Chapter 1, Section III.

¹⁴²⁷ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret F.R. No. 40’, 6 December 1974, U. No. 0087339, FR Jan 1974-Dec 1974, 133-139, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

¹⁴²⁸ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret F.R. No. 31’, 20 July 1974, U. No. 0087339, FR Jan 1974-Dec 1974, 85-90, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

months¹⁴²⁹ and opposition parties began to independently organise protests for early elections¹⁴³⁰.

It was in this atmosphere that JP, after an unsuccessful visit in January, came to Gujarat in March 1975 and a Gujarat LSS, which included in its Executive Committee, leaders from various non-Communist parties, activists and three student representatives was formed. The LSS began to organise protests for elections to the Assembly. Sometime in 1974, a CSS fashioned on the lines of the Bihar CSS, had already been formed and it also became involved in protests along with the LSS¹⁴³¹. The most significant of these was on 6 April when the LSS and its constituents organised Revoke Emergency Day. Morarji Desai went on an indefinite fast and major leaders of the opposition, including, Advani and Vajpayee of the BJS, poured into the state to “whip-up public tempo” in support of the election demand¹⁴³². With Desai’s health deteriorating, elections were set to be held in June 1975.

What was particularly noteworthy was the composition of both the CSS and the LSS leadership. With the collapse of the NYS in the domain of student politics and moves being made towards opposition unity in partisan politics, the Sangh was able to dominate the CSS and be significantly represented in the LSS. Within the CSS, it was the ABVP that was, by far, its most major component. The ABVP’s dominance of the joint committee is confirmed by the fact that Oza was the Secretary of the CSS and

¹⁴²⁹ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret F.R. No. 45’, 22 February 1975, U. No. 0087340, GS XIII (246)/76, 19-24, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

¹⁴³⁰ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret F.R. No. 47’, 22 March 1975, U. No. 0087340, GS XIII (246)/76, 32-38, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

¹⁴³¹ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret F.R. No. 48’, 7 April 1975, U. No. 0087329, Untitled File, 190-194, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

¹⁴³² Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret F.R. No. 49’, 20 April 1975, U. No. 0087340, GS XIII (246)/76, 44-47, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

also its sole representative in the LSS Executive Committee¹⁴³³. Within the larger scheme of the LSS the Sangh was prominently represented through both members of the BJS and the ABVP as part of the Executive Committee. As a result, unlike during the Navnirman Agitation, the Sangh had the ability to directly influence the direction that protests were taking.

Gaining through Navnirman

When the Navnirman Agitation began in January 1974 the Sangh was initially not completely supportive of it. When it later attempted to involving itself in the agitation, the NYS, despite internal division, still managed to keep the Sangh outside the official leadership. Beyond the central leadership, however, due to the organisational and other limitations of the NYS, the Navnirman Agitation also came to be associated with groups and organisations that were most active in localities- the position of being the *Navnirman* Agitation in a sense, was up for grabs. Given its own extensive organisation, the Sangh was successful in occupying this position through the formation of parallel samitis or infiltrating existing ones. Moreover, once the agitation ended, with the loss of popularity and quick disintegration of the NYS alongside having aggressively conducted its parallel programmes and protests the Sangh was able to obfuscate the role that played it during the entirety of the agitation, further its narrative, and freely capitalise on the legacy of the Navnirman Agitation.

Both, its actual interventions through the infiltration and formation of parallel samitis, as well as being able to successfully claim, that it was the vital force behind the

¹⁴³³ Home Department (Government of Gujarat), 'Note on the Political Situation in Gujarat (Between March 6 to 26, 1975)', March 1975, U. No. 0087306, Home Department Confidential, 10-17, GSA, Gandhinagar, India. [This provides a list of all the initial members of the Executive Committee]

Navnirman Agitation can be understood as being of importance to the Sangh in multiple ways. As noted in the previous section, the BJS and the ABVP, following the 1969 riots, were engaged in rebuilding the Sangh's image to a more non-controversial one, while also trying to widen its base. This was done through taking up the issues of different sections of the population. In this context, the Navnirman Agitation which witnessed the involvement, with notable exceptions, of wide cross section of Gujarat society, was an ideal medium through which to further this project. The Sangh's involvement in the agitation as well as its subsequent attempts at magnifying its role in it, was to a certain extent, a continuation of the image building project that it had begun in 1970. That the BJS, for one, had been fairly successful in doing so was noted by the Governor's Conference Report of 1975 which stated that by leading agitational programmes prior to the Navnirman Agitation and during the agitation itself, the BJS, a "Hindu Party", had been able to "recast its image as a wholly secular party"¹⁴³⁴. The importance of the Navnirman Agitation to the Sangh, however, went beyond perceptions and translated into tangible electoral gains. This is presently discussed.

The Navnirman Agitation and the Bihar Movement that followed, had created conditions for the formation of a united opposition front against the Cong(R). While attempts in December 1974 by the BJS were rebuffed by the Cong(O)¹⁴³⁵, following the declaration of Assembly elections, the opposition parties reached an agreement to contest together as the Morcha. The BJS, had, since the end of the Navnirman Agitation, and particularly from January 1975, "commenced intensive election

¹⁴³⁴ Home Department (Government of Gujarat), 'A Brief Note on the Political Situation in Gujarat with Special Reference to Law and Order', July 1974, U. No. 0087309, 5-9, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

¹⁴³⁵ Governor of Gujarat, 'Secret F.R. No. 42', 5 January 1975, U. No. 0087340, GS XIII (246)/76, 2-7, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

propaganda”¹⁴³⁶. It had taken up scarcity relief work¹⁴³⁷, started demanding a higher price for wheat procured by the government¹⁴³⁸, and even attempted to “win over Muslim sympathy”¹⁴³⁹. This was in addition to participating in the LSS protests over the election issue. As part of the Morcha, it contested 40 seats, which, while less than the Cong (O), was much greater than the BLD’s 11 and the RMP’s 6. In the elections, the Morcha won 86 seats out of which the BJS won 18, increasing its tally from 3 in the previous elections. The Morcha, receiving outside support from the KMLP, formed the government. In the 17-member ministry that was sworn-in, Keshubhai Patel¹⁴⁴⁰, Makarand Desai¹⁴⁴¹, and Hemaben Acharya¹⁴⁴² belonged to the BJS¹⁴⁴³. Thus, for the first time in Gujarat, not only was the Sangh part of the ruling coalition, but members of the Sangh also held ministerial portfolios. This electoral victory, while there were certainly other factors involved, can be attributed, to some extent at least, to the gains made by the Sangh through interventions in the Navnirman Agitation through means discussed earlier and later propagate its own narrative regarding its role in the agitation.

Section III Emergency and After

Sangh Activities During the Emergency

¹⁴³⁶ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret F.R. No. 42’.

¹⁴³⁷ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret F.R. No. 38’, 21 November 1974, U. No. 0087339, FR Jan 1974-Dec 1974, 123-128, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

¹⁴³⁸ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret F.R. No. 48’.

¹⁴³⁹ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret F.R. No. 46’, 22 March 1975, U. No. 0087340, GS XIII (246)/76, 25-31, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

¹⁴⁴⁰ Minister for Agriculture and Irrigation Projects

¹⁴⁴¹ Minister for Housing and Accommodation Control

¹⁴⁴² Minister for Health and Family Planning

¹⁴⁴³ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret F.R. No. 53’, 21 June 1975, U. No. 0087340, GS XIII (246)/76, 63-66, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

Within days of the Morcha coming to power, the Emergency was imposed. As discussed in Chapter 2, although the Emergency was comparatively less severe, there was nonetheless a difference between the period when the Morcha was in power and when the state under President's and Cong(R) rule. The Morcha stayed in power until March 1976 and for that period it eased the impact of the Emergency in Gujarat. Parties that constituted the Morcha more or less freely carried out protests against the Emergency both independently and through the LSS by organising protests, public meetings, processions, and submitting memoranda¹⁴⁴⁴. At least two major opposition conferences, with leaders coming from different parts of the country, were, during this time, organised in Gujarat¹⁴⁴⁵.

Two points are particularly noteworthy, in the context of the present discussion, with respect to this phase of the Emergency. First, despite favourable conditions, students did not form a major part of the opposition to the Emergency that flourished during this time in Gujarat. The case of the ABVP, which as discussed in Chapter 4, had initially adopted a "wait and watch" approach at the All-India level, was no different from the rest and one finds no reference in either Sangh or non-Sangh sources to programmes organised by it during this time. Second, elections continued to be held and in all the Municipal Corporation elections, the BJS, contesting as part of the Morcha, continued to make impressive electoral gains. The Morcha secured a majority in all major cities, winning 42 out of 65 seats at Baroda, 46 out of 60 at Surat and 54 out of 105 at Ahmedabad of which the BJS accounted for 10, 9 and 14 respectively¹⁴⁴⁶. Remarkable

¹⁴⁴⁴ See Chapter 2 Section II.

¹⁴⁴⁵ See Chapter 2, Section II.

¹⁴⁴⁶ Governor of Gujarat, 'Secret F.R. No. 64', 4 December 1975, U. No. 0087340, GS XIII (246)/76, 113-117, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

was Rajkot where the BJS won 36 out of the total 51 seats, the Cong (O) managing only 3¹⁴⁴⁷.

Immediately after the fall of the Janata Morcha government in March 1976 and the imposition of President's Rule, political persecution began in earnest with a clamp down on protests and agitations as well as largescale detentions of political opponents.

With respect to student groups, the ABVP was the principal target during President's/Cong (R) rule. However, as was noted by a post-Emergency scrutiny of MISA detentions in the state as a part of the Shah Commission, for a student to have been detained, "the main ground given in the majority of cases was that he took active part in the Navnirman Agitation in Gujarat in 1974 *or was connected with the Vidyarthi Parishad*"¹⁴⁴⁸. Therefore, although some twenty of its members, accounting for the majority of students, were detained under MISA¹⁴⁴⁹, these detentions were more of an indication of the government's paranoia about the Sangh and should not be mistaken to be proof of anti-Emergency activity. It can confidently be stated that due to repression during the latter part of the Emergency, student politics effectively disappeared and the ABVP was no exception to this.

In terms of political opposition, the Sangh, even more than the Cong (O), was targeted by the administration. Of the 462 persons that belonged to *all* opposition parties and groups who were detained under MISA during the latter part of the Emergency in

¹⁴⁴⁷ Governor of Gujarat, 'Secret F.R. No. 62', 5 November 1975, U. No. 0087340, GS XIII (246)/76, 103-107, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

¹⁴⁴⁸ O.S.D., 'Scrutiny Note on Misa Detention Cases of Gujarat', 10 January 1978, U. No. 0086343, Material for Shah Commission, 134-140, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

¹⁴⁴⁹ 'Secret Note on the Political Situation in Gujarat', 9 July 1976, U. No. 0087416, GS/II/4 (11)76, 87-116, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

Gujarat, the BJS and ABVP alone accounted for over half of them¹⁴⁵⁰. Of the 138 persons that belonged to banned organisations who were detained under MISA, 128 were from the RSS¹⁴⁵¹. This was in addition to more than 300 members¹⁴⁵² of the Sangh who had been detained under the Defence of India Rules.

As noted in Chapter 4, although the Sangh began to later claim that it had bravely battled the political persecution, this was not the case. Specifically with reference to Gujarat there is no evidence that the RSS or any other Sangh affiliate was active in resisting the Emergency during President's/Cong(R) rule. It bears re-emphasising in this context that detentions in Gujarat cannot in themselves be taken as evidence of activism because, as noted by the Shah Commission persons had been detained not because of recent activity but based on their "participating in meetings and agitations in the years prior to 1975" and "particularly in the case" of those of the BJS and the ABVP¹⁴⁵³. Similarly, it was simply because they were "sympathisers or members" of the RSS that they had been detained and not because of any activity "present or past"¹⁴⁵⁴.

Further, not only is there no evidence of the Sangh's valiant opposition to the Emergency in Gujarat, but there are, in fact, indications to the contrary. Following the political persecution that was first unleashed in March 1976, the BJS called a private meeting and condemned the large scale use of MISA against its workers¹⁴⁵⁵. In early

¹⁴⁵⁰ J.C. Shah, *Shah Commission of Inquiry: Third and Final Report* (New Delhi: Government of India, 1978), 61–64.

¹⁴⁵¹ Shah, *Shah Commission of Inquiry: Third and Final Report*, 60.

¹⁴⁵² This has been estimated from figures provided in Governor's Fortnightly Reports of the period.

¹⁴⁵³ Shah, *Shah Commission of Inquiry: Third and Final Report*, 61.

¹⁴⁵⁴ Shah, *Shah Commission of Inquiry: Third and Final Report*, 65.

¹⁴⁵⁵ Governor of Gujarat, 'Secret F.R. No. 73', 22 April 1976, U. No. 0087345, FR (O/C), GS XIII, (245) 76, 606-612, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

June, its Executive decided that its workers should, on 26 June, go on a one-day taken fast outside their residences and that it would lead an agitation against the Emergency¹⁴⁵⁶. However, when in the second half of June, its “main leaders/workers” were detained under MISA, the BJS “forbid”¹⁴⁵⁷ its members from taking up any agitational programme. Following this, in the Governor’s Fortnightly Reports, there is no mention of any even remotely agitational activity taken up by the BJS or any Sangh affiliate between early August till the end of the Emergency. This was highly unusual as in these reports, particularly during the time of the Emergency, even minor activities that were taken up by the opposition were noted. The protests, marches, conventions, mock parliaments, and even closed-door meetings of the Cong (O) were meticulously noted in the reports¹⁴⁵⁸. Its absence from these reports of the Governor is conspicuous and a strong indicator of the level of oppositional activity in which the Sangh was involved.

Despite having laid low in terms of directly oppositional protest activities, the Sangh was active in the formation of the new Janata Party. Moreover, the government’s targeting of the Sangh, in Gujarat, where there was no opposition to the Cong (R) other than the Cong (O), further enhanced the Sangh’s image, as an important non-Congress opposition force. Therefore, when the Emergency was relaxed in January 1977, the ban on the RSS revoked and elections declared for March, the Sangh once

¹⁴⁵⁶ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret F.R. No. 76’, 7 June 1976, U. No. 0087345, FR (O/C), GS XIII, (245) 76, 657-662, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

¹⁴⁵⁷ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret F.R. No. 80’, 5 August 1976, U. No. 0087345, FR (O/C), GS XIII, (245) 76, 687-692, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

¹⁴⁵⁸ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret F.R. No. 81’, 20 August 1976, U. No. 0087345, FR (O/C), GS XIII, (245) 76, 758-762, GSA, Gandhinagar, India; Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret F.R. No. 82’, 7 September 1976, U. No. 0087345, FR (O/C), GS XIII, (245) 76, 773-776, GSA, Gandhinagar, India; Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret F.R. No. 88’, 7 December 1976, U. No. 0087345, FR (O/C), GS XIII, (245) 76, 883-888, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

again made electoral gains. In Gujarat, which was a direct contest between the Janata and the Congress, the former won 16, out of the total 26 seats, of which three belonged to the Sangh¹⁴⁵⁹. Moreover, soon after the general elections, faced with defections, the Congress government in the state also collapsed and the Janata came to power. In the new ministry, two former ministers from the Sangh were again included¹⁴⁶⁰.

The period of the Emergency and immediately after it was a somewhat complex one for the Sangh. The RSS was banned and as a result of being singled out for political persecution the Sangh, especially the RSS and ABVP, did suffer organisationally. There were, however, electoral gains made at the civic, Assembly and parliamentary levels, at different points of time in the period. Considering the dormant condition of student politics and inactivity of the ABVP during this time, it was clearly the case that student politics and the Sangh's interventions in it had little to do with the gains that were made by the Sangh.

The Janata Period

The change in government in the state and centre, mentioned earlier, was accompanied by a brief upswing in student activity. Much to the chagrin of the former Cong (O) segment of the Janata as the Education Minister was from that faction¹⁴⁶¹, the ABVP was responsible for, as the Times of India put it, a "sudden rash of student agitations", over various student issues¹⁴⁶², in Ahmedabad around September

¹⁴⁵⁹ Anantray Dave, Keshubhai Patel and Shankersinh Vaghela *Statistical Report on General Elections, 1977 to the Sixth Lok Sabha: Volume I (National and State Abstracts & Detailed Results)* (New Delhi: Election Commission of India, 1978), 73–74.

¹⁴⁶⁰ Governor of Gujarat, 'Secret F.R. No. 97', 21 April 1977, U. No. 0087349, FR Sent to President and Prime Minister, O/C, No. 90-113, 122-127, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

¹⁴⁶¹ Governor of Gujarat, 'Secret F.R. No. 97'.

¹⁴⁶² See Chapter 2, Section III.

1977¹⁴⁶³. The ABVP in particular was active during the failed anti-fee hike agitation in June 1977. It was reported to have held “several public meetings” to “rally popular support” against the fee-hike¹⁴⁶⁴. Following the initial spurt of activity, the period between 1978 and the first half of 1980, as discussed in Chapter 2, was a comparatively quiet one for student politics in the state. With respect to the ABVP too, one does not find in the sources any record of agitational activities taken up during this time and the Governor’s Conference Report for 1980, specifically mentioned the ABVP as having been “not very active” in the previous year¹⁴⁶⁵. With a friendly government in power the focus seems to have been on organisation building rather than agitational activities and its most major activity during this time, that was publicised by the Sangh, was joining the RSS and other Sangh affiliates in relief work during the dam burst at Morbi in 1979.

Not only for the ABVP but for other affiliates of the Sangh, which had suffered organisationally due to the persecution during the Emergency, being a part of the ruling party proved to be greatly advantageous. The former BJS group within the Janata functioned almost like a party within it and for the entire period maintained its distinct identity. On issues such as the induction of Chimanbhai Patel and others from the KMLP into the Janata the group presented a united front in protest. Following the Macchu dam burst, discussed presently, it was active in relief work along with the Sangh and not the government, carving out an identity distinct from the government. The group even organised protests against price rise in opposition to the party of which

¹⁴⁶³ L.K. Sharma, ‘Pulls and Counter-Pulls Affect Gujarat Ministry’s Working’, *The Times of India*, 2 September 1977.

¹⁴⁶⁴ ‘Restive Students’, *The Times of India*, 14 June 1977.

¹⁴⁶⁵ Home Department (Government of Gujarat), ‘Notes for Governors/Chief Ministers Conference’, March 1980, U. No. 0087318, GS XXVI/8/80, 368-388, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

it was ostensibly a part¹⁴⁶⁶. Similarly, based on the information provided by the Governor's Fortnightly and Monthly reports the RSS remained during this time "absorbed" in efforts to "strengthen its organisation in the state"¹⁴⁶⁷. This was sought to be done through "revitalising shakhas that had become inactive during the Emergency"¹⁴⁶⁸ and organising state and local level camps¹⁴⁶⁹, especially those for "officer training"¹⁴⁷⁰. The national organisation of the RSS also seemed to have taken a keen interest in this with Deoras noted as having attended and addressed a number of these camps¹⁴⁷¹.

An event that was of particular significance with respect to the activities of the Sangh in this period was the failure of the Macchu dam. On August 11, 1979, a dam constructed on the Macchu River near Mobri, burst, sending "furious swirling waters" into the town, submerging some areas under 30 feet of water¹⁴⁷². The flooding caused massive damage to the town's infrastructure and left tens of thousands homeless. While the Janata government claimed from the very beginning that the death toll was 1000, some studies have suggested that the real figure could have been as high as 20,000¹⁴⁷³. In wake of the flooding, the Sangh, particularly the RSS and the former

¹⁴⁶⁶ Governor of Gujarat, 'Secret M.R. No. 15', 17 November 1980, U. No. 0087353, GS X/1979-80, 60-65, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

¹⁴⁶⁷ Governor of Gujarat, 'Secret M.R. No. 20', 15 April 1980, U. No. 0087353, GS X/1979-80, 117-125, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

¹⁴⁶⁸ Governor of Gujarat, 'Secret F.R. No. 108', 5 October 1977, U. No. 0087349, FR Sent to President and Prime Minister, O/C, No. 90-113, 278-282, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

¹⁴⁶⁹ Governor of Gujarat, 'Secret M.R. No. 5', 13 January 1979, U. No. 0087359, Monthly Report O/C, 53-56, GSA, Gandhinagar, India; Governor of Gujarat, 'Secret M.R. No. 19', 13 March 1980, U. No. 0087353, GS X/1979-80, 105-111, GSA, Gandhinagar, India; Governor of Gujarat, 'Secret M.R. No. 20'.

¹⁴⁷⁰ For more on pracharak see Chapter 4, Section I.

¹⁴⁷¹ Governor of Gujarat, 'Secret M.R. No. 5'; Governor of Gujarat, 'Secret M.R. No. 19'.

¹⁴⁷² Our Correspondent, 'Gujarat - the Inundation of Morvi', *Economic And Political Weekly* 14, no. 34 (25 August 1979): 1454.

¹⁴⁷³ Utpal Sandesara and Tom Wooten, *No One Had a Tongue to Speak: The Untold Story of One of History's Deadliest Floods* (Prometheus Books, 2011).

BJS group, took up, well publicised, relief and rehabilitation activities. A *Pur Pedit Shayata Samiti* (Committee for Flood Relief) was formed at Rajkot¹⁴⁷⁴ by the RSS, and it claimed that it had sent “several hundred workers” from across the country to assist relief operations¹⁴⁷⁵. It also claimed to have set up nine camps for a total of 10,000 people and spent Rs. 26,00,000 on relief activities¹⁴⁷⁶. The ABVP, as noted earlier, was also involved in the RSS led relief work. With respect to the relief activities that were conducted by the Sangh during this time, two important points must be noted. First, how relief activities are used by the Sangh in furthering its Hindutva agenda has been discussed in the context of the 2002 earthquake in Kutch¹⁴⁷⁷. Similarly, during the Macchu Dam burst, the RSS was accused of communalising relief activities and neglecting Muslims¹⁴⁷⁸. Second, although it was a part of the ruling party, instead of aiding the government, the Sangh had, as a correspondent for the Economic and Political weekly noted, “deliberately chosen” to take up relief activities independently¹⁴⁷⁹. This had to do with Keshubhai being the Irrigation Minister and being held responsible for the calamity by the main rivals of the Sangh in Saurashtra¹⁴⁸⁰. The relief activities taken up by the Sangh can be viewed, therefore, as both a political face saving measure as well as an attempt to exploit the conditions to further its Hindutva agenda.

¹⁴⁷⁴ Morbi at the time was a part of Rajkot district.

¹⁴⁷⁵ ‘Sangh Workers Lead Relief Operations in Morvi’, *Organiser*, 19 August 1979.

¹⁴⁷⁶ Our Correspondent, ‘RSS to Reconstruct Flood-Hit Morvi’, *Organiser*, 2 September 1979; Our Correspondent, ‘Rs. 26 Lakhs Spent on Morvi Flood Relief’, *Organiser*, 14 December 1979.

¹⁴⁷⁷ Malini Bhattacharjee, ‘Seva, Hindutva, and the Politics of Post-Earthquake Relief and Reconstruction in Rural Kutch’, *Asian Ethnology* 75, no. 1 (2016): 75–104.

¹⁴⁷⁸ Our Correspondent, ‘Mrs. Gandhi’s Motivated Attack on RSS to Cover up Cong-I Inaction’, *Organiser*, 2 September 1979.

¹⁴⁷⁹ Our Correspondent, ‘Gujarat - the Inundation of Morvi’.

¹⁴⁸⁰ Our Correspondent, ‘Gujarat - the Inundation of Morvi’.

Although it had managed to, under a favourable government, revitalise its organisations, the time between August 1979 and May 1980 was one of electoral reverses. The Janata split, the government led by Morarji Desai lost its majority at the centre and the PM resigned in July 1979. While Charan Singh with the support of the Congress became the PM, the Parliament was dissolved in August 1979. In the general elections held in January, Indira Gandhi returned to power and the Janata, of which the Sangh was a part, was reduced to a total of 31 seats. In Gujarat, all the Sangh candidates, including its sitting MPs lost, with the Janata managing to win only one seat. Soon after the elections, the central government dismissed the Gujarat government and dissolved the Assembly¹⁴⁸¹. During this time the Sangh abandoned the Janata, the Bhartiya Janata Party was formed, and its Gujarat unit was established on 20 April 1980¹⁴⁸². This meant that the BJP was able to contest the Assembly elections in May. The BJP which had 129 candidates in the fray, while it did manage to secure 14% of the vote share, could win only 9 seats compared to the Janata which won 21¹⁴⁸³.

Following the defeat in the Assembly elections, opposition parties, almost immediately began to mobilise over different issues. Important amongst these, with respect to participation from the Sangh, was the price agitation in August 1980. The protests began with the Janata's call to people to agitate against rising price which was followed by a rebel Youth Congress politician going on a fast unto death soon after¹⁴⁸⁴. The

¹⁴⁸¹ Governor of Gujarat, 'Secret M.R. No. 19'.

¹⁴⁸² Governor of Gujarat, 'Secret M.R. No. 21/SM', 9 May 1980, U. No. 0087364, GS/X/1980, 7-15, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

¹⁴⁸³ *Statistical Report on General Elections, 1980 to the Legislative Assembly of Gujarat* (New Delhi: Election Commission of India, 1980), 9.

¹⁴⁸⁴ See Chapter 2, Section V.

BJP immediately “extended its full support” to the agitation by organising public meetings and protests¹⁴⁸⁵. As noted in Chapter 2, the agitation received widespread support from students. The agitation also witnessed attempts by the opposition at dismantling KHAM with clashes between Dalits and Muslims taking place at Ahmedabad. Moreover, the BJP was observed to not only be “actively associating” with the agitation but also carrying out “vehement propaganda” against other measures and policies of the government both within and outside the Assembly¹⁴⁸⁶. While there was also evidence that the Sangh’s labour union, the BMS was far more active, resulting in clashes with the Congress’s INTUC¹⁴⁸⁷.

Section IV Interventions in the Anti-Reservation Agitation 1981

The first anti-reservation agitation was sparked off by opposition from medical students and Junior Doctors to different aspects of the reservation policy in relation to the post-graduate medical education. Although the government conceded to some of the demands, the agitation kept growing as first other Medical Colleges, then LD Engineering and other colleges. The agitation that carried on in some form or another for almost five months, witnessed not only clashes between the police and the agitators but also attacks on those belonging to KHAM communities. The events, the actors involved, and the nature of this agitation have already been discussed in chapter 2, here the attempt is to understand how the Sangh positioned itself and the role it played during the agitation.

¹⁴⁸⁵ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret M.R. No. 25/SM’, 19 September 1980, U. No. 0087364, GS/X/1980, 64-70, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

¹⁴⁸⁶ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret M.R. No. 26/SM’, 22 October 1980, U. No. 0087364, GS/X/1980, 74-80, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

¹⁴⁸⁷ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret M.R. No. 28/SM’, 18 December 1980, U. No. 0087364, GS/X/1980, 89-96, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

Maintaining a Tactical Distance

Unlike the Navnirman Agitation, which began from a student protest against rising mess bills and later on took up political demands, the anti-reservation agitation was centred around the divisive question of reservations which had at its root the issue of caste and involved widespread caste rioting. Being viewed as either openly supporting or opposing the anti-reservation agitation would have meant a loss of some form of support for most political groups active in Gujarat at the time. This meant that during the first anti-reservation agitation, apart from the Lok Dal, the CPI and the CPI (M) that took explicit positions in favour of or against the agitation, other attempted to appear neither supportive nor critical of it. Among these were the Congress, the Janata and most significantly, the Sangh. For the Sangh, like the Janata, although much of its electoral and organisational base came from amongst the sections that were supportive of the anti-reservation agitation, it could not afford to “openly support” the agitation. Therefore, the manner in which the Sangh approached the anti-reservation agitation, sought to intervene in it and how it portrayed its interventions was different from the Navnirman Agitation.

With respect to the Navnirman Agitation the Sangh had not been a part of the leadership, it had frequently played a disruptive role, attempted to usurp control of the agitation and after the agitation sought to further the narrative of the pivotal role played by the ABVP during it. Compared to this, for the first anti-reservation agitation, Sangh sources of the time made no reference whatsoever to the ABVP’s role. While the ABVP remained in the background, the Sangh still did intervene in the agitation, especially through the BJP. Further, although not directly in the leadership, here the Sangh did play an important guiding role. However, instead of emphasising it, at no point during

or after the agitation did the Sangh claim that it had played an active role in it. In capitalising on the agitation, it took a more subtle approach.

Pro-Reservation Posturing

In a bid to not alienate sections that were suffering due to the anti-reservation agitation, the Sangh indulged in pro-reservation posturing. This was done by making statements in support of the reservations and refuting allegations that it was against reservations. Bhanu Advaryu, a contemporary Dalit writer and activist, noted in his account of the agitation, that pro-reservation statements made by the President of the Harijan Cell of the Gujarat BJP¹⁴⁸⁸. A report in *Organiser* claimed that the RSS (Gujarat) Prant Karyavaha, had “publicly” said that the RSS was in favour of reservations and the Sarsanghchalak was quoted as having “made it clear” that the “RSS supported the reservations for scheduled castes and scheduled tribes”¹⁴⁸⁹. At the RSS’s Annual Conference which took place while the agitation was on-going, a resolution was passed that the organisation considered “it necessary that reservations be continued for the present with a view of bringing all these brethren of ours who have remained backward in educational, social and economic fields over the centuries, at par with the rest of society”¹⁴⁹⁰. BJP MLAs in the Gujarat Assembly supported a resolution, passed unanimously, in favour of reservations¹⁴⁹¹. There was, on occasion, even outright criticism of the anti-reservation agitation by Dalit leaders of the BJP, such as by Suraj Bhan, a BJP MP. Bhan called the anti-reservation agitation “ill-conceived and

¹⁴⁸⁸ Bhanu Advaryu, ‘Anamat Na Prashne Aavu Narova Kunjarova (in Gujarati) [Neither Here, nor There on the Reservation Question]’, in *Rudraveena No Jhankaar (in Gujarati) [The Sound of the Rudraveena]* (Ahmedabad: Gujarat Khet Vikas Parishad, 1994), 32.

¹⁴⁸⁹ Our Correspondent, ‘Slap after Slap for Gujarat Government’, *Organiser*, 22 March 1981.

¹⁴⁹⁰ ‘RSS Favours Effective Reservations- but, for Limited Period’, *Organiser*, 1981.

¹⁴⁹¹ Staff Correspondent, ‘Gujarat MLAs Too Back Reservation’, *The Times of India*, 20 March 1981.

absolutely uncalled for”, criticised the “mentality of the agitators” and even defended the systems of interchangeability and carry forward that were being attacked by the anti-reservationist medical students¹⁴⁹².

Siding with the Anti-Reservationists

In this manner maintaining that it supported reservation, the cause of the anti-reservationists was simultaneously taken up. The *Organiser* proclaimed that reservations had not been implemented correctly, that they affected merit and efficiency, should not be extended to any other backward castes and should be “done away with as soon as possible”¹⁴⁹³. An editorial in the *Organiser* written in early February said that reservations had “degenerated from an instrument for Harijan upliftment into a shuttle cock of politics”¹⁴⁹⁴. Asserting that “the whole country [was] backward”, the Editorial criticised states that had extended reservation to “more and more castes and communities” for having “reduced them [reservations] to ridicule”. Declaring that parties had “played politics long enough” with reservations, it demanded that this be “the last extension of reservations”¹⁴⁹⁵. The Sangh, also objected to reservations being extended to those “well-off” within the SCs and STs, calling it an “absurdity”, and pronouncing that “reservations need not be made available to categories that have already been uplifted”¹⁴⁹⁶. Children of those SC/ST persons who were elected to legislatures, were Class-I or Class-II employees or those that paid income tax, according to the Sangh, were to be considered “advanced enough” to not

¹⁴⁹² Suraj Bhan, ‘Let There Be a Central Act on Reservations’, *Organiser*, 25 April 1981.

¹⁴⁹³ ‘RSS Favours Effective Reservations- but, for Limited Period’.

¹⁴⁹⁴ Editorial, ‘Reservations Reduced to Ridicule’, *Organiser*, 15 February 1981.

¹⁴⁹⁵ Editorial, ‘Reservations Reduced to Ridicule’.

¹⁴⁹⁶ ‘Wanted: A Public Debate on Reservations’, *Organiser*, 29 March 1981.

be considered for reservations. Another Editorial written soon after both the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha had unanimously passed resolutions in favour of reservations for SCs and STs, in March, after claiming that “the whole country endorse[d] their resolve” went on to say that there was a “certain uneasiness in the country that the reservations, as practised so far, have not worked particularly well”. According to it, there could be “no two options”, reservations must not be “extended to more and more castes and communities decade after decade” and that there had to be an “end this absurdity”¹⁴⁹⁷. At the Conference mentioned earlier it was resolved that reservations had become “a tool of power-politics and election-tactics” and “this had generated mutual ill-will and conflict”. It was asserted that “merit and efficiency should not be allowed to be adversely affected” by reservations. Reservations could not be “a permanent arrangement” and that “these crutches have to be done away with as soon as possible”¹⁴⁹⁸.

The issues raised, and arguments made against reservations by the agitators in Gujarat, during this time, were echoed and presented as legitimate by the Sangh. LK Advani of the BJP writing towards the end of April after expressing the “hope” that the situation “normalise”, stated that “normalcy should not make us sleep over the issues arising out of the agitation”. The issues raised by the anti-reservationists were then sympathetically repeated and reservations were attacked on the same basis as done by the anti-reservationists- efficiency, quality, merit, and injustice¹⁴⁹⁹. Moreover, as noted in Chapter 2 claims of there being no unreserved seats were a falsehood that

¹⁴⁹⁷ ‘Wanted: A Public Debate on Reservations’.

¹⁴⁹⁸ ‘RSS Favours Effective Reservations- but, for Limited Period’.

¹⁴⁹⁹ L.K. Advani, ‘Political Diary’, *Organiser*, 26 April 1981.

had been spread during the agitation. Despite this, in reporting on anti-reservationist demands, the *Organiser* uncritically stated that in the previous year in some special section of the “Medical College” all seats were reserved¹⁵⁰⁰. In the writings and utterances of the Sangh could be found criticisms and attacks on reservations, in a manner similar to the anti-reservationists, for adversely affecting “merit and efficiency”¹⁵⁰¹ and detracting from the “the quality of services and professions”¹⁵⁰². The myths that because of “carry forward” “interchangeability” and reservations, “deprivation of merit students becomes augmented manifold”¹⁵⁰³ and they “lowered educational standards”¹⁵⁰⁴ were similarly propagated.

The Sangh also blamed the government and pro-reservationists for violence and obstructing a resolution. A report, in *Organiser*, on how the anti-reservation agitation grew after 26 January stated that it was when “students held a public meeting to apprise the general public of their demands” that there was violence¹⁵⁰⁵. There was no mention of the attacks on backward caste doctors or surrounding Dalit localities that students participated in a few days earlier. The blame for further violence was shifted onto Dalits alleging that “some Congress I leaders started inciting the scheduled castes to retaliate. So scheduled attacks on the non-scheduled began”¹⁵⁰⁶. Another report insinuated that Dalits who “took to violence” were, on Yogendra Makwana’s¹⁵⁰⁷ instructions, “not apprehended” and that “police were instructed *not*

¹⁵⁰⁰ Our Correspondent, ‘The Politics of Gujarat Medical Reservations’, *Organiser*, 8 March 1981.

¹⁵⁰¹ ‘RSS Favours Effective Reservations- but, for Limited Period’.

¹⁵⁰² Editorial, ‘Reservations Reduced to Ridicule’.

¹⁵⁰³ Editorial, ‘Reservations Reduced to Ridicule’.

¹⁵⁰⁴ Our Correspondent, ‘The Politics of Gujarat Medical Reservations’.

¹⁵⁰⁵ Our Correspondent, ‘The Politics of Gujarat Medical Reservations’.

¹⁵⁰⁶ Our Correspondent, ‘The Politics of Gujarat Medical Reservations’.

¹⁵⁰⁷ An important Dalit leader of the Gujarat Congress who was at the time also a Union Minister.

(emphasis original) to touch particular sections of the population”¹⁵⁰⁸. Makwana was further accused of having been the reason for the breakdown of talks between anti-reservationists and the government by making SC students “part company with their colleagues” and of having “instigated a counter-movement” led by “sections unconnected with medical studies”¹⁵⁰⁹. Similarly, after representatives of the AC failed to reach an agreement with the Central Government, Advani wrote that “it is sad that the Gujarat medicos have returned to Ahmedabad without a solution to their problems. They had scaled down their demands”. Here again it was the SC/ST delegation from Gujarat that was blamed for the breakdown of negotiations and obstructing a compromise¹⁵¹⁰.

Intervening and Gaining from the Agitation

The few statements made in favour of reservations by the Sangh were nullified by the Sangh’s attacks on reservations through its various writings and utterance. Furthermore, lest there be any doubt about the Sangh’s sympathies, the record shows that the Sangh gave active support to the anti-reservationists. A Governor’s Fortnightly Report mentioned how opposition leaders, including those of the BJP routinely advised the anti-reservationists while another report alleged that “elements” in the BJP were “apparently active in inciting the anti-reservationists”¹⁵¹¹. A near contemporary government report dealing with the agitation noted that BJP workers were “actively” supporting the agitation and that “whenever the police arrested some persons in

¹⁵⁰⁸ Our Correspondent, ‘The Politics of Gujarat Medical Reservations’.

¹⁵⁰⁹ Editorial, ‘Reservations Reduced to Ridicule’.

¹⁵¹⁰ L.K. Advani, ‘Political Diary’, *Organiser*, 5 April 1981.

¹⁵¹¹ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret M.R. No. 32/SM’, 15 April 1981, U. No. 0087364, GS/X/1980, 133-139, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

connection with this agitation the supporters of the BJP took initiative to get them released from the (sic.) police custody”¹⁵¹². The multiple visits by national leaders of the BJP and Janata were noted as having added “fuel to the fire”¹⁵¹³. A report in the contemporary press went so far as to suggest that at the local level the RSS and ABVP were “unequivocally” supporting the anti-reservation agitation¹⁵¹⁴.

Although the anti-reservation agitation was not initiated by students who were close to the partisan student organisations, the conditions created due to the agitation were taken advantage of by the Sangh and other parties. As a Governor’s report put it, some “opposition parties” were interested in “keeping up the tempo of the agitation in order to discredit the party in power”¹⁵¹⁵. Early on in the agitation, the opposition took up the matter of the deteriorating “law and order situation”. A walk out was staged during the Governor’s budget speech and the Finance Minister’s speech was disrupted through singing, for which the opposition MLAs were suspended¹⁵¹⁶. Following this, a “Janata Assembly” at Ahmedabad was organised where leaders of the Janata and the BJP attacked the government on its “failure to maintain law and order”¹⁵¹⁷. The allegations of police atrocities were also raised, funeral parties of those anti-reservationists killed by police firing were addressed by opposition party leaders¹⁵¹⁸ and police atrocities

¹⁵¹² Social Welfare and SC/ST Development Department, ‘Statement 4: List of Points for Discussion with the Officials of State Govt. of Gujarat Regarding Disturbances in Gujarat’, 30 August 1981, U. No. 0086911, Cabinet Meeting Papers, 1981, 468-475, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

¹⁵¹³ Social Welfare and SC/ST Development Department, ‘Statement 4: List of Points for Discussion with the Officials of State Govt. of Gujarat Regarding Disturbances in Gujarat’.

¹⁵¹⁴ ‘Agitation Has a Smack of Assam’, *Link*, 29 March 1981.

¹⁵¹⁵ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret M.R. No. 31/SM’, 23 March 1981, U. No. 0087364, GS/X/1980, 122-129, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

¹⁵¹⁶ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret M.R. No. 31/SM’.

¹⁵¹⁷ Social Welfare and SC/ST Development Department, ‘Medical Students JR. Doctors’ Agitation Against Reservation in Post-Graduate Medical Courses’, 30 August 1981, U. No. 0086911, Cabinet Meeting Papers, 1981, 476-485, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

¹⁵¹⁸ See Chapter 2, Section IV.

were protested both within and outside the Assembly¹⁵¹⁹. Alongside these, the opposition parties while the agitation was on going, raised the matter of rising prices and inadequate supply of essential commodities to corner the government¹⁵²⁰. This was done through the organisation of public meetings, protests, processions, and the presentation of memoranda¹⁵²¹. Taking up these issues, in addition to providing tacit support to the agitators, allowed the opposition, including the Sangh, to not be directly exposed as being anti-reservationist but at the same time attack the ruling party and gain as much political mileage as possible from the agitation. While noting this, it must be acknowledged that the first anti-reservation agitation was not uniquely beneficial to the Sangh. While it did provide an opportunity for the newly formed BJP to register its presence as an eminent opposition force, gains were also made by the Janata and the Lok Dal.

Section V Between the Agitations: 1981-1984

Interventions in Student Politics

Following the first anti-reservation agitation, the ABVP and the Sangh, were particularly active in student politics. The ABVP raised and frequently agitated over a number of student issues such as the inclusion of subjects to university courses¹⁵²²,

¹⁵¹⁹ Staff Correspondent, 'BJP Men behind Gujarat Trouble', *The Times of India*, 11 February 1981; Governor of Gujarat, 'Secret M.R. No. 32/SM'; Governor of Gujarat, 'Secret M.R. No. 33/SM', 15 May 1981, U. No. 0087364, GS/X/1980, 143-148, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

¹⁵²⁰ Governor of Gujarat, 'Secret M.R. No. 33/SM'; Governor of Gujarat, 'Secret M.R. No. 34/SM', 12 June 1981, U. No. 0087364, GS/X/1980, 152-156, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

¹⁵²¹ Governor of Gujarat, 'Secret M.R. No. 35/SM', 10 July 1981, U. No. 0087364, GS/X/1980, 160-164, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

¹⁵²² Governor of Gujarat, 'Secret M.R. No. 44/SM', 14 April 1982, U. No. 0087364, GS/X/1980, 241-245, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

reduction in food bills and examination fees¹⁵²³. The organisation also lent its support to the demand for the establishment of a North Gujarat University¹⁵²⁴. It was once again on the question of the EBC income limit that the ABVP was most active. Between December 1982 and January 1983, students at GU, agitated for the raising of EBC income limit and improvement in the quality and quantity of hostel food¹⁵²⁵. Not much information regarding the agitation is available in the sources, however we do know that the agitation was led by a joint action committee consisting of student members of the GU Senate¹⁵²⁶ and that the government conceded the EBC income limit demand, more than doubling it.¹⁵²⁷ It is also clear that the Sangh was active and played an influential part as the convenor of this committee was Pravin Togadia. Togadia, who would soon become a prominent leader of the VHP, was at the time a member of the ABVP elected to the GU Senate¹⁵²⁸. Additionally, both the BJP and the ABVP participated in protests against the admission policy for class XI¹⁵²⁹ and played a leading role in an unsuccessful agitation demanding a High Court bench in Saurashtra¹⁵³⁰.

Moreover, in December 1981, the government promulgated an Ordinance that would water down the representative character of the University Acts and in its own words

¹⁵²³ General Administration Department, 'Secret Monthly Report on the Happenings in Gujarat during the Period from 21st June, 1983 to 20th July, 1983', 13 August 1983, U. No. 0087366, KNC/1/340, 56-72, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

¹⁵²⁴ General Administration Department, 'Secret Monthly Report on the Happenings in Gujarat during the Period from 21st June, 1983 to 20th July, 1983'.

¹⁵²⁵ Governor of Gujarat, 'Secret M.R. No. 54/S.M.', 14 February 1983, U. No. 0087365, 84-88, GSA, Gandhinagar, India; 'Stir Called Off', *The Times of India*, 8 January 1983.

¹⁵²⁶ Staff Correspondent, 'Income Limit up for Fee Concession', *The Times of India*, 9 January 1983.

¹⁵²⁷ Staff Correspondent, 'Income Limit up for Fee Concession'.

¹⁵²⁸ *Proceedings of the Gujarat University Court 30/31-3-1983* (Ahmedabad: Gujarat University Press, 1983), 3.

¹⁵²⁹ General Administration Department, 'Secret Monthly Report on the Happenings in Gujarat during the Period from 21st June, 1983 to 20th July, 1983'.

¹⁵³⁰ Commission report.

“enhance the powers of the Vice Chancellors and the State Government”¹⁵³¹. Between December and January, there were joint protests by different organisations. On behalf of the Sangh, the *Adhyapak* Sangh and the ABVP were both part of these. The Sangh criticised the Ordinance for creating a “dictator ruled university” and converting the Senate and Syndicate into “subordinate departments of the state government”. The atmosphere amongst students, was described by *Organiser* as being “surcharged with anger and resentment” and it claimed that the resistance could be “as militant as the historic Navnirman movement”¹⁵³². While it is clear the Governor’s Reports clarify that such a portrayal was massively exaggerated, the anti-Ordinance do serve as further evidence of the Sangh being particularly active in student politics during the time after the first anti-reservation agitation.

Between 1981 and 1985, as discussed in Chapter 2, students in an agitation against the transfer of the CoP, Baroda, Jaspal Singh in 1982-83 and another against the Pension Bill in 1984.

As noted, following successive bouts of rioting at Baroda between October and December 1983, the government decided to transfer Singh, who had in his short tenure, ingratiated himself, to the opposition and an influential group of MSU students. His transfer was accompanied by immediate protests which were led by them. As protests began, laudatory accounts about Singh and his popularity were printed in *Organiser*. The government was criticised for transferring an honest police officer and

¹⁵³¹ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret M.R. No. 41/SM’, 12 January 1982, U. No. 0087364, GS/X/1980, 215-219, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

¹⁵³² Our Correspondent, ‘Cong-I War on Seven Gujarat Universities’, *Organiser*, 27 December 1981.

the protests against his transfer were portrayed in a positive light¹⁵³³. Moreover, the BJP was noted as actively agitating against Singh's transfer¹⁵³⁴. While the Sangh was no doubt active, it was the Janata, its student front, and those student politicians, some of whom were elected members of MSUSU, who were close with Singh, that were the driving forces behind the agitation¹⁵³⁵. It was the agitation against the Pension Bill that witnessed greater involvement from the Sangh.

A bill granting pensions to retired MLAs was passed in the Gujarat Assembly in April 1984. Protests against the bill started at Nadiad and soon spread to other urban centres. A Pension Pratikar Samiti as well as an anti-pension students' committee were formed. These committees led protests against the bill as a result of which the bill was eventually not signed by the Governor for a long time. That the Sangh was particularly active in the agitation is clear from a reading of government reports. In these, the agitation is mentioned more than once under the sub-heading of "BJP activities"¹⁵³⁶. According to one report, it was the BJP that "appeared to be more active on the issue", organising "*dharnas* (demonstrations), processions, meetings, burning of effigy, handing over memorandums to authorities etc." at places such as Bhavnagar, Vadodara, Ahmedabad, Jamnagar, Mehsana, Petlad, Himatnagar, Surat, Surendranagar, Limdi, Amreli, Rajkot and Palanpur¹⁵³⁷. While there is no definite proof

¹⁵³³ 'Baroda Riots', *Organiser*, 26 December 1982; Our Correspondent, 'Baroda's Police Commissioner Transferred for Smashing Cong-I Goonda Gangs', *Organiser*, 7 January 1983; Our Correspondent, 'Cong-I Men Blame Each Other for Baroda Riots', *Organiser*, 27 February 1983.

¹⁵³⁴ Governor of Gujarat, 'Secret M.R. No. 54/S.M.'

¹⁵³⁵ See Chapter 2, Section V.

¹⁵³⁶ General Administration Department, 'Secret Monthly Report on the Happenings in Gujarat during the Period from 21st April 1984, to 20th May, 1984', 6 June 1984, U. No. 0087363, Material for Monthly Reports, 142-158, GSA, Gandhinagar, India; General Administration Department, 'Secret Monthly Report on the Happenings in Gujarat during the Period from 21st March, 1984 to 20th April, 1984', 13 May 1984, U. No. 0087367, 157-169, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

¹⁵³⁷ General Administration Department, 'Secret Monthly Report on the Happenings in Gujarat during the Period from 21st April 1984, to 20th May, 1984'.

that the ABVP was active, although this was most likely to have been the case, what is certain is that the Sangh not only played a role in the agitation but was also active among students. Students were supposed to have, “under the leadership” of two student politicians who were close to the BJP, participated in protests against the bill¹⁵³⁸ and the Sangh was definitely represented in the anti-pension bill students’ committee. This committee which had a former NYS member as its coordinator was one in which student politicians, according to a Governor’s Monthly Report, “close to” the Janata and the BJP were also present¹⁵³⁹.

As noted in Chapter 3, student politics between the two anti-reservation agitations was characterised by the virtual disappearance of left and progressive tendencies of both the partisan and non-partisan varieties. Additionally, the NSUI of the Congress remained embroiled in dissensions and splits while the Gujarat *Chhatra Parishad* of the Janata Party was active at primarily at Baroda. In this context with the Sangh being increasingly involved in the different ways mentioned above, it emerged as the most active and organised force in student politics.

Escalation of Communalism and Hindutva

Thus far, the thesis has emphasised the ways in which the Sangh managed to interject itself into student politics by getting involved in agitations and movements that related to relatively non-controversial issues. But the Sangh and the ABVP in Gujarat, did not remain restricted to non-controversial issues and demands. The ABVP, in particular,

¹⁵³⁸ General Administration Department, ‘Secret Monthly Report on the Happenings in Gujarat during the Period from 21st August, 1984 to 20th September, 1984’, 13 October 1984, U. No. 0087367, 272-284, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

¹⁵³⁹ General Administration Department, ‘Secret Monthly Report on the Happenings in Gujarat during the Period from 21st April 1984, to 20th May, 1984’.

also took up a number of issues that were linked to longstanding core Hindutva causes.

At a state Executive Committee meeting, for instance, held at a town near Baroda, in August 1982, the ABVP expressed “serious concern” over “threats to sovereignty of India” because of the move by the UP and Bihar governments of recognising Urdu as the alternative state language¹⁵⁴⁰. At the same meeting the bogey of rehabilitation of “Pakistani Muslims in Kashmir” was also raised. It was further alleged that Muslim organisations were getting funds from the Middle East to carry out proselytization activities and this was a serious threat to national integration¹⁵⁴¹. Similarly, in the lead up to its state convention in December 1983, its General Secretary compared the region of Kutch to Assam. He alleged that just as in Assam there was the problem of Muslim infiltration in Kutch from Pakistan. The Muslims “overstayed” and were involved in “smuggling and clandestine import of contraband and arms”¹⁵⁴². During this period, unlike earlier, one sees, even if to a limited extent, the ABVP foregrounding Hindutva.

In this foregrounding of Hindutva politics in Gujarat during this period, the ABVP was not an exception. The VHP, had by this time begun to raise the issue of conversions to Islam and Christianity¹⁵⁴³ and the RSS Sarsanghchalak, at rally held in Ahmedabad

¹⁵⁴⁰ General Administration Department, ‘Secret Monthly Report on the Happenings in Gujarat during the Period from 21st August, 1982 to 20th September, 1982’, 6 October 1982, U. No. 0087363, Material for Monthly Reports, 219-226, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

¹⁵⁴¹ General Administration Department, ‘Secret Monthly Report on the Happenings in Gujarat during the Period from 21st August, 1982 to 20th September, 1982’.

¹⁵⁴² General Administration Department, ‘Secret Monthly Report on the Happenings in Gujarat during the Period from 21st November, 1983 to 20th December, 1983’, 13 January 1984, U. No. 0087366, KNC/1/340, 231-246, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

¹⁵⁴³ General Administration Department, ‘Secret Monthly Report on the Happenings in Gujarat during the Period from 21st June, 1983 to 20th July, 1983’.

criticised the “immigration of non-Hindus in India” and demanded the declaration of “Bharat as a Hindu Rashtra”¹⁵⁴⁴. The BJP, as part of a national protest, raised the communally sensitive issue of mixing “cow tallow” with vegetable oil¹⁵⁴⁵. This was also the time that the VHP organised its “*Ekatmata Yatra*” (Unity Procession). The aim of this yatra was to foster of Hindu unity which included three processions, including one of which began in West Bengal and ended at Somanth, Gujarat¹⁵⁴⁶. The yatra, in Gujarat, went through a number of important towns and cities and in all these centres, in preparation, “sizeable public meetings” were organised “with a view to establish direct contact with at least 25% of the Hindu population”¹⁵⁴⁷. The Governor’s Monthly Report noted how from the “elaborate preparations” made “under the auspices” of the VHP and RSS, and from the “nature of the organisation and the kind of speeches being made and literature being distributed” it was clear that the attempt was to “appeal” to “Hindu fundamentalism” in order to “rouse Hindu masses”¹⁵⁴⁸. The yatra itself which ended at Somanth temple, was also noted to have received “considerable response from the masses”¹⁵⁴⁹.

During this period there was also an increase in communal violence and clashes in Gujarat. From a perusal of the Governor’s Monthly Reports, it is clear that between

¹⁵⁴⁴ General Administration Department, ‘Secret Monthly Report on the Happenings in Gujarat during the Period from 21st August, 1983 to 20th September, 1983’, 13 October 1983, U. No. 0087366, KNC/1/340, 106-115, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

¹⁵⁴⁵ General Administration Department, ‘Secret Monthly Report on the Happenings in Gujarat during the Period from 21st October, 1983 to 20th November, 1983’, 13 December 1984, U. No. 0087366, KNC/1/340, 196-208, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

¹⁵⁴⁶ For more on the yatra C. Jaffrelot, *The Hindu Nationalist Movement and Indian Politics, 1925 to the 1990s: Strategies of Identity-Building, Implantation and Mobilisation (with Special Reference to Central India)* (London: Hurst, 1996), 359.

¹⁵⁴⁷ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret M.R. No. 5/83’, 11 December 1983, U. No. 0087366, KNC/1/340, 159-169, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

¹⁵⁴⁸ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret M.R. No. 5/83’.

¹⁵⁴⁹ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret M.R. No. 6/83’, 7 January 1984, U. No. 0087366, KNC/1/340, 221-227, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

June 1981 and December 1984 not only the major cities¹⁵⁵⁰ but also a number of larger towns of the state including, amongst other places, Bharuch¹⁵⁵¹, Godhra¹⁵⁵², Viramgam¹⁵⁵³, Deesa¹⁵⁵⁴, Rajpipla¹⁵⁵⁵, Valsad¹⁵⁵⁶, Amreli¹⁵⁵⁷, Himatnagar¹⁵⁵⁸, Veraval¹⁵⁵⁹, and Dabhoi¹⁵⁶⁰, witnessed major and minor, often multiple, incidents of communal violence. These were in addition to the communal rioting at Baroda in 1982¹⁵⁶¹, widespread riots at Sidhpur in 1983¹⁵⁶² and Himatnagar in 1984¹⁵⁶³. Viewed in the light of the Sangh's foregrounding of Hindutva politics, the increase in communal incidents during this time cannot be written off as simple coincidence.

Electoral Gains

The efforts "at revival of Hindu fundamental movement", were in the Governor's, that is of the Intelligence Bureau's, assessment "indirectly benefitting BJP"¹⁵⁶⁴ and

¹⁵⁵⁰ In March 1982 in Ahmedabad Governor of Gujarat, 'Secret M.R. No. 44/SM'. and September 1982 in Ahmedabad, Baroda and Rajkot, Governor of Gujarat, 'Secret M.R. No. 48/SM', 10 August 1982, U. No. 0087365, 31-34, GSA, Gandhinagar, India. These were in addition to the recurrent communal violence in Baroda mentioned earlier.

¹⁵⁵¹ Governor of Gujarat, 'Secret M.R. No. 36/SM', 14 August 1981, U. No. 0087364, GS/X/1980, 168-172, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

¹⁵⁵² Governor of Gujarat, 'Secret M.R. No. 36/SM'.

¹⁵⁵³ Governor of Gujarat, 'Secret M.R. No. 5/83'.

¹⁵⁵⁴ Governor of Gujarat, 'Secret M.R. No. 48/SM'.

¹⁵⁵⁵ Governor of Gujarat, 'Secret M.R. No. 49/SM', 8 September 1982, U. No. 0087365, 39-43, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

¹⁵⁵⁶ General Administration Department, 'Secret Monthly Report on the Happenings in Gujarat during the Period from 21st December, 1983 to 20th January, 1984', 13 February 1984, U. No. 0087367, 25-37, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

¹⁵⁵⁷ Governor of Gujarat, 'Secret M.R. No. 49/SM'.

¹⁵⁵⁸ Governor of Gujarat, 'Secret M.R. No. 51/S.M.', 11 November 1982, U. No. 0087365, 55-61, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

¹⁵⁵⁹ Governor of Gujarat, 'Secret M.R. No. 51/S.M.'

¹⁵⁶⁰ Governor of Gujarat, 'Secret M.R. No. 51/S.M.'

¹⁵⁶¹ See Chapter 2, Section V.

¹⁵⁶² General Administration Department, 'Secret Monthly Report on the Happenings in Gujarat during the Period from 21st October, 1983 to 20th November, 1983'.

¹⁵⁶³ General Administration Department, 'Secret Monthly Report on the Happenings in Gujarat during the Period from 21st March, 1984 to 20th April, 1984'.

¹⁵⁶⁴ Government of Gujarat, 'Secret M.R. No. 7', 9 February 1984, U. No. 0087367, 13-18, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

following the anti-reservation agitation, the BJP also began regaining some lost ground, electorally. Soon after the agitation, in November 1981 when bye-elections were held, the BJP won two out three Assembly seats and all the three seats in the Rajkot Municipal Corporation¹⁵⁶⁵. The BJP, as a Governor's Report from December 1983 noted, "continued to slowly consolidate its hold local self-government bodies"¹⁵⁶⁶. During the period between the two anti-reservation agitations, it managed to "wrest" control of a number of Municipal Corporations and Municipalities including Rajkot¹⁵⁶⁷, Surat¹⁵⁶⁸, Anand¹⁵⁶⁹, Navsari¹⁵⁷⁰, Dhoraji¹⁵⁷¹, Upleta¹⁵⁷² and Botad¹⁵⁷³. Even in bye-elections to Assembly seats, the BJP managed to win five out of nine¹⁵⁷⁴. In the 1984 Lok Sabha elections held in the wake of Indira Gandhi's assassination, the BJP, nationally, won a total of two seats. In Gujarat, where the BJP contested in 11 seats as part of an alliance with the Janata and other smaller parties, its performance cannot be considered a complete flop as it managed to win 1 seat and secure 18.64% of votes, more than the Janata¹⁵⁷⁵. It must also be noted that the solitary BJP MP from

¹⁵⁶⁵ Governor of Gujarat, 'Secret M.R. No. 40/SM', 16 December 1982, U. No. 0087364, GS/X/1980, 206-211, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

¹⁵⁶⁶ Governor of Gujarat, 'Secret M.R. No. 5/83'.

¹⁵⁶⁷ Governor of Gujarat, 'Secret M.R. No. 5/83'.

¹⁵⁶⁸ Governor of Gujarat, 'Secret M.R. No. 1/83', 10 August 1983, U. No. 0087366, KNC/1/340, 7-11, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

¹⁵⁶⁹ Governor of Gujarat, 'Secret M.R. No. 5/83'.

¹⁵⁷⁰ Governor of Gujarat, 'Secret M.R. No. 5/83'.

¹⁵⁷¹ Government of Gujarat, 'Secret M.R. No. 9', 8 April 1984, U. No. 0087367, 84-94, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

¹⁵⁷² General Administration Department, 'Secret Monthly Report on the Happenings in Gujarat during the Period from 21st November, 1983 to 20th December, 1983'.

¹⁵⁷³ Government of Gujarat, 'Secret M.R. No. 3', 9 July 1984, U. No. 0087367, 209-213, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

¹⁵⁷⁴ Government of Gujarat, 'Secret M.R. No. 2', 8 June 1984, U. No. 0087367, 195-199, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

¹⁵⁷⁵ BJP got 18.64% of the vote share while the Janata got 16.59% ECI p. 98

Gujarat, A.K. Patel, was one who had been arrested on multiple occasions for his involvement in communal violence¹⁵⁷⁶.

Between the two anti-reservation agitations, the BJP continued to agitate and attack the government on a number of varied issues while also making efforts to strengthen its organisation. Having assailed the government on price rise and inadequate supply of essential commodities, during the anti-reservation agitation, it persisted with this even after the agitation had ended, organising a “*Sarkar Jagao Saptah*” (Awaken the Government Week) in August 1981¹⁵⁷⁷. It played a leading part in agitations against a hike in milk prices at Ahmedabad and Baroda¹⁵⁷⁸. The BJP attempted to take up issues of the peasantry, leading protests against a 100% levy that had been placed on the export of wheat¹⁵⁷⁹ and against a rise in the irrigation rate¹⁵⁸⁰. From the Governor’s Monthly and other government reports of the time, one knows that there were frequent visits to the state by senior leaders of the All India BJP, particularly Vajpayee and Advani but also others like Bhai Mahvir, Yogendradutta Sharma as well as one of their few Muslim leaders, Arif Beg. They would typically address gatherings of BJP workers and sympathisers. Such activities picked up steam particularly towards the end of 1983 with the BJP organising large *sammelans* (conventions) for its workers at Mehsana and Himmatnagar¹⁵⁸¹ which were followed a “number of well attended

¹⁵⁷⁶ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret M.R. No. 5/83’; General Administration Department, ‘Secret Monthly Report on the Happenings in Gujarat during the Period from 21st October, 1983 to 20th November, 1983’.

¹⁵⁷⁷ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret M.R. No. 34/SM’.

¹⁵⁷⁸ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret M.R. No. 58/S.M.’, 15 June 1983, U. No. 0087365, 121-124, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

¹⁵⁷⁹ Governor of Gujarat, ‘Secret M.R. No. 53/S.M.’, 15 January 1983, U. No. 0087365, 73-80, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

¹⁵⁸⁰ General Administration Department, ‘Secret Monthly Report on the Happenings in Gujarat during the Period from 21st November, 1983 to 20th December, 1983’.

¹⁵⁸¹ Government of Gujarat, ‘Secret M.R. No. 7’.

sammelans” in 1984¹⁵⁸². These sammelans were addressed by one or more of the BJP’s national leaders and the purpose of these was, according to a Governor’s Report to “consolidate their ranks”¹⁵⁸³ or in other words organisational consolidation.

On the eve of the second anti-reservation agitation, therefore, the Sangh, particularly the ABVP, VHP and the BJP, was, organisationally, in a position to exploit it to the advantage.

Section VI Interventions in the Anti-Reservation Agitation 1985

The second anti-reservation agitation began when the issue of an increase in seats reserved for SEBC students taken up, in early February, by students at LE Engineering, Morbi. They were soon joined by students at LD Engineering and with that protests erupted at different educational centres and by the middle of February all universities in the state were ordered shut. The agitation that lasted till the late July witnessed not only attacks on backward castes but also recurrent bouts of communal violence and ended only with the resignation of the CM. This section attempts to understand the role played by the Sangh in the agitation.

Attitude towards the Agitation

Given the electoral significance of those who were availing reservations, in a manner similar to the first agitation, Sangh attempted to indulge in pro-reservation posturing. Thus, a piece in *Organiser*, in which the anti-reservation agitation was first mentioned

¹⁵⁸² Government of Gujarat, ‘Secret M.R. No. 4’, 13 August 1984, U. No. 0087367, 230-234, GSA, Gandhinagar, India; Government of Gujarat, ‘Secret M.R. No. 9’; General Administration Department, ‘Secret Monthly Report on the Happenings in Gujarat during the Period from 21st February, 1984 to 20th March, 1984’, 13 April 1984, U. No. 0087367, 99-109, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

¹⁵⁸³ Government of Gujarat, ‘Secret M.R. No. 8’, 7 March 1984, U. No. 0087367, 54-59, GSA, Gandhinagar, India.

asserted, “that backward classes must get their opportunities to go up the socio-economic ladder no body (sic.) would question”¹⁵⁸⁴. The ABVP National Executive, in June, resolved that in order to make “SC/ST/OBC the partners in education, property and power”, reservations were a “a historic need” and should continue till “social disparity exists in society”¹⁵⁸⁵. Similarly, a delegation of BJP leaders that met the President during the agitation, according to a report in *Organiser*, “in one voice repeatedly said that they fully supported reservations” and also claimed credit for having implemented reservations for OBCs as part of the Janata¹⁵⁸⁶.

Although attempting to, in this manner, appear to be in favour of reservations, anti-reservationist sympathies were apparent in the Sangh’s criticism reservations and portrayal of the agitators in a favourable light. For instance, the article in *Organiser* mentioned above, after claiming that it supported reservations went on to call for on an end to reservations arguing that under the system “a rich backward class boy who neglects his studies” and got “less than 30 per cent marks” would get admission to a Medical college “in preference to a poor boy from the so-called high caste who studies hard and gets 80 per cent...”¹⁵⁸⁷. Similarly, the resolution passed by the ABVP which purported to support reservations, did not do so unequivocally. Instead, issues such as “upper limit of reservation”, “balance between merit and efficiency and reservation” and reservations perpetuating vested interests were raised and a national debate was on the question was reservations was demanded. It was further asserted that without taking all sections “into confidence” and without a “national consensus” no more

¹⁵⁸⁴ Special Correspondent, ‘Cong-I Unleashes New Caste Tensions for Poll Gains’, *Organiser*, 17 March 1985.

¹⁵⁸⁵ Our Correspondent, ‘ABVP’s Call for Withdrawal of Gujarat Agitation’, *Organiser*, 26 June 1985.

¹⁵⁸⁶ ‘BJP Nails Canard of Party’s Hand in Gujarat Violence’, *Organiser*, 25 June 1985.

¹⁵⁸⁷ Special Correspondent, ‘Cong-I Unleashes New Caste Tensions for Poll Gains’.

reservation should be announced¹⁵⁸⁸. This for all intents and purposes meant leaving the increase in reservations to the mercy of the anti-reservationists. The BJP delegation mentioned above claiming that reservations were a “national issue” also called for a “national consensus”¹⁵⁸⁹. Similarly, an RSS resolution on Gujarat called for a “national consensus on the Reservation policy” because it felt that “the overall efficiency of the administration and social harmony” should not “receive any setback” due to attempts to provide “necessary support” to “socially neglected and needy sections”¹⁵⁹⁰. This was in addition to the statements made by the state ABVP and Ashok Bhatt to the press that they were against reservations¹⁵⁹¹.

That the loyalties of the Sangh lay with the anti-reservationists also came across from the sympathetic portrayal of the anti-reservation agitation in *Organiser* and submissions to the Dave Commission. As noted in Chapter 2, even before the agitation was temporarily suspended for the Assembly elections, there were attacks against backward communities. Despite this, the Sangh presented the agitation as being a non-violent one, started by parents and students against a “further disregard of merit”¹⁵⁹². Although there was clear evidence of the link between the agitation and the communal rioting, L.K. Advani speaking with the press defended the anti-reservationists stating, that the rioting “nothing to do with the anti-reservation agitation

¹⁵⁸⁸ Our Correspondent, ‘ABVP’s Call for Withdrawal of Gujarat Agitation’.

¹⁵⁸⁹ ‘BJP Nails Canard of Party’s Hand in Gujarat Violence’.

¹⁵⁹⁰ ‘RSS Resolutions: Gujarat Turmoil’, *Organiser*, 21 July 1985.

¹⁵⁹¹ UNI, ‘ABVP Backs out of Stir’, *The Times of India*, 18 March 1985; V.S. Dave, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Incidents of Violence and Disturbances That Took Place at Various Places in the State of Gujarat since February, 1985 to 18th July, 1985: Volume I* (Gandhinagar: Government Central Press, 1990), 139.

¹⁵⁹² Editorial, ‘The Agony of Gujarat’, *Organiser*, 26 May 1985.

launched by students”¹⁵⁹³. In its submission to the Dave Commission echoing the anti-reservationists, the Sangh claimed that the agitation was “not against any community”, it was “neither anti-Harijan nor anti-backward classes, nor anti-Muslim”¹⁵⁹⁴. It was also falsely claimed that until 5 March, “most incidents were about destroying public property and no incident took place against the persons like Harijans, Baxi Panch beneficiaries, or Muslims etc.”¹⁵⁹⁵. An article in the *Organiser* went so far as to suggest that “the agitation in Gujarat was running on peaceful lines till April 15”¹⁵⁹⁶ which was far from the truth.

Denial and Deflection

This being the case, the Sangh attempted to rebuff charges of participating in the agitation and the ensuing caste and communal violence. Soon after the first incidents of communal rioting at Ahmedabad, Advani visited the state, held a press conference at Gandhinagar and refuted all allegations of “opposition and particularly BJP involvement in the riots”¹⁵⁹⁷. As the rioting continued, the Sangh farcically set up its own “inquiry committee” comprising of pro-Sangh individuals¹⁵⁹⁸, including two BJP MPs, which proceed to give a clean chit to the Sangh. The chairperson of the so-called committee stated that the BJP was not behind the agitation but was “being made a

¹⁵⁹³ Tol News Service, ‘Ex-Cong. MLA behind Gujarat Riot, Says Advani’, *The Times of India*, 28 March 1985.

¹⁵⁹⁴ Dave, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Incidents of Violence and Disturbances That Took Place at Various Places in the State of Gujarat since February, 1985 to 18th July, 1985: Volume I*, 60–62.

¹⁵⁹⁵ Dave, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Incidents of Violence and Disturbances That Took Place at Various Places in the State of Gujarat since February, 1985 to 18th July, 1985: Volume I*, 60–62.

¹⁵⁹⁶ Editorial, ‘The Agony of Gujarat’.

¹⁵⁹⁷ Tol News Service, ‘Ex-Cong. MLA behind Gujarat Riot, Says Advani’.

¹⁵⁹⁸ Members of the Committee – Sunder Singh Bhandari (head); Justice H.S. Sheth, Ram Jethmalani, A.K. Patel (MP) R.C. Batra, ‘Solanki’s Devil Dance’, *Organiser*, 5 May 1985.

scapegoat”¹⁵⁹⁹. The General Secretary of the BJP’s Gujarat unit while addressing a press conference at Delhi, in June, denied “the charge of BJP hand in rioting” made by “some sections of the press” saying they were either “biased or were based on second hand information”. He “emphasised” that BJP was “in no way involved in any violent activity” but was instead “actively working in relief camps set up for riot victims”¹⁶⁰⁰. The Dave Commission succinctly summed up the form the denials took. According to the Commission it was claimed,

“ [in] all the incidents from beginning to end, BJP had absolutely no hand in them neither in anti-reservation agitation nor in communal disturbances because they neither oppose the reservation policy about SC and ST nor they are engaged in criminal violence against Muslims...BJP had no connection with the agitations... No worker of BJP had participated in any incident”.¹⁶⁰¹

Further, all manner of allegations were hurled in attempting to deflect from the involvement of the Sangh in the agitation and rioting. Muslims and “pro-reservationists” allegedly working for pro-Solanki factions within the Congress were accused of initiating the agitation as well as escalating the violence. According to this version, upon not being able to control the agitation, Solanki, had acted in a “typical Machiavellian way”, he had mobilised “reservationists against anti-reservationists” and had “engineered” “caste and communal clashes” in order to “defame and defuse the agitation”¹⁶⁰². According to the Sangh’s statement made to the Dave Commission

¹⁵⁹⁹ Batra, ‘Solanki’s Devil Dance’.

¹⁶⁰⁰ ‘BJP Nails Canard of Party’s Hand in Gujarat Violence’.

¹⁶⁰¹ Dave, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Incidents of Violence and Disturbances That Took Place at Various Places in the State of Gujarat since February, 1985 to 18th July, 1985: Volume I*, 62.

¹⁶⁰² Editorial, ‘The Agony of Gujarat’.

“students had a programme of sounding death knell [on 18 March] but with this programme simultaneously the Muslims made a violent assault on Hindu localities which were preplanned and systematised”¹⁶⁰³. This was the result of a conspiracy between the CM and “men of his confidence and Police people”¹⁶⁰⁴. Similar claims were made regarding the communal violence in mid-April. Jayendra Pandit, “leader of BJP civic group”, in the Ahmedabad Corporation, accused a “former Cong-I Muslim MLA”, close to the CM, of “instigating his co-religionists during the riots”¹⁶⁰⁵. The government to “meet the challenge” posed by the anti-reservation agitation had used its “brain child and stooge organisation” the Shanti Seva Samiti to “warn the anti-reservationists”. When the anti-reservationists “refused to be browbeaten by the Sena’s threats”, the government had “brought in” “groups of youngmen belonging to Muslim, Harijan and backward classes” in trucks to “Khadia-Saraspur-Raipur-Gomtipur area”, known Sangh strongholds, who went on to carry out an “orgy of violence”, unencumbered by the police¹⁶⁰⁶.

While the CM and his government were supposed to have hatched such conspiracies, his detractors within the Congress were also accused of orchestrating violence. In the pages of *Organiser*, it was alleged that it was “dissidents of the ruling party who were

¹⁶⁰³ Dave, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Incidents of Violence and Disturbances That Took Place at Various Places in the State of Gujarat since February, 1985 to 18th July, 1985: Volume I*, 54–55.

¹⁶⁰⁴ “Shri Prabodh Rawal and Police Inspector S.S. Chauhan, former legislature (sic.) Mohd. Hussain Barejia, Municipal Corporators like Tayyabali Rangwala and Dudhwala and they started communal disturbances in Vadigam when Muslims staying in Naginapole climbed up their roods and threw burning rags and cement bowls with nails on Hindu locality”. Dave, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Incidents of Violence and Disturbances That Took Place at Various Places in the State of Gujarat since February, 1985 to 18th July, 1985: Volume I*, 60–62.

¹⁶⁰⁵ Our Correspondent, ‘Riot-Eve Visit of Six Mysterious Arabs in Ahmedabad’, *Organiser*, 26 May 1985.

¹⁶⁰⁶ Batra, ‘Solanki’s Devil Dance’.

behind the agitation”¹⁶⁰⁷ and the agitation was “to oust their own party’s ministry”¹⁶⁰⁸. The BJP National Executive passed a resolution stating that it was the “internal feuds” of the Congress that had “contributed first towards making the agitation violent, and later towards giving the situation a dangerous (c)asteist and communal twist”¹⁶⁰⁹. Advani at the press conference mentioned earlier accused “a former minister and a former Congress member of the state Assembly”, part of the dissent group, for being “behind the current disturbances” at Ahmedabad¹⁶¹⁰. A report in the *Organiser* was, similarly, of the opinion that “the current anti-reservation agitation had turned violent because some of Solanki’s rivals [within the Congress] want him to be shown the door”¹⁶¹¹.

Involvement in the Agitation

“The role of the leaders of these opposition parties was like Krishna during Mahabharat. After having given his entire army and armoury to Duryodhan, he himself stayed on the side of the Pandavas. In the same way these leaders, after initially claiming in the press that they supported reservations stayed silent the entire time while giving a free hand to their activist army to run the anti-reservation agitation, make it more militant and target Dalits and Muslims”¹⁶¹²

¹⁶⁰⁷ Batra, ‘Solanki’s Devil Dance’.

¹⁶⁰⁸ ‘Cong-I Dissidents Fanning Violence to Oust Solanki’, *Organiser*, 31 March 1985.

¹⁶⁰⁹ BJP Resolution from National Executive 19-21 July 1985.

¹⁶¹⁰ Tol News Service, ‘Ex-Cong. MLA behind Gujarat Riot, Says Advani’.

¹⁶¹¹ ‘Cong-I Dissidents Fanning Violence to Oust Solanki’.

¹⁶¹² V.S. Dave, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Incidents of Violence and Disturbances That Took Place at Various Places in the State of Gujarat since February, 1985 to 18th July, 1985: Volume III* (Gandhinagar: Government Central Press, 1990), 19.

This, a part of an affidavit submitted to the Dave Commission, is a particularly apt description of the manner in which the Sangh was involved in the 1985 agitation.

Its attempts at denying, deflecting and pro-reservationist posturing, notwithstanding, the Sangh was active throughout the duration of the six-month long agitation. As noted above, following the protests at Morbi, BJP MLA Ashok Bhatt had come out in support of the agitating students and had criticised the “caste oriented” reservation policy. Moreover, unlike the agitation in 1981, the primary involvement of the Sangh in the 1985 anti-reservation agitation, up until the Assembly elections in early March, was through the ABVP, with other organisations, especially the BJP, focused more on the Assembly elections. Some accounts in the contemporary press went so far as to suggest that the ABVP had “initiated the agitation”¹⁶¹³. According to the Dave Commission there was “positive evidence” with respect to the involvement of the ABVP in the agitation prior to 5 March¹⁶¹⁴. It concluded that “when certain students in Morbi showed their protest against increase in percentage of quota”, the “ABVP got an opportunity to take the lead”¹⁶¹⁵ and had “taken command of [the] agitation”¹⁶¹⁶. The ABVP had “masterminded (sic.) in planning and its [the agitation’s] execution”, in “each town... the same pattern was followed” and it was due the efforts of the ABVP that the agitation spread “throughout the length and width of Gujarat”¹⁶¹⁷. While

¹⁶¹³ UNI, ‘ABVP Backs out of Stir’.

¹⁶¹⁴ V.S. Dave, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Incidents of Violence and Disturbances That Took Place at Various Places in the State of Gujarat since February, 1985 to 18th July, 1985: Volume II* (Gandhinagar: Government Central Press, 1990), 9.

¹⁶¹⁵ Dave, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Incidents of Violence and Disturbances That Took Place at Various Places in the State of Gujarat since February, 1985 to 18th July, 1985: Volume II*, 4.

¹⁶¹⁶ Dave, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Incidents of Violence and Disturbances That Took Place at Various Places in the State of Gujarat since February, 1985 to 18th July, 1985: Volume I*, 268–69.

¹⁶¹⁷ Dave, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Incidents of Violence and Disturbances That Took Place at Various Places in the State of Gujarat since February, 1985 to 18th July, 1985: Volume I*, 268–69.

accounting for some amount of exaggeration, the fact that the ABVP was involved, prominently and openly, during this period of the agitation is undeniable.

Following the elections and landslide victory of the Congress, along with the nature of the agitation, the Sangh's involvement in it also changed. Amongst the major developments that took place between 5 and 18 March¹⁶¹⁸, were the formal withdrawal of the ABVP from the agitation as well as the formation of the Vali Mandal. The government, in response to the call given by the anti-reservationists for the boycott of examinations from 18 March, announced multiple concessions on 16 March. The following day, the ABVP publicly declared its withdrawal stating it was "satisfied" with the government's offer¹⁶¹⁹. The public withdrawal of the ABVP must, however, not be taken at face-value. Much like in previous large agitations, apart from the AGNS at Ahmedabad, there were large and small samitis that had been formed across the state, many of which were under the control of the Sangh. That such samitis were fronts of the Sangh was specifically noted by the Dave Commission¹⁶²⁰. This was particularly the case with Sangh dominated localities in Ahmedabad such as Khadia, Astodia, Raipur etc. which went on to witness large scale violence. Functioning in this manner through local samitis, there was no longer any need for the ABVP to appear directly involved. Withdrawal left it free to play the balancing role and indulge in posturing¹⁶²¹. Moreover, the Vali Mandal that was formed during this time played a significant part in the agitation. It had a great amount of influence on the direction taken by the agitation in the succeeding months and its representatives were amongst those

¹⁶¹⁸ See Chapter 2, Section VI.

¹⁶¹⁹ UNI, 'ABVP Backs out of Stir'.

¹⁶²⁰ Dave, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Incidents of Violence and Disturbances That Took Place at Various Places in the State of Gujarat since February, 1985 to 18th July, 1985: Volume II*, 5.

¹⁶²¹ Tol News Service, 'Quota Rioting in Gujarat', *The Times of India*, 19 March 1985.

that ratified an agreement with the government that effectively ended the agitation¹⁶²². With the formation of the Vali Mandal during this time, the Sangh found another means to exercise influence over the agitation without exposing itself as being anti-reservationist. While the group claimed to simply be a collective of concerned parents and guardians, according to the Dave Commission, some of the Vali Mandal's "prominent workers" were "active workers" of the BJP¹⁶²³.

This was in addition to the other common means used by the Sangh to intervene in the agitation. In a manner similar to the first agitation, there were documented cases of BJP leaders securing the release of or standing as surety for student agitators that had been arrested¹⁶²⁴. As earlier, exaggerated and often false accounts of police atrocities were utilised by the Sangh. The pages of *Organiser* were replete with accounts of police atrocities such as arson, looting, molesting women, police entering and killing people in their homes particularly in Sangh dominated areas. During the April violence, it was alleged that the CM had used the police as "Pro-reservation goonda elements to break the Anti-reservationists agitation"¹⁶²⁵. According to an editorial in *Organiser*, there were "unheard of atrocities and indignities on the citizens of Ahmedabad" where a "politicised and criminalised police force was unleashed like Hitler's storm troopers"¹⁶²⁶. Shankarsinh Vaghela, similarly, told the press that police atrocities in BJP strongholds would even put "Hitler to shame"¹⁶²⁷. Protests were

¹⁶²² See Chapter 2, Section VI.

¹⁶²³ Dave, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Incidents of Violence and Disturbances That Took Place at Various Places in the State of Gujarat since February, 1985 to 18th July, 1985: Volume I*, 223.

¹⁶²⁴ Dave, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Incidents of Violence and Disturbances That Took Place at Various Places in the State of Gujarat since February, 1985 to 18th July, 1985: Volume III*, 146.

¹⁶²⁵ Batra, 'Solanki's Devil Dance'.

¹⁶²⁶ Editorial, 'The Agony of Gujarat'.

¹⁶²⁷ Tol News Service, 'Solanki Bows to Students', *The Times of India*, 20 April 1985.

organised against alleged atrocities and the BJP delegation which met the President also demanded a judicial inquiry¹⁶²⁸.

While the police were on the whole demonised by the Sangh throughout this time, there was a notable exception, that of Police Sub-Inspector M.T. Rana. Rana was allegedly murdered by Muslims in the Baluchavad area of Ahmedabad on 8 May and his murder was communalised by the Sangh. Rana was portrayed by the Sangh as a “courageous Rajput officer” who had attempted to “rescue” the “helpless Hindu residents” of the area who were “surrounded by huge Muslim population”¹⁶²⁹. He had been according to at least one account peddled by the Sangh, killed by a Muslim underworld don “himself”, using a gun smuggled from Pakistan¹⁶³⁰. According to the evidence given by the CoP, Baroda to the Dave Commission, “board writings condoling the death” were found in “BJP dominated areas of Ahmedabad”. Sangh workers also “shaved off their heads and moustaches to express their condolence” and then got their “photographs published which was given wide coverage by some sections of the press”. This “shaving-off ceremony by a large number of Hindus” was described by him as an “astute move” that succeeded in rousing “Hindu passions against the Muslims”¹⁶³¹.

The Sangh while denying all allegations of involvement in communal rioting, often made counter allegations. The Dave Commission, however, was unequivocal about the role played by the Sangh, including the ABVP. It stated that Solanki’s return to

¹⁶²⁸ Our Special Correspondent, ‘President “unhappy” at Situation in Gujarat’, *Organiser*, 30 June 1985.

¹⁶²⁹ Our Correspondent, ‘Cong-I Importing Communal Criminals in Ahmedabad’, *Organiser*, 14 July 1985.

¹⁶³⁰ Our Correspondent, ‘Cong-I Importing Communal Criminals in Ahmedabad’.

¹⁶³¹ Dave, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Incidents of Violence and Disturbances That Took Place at Various Places in the State of Gujarat since February, 1985 to 18th July, 1985: Volume I*, 139.

power had “antagonised” certain groups, among whom were included the ABVP, BJP and the VHP, and there was evidence to suggest that they had “combined together to intensify the anti-reservation agitation”¹⁶³². Contrary to the Sangh’s claims that the first outbreak of communal violence at Ahmedabad was the result of a conspiracy hatched by the CM and his confidantes who had instigated Muslims to attack Hindu localities, the Commission noted that “the evidence” was “suggestive of the fact that provocation came from the Hindus of Wadigam [the area where the rioting began] ...”¹⁶³³. There was also “overwhelming evidence on record not rebutted despite giving several opportunities to the BJP and ABVP that it was they, who gave the communal turn to the entire agitation”¹⁶³⁴. This being the case, that Sangh functionaries between March and July 1985 initiated and participated in gruesome communal rioting is well established. It is also the subject a number of studies¹⁶³⁵, is adequately documented and need not be repeated here.

It can thus be concluded that the Sangh, while making empty pro-reservation noises and denying that it had anything to do with the rioting, during the second anti-reservation agitation brought to bear its entire organisational strength, utilised multiple organisations simultaneously, and, as a result, was able to transform what was initially

¹⁶³² Dave, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Incidents of Violence and Disturbances That Took Place at Various Places in the State of Gujarat since February, 1985 to 18th July, 1985: Volume II*, 9.

¹⁶³³ Dave, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Incidents of Violence and Disturbances That Took Place at Various Places in the State of Gujarat since February, 1985 to 18th July, 1985: Volume II*, 4.

¹⁶³⁴ Dave, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Incidents of Violence and Disturbances That Took Place at Various Places in the State of Gujarat since February, 1985 to 18th July, 1985: Volume II*, 4.

¹⁶³⁵ O Shani, *Communalism, Caste and Hindu Nationalism: The Violence in Gujarat* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); G. Shah, ‘Middle Class Politics: Case of Anti-Reservation Agitations in Gujarat’, *Economic and Political Weekly* 22, no. 19/21 (1987): AN155–72; Asghar Ali Engineer, ‘Communal Fire Engulfs Ahmedabad Once Again’, *Economic And Political Weekly* 20, no. 27 (6 July 1985): 1116–20; Sujata Patel and Iyengar Sudarshan, ‘Violence with a Difference’, *Economic And Political Weekly* 20, no. 28 (13 July 1985): 1174–75.

a minor student protest into an agitation involving widespread communal violence lasting almost six months.

The second anti-reservation agitation was a seminal moment for Gujarat politics. Its repercussions went much beyond the resignation of the CM who had been elected with a massive majority only months before. Yagnik and Sheth¹⁶³⁶ have noted how the anti-reservation agitation while bringing them even closer to the Sangh, brought about a greater unity within the Brahmin-Vaniya-Patidar grouping. While the communal rioting, according to Shani¹⁶³⁷, was utilised by the Sangh to expand its reach into lower castes to create a so called “Hindu unity”. Although it would take the Sangh another five years and mobilisations on the Ram Mandir issue to consolidate its position, the 1985 anti-reservation agitation and the communal violence, brought an end to the KHAM alliance and initiated the decline of the Congress and the concurrent rise of the Sangh.

Conclusions

This chapter while broadly tracing the rise of the Sangh, in electoral and organisational terms, has been an attempt to understand what part was played by student politics in the Sangh's rise between 1967 and 1985. Simultaneously, the chapter seeks to identify the Sangh's own deliberate and strategic interventions as it sought to expand its reach and power.

We began by noting the development of the ABVP, which was an unimportant force in student politics in 1967 but emerged as a well-organised and powerful actor in 1971.

¹⁶³⁶ Achyut Yagnik and Suchitra Sheth, *The Shaping of Modern Gujarat: Plurality, Hindutva and Beyond* (New Delhi: Penguin Books India, 2005), 254–56.

¹⁶³⁷ Shani, *Communalism, Caste and Hindu Nationalism: The Violence in Gujarat*, 144–46.

This was accomplished, through a combination of service and agitational activities to aid organisational growth. Along with other elements of the Sangh, the ABVP attempted to rehabilitate the image of the Sangh after its first major expansion through the Ahmedabad riots in 1969. To this end, the ABVP and the BJS focused on non-controversial sectional issues in an attempt to be viewed in a positive and secular light. During and after the Navnirman Agitation, the Sangh sought to further a narrative of its own importance; this chapter scrutinises the evidence and finds that the Sangh played a more complex and ambiguous role than its own propaganda suggests. In reality, the Sangh was initially opposed to the Agitation; but when the Agitation gathered strength, the Sangh then attempted to usurp control of the agitation for its own ends. While it was never part of the organisational leadership, the Sangh, through the formation of parallel samitis and infiltration of existing ones, was able to influence the agitation and later on capitalise on its legacy. Its interventions in the agitation – and its well-constructed propaganda around it – contributed to the electoral gains made by the BJS as part of the Janata Morcha.

Having covered the period from the imposition of the Emergency to just after the 1977 elections, we concluded that this was a complicated period for the Sangh. On the one hand, the Sangh faced some organisational setbacks during this period because of political persecution; but it also made electoral gains. After merging with others to form the Janata, the Sangh was part of the government both at the centre and the state by June 1977. Its proximity to power allowed the Sangh some time for organisational consolidation. Apart from a few protests, the Sangh and ABVP seem to have focused on service activities during this period, as they attempted to portray themselves as responsible actors capable of being entrusted with political power.

We then examined how the Sangh during the first anti-reservation agitation of 1981, played a duplicitous role. While making some pro-reservation statements as a face-saving measure, its sympathies lay with the anti-reservationists, whom it defended and tacitly supported. Although the agitation was not initiated by the Sangh, it is clear that the Sangh exploited the instability created by the agitation. The group attacked the government on issues of police atrocities against agitators, while also charging the government with failing to address other issues such as price rises and food shortages. This combination of attacks on the government helped the Sangh to gain political advantage.

Following the first agitation, there was a foregrounding of the Hindutva agenda, by the ABVP and other affiliates of the Sangh. This was accompanied by a spike in incidents of communal violence and rioting in the state, coinciding with electoral gains for the BJP. The 1985 agitation proved to be the most significant development of the time for the Sangh. Having faced reverses in the Lok Sabha and Assembly elections, a small student protest was amplified, using the organisational strength of the Sangh. This eventually led to the fall of the popular ministry. The 1985 agitation and communal rioting signalled the beginning of the end for the Congress in Gujarat, and the Sangh continued on its ascent to power.

Epilogue and Conclusions

The State of Student Politics

In the years following the second anti-reservation agitation, issues such as postponement of examinations¹⁶³⁸, shortening of semesters¹⁶³⁹, strict examinations¹⁶⁴⁰, conduct of internal examinations¹⁶⁴¹, high food bills and exemption from payment of fees¹⁶⁴² led to, sometimes violent¹⁶⁴³, protests. One also finds students protesting over non-student issues such rise in milk prices¹⁶⁴⁴ and the transfer of public officials¹⁶⁴⁵. Particularly after 1987, however, from an examination of the sources it is apparent that, student activity, even on student issues, with the partial exception of reservations, greatly decreased in intensity and frequency.

Even on the issue of reservations, while there were, for a while, recurrent protests, they failed to acquire greater proportions or have serious political implications. The first attempt to revive protests was made in November 1985 by the AGNS and NJPS, this time on the issue of reservations in class XI admissions. The committees convened a meeting, took an oath to boycott education, and gave a call for a Gujarat Bandh with the support of the Vali Mandal¹⁶⁴⁶. With the government deciding to slightly

¹⁶³⁸ 'Education Blues, Violent Scenes', *The Times of India*, 27 November 1985; PTI, 'Stir to Put off Exams', *The Times of India*, 21 November 1985.

¹⁶³⁹ PTI, 'Baroda Students Go on Rampage', *The Times of India*, 5 March 1986.

¹⁶⁴⁰ Tol News Service, 'Gujarat Students Burn Jeeps', *The Times of India*, 15 August 1987.

¹⁶⁴¹ Staff Correspondent, 'Stray Violence in Ahmedabad', *The Times of India*, 28 April 1987.

¹⁶⁴² 30 November 1987 Colleges in Ahmedabad observed a bandh for concessions in hostel food bills and exemption from payment of fees. TOI B 222

¹⁶⁴³ Tol News Service, 'Gujarat V-C Starts 72-Hour Fast', *The Times of India*, 18 April 1987.

¹⁶⁴⁴ Ashraf Sayed and Gautam Mehta, 'Act That Terrorises Gujarat', *The Times of India*, 30 September 1987.

¹⁶⁴⁵ 6 October 1987 Student action committee at Rajkot protested the transfer of municipal commission S. Jagadeesan. Tol News Service, '2 Killed in Rajkot Firing', *The Times of India*, 7 October 1987.

¹⁶⁴⁶ Staff Correspondent, 'Gujarat Bandh Call by Students', *The Times of India*, 16 November 1985.

modify the reservation policy, the Gujarat Bandh failed and all agitational programmes were called off¹⁶⁴⁷. There was another failed attempt at “launching” an agitation by the NJPS in December 1989¹⁶⁴⁸. Even during the Mandal Commission protests which gripped much of North India, from September 1990 onwards, there was initially, according to reports in the contemporary press “not much support”¹⁶⁴⁹. While eventually there were protests, violence, fasts unto death and numerous suicide and self-immolation attempts, these abated much sooner in Gujarat. Similarly, during the second nation-wide outburst on reservations, in the following year, violent protests in Gujarat lasted a few of weeks and then “fizzled out” having no further ramifications¹⁶⁵⁰.

To conclude that the 1985 anti-reservation agitation was the last time students played any meaningful part in Gujarat politics would, thus, not be an exaggeration.

Further Rise of the Sangh

The latter half of the 1980s witnessed intense activity from the Sangh through various organisations and on different issues. According to a vernacular Sangh source, by the early 1990s, over a 100 Sangh affiliated fronts were active in Gujarat¹⁶⁵¹. Between 1985 and 1987, the BJP launched significant agitations, as Shah noted, on the issue of rising prices¹⁶⁵² and also mobilised on the issue of the Narmada Dam, launching a “pad yatra” (foot-march) to campaign in 1988-89¹⁶⁵³. The membership of the party

¹⁶⁴⁷ ‘Gujarat Students Postpone Strike’, *The Times of India*, 19 December 1985.

¹⁶⁴⁸ Tol News Service, ‘Gujarat Front for Anti-Quota Stir’, *The Times of India*, 23 December 1989.

¹⁶⁴⁹ Tol News Service, ‘Anti-Mandal Stir Not Organised’, *The Times of India*, 27 August 1990.

¹⁶⁵⁰ Ashraf Sayed, ‘Gujarat Quota Stir Fizzles Out’, *The Times of India*, 14 October 1991.

¹⁶⁵¹ Gajendra Shukl, *Bhartiya Janata Party: Ek Rajkiya Vishleshan (in Gujarati) [Bhartiya Janata Party: A Political Analysis]* (Ahmedabad: Atul Prakashan, 1999), 111.

¹⁶⁵² Ghanshyam Shah, ‘Tenth Lok Sabha Elections: BJP’s Victory in Gujarat’, *Economic And Political Weekly* 26, no. 51 (21 December 1991): 2921.

¹⁶⁵³ Shah, ‘Tenth Lok Sabha Elections: BJP’s Victory in Gujarat’, 2923.

increased from 55000 in 1980 to 200,000 in 1990¹⁶⁵⁴. The ABVP increased its membership from 6000 in 1987 to over 10,000 in 1990¹⁶⁵⁵. Like other Sangh affiliates it too was involved in the communal mobilisations of the late 80s and early 90s¹⁶⁵⁶. According to Shah, there was also the expansion of the BMS, the labour front of the Sangh, with its branches present in as many as 61 towns and cities in Gujarat¹⁶⁵⁷. The BKS, the peasant front, too grew rapidly following almost a year of agitational activities such as rallies, dharnas, *rasta roko* (block the roads), non-payment of revenue or electricity, stoppage of supply of milk/vegetables. This was in addition to a Gujarat bandh, in 1986-87, over a 31 point charter of demands which took up issues of various sections of the rural population¹⁶⁵⁸. Its membership increased from about 4000 in 1985 to over 200,000 by 1990¹⁶⁵⁹. There were also the “repeated communal riots and a systematic campaign on the Ram mandir” by the VHP, RSS and the BJP which, as Shah noted, “created a near hysteria in society” and were “immensely” beneficial to the BJP¹⁶⁶⁰.

The Sangh combining tactically taking up “socio-economic issues” through different fronts while also mobilising fiercely on communal lines meant that the BJP’s electoral rise continued unabated. In 1987, the BJP won the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation for the first time. By 1990, the BJP had “under its control” as many as 10 municipalities,

¹⁶⁵⁴ Shukl, *Bhartiya Janata Party: Ek Rajkiya Vishleshan (in Gujarati)* [*Bhartiya Janata Party: A Political Analysis*], 103.

¹⁶⁵⁵ Shukl, *Bhartiya Janata Party: Ek Rajkiya Vishleshan (in Gujarati)* [*Bhartiya Janata Party: A Political Analysis*], 106.

¹⁶⁵⁶ L.K. Mishra, ‘Keep Out, BJP Tells Police’, *The Times of India*, 25 September 1990.

¹⁶⁵⁷ Shah, ‘Tenth Lok Sabha Elections: BJP’s Victory in Gujarat’, 2922.

¹⁶⁵⁸ Shah, ‘Tenth Lok Sabha Elections: BJP’s Victory in Gujarat’, 2923.

¹⁶⁵⁹ Shukl, *Bhartiya Janata Party: Ek Rajkiya Vishleshan (in Gujarati)* [*Bhartiya Janata Party: A Political Analysis*], 110.

¹⁶⁶⁰ Shah, ‘Tenth Lok Sabha Elections: BJP’s Victory in Gujarat’, 2924.

8 Nagar Panchayats and 2 Zilla panchayats¹⁶⁶¹. In the Assembly elections that year, the BJP won 67 seats, only 3 less than Chimanbhai's Janata Dal, and went on to form the government with Chimanbhai as the CM. Although the government lasted for a very short time, the BJP had firmly established its position in Gujarat. When general elections took place the following year, the BJP, despite an alliance between Chimanbhai and the Congress, secured close to 51% of the votes and won 20 out of 26 seats. The party, winning 121 seats in 1995, went on to form the government for the first time and Keshubhai Patel became the CM. While factional disputes within the party ensured that elections had to be held again in 1998, Keshubhai returned as CM and the BJP has since then remained in the power in the state¹⁶⁶².

Redefining Key Terms

In the introductory chapter, students, who are the primary subjects of this study, are sought to distinguished from the 'youth', with whom they are frequently conflated. Unlike the hazily defined category of youth, students, for the purposes of this thesis is defined, unambiguously, independent of their age as those who were enrolled in higher education institutions like polytechnics, colleges, and universities, in order to gain post-school diplomas and degrees of various sorts. In studying the political activity of students, a generic term, 'student politics', which offers the maximum scope in order to develop a nuanced understanding of its subject matter is utilised by the thesis. Student politics covers here a wide variety of activities ranging from student participation in union elections, student protests around "student issues", often

¹⁶⁶¹ Shah, 'Tenth Lok Sabha Elections: BJP's Victory in Gujarat', 2921.

¹⁶⁶² Due to factional struggles within the BJP, the government fell and elections were held again in 1998. The BJP won 117 seats and Keshubhai once again became the CM.

considered to be of little relevance, such as fee hikes, improper living conditions etc. as well as involvement in state or national electoral politics and mass agitations that include other sections of the population. Further, given ambiguity in defining a 'student activist', those students who played a somewhat more prominent or visible role in student politics are instead referred to as 'student politicians'.

This study, noting that students neither exist independently of classes and nor do they not constitute a separate class, studies them as a multi-class body having an "undeniably specific nature"¹⁶⁶³. Students, particularly in former colonies, were considered by important strands in the academic literature as "prospective members of the elite" or an "incipient elite". Considering that the development of higher education in British India followed a trajectory that was different from other colonies, students as a group, at independence, let alone during the period under study, did not constitute an incipient elite. It was also not the case that there had been such a deterioration in the position of students that they could be considered to be 'proletarianised'. Students, still drawn largely from different sections of the middle class were a relatively privileged group treated with greater deference by the state and allegations of state repression against them could potentially result in wider protests against ruling governments involving non-student sections. Being a multi-class group with undecided future class affiliation, students are under the influence of various forces and there exist within the student politics various political tendencies. It is through the recognition of the relative strengths of these that general trends or shifts within student politics can be understood. Having, discussed these matters in the

¹⁶⁶³ Eduard Batalov, *The Philosophy of Revolt: Criticism of Left Radical Ideology* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1975).

introductory chapter, the thesis, in chapter 2 and 3 takes up its most major task- the production of an empirically accurate history of student politics in Gujarat between 1967 and 1985.

A History of Student Politics in Gujarat

We note the re-emergence of student politics in Gujarat after an almost decade long hiatus following the end of the Mahagujarat movement of 1956 with the simultaneous protests over the location of Saurashtra University with the SU and fee-hike agitation at Ahmedabad in 1967. Following these agitations, between 1967 and 1972 there were numerous protests by students in almost all parts of the state primarily over student issues. These early “struggles” of students while limited to while they were “sporadic outbursts or merely restricted to the academic sphere”¹⁶⁶⁴, were not unimportant in the historical context paving the way towards greater involvement in wider politics. It was political and economic crises in 1973 that finally forced students to oppose the state. This culminated in the Navnirman Agitation of 1974, led by the NYS, as a result of which the CM was forced to resign and the state legislative Assembly, dissolved. Having succeeded in toppling the government, student politics, with few exceptions, returned to taking up only sectional student issues. They were not a factor in the elections that were subsequently held, following which the Janata Morcha coalition formed the government in June 1975. The period between 1967 and the victory of the Janata Morcha coalition in Gujarat in 1975 is covered in Chapter 1.

¹⁶⁶⁴ Suneet Chopra, ‘Political Consciousness of the Student Movement in India’, *Social Scientist* 6, no. 10 (1978): 53–68.

The Emergency was imposed on 25 June 1975 and for the entire period until restrictions were loosened in January 1977, despite having favourable conditions for at least the first 9 months, there was little student politics of note. Following the withdrawal of the Emergency, although students were active once again, much of this remained ill organised and was more often than not localised. This changed with the return to power of the Congress government in 1980 and students joined in protests with other sections and opposition parties on the matters of rising prices and on one occasion even on peasant issues. Although, the divisions of caste had always been prevalent within the student body, they assumed immense proportions in 1981 with the anti-reservation agitation. Beginning with protests at the Medical college in Ahmedabad against reservations at the Post-Graduate level, the agitation, soon involved students from all colleges and universities in the state. It continued for close to five months and included attacks on backward caste students and non-students, ending only after the government had made multiple concessions to the agitators. While parties like the BJP and the Janata Party benefitted from the agitation, in terms of student politics, after the 1981 agitation there was a virtual disappearance of, the once prominent, left and progressive tendencies from the scene of student politics in Gujarat. Students went on to participate in wider politics through agitations which also involved the major opposition parties such one for the reinstatement of the Baroda Commissioner of Police and against a Pension Bill. In 1985, another anti-reservation agitation initiated by students involved months of caste and communal rioting led to the resignation of the CM bringing an end to the period covered by this study.

Certain characteristics and features of student politics in Gujarat during this period are discernible. First, while there has historically been a tendency within student politics that was averse to “politics” or claimed to be “non-political”, this was particularly the

case with student politics in Gujarat. Even with the larger agitations that went on to be politically significant, with attempts by students to make themselves and the agitations appear non-political. Second, in terms of organisation, student politics in Gujarat was for the most part one that was divided and isolated into colleges and universities each functioning in their own domain having their separate, specific, and sometimes even contradictory demands with joint action committees being formed during times of larger agitations. Although it was far from dominant at all point of times, it was only the ABVP that was active throughout the period under study. Third, one finds a major, if not a dominant, presence of left and progressive tendencies in student politics at the beginning of the period under study. The influence of these groups, organisations and individuals, although gradually declining, can be considered to have been significant until at least the Navnirman Agitation. However, following the end of the agitation, one finds them in steep decline with the imposition of the Emergency and even during the period of Janata rule. The 1981 anti-reservation agitation all but wiped out the already weak left and progressive tendencies and by the time of the second agitation, one finds no evidence of their presence. Fourth, students, although they frequently resorted to violent methods, were treated with greater deference by the state than other sections. In dealing with student protests, it seems to have been the case that use of the repressive measures were not the preferred option. Even when repressive measures were utilised against students, a more conservative approach, compared to other sections of the population, was followed by governments and administrations. Fifth, despite this being the case, allegations of police atrocities, real or perceived, allowed for both the escalation of student protests and also for a variety of groups, including political parties to be involved in the agitations.

The Sangh, Organisation and ABVP

The second part of the thesis was devoted to understanding how student politics and the Sangh's involvement in it aided the rise of the Sangh in Gujarat. Chapter 4 explored relevant historical, organisational, and political aspects of the RSS, the Sangh and the ABVP. Since its inception, "erecting a mighty organisation" has been an important goal for the RSS¹⁶⁶⁵. The RSS shakha, is the primary unit of the RSS's hierarchical internal organisation, which plays a vital role in the recruitment and indoctrination. Following independence, the RSS spawned a number of sectoral affiliates owing allegiance to it, referred to collectively as the Sangh Parivar. The ABVP, established around 1948-49, the RSS's organisational projection into the student constituency, like any other Sangh affiliate is dominated by the RSS with the posts of President and Vice President occupied by RSS teachers and the all-important post of Organising Secretary occupied by a pracharak. While the ABVP, ever since its inception remained involved in politics, participated in violence and rioting, a carefully curated image of a "non-political" organisation with a difference was sought to be maintained making it ideally suited to intervene in Gujarat politics.

Student Politics and the Rise of the Sangh in Gujarat

At the time of independence while it did have a presence in the Gujarat region, it could not be considered to be one of the RSS's stronger units. Through, the 1950s and 1960s, it began a steady expansion along with the Jana Sangh that had been established in 1951, such that by the 1967, it had carved out for itself pockets of influence in the state. The ABVP was absent the from scene of student politics in Gujarat until at least 1964 and played no part in this early rise. The first major

¹⁶⁶⁵ Pralay Kanungo, *RSS's Tryst with Politics: From Hedgewar to Sudarshan* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2017), 68.

expansion of the Sangh took place after 1967 with the communal rioting at Ahmedabad and some other parts of Gujarat. Following this, however, the Sangh, particularly the Jana Sangh and the ABVP, attempted to recast themselves as non-communal, by taking up demands such as those related to price rise, food scarcity and corruption. Further, its sectarian involvement in the Navnirman Agitation and successful propagation of a false narrative regarding the role played by it during this time proved to be beneficial to the Sangh. Not only did it go a long way in promoting a non-controversial image, but it was also, electorally, biggest gainer in the elections that followed. After the Navnirman Agitation, although the Sangh continued to intervene in it, student politics played little part in its overall expansion until after the election 1980 in which the Congress came to power having stitched together the KHAM alliance. The 1981 anti-reservation agitation provided an opportunity to the Sangh, through tacitly supporting the agitation and attacking the government on issues of police brutality and price rise to make political gains. Four years later, the Sangh, more directly involved, was able to, first through the ABVP and then through other affiliates, what was initially a minor protest against reservations by students, into almost six months of caste and communal rioting, leading to the resignation of a Chief Minister who had, only months earlier, been elected with a two thirds majority. This, how student politics at various points contributed to the rise of the Sangh is examined in chapter 5. In doing, so, the thesis does not claim that that student politics was the only or even the most important factor that led to the rise of the Sangh. It is a recognition and exploration of a hitherto unexamined aspect of the Sangh's rise in Gujarat.

Relevance in the Present Political Context

Despite the subject matter of the thesis being historical in nature the thesis is very much a product of contemporary impulses and is of relevant to the present. The original ideas of this thesis were conceptualised in 2014 and 2015 in the time immediately preceding and succeeding the victory in the parliamentary elections of the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA).

While the Sangh and its ideologues had always endeavoured to spread a Hindutva history, being in control of the state, greatly enhanced the Sangh's ability to successfully propagate its versions of history. Having attempted to do so during its first stint at the helm (1999-2004), since coming to power in 2014, the Sangh took up the task of re-writing history post-hate. As a progressive journal noted, within months of forming the government, "historical revisionism" had "attained a certain kind of urgency" and the "blurring of the lines between fact and myth" had been "expedited like never before"¹⁶⁶⁶. In addition to the bizarre, false and almost laughable, but no less dangerous statements, about the past being made by top government functionaries including the PM, who traced plastic surgery and genetic science to ancient India, as well as calls to "rewrite" India's history according to "our [Sangh's] own viewpoint" by the Home Minister¹⁶⁶⁷, there have been systematic attacks particularly on school curriculums at both the national and state levels.

Between 2014 and 2018, during the first term of the BJP in power, 1334 changes were made to the NCERT¹⁶⁶⁸ textbooks utilised by schools affiliated to the Central Board of

¹⁶⁶⁶ 'Orgy of Myth Making', *Frontline*, 28 November 2014, <https://frontline.thehindu.com/the-nation/orgy-of-myth-making/article64763371.ece>.

¹⁶⁶⁷ Express News Service, 'Amit Shah Has a History Lesson: Don't Blame Others, Rewriting It Our Responsibility', *The Indian Express*, 18 October 2019, <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/amit-shah-has-a-history-lesson-dont-blame-others-rewriting-it-our-responsibility-6075169/>.

¹⁶⁶⁸ National Council of Educational Research and Training

Secondary Education¹⁶⁶⁹. In its second term, a number of topics that did not fit into the Sangh's narrative including references to 2002 Gujarat riots, Mughal rule in the 16th and 17th centuries, the Naxal movement and excerpts from the poems of revolutionary poet Faiz Ahmed Faiz were dropped from NCERT textbooks¹⁶⁷⁰. BJP ruled states have also followed a pattern of saffronising history by propagating Sangh myths, deleting uncomfortable issues and personalities, while at the same time smuggling the Sangh into the syllabus. For instance, in Karnataka, the NEP curriculum recommendations made by a committee in Karnataka traced the origin of the Pythagoras theorem¹⁶⁷¹, Fibonacci series and the discovery of the duration of the lunar cycle to ancient India¹⁶⁷². Similarly, in Haryana, another BJP ruled state, a history textbook sought parachute the RSS into India's struggle for independence, claiming that the organisation and its founders played a "positive role" in "awakening cultural nationalism and freedom struggle". There was even a laudatory mention of the RSS's founder Hedgewar as being an important part of the freedom struggle¹⁶⁷³. While in

¹⁶⁶⁹ C. Jaffrelot and Pradyumana Jairam, 'BJP Has Been Effective in Transmitting Its Version of Indian History to Next Generation of Learners', *The Indian Express*, 16 November 2019, <https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/education-ours-and-theirs-6121982/>.

¹⁶⁷⁰ Scroll Staff, 'Paragraphs on Gujarat Riots, Chapter on Mughal History Removed from NCERT Textbooks', 17 June 2022, <https://scroll.in/latest/1026397/paragraph-on-gujarat-riots-chapter-on-mughal-history-removed-from-ncert-textbooks>.

¹⁶⁷¹ Sruthy Susan Ullas, 'Pythagoras' Theorem Has Vedic Roots: Karnataka Panel', 10 July 2022, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/bengaluru/pythagoras-theorem-has-vedic-roots-karnataka-panel/articleshow/92775392.cms>.

¹⁶⁷² Nikhila Henry, 'Karnataka NEP Recommendations: Caste Erasure, Puranic Bharata, and Moon's Wives', *The Quint*, 12 July 2022, <https://www.thequint.com/south-india/karnataka-national-education-policy-recommendations-caste-erasure-puranic-bharata-and-moons-wives>.

¹⁶⁷³ Vivek Gupta, 'Haryana: Class 9 History Book Blames Congress for Partition, Lauds RSS, Hedgewar, Savarkar', *The Wire*, 12 July 2022, <https://thewire.in/education/haryana-class-9-history-book-blames-congress-for-partition-lauds-rss-hedgewar-savarkar>.

Gujarat, six books of Dinanath Batra, a specialist in re-writing history according to “the canons of Hindu nationalism”, were prescribed as compulsory reading¹⁶⁷⁴.

In this context of furious myth making and narrative building that has been undertaken since the Sangh came to power, the present thesis which attempts to examine and repudiate some of the Sangh’s many claims, based on a careful examination of available sources is of particular relevance.

Moreover, the Sangh coming to power in 2014 was accompanied, nationally by an uptick in student protests, especially at so called elite universities. The first of the major ones was against the appointment of a Sangh functionary, Gajendra Chauhan, as the Chairperson of the prestigious Film and Television Institute of India (FTII). There were major protests by the students at the institute and a strike which lasted 140 days which received support from students in other parts of the country as also and those in the film fraternity¹⁶⁷⁵. Soon after, when in October 2015 the UGC, under the guidance of the central government, decided to discontinue a financial support programme available to MPhil and PhD students at some fifty odd central universities and “centres of excellence”, protests were initiated by students at JNU, Delhi at the offices of the UGC, dubbed the “Occupy UGC Movement”. These later spread to other cities and protests were organised at the UGC’s regional offices at Kolkata, Allahabad, Pune and Varanasi¹⁶⁷⁶. Another large outburst of student protest followed the suicide of a Dalit

¹⁶⁷⁴ Rahi Gaikwad, ‘Dinanath Batra’s Books Are a Must-Read in Gujarat Schools’, *The Hindu*, 25 July 2014, <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/Dinanath-Batra-man-behind-pulping-of-Wendy-Doniger%E2%80%99s-book-is-must-read-in-Gujarat-schools/article60361322.ece>.

¹⁶⁷⁵ Aparna Bose, ‘10 Biggest Students’ Protests in History of Independent India’, 8 January 2020, <https://www.theindianwire.com/events/biggest-students-protests-in-independent-india-266169/>.

¹⁶⁷⁶ Kritika Sharma Sebastian, “Occupy UGC” Stir Spreads across India’, *The Hindu*, 3 November 2015, <https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Delhi/occupy-ugc-stir-spreads-across-india/article7835175.ece>.

scholar, Rohit Vemula, at the University of Hyderabad, in which the Sangh through the ABVP, the local MP and the MHRD Minister at the time were held responsible by students for Vemula's death¹⁶⁷⁷.

Close on the heels of these protests, on 9 February 2016, at JNU, the ABVP interrupted an event organised by ultra-left students and groups claiming that the event was 'anti-national' and anti-India slogans had been raised. Following this, mobile-camera videos of the same were circulated in television media but were later found to be doctored. The uproar led to the arrest of three Left student politicians, including the JNU Students' Union president, Kanhaiya Kumar, invoking the section 124 A (sedition) and 120B (criminal conspiracy)¹⁶⁷⁸. The arrests were followed by large scale protests in the university, on the streets of Delhi as well as demonstrations of global solidarity¹⁶⁷⁹. Student protests against the Sangh's activities continued into the second term of the BJP with the most major one being their involvement in the agitation against the heavily criticised Citizenship Amendment Act and the National Population Register. Beginning from the major universities in Delhi, the protests spread to other parts and students faced brutal action from the police in both Delhi and UP¹⁶⁸⁰.

Given the manner in which they have been covered in the contemporary press both by their supporters and detractors it would be easy to confuse students resisting

¹⁶⁷⁷ Zeeshan Shaikh, 'FTII, HCU, JNU, Fergusson, NIT and Now Jadavpur: 6 Protests That Expose Modi Government's Failure to Understand Students', *India.Com*, 7 May 2016, <https://www.india.com/news/india/ftii-hcu-jnu-fergusson-nit-and-now-jadavpur-6-protests-that-exposes-modi-governments-failure-to-understand-students-1166795/>.

¹⁶⁷⁸ Prabir Purkayastha, 'Violence Against JNU Is an Attack on the Indian Nation', 18 February 2016, <https://www.newsclick.in/india/violence-against-jnu-attack-indian-nation>.

¹⁶⁷⁹ "JNU Events Signal Culture of Authoritarian Menace", 16 February 2016, <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/JNU-events-signal-culture-of-authoritarian-menace/article14084416.ece?homepage=true>.

¹⁶⁸⁰ A L I Chougule, 'The Changing Face of Student Protests', 20 January 2020, <https://www.freepressjournal.in/analysis/the-changing-face-of-student-protests>.

authoritarian Hindutva policies, actions and politics of the government under certain conditions as evidence that Indian students are an intrinsically democratic or progressive group, inherently hostile to the Sangh. While it is not unusual for students to transcend the boundaries of their social backgrounds and end up practicing progressive politics, this is not always seen to be the case. This thesis, which presents umpteen illustrations of students and student politics not being attracted to progressive politics but quite to the contrary both directly and indirectly supportive of and beneficial to the Sangh, acquires a special relevance in the present context.

Contributions to Existing Scholarship

In terms of the global literature, this thesis with its focus on student politics that was frequently right-wing and pro-status quo contributes the understanding of this variety of student politics and the small but growing literature on right-wing student politics. At the level of literature on student politics in India, much of what was produced after the 1990s primarily includes contemporary or near contemporary analyses. The thesis is different from other recent works as it is one of the few historical studies on student politics on any part of India seeking to understand the developments in student politics before the National Education Policy of 1985 and economic liberalisation. Additionally, although considerable research has been produced regarding the Sangh, there is little of note that has been written about the role of student politics and its relationship with the Sangh. This thesis in examining the Sangh's interventions in student politics and how it came to aid its eventual rise, has sought to address this gap in the literature.

Given this, the primary contribution of the thesis is to the body of work produced on the politics and history of Gujarat in the post-independence period. Despite having played a role in political developments during the period under study, students and

student politics have remained largely unexplored. While the three major agitations- Navnirman and the two anti-reservation agitations- have been studied, even here, the role played by student politics in them has been only partially dealt with. There is no work addressing the trajectory followed by student politics during this time. In the absence of such literature, this thesis is an empirically accurate and detailed historical account of student politics in Gujarat between 1967 and 1985.

Moreover, amongst the numerous works produced particularly on the subject of the Sangh's rise in the state, with the partial exception of studies on the Navnirman Agitation, students are, once again, missing from the story. The growing influence of the Sangh on student politics as well as how student politics contributed to the rise of the Sangh remain unexplored. Acknowledging that there were equally and indeed even more important groups and classes, discussed in the existing literature, that aided the rise of the Sangh, the thesis, subjecting students and student politics to a systematic analysis, adds to the existing understanding of the factors that contributed to the rise of the Sangh in Gujarat.

Finally, the thesis also contributes to the existing scholarship on Gujarat by uncovering and utilising sources that have remained hitherto unexamined. These sources include a variety of confidential correspondence between different government departments and the Governor, notes prepared for cabinet meetings on issues relevant to the thesis, correspondence between universities and the Governor, who was the Chancellor of most universities in the state, and most significantly, the Governor's fortnightly, monthly, and annual reports. Most of these are located in the Gujarat State Archives at Gandhinagar while some are in the Gujarat Legislative Assembly Library. Not only were these sources crucial for the production of the thesis but given the

variety of data they include can be utilised in elaborating on numerous aspects of the history of Gujarat including but not limited to politics, labour, white collar trade unionism, education, caste and communalism.

Potential for Future Research

Apart from the source related limitations of the thesis, noted earlier, in attempting to write a history of student politics in Gujarat between 1967 and 1985 the thesis was forced to remain limited to elaborating the general trajectory and trends during this time. As a result, a number of different approaches and lines of inquiry of understanding student politics could not be pursued. Taking up these questions and approaches that could not be addressed offer an opportunity to extend, supplement or even contradict, the work done here.

First, in providing an overview of general trends in student politics, apart from some major agitations, the thesis rarely goes into a deeper analysis of individual agitations. Focused inquiries into these agitations and protests that were endemic during the period would be beneficial in either adding to or perhaps repudiating some of the points made here. Second, the thesis is primarily based on the examination of written sources and only on a handful of occasions relies on oral testimony. This approach was chosen particularly to avoid the pitfalls of the current political climate of Sangh dominance and the many decades of methodical obfuscation by it. The writing of an oral history of the period which would consider, and address questions of memory and the construction of the past based on the current political positioning of the interviewees would, no doubt, add much needed dimension to the work done here.

Third, the thesis at different points of time attempts to address the role of caste within student politics, particularly in the context of the two anti-reservation agitations.

However, caste, is not the primary lens through which student politics of the time is examined. With caste becoming increasingly important in the 1980s, there is a strong case for the writing of a history which focuses on caste and foregrounds the Dalit or backward class student experience. Fourth, the domain of student politics during this time was heavily gendered. Not only in terms of the student body and representation in the student leadership, this was true also for the forms of protests took. A major drawback of the thesis is being unable to in a significant manner address the part gender played in student politics.

There are different ways in which the work done by the thesis can be taken further. While the thesis examined the politically important role played by students during this period, it was clear that politics in the university, was not limited only to students but also included the trade unionism of sections of the University including the teaching and non-teaching staff. The college, university, and state level associations and federations of these different constituents of the university actively agitated for their interests and these agitations often had political implications. A simultaneous exploration of the interactions, alliances and even opposition within them and amongst the various sections of the university, which could not be done due to a paucity of space, would add another layer to the understanding of the ways in which the university came to play an influential part in Gujarat politics.

The period covered by the thesis ends in 1985 with the conclusion of the anti-reservation agitation. The rationale behind this is twofold. First, it is the case that following the 1985 agitation, as noted above, there was no major agitation of students in Gujarat. Second, students and student politics after that point did not play a particularly important role in the subsequent rise of the Sangh. This is however not to

suggest that an examination of student politics in Gujarat after the 1985 agitation would be a futile exercise. How students and student politics responded to factors such as the gradual influence of the National Education Policy, liberalisation of the economy and the growing influence of the Sangh on the state from 1985 onwards are questions worth examining. This would aid in understanding how student politics, which today is in a state of complete stasis in Gujarat, reached this point.

Although it was GU that was the epicentre of student politics in Gujarat for the entirety of the period, it was not the case that the other universities played no part. The importance, particularly of MSU and SU in this regard have been brought out by the thesis. While the happenings at these universities have found a mention in the thesis, studies dedicated to politics in these two universities present themselves as particularly exciting avenues for future research.

MSU, one of the oldest universities in the state, has had since its inception a powerful official student union. While student politics at MSU might not have as important to politics at the state level, at the level of Baroda city, the university was always important with there being intimate connections between students and wider politics. By the 1980s Baroda and MSU had, as mentioned in the thesis, become sites for communal politics and anti-government protests. A deeper study into the politics of MSU, would further the understanding of the influence of student politics on one of the more important cities in Gujarat. As noted earlier, the Sangh first began to make its mark organisationally and electorally in the Saurashtra region in the state. When SU was established, one found that at the university and its affiliated colleges, the Sangh and the ABVP, had a prominent presence. Throughout the period, its influence in SU was utilised by the Sangh in a number of different ways by the Sangh that have been

discussed above. Given this, the early association of the Sangh with Saurashtra and its perennial presence in SU make the university a particularly interesting prospect for greater investigation. A study that delves deeper into the politics of SU, would in all likelihood be able to further the project taken up by this thesis- the understanding of the Sangh's interactions with student politics and the role played by it in its rise.

Finally, one of the tasks taken up by the thesis was to rebut some of the claims and narratives with respect to student politics furthered by the Sangh. Given the largescale obfuscation undertaken by the Sangh regarding its history in Gujarat and the general acceptance of this narrative, taking off from the work done by the thesis, a project dedicated to challenging the claims of the Sangh, not limited to student politics could potentially be undertaken. This project would essentially be an attempt to write a history of the Sangh in Gujarat that while dismantling the Sangh's hagiography would try to understand the means through which the Sangh successfully propagated its narratives and how doing so aided the Sangh in its rise in the state.

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