Chapter 5

Major protest movements in Gujarat

Gujarat as a region had witnessed many mass-agitations since independence. Notable among them are Maha Gujarat agitation (1956-1960), Navnirman Youth movement (1974), Anti-Emergency resistance (1975-1977), Anti-Reservation agitations (1981 and 1985), and Farmers’ agitations (1986-2004). This chapter attempts to diagnoses the impact of movements on state and society. It is divided, which is divided into two parts. First one is importance of Navnirman movement at length and important mass movement on peoples issue thereafter.

5.1- Importance of Navnirman movement

The importance of any phenomenon can be judged by the coinage it creates in given society. The word ‘Navnirman’ has been frequently used by actors of movement in any agitation or protest. This term has become a synonym with movement. Whenever in any part of Gujarat there is movement by students, youths, and citizens fighting for any issues or legitimate demands. They would challenge government to concede the demands otherwise they would do Navnirman type of movement. If movement is conducted in peaceful manner, People would commonly say in proceeding in ‘Gandhi Chindia Marg’ as Gandhism way and if government does not fulfil our demands, we will create another Navnirman. This is fantasized notion of movement is one of unique as after yours it carries it
due weight. Movement it is built up of many factors. It may be unparallel in India’s movement after independence.

There has been substantial work on Navnirman movement by Ghanshyam Shah in his book ‘Protest Movement in two states’ and P.N. Sheth’s ‘Political Change in India from Gujarat to New-Delhi’. Both these academic work on aspect of movement studies, which were are unknown in Indian social science. These works were based on the firsthand account of those involved in movement along with primary and secondary sources on their disposal. This has helped to know about dynamics, stages of movement, and consequences. These both books and number of articles concludes that the removal of Chimanbhai due to this Navnirman movement of 1974. It is victory of People’s power what Jayprakash said about importance of ‘Jan Shakti’- people power can built or destroy any power on Earth. This confidence on common people involvement in political process by such huge result of removing corrupt CM gave boost to movement all over India.

This movement generated energy on conducting larger movement diverted towards the centre, led by popular and powerful Prime Minister Indira Gandhi (Sheth; 1977). Dynamics of popular movement uproots everything even, Indira Gandhi, most popular and powerful PM having mass-appeal was swept out of power by people’s movement. People, as political category cannot be taken for granted it is same people who supported Indira Gandhi against old guards of Congress. In 1967 congress divide Indira Gandhi was supported by Indian masses due to pro-poor measure and her image of lone fighter against big powerful stalwarts of her
party. In this political crisis Indian masses stood by her. But those political pundits or intellectuals close of Indira Gandhi were under impression that whatever she will do will be accepted easily. (Limaye; 1982)

The political upheaval, created by this movement in 1974 movement shook whole of Gujarat for full two months. This was unprecedented in the history of Post-Independence India. The intensity of movement can be judged by as no town remained untouched by the upsurge. Though initially it was centering round urban centers, but soon it affecting rural area as fire of movement spread across Gujarat.

The ground for this movement was getting prepared, as Prakash N. Shah, know journalist spoke about a book written by the Marxist Bhogilal Gandhi titled as “Indira Kya Marg?” (Which way Indira is going?) in 1969. This book made remarks about authoritanism of Mrs. Gandhi in Indian Politics. The book was published in Guajarati so had been read in every nook and corner of state. Another incident was about Gujarat University Vice Chancellor, state Chief Chimanbhai Patel decided to appoint Mr. Maganbhai Patel as Government official nominee for the post. But the teachers, academicians, literature and education loving people consider it as political interference in University affairs. Against CM decision, anti-government lobby persuaded Umashankar Joshi, well known poet of Gujarat literature, fit for post of Gujarat University VC. The state v/s civil society fight in University created a setback for CM Chimanbhai as his candidate was defeated by Joshi. Shah believed this Gujarat University VC issue to safeguard Gujarat University academic autonomy, “as a hope,
aspiration and dream of alternative vision in India against Indira Gandhi dominance.” (Prakash Shah’s interview)

5.1(a) The Growth of Movement:

Along with these students, trade unions also joined and gave Ahmedabad Bandh on 10 Jan. this changed the dimension of movement. Very quickly, peoples from all ways of life were joining this movement thereby making it a people’s movement. The walled city of Ahmadabad witnessed everyday a fetched battle between police and youngsters, the high handiness of police in dealing with sensitive issue created more movements as ‘Repression lead to mobilization’.

On getting peoples positive response on such sensitive issue, students’ leader formed a committee known as Navnirman Yuvak Samiti (NYS). This broad based peoples committee conducted movement for next 2 months. Starting from Ahmadabad, it becomes all Gujarat movement on peoples burning problems. In this Navnirman, the spark came from students agitating against the mass-bill, but as the movement spread to other parts and now demands were added, live corruption price-rise. This raised the movement to new heights. Price-rise and corruption two most important burning problem of peoples added fuel to fire in movement.

Various section of society joined the struggle like teachers association, white-collar employees union. All groups having different issue but focal point became ‘Chiman Hatao’ (Remove Chiman). Chimanbhai Patel, Gujarat Chief minister was the youngest C.M in country and was
popular. His style of work and arrogance annoyed each and everyone in political circles. As Pravin Sheth notes:

The new Patel chief minister would not care for the urban intellectual who are spread over scores of colleges and courts in the town and cities of Gujarat. Thus, Chimanbhai’s emergence was a deviation from the traditional style of Gujarat politics; as also to the importance of the urban middle class and commercial culture so far.” (Sheth; 1997:5)

Before joining politics, Chimanbhai was a teacher at the college in Ahmadabad and later established his own Collages. By the End of 1960’s, notes Yagnik, he (Chimanbhai) controlled, directly or indirectly about seventy collages in the state. He derived power and prestige in public life from the vast network of educational institutes in the city.

Navnirman movement is also attributed for innovative programme of protest to press forward the demand. Apart from traditional programme like dharna, fast, rallies, meeting, some of new forms of agitation were developed in this movement, which were not common earlier. These mass-involvement programs were as follow.

1. ‘Ghant-naad’ or ‘Mrityu Ghant’ (death knell)- Such Programs were undertaken when police used to imposed curfew, people have to be in houses. At evening people planned fully beat drum on their houses, terrace, with whatever instrument they had like the dhol, nagara or thali, etc and would beat it loudly to creating a fear
psychosis among police and administration and also express solidarity among themselves.

2. Another innovative programme was ‘Janta Curfew’. Curfew is a prohibitory order by government and police forces to control the volatile situation. It is believed by police that if people are abstain from venture in street, violence would be less. But people themselves put up such curfew, to show administration of their collective strength. Modes operandi was simple, people would restrain themselves that they would not be going out in the city. This Janta curfew was very successful in developing a peoples power, solidarity among agitators against government power.

3) Hijacking of Buses: Ahmadabad had a effective public transport system with fleets of buses. During Navnirman movement about 110 buses were hijacked by the students who used to take these buses towards the local residence of Chief Minister shouting Slogans like ‘Chiman Hatao’, remove Chiman. In this movement a group of students/youths would board any bus and force driver to take another route shout anti-government, anti-congress slogans.

4) Procession of animals: During Navnirman movement, agitators would take out rally of donkeys, dogs as symbolic part. Symbolic form of protest had logic that government is putting probationary order by not allowing any form of public protest such as rallies, meetings. By taking out animal procession was that government.
Though many leaders of movement had not endorse to such ‘cheap kind of protest’, in the view of Manishie Jani, one of leaders of navnirman movement, “such acts dilutes the motive and dignity of movement” But as Navnirman was not a organized movement such as class movements are which had dangers of dilution in the conduction of movement. In today Gujarat on any issues of movement some forces would use form like ‘becoming bald’, ‘shav-yatra’, ‘therivari’ – the icons of Hindu religious system, which symbolizes with death. By such act the protesters convey that government in power is dead. They take out ‘shamsan yatra’ etc programme, such programme are direct results of Navnirman movement. The deeper study of this Navnirman would be due to unorganized motley crowd conducting movement against political power.

In removing powerful CM Chimanbhai Patel by people’s movement, Jayprakash Narayan got inspired and tried to implant this Gujarat experiment in Bihar. Bihar experiment was much more organized in compare to Gujarat (Shah; 2002). Theory become more concrete by experiences, in theorizing about achievements and limitation of Gujarat movement, strategy changed in Bihar. There it become more organized, sharper and particularly after with victory of people in Gujarat.

Navnirman movement is counted as most successful mass-mobilizations programme with collective action in independent India. In preceding years, good number of theoretical work on movement studies especially collective action has been done. Let’s us examine a theoretical aspect to analysis movement of Navnirman. Charles Tilly, put forward a working concept as ‘The components of Collective Action’, the components
as (a) interest, (b) organization, (c) mobilization, (d) opportunity and (e) collective action. In this Navnirman movement it has combined all these elements of collective action with mobilization of resources using every opportunity with the common interests. But only problem in this was organization – it was loose and controlled by many forces.

J.P. movement after Bihar organized a Delhi rally about which Hindi poet Dinkar wrote “Samay ke Rath ka pal, pal ka Nand suno, Shinhasan khali karo ki Janata Aati hai” (leave throne, masses are coming). The Delhi rally known as ‘Shinhasan Khali Karo rally’ was attended by lakhs of people from all over India. J.P. in enthusiasm gave call to armed forces and army to be side of people; this gave Indira Gandhi a reason to declare Emergency citing ground on Article 352 of Indian Constitution emergency on the ground of ‘Internal Distribution’. (Basu; 1977). The 18 month long emergency could not break morale of people but on the contrary saw people getting more agitated and on the path of movement to save democratic rights and civil liberties in the country. Indira Gandhi was compelled to withdraw emergency and declared fresh general election in 1977 which the congress party was defeated.

Important political development of Navnirman movement and J.P movement afterwards was 44th amendment of 1978 in Indian constitution. The ground on internal disturbance was substituted by word ‘armed rebellion’ for declaring emergency. Earlier it was only ‘Internal disturbances’ which can be interpreted as misused as Indira Gandhi’s Congress Government in 1975.
The geneses of movement – undercurrents

Every political movement is the product of socio-political factors, which contributes in its birth, development and decay. 1974’s Gujarat movement had its roots in policies and actions of national as well state politics.

After Nehru-Shastri era, general public supported and voted Indira Gandhi as Prime Minister. Her fight against old guards of congress party led to split in congress as syndicate versus indicate in 1966. Her government policies like removing of privy purses, bank nationalization boosted her image. Her pro-poor, pro-working class image and populist slogans like ‘Garibi hatao’ led to landslide victory of congress party in 1971 general election.

Victory against Pakistan in indo-Pak war of 1971 with liberation of Bangladesh, and indo-Soviet treaty created her image as most powerful PM of independent India. This created a self-compliancy and sycophancy among rank and file of congress party under her. The economic crises developing since 60s were posing as serious danger by 70’s. This short-lived popularity of Indira Gandhi made the crises more critical, as it was of both political as well as economic (shah: 2002, Kothari ;1990)

The major economic crises of this decade were price-rise of essential commodities and raising unemployment. After independence there was substantially increase of educational activities especially higher education adding to the army of unemployed in job market. In spite of government motive of curtailing higher education, UGC first chairmen spoke in 1957,
that in order to curtail unemployment, government had to curtail education). India in seventies was a period of large educated unemployed posing a danger for populist centre Government as there were no jobs for those educated youths.

This economic and social discontentment resulted into increase of protest movement across the country. Ghanshyam Shah mentions about 649 agrarian agitations in 1970. Same was about student unrest which increased manifold. It was counted as 45 agitation per 10,000 students between 1967-70, there were also high incidence of violent agitation (shah 2002:343) (quoted figures from the pant’s study, 1973 violence in a period of social change)

After Indo-china war in 1962, the Indian state has strengthen its Para-military forces like CRPF, BSF, CISF, SRP and RAW. Apart from this to curb political movements and raising trade-union activities, draconian rules like Defense of Indian Rules (DIR) and the Maintenance of Internal Security Rules (MISA) were frequently used by authorities to control dissent and protest activities.

This economic, social and political crisis was on the verge of explosion. The Navnirman movement in 1974 in Gujarat along with Bihar acted as spark to lit the fire of biggest political movement of independent India. (Limaya; 1980)
Consequences of Navnirman movement

The immediate goal of Navnirman movement as removal Chief Minister Chimanbhai Patel and dissolution of the state assembly was achieved. The state election in June 1974 saw a new combination of non-congress and non-communist political parties coming together as ‘Janata ‘Morcha’. Morcha means united front, where was formed to fight elections. In that election congress got 75 seats out of 181 and janata morcha secured 86, below majority to form government. With the support of some independent member in house, Babubhai Jasubhai Patel becomes Chief Minister. This morcha experiment was short lived as during emergency some independent as well as some members of morcha defected to the congress.

During emergency political and civil rights were snatched all over India with exception of Gujarat, under Janta morcha. It was known as political ‘oasis’ (Pandya;1988) as during emergency political activist use to come and stay here. Kiritbhai Bhatt ex. Editor of Indian Express and one of accused of famous case in emergency period known as ‘Baroda Dynamite Case’, narrates “Due to dislodging of powerful CM like Chimanbhai Patel out of power by Nav nirman movement, a hope was generated across country to wage movement against Indira Gandhi corrupt regime.” (Kirit Bhatt’s Interview)

The important outcome of Gujarat movement, according to Rajni Kothari (1990:221), was on the question of legitimacy of elected government. A duly elected government of Gujarat could not go unopposed if engage on corrupt actions and practices and anti-people
policies. This movement establishes the supremacy of people as political actor. (Tournien; 1977/1981)

Though with such achievement, this 1974 movement failed on following points:

(a) Movement developed but focus lost --- Though the immediate demand of movement was removal of chief minister. Once this demand was over, whole exercise of social movement organization involving a good section of society was reduced to ‘study in political tragedy’ (Kothari 1990; 220). Kothari analyses that this ‘Nav nirman samiti’, the broad based people’s organization behind movement would have played an important role if have been acted as a ‘watch dog’ institution. Thereafter it would have picked up more such burning social- political issues by keeping watch on governmental action and policies. The focus was lost in developing higher goal of movement, as movement develops the focus should also develops higher. Noted social activist Prakash Shah jokingly says that net visible gain for people in Nav nirman move. In Ahmedabad was on 3 persons allowed to board autorikshaw. Prior to 1974 only two persons were allowed to be in rikshaw.

(b) Failed to keep promises – after the so called successful in removing the elected government, people expectation were high with new government. But new government was following same corrupt policies and practices. Even various political movements were meted with high handiness of power. (Ghanshyam shah 2002). During the janata party period, in centre of formed by people’s movement was
same like its predecessor. In policy and practices it was also a period of corruption, price-rise, unemployment and repressive measure of all kind.

(c) Gujarat phenomenon-localized and isolated- Rajni Kothari observed that Gujarat movement though displayed a daring act but failed to achieve anything positive as “Gujarat was peripheral to the natural mainstream” (Kothari 1990;221). Like many political movement like telengana in Andhra Pradesh, naxalism on Bengal and Bihar. This Gujarat movement of 1974 also turn out to be one more movement in peripheral state.

(d) System readjustment whenever a political crisis develops into mass movement the Indian State true to its concept of ‘soft state’ adjusts itself. Kothari (1990; 225) puts it as normal logic, “in course of time absorbing the elements that had been thrown up by such upsurges”

This flexibility of normal logic has been observed by many political theorist like Thomas Baryal who observes that even after major crises, the Indian state does not collapsed. It has withstood the pulls and pressure political movement arising from civil society.(Baryal;1970:308)

The movement - direct action of its kind

The Gujarat agitation, termed as ‘Nav nirman’ means ‘social reconstruction’ (Shah; 2002:344) was coined by students, teachers under their organization NavNirman yuvak samiti (NYS hereafter) who had incited the movement. Though active life of this movement was about two and
half months from January to March 1974, but it impact dominated political space of Gujarat for long.

The trigger factor of movement is attributed to increase of mass bill from Rs.85 to Rs.120 in hostel of Ahmadabad’s L.D. College. (Shah; 1977:35). Students protested and took up representation to authorities as economic crises of general public at that period was passing through sever crisis. Anger manifest as some violent incidents of mob reaction like smashing window planks, burning furniture happen during initial stage of movement. Sensing the mood and involvement of students the conscious leaders formed a committee named ‘Yuvak Lagni Samiti’ (committee for expressing feelings to youths), which later on turned into the broad based peoples committee called. Whole movement was termed after this committee. Nav nirman Yuvak Samiti (NYS).

To intensity this mess-bill movement Ahmadabad bandh was organized on 10 Jan 1974. Followed by widespread riots were reported for 2 day in Ahmadabad and Baroda (Shah; 2002:344). Judging the support of general public on their demands which included corruption, price-rise and unemployment, a call for all Gujarat Bandh was given on 25 Jan. 1974. The state government apprehending violence imposed curfew as precautionary measure in about 44 major towns of Gujarat. Despite of curfew, the movement intensified further against Chimanbhai Patel – the CM of Gujarat Government. It had becomes a general demand that remedy of all ills in Gujarat political-economic crises would be removal of Gujarat CM. Though there was some leaders who were not in favor of movement against individual but thought should be against systems, like Minishi Jani
and his group. It becomes more aggressive in their demands. To curtail this ongoing movement Gujarat Government called upon army on 28th Jan. 1974.

By 1st week of Feb, 1974, this agitation spread almost all towns of Gujarat. The movement ‘Remove CM’ gained momentum as dissidence within ruling congress also getting soft on protesters and agitators. To put the end to political crises and to curtail the movement to spread in other parts of Gujarat especially rural areas, Indira Gandhi advised C.M. Chimanbhai patel to resign. On 9 Feb. 1974 Chimanbhai resigned and the governor suspended state assembly and with imposition of president rule.

But these incidents also could not stop the agitation as now demand was the dissolution of the state assembly. This movement intensity and was spread to the rural areas, where it continued for several days. 15 members of congress(O) resigned on 16 Feb. 1974 followed by more members. By 2nd week of March, 95 out of 167 MLA’s resigned from the Gujarat assembly. Morarji Desai, leader of congress(O)went on hunger strike for dissolution of assembly. Finally on 15th march, state assembly was dissolved.

**Ideological basis of 1974 movement**

Though 1974, movement of Gujarat was trigged by mess-bill in hostel, but snowballed into major political movement. It was started by students who got support from all section of movement. To intensity and co-ordinate movement Nav nirman Yuvak Samiti (NYS) was formed in Ahmadabad. Similar organization with similar or different names came into
existence in various cities, towns and villages across Gujarat. These peoples committee were adhoc with common demands of removal of corrupt CM.

Though attempts were made to co-ordinated in order to wage a planned movement but were unsuccessful. Rohitbhai Shukla, one of the leader of teacher association narrates “In many villages town persons belonging with different ideological acquired position, it was due to fact that as movement proceeded it boils down to one factor – Removal CM Chimanbhai Patel.”

The schools and colleges teachers associations bar association, sarvodaya mandals, womens organization, journalist association and notable the 14 august sarmajiv samiti (coordination of white collar trade unions) provided the organization structure to this movement.

This 1974 movement was unique as all section of Guajarati society joined it from teachers to workers with their organization. Because of this varied ideologies a concrete and coordinated movement was not possible. Had this all elements under leadership of one political party, it would have created a different story. The main ideological components of all these forces were anti-congress and anti communist, though these were few left trade unions but their voice was not prominent in Gujarat. This movement boosted Sarvodaya and Jan Sangh workers. The political benefit was reaped by Jan Sangh as Sarvodaya true to its ideology went back to their constructive activities in rural areas.
5.2.: Various movements after 1974 movement

After 1974, Gujarat has witnessed number of movements on various issues like Land, Livelihood, Caste, and religious issues, but it has lack the approach and political combination as well mass-appeal like that of Navnirman Movement. There has been increase of caste and religious movement in 80’s and 90’s in Gujarat. With policies of liberalization and globalization reducing large section of population out of safety-net also resulted in agitation and protest movement.

In this chapter a survey of movement on various issues after 1974 is undertaken. This period is divided on four parts depending on issue and challenge to political establishment in Gujarat. Election is an important indicating of healthy Democracy. Winning election and forming government is an indication of peoples mandate in support of any political party for forming government. But it does not necessarily conclude that those in power would also exercise same command on society. The study of movements emerges in Gujarat clearly witnessed this divide of state and civil society. Movements assert from of cases. Civil society, state reacts, demystified or dilutes the movement in number. Every movement passes through four stages namely birth, genesis, growth and demise. The demise of movement is when demand of movement is fulfilled or the components of movement are accommodated by system. As four stages of social movement is recorded by states how movement declines. One of reason is if it becomes successful or failure and another is government gets hold of it.
5.3.: Movements after Nav nirman

After a massive Navnirman movement on peoples issue, there were movements on various issues but due to political as well organizational limitations movement cannot developed in all scale. For study purpose this It has been divided into three parts, first one is from 1975-90, The Period of Liberalization Policy. Second part is from 1990 to 2002, the year of Godhra incident. From 2002-2012 onwards the politics of development and deprivation created movements are been dwelt with. The movements on the issue of peoples problem only is been dealt with. Though caste and religious movements are also mass-mobilizations programmes but due to limitations of this particular study these issues are not been taken.

a) Period from 1975 to 1990

The period preceding emergency was of hope and aspiration on democratic movement in uprooting the mightiest congress party out of power. During emergency Gujarat was used by many political activists as safe haven due to Janta morch government of Babubhai Jasubhai Patel ministry. After the emergency was lifted there was the growth of Public interest ligation know as PIL and judicial activism all over the country. In Gujarat an organization called Lok Adhikar Sangh was pioneer in this socio-legal movement.

Another major shift of Gujarat politics in this period was from peoples issue to caste-politics of worst kind. This was a partly due to caste politics pursed by policy of KHAM, a combination of castes and communities. This made stunning comeback of Congress party back to power with thumping majority. (Sanghvi;1998). It proved to be setback for
socio-political movements, due to its absence such intensity of caste polarization is possible winning electorally.

**Judicial activism and the experiences of Lok-Adhikar Sangh.**

After the emergency was lifted, in 1977, a group of about 150-200 activists, from different walks of life, headed by eminent human right activist lawyer Girishbhai Patel decided to form a human Rights organization, called Lok Adhikar Sangh (People’s Right Organization, hereafter called LAS) to fight basic human rights of the poor and the deprived in Gujarat. The fundamental principles of LAS were that

A) Human Rights of all can become real, effective and meaningful only in a democratic state, society and economy;

B) That the struggle for food and dignified life and for freedom, equality and justice is one and indivisible, and

C) That Different Human Rights group/organization working in different spheres/levels of society will require a common and comprehensive ideological framework to make human rights struggle a national people’s movement for human rights for all.

This was period of ‘Judicial Activism’, which initiated the movement of PIL. It was due to same landmark judgment by Justice Krishna Iyer. Only through court or good judgment can one attain good will in society. This in context of important role by pro-people judgments in various courts created a impression that through courts one can settle the issues. Such hypothesis had determined the field of social movement. In this context justice Iyer says Justice V.R. Krishna Iyer says, “Jurisprudence cannot go it alone. It is people’s militancy without violence, literacy without arrogance,
sense of accountability without authoritarianism that make the constitution the great guarantee and perennial locomotive of people’s right. The crème de la crème of the constitution, in its political vision, economic mission and development action, is what the preamble tersely spells out.” (Iyer; 1999:275),

Which would the democratic and pro-poor spirit of Indian constitution. This period saw rise of many luminaries in legal field to social movement in Gujarat was started by Lok Adhikar Singh. It has coincided with rise of judicial activism all over India, which had developed in eighties,

Girishbhai and his LAS are pioneer of this activism in Gujarat as it helped socio-political movements in Gujarat. Social oppression, communal violence, and caste conflicts have been detrimental in undermined democratization of society and people’s movements. In a strange paradox, increasing discontent and dissent has intensified state terrorism, to the benefit of private corporate power.

The democratic state is shrinking and its place and space are being occupied by market forces. With the shrinking of the democratic state and expansion of private economy, the PIL is facing a serious challenge and will suffer serious erosion unless the higher judiciary is ready and willing to bring the private sectors – national and multinational corporations – within constitutional limits and to subject them to part III (Fundamental rights) and part IV (Directive Principles) of the constitution.

In this fight for underprivilege in legal battles or in society, Lok Adhikar Sangh and Girish Patel is remarkable in fighting with zeal by using
of constitutional provisions. This has benefited the poor and underprivileged section of society which had made Girishbhai a know figure of legal activism in Gujarat. Till date he has fought innumerable cases of downtrodden people on various problems of peoples’ lives.

In spite of getting some relief from court judgments, Grishbhai laments that the mechanism of socio-economic system pulls back the gains of legal battle. Because the laws enforcing agency in grassroots level field is so weak to implement it. One interesting case was that Girish Patel fought and got some relief was regarding plight of unorganized workers in Surat textile industry. A PIL was filed by LAS in the Gujarat High Court against the state, its Labor department and association of these units, for various reliefs covering the enforcement of all labor laws. The High court directed the Vice Chancellor of South Gujarat University, Prof. Upendra Baxi, to conduct a survey on their living and working conditions, a team of teachers and research workers prepared a full-fledged report which was published and submitted to High Court. The report exposed the pathetic working and living condition of these workers – low wages, 12 hour work day, unsafe and unhygienic conditions, living in small rooms crowded rooms without families, prevalence of disease, no retirement benefits, and absence of registration, identity cards, and wage regulations. The report concluded “This is not isolated violation of labor laws, but a planned subversion of the legal system.” And suggested what the report described. “Counter-insurgency measures”. The court directed for the appointment of 4 factory inspectors for this purpose, and also directed the legal aid department to conduct awareness programmes. After that many studies were focused on this issue after this legal battel.
As the nature of work in Surat textile and diamond industries is highly unorganized and migrant population of workers made hurdle in getting their political presence field by forming union (Hein Streef; 2002) “In searching for space”, Kiran Desai (2002) draws the attention as how these workers live in Surat. Girish Bhai Concludes “An effective legal action requires sustained efforts, continuous monitoring, overcoming the weakness, helplessness, reluctance of the workers themselves, local trade union action, repetitive legal action, overcoming the linguistic and regional divisions.(Patel; 2010: 67)

The United Nations declaration on Social Progress and Development of 1969 states, “Without a Basic sustainable economic subsistence civic political rights have no meaning, the very condition of scratching the earth for existence preclude enjoyment of and exclude people from the imperium of the dominant agenda of human rights.” (Page 210)

The Narmada Movement- Growth of Gujarat pride:

One of the issue which got an all India attention in this period was about a construction of dam on river Narmada. Tempers were high in Gujarat society as drought affected regions have suffered lot economically and culturally due to water sacarcity. The saurastra and Kutch regions as well as North Gujarat are known areas of drought. The water situation is very grim in Gujarat as only 8 out of its 185 rivers are perennial. At this juncture the construction of big dam on Narmada called Sardar Sarovar project as a ray of hope. It was projected that the dam will have irrigation
potential of 1.8 million hectares benefiting 15 districts, 73 talukas and 3112 villages in Gujarat, and would provide drinking water to more than 9000 villages in the water scarcity regions of Saurashtra, Kachchh and North Gujarat.

When the dam was sanctioned with beneficiaries of four states namely, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Maharasthra and Madhya Pradesh. Sardar Sarovar Dam in Gujarat with its recommended height of 176 meters created a controversy. Disputes among the beneficiaries led to the establishment of Narmada Water Disputes Tribunal in Oct. 1969. The Tribunal gave its award in Aug. 1978 and its final orders in Dec. 1979. Though the Tribunal had sanctioned the height of 455 ft or 138.68 meters for the Sardar Dam, the beneficiary States agreed to restrict its height to 121 meters only. Gujarat was one of best beneficiaries state with 9 MAF for irrigation and 16% of electricity generated at the Sardar Dam.

Another part of this development was large number of villages would be submerged in water. An organization called Narmada Bachao Andolan (NBA) demanding proper and just compensation for those lands and homes were submerged. The chief minister of Gujarat Amarsinh Choudhari responded with a very fair and generous package for them in 1988. The agitation to save Narmada Project on the path of conflict, construction and development, which lasted for four decades, has been a unique chapter of co-operation between the state and the people, its governments and NGOs.

The dispute between Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh about the Height of the Dam is long since 1960; the dispute about the Jal Sandhi project of
Maharashtra; of Indira Gandhi in 1974 called the Chief minister of concerned state at Delhi and declare the award regarding the Height of the Dam; Subsequent acceptance of the Verdict of Narmada Tribunal (1979) by the four concerned states; the commencement of the construction work near Kevadia colony started. The legal battle started as some challenging the government of Gujarat in court regarding the rehabilitation got success in courts. The judgement of the Supreme Court was against the Gujarat government. Amarsing Choudhary, then Chief Minister declaring the relief and rehabilitation policy in December 1987, which was considered to be the most progressive package for the rehabilitation of the displaced.

But as movement against stopping of dam was getting support in india and all over world for NBA. Some of the citizen’s organizations led by veteran Gandhian Chunibhai Vaidya and others put their weight behind this project for ‘Development with judicious rehabilitation’. In nineties ugly scene were enacted as Chimanbhai Patel, whose political comeback as chief minister rallied this Narmada issue as a pride of Gujarat. Those who oppose it like Medha Patkar the leader of Narmada Bachao Andolan (NBA) were labled as anti-Gujarat, anti-development in the name of environmental issue. This was first such issue were Gujarat civil societies were pitched against each other as pro and anti establishment. As sahghvi observers:

Narmada Bachao Andolan used agitation and judicial processes in very skillfully that the Supreme Court admitted her writ petition. [1994] clubbed several cases she had filed against Government of Gujarat and granted a stay order stopping all work [May 1995] till the final hearing of
the case. The stoppage of work when the dam had reached a height of mere 80.30 meters created intense anger and frustration all over Gujarat and Patkar became and remains the most hated name in the State. (Sanghavi; 2010)

This was also chapter of growth of Gujarat pride which was reached to such high pitch any one against development would be counted as anti-Gujarat.

b) Period From 1990 to 2002.

This period is marked by policies of liberalization- globalization policies. After its implementation it has led to many changes in economy which had impact on society in long run. The fundamental policies of Liberalization, Privatization and Globalization were viewed by social scientist as anti-poor because it focuses on less government spending on social sector, leaving a large section of society out of fruits of Development.

The helpless poor and development by state is interconnected. The costs of such policies are heavy as the sense of insecurity among the peoples grows, alongside persisting poverty, unemployment and increasing injustice and discrimination, would led to growth of movements.

“It pushes the poor and the unemployed into a culture of protest, anger and desperation, contributing further to an overall condition of insecurity which is then exploited by sectarian politicians and is sought to be put down by criminalized police and paramilitary establishment. Slowly and
without their knowing it, the poor are being pushed into a world of crime and criminality of inter-ethnic violence and militancy against the state.” (khotari; 1993:52)

**Umbergoan Anti-port movement**

Umbergoan is situated in Valsad district of south Gujarat region. South Gujarat due to abundance of water is quite scenic region of Gujarat. Before 2000, this area was known for shooting of television serial on mythology of Ramayan by renowned film director Ramanand Sagar. The scene recreate in the coastal belt of Umbergoan got attraction about the natural beauty of this place of Umbergoan in India.

Another time, when this small, sleepy town of mostly fisherman came to become headline was on 20 April 2000. The news about a retired Lieutenant Colonel Pratap Shave death due to police atrocities, was to break morale of people waging movement against proposed port in that area. This news (The Hindu, 27, April 2000) tempt activist, academicians involved in movement and general public to know about the movement which reached to such height in death of Lt. Colonel. Newspaper, readers’ letter to editor, (Gujarat samachar. May 1999) column about this movement and especially death of a colonel by police personnel was focused on more attention. It was due to fact that just 2 years before this movement; High-powered nationalist fervor was funnel regarding Kargil issue. This disputes and Indian Army operation in Kashmir is the last direct army engagement between India and Pakistan.
Umbergoan-Maroli village consist of mostly tribals and fishermen. Proximity of Sea had developed fishing as major means of livelihood along with farming. Suddenly these villagers were astonished to see some survey work done by government officials. When they enquired they tried to avoid and told they are government oil-company making preliminary survey (1). The employees said they do mot about project, they are just salaried employees.

Villagers inquired about this survey to taluka’s Mamlatdar, who himself was unaware of such survey. After lot of exercise the villagers come to know about the project of a port-building by government. It became a news with local population that Gujarat government have given contract to NETELECO and UNICOL, multi-national companies along with Gujarat Marine time Board (GMB) for construction of modernized all-weather port at Umbergoan. This agitated the people of 15 villages who were not taken into consideration on policy which would affect their lives. They formed a peoples committee named Kinari Bachao Sangharsh Samiti (KBSS).

Advocacy group called The Indian People’s Tribunal on Environment and Human Rights (IPT) published a report titled, ‘In the name of development’, the report was part of enquiry committee headed by justice S.M.Daud of Bombay High Court.

This report indicated the dangerous aspect of this project which would destroy the livelihood of about 75,000 peoples inhabited in 21 villages. The villages formed a peoples committee in Feb 1999. To carry forward this movement, Col. Save was retired army personnel decided to have his retired life in Umbergaon. With his ability of known well the
language English, Hindi, Gujarati got involved in the movement though he was not directly affected by this project. KBSS poor villages made him as their president.

To intensify movement, activist decided to conduct Padyatra from Vedachchi, a Gandhian institution from Aug 9 to spread awareness about issue, culminating into public meeting on 15th aug 200 at Umbergoan. Another Padyatra started from Azad Maidan, Mumbai and could also reach Umbergoan. The Padyatra passed through many villages, meetings were conducted and common villages were appraised about situation in Unbergaon. They become a conscious force in the movement.

On 15th Aug, in Flag hosting ceremony, nearly 20,000 people from all walks of life came. Congress leader Jiva Bhai Darji, Gandhian Chunibhai Vaidya spoke at meetings. Chunibhai, had already camped for many days in Umbergaon.

This movement led to electoral defeat to BJP, the congress swept the local elections held in September 2000. Due to this movement the government put off this proposed plan. Chunibhai told, “By reading the news about police atrocity on common villages and death of colonel Save. I decided to join this movement.” The researcher was also participant of this 7 days padyatra which comprises of activists, students, villagers and retired teachers. The group of about 50 to 60 people used to walk whole day to take a break at noon. Wherever this group was halted a public meeting was organized.

**Meethakhali School No. 20 Bachao Movement**

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It was the threshold of the implementation of GATT treaty in the country. And self finance colleges had not become that acceptable in Gujarat yet. Ahmadabad Municipal Corporation was running a school in Meethakhali area of Ahmedabad. The area consist of low-income families carving out some livelihood by doing household works in nearby bungalows, Tiffin works, casual labor, etc. from very early childhood the children’s along with their studies and playing were helping hand for their parents.

This school was adopted by Lions’ Club of Ahmedabad. It had a very good ground along with well lit and spacious class rooms. It was situated in the Western Ahmedabad having 325 students from nearby Meethakhali, Muslim Society, Ellis bridge police line, NCC ground, Government Quarters K Colony, etc. were studying.

One fine morning in June 1998, the children were told be shifted to another school adjacent to the area at School no. 4. When enquired about reason out of curiosity and they got to know that the school was given away to some private people. When parents came to know about it, they opposed the move. They sought the help of Jayeshbhai Patel, who was running socio-cultural Narmad Meghani Library in the area. The library was center of Cultural Movement, sports activity in the locality. When he came to know, he along with his organization joined the parents in their protest.

This began the chapter of this historic movement of involving large section of citizens, organizations who made representations to the authorities. But the authorities did not take these poor people into
consideration. The argument of the parents was that how can a public property like school, where hundreds of poor children are studying, can be handed over to a Private Trust. In the course of their protest, it was revealed that the Trust was made overnight. The administration was adamant, the parents too were firm. They started a sustained organized movement to save the school from being privatized. The daily Dharna near Meethakhali Garden, occasional rallies and representations, relay fast were undertaken. The movement got momentum with well known educationist Sh. Yashwantbhai Shukla, Sarvoday leader Sh. Chunibhai Vaidya and former Vice Chancellor of Saurashtra University, Prof. Devvrat Pathak took the lead of the movement. They tried to meet the Mayor several times, But the arrogance of administration was at their peak that they didn't even care to acknowledge their Memoranda. A Citizens' Convention in support of this movement which was attended by many eminent personalities of Gujarat including the veteran Gandhian Sh. Manubhai Pancholi(Darshak).

Most notable part along the movement was the concern for the children's study. As a part of the movement a 'Footpath Shala' was opened, where then Principal of Bhavan's College Sh. Kishorebhai Desai, Sh. Kashyapbhai Dalal, Sh. Dilipbhai Chandulal, eminent citizens of Ahmadabad start to teach these children. The significant was the participation of students of All India Democratic Students' Organisation who did volunteering in almost all fronts of the movement.

Once when a delegation went to meet the Mayor after taking prior appointment, when the procession reached it was known that Mayor is in meeting. They insisted for an appointment which was refused bluntly, the
protestors were thrown out of the premises forecly. the leader of the procession Jayeshbhai was isolated and lath charged. This aggravated the movement to escalated further. More citizens, students came to Dharna spot daily.

Well Known Dramatist Sh. Saumya Joshi, then in his early youth, made a street play casting the real children of the school in it and portrayed the situation of school movement in various parts of the city. Personalities like Sh. Yashwantbhai Mehta, well known litterateur, Sh. Vinodbhai Shukla, Sh. Prof. Rohitbhai Shukla, Anisaben Mirza and many others participated in the movement. The scientist of repute, Prof. Yashpal, former chairman of UGC, visited the place of movement. He was briefed about the situation by the parents and leaders of the movement. as a moral support for movement he teach children in their 'Footpath School' for some time. On seeing this he spared some time to meet Municipal Corporation Authorities and request them to terminate their decision.

At the peak of the movement, some militant law break Program was taken. It was decided to forcefully enter the school premise which was prohibited by police since the initial stage of the movement. The entire locality was occupied by the Rapid Action Force Army, armed with to like a war front. Even such step could not deter the protestors and historic Jail Bharo began. All the participants-old people like Yashwantbhai, Chunibhai, Devarbat Pathak, other citizens, women and even school children arrest voluntarily and over 500 people arrested on that day.

On legal front, a Petition was filed in the Court where well known advocates like Sh. Girishbhai Patel, Sh. Harubhai Mehta, Sh. Krishnakant
Vakharia, Sh. Bhushan Oza fought for There were many attempts from the ruling party to break the movement, threatening, corrupting, dividing, deceiving, but nothing could serve their purpose. But it was the Court Judgment which proved to be a severe blow on the movement. They refused the parents' argument that Municipal School is the Public Property and that Municipal Corporation can not give it to any private firm, either on lease or on sale. The case was then referred to Supreme Court but without any relief . But the one and a half year long School Bachao Movement became a history. Long after Navnirman movement, the land of Gujarat saw such a historic movement involving all diverse sections of the society believing in different ideologies, but united in saving the school.

**c) Period from 2002 to 2012.**

This period is marked by worst communal carnage after train burning incident in Ghodhra. Cases of riot victims and compensation were also in this period but it cannot be consumed in such space. And focus of studying is people-issue movements.

**Patan Gang Rape Movement- 2008**

A gang rape of a girl student at Primary Teachers Training College(PTC) at Patan, 190 kms away from Ahmedabad involving 5 teachers came a shook for many in Gujarat in 2008. Newspaper reported that this sexual exploitation of the girl was going on for around six months. She has been raped 14 times by these six teachers in various places. The matter came to light only because she fainted during prayers on 31st January 2008.
When coming to know about this incident, peoples from all walk of life in patan came to protest. This was not limited to Patan only but spread to various other cities. It was know that the affected girl was from the family of laborer from a village of Mehsana district. The girl’s father even sacrificed this son studies for the sake of his bright daughter –

The movement was spreaed by Mahila Sanskritic sanghathan who organized a women’s convention in many cities of Gujarat. In an Memordum to National commission for women’s on Feb. 2008, narrated the incident and punish the culprits. It was not surprising that ordinary people, who had rarely joined any demonstration, felt compelled to register their protest this time.

A four member team of National Commission for Women which had visited the victim (as reported in newspaper on 8th Feb. 2008) and also addressed the press. In fact the initial investigations indicated that ‘more girls have been raped, but are scared or unwilling to register their complaints’. It has been more than ten years that Supreme Court in its ‘Vishakha Judgment’ case had issued guidelines for formation of Gender committees in various.

Ultimately with the sustained movements on this issue, after 10 months of legal fight, court gave verdict for life imprisonment of all teachers. This was a well-come sign for member of civil society in Gujarat.

**Mahua Movement 2010**
Mahuva movement was held in the year 2010, it was the movement by farmers regarding land acquisition. The farmer had lost their lands, and that land was provided to Nirma cement plant. The government of Gujarat sanctioned to Nirma Ltd. 288 hectares (720 acres) to construct cement factory and 3000 hectare (7500 acre) for limestone mining. It would only employee 418 people. The total investment is Rs. 25000 crore (Rs. 25 billion).

Mahuva is situated in the western coast of Gujarat. Once the land was barren and was prone to salinity ingress. Only 10% of the land was used for cultivation. Measures were taken to check salinity ingress which yielded result and land became cultivable. Now almost 100% land are cultivated.

The onion and other vegetable production is quite high. More than 52 dehydration plants of Onion are operational here. 5,000 people are directly employed in onion farming. The export of onion earns foreign exchange in tune to cr. This is not all in agricultures. In addition to that 18 cotton ginning factories are running.

The people of Mahuva taluka are apprehending that due to the cement plant and the allotment of land to NIRMA they will loose the agricultural land, onion production and the production of Cotton and the ginning factory may face closure and loose direct employment. The cement factory will give employment to only 418 people and that too not necessarily to local people.
The discontent of the people grew day by day. The villagers of Samddhiyala formed a committee, Mahuva Khetivadi Paryavaran Bachao Samiti. This Samiti has filed a petition in Gujarat High Court in high court of Gujarat, a special civil application no.3477 at 2009 against the proposed cement plant. The State Govt. has formed two committees to decide the controversy. One committee is experts' committee and another one is of ministers' committee.

Now voice of struggle of the people of Mahuva is gaining support from Bhavnagar district and from other parts of the state. Renowned Sarvoday leader Mr. Chunibhai Vaidya has joined the vortex of the movement. Interestingly, the sitting MLA belonging to BJP Mr. Kanubhai Kalsaria has joined the movement openly and has become a point of discomfort for the ruling party, ultimately he left the party.

The fighting people are adopting newer tactics and forms of movement to involve the broadest section of the masses. Apart from sending delegation to various administrative bodies of the Government, they are organising public meetings, demonstrations, rallies etc. A twenty km Padyatra was taken up. They too are planning to call an all party public meeting in support of their cause. They have proposed the Govt. to take the people’s Referendum as it took place in SEZ in Raigarh of Maharastra. The movement gaining support day by day and the Government was compelled to ask NIRMA Company to suspend the work.

A people body named Lok Andolan Gujarat comprising of leading citizens, activists, writers, journalist, lawyers held press conference on 12/12/09 condemn Gujarat government move to give land to industrial
house Nirma. It stated that such move would have adverse effect in Mahuva taluka’s 15 villages which will have affect 50,000 peoples. Another people body “ Gujarat Lok Samiti” headed bu gandhian chunibhai vodya also sent a condemnation on this issues. In this way the movement got support in urban centre of Ahmadabad. To counter the ongoing agitation Gujarat government claimed 9500 jobs would by created by Nirma with commencement of its cement plant in mahuva. But those who were spear heading the movement claimed 50,000 people in 15 villages economic activity of agriculture would be at stake.

For construction of this cement plant 268 hectares of land in Mahuva talakua were given directly and additional 28,000 bigas would be given indirectly.

The movement of Mahuva is one of the movement and voice of dissent against the so called policy of globalization and liberisation in Gujarat. In the early days of globalization and linearization the people resisted the allotment of 200 acre of grazing land to an MNC in Dahegam taluka successfully. Similarly people of Umargam of South Gujarat resisted the allotment of Umargam port to one MNC. Captain Save became martyr in the movement but people became victorious. So it defies the general impression about people of Gujarat that they are not interested in protest. People have been resisting in the state.

Apart form the Mahuva movement there are two important movements are taking place against land acquisition. One is in Vadodara Jhala village in Junagarh district where people are protesting against the allotment of 650 acre of land to Larsen & Tourbo Company.
To press their opposition against proposal cement plant in Mahuva. The affected farmers headed by MLA kanubhai kalsariya planned to state capital Gandhinagar on 13/12/09. But highhandness of police administration was witness as all leading leaders like kalsariya, Chunibhai vaidhya, Prakash shah, former minister Sanat Mehta, women activist Elaben pathak, Meenakshi Joshi, were all arrested (ref. various dailies like sandesh, divya bhasker.

In one article, Meenakshi Joshi wrote About Mahuva movement, she wrote, “Here the state government has allotted the land to Nirma company to set up a cement plant. Because this area has a rich deposit of Lime Stone, But the villagers are raising their voice against the allotment of land. More than 45,000 people are resisting and protesting, which has taken away the sleep of the government officials.

The people of Mahuva taluka are apprehending that due to cement plant and the allotment of land to Nirma, they will lose the agricultural land, onion production and the production of cotton and the ginning factory may face closure and lose direct employment. The cement factory will give employment to only 418 people and that too not necessarily to local people. The state government has formed two committees to decide the controversy. One committee is experts committee and other one is of Minister’s committee. Interestingly the lawyer of the government (Advocate General) is too the lawyer of Nirma Ltd. The peasants were apprehensive to justice meted to them and so organized.

Due to sustained movement people of Mauhva were revelived by the Green Tribunal Judgment which went in favor for People.
References


