

FROM
**DEMOCRATIC
SOCIALISM
TO
NEO-LIBERALISM**

THE STORY OF INDIA'S DEMOCRACY



AMBROSE PINTO SJ

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From Democratic Socialism to Neo-Liberalism:
The Story of India's Democracy

FROM DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISM TO
NEO-LIBERALISM: THE STORY OF
INDIA'S DEMOCRACY

AMBROSE PINTO S.J.



Indian Institute of Advanced Study
Rashtrapati Nivas, Shimla

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The genuine alternative to the hitherto hegemonic neo-liberal settlement (which is variously more market-driven or more state-centric) is a political economy that promotes investment in productive activities, distributes assets and seeks to re-embed the global 'market-state' in the interpersonal relationships and the social bonds holding society together. Such a political economy requires a fundamental rethink of the dominant orthodoxies. The challenge is not between either more state or more markets but primarily how to protect both community and society against the double-headed hydra of the global 'market-state' and how to nourish the interpersonal relationships and social ties on which a vibrant market economy and democracy rely”

ADRIAN PABST

“The new “alternative regionalisms” being promoted by social movements are, on the one hand, 'alternative' to the increasingly neo-liberal directions being taken, and the regional trade and investment liberalisation programs being adopted or imposed in the existing regional groupings of countries of the South. Social movement strategies for alternative regionalisms are also designed to counter the so-called 'regional support' aid programs containing neo-liberal conditionalities set by foreign governments, particularly the US and the EU; by international institutions, particularly the IMF, World Bank and the WTO; and by transnational corporations”

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INTRODUCTION

When India became independent, Indian democracy was crafted in the context of a developmental and welfarist state. The preamble of the Constitution spoke about providing social, economic and political justice and equality to all the citizens. Granville Austin rightly opined that there was the coming together of the “national” and “social” revolutions in the Constitution. While the social revolution focused on emancipation, justice and equality which the dominant culture and tradition had not provided to the subalterns and women, the national revolution focused on democracy, liberty and fraternity that were denied to the citizens during the colonial rule. The Directive Principles of the Constitution included engagement with matters of health, education, individual and communal safety, equality and prosperity. The extent and reach of such a political and social agenda provided a central place to the state in the eradication of poverty, annihilation of caste, improvement of health and education, fostering of national unity and economic prosperity. It was a revolutionary agenda. Though the spirit of the Constitution was socialist, with an amendment in 1976, the word “socialist” was included in the preamble to further strengthen that definite direction that was offered to the state at the time of the framing of the Constitution to tread the path of equality and social justice. The activist role that was given to the state was to bridge the gap between the haves and the have-nots while pursuing the developmental agenda. In fact, several interventions of the state in the economy, state and politics were meant to include the excluded sections of society. The attempts that were made were to usher in a social revolution.

But a revolution that was visualized did not take place. What went wrong? Though the state professed democratic socialism, it practised the principles of liberal democracy. And yet, there were perceptible changes in a section of the lives of the have-nots as a result of state intervention in spite of their limitations. At the

Constituent Assembly, Rajendra Prasad had said, “After all, a Constitution like a machine is a lifeless thing. It acquires life because of men who control it and operate it, and India needs today nothing more than a set of honest men who will have the interest of the country before them.”¹ With a lack of visionaries and persons keeping public interest in mind and pressures from above, those responsible for governance decided to liberalize the economy in the late Eighties and embrace market reforms in 1991. The liberalization of the economy has witnessed a change of direction. The socialist nature of the state has come under attack. The shift from socialism to market economy has affected the lives of the marginalized, who constitute the majority, impacting democracy in significant respects. The nexus between the state and corporations is all too visible. Elected representatives have become more promoters of the market than representatives of people or society. Decisions pertaining to the lives of the people of the country are no more debated and discussed in the legislatures but in the headquarters of the international financial institutions. There is a certain secrecy pertaining to economic decisions, preventing the public from the legitimate right to know.

Market economy has increased poverty and poverty has polarized society. A small number of haves and as much as 55% below the poverty line in India according to the Oxford survey 2011, and the others hardly able to survive have had an impact on the functioning of democracy, leading to restlessness and social tensions. People feel betrayed. Those who are alienated from the state are mostly members of the subaltern communities - Scheduled Castes, Schedules Tribes, Muslims, and Backward Classes. The unevenness across India has become reinforced. There are small pockets of affluence and vast areas of grinding poverty. Agriculture has suffered the most making it dependent on corporations. Industry is no different. The sustainable model of development advocated prior to the liberalization phase has been given up. With unproductive agriculture and the imposition of a single model of development, the poor have been at the receiving end with displacements and migration. Unemployment has increased.

This work is an attempt to probe into this impact of the shift of Indian democracy from a democracy premised on socialism and state sovereignty to market economy and subordination. The work interrogates the shift in democracy, the dichotomy between democracy and market economy and on the impacts of the markets on Indian democracy. The various responses that are emerging on this alienation of the people are looked at. People's movements, the emergence of extremist violence and the demands for smaller states and its meaning for Indian democracy are explored and the alternative that is emerging from below is examined.

DR. AMBROSE PINTO SJ

NOTES

1. Constituent Assembly Debates, Vol.1, page 15, 1999.

CHAPTER 1

A VISION FOR DEMOCRATIC INDIA

“It was the best of times; it was the worst of times. It was the age of wisdom; it was the age of foolishness... It was the season of light; it was the season of darkness. It was the spring of hope; it was the winter of despair...” So goes the beginning of Charles Dickens book “A Tale of Two Cities” which deals with the historical background of the French Revolution. The situation was similar at India’s independence. It was the best of times since the country was united in the battle for freedom and the struggle for India’s Independence had borne fruit. We were finally free from the clutches of the colonial masters. It was the worst of time with ideological differences, vested interests and sinister designs. Within the Congress fold, there were people of the right, centre and left. There were other individuals and groups who had conceptualized democratic India differently. A consensus looked difficult though not impossible after all those experiences of the freedom struggle. While on the one hand, a group within the Congress was keen to take over power to seek their own interests, there was another group of the freedom struggle that was keen to make use of the freedom to wipe every tear from every eye. There was no single vision for the future of the country. There were conservatives, moderates and extremists with their own understandings of what independent India should be. People had no clue where the country was moving though they had dreams for their future. The freedom that was long awaited came through bloodshed, division and struggle. With the partition of the country, voices of lament were heard. “Why this division?” and can religion be the basis for nationalism were the queries among the concerned. There were moments of despair with hopes for a better tomorrow.

Countries that have become free have their own stories to tell.

India's story is its own and unique. There are few countries in the world as diverse as India. Freedom became possible through loss of lives, persevering struggle and an evolving vision, put together from diverse and different voices. That struggle was not easy. There were discussions, debates and even dissensions on the strategies adopted, ways and means to be used and the ultimate goal to be realized among the freedom fighters and the country as a whole. A vision for a new India emerged through those struggles, discussions and differences. The country was unanimous that the struggle was against colonialism and all that colonialism symbolized. The educated Indians were quick to realize the motives behind colonialism. The colonial project was directed towards two main objectives – to keep the people in political subjugation and to make possible the maximum exploitation of the country's resources. In essence, it was both political and economic subjugation of the people to the designs of the British rule. There was a whole array of laws to limit democracy – to outlaw strikes, restrict trade unions, limit political activities, suppress criticism, arrest political leaders, curb individual liberty and permit most limited representation to the people. Colonial laws and decrees were intended to tie the hands of the people so that they were in no position to prevent their economic exploitation. Direct rule over the colony gave the colonizers monopoly against all competitors in trade and business. In the colonial market it was easier to eliminate competition, to make sure of orders and to strengthen the necessary connections by monopolist methods. While colonialism provided the colonizers cheap land, labour and resources, they were able to establish a monopoly-established market. In order to maintain the profitable system, the colonizers prevented industrialization in the colony. They preferred India to be a service sector than a manufacturing one.

IMPACTS OF COLONIALISM

How did colonialism impact the country? When the objective of colonialism was loot and plunder of resources, it is logical to hold that the interests of the people of the colony were of least importance. More important were the needs and greed of the alien people and

the country from which the colonizers hailed. People of the colonies were subordinated and subjected in every way so that the entire production and the economy could be geared to the needs of the people of the mother country. For the colonies and the people, colonialism meant poverty, ill-health, illiteracy, malnutrition, political tyranny and dependence. Different groups of people felt the impacts of colonialism differently in the colonies. For the workers, it meant the denial of rights – trade unions the right to strike, the right to work for six hours, right to just wages and right to participation. When people went on strikes or protested maltreatment, workers had to be prepared to meet batons, bullets and even death. For a small percentage of the educated, it meant frustration, a lack of opportunities to use their skills to become entrepreneurs or to creatively contribute to the economy, polity and the wellbeing of society. For the peasants, farmers and the others, it was the introduction of western economy by replacing the local economies. “For practically everyone, apart from a privileged few, the colonial system became an object of hatred. All the progressive classes in colonial society felt frustrated. Their economic hardships, their limited possibilities of growth and improvement, the daily practice of racial discrimination, and the lack of political rights, all came to be seen as a natural consequence of foreign rule. Thus the struggle against colonialism which became such a major phenomenon was a struggle supported by the overwhelming majority of the people – workers and peasants, intellectuals and capitalists, small shopkeepers and traders, and even individual chiefs or members of royal families.”¹

There was no place for a dialogue as long as the English were unprepared to listen and leave. Why would they have a dialogue as long as they can achieve their purpose without it? The entire game was premised on robbing of economic wealth and resources. The country was pauperized with resources freely flowing out of the country. Though a section of the local population was won over through absorption into the culture of the colonizers, the educated, the conscious leaders and the people were aware of the designs of the colonial rule and they were determined to oust them from the country. Jack Woddis in his book, “Introduction to Neo-colonialism”

points out, “In India, the steps to encourage the growth of an educated, westernized elite were taken as early as the nineteenth century, and the introduction of the Morley-Minto reforms in 1909 was in fact based on the existence already on a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinion, in morals and in intellect, on whose support Britain anticipated it could rely. The new elite which began to emerge in the colonies, as Mansur correctly points out, was “not a new elite created by the colonial impact out of a diversified society at random” but “a part of the traditional elite, whether political or cultural”. Some members of this elite group were later to play a prominent part in the national independence movements, but many passively accepted the colonial system; and the colonial powers, in fostering them, generally regarded them as a secondary support to their main ally, the traditional rulers and land-lords connected with the pre-capitalist economic reforms, mainly feudal.”²

While in several other countries, the colonizers ruled by “divide and rule” policy, it was no different here. Divisions existed in the country on the basis of caste and the Britishers were able to exploit it. Given the fact that land, resources and power were concentrated in the hands of a small number of the upper castes and classes, striking a deal and maintaining that deal was easier. The subalterns really did not matter. It was not the mission of the colonizers to work towards an agenda of social equality or caste annihilation though they were aware that the system of caste was anti-human. If they were to struggle against caste, their primary purpose of economic loot would have been affected with turmoil within the social system. The opposition they would have experienced to their presence would have been intense from the dominant communities. That would have made their presence in the country difficult. Focused on their prime motive, they were keen to strike a deal with the holders of power than to disturb the existing system of caste. Though they were aware that the system of caste was immoral and exploitative, given their primary intentions they decided not to intervene in the social system to reform it. As far as independence for the country was concerned, there could be no freedom unless and until both the internal colonization of people in the name of caste and the

colonization by external forces was put to an end. That is why the anti-colonial struggle had to be spearheaded not only against the British but equally against those domestic social, economic and political forces which by their collaboration with the colonizers and their own vested interests had made it possible for the colonial system to be maintained. One of the reasons why the independence struggle was not always thorough is that it was conducted without a full understanding of the character of the internal support on which colonialism relied. The requirements of complete national liberation would make it necessary for the independence struggle to combine the overthrow of British rule and foreign economic domination with the defeat of the traditional domestic forces which stood in the way of social and economic democracy.

With Gandhi, Nehru, Ambedkar and many other significant persons and ordinary people that included peasants and workers, it was a struggle where different sections of people were united. While Gandhi represented the struggle for freedom from both internal and external forces, Nehru stood for liberalism with a vision of freedom for individuals and society and Ambedkar was a symbol for the inclusion of the excluded. Each of them had visions of their own for the freedom of the country. They discussed, debated and arrived at some kind of consensus without total agreement and in spite of differences worked as a team. In the process, they enriched the notion of democracy for India and placed before the country the importance of deep respect for dissent and pluralism. Each of them had their own experiences and intellectual visions and they contributed to the total understanding of what the future of Indian democracy should be. While Nehru was the leader of the Congress party, Mahatma Gandhi had galvanized different segments of the population to take on the British in a non-violent manner. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, a scholar par excellence, hailed from the untouchable community and brought with him the hopes and aspirations of the community at the framing of the Constitution. Putting together their different visions was not easy. What did they desire from independence? The three of them along with others who were a part of the struggle desired an end to discrimination both from the colonial as well as the caste masters.

FREEDOM FROM DISCRIMINATION

That is why we need to look at the Indian version of democracy differently from other countries. Other countries of the West did not inherit a vicious system of caste which had made people internally un-free. Those divisions of high and low, pure and impure premised on caste had to be given up to experience freedom internally. The system of caste was internal colonization by the upper and dominant castes of the majority of the subalterns. Those who suffered social discrimination, with independence of the country wanted nothing less than a social revolution. They were of the opinion that political freedom is only one aspect of freedom and political freedom without social freedom would not make any sense. For India to be free, caste must be annihilated because it is inhuman and detrimental to the upward march of the untouchables and the other subalterns. Wrongly idealized social relations would threaten the whole of human existence and shake the foundation of a moral and just social order. If discrimination had to stop, there must be right social relations. The challenge of freedom was how to create an egalitarian social order from a hierarchical society rooted in the ideas of pollution and purity, high and low, pure and impure. To rid the country from the British was one aspect of freedom. Getting rid of foreign rule without commitment to a social order with no discrimination would not make freedom complete as far as the subalterns were concerned. With Ambedkar as the representative of the community, elected to draft the Indian Constitution, it was held that the social aspect of discrimination will be taken care of and justice will be provided for the untouchables. The minorities had their fears too. They opined that India should discover her identity not in uniformity but diversity. They wanted assurances of community rights not only to protect but to preserve their culture as well.

Coupled with the internal discrimination, the colonial oppression was equally exploitative. Independence was to put an end to that oppression. It was a discriminatory rule. There were multiple forms of discrimination and victimization. One of the important sources of discrimination was racism, the most irrational and unnecessary denial of equality springing from deeply rooted and primitive

prejudices, a clear affront to the fundamental truth that all human beings are born free and are equal in dignity and rights. In the name of race, the Britishers enjoyed political, economic and social privileges and control over the colonized. Hierarchy was maintained by claiming superiority of race and the colonized were made to internalize inferiority. In fact, the colonial rule was legitimized on the basis of racism. The claims of white superiority had excited strong and deep resentment in the country because the local population was looked down as semi-civilized. Racism represented a systematic denial of human rights and attempted to justify the racist ideology. In the name of racism, people were denied access to rights, representation and to their own economic resources. Institutionalized racism is a thorough system of discrimination that involves social institutions and affects virtually every aspect of society.

PSYCHOLOGICAL SCARS

Both caste and racial discrimination left psychological scars on the people. The so-called “pollution line” divided Dalits from other castes, the lowest in the caste hierarchy. The way they were conceptualized and treated was inhumane. The backwards were discriminated by the upper castes and the backwards in turn heaped violence on the Dalits. In spite of more than 60 years of freedom, it is unfortunate that discrimination based on caste still exists and what is worse, even untouchability is still prevalent in spite of the abolition of the practice of untouchability through law. Beatings, rape and murder of Dalits take place frequently. Persistent low-level everyday harassment affects the physical and psychological wellbeing of Dalits and Other Backward Classes. The psychological scars are passed on from person to person, community to community and remembered by generations to come. Living in fear because of one’s inherited status as a member of a community dubbed as low or backward and becoming a victim of physical and emotional violence with constant harassment is a major cause of psychological scars and low self-esteem. Those who are harassed often adopt an identity with the negative images and labels they are given. They internalize the stereotypes of the dominant communities, leading to acceptance of what they are

from the characteristics attributed to them. Those who become conscious resist. Resistance sometimes leads to more dangerous harassment and discrimination, resulting in assault and even physical violence. The horror of caste-motivated murders is too painful to comprehend. It leaves a long-lasting negative impression on the minds of the victim, victim's family, community and society as a whole. It is a signal and warning which the country cannot ignore. Unchecked hatred in the past has led to the indiscriminate slaughter of men, women and children justified by enmity and dislike of the other. The history of the country is littered with examples of hate and violence on the subalterns. We simply can never forget the systematic violence meted out to Dalits and OBCs during and after colonialism, which has obstructed the country's full freedom. The state response to caste violence indicates the way society, the institutions and the political systems behave towards those who are perceived to be different. The failure of the justice system to catch and prosecute those responsible adds to the grief and injury felt by the family, the community and anti-caste activists everywhere. There is institutional casteism within the state and police force, which has led to inexcusable silence, apathy and at times even support to caste violence. The increase of rightist political parties who distribute materials to legitimize the existing caste order through subtle ways has further incited hatred. The government's condemnation of casteism, in most cases, amounts to meaningless platitudes. At times this has empowered and encouraged the perpetrators of caste violence to continue their practices. States unconsciously sanction caste violence by legal documents, rules and procedures which portray certain groups of people as inferior, backward, criminals or scoundrels. The fear, hatred, dislike and the negative attitude towards people because of their caste when nurtured and fuelled by those who have the advantage of possessing economic, social or political power, can be turned into the ugly and obscene annihilation of people and a total disregard of their humanity. As long as such violence remains institutionalized, communities remain subordinated and it is difficult to speak about freedom for a nation.

On the other hand racism practised by the colonizers led to the

belief that the people of the country were second rate human beings and not worth as much as the whites. They suffered humiliation, degradation and deprivation. Their self-concept suffered to a large extent and they couldn't bring themselves to believe that they could rule themselves, accomplish certain tasks or perform certain jobs. They were willing to be subordinated since they thought governance was a complex issue and they would not be able to govern themselves. While at the psychological level inferiority was internalized, at the social level the colonizers kept themselves apart from the local people, rulers meant to rule. Politically power was wielded on the native population and the economic policy was defined by those in power. It led to social injustice. As literacy spread and the elites were educated in institutions of higher learning both in and outside the country, there was a growing realization that the country needed to be freed from the clutches of foreign rulers. The conscious and the educated came to realize that they can govern themselves much more effectively with greater benefits for the people of the land. India's independence movement therefore was a protest against caste and claims of natural and racial superiority, a claim that the British were more equal than the Indians, a struggle to put an end to all kinds of discrimination. Positively, it was an assertion that the people of India can govern their country without monopolizing power by any group within the country or external rule.

STRUGGLE FOR EQUALITY

Moving beyond discrimination, the second aspect of the freedom struggle was a struggle for equality. In a caste society, not all communities are equal. Equality within the country meant a determination to pull down the caste order that determined one's life from womb to tomb and a commitment to establish a human community as a part of the struggle against discrimination within the country. In 1830, Ram Mohan Roy said that India cannot be a nation because it is divided among many castes. If India had to be a nation, the caste system had to be rejected. Though India was not historically a nation, at the time of becoming a free nation, it had made a commitment to become a nation by rejecting its past as a

divided society, a society divided on castes and sub-castes. The country had to confront its own internal divisions for social freedom. Any society based on injustice, discrimination and inequality has the seeds of conflict and decay within itself so long as it does not get rid of this evil. Destruction and violence as devices do not pay to obtain freedom. These weapons are weapons of the weak and bound to increase violence in society. They can only be obstacles in both the short and long run. They confuse the issue and are likely to make the solution difficult. Building up things through dialogue, non-violence and peaceful methods of pressure are more prudent. This is what those who fought for the freedom of the country did. They were aware that social divisions, social conflicts and economic growth cannot go hand in hand. A new India had to be built. Working for social equality was one of their priorities. To respond to the culture of caste, there were several transformative and egalitarian traditions in the country. To make India free, they needed to rely on those cultural heritages as well. The framers of the Constitution were attracted towards the teachings and sayings of Ashoka and Buddha. Gandhi's non-violent philosophy also may have been derived from the Buddhist traditions. Besides Gandhi, there were the influences of Nehru who was one of the prominent leaders of the Indian National Congress and Dr. Ambedkar, the architect of the Indian Constitution. When the framers of the Constitution thought of an alternative vision for the country different from the colonial and the caste project, it was their design to create an India of "equality, fraternity and justice". The country was promised an egalitarian social order. Equality in all its dimensions – economic, political and social – was assured to citizens. Socialism that is different from the West with concern for subaltern communities became the vision and the goal of future India. That socialism that was presented was not to be a scientific one but a democratic one with respect and value for every individual and communities. Freedom from social, political, economic and cultural slavery needed a political, social and moral revolution. Both Nehru and Gandhi along with Ambedkar were rightly convinced that without a moral revolution, there was no possibility of a social, political and economic revolution in the country.

In the external forum, the British considered themselves as more equal than the natives and citizens over whom they ruled. Their rule gave them complete control over economic and natural resources as well. The people of the country were the objects of their rule. Given the sharp differences and inability to reconcile those differences, there was anger and frustration against the colonial rule. In fact, most revolutions and radical social changes have emerged from such dissatisfactions. What did equality mean for those in the freedom struggle? They were in contact with the masses and knew their poverty, misery and ill-health. "They were in miserable rags, men and women, but their faces were full of excitement, and their eyes glistened and seemed to expect strange happenings which would as if by a miracle put an end to their long misery"³, wrote Jawaharlal Nehru in his autobiography. "The British government...based itself on the exploitation of the masses and ruined India economically... Politically, India's status has never been as reduced as under the British regime. Culturally, the system of education has torn us from our moorings, and our training has made us hug the very chains that bind us. Spiritually, compulsory disarmament has made us think that we cannot look after ourselves or put a defence against foreign aggression."⁴ The freedom movement was to bring about an economic regeneration so that masses would cling to the idea of political and economic liberation. Swaraj meant an end to all kinds of exploitation of the masses. Political freedom was to include economic freedom of the starving millions and social equality. Adoption of an economic programme with the objective to socialize the national struggle became the strategy of the national movement. "Equipped with a socialist ideology and immersed in the work of making the masses economically conscious and politically organized, we can with confidence look forward to the future and hope in the fullness of time to lead the organized masses of India to freedom,"⁵ said Acharya Narendra Deva, one of the important leaders of the socialist movement. It meant that every citizen should enjoy the right to vote, to hold and express opinions, to enjoy liberty before the law, to engage in political activity, to criticize the government with rights for food, clothing and shelter with equality regardless of caste, class and creed. Though

there were no claims for absolute economic equality, the battle was for minimum inequality. Not equal shares but fair shares; not equality but social justice. With gross inequalities, the country had experienced starvation and deaths in several parts of the country. The state did not intervene in situations of food crisis, natural calamities and drought simply because it was a “foreign government” with no obligations to citizens. Politically, Indians were kept out from participation from the institutions of the state and they were unable to respond to calamities. Culturally, the elite of the country were introduced to the British culture through the instrumentality of English and English educational institutions and were distanced from the poor. The local population was made to assimilate the culture of the colonizers and in the process made to look down on their own culture. The kind of equality visualized by the colonizers was one of uniformity in spite of the country being diverse and different with no sensitivity to economic, social and cultural differences. The objective of uniformity was for efficient governance and through the process to make it easy for the rulers to attain the purpose of their rule.

There were differences within the Congress movement on the approach to the ouster of the British from the country already in 1905. When the moderate demands of the Congress were not accepted by the British government, with the rising awareness of the British exploitation, there was the growth of a radical wing in the Congress. With that began a new phase in the freedom struggle. New demands were made and new methods of struggle adopted with increased mass mobilization. Tilak was clear in his conviction that “political rights will have to be fought for. The moderates think that these can be won by persuasion. We think that they can only be got by strong pressure”. The extremist leaders – popularly known as Lal-Pal-Bal (Lala Lajpat Rai, Bipin Chandra Pal and Bala Gangadhar Tilak) drew masses into the struggle, particularly in urban areas. The mobilization of the people, particularly the youth for the struggle was a major contribution of the extremists. There was a nation-wide protest movement against the partition of Bengal and the annual session of the Congress that was held at Calcutta in 1906 had felt its

impact. At the session, Dadabhai Naoroji supported the stewardship of the programme of the extremists in the Congress and declared the attainment of Swaraj as the aim of the Congress. The Swadeshi, non-cooperation and the boycott movements were favoured as the means of resistance. Soon, the Swadeshi and boycott movements spread. Shops selling foreign goods were picketed. Students played an important role. Meetings were held all over the country and associations were formed. The government resorted to repressive measures. Meetings were banned. The chanting of the national song “Bande Mataram” composed by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee was prohibited. Recognition was withdrawn for schools that became a part of the movement and grants were stopped. Processionists and protesters were lathi-charged and various attempts were made to strike terror in the people. However, all the measures of oppression were of no avail. The popular upheaval was so intense that many people came to believe that the end of British rule was near. Tilak wrote, “Repression is repression. If it is legal, it must be resisted peacefully; but if it is illegal, it must be illegally met.” He also gave Congress the slogan “Swaraj is my birthright and I shall have it.” The movement continued into the year 1907. The nationalist newspapers were banned and their editors prosecuted. Many leaders were imprisoned. In 1907, at the 23rd session of the Congress held at Surat in Gujarat, the ‘moderates’ and the extremists came into conflict. The ‘moderates’ wanted to modify the resolutions on Swadeshi, non-cooperation and boycott passed at the Calcutta session in the previous year. They also wanted to add in the constitution of the Congress a clause that self-government was to be achieved through constitutional means and by reforming the existing system of administration. They were opposed to the intensification of the movement. Tilak tried to capture the leadership of the Congress without success. There were disorderly scenes and the session broke up. The two groups later met separately. Leadership of Congress remained in the hands of the moderate group. The ‘extremist’ worked separately until the reunion in 1916. The repressive measures of the government continued. In 1907, the Act on sedition was passed to prevent the holding of meetings that may promote the disturbance

of public tranquility. In 1910, the Indian Press Act was passed which gave the authorities wide powers to punish the editors of newspapers which in their view were providing incitement to rebellion. The government deported people without trial under a century-old law. A number of newspapers were banned and leaders imprisoned and deported. Tilak was sentenced to six years' imprisonment and deported to Mandalay for two articles which he had published in his paper "Keshari." His arrest was widely resented and led to one of the earliest strikes in the history of India by the textile workers of Bombay. The industries in Bombay were brought to a standstill and there were 16 deaths. However, the Congress decided to follow a policy of conciliation and compromise and not a path of confrontation, which may have led to deaths, violence and bloodshed, thus defining the manner in which freedom from colonial masters had to be struggled and fought for.

DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISM AS A VISION

The process through which we attained freedom is unique. It is the triumph of the voices of moderation. Our freedom was to be freedom from external as well as internal discrimination for equality. Unlike the socialism of the West and that of Soviet Union or China, our socialism therefore had to be different, due to the prevalence of caste, different ideologies at work and the nature of colonization of the country. It would have to have its own national moorings. Right to vote, right to contest elections and the right to criticize the government were all a part of liberal democracies across the world. Though essential, that was not enough as far as independence for India was concerned. From the British rule, we demanded political freedom. But economic freedom was no less important and that had to be obtained as a result of internal policies. The state promised to bridge the gap between the rich and the poor by introducing land reforms and controls in various economic activities. For a hungry person or starving communities, there can be no freedom without food, clothing and shelter. Fighting against social inequalities was essential. For the country's impoverished millions, caste was another aspect of slavery. At the social level, untouchability had to be

abolished. It is one thing to abolish untouchability by law and it is quite different to be treated as an equal. Opportunities had to be created and representation had to be offered in the sphere of economics, politics, employment and education so that the discriminated communities were able to assert their rights. To bring the unequals to the level of equality, the system of reservation in jobs was constitutionally assured in public institutions for SCs and STs. Seats were reserved in admission to educational institutions run by the state and those assisted by the state through grant-in-aid. To make the legislatures truly representative, reservation of seats for the legislatures was provided. The backwards were promised their share in the development process with reservation in jobs and education. The minorities were assured rights in Articles 29 and 30 to establish and administer their institutions. Social betterment became the objective. Communities of people were given their legitimate rights. All communities were assured of their cultural rights. All these were community rights. Socialism, inclusion and democracy thus became the means for building an egalitarian society. Individual rights were protected. The framers of the Constitution as well as those in the freedom struggle in no way had even the slightest inkling to curb individual freedom. Socialism implied increasing and expanding the grip of the state over the economy to even out economic and social imbalances. Social progress can happen, the framers of the Constitution thought only when opportunities are given to each individual, provided the individual is not a single individual of a selected group but a representative of the community as a whole. Socialism was viewed in the context of how far it would enable the individual to rise above his petty self and then think in terms of common good. Instead of promoting acquisitiveness and greed, socialism was to promote co-operation and social harmony. The empowerment of discriminated communities through creation of opportunities as well as individual enhancement of members of these communities was considered a priority for bringing about social equality. A moral revolution that would create a change in the attitude of people was deemed necessary.

ETHICAL ASPECTS OF SOCIALISM

If Nehru did not go with the Soviet or Chinese model of socialism, it is precisely because he was conscious of the ethical aspect of socialism. He was against every kind of authoritarianism. He could never reconcile the establishment of a socialist order through recourse to violence. The transfer of power through peaceful means had further confirmed the belief in the superfluity of the concept of class-conflict as the only way of bringing about oneness. The General Council of the Socialist Party in its policy statement in October 1949 had said, "The bourgeois revolution was the mother of the bourgeois democracy; so is the social revolution the mother of socialist democracy. Taking into account the entire situation in the country and the future possibilities, democratic means appear the only means to follow."⁶ While the welfare of the society as a whole was important for Nehru, he also believed in the individual freedom and welfare of citizens. In the socialist model of both USSR and China, there was no freedom for the individual. Every citizen was to be a slave of the state. The state was controlled by the representatives of the party. And it is these representatives who in the name of socialism imposed their will on the masses. For Nehru, being influenced by the ethics of the West, without the free will and consent of the people, there can be no democracy.

Gandhi's nationalist strategy was a dominant force in understanding the nature of India's socialism. He wished to transform India into Ramarajya. In the Ramarajya of his imagination, each and every one, weak or strong, will get equal opportunity to rise and his/her security and honour are guaranteed. In fact, justice and freedom for every citizen are possible only under this system with opportunity for progress and general welfare. For Gandhi, democracy had to be in essence the art and science of mobilizing the entire physical, economic and spiritual resources of all the various sections of people in the service of common good. Based on the country's ethos and values, Gandhi added some powerful features for containing consumption and promoting social justice and equity. He advocated village governments in which the village assembly controls resources

and decision-making; decentralised production systems to curb distress migration to urban centres; self-sustaining local economies providing resilience to regional and global economic turbulence; a low-expense clean election system; national governments accountable to local governance as a check against arrogance of the state; industry as trusteeship of the people, reinvesting in production of goods and services and not indulging in ostentatious consumption; and religions integrated as a positive force at the grassroots level. He particularly stressed upon discipline, equal respect of law by all and priority to social will over the individual will in a democracy. He was of the opinion that indiscipline, disrespect of law and priority to the individual will over the social will are among the main causes behind evils in a democracy. So, it is necessary to minimize them for making democracy disciplined and enlightened. Moreover, he laid great emphasis on a healthy public opinion and expressed the need for responsible representation. If public opinion in democracy is not healthy and matured, it can be converted into a mobocracy. Democracy necessarily means a conflict of will and ideas, involving sometimes a war to the knife between different ideas. The very essence of democracy is that every person represents all the varied interests which compose the nation. To safeguard democracy, the people must have a keen sense of independence, self-respect and their oneness. Intolerance, discourtesy and harshness are taboo in all good societies and are surely contrary to the spirit of democracy. Corruption and hypocrisy ought not to be inevitable products of democracy. Thus, it was Gandhi who salvaged India's freedom struggle from the grip of the extremists and theoreticians and made it a mass movement. Democratic socialism was his ideology too. Given the fact that India was agricultural, he had subscribed to the alleviation of the misery of the underdogs with special reference to the peasants of India. His politics had a social orientation. But he was an incarnation of voluntarism. His whole concept of socialism was "Sarvodaya" – welfare of all, a society in which there would be no exploitation, a state that would perform as few functions as possible and people would look after themselves.

POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC DEMOCRACY

Ambedkar's understanding had added another dimension of democracy. Hailing from a community that was victimized in every aspect of life with hardly any economic assets and excluded from the mainstream, he had stated that any government that is in power should strive to bring about economic democracy with social inclusion. On March 15, 1947, Dr. Ambedkar submitted a memorandum to the Constituent Assembly where he stated, "Spokesmen of Hindus have not cared to define the scope of Scheduled Castes minority and its meaning. I interpret it to mean that the Scheduled Castes are more than a minority and that any protection given to the citizens will not be adequate for the Scheduled Castes. I am justified in demanding for the Scheduled Castes all the benefits of the Fundamental Rights of citizens, all the benefits of the provisions for the protection of the minorities and in addition special safeguards."⁷ He proposed state ownership in agriculture with a collectivized method of cultivation. On equality, he pointed out that the principle of one vote for one person makes no sense as long as we deny communities equality in social and economic life. "We must remove the contradiction at the earliest possible moment or else those who suffer from inequality will blow up the structure of political democracy which this Assembly has so labouriously built up,"⁸ he said. For him, there would be no democracy as long as economic and social dimensions of democracy are not guaranteed. For Ambedkar social equality is the end and state socialism is the means. What did he mean by social democracy? He meant a way of life which recognizes liberty, equality and fraternity as the principles of life. Liberty cannot be divorced from equality. Nor can liberty and equality be divorced from fraternity or community. In India, there is absence of social equality since society is based on the principle of graded inequality. On the economic plane, many live in abject poverty. Those who are socially weak are economically poor. The system has maintained interests. Those interests would not like changes in the system. That is why the state should ensure basic standards of living to all sections of the society and change the system by including the excluded sections of society. He held state

socialism as essential for rapid industrialization since the task of building modern India could not be left to private individuals. That in no way meant that Ambedkar did not define the role of the individual in the state. The concept of “one man, one vote and one value” expressed his commitment to the place of the individual.

There were thus three different visions of democracy. But all the three visions were to peacefully transform India to an egalitarian society without resorting to violence. All the three visualized a social revolution with deep respect to individuals while stressing social transformation and making their unique contributions. The prevalent spirit was one of acceptance of tolerance, pluralism and differences. Mahatma Gandhi gave our freedom movement a moral and mass dimension with stress on de-centralisation and self-sufficient villages. Jawaharlal Nehru gave it an economic and socialist dimension stressing the role of the individual and his connectivity to society, and the need of industrialization to modernize the country. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar gave it a challenging social and democratic vision asking the excluded to resort to the devices of education, agitation and organization and thus move away from “the graded social inequality” by asserting for their dignity and rights. The mass and moral dimension given by Mahatma Gandhi brought the ordinary citizens, particularly women, to the fold of the freedom movement. The economic and socialist dimension of Nehru modernized India and Ambedkar was able to include the excluded in the democratic vision. One of the major factors behind the resounding success of the freedom struggle is the consolidation of all voices – left, right and centrist democratic forces without the sacrifice of the individual. What did all of them mean by socialism? It is necessary to explore the issue further and highlight the attitudes that were considered essential for democratic socialism.

ABSENCE OF VESTED INTERESTS IN SOCIALISM:

Socialism implied divesting of vested and selfish interests for all of them. People who have interests in an existing order do not want change and resist it with all their might. When guided by self-interest people hardly see reason. Socialist methods are aimed at the

conversion of the heart, mind and attitudes. It is necessary and essential that people move away from their personal desires and interests to the values and aspirations of society by personal choices. One cannot be happy when the community or society is not at peace. The individual should consider society as an extended part of 'self' and make the welfare of society one's life mission. When individuals resist, both Gandhi and Nehru had no problems to resort to coercion. The socialistic pattern of society, therefore justified coercion or use of force where it is inevitable. Life in the state necessitates some form of government that has to curb and prevent selfish tendencies which are likely to injure society. The very purpose of the state is to look after the welfare of all. It is in the common interest that state taxes. But the imposition of taxes can become a form of coercion. Without a certain amount of coercion, private property will simply not disappear. Human nature sometimes may need this kind of coercion given the fact that the greed of individuals may prevent the overall good of the community and society. Moral pressure too is a type of coercion. The object of the socialist state is to raise human beings to the highest level of moral uplift with material prosperity by abolishing hate and selfishness. But the good of the community cannot be held up and sacrificed because of some people who profit from the existing system objecting to it. If political and social institutions stand in the way and if selfish persons are an impediment in identifying one's good with the good of the community, such obstructions are to be removed. To compromise with them is a betrayal. If coercion is prompted by hate, cruelty or revenge it is to be avoided. If coercion is based on goodwill, it is morally defensible. "Everything that comes in the way will have to be removed, gently if possible, forcibly if necessary. And there seems to be little doubt that coercion will often be necessary. But if force is used, it should not be in the spirit of hatred or cruelty but with the dispassionate desire to remove an obstruction."⁹ It is essential to realize the importance Nehru, Gandhi and Ambedkar gave to the interest of the public or society over the selfish interests of individuals. However, selfish individuals were not to hold society to ransom through their greed and accumulation.

DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISM IS NO DOGMA

Democratic socialism was not a dogma for all of them. But a socialism that is free to examine the claims of every system of ideas which professes to serve the social purpose and is willing to revise the idea in the light of new experiences. The Indian socialist movement thus is a byproduct of the national movement. It is a nationalist socialism that is predominantly anti-colonial and anti-caste and did not desire to subordinate itself either to Western capitalism or Soviet colonialism or the caste system. India's socialism thus was unique. If democracy is used by the possessing class to maintain its position of privilege, it is not real democracy. Socialism called for ownership and control by the state of defence industries, mines, quarries, rivers, forests, key industries. But "socialism does not necessarily mean that every method of production should be owned by the state. But in order to take steps towards introducing a socialist structure of society, it is inevitable that the major methods of production should be owned and controlled by the state",¹⁰ Nehru had said. However, in the socialist pattern of society, public sector and private sector can co-exist provided the philosophy behind the private enterprise is not private gain at the cost of the society but public welfare. Capitalism imbued with a spirit of social welfare and devoid of exploitative nature and socialism was reconcilable.

SOCIALISM AND SOCIALISM ALONE FOR NEHRU

Nehru was the president of the Congress party as well as the first Prime Minister of the country. He contributed much both to the framing of the Constitution of India as well as its implementation. While Gandhi was an inspirational figure, Nehru was a statesman. As the first Prime Minister of the country, socialism was the vital creed of his political faith and he saw there were no other alternative than the country becoming socialist. "Socialism is thus for me not merely an economic doctrine which I favour; it is a vital creed which I hold with all my head and heart. I work for Indian Independence because the nationalist in me cannot tolerate alien domination; I work for it even more because for me it is the inevitable step to

social and economic change.”¹¹ On the eve of his election as the president of the Congress for the third time in 1953, Nehru had stated that socialism alone can solve our economic problems. In spite of being impressed by Soviet socialism, Nehru was not keen to use that model in India since there was no political democracy there. He found it too authoritarian. Though initially impressed by what he saw and witnessed in Soviet Union, by the year he assumed Prime Ministership, he had made a break with Marxian socialism and Soviet techniques. He was against any form of dictatorship in the name of socialism. But he favoured amelioration of the system of economic inequality not by the total absence of individual freedom or abolition of private property, but by the existence of personal freedom and private property. Reduction of inequality was to be achieved not merely by re-distribution but by creating further wealth. Nehru felt concerned “how to combine democracy with socialism, how to maintain individual freedom and initiative and yet have centralized social control and planning of the economics of the people.”¹² He vouched for freedom and end of exploitation during his Vice-Presidency of the country under the interim cabinet. In his broadcast to the nation on September 7, 1946, he had said, “It is for this one world that free India will work, a world in which there is the free cooperation of free peoples and no class or group exploits another.”¹⁴ While he pitched his ambition to end inequality in every form, socialism was core to his doctrine. The Objective Resolution that he moved in the Constituent Assembly upheld the cause of socialism. “I stand for socialism and I hope India will stand for socialism and that India will go towards the constitution of a socialist state...”¹⁴ That was no rhetoric. He had a deep desire to implement that vision though he was aware it is a difficult vision and yet a possible path to tread. Not many countries had succeeded voluntarily embracing social democracy. With the moral strength of the country, Nehru and others thought it should be possible to realize it. Gandhi too believed in the essential goodness of human beings. Without force and with invitation to the inner voice of conscience, Nehru, Gandhi and others were convinced that India could transform itself as a socialist economy in the manner of the freedom struggle, which believed in no violence.

STRESS ON PRODUCTION

Along with reduction of inequality, more equitable distribution of wealth was another component of that vision. Wealth cannot be distributed without its creation and India did not have plenty of wealth to distribute at the dawn of independence. The thought of Nehru soon after independence was to stress more on production than equitable distribution of wealth. To distribute, there should be production. The economy had suffered a major setback due to partition and was stagnant and per-capita income was low. Equitable distribution of wealth would only lead to equitable distribution of poverty. With the primacy on production, he was still not an advocate of a mixed economy. In a speech in the Constituent Assembly, he had said, "I am prepared to say that everything that we do should be judged from the point of view of production, first of all. If nationalization adds to production, we shall have nationalization at every step. If it does not, let us see how to bring it about in order not to impede production. That is the essential thing."¹⁵ With the problem of food, clothing and shelter to be faced and the standard of living of the people to be raised, while addressing the 22nd annual meeting of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry, New Delhi, on March 4, 1949, Nehru had said, "Whatever the method may be, the method which delivers the goods and brings about the necessary change and gives satisfaction to the masses, will justify itself and give hope."¹⁶ But his faith in socialism was abiding. "If we want India to be prosperous and if we want to raise the standard of India, we want a socialist society in India. We are strong in that there is no weakness."¹⁷ He thought of socialism as the inevitable step for social and economic change. Though he gave no definition to the term, he considered the end of socialism as human welfare and everybody having a chance to concrete development.

STRESS ON AGRICULTURE

Like Gandhi, Nehru's concern was primarily for the agrarian peasants. India was primarily an agricultural country at the time of independence. Both Gandhi and Nehru were opposed to the

subordination of agriculture to the industrial economy. "Industrial workers, important as they are and to be more so in future, must take second place before the peasants, for the problem of today in India is the problem of the peasantry,"¹⁸ he had written in his autobiography. The Karachi resolution of the Congress read, "The system of land tenure and revenue and rent shall be reformed and an equitable adjustment made of the burden on agricultural land, immediately giving relief to the smaller peasantry by a substantial reduction of agricultural rent and revenue now paid by them and in case of uneconomic holdings, exempting from rent, so long as necessary, with such relief as may be just and necessary to holders of small estates affected by such exemption or reduction in rent and to the same end imposing a graded tax on net incomes from land above a reasonable minimum."¹⁹ That is why we see his emphasis on land reforms and abolition of landlordism in Independent India in preference to state owned industries. "We are a Zamindari and Taluqdari Province and the first question we had to face was that of the land. We declared that the existing land system must go and that there should be no intermediaries between the state and the cultivator,"²⁰ he had said. He had realized more than anybody else the significance of the abolition of landlordism, removal of intermediaries and the dissolution of the feudal socio-economic structure. Since agriculture was the principal occupation of the great majority of the people, he was clear that it should be the first concern of the state. On the growth and betterment of the peasantry, he placed the future of India. To give his socialist convictions an agrarian bias, he expressed his final will to scatter his ashes over the fields where the peasants of India toil, so that they may mingle with the dust and soil of India. While he valued the right to vote, he was of the view it will not protect the poor from economic exploitation. "A vote is of little use to a hungry man. The people with real power were those who could take advantage of his hunger and make him work to do anything else that they wanted to their own advantage. Thus political power, which the vote was supposed to give, was seen to be a shadow with no substance, without economic power, and the brave dreams of the early democrats that equality would follow from

the vote, came to nothing.”²¹ On the other hand, he believed treading the social democratic tradition with the intelligent use of the ballot box and the extension of the franchise can achieve a lot. While a limited franchise can help the privileged section to manipulate and use power to the detriment of the community, adult suffrage could bring about a non-violent and peaceful change.

SOCIALIST PATTERN OF SOCIETY

After a visit to China in 1954, Nehru had advocated a socialistic pattern of society after witnessing the faster growth of rate and quicker progress in agriculture there. He was not satisfied with the notion of a welfare state. Welfare state may increase the nation’s wealth but does not have to lead to equi-distribution of opportunities and equitable distribution of wealth. At the address of the Indian National Congress in 1955, he said, “...a welfare state and a socialist pattern of economy are not synonymous expressions.”²² But they can be fused by an increase in national income and equitable distribution of national wealth. Social betterment instead of individual enrichment was the objective of socialism. At the Congress session in Avadi in 1954, at the initiative of U. N. Dhebar, the resolution on a socialistic pattern of society was moved. Though Nehru said he had nothing to do with the resolution, the inspiration of course must have been from Nehru. He had on earlier occasions hinted at the socialist picture of society in his addresses. Why was that expression used? Jawaharlal Nehru preferred “socialistic pattern of society” to socialism that was normally associated with violent methods and the use of force to be away from the Chinese and Russian kind of socialism. He preferred a decentralized social structure instead of a centralized one. He was inclined to leave sufficient room for private enterprise. But his goal was the creation of a classless society aspiring to provide greater facilities to individuals, better opportunities for their self-enfoldment and getting them out of the acquisitive society. The emphasis was on a co-operative enterprise of all the people. Socialistic pattern of society was to be founded on close association or partnership of people with the apparatus of administration.

Though he saw no distinction between socialism and socialistic pattern of society, the distinction was made to distinguish it from communism. Besides, the emphasis in scientific socialism was on economic activity while socialistic pattern of society recognized the worth of the individual, opportunity for one's further development and methods of peace, democracy and non-violence. The essence of the socialistic pattern of society is socialization of the key industries and leaving an economic sector free for private enterprise with certain state control. Private sector can play an active role in the socialist economy. Total extinction of the private sector can paralyze production. Gradually the state activity would expand in the realm of economy, depending on the performance of the private sector. Any failure on its part and the state will intervene. The growing extension of regulation and control by the state over the private sector is the very basis of democratic socialism. Free enterprise in the form of absolute freedom from the control of the state machinery is out of date.

STRESS ON GRASSROOTS DEMOCRACY

His preference like that of Gandhi's was for democracy from grassroots, power spreading from the bottom to the top with initiative by the people. To make people involved, he advocated a "socialist cooperative commonwealth". "In a socialist cooperative, we cannot impose anything from above. It has to start at the root only, from the village, the village panchayat or the village co-operative"²⁴ Gandhi too opined that the Indian society should be built on the village system. "I would say that if the village perished, India will perish too. It will be no more India."²⁴ The basic principles of village swaraj for Gandhi were trusteeship, swadeshi, full employment, self-sufficiency, decentralization, co-operation and equality. The conception of the ideal village included the economic, political, social and educational dimensions. What mattered for Gandhi was not the modern notion of development but the quality of individual life in the village. "My ideal village will contain intelligent human beings. They will not live in dirt and drunkenness as animals. There will be neither plague, nor cholera nor small pox; no one will be

idle, no one will wallow in luxury.”²⁵ Though like Nehru for Gandhi the individual was of supreme consideration, the individual becomes an authentic individual when he or she sacrifices for the family, the village, the district, the province and the nation.

NATIONALIZATION AND PRIVATIZATION

Democratic socialism was not to be identified with wholesale nationalization. While the scope of public sector would be perpetually expanded it does not necessarily take the form of nationalization of existing industries. “We talk about nationalization as if nationalization was some kind of a magic remedy for every ill. I believe that ultimately all the principal means of production will be owned by the nation, but I just do not see why I should do something which limits our progress, simply to satisfy some theoretical urge.”²⁶ Instead of nationalization of the existing industries, it was the objective of Nehru that the state should start with new industries. In the new and emerging branches of technology and in strategic sectors of the economy, the state shall have the monopoly. This would add to production. The state will initiate schemes for extended irrigational facilities, improved technology, industrialization of agriculture, cheap supply of water and power, river valley schemes, construction of dams and reservoirs and hydroelectric plants. Atomic energy will be developed as Central government monopoly. In 1956, Nehru put under the exclusive state sector development of heavy plants and machinery required for iron and steel production, mining of iron ore, manganese, mineral oils, and heavy electrical plants. Fair and equitable compensation was to be paid for any kind of acquisition of property if the state needs it. The compensation to be paid is to be decided by Parliament and not the judiciary. The judiciary could intervene when there is gross violation of individual rights. “Parliament fixes either the compensation itself, or the principles governing the compensation and they should not be challenged except for one reason, namely where it is thought that there has been a gross abuse of the law where in fact there has been a fraud on the Constitution.”²⁷ As far as private property is concerned, its acquisition is conditional. Compensation is to be paid as decided by

the democratically constituted legislature with the objective of general welfare. The Praja Socialist Party in 1955 had gone to the extent of saying, “the socialist movement has worked assiduously for the establishment of a democratic socialist society in India... The socialist society which it aims at is a society in which there is fullest economic and political democracy.”²⁸ This fascination for democratic socialism was due to the increasing knowledge of life behind the iron curtain countries. Nehru favoured the kind of socialism that was premised on Gandhian ethics, Ambedkar’s inclusive politics, Marxian economics and democratic politics. Socialism provided him a clue for the ending of imperialist exploitation. He opined that imperialism was the last stage of monopoly capitalism and has to be swept overboard by the tempest of socialism.

THREATS TO SOCIALISM

Independence had brought myriad problems to the fore. With sectional and group interests sweeping the country, the fear of impending socialism had created a crisis of confidence in the business circles. The policy of the Economic Programme Committee of Congress that contemplated nationalization of public utilities, all defence and key industries, public ownership of monopolies, destruction of the managing agency system and other issues had let loose a sense of insecurity and loss of confidence among the capitalists. Sardar Vallabhai Patel and others with capitalist interests in the Congress used their influence to prevent any move to the Left. Nehru was largely influenced by Gandhi in his aversion to any kind of violence in the reconstruction of the country. Both wanted socialism without any conflict. The Russian and Chinese models of socialism were primarily rejected by Gandhi and Nehru since they had the element of violence to bring about a classless society. What was central to them was creation of a social order without great inequalities. But the coming together of the dominant castes and class forces with vested interests was to obstruct any radical change and to maintain the existing order of things. Those who had enjoyed privileges were determined not to permit a subversion of the social order.

A CONSTITUTION FOR INDIA

When Jawaharlal Nehru moved the Objective Resolution in the Constituent Assembly in 1946 he said that the purpose was to enact a Constitution, “wherein shall be guaranteed and secured to all the people of India justice: social, economic and political; equality of status and opportunity and before the law; freedom of thought, expression, belief, faith, worship, vocation, association and action, subject to law and public morality.”²⁹ Social, economic and political equality have been tagged together with freedom of thought, expression and belief. That vision was made a part of the Constitution when the Constitution was framed. The Preamble of the Constitution, the Fundamental Rights and the Directive Principles of State Policy provided the country a basic philosophy as well as a set of guidelines to transform India into a land of social democracy. While the original Preamble spoke of a sovereign democratic republic it was in 1976 that Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister, added the terms of “secular” and “socialist” to the Constitution. The purpose was to publicly proclaim the values of the nation that were not sufficiently stressed though professed right from the independence days. Subhash Kashyap opines that the intention of including the word “secular” was to preclude any future declaration of “Hindu Rashtra” and thus create insecurity among minority and subaltern communities. Similarly, the term “socialist” was an attempt to place article 39, clauses, (b) and (c) above Fundamental Rights. The clauses state “that the ownership and the control of the material resources of the community are so distributed as best to subserve the common good” and “the operation of the economic system does not result in the concentration of wealth and means of production to the common detriment.”³⁰ The Preamble defined the ideals and aspirations of the people while the Directive Principles of State Policy along with Fundamental Rights have been described as the conscience of the Constitution. Socialism as a philosophy has been offered the highest place along with justice in the Preamble. The Directive Principles of State Policy gave directives for the creation of village panchayats for grassroots participation, called for the promotion of cottage industries for rural development, directed the states to promote

compulsory primary education so that people could shed their prejudices and biases and develop a rational spirit, promotion of agriculture for economic self-sufficiency and to promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections.

REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY

India was to be a representative democracy with adult franchise. All citizens above the age of 21 then and 18 now have the right to vote and choose their political representatives in a multi-party contest irrespective of caste, class, gender and community. Participation of all citizens was considered a key to nation-building. By promoting adult franchise, it was believed that people would learn to participate and the elected representatives would remain accountable to the people. In the whole process of development, therefore, people and their representatives were to be policy-makers. Without the participation of people, any development that is brought about would not be owned by the people. Since the colonial masters had a model of development that suited their interests, they wanted no participation of people. Right at the start of independence, it was realized that progress would be only possible if individuals, communities and public services are each able and willing to contribute to development. For this to happen, public participation had to become the core of the future of public service decision-making. Those elected were to be people's representatives. The relationship between elected representatives and their constituents and between the institutions of the states and the citizens was to be one of dialogue. This is why participation is important to the public sector. When elected governments work – top-down, top-heavy, controlling – it has frequently had the effect of sapping responsibility, local innovation and civic action. It turns many motivated citizens, individuals and public sector workers into disillusioned, weary puppets of government targets. It turns able, capable individuals into passive recipients of state help with little hope for a better future. It turns lively communities into dull, soulless clones of one another. The role of the government, therefore, was thought of as unleashing community engagements. The principles laid down by

the Constitution in the Fundamental Rights as well as in the Preamble were to build a democratic and welfare state. Justice K. S. Hegde of the Supreme Court had rightly said, "The purpose of the Fundamental Rights is to create an egalitarian society, to free all citizens from coercion or restrictions by society and to make liberty available to all. The purpose of directive principles is to fix certain social and economic goals for immediate attainment by bringing about a non-violent social revolution. Through such a social revolution, the Constitution seeks to fulfill the basic needs of the common man and to change the structure of our society. It aims at making the Indian masses free in the positive sense."³²

EVALUATION

All those who fought for India's freedom as well as those who were members of the Constituent Assembly were unanimous that a unique form of social democracy or democratic socialism was suited for the country. Gandhi as a representative of the freedom struggle, Nehru as the leader of the Indian National Congress and Dr. B. R. Ambedkar as the architect of the Indian Constitution were in agreement on the direction which India should take though each one may have differed in their understanding. While Ambedkar stressed on social and economic equality, for Nehru India would be a nation of people without greed where the need of everybody had to be met without delay. Mahatma Gandhi made his own contribution by advocating non-violence and focus on the village as a base. Ambedkar had realized that annihilation of the structures of caste injustice is central for social justice. More than individual freedom, social democracy for Ambedkar was to promote associational social life, both in intra and inter-caste terms. Though there were some differences in terms of the stress among the three leaders on the nature of Indian democracy, they had arrived at a consensus. None of them wanted to curb individual freedom while stressing the collective good of the country. The Preamble of the Constitution described the vision of social democracy when it stated that India will strive to usher in liberty, equality and fraternity.

The credit for forging unity should go to Mahatma Gandhi for

uniting people across the ideological spectrum. With Mahatma Gandhi, the freedom movement both the extreme right and the left came together for the national cause. Affirmation of differences and tolerance became the hallmarks of the entire struggle. To make the people own the nation and not to lose the mass character of the freedom struggle, India opted for popular sovereignty expressed through periodic elections so that people have an ownership. Adult franchise connected the people with the state through their representatives. With the Ambedkarite concept of “one man, one vote, one value” irrespective of wealth or status, there was an egalitarian and moral principle included in it. The country ever since has conducted periodic elections. Nobody could doubt the earnest desire of the framers of the constitution to make India an inclusive nation by providing suffrage to all. The Constitution had provided a significant role to the state from the beginning of independence in all economic and industrial policies. Certain industries like the railways, atomic energy, manufacturing of arms and ammunition and post and telegraphs were declared to be the sole monopoly of the state. The state had the right to bring any major industry within the public sector. In fact, during the regime of Indira Gandhi, banks were nationalized and privy purses were abolished. Another complex feature of Indian democracy is secularism. In a plural and diverse Indian society, what the framers assured to the people is non-discrimination on the grounds of religion and community. While the state will have no religion, all citizens were free to be atheists or theists, agnostics or hold on to any religion. Individual choice was guaranteed.

Moving towards the creation of an equal society with a commitment to diversity is both a challenge and a process. It is a challenge because no other major society in recent history has known inequalities so gross or so long preserved as in India. There are not too many countries with such differences in terms of culture, beliefs, traditions and faiths. The notion that classes of people should remain in the same occupation and station of life as their forefathers was enshrined in religious precepts and social customs. While life was immobile for groups and communities of people, from time to time

revolts against the dominance of particular social classes occurred and still take place. Gross inequalities, not merely in material standards, but more profoundly in the attitudes of people toward each other haunted the nation. In the whole process of building the nation, three issues were central – an overriding concern for national unity, a deep pre-occupation with issues of caste, poverty, illiteracy, development and India’s image abroad. The system of caste was social, but the impacts were multidimensional. They were felt at the level of economics as well. Lower the caste, lower was the community in social acceptance and economic resources. Those at the lowest rung of the caste order were economically the poorest, educationally the most illiterate, socially the most ostracized with no political voice. Then there were the backwards. Their backwardness was once again due to those very factors of caste. A small group of haves were termed “pure” with certain privileges derived from birth. It was truly a challenge to work towards equality. Social segregation, where communities of people belonging to specific castes lived in a particular locality, was the practice. For the upper castes, it was the fear of being polluted while it was their fate to live in unproductive lands and out of sight from the public spaces of villages and towns for the untouchables. As for daily livelihoods, each community was to perform that occupation that was prescribed by the caste order. No individual from subaltern and dominant communities could aspire to enter the institutions of knowledge. Priesthood was denied to them. So also entry into temples. There were graded inequalities in the system of communities, some of whom were higher than the others and the others lower than others. Right from birth the notions of caste are internalized in families. Schools can only transmit the values and attitudes of the society. Religions carry cultural norms. Against all this internalization, it was a bold assertion when the framers of the Constitution promised to get rid of this system and assured equality to all. “You cannot build anything on the foundations of caste. You cannot build up a nation; you cannot build up a morality. Anything that you will build on the foundations of caste will crack and will never be a whole,” Ambedkar had said. Transforming communities with an egalitarian agenda without force was no

overnight exercise. It was a process the nation committed itself to since a transformation of the social order does take years of sustained measures. How can an oppressive social order premised on culture and caste be set aside? It was no easy task. All said and done, a caste society will function on the basis of caste even at the level of the state. State is an artificial institution erected on the natural foundation of society. To get rid of caste, there needs to be a change in the mental framework of people. Education does not easily remove stereotypes and prejudices of society, especially when those biases and prejudices are legitimized by religion. In spite of all those obstacles arising from culture and colonial rule, the Constitution assured social, political and economic equality and justice to all citizens with a promise to foster a sense of fraternity or community in the country. Did we succeed with this vision? How socialistic was our democracy and how democratic was our socialism? These questions can only be responded by an honest evaluation of the concrete achievements and failures of this experiment.

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CHAPTER 2

OUR ACHIEVEMENTS AND FAILURES

While the articulation of a national vision requires the inclusion of all voices of reason, its implementation is the task of the leadership. Fortunately for India, Jawaharlal Nehru, who played an important role in the making of a vision as a leader of the Congress party prior to independence, also had the responsibility of implementing that vision later as the first Prime Minister of the country for a period of 17 years. Seventeen years are long enough to lay the foundation for that vision. On the seeds sowed by the first Prime Minister, the others who came after him were able to reap. But the foundation for a socialist democracy, whatever may be its success and limitations, was laid by Nehru. All said and done, it is the personality of the leader that impacted the implementation of a vision. In the case of Nehru it was no different. The only loss that Nehru suffered was the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi early in freed India. As a result, he lost a mentor who could have provided him the kind of moral support that he badly needed to wipe out every tear from every eye. Questions have been raised when one evaluates our achievements and failures whether it was the Nehruvian vision that got translated into action or the vision of the Constitution. Not that the Nehruvian vision was not part of the Constitution. In the democratic vision, there were Gandhian concepts and Ambedkarite elements. With the leadership of Nehru, who believed in modernization, liberalism and industrialization, did the Gandhian vision of decentralization, prominence to agriculture and trusteeship get relegated to the background? What happened to the inclusion of the excluded and the empowerment of the weaker sections, the vision of Ambedkar? We shall examine these in this chapter.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NEHRUVIAN VISION

If one reviews what Nehru did for Indian democracy for 17 years in power, we may be able to conclude that he was one of the few great architects in the delicate and uncommon art of nation-building. His experiences played an important role in making India what it came to be. A product of half a century of freedom struggle, he was moulded by British administration, education abroad, his close relationship to Soviet Union and by a galaxy of lifelong friends and comrades, chief among whom would be Mahatma Gandhi. Ever willing to learn with an intention of laying a strong foundation for the nascent democracy, he was open. His goals were clear and farsighted. He wanted India to occupy a place of prominence in the polity of nations and was keen on fast development of the country. He tried to accelerate the historical processes of achieving within the space of decades what had taken other nations centuries to modernize a feudal society, to industrialize a rural agricultural economy and mould fragmented states into a 20th century nation state. While he was passionate for independence, he was excited about democratic socialism and was committed to modernism. To build democratic institutions in a nation state of illiteracy and to forge a united and secular society with a modern scientific outlook in a feudal society dominated by caste, superstitions and primitive beliefs was no easy task. Yet Nehru was keen to make India a modern, self-reliant industrial country and non-aligned in a world dominated by superpowers. If we still stand among a handful of Third World states where constitutional and democratic government still functions, it surely is a tribute to that vision of Nehru. In his grand design for India, Nehru looked beyond the immediate to the future. When India became independent, there were several immediate problems. The riots that broke out, the integration of princely states, the problem of Kashmir and the North-East and several others needed immediate attention. Most leaders would have been bogged down by immediate concerns, unable to look at the future. The country was in the midst of several challenges. While attending to the immediate problems, Nehru as a statesman focused on the future as well. He faced challenges with a sense of mission, a sense of the present and

future, and because of this, his years were endowed with a sense of hope. He showed that the leader who is driven by a vision can succeed against seemingly impossible odds. Such was the essence of his legacy. That legacy achieved a lot by taking dissenting voices to arrive at consensus. Of course, it was no easy task. It was made possible because of his breadth of vision, depth of insight and a clear commitment to the goals of democratic socialism. Given the country's poverty and illiteracy, he knew that there were no other ways. Dissension and dissent if guided by a common goal, he was sure, could easily be resolved and the country could then march on that road marked by that common vision. He saw the country from the vision of liberalism and was determined to create space for every individual and community with a transformative agenda, so that the excluded members and communities are included in the development of the country.

CENTRALITY TO THE PARLIAMENT

It is one thing to have a personal vision and it is quite another to carry along other people by communicating that vision and modifying that vision after listening to other voices. As a democrat, Nehru wanted all voices to be heard so that all the elected leaders take responsibility for the development of the nation. Parliament, in an economically backward and largely illiterate society, is central to the creation of democratic ethos. It is here that the representatives of the people meet. The electorate places their trust on them to provide a better quality of life. Not only did Nehru have a very high regard for the institution of Parliament, he worked hard to make Parliament succeed. There was scarcely a debate that he missed in Parliament and integrated the Parliament into the country's decision-making processes. The Five Year Plans were discussed threadbare in Parliament. For his foreign policy, he had the backing of Parliament. Parliament for him was a serious business, a chamber for lofty debate, and he treated the Opposition with a sense of importance. Some do say that the importance that he gave to the Opposition was unjustified by its real strength in the House. But Nehru thought differently. Minority voices and voices of dissent, whatever may be their

numerical strength, have to be listened to and responded if democracy had to thrive. While the majority can be irrational at times, the minority does not have to be wrong all the time. The truth for Nehru could come from any direction. “The minority ... has a very important part to play. Naturally the majority by the mere fact that it is the majority must have its way. But a majority that ignores the minority is not functioning in the true spirit of parliamentary democracy”¹, Nehru had said regarding the relationship between the majority and the minority. He never used force or manipulations to silence his critics and played the game according to the rules. In a speech on January 28, 1957, he had said, “The whole parliamentary system of government is based on criticism...If people were not allowed to speak and criticize government fully and in the open, it would not be parliamentary government. It would not be proper democracy. I welcome criticism in our Parliament. In fact, I welcome criticism from our own party members.”² There were eminent parliamentarians in the House then. Nehru was never found imposing his will on the House. Instead, at every debate, he was a listener, interested in learning so that the country benefits. Differences of opinions brought greater and better perspectives to the debates and Parliament thus became a house of enrichment. Government’s responsibility to Parliament was established by him. He did insist that replies to questions tabled should be full and informative. No Minister was allowed to give evasive and ambiguous replies.

BUILDER OF INSTITUTIONS

Ideas and ideologies to be implemented have to be changed into policies and executed through the institutions of the state. It was essential that the country was administered by the rule of law and not by the whims and fancies of individuals. Nehru was an institution builder. There was no way he could have implemented the democratic vision without democratic institutions. As the first Prime Minister of the country, he was conscious of his role. He was respectful of Parliament, the executive and even of judiciary. Thus, he set very high standards for democratic institutions in the country. To that, he received support from his party as well as from others. In the

process, he made his colleagues as well as the country to develop a deep respect to these institutions as well. Congress was a party of Nehru's peers, of men and women of dedication and ability, experience and strength. Several of them were in the freedom movement and were fully aware of their responsibilities. While welcoming their independence, he was not looking for their personal loyalty. What he desired was that independent India should be governed by the rule of law and not by whims and fancies of individuals and pressure groups. While he did not allow people to challenge his own power as Prime Minister of the nation, he wanted to carry everybody with him. According to the Constitution, the Prime Minister is "primus inter pares" (the first among equals) in the Cabinet and the Government. He maintained that position. Not that he had no problems with his party men. They were all people of different ideas and world views. In responding to those in the party who differed from him, he combined the force of his office and personality with the powerful sanction provided by the freedom movement to ward off challenges. While he claimed no infallibility, it was the mark of his greatness that when he was proved wrong, he admitted it. What he wanted was the progress of the country. To that progress, he was aware the institutions of the state have to have autonomy to function effectively and efficiently. More than anything else, it was his conviction that the country should be managed by institutions so that the law of justice prevails.

AMELIORATION OF POVERTY

His priorities were clear. In a broadcast to the nation on September 2, 1946, in keeping with that national vision Jawaharlal Nehru had pledged to ameliorate poverty from the country. Three months later, moving the Objective Resolution in the Constituent Assembly, he had advocated that the Constitution shall ensure social, political and economic justice guaranteeing equality before law. Through the Constitution, the country was assured that there will be an end to poverty and ignorance, diseases and inequality of opportunity, while promising to create social, economic and political institutions to ensure justice to all citizens. In the chapter of the Third Five Year

Plan, Nehru wrote, “Since independence, two major aims have guided India’s planned development – to build up by democratic means a rapidly expanding and technologically progressive economy and a social order based on justice and offering equality of opportunity to every citizen.” In the view of Nehru, the objective behind planning was to achieve a classless society. Those who came after Nehru could only build on the foundation of Nehruvian philosophy. Socialism as enunciated in the Constitution of India is a humanitarian ideal, to bridge the ever-widening gap between the rich and the poor by bringing about a better-ordering of the means of production and distribution with a blend between the “collective spirit” and the “individual self”. While the individual could not be sacrificed for the society, society could not be used by individuals for their own wellbeing. The good of both the “individual” and the “society” had to be balanced.

THE CONTEXT OF SOCIALISM

One cannot get an insight into the Constitution unless and until one understands the context of the global and national scenario of the times. Confronted by two world views – one of western capitalism of the first world and Soviet Marxism of the second world – India had to make a choice. While both the blocs were keen to place India under their hegemony, the Indian leaders placed their country above their personal interests. Their choice was prompted by national interests and history and the experiences of the freedom struggle. Indian socialism in some way combined the best of both – western capitalism and Soviet Marxism. While there would be respect for individual freedom and rights in the country, the interests of state and society would be primary. The rights and freedom of individuals were to contribute to the common good of the country and thus freed from selfishness and greed, individuals were expected voluntarily to place their wealth at the disposal of the common good to build the Indian nation. The state would play an interventionist role to bridge the gap between the haves and have-nots. As the president of the Indian National Congress even prior to India’s independence and as India’s first Prime Minister for 17 years, Nehru’s distinct

contribution to the Indian socialist movement is significant. To ensure success for democratic socialism, the state was active in trying to provide equal facilities to all sections of the people. Measures were put in place for prevention of concentration of economic power in a few hands, elimination of monopolies and monopolistic trends in business, industrial or other organizations. The state made a commitment for progressive extension of the public sector in key industries and power generation and public control over significant areas of economic power. In the social sphere, the aim was the elimination of social inequalities through legislation and extensive state-implemented welfare activities. Right from the freedom struggle till his death in May of 1964, Jawaharlal Nehru was not tired of repeating that socialism is the ultimate goal of India. The Bhubaneswar Congress resolution of 1964 sums up the Congress ideal of democratic socialism, "... a society wherein poverty, disease, and ignorance shall be eliminated wherein property and privilege in any form will be limited, wherein all citizens have equal opportunities and wherein ethical and spiritual values contribute to the enrichment of the individual and community life."³

What have been our achievements under the ideology of democratic socialism? There are several achievements. The personality of Nehru and what he contributed through his own life and convictions is of great importance. No country can move ahead without a vision. That the leaders of India could come together and articulate a vision and then move in that direction is no small achievement. The country began its life by placing a high level of faith and trust in democratic means and methods. However, it is one thing to speak about democracy since democracy has multiple forms, and quite different to examine our achievements under democratic socialism. Was that dream of democratic socialism implemented by those who took over governance? Fired by an ideal, there were significant attempts to implement the ideal. When we became independent, we had to evolve a framework for governance. Political structures had to be put in place. Excluded communities had to be included. Communal violence had to be responded to. Poverty had to be eradicated with an economic plan given the fact

that the economy was stagnant and industrial development was restrained. With the economy predominantly agrarian and feudal with zamindars controlling land and its produce, new agrarian relations had to be created. Most of the population was employed in agriculture. People existed by cropping their own small plots or working under zaminadrs and thus selling their labour for a price. A new economic order on agrarian relations had to be set. Our achievements have to be noted under both democracy and socialism to be fair to what we have achieved in the context of the challenges. The following are some of the notable achievements of the Nehruvian era, an era of democratic socialism.

POLITICAL ACHIEVEMENTS

a. Survival of Democracy

Democracy survived in the country in spite of all the ups and downs. When India became independent, there were doubts expressed about the future of democracy in the country. “Chaos would prevail in India if we were ever so foolish to leave the natives to run their own show. Ye gods! What a salad of confusion, of bungle, of mismanagement, and far worse, would be the instant result. These grand people will go anywhere and do anything if led by us. Themselves they are still infants as regards governing or statesmanship. And their so-called leaders are the worst of the lot” – Sewell, a British civil servant, had said. Views of the kind were prevalent among the British. Even the elite in the country were not sure where democracy would take them. There were self-doubts. We were a diverse country. There were differences of various kinds based on caste, community, language, religion and culture. During the British rule some of these tensions in society had resulted in violence. Naturally, once the country became independent there were speculations about the longevity of our democracy. With the death of Nehru, the question was more intense, especially in the foreign media. At the death of every Prime Minister, there were questions raised about the future of democracy in the country. India’s democracy may have been a puzzle to the West and yet we have survived and

there are no reasons to predict that our democracy will fail. Even the West has come to accept the fact. One of the main reasons for this survival was the independence movement, which was built along participatory lines and the leadership of the country that came soon after independence. The first general election of independent India was held in 1951-1952 under universal adult franchise. During the more than six decades of independence, elections have increased in number and variety, and the average participation in Lok Sabha elections has risen to about 60% and more of eligible voters. The increasing voters' turnout is an indication of the faith people have in democracy in the country. Parties have come and gone. Regional parties in some states have taken over power. Congress party has declined. And yet India has been able to sustain a stable and legitimate political order due to the existence of a relatively fair and effective electoral process. The end of Nehru's era did not lead to the end of democracy as predicted by some. With one exception of the period of National Emergency between 1975 and 1977 under Indira Gandhi, India has remained a representative democracy since its independence. We can proudly boast of being the biggest democracy in the world. The machinery for a democratic government is well established in the country. Like in the past, there is unlikely to be any change through sudden military intervention as in our neighbouring states. In spite of attempts to curb the freedom of the press by lunatic parties and individuals, now and then, the press has been free to express the most hostile criticism of the government. The people can voice their opinion, however unpalatable, in the press and at public meetings. There has not been any interference in electoral procedures and counting of votes. The Election Commission has maintained its autonomy and independence. The Opposition parties have always had their space. The parliamentary system has worked. People have removed individuals and parties from governance when they have forfeited popular confidence. The country has realized that there is no substitute for democracy over all other forms of government.

b. Elections and Integration of the Marginalized Communities:

“One person, one vote with one value” is the key aspect of political equality. The system of voting has provided a new awareness to subaltern communities and people that they count in the formation of governments. The leaders of various political parties have wooed people from impoverished groups and in the process provided them awareness about political processes. As a result, the process of elections has gradually integrated previously marginalized social groups and geographical areas into electoral politics. If one has to analyze the different social groups going to the polling booths during elections, one would discover an increasing number of India’s discriminated and marginalized communities since they still hold that their destiny is linked with the country’s electoral process. India’s democratic political system has been the ultimate source of the state’s legitimacy that has kept the country together. The Constitution gave 170 million Indian citizens the right to elect their own government in 1951-52. In 2004, a total number of 38,99,48,330 people voted out of total electorate size of 67,14,87,930. In the 2009 elections, about the same numbers went to the polls⁴. Voting has transformed different interests and values into the unity of the state. Political parties though often accused of creating artificial splits among the people and the disintegration of the society, have been a reflection of the people of the land. Indian society is divided into many social, linguistic and religious groups. On the one hand political parties have represented and united these disintegrating tendencies while on the other, they may have contributed to fissiparous tendencies. The party system that began as a “one dominant party system” with the Indian National Congress has become a system of coalition at the centre as well as in many states. For a long time, the ruling Congress party was “a party of consensus” and the Opposition parties were “parties of pressure”. The national as well as regional parties have changed due to pressure and demands from castes, communities and regions. To win elections, they have become more and more aware that they need to include the agenda of various groups and regions since majority of those who go to vote hail from discriminated communities and backward regions. With the increase of education,

the expectations of people from elected representatives have also increased. They are no more interested in slogans and propaganda. They want development as well as respect for their local, regional, ethnic and personal identities. Ambedkar was right when he stressed the importance of elections with the slogan of “one person, one vote and one value”. The SCs/STs have been major beneficiaries of electoral politics. At least as a vote-bank, political parties have included them in their road to power. No party can ignore them in politics today.

c. Presence of Democratic Spirit

Relationships between different parties though one of competition have also been one of openness in spite of differing ideologies. As a dominant party, Congress occupied not only the broad centre of the political spectrum for many years, but most of the left and right space as well in the initial years. In spite of its unquestionable position, it was a party that resolved differences in a democratic spirit, especially during the Nehruvian era. Indira Gandhi was surely more tolerant of the Opposition after the Emergency years. The Congress party always had inner problems with the small groups within the party, which attempted to fight for their own interests. There was a group during the Nehruvian period that did not fully agree with Nehru on his socialism as well as his secularism. Indira Gandhi broke the Congress Party due to differences with the so-called “old guards” in the party. The party did accommodate different factions within their ideological framework as much as possible. It was only when the leadership felt too insecure that divisions and fragmentations took place. This is true of other parties as well. The Left in West Bengal did attempt to resolve differences in a democratic spirit. The dissenting groups sometimes have left the party and in a democracy that too is a right. However, one may not be wrong in stating that as far as possible, parties have tried to resolve differences especially when those differences were not personal but concerned the interest of the nation. The essential characteristic of all politics is compromise and conciliation and the parties have compromised as much as possible to keep the flock together in keeping with the experiences

of the freedom struggle. Without responding to those expectations, parties may not have been able to keep and expand their base as well. Some in the Congress party had left in the initial years since they thought the party is not what they thought it should have been. However, the spirit of the freedom struggle of tolerance and acceptance of diversity has been maintained.

d. Opposition Parties

Opposition parties could not prevent the Congress from obtaining sizeable majorities in the legislatures despite the ruling party's failure on most occasions in the initial years. The hegemony of the Congress party for the first 30 years' rule was due to its leadership in the independence movement, direct continuity with that movement and the founding of the Indian state and the political identity of India, which was defined as a consequence of the freedom struggle. To save themselves from absorption by or the loss of defectors to the Congress, Opposition parties tended to develop rigorous ideologies and tightly disciplined organizations. Given the number of contestants for power on the other hand and the increasing number of groups demanding a share in power, the Congress could not include all individuals and communities. Neither could the party as a national party satisfy all the aspirations of all groups. This brought a number of parties into the market place on the basis of caste, community and regions, and competition that had previously occurred within the Congress was now brought into the realm of inter-party conflict. Competition also increased in as much as Opposition parties formed coalition governments in every state they controlled. This has not been a negative development at all. "Party system is based upon a paradoxical ideology. It breeds factional elements of disunity, sowing the seeds of diversity, while at the same time it strengthens and consolidates the nation. It proves almost a blessing to a nation when it checks the government from becoming tyrannical and autocratic, but in its prostituted spirit, tears a nation, into clashing groups, leading the country to the worst form of demoralization," said Lord Bryce. For the health and efficiency of a democracy opposition is a necessity. With Opposition parties coming

to power at the level of the states, there has been a greater importance given to federalism, economic development of the regions and furthering of their identities. Opposition parties have also checked the greed and arrogance of the ruling dispensation in states and the centre drawing attention to the concerns of society and the national issues.

e. Regional Parties

After the Emergency of 1975 to 1977 with the restoration of the democratic process though the left, the right, the centre and the regional parties came together on a common platform, there was still no balanced two or multi-party system. Some thought the emergence of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) after the Ayodhya episode would lead to the potential for a two-party system. The Congress lost its dominance but in spite of winning elections in 1996, 1998 and 1999, the BJP is still to have a national character. In several states it has yet to make its presence felt. In many other states, it is still a marginal party. There are regions where its political agenda has not been acceptable. The minorities as a whole have rejected the party for its communalism. There are parties that are unwilling to go with the party for elections with the fear of being rejected by the people. With no party able to acquire an absolute majority of votes in national elections, it is through the plurality system that the Indian National Congress has managed to secure its hegemonic position. Over time, smaller regional parties have also gained substantial significance. Since the second half of the 1990s, regional parties such as the Telugu Desam Party from Andhra Pradesh, the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam or Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam from Tamil Nadu, the Akali Dal of Punjab, the Biju Janata Dal from Odisha and Trinamool Congress in West Bengal from 2011 are playing a decisive role not just as governmental parties in their respective states, but also as key partners in alliances with national parties in the central government. These are positive signs in a federal state that express pluralism and diversity. These regional parties because they have become aware of their power, have challenged the Centre in decisions pertaining to the states even in

the list of subjects in the concurrent list. With the constant changing political scenario, in spite of many limitations, one can legitimately feel proud that the democratic spirit is present in the country. Groups, regions, communities and castes have been able to assert through democratic means for a share in the national resources.

f. Vibrant Democracy

There is recognition of the vibrancy of our democracy even internationally. India climbed a point up in the Democracy Index measured by the “Economists Intelligence Unit” for 2011. The country that was ranked at 40th position in 2010 globally for democracy, out of 115 countries, has improved its rating having been placed at 39th rank in 2011. It’s a good rating for India, since 76 countries are in a lower position than India. India has scored overall 7.3 marks, out of 10. The country secured 9.58 points for electoral process and pluralism. In terms of governance, India earned a 7.5 score and for political participation 5 points. In terms of political culture, India scored 5 points and in the measurement of civil liberties, India earned 9.41 points. Democracy Index values are used to place the 115 countries within one of four types of regime: full democracy (having score between 8 and 10), flawed democracy (scores of 6 to 7.9), hybrid regimes (scores of 4 to 5.9) and authoritarian regimes (scores below 4). India falls in the category of flawed democracies. The countries that qualify for the status of full democracy are those where not only basic political freedom and civil liberties are not only respected, these also tend to be underpinned by a political culture conducive to the flourishing of democracy. In full democracies, the functioning of government is satisfactory; media independent and diverse; judiciary’s decisions are enforced; and effective system of check and balance is in place. Those falling in the rank of flawed democracies are the countries having free elections with civil liberties respected, but they face problems in terms of governance, an under-developed political culture and low level of political participation.⁵ By western standards India is a lower quality democracy. The caste system is still alive and well in the countryside. Corruption is another aspect. Transparency International ranks India 95th out of 115

countries a rather low rank. Corruption takes a huge toll on India's economy, especially for poor people. According to Transparency International's 2010 Global Corruption Barometer, 54 per cent of households paid a bribe in a 12-month period to receive basic services in India. The World Bank conducts very interesting analysis of the "ease of doing business", which ranks India 132nd out of 183 countries. India scores particularly badly when it comes to criteria like enforcing contracts, and dealing with construction permits. Local Indian companies are also deterred from investing at home by the corruption, inefficient bureaucracy, and bad governance, says the report. The World Economic Forum analysts say, "The country's supply of transport, ICT, and energy infrastructure remains largely insufficient and ill-adapted to the needs of business. Indeed, the Indian business community continues to cite infrastructure as the single biggest hindrance to doing business in the country. ... Despite improvements across the board over the past few years, public health and education quality remain a prime cause of concern...discontent in the business community about the lack of reforms and the apparent inability of the government to provide a more conducive environment for business has been growing. Corruption and burdensome regulation certainly fuel this discontent...the macroeconomic environment continues to be characterized by large and repeated public deficits and ... by high inflation, near or above 10 per cent. ... Despite these considerable challenges, India does possess a number of remarkable strengths in the more advanced and complex drivers of competitiveness. ... The country boasts a vast domestic market that allows for economies of scale and attracts investors. It can rely on a well-developed and sophisticated financial market that can channel financial resources to good use, and it boasts reasonably sophisticated and innovative businesses."⁶

India is the world's 17th largest exporter. As to foreign direct investment, over the past few years India is the world's 18th biggest recipient.⁷ With all these strengths and limitations, India still is a vibrant democracy. The country has a vibrant anti-corruption movement and in recent years individuals and pressure from below have made a difference. Whatever may be the expectations of the

foreign markets, Indian civil society has been able to halt reforms that the people think are not in their best interests. Judging an economy by corporate standards is not what India should go by. Free Press, people's movements, vibrancy of public debates and assertions from below have kept our democracy vibrant. Besides, a score of 7.30 out of 10 is surely a positive indicator. With the fight against corruption and the positive interventions of civil society and judiciary against corruption and the political parties' fear of losing public trust if they do not change, it would surely soon place the country in the rank of full democracies.

g. Multicultural State and Secularism

The Constitution of India declared the country as plural and sought to discover the unity of India in diversity. Different groups, communities, regions, religions and people with their distinctive culture and way of life have been integrated into this nation. There have been threats to this multiculturalism. The major threat has come from the Bharatiya Janata Party and its affiliates who would like India to be a country of one culture, one faith, one language and one religion and define the unity of the country in uniformity than diversity. And yet those threats have been responded by communities, people and regions who have been determined to maintain their distinctiveness and thus add to the enrichment of the land. After more than 60 years of independence, India can be regarded as an example of a multicultural state able to use resources such as democratic institutions or a federal structure to manage challenges and to incorporate dissidence and opposition successfully into the political process. This does not mean that there have not been violence and temporary challenges to law and order. These have been responded to sometimes creatively and at other times with dialogue. The state has also used force on occasions. Many more states have been created since independence as a response to regional aspirations. What is appreciable is while the states have asserted their rights, the Centre has not been weakened. Attempts have been made to affirm different cultures and communities. One would not be wrong to state that India's remarkable political stability

and high degree of participation has made her one of the most plural and diverse states among post-colonial states.

The multi-religious and multicultural nature of the state has strengthened secularism in spite of threats to the secular nature of the polity. “I do not expect India of my dreams to develop one religion, i.e., to be wholly Hindu or wholly Christian or wholly Mussalman, but I want it to be wholly tolerant, with its religions working side by side with one another”⁸, Mahatma Gandhi had said. When Nehru was asked by French writer Andre Malraux about what had been his greatest difficulty since independence, he had replied, “Creating a secular state in a religious country” along with “creating a just society by just means”. Since the Indian national movement had refused to define itself in religious terms, secularism remained as the basis of the very foundation of free India. Nehru translated the idea of scientific temper in society into secularism, a part of his legacy which has given India the means of holding together its multiple religions, cultures, regions, communities and castes. “We have to treat our minorities in exactly the same way as we treat the majority. Indeed, fair treatment is not enough; we have to make them feel that they are so treated”⁹, he had said. The concept of secularism may not have been of Nehru. It sprang from Gandhi’s thinking and the freedom struggle which evolved a consensus on secularism. The national movement had refused to define itself on religious terms and Gandhi had insisted that the multiple faiths of India can and must co-exist peacefully in a free India. From its inception the Indian National Congress was a sort of political Noah’s ark which sought to keep every species of Indian on board, Mukul Keshavan had observed. In spite of the freedom struggle being premised on harmony and co-operation, the partition of India on the basis of religion further convinced the leaders why India should remain secular. While Pakistan decided to be a theocratic state, the leaders of India committed themselves to a secular India to infuse trust and confidence in the minorities of the country. For Jawaharlal Nehru and his comrades India was not to be a Hindu Pakistan. Given the large number of divisions within the major Hindu religion, secularism was found relevant. With the growing awareness in

subaltern communities, it has become difficult to define who a Hindu is. While the concept of secularism fitted well with Nehru's understanding of history and his determination to give the Muslims of India a safe berth after the holocaust of Partition, it was also something that well suited the country. Within the Congress party, there were some who were not enthused or did not consider secularism as an essential tenet for our democracy at the start. In fact, when the elections for the Congress presidency were held in August of 1950, Tandon, who represented the extreme communalist views in the Congress and was an anti-Muslim and a pro-caste Hindu who stood for the resurrection of a long extinct system of society, won the elections.¹⁰ Nehru issued a statement to the press, saying that "the spirit of communalism and revivalism has gradually invaded the Congress."¹¹ It was a matter of time that Tandon decided to resign and Nehru took over the leadership of the party as well. With the Ayodhya episode, there were people both within and outside the country who thought India's secularism is going to have a burial. All of them have been proved wrong. In spite of setbacks now and then, India has survived as a secular democracy. More than anybody else, it is the subaltern communities and discriminated castes that have benefitted from the profession of secularism and have contributed to its professions and practice. The oppressed sections have joined the secular movement to wrest the liberal space for launching the struggles for their rights. With emerging consciousness in their ranks, they have been attempting to define their cultural identity distinctly. The consequence of that commitment is there to see. In India's politics, there are members of all communities. In 2007, the President of the country was a Muslim, the Prime Minister a Sikh and the leader of the ruling party a Christian. There are several other instances of the kind. Our prominent business men and women, sportspersons, academicians and professionals have all hailed from different communities. In spite of threats to secularism coming from the political right, the country has maintained its secular character. If religion is not exploited for political purposes by vested interest, parties or individuals, communities on the whole have lived in peace and amity.

h. Foreign Policy

Our achievement as a democratic nation has been no less in foreign affairs as well. Non-alignment gave us the right to intervene effectively in world affairs, and we did it with pride and determination. The Afro-Asian nations discovered an alternative in non-alignment to the power bloc rivalry. Nehru's foreign policy, based on non-alignment and Panchshila, blossomed and expanded for several years. The policy served our interests as well as the interests of the newly-freed countries from the yoke of colonialism. We had no hesitation in seeking Soviet help in the UN's Kashmir debates or seeking economic assistance from both the West and the East. The tilt towards the Soviets may have had to do a lot with soviet socialism, appreciation for Soviet egalitarianism, a perception of the Soviet Union as an anti-imperialist power and India's gains from the Soviet connection in situations when USA was hostile to the country's interests. The thread of Nehru's policy remained unbroken with Indira Gandhi as well. The basic thrust of independence from the rivalry of power blocs, the treaty with the Soviet Union notwithstanding, remained intact till the end of the cold war. The non-alignment of Nehru even became a global phenomenon. Legions of countries queued up to join the movement, countries ranging in ideology from Cuba to Singapore. From 25 countries that attended the 1961 Belgrade summit, the membership went up to 104 in the late eighties. The banding together of the group of 77 and the North-South dialogue can also be credited to non-alignment. In a world of bloc rivalries, India was able to provide a leadership in international relations for newly-freed countries and most of the Arab-Asian countries. While not being a part of the power bloc rivalry, non-alignment partially contributed to the establishment of peace and avoidance of tensions at the international level. While it kept the newly-emerging countries away from war and violence, it promoted development in these countries. If these countries had got struck with conflicts and wars, they would have developed less and wasted their limited resources in destruction than construction of their economies.

SOCIAL ACHIEVEMENTS:

a. Social Justice:

While achievements at the level of political democracy were creditable, a lot happened at the level of economic and social aspects of democracy in providing justice to the suppressed and oppressed communities in the country as well. Those who struggled for freedom wanted India to be both politically independent with equitable distribution of wealth. The Five Year Plans as national plans were to create an egalitarian society, and attempted to create social justice by applying democratic principles to the political structure of the country. It worked towards social and economic equity and removal of regional disparities. To reduce regional inequality, specific programmes were adopted for the backward areas and the marginalized communities of the country. With efforts to raise the condition of backward and depressed classes economic power was decentralized. To improve the lot of the Scheduled Castes and tribes, a number of target oriented programmes were implemented. To reduce the inequality in the distribution of landed assets, land reforms were adopted with some success. After the Second Plan, when the price level started increasing, the planners tried to stabilize the economy by controlling the rising trend of the price level. Several anti-poverty programmes were introduced. The National Rural Employment Programme was evolved in 1980 from the earlier Food for Work Programme to use unemployed and underemployed workers to build productive community assets. The Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme instituted in 1983 was to address the plight of the rural poor by expanding employment opportunities and building the rural infrastructure as a means of encouraging rapid economic growth. Though there were problems with the implementation of these, analysts credit them with helping reduce poverty. To improve the effectiveness of the National Rural Employment Programme, in 1989 it was combined with the Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme and renamed Jawahar Rozgar Yojana, or Jawahar Employment Plan. Rural electrification made great progress in the 1980s. More than 200,000 villages received electricity for the first time. In 1990, around 84 per cent of India's

villages had access to electricity. In 1990, installed capacity for hydroelectric power was 18,000 megawatts⁴⁴. This was no small achievement for a country that was left with hardly any resources when the colonizers had left.

The Constitution mandated reservation to the SCs/STs so that the groups are represented in proportionate to their population in legislatures, educational institutions, state employment and other public spaces and take a share of the national resources that are legitimately theirs. Untouchability was abolished by law and forced labour or bonded labour were termed acts of criminality. Protection to the minorities and the right to their cultural life was assured in Articles 29 and 30. They were permitted to establish and manage educational institutions of a secular nature without interference from the state. The backward classes were assured participation in employment and development. Rights were guaranteed to put an end to arbitrary rule so that they do not become a plaything in the hands of legislatures and those who govern. In an indirect democracy, the elected representatives could easily pass any discriminatory or unjust legislation. There is always the possibility of the tyranny of a legislative majority. To prevent all those aberrations, rights were guaranteed in the Constitution.

A glance at the two chapters of the Constitution – Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles – would convince that these were meant to usher in an egalitarian and modern society. The urge for equality and liberty has been the motive force of many revolutions. Those who fought for the country's freedom wanted no bloodshed in bringing about equality in society. There were social movements in India that fought for equality. With the Constitution offering protection against discrimination, equality of opportunity in matters of public employment and abolition of untouchability, it was hoped that a new era would begin in the country's freedom. Financial resources of the country were invested in the social sector. Literacy, health care and education were priority areas along with agriculture. For a country with hunger and malnutrition, it was felt necessary to create a revolution in the food front to prevent starvation deaths. The results were there to see. We had a Green Revolution and a

white revolution. The country became self-sufficient in food. The country moved.

ADVANCEMENT OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Science and technology were placed at the service of economic empowerment. Nehru was a fervent modernist. He wanted people to shed their traditional, obscurantist and superstitious ways and evolve a scientific temper. And he believed that the salvation of India lay in the creation of a vast scientific, managerial and technological base that would enhance the quality of life of millions of poor in the country. He put his faith in the application of modern science and technology to cure the ills of the country. Establishing agricultural universities, institutes of management, science and technology and universities was for the purpose. Our scientific and technical developments have aided diverse areas of research such as agriculture, biotechnology, communications, environment, industry, mining, nuclear power, space and transportation. At the onset of independence, Nehru called science “the very texture of life” and optimistically declared that “It is science alone that can solve problems of hunger and poverty, of insanitation and illiteracy, of superstition and deadening customs and tradition, of vast resources running to waste, of a rich country inhabited by starving people...Who indeed could afford to ignore science today? At every turn we have to seek its aid. The future belongs to science and to those who make friends with science.”¹² Then again, Nehru wrote, “I am convinced that the methods and approach of science have revolutionized human life more than anything else in history, and have opened doors and avenues and even more rapid change.”¹³ Under his leadership, the government set out to cure numerous societal problems. The Green Revolution, the white revolution, educational improvement, establishment of hundreds of scientific laboratories, industrial and military research, massive hydraulic projects, and entry into the frontiers of space all evolved from this early decision to embrace high technology. In 1983, the government issued a statement that stressed the importance of international cooperation and the diffusion of scientific knowledge, and put considerable emphasis on self-

reliance and the development of indigenous technology. At the time of Independence, a mere 0.1% of GNP was spent on scientific research. It was increased to 1% within 15 years of Independence. New research laboratories outside the universities were set up. Engineering schools were started. The Indian Institutes of Technology and the Indian Institutes of Management came to acquire global reputation for their quality and competence. Several products of some of the better universities and colleges of the country were found globally competitive. The Scientific Policy Resolution of 1958 paved the way for the growth of pure, applied and educational science and scientific research, training and involvement of scientific and technical personnel for modernizing agriculture, industry and defence. Nehru was emphatic when he said, "Science and Technology have freed humanity from many burdens and given us this new perspective and great power. This power can be used for the good of all if wisdom governs our actions; but if the world is mad or foolish it can destroy itself just when great advances and triumphs are almost within its grasp."¹⁵

ECONOMIC ACHIEVEMENTS

a. Impetus to Agriculture:

Food for every hungry person was a challenge. At the beginning of planning, the country had to import foodgrains from USA to meet our domestic demand. By the end of the Fifth Plan, India became self-sufficient in foodgrain production. It was no mean achievement. The state initiated, sustained, and refined many programmes to help the poor attain self-sufficiency in food production. Food was provided at controlled prices. When the state governments in surplus-grain areas were less than cooperative to part with their excess, in late 1970s, the Central government started holding reserve stocks to meet the increased demand during drought years. Remunerative prices were offered to farmers. To counter the adverse impacts of rainfall, wells were dug, land taxes were rescinded in drought areas, stable food prices were maintained and food-for-work programmes initiated. Employment was offered to the poor at a low daily wage, usually paid

in grain. Assistance was offered to increase income through pricing and regulations, supplying water from irrigation works and providing fertilizers. The growth in foodgrain production was a result of concentrated efforts to increase all the Green Revolution inputs needed for higher yields: better seeds, more fertilizers, improved irrigation, and education of farmers. Although agriculture is constitutionally the responsibility of the states rather than the Central government, the Central government played a key role in formulating policy and providing financial resources for agriculture.

India is a land of small farms, of peasants cultivating their ancestral lands mainly by family labour and by pairs of bullocks. The operators of most agricultural holdings possess vested rights in the land they till, whether as full owners or as protected tenants. By the early 1970s, after extensive legislation, large absentee landowners had for all practical purposes been eliminated. Their rights were acquired by the state in exchange for compensation in cash and government bonds. More than 20 million former zamindar-system tenants had acquired occupancy rights to the land they tilled. Whereas previously the landlord collected rent from his tenants and passed on a portion of it as land revenue to the government, starting in the early 1970s, the state collected the rent directly from cultivators who, in effect, had become renters from the state. Most former tenants acquired the right to purchase the land they tilled, and payments to the state were spread out over 10 to 20 years. Large landowners were divested not only of their cultivated land but also of ownership of forests, lakes, and barren lands. Certain specialized branches of agriculture, such as horticulture, cattle breeding, and dairy farming, were usually exempted from ceilings. In several states, steps were taken to associate village assemblies, or panchayats, with the maintenance of land records, the collection of land revenue, and the management of lands belonging to the government. A large number of farmers depend on livestock for their livelihood. Dairy farming provided supplementary employment and an additional source of income to many small and marginal farmers. The National Dairy Development Board was established in 1965 under the auspices of Operation Flood at Anand in Gujarat, to promote, plan, and organize dairy

development through cooperatives; to provide consultations; and to set up dairy plants, which were then turned over to the cooperatives. The increase in milk production permitted India to end imports of powdered milk and milk-related products. Fish production increased more than fivefold since independence. The government provided subsidies to poor fishermen so that they could motorize their traditional craft to increase the range and frequency of operation, with a consequent increase in the catch and earnings.

b. Development of Industries

At Independence, industrialization was viewed as the engine of growth for the rest of the economy and the supplier of jobs to reduce poverty. The Industrial Policy Resolution of 1948 gave the government the go-ahead to build and operate key industries to produce capital and intermediate goods. It was believed that public ownership of basic industry was necessary to ensure development of all. The decision reflected the belief that private industrialists would find establishment of many of the basic industries on the scale that the country needed either unattractive or beyond their financial capabilities. Though private enterprise was encouraged, there was concern that private industrialists could enlarge their profits by dominating markets in key commodities. Nehru singled out two activities as providing the base for planning – the production of power and the production of steel. At the time of independence, the country had only two privately-owned steel plants. Through foreign collaboration he was able to help the country meet its needs of steel. Large dams were another of Nehru's priorities for purposes of irrigation and drinking water. The industrial policy resolutions stressed the need for a large degree of self-sufficiency in manufacturing. Another early decision on industrial policy mandated that defence industries would be developed by the public sector. Building defence industries for a modern military force required the concomitant development of heavy industries, including metallurgy and machine tools. India was one of the few developing countries to produce a variety of high-technology military equipment to supply its own needs. The state fixed prices on a number of basic commodities like

cement, steel, and coal and assumed considerable control of their distribution. The government eventually abolished some of the managing agencies. In 1970, the Monopolies and Restrictive Practices Act supplied the government with additional authority to diminish concentrations of private economic power and to restrict business practices contrary to public interest. This act was strengthened in 1984. In the mid-1990s, there were state monopolies for most energy and communications production and services, and the state dominated the steel, nonferrous metal, machine tool, shipbuilding, chemical, fertilizer, paper, and coal industries. Industry grew at an annual rate of 6.6 per cent and agriculture at a rate of 3.6 per cent.

*Economic Growth*¹⁶

If a crucial indicator of economic performance is changes in per capita income, during the first half of the 20th century, it was almost without any increase. Even national income grew at less than 1 per cent per annum, indicating a stagnant economy – “moribund economy” is how Balakrishnan describes it. The quickening of this moribund economy was the great achievement of the early Plan period, 1950 to 1964, appropriately designated as “the Nehru era”. That is why when one compares the growth of the post-independent economy in reference to those days of British India where the economic growth was practically nil, the country grew. And the quickening was indeed significant, the growth rate of the period shooting up to 4.1 per cent a year. Rightly does Balakrishnan claim it to be “the mother-of-all turnarounds in this country.”¹⁷ In the light of this quantitative performance, Balakrishnan makes a critical evaluation of the economic strategy of the period designated as “the Nehru-Mahalanobis strategy”, with its emphasis on import-substituting industrial growth and on basic industries. He opines that these were required to stimulate the domestic factors, including domestic demand, for sustained long-term growth. Two other significant aspects of the economy were the non-neglect of agriculture in spite of the industry-centered strategy which performed well during the period, thus showing a balanced growth. Second, while the substantial increase in public sector investment was the driver of

growth during this period, it is not correct to say that the private sector was discouraged. The end of the Nehru era altered the economic environment in the country. Nehru used his political power to shape the kind of economic policy he thought was necessary for long-term growth. In spite of the devaluation of the rupee in 1966, the two wars with Pakistan, the oil shocks of 1973 and 1979 and the balance of payments crisis of 1980 and droughts of 1965-66 and 1966-67, the performance of the economy could not be described as poor at all. The Green Revolution and the stimulus that agriculture received from it were the main factors that sustained growth. It was also a period of steady increase in public investment in agriculture. For the first time in the 20th century, the rate of growth of foodgrain production in the country exceeded the rate of growth of population. That enabled the industrial sector also to grow, though sporadically. The two Janata Party years, which saw the new Industrial Policy Statement of 1977, were years of very high industrial growth. But during the period as a whole, there was considerable variation in public sector investment, which also affected the performance of the private sector. A notable feature of the growth of this period was the divergence in growth patterns of different sectors of the economy. From the mid-1960s, there was a distinct acceleration of the growth of agriculture, while the industrial sector was heading somewhat in the opposite direction. And, for the first time the services sector began to pick up momentum. The total impact of these changes, was a perceptible upward shift of aggregate growth. The growth rate, which was between 3.5 per cent and 3.8 per cent per annum in the preceding three decades, moved up to 5.2 per cent during the decade of the 1980s, not far below the 6.1 per cent in the first decade after the 1991 reforms.¹⁸

Ideologically, the country remained committed to a socialistic pattern of society and democratic socialism. During the reign of Indira Gandhi steps were taken towards socialist transformation of the country. Whatever may have been her intentions, with the 24th Amendment of the Constitution, the Constitution became adequately supple to serve the objectives of socialism and the constitution was permitted to be amended as desired to remove the

roadblocks on the way to socialism. The 25th Amendment did away with the right to private property as a fundamental right. All these changes during the regime of Indira Gandhi, in spite of being done with ulterior motives which would be explained in the next chapter, were to go beyond that electoral rhetoric of “Garibi Hatao”. Looking at these achievements, they are not insignificant. The highest tribute we can pay to Indian democracy is that we had chosen the path of democracy, the rule of law and representative institutions. Our decision to adhere to democracy had yielded results. The lives of the poor saw improvements though poverty was not fully ameliorated. There was a lot of concern towards the downtrodden with some policy measures put in place. We were able to feed the hungry and provide hope for their future. Things moved both on the road of political and economic democracy with a new awakening among the subalterns.

OUR FAILURES

In spite of the many successes of democracy and democratic socialism, the country could not make a tangible dent with socialist transformation. Not that there were no attempts. But those attempts to implement have not borne wholesome results. One is not even sure whether there was a “political will” to implement the democratic socialist agenda by the government as a whole. There was always the fear of vested interests being attacked. Political parties and parties especially in power do not desire to displease the power centres entrenched in the system simply because the existence and survival of political parties depend on them. The economy, the national income and the per capita income though marked an upward trend its benefits did not reach the majority in the country. There was no equitable distribution of wealth. There was no sufficient interest in primary education in spite of the Directive Principle of State Policy’s commitment to make primary education compulsory within 10 years of independence. Land reforms were gradually given up since landlords were not in favour and they were the support base of the Congress and other parties. The excluded communities suffered the most since the production in the agricultural farm depended on their labour.

But without land of their own, they remained at the level of labourers and bonded labourers without benefiting from the fruits of production. They were either not paid or paid very little, without adhering to the principles of a just wage. With increasing investment in industrial growth, agriculture did not get the importance that was due. Rural development took a back seat. The cleavage between the rich and the poor widened. While the major section of the poor had become poorer, another section had improved their lot and the rich became richer. Political freedom in substance did not provide freedom at the social and economic level. The following were some of the major failures of the democratic socialist period.

1. Neglect of Primary Education

The Constitution mandated free and compulsory schooling for children up to the age of 14 years. Krishnamurthy had argued, “A concerted effort to educate the mass of the population, especially in the rural areas, would undoubtedly have far-reaching benefits of a cumulative expansionist character. This would greatly lighten the task of the government in bringing about rapid economic development. For, in a reasonable time, one could expect that the ignorance and inertia of the people would crumble and an urge to improve one’s material conditions by utilizing the available opportunities would develop. If this were to happen, the employment problem would take care of itself. The people of the country would begin to move along the lines of those in the advanced democratic countries such as Great Britain and Switzerland.”¹⁹ But for the planners, literacy was not a high priority. The literacy rate grew from 18.33 per cent in 1951 to 28.3 per cent in 1961, 34.45 per cent in 1971, 43.57 per cent in 1981, 52.21 per cent in 1991, 64.84 per cent in 2001 and 74.04 per cent in 2011.²⁰ The growth in literacy from 1951 to 1961 was significant with a 10 per cent increase. However, that increase did not keep pace for the next 30 years. Besides growth, there were questions raised about the standards of primary education as well. Even a seventh standard student in some schools did not know how to read and write either in the vernacular or in English. They were unable to form sentences and do the

counting. The same story continues even today: 42 per cent of those enrolled drop out before they reach 5th standard. With around 75 per cent of children starting school in the first grade and less than 35 per cent continuing up to grade eight, the dropout rates still continue to be high. Many students are just registered while on an average only 50 per cent of them attend classes. Some children are enrolled because teachers are pressured to enroll a large number of children in order to keep their jobs. The other reason for the high dropout rate may be that rural schools are designed as per the urban lifestyle. The schools in rural areas do not have any break for the harvesting season when children go to work to bring in the harvest. In several schools, teacher attendance is very weak. If they come to school, some of them do not go to the classes to teach. They see it as a burden. India spends 3.5 per cent of its GDP on education, which is insufficient and low. In order to educate such a large number of children, you need a lot of capacity development of a large number of teachers, improving the quality of schools. Drastic changes are required to improve the education system from grassroots level, including stricter checks on the functioning of schools and the quality of teaching. Otherwise, many bright minds will continue to lack a proper education. Not providing education for all was the major failure of the promise made. How would a country march into progress without primary education which can promote better participation in the polity? The neglect of primary education affected development in other sectors as well. Illiterate masses cannot meaningfully participate in politics and make decisions for their life and living. Why did the country spend so little on education after independence when countries in our neighbourhood have been allocating a much higher amount to the sector? The SCs and STs remained at the lowest level of literacy.

For want of proper education and low percentage of literacy, in the early stages, Indian democracy was 'buy people', instead of rule 'by the people'. For a vibrant democracy to be vibrant what is required is not mere literates but an educated group of voters concerned about the country and its problems. Higher Education figures for a country of more than 60 years of independence are dismal. A mere 12 per

cent people move into higher education mostly children of traders, businessmen, bureaucrats, professionals and zamindars. Several evils have taken root in the system due to ignorance and lack of education. In recent years, with the corporate nexus with politicians, the question of buying votes has been widely discussed. Voters have been voting for the party that pays them the most. Success of rule by the people depends, to a large extent, on an educated and conscious electorate. When Disraeli extended the voting right in England, he said. "We must now educate our masters." To educate the political masters, people need to know what their rights are and they should be able to make demands on the administration. Since people are not fully aware, basic facilities that ought to be made available to them are not made available. Decisions that will affect the lives of millions are being taken by the governments without the input of the public and the public cannot participate since they have been kept illiterate.

2. *Disparity in Income*

Right from the time of independence in spite of adopting a Constitution centered on democratic socialism, the country was unable to bridge the gap between the rich and the poor. In fact, our achievements in eradicating poverty and bridging the gap between the rich and the poor have been unsuccessful right from the beginning. H.N. Mukherjee on May 25, 1956, just nine years after the declaration of independence while participating in the debate in Parliament on ceiling of income of an individual had sadly remarked, "The Secretary gets Rs 4,000 a month while a Class IV servant gets a salary less than Rs 40 per month on an average. It is the ratio of 1:100; this is vulgarity."²¹ In 1965, Ashok Mehta noted "Not that life has not been affected by the spate of changes. Studies of typical tribal villages have disclosed that aluminium utensils, china-clay cups and saucers, glass tumblers, wooden chairs, looking glass combs and washing soaps as well as musical instruments and the gramophone have already reached their households. But while this cultural seepage has gone on, the economic life of the rural poor, including the traditionally weaker sections of society in the villages has not been

fully organized for mastering poverty.”²² The Planning Minister in the Government of Nehru, Gulzarilal Nanda, while expressing his disappointment over the vast disparities had said, “I have never felt comfortable myself so far as the question of disparities is concerned.”²³ The Mahalanobis Committee appointed by Nehru contended that the income of the contractors, manufacturers, traders and financiers during 1950-51 to 1958-59 increased faster than the increase in the national income or per capita income as a whole. Tax-evasion, tax-avoidance and other loopholes in the system had made the tax structure ineffective in reducing inequalities. In fact, the inequalities have only further increased from 1960s. The “Nehruvian Socialist rate of growth” stagnated at around 3.5 per cent from 1950s to 1980s, while the per capita income growth averaged extremely low to 1.3 per cent a year. In spite of various efforts undertaken by the authorities, the problem of inequality remained as great as ever. The worst in the poverty groups continued to be the SCs/STs.

3. Attack on Social Justice:

There is much the Constitution promised for the marginalized communities and there is little that has been achieved. Ambedkar wanted more action on the part of India’s politicians to restore non-Brahmans to their rightful place in the public sphere and in administration of the country. He had called for legal action against untouchability ahead of the Untouchability Offences Act of 1955 and land reforms that would benefit the SCs and STs overwhelmingly so that the Dalits are able to participate. “There is no nation of Indians in the real sense of the world; it is yet to be created. In believing we are a nation, we are cherishing a great delusion. How can people divided into thousands of castes be a nation? The sooner we realize that we are not yet a nation, in a social and psychological sense of the world, the better for us. Independence is no doubt a matter of joy. But let us not forget that this independence has thrown on us greater responsibilities. .. If hereafter things go wrong, we will have nobody to blame except ourselves. There is a greater danger of things going wrong. Times are fast changing.”²³ We are a nation in

the making. A nation cannot be made if sections of people or communities are left out from development. As a spokesperson for the Dalit community, Ambedkar had made it clear that there cannot be freedom or independence in the country as long as discrimination on the basis of caste would prevail. That discrimination has not stopped. The SCs have been on the receiving end of upper-caste violence. Caste prejudice and discrimination continue to be rampant. Though there is a law on untouchability, its practice has not been annihilated. Atrocities on SCs/STs have been on the increase. Caste wars are more frequent than before. The vision of the framers of the Constitution has not only not been realized, it has even been subverted. Most of those who live below the poverty line primarily hail from SC and ST communities. What is unfortunate is that successive governments in the states and the centre have even failed to identify the poor and landless and initiate strategies for action. Land of poor tribal and middle class people, forests and common properties are being indiscriminately acquired for setting up industrial units by multi-nationals, corporates, capitalists, influential sections of political class and government itself in most of the states. Proper compensation is not paid and rehabilitation for uprooting them from their houses and lands is not attended to. Reservations to SCs, STs and Other Backward Classes have not been completely implemented. When the poor assert for their right over land and resources, state power and private armies of landlords resort to violence to suppress the voice of the poor and the downtrodden. Even the directives of judiciary under the laws and the Constitution are being violated on tribal self-rule law and Panchami land of the SCs. There are commissions set up to provide security to insecure groups. The commissions for minorities, SCs/STs for preventing atrocities and to promote their welfare, human rights commissions and women's commissions have hardly provided justice to the communities they were expected to provide. The state has failed to prevent violence and protect the vulnerable groups from systematic and targeted violence. After 65 years of independence, several Five Year Plans, hundreds of laws leading to a veritable forest of rules offering a variety of special facilities to the underprivileged ranging from Scheduled

Castes and tribes to women, in matters of education, employment, housing, etc., social justice is far from reality. Half of India's population is under the poverty line. They are unable to spend even a dollar a day on bare necessities. Rural health care is a sham and almost non-existent. Some form of inequality is unavoidable in any country. But the persistence of large-scale economic disparities and the undignified living conditions of millions of Indians is a reality that cannot be overlooked. Without food, shelter, clothing, health care and primary education, a person does not become a human being. The widespread caste prejudices and the continuing discrimination against the subaltern castes are a threat to social stability and peace. The social and educational backwardness of a vast section of the population inhibits its participation in the process of social and economic development, not to mention human development. Discriminatory social practices are rampant.

a. Special Armed Forces Act in the North-East

The tribals of the North-East still do not feel integrated with the Indian Union. The Government of India has adopted a very hostile attitude towards the region. With not much development in the region, other than in Mizoram, the underground forces still extract money from helpless ordinary citizens. The region has been subject to separatist insurgencies right from the Fifties. We have had segments of Nagas, Mizos, and the peoples of Meghalaya, Assam, Tripura and Manipur indulging in terrorist violence and separatist agitations. We have managed to work out political compromises with different groups at different points of time. But what is regrettable is that we have had to deploy our armed forces and use coercion to retain these states as part of the Indian Union from time to time. Countries hostile to India have fomented and supported separatist tendencies. These tendencies gained support from the local population due to the region's economic and political neglect. All the agitations resulting from this alienation, whether by the Nagas, Bodos, Assamese secessionists, and the various violent groups operating in Manipur or Tripura, can be traced to this history of

neglect. Resource allocations to these states under successive Five Year Plans have been based on routine administrative and statistical considerations only. For instance, even 65 years after independence, this important strategic area has very little national highway network. Civil aviation links to the region are woefully inadequate. Air connectivity is infrequent. The Centre has focused largely on counter-insurgency, not the socio-political causes of these agitations. With high corruption in the region, the resources allocated by Central governments are not utilized for the purpose for which they are disbursed. The members of the All India Services have been reluctant to serve in those states due to the violent atmosphere in the region. The fate of the North-East is, therefore, left to political parties and leaders on the one hand, and to the armed forces on the other, with the latter swayed only by security considerations. The conflict over the past decades in the North-East has created differing powerful systems, which seek to condition minds, to shape the way people act and the way they live. The bandh culture resorted to by the militant outfits in Assam, Nagaland, Manipur and Meghalaya has disrupted transportation on the few functional highways that cross the states. Poor governance has been a major problem in the region. The North-eastern region does not figure high on New Delhi's agenda. The people of the North-East think that India is keen to maintain its hold on the region as a buffer against possible foreign aggression and Delhi has no great interest in them. The region is thus caught in the vicious cycle of lack of development breeding insurgency and unrest, and militancy and violence retarding economic growth. Hundreds of people have been killed by the armed forces. The Special Armed Forces Act permits the state to arrest and even kill a citizen in the name of security. Cut off from social and political development, the states of the North-East are highly militarized. With a large presence of the armed forces and the police, the citizens do not feel secure. Due to lack of opportunities and quality institutions, a large section of the tribals of North-East have been migrating to Delhi and the southern part of India for education and jobs. Away from their culture, they still experience alienation.

4. *Discrimination against Women*

Women continue to suffer from historical, social and economic disadvantages. In spite of the proposal by R. K. Chaudhuri for women's reservation, in a male-dominated Constituent Assembly, there were no takers for the proposal then. "I think it would be wise to provide for a women's constituency. When a woman asks for something, as we know, it is easy to get it and give it to her; but when she does not ask for anything in particular, it becomes very difficult to find out what she wants. If you give them a special constituency, they can have their scramble and fight there among themselves without coming into the general constituency. Otherwise, we may at times feel weak and yield in their favour and give them seats which they are not entitled to"²⁴, he had said. If the Constituent Assembly had then provided reservation to women in the highest decision-making bodies – the legislatures of the country – the stories of women would have been different. It is a shame on the country inspite of years of freedom, women have not experienced freedom. They continue to be victims of much pain, discrimination and violence. There are unfortunate women who have not stepped out of the confines of their homes, or have not been allowed to step out of their homes in the name of tradition. The outside world is a stranger to them. There are sacred places where their entry is still banned. Due to discrimination, some of them are not even allowed to be born. Others die young due to malnutrition. Major sections of women are confined to their homes, and a few are forced to sell themselves to earn bread for their family. Female infanticide cases are highest in India. Unless and until the country provides equal opportunities to them, the country cannot progress and move ahead. The question is not one of 33 per cent reservation alone. Women need to be on a par with males. Reservation is a step toward women's emancipation. 33 per cent representation can only be a beginning of an undoing an injustice at the time of the framing of the Constitution.

5. *Insecurity among Minorities*

For Mahatma Gandhi, swaraj would have meaning only if it came to

all Indians, regardless of caste, class, religion and gender. Along with Nehru, he was particularly concerned about the well-being of the minorities. In a survey that was conducted by an American psychologist in 1950, the Muslims in India had expressed deep insecurity about their future in the country²⁵. There were suspicions against them even among a section of national leaders. In a letter addressed to the Secretaries by the Home Secretary (Vallabhai Patel was the Home Minister) in 1948, he writes, "There is growing evidence that a section of Muslims in India is out of sympathy with the Government of India, particularly because of its policy regarding Kashmir and Hyderabad, and is actively sympathetic to Pakistan... It is probable that among Muslim employees of Government, there are some who belong to these categories. It is obvious that they constitute a dangerous element in the fabric of administration and it is essential that they should not be entrusted with any confidential or secret work or allowed to hold key posts. For this purpose, I would request you to prepare lists of Muslim employees in your Ministry and in the offices under your control, whose loyalty to the Dominion of India is suspected or who are likely to constitute a threat to security... These lists should be used for the specific purposes of excluding persons from holding key posts or handling confidential or secret work."²⁶ The letter was a reflection of the anti-Muslim mind-set. Officials who had close relatives in Pakistan were also targeted. Some of the officers with an anti-Muslim mind-set used the circular as a sort of witch-hunt. While on the one side Muslims were under threat from Hindu communalism, on the other there was an effort of the Indian political leadership to create a secular state. When street clashes threatened to escalate into a major riot in Ahmedabad in 1956, Morarji Desai went on an indefinite fast. In the Jabalpur riots of 1961, around 50 Muslims lost their lives. In 1963-64, on the theft of the Prophet's hair from a mosque in Srinagar, more than 400 people died in religious rioting. In the riots of Jamshedpur and Rourkela, more than 1,000 people died, most of them Muslims. According to the figures of the National Integration Council, there were 132 incidents of communal violence in 1966, 220 in 1967, 346 in 1968 and the upward trend has continued in

1969 and 1970²⁷. Communal violence and riots have occurred with frequency in the country. More than 3,000 Sikhs were eliminated in the carnage of 1984. The history of post-independence India is strewn with numerous cases where the ruling governments and the commissions constituted by it have failed in their duty to protect these groups. Almost all the fact-finding inquiry commissions constituted after every untoward incident reveal that most of the riots were a part of larger conspiracies, a systematized plan of the communal forces. The targeted violence is for political goals, duly assisted by the political leadership and help from the incumbent bureaucrats and forces. Politicians benefit from the same by polarizing the majority community votes in their favour. The Hindutva forces are opposed to any affirmative action where the weaker sections of the society, be it the minorities, Schedule Castes or OBCs, are identified and given protection. Pannikar has said that what we are witnessing in India is “religionisation of politics” and “politicization of religion”. In the present situation in Indian politics, religion has become a powerful mobilizing force, being invoked by both communal and secular parties to retain power in different states and the centre. The Muslim community still remains as one of the most impoverished only next to the SCs/STs. The threat of violence still exists for them. In recent years, Christians have become the target of communalists. Around 3,000 Sikhs were killed and many more attacked and humiliated after the assassination of Indira Gandhi in 1984 by a Sikh bodyguard of hers. Minority groups have felt that their life and property have been unsafe wherever hostile governments have been in power. What has worried them more is that a section of the media, judiciary and armed forces is gradually coming under the influence of “anti-minoritism.” The trend can prove to be extremely dangerous. One of the important reasons why we have not progressed in the process of nation-building is the exclusion of these groups. While caste masters have been reluctant to include the SCs, the patriarchal system has excluded women from the national agenda. The tribals of North-East are yet to be included. The minorities still experience the wrath of the communalists. This communal consciousness has increased in recent years due to politics.

The BJP has been hostile to the minorities with an intent to build a Hindu Rashtra in India. The Congress party has compromised with secularism fearing that the secular agenda might alienate them from the Hindu vote-bank.

6. *Political Uncertainty*

Democracy has survived. Lack of political stability in some states and the coalition system in the Centre has created a sense of uncertainty in the people. Coalition governments are never very stable. The partners of the coalition have sought their interests than the interests of the people. Indian democracy has some features of anarchy. Parties join the coalition and when their interests are not met threaten to withdraw support to the government. Governments are more at work in keeping the coalition functional than working for progress and welfare of the nation. Many of the demands the minor parties very often make may be unreasonable. And yet if demands are not met and interests are not satisfied, there are threats of pulling out from the government, making governments insecure. The most stable governments were when the ruling party had a majority. In the 65 years of our democracy, Nehru was the Prime Minister for 17 years and Indira Gandhi for 15 years. Manmohan Singh has completed 9 years in office and Atal Bihari Vajpayee was the Prime Minister during the National Democratic regime for six-and-a-half years. With all uncertainties, he was able to complete his one term. P. V. Narasimha Rao headed the government for a five full years from 1991-1996. Put together, these five have governed India for 52 years. Many others did not even last more than a year. H. Deve Gowda, Chandrashekhara, V. P. Singh, Charan Singh and Morarji Desai were in office not even for a year. Similarly, there are instances of state governments that could not complete their term. There is considerable variation in the effectiveness of local governments.

Governments in office sometimes get drunk with power and do not respond to people's needs. There are states that use excessive force and are highly authoritarian. In a democracy, governments are not expected to use force. When does a state become authoritarian?

A state becomes authoritarian when it is unable to address the needs of the people. The concerns of the poor are hardly addressed by many states. Once in power governance does not get the importance it should get. With the politics of groups and sub-groups, leaders spend much of their time in appeasing leaders to stay in power. There are serious violations of human rights by the police and armed forces in some parts of the country. In spite of democratic traditions, severe restrictions were placed on the functioning of party politics during the 18-month Emergency of Indira Gandhi (1975-1977). Local governments sometimes pursue the party agenda more than the people's agenda while in power.

7. Increasing Violence

There have been and still are caste wars between castes across the country. Inter-caste conflicts have led to loss of thousands of lives. A random sampling of headlines in mainstream Indian newspapers tells the story: "Dalit boy beaten to death for plucking flowers"; "Dalit tortured by cops for three days"; "Dalit 'witch' paraded naked in Bihar"; "Dalit killed in lock-up at Kurnool"; "7 Dalits burnt alive in caste clash"; "5 Dalits lynched in Haryana"; "Dalit woman gang-raped, paraded naked"; "Police egged on mob to lynch Dalits". Then there is the violence among the intermediary castes for land and resources. The extremist violence is another kind of violence specially targeted against the capitalist class and the state. Ethnic violence is still prevalent in some parts of the country. The North-East regions have experienced both the brutalities of the armed forces and the underground elements. The war that has been going on for decades over Kashmir has led to enormous bloodshed. The growing crime rate in cities has been a cause of concern. Violence against the state has been the most common form of violence. The conflict between separatist Sikhs and the Central government in Punjab led to the assassination of Indira Gandhi. Rajiv Gandhi was murdered by the extremist elements of Sri Lanka in Tamil Nadu. "The first and by far the most widespread and routinized form of public violence, is protests against the state, or any kind of official, by crowds gathering, pelting stones, attacking and destroying public property. The

increasing political violence in India during the 1980s and 90s was clearly connected with the growth of Hindu nationalist sentiments.”²⁸ The register of public protests, of breaking the law peacefully – dharna, rasta roko, hunger strikes, etc. – are deeply embedded, even banalized, across the Indian political landscape as a set of possible languages of political expression and dissent.

8. Representative Democracy, Political Parties and Individuals

Ours is an indirect democracy. We are governed through our representatives. These representatives mostly are members of political parties and they have to abide by party discipline and party choices. Individuals do not have a right to dissent once the party has given a whip. A consequence of some recent amendments to the Constitution (i.e. the 52nd Amendment of 1985 and the 91st Amendment of 2003), combined with the power of parties to issue whips, has been to make individual members of Parliament fully subordinate to their leaders. This is a violation of the right of individual freedom and makes individuals a pawn in the hands of the party. The power of party leaders vis-a-vis elected members has been further compounded by an amendment in 2003 in the Representation of the People’s Act, which removed the domicile requirement for election to the so-called Council of States. How can an elected member, directly or indirectly elected not be a member of his constituency? With the quality of representatives, democracy in India cannot be termed representative. Most of the elected members return to their constituency only during the time of elections.

9. Minority Rule

Under our democratic system, the electoral system plays an important role. The other limitation of the system is that the party that wins the majority of seats forms the government. But the majority is decided not in terms of the majority of people’s votes. Majority is determined by who gets the highest number of votes and not majority of votes in each of the constituencies. The percentage of vote polled may be low or not all may have exercised their franchise or the votes

may have been divided among different candidates. But whoever gets the highest number of votes in the Lok Sabha and State Assembly elections in a constituency is declared the winner despite the fact that the figure of total votes cast may even be less than 50 percent of the total electorate sometimes. Out of the 50 per cent who may have voted, in the multi-contest constituency, the winning candidate may have just got 25 per cent or less of the votes. In actual practice the candidates become the representative of less than 15 per cent of the people of the constituency. Most of the candidates who win elections have won by minority votes. In many states and Parliament, minority governments are elected by securing less than 50 per cent of total votes polled and they are ruling over majority of people. In terms of their social locations, these representatives are elites of an area. Without big money and patronage, it is not easy to contest elections and win in India.

10. Legislatures and Representation

Given the expensive nature of elections in the Indian democratic system, the poor and downtrodden have no chance to be elected to state assemblies and Parliament except through reservation of seats. Even there the cream of the community enters the legislatures. There may be some exceptions. The political class in India is dominated by the affluent, educated and socially advanced and powerful sections of society. The present system of representation has become the exclusive platform of millionaires and multi-millionaires. The majority of people of the country have no stake in governance. This system has caused serious alienation of the people from their representatives, especially in rural areas. The limitations of representative democracy are that the representatives who have been elected by the people are unable to represent fully the concerns and aspirations of the people of their constituency. In fact, it is humanly impossible for anyone in politics to represent the entire constituency. This is due to several reasons. India is a multi-cultural society. Every candidate belongs to a particular culture or a community. In the process of representing, he may represent some concerns of his community while being a representative of his own community.

Besides, how does one become a representative? A critical examination of India's democracy provides a picture of vested interests everywhere. Those who contest elections with the backing of money, caste and land have not been able to represent the poorer sections of people in their constituency. Part of the reason is that our representatives have not been the representatives of the people and include in their agenda the excluded groups and communities. Elected by various questionable means, several of them are there to further their own interests than the interests of the common good they are expected to represent.

HAS DEMOCRACY FAILED?

Has liberal democracy failed us? It is not the system but the manner in which it is administered that matters. Our Parliament has malfunctioned because MPs and parties are sometimes more interested in playing politics than in good governance and the national interest. Poor governance and drift by the government has also contributed to a sense of destructive anger. It is well established that one of the major engines of corruption and mal-governance is election funding, which generates and is greased by black money and, with muscle-power, has criminalized politics. However, the very discussion of political reform seems taboo! Corruption is both a cause and consequence of poor governance and must be attacked from both ends. Reforms are necessary not merely in the Vigilance, CBI and judicial structures but, specially, in the police, whose independence must be ensured through mechanisms spelt out by various commissions and committees. In recent years, corruption by politicians and the functionaries of the state has been a hotly debated issue. With members of the civil society and the middle class coming to the streets and the helplessness of the state to act on the malaise, the issue still remains unresolved. Crores of public money meant for people's welfare and development has been pocketed by the governing class. Cutting across political parties – in power and in Opposition – nearly 25 per cent of elected members in the Lok Sabha have criminal antecedents. The numbers with criminal records are no less in the state legislatures. An important reason for the

attractiveness of politics as a career of choice by persons with criminal records is the money one could make as a representative. Several representatives have amassed wealth through acceptance of bribes and buying of land for no price. Given the judicial delay in deciding such cases, and the power of political leaders to further delay the investigation and prosecution, these representatives have nothing to fear. With these persons in legislature, one wonders what the future holds for Indian democracy. In some of the states, governments do not complete their term. Legislators change parties according to their convenience for personal gain. This has led to a complete loss of faith in the political class and the democratic process itself. People have come to regard parliamentary institutions with contempt, as being hotbeds of criminals, the corrupt, and the dishonest. There is a general feeling among the people that corruption is inevitable in the governance of the country and that laws exist only for the common people and not for those in power. The mood among the people is one of widespread frustration, cynicism, and helpless anger. They have come to believe that elections only result in one set of rulers being thrown out to be replaced by another set of rulers who are equally unscrupulous, uncaring and incompetent.

IDEOLOGICAL VACUUM

What has happened to that democratic vision? In pre-independent India, politics meant service and self-sacrifice. While the primary aim was to overthrow foreign rule, those who led the freedom struggle did not ignore the fact that they had simultaneously to wage a struggle against social and economic backwardness and the evils of caste, superstition and ignorance. And their motivation was not based on self-advancement but selfless public service. The freedom movement thus threw up a leadership which put the country before everything else. Participation in politics during the freedom struggle meant long periods in prison and undergoing hardships. These were the men and women who, when the British left, took over the task of governance. When Independence was attained, India therefore had a leadership of high quality in terms of idealism and commitment. With freedom attained, politics entered a new phase. "As rebels

against the Raj, the nationalists had been sacrificing idealists, but as governors they came rather to enjoy the fruits of office”²⁹ opined Ramachandra Guha. “The Congress grew fat and lazy, today harbours many time-serving office-holders and not a few black-marketeers”³⁰, commented Time magazine already in 1951. The party got closely linked to power. Political power gave control over the vast resources of the country. The use of these resources for development or for the distribution of favours and patronage went into the hands of those who wielded authority. Once power becomes primary, then commitment to the country, especially for the transformation of the social order, takes the back seat.

The government’s policy of controlling the “commanding heights of the economy” through the National Planning Commission and the Five Year Plans resulted in the concentration of enormous political and economic power in the hands of the bureaucrats and politicians. Inevitably, this led to what came to be known as the ‘licence-permit-quota raj’ and to corruption on a scale that permeated every level of administration. In the absence of ideological or moral constraints, power became the instrument to secure control over resources which were used for the benefit of those in power and their relatives, friends and supporters. Acquisition of money by any means available became the legitimate function of politicians. Obliging anti-social elements like smugglers, black-marketeers, and gangsters in return for the use of their money and muscle power in elections became the accepted modus operandi in electoral politics. It was not long before criminal elements openly entered politics and many even got elected to the legislatures as candidates of national and state parties. The situation was summed up accurately by Achyut Patwardhan an eminent participant in the freedom struggle, who disgusted with the turn of politics after independence gave up public life and turned to education and matters of the spirit. He said: “Today, the State has lost all moral authority. It is viewed as the creation of crooks, by crooks, for crooks. Nothing seems to work without the use of money, muscle power or influence. So even if we have achieved a little prosperity, people think it is ‘in spite’ and not ‘because’ of the State. Back in 1947, one could distinguish between bandits and politicians, not

now. That is a measure of how far we have fallen.”³¹ Public office, a ministerial berth or simply being an elected legislator, whether at the municipal, state or national level have become a passport to power, wealth and pleasures for those who are not troubled by scruples. This being the case, getting into power, anyhow, has become the all-important consideration. Ideology has taken a back seat; dynastic loyalties have become an important factor – many hitching their loyalties to this or that rising family. Two other favoured paths to power are caste and religion. If, before independence, the emphasis was on abolishing caste divisions, after independence, it is on perpetuating caste either by linking it to reservations or by mobilizing communities by vested interest leads for political power. This has given caste a fresh lease of life. The aspiring seeker of public office has an issue to exploit. Religion is the other factor that is exploited. Elements who are in positions of authority show scant respect and even contempt for Parliament, legislative assemblies and other elective bodies. This is what happens when law-breakers usurp the seats of law-makers. Disorderly behaviour, screaming and shouting when not ripping out microphones and using anything else that is handy to throw against one another to settle differences is not uncommon in legislatures. Showing scant respect for the presiding officer, sometimes even threatening him with physical violence, has become the rule rather than the exception. And all this is in front of television cameras for citizens to watch.

There are innumerable parties, most of which have no clear-cut ideology or conception of what they really want from politics. Some of these are regional parties and others are national. There are parties premised on caste and there are parties premised on religion. Many of these parties derive their support from caste groups, religious formations, farmers, businessmen and others. In their hunt for power they make unscrupulous alliances with parties with which they have little or nothing in common, use and play up local or communal passions to win popular support, and bribe. Money is paid and bribes are offered to form governments. Such marriage of convenience frustrates the proper functioning of democratic government and prejudices the minds of the people. The alliances are no more

ideological. Parties have joined alliances and given up alliances purely on vested interests. Decisions are also made on expediency. The ideology is to remain in power and when power is threatened, they are willing to go in search of interests.

All said, while we can feel proud that we have survived as a democracy, the failures of the system have been many. No democracy can move ahead without leaders of honesty, integrity and selflessness without a vision. While the subalterns – the minorities, SCs/STs and the poor – feel betrayed, the people of the country as a whole are disappointed with the functioning of democracy. With the vision of the freedom struggle fading and many of those in politics entering the field for personal gains, the threats to our democracy are many. Things have changed for the better for the elite in the country. The situation of the subaltern communities has not been transformed. They are restless and a consciousness is emerging in them that they need to organize and mobilize for obtaining their legitimate dues. One hopes the internal mechanism to correct the course with people's awareness and consciousness growing will strengthen the system by correcting the loopholes. There are already voices for the reform of the electoral system, proportionate allocation of resources for the SCs and STs and other demands. The question of course is how did the country reach the present level of decline? We shall explore the issue in the next chapter.

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CHAPTER 3

FROM DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISM TO LIBERAL DEMOCRACY

Why did our system fail? How do we explain the dichotomy between the promises made and not implemented? The Constitution assured to all citizens “equality, fraternity and justice” and what has been meted out is “inequality, division and injustice”. Why did the constitution of India promise to transform India into a democratic socialist state and then betray the nation without including all in its developmental agenda? While we failed to improve the lot of the masses, there have been individuals and families who have improved their lot. Is it a failure of a policy or have there been definite interests that did not allow India to be a social democracy? What we professed was democratic socialism and what we practised was liberal democracy, bettering the lot of the already bettered and including a few from the excluded groups into it so that an impression is created that all have a chance in the system. Instead of ameliorating mass poverty, the system has strengthened the privileges of the already privileged. The whole system basically favoured a class than the masses of India.

DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISM VS LIBERAL SOCIALISM

In the name of democratic socialism, the state had promised to intervene to promote economic, social and political equality. That is why Jawaharlal Nehru gave a pre-eminent place to the state in planning. The interests of individuals were to be subordinated to the state. The state was to be primarily concerned about common and public good than individual greed and interests, attempting to bridge the gap between the haves and the have-nots. Those who fought for the freedom of the country were keen to enlist popular

support for the freedom movement. The movement therefore had to be defined in terms of economic regeneration so that people cling to the idea of political liberation. Swaraj was to alleviate the misery of the people of the country and bring about welfare of the masses. "In order to end the exploitation of the masses, political freedom must include real economic freedom, of the starving millions"¹, Sitaramayya had opined. The strategy of the national movement was to adopt an economic programme with the aim of socializing the national struggle. The socialist society would be a society where there would be fullest economic and political democracy. In fact, Nehru was of the opinion that "the capitalist system of industry, whatever its services in the past may have been, is no longer suited to the present methods of production"² and he believed that it is not possible to establish peace out of imperialism and capitalism. He was aware that the problem with the capitalist system was one of mal-distribution, with problems of lack of distributive justice, concerning social and economic rights of entitlements. His socialism had the concept of equality as its defining term. Though much influenced by Fabianism³, Gandhism and Marxism, he forged his own brand of socialism. He was clear on the end of socialism as human welfare and development, affording maximum opportunity to individuals to enable them to attain the stature for which they are best suited. To do this, he was aware that the country had to break through the barriers of poverty and exploitation. Planned development, industrialization and organization and distribution of the means of production were to be geared to an egalitarian society.

But Nehru's grand vision lacked concrete implementation strategies. There were dichotomies in the very articulation of the vision. When maximum opportunities are created for individuals, the system is unlikely to work for the common good. The opportunities are likely to be grabbed by individuals from privileged castes and classes since they are already ahead in the race, leaving marginalized communities and groups to fend for themselves. While critical of capitalism, in reality the industrialization and modernization plan of Nehru provided space to private capital, which went on expanding its base. In the agricultural sector, land reforms did not

completely take off, leaving the masses of marginalized communities as bonded or casual labourers in the hands of the Zamindars. Even the Green Revolution that brought self-sufficiency in agriculture and the “white revolution” that provided enough of milk and its products to the country only strengthened the richer classes of farmers than transforming the agricultural sector. As a product of Western education and life, what Nehru promoted was an environment of liberal democracy than democratic socialism. Instead of placing marginalized communities and discriminated groups in the centre of planning strategies for development, he was keen on promoting the good of individuals.

WHAT IS LIBERAL DEMOCRACY?

Liberal democracy is very different than socialist democracy. In a liberal state, there are no obstacles to the self-fulfillment of each individual – to the unfolding of one’s faculties, to the growth of one’s personality and to the satisfaction of one’s greed. The individual comes first and society after. It is only through the total development of individuals liberalism holds that a state can develop. Liberalism and a free economy go hand in hand. Freedom and autonomy of the individual are the central values of liberalism. On these rest an open society. Democratic liberalism holds that people should be given the greatest possible freedom of choice while making them responsible. Responsibility means taking care of one’s own welfare, bearing the consequences of one’s own actions, involving and participating in public affairs as well. Individuals are expected to take responsibility in public life and not evade their responsibility as members of a civil society.

TOLERANCE, EQUALITY AND LIBERALISM

Since no one has the monopoly of wisdom or is the sole repository of truth, tolerance is an integral aspect of liberal democracy. The liberal is tolerant towards all dissenting views other than those that militate against human dignity and freedom. Dialogue is the way of resolving conflicts and differences. Violence, to a liberal, is

unacceptable. While they believe in social justice, social justice means for them that we all belong to a society where those in need of help should be able to rely on the support of others, of individuals, groups and government. It is a charity notion and not a concept of justice. Since no two persons are alike, liberals believe in the principle of equality of opportunity. This implies that, in principle, no group or individual should be given preferential treatment in the pursuit of their goals. Every human being has equal rights in society. Logically, liberalism is against discrimination of any kind as well as creating special opportunities to discriminated or marginalized communities. Where there are people who have been denied equal opportunity, the liberals believe that society should lend a helping hand through voluntary organized efforts where possible and through the state where required. The function of the state is to protect the liberty of everyone against everybody else's.

SELF AND SOCIETY

Instead of looking at society from a social perspective, trying to understand the inequalities existent there, their root causes and ways and means of responding to them, the liberals look at the world from the perspective of "self" alone. Whenever specific communities due to their historic marginality are not provided with a preferential treatment, it is not easy to bring them to the level of equality. One cannot accept the understanding of liberals on "equal opportunities" since the concept does not embrace the inclusion of the excluded, who have not been treated as equals for centuries due to various kinds of discrimination. If the historical roots of injustice meted out to communities in every society and especially in India are not taken into consideration, what happens in the process is the protection of the stronger. In the domain of politics, the same powerful social groups take over power and the state may enforce a law legitimizing discrimination, endorsed by a majority against the wishes of a minority. The political majority in reality may be a social minority but as long as this group is in power, it becomes a majority. Similarly, in the country's economy, the state may take sides with monopoly and privilege against the requirements of common welfare.

In the realm of religion and culture, the state may deny conscience, independence of reasoning and freedom of judgment.

While liberalism claims rationality, that rationality however is derived without any reference to the outside world. While racism, casteism and discrimination are irrational, there are rationalists who live with it as a part of their irrational culture providing at times rational explanations. Since the individual and the minority have certain rights which are inviolable, the liberals restrict the movement of the state to the limits of proven necessity and would hesitate to approve of action by the state in matters which are outside its purview. Democracy is the recognition of the significance of the individual. It is a commitment to the greatest possible freedom. Liberalism means personal freedom and human dignity for every individual. Since liberals know that in any society, power is a factor and cannot be eliminated, they do not try to abolish the state but think that it is a necessary evil. Its powers are not to be multiplied beyond what is necessary. The role of the citizens is to limit, to divide and to control power and preserve the chance of replacing those in power. Liberals know that people are not equal. Society must be radically committed to equal opportunities so that everyone will find their place in society according to their talents, wishes, abilities and willingness to achieve - irrespective of social background, heritage and health. However, the grand expression "equal opportunity" has remained empty words behind which extreme inequality has been concealed in all liberal states. They do not believe in providing a level or at least near-level playing field for those unequal communities, tortured for centuries. Freedom of thought and expression are ultimate values of liberalism.

In spite of his rhetoric of democratic socialism, did Nehru fall into the trap of liberalism or liberal democracy? Did he encourage individualism over social good? Did Nehru promote liberal democracy that stressed more the development of individuals than the development of society as a whole? Was he very inconsistent? Of course, Nehru admitted his inconsistency when he said, "You do not have to try very hard if you want to catch me in an inconsistency. This is the occupational disease of any philosopher who finds himself

in a position of an operating leader.”³ Where there powerful interests that Nehru could not resist? One cannot deny the fact that the Nehru of the freedom struggle was not the same Nehru who functioned as Prime Minister. Once he became the Prime Minister, he was a philosopher turned operating leader⁴. There were constraints in implementing a vision. For a visionary, the scholastic convictions or the freedom experiences have now to be negotiated with the governmental hierarchy and other pulls and pressures. Nehru was fully aware that the Indian society was far from being a just society. But he could not make a tangible dent to socialist transformation that he visualized. The reasons why he failed in promoting social democracy are the following:

a. Lack of clarity on the term

Dr Chand said, “Jawaharlal Nehru did not define socialism as clearly and unambiguously as he should have and in the name of flexibility, which is undoubtedly needed, compromising decisions were taken and carried out whose dangerous implications were overlooked, and the spirit of socialism did not inform the plans and their implementation.”⁵ As the first Prime Minister of the nation, who had the responsibility of implementing the democratic vision of the Constitution, part of the blame has been placed on Nehru. Though drafted by Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, influenced by Mahatma Gandhi, inspired by those discussions in the constituent assembly, the person who influenced the constitution more than anybody else and later implemented it for 17 years as the first Prime Minister of India was Jawaharlal Nehru. In fact, he laid the foundation for the spirit of new India as the leader of the governing team. An insight to the person of Jawaharlal Nehru may be necessary to fully understand the failures of that democratic socialism. M.N. Roy one of the critics of Nehru once commented, “Nehru is a misfit in politics; he was cast for the role of a poet or play actor. Having strayed into politics, he is qualifying himself for a shameful role.”⁶ While the economy marked an upward trend with the increase of national income and per capita income, the gap between the rich and the poor increased. The poor may not have become poorer but the rich became richer. The SCs

and STs were not included in the paradigm of development. Decentralization did not take place. Panchayatiraj institutions were not considered important. Ten years after the assumption of power by Nehru “nearly five lakhs of persons were enjoying Rs 600 crores after paying all their taxes when good number of people did not get enough to eat”⁷. After four months in Office as Prime Minister, Nehru himself admitted this inequality when he wrote, “I have yet to understand, how, in spite of the tremendous and heavy taxation in India, these vast fortunes, were made by certain individuals and groups. I just cannot understand it and we have to find some means and machinery to prevent this kind of shameful traffic in human beings and profiting at the expense of the nation.”⁸ And yet hardly four months later in the Industrial Policy Resolution of April 6, 1948, the Prime Minister opined that “private enterprise, properly directed and regulated has a valuable role to play”. Was it a retreat from socialism? Why was Nehru speaking differently at different times? Was he clear on what the strategies of the state should be if economy has to be transformed and placed at the service of the masses with possibilities of “wiping out every year from every eye”?

b. His Bourgeoisie Background

Born in an aristocratic family, reared in bourgeois surroundings with all the vices and inhibitions of sheltered life, there are some who have called Nehru a “bourgeois reformist”. Nehru himself admits to it in his autobiography. “I am a typical bourgeois brought up in bourgeois surroundings with all the early prejudices that the training has given me.”⁹ As a Kashmiri Brahmin, life was pleasant for him. Every material comfort was available when he lived in Anand Bhavan in Allahabad. He had a swimming pool at home and his father imported the first car while in Uttar Pradesh. He was raised in the image of an English gentleman. He was educated at Harrow, Cambridge and London. He lived in an environment very different from how people lived in the country. He frequented expensive clubs, restaurants and aristocratic gatherings. It is not easy not to be influenced by an environment of that kind. If one has to ask a question on the identity of Nehru, the answer would be that he was

a Kashmiri Brahmin, son of a distinguished and wealthy lawyer and he had acquired habits of an English nobleman. Is it possible for a human being to reverse his past totally and take on a new value system? In no way does this mean that he was unconcerned. At the Jaipur session of the All India Congress on November 4, 1963, Nehru had expressed that the Indian capitalists are selfish, living in a world of their own, perpetuating injustice and admitted that monopoly had grown in India, while expressing his desire to reverse the trend.¹⁰ When Nehru was asked whether he was satisfied with the gains of socialism at the fag end of his life, his response was: “Frankly, I am not. While industrial and agricultural production has increased considerably, though not to the extent we had planned, the tendency has been towards the accumulation of the national wealth with people at the top – that is, the big business and the big farmer – and not towards its equitable distribution among the masses of the people. Thus, the rich have grown richer. The poor have also gained, but proportionately less, much less than the wealthier classes. In result, the gap between the haves and have-nots has widened.”¹¹ One of the important reasons for this increasing gap is that while Nehru thought of the poor and was concerned about them, he had no experiences of poverty and the lot of the poor. His function as Prime Minister was to work for the poor without adapting right strategies and action plans.

c. His respect for the opinion of others

Nobody questions Nehru’s scholastic convictions. His socialist pronouncements were not political stunts or vote-catching devices. He meant what he said but may not have been able to translate into action what he meant. To translate convictions into practices needs a different kind of a style. Brought up in liberal traditions of the West, he was averse to any kind of authoritarianism or dictatorship. Though in all decisions pertaining to the country he was ‘primus inter pares’, he respected diverse opinions and views. In his cabinet, there were people who were unenthusiastic about socialism. With elements of the kind, and the personality of Nehru who believed in no authoritarianism and consensus as far as possible, the advance

towards socialism must have been obstructed. In all discussions and debates, when a leader desires consensus, it is the voice of the strong that finally prevails. Unable to present his vision powerfully and competently so that it is implemented concretely, Nehru preferred to listen to voices of interest and pressure groups and thus be willing to be led than to lead. There are no countries that have established socialist patterns of society without clarity, coercion, courage and determination. While respect to all voices of dissent is essential to any leader, the leadership once clear of a national common vision had to move in the constitutional direction than give into forces of conservatism and feudalism. That courage and determination is what Nehru lacked, given his own lack of clarity of how he would work towards social transformation.

d. Nehru's willingness to compromise

Nehru was willing to compromise. In one of his conversations with a foreigner he had said, "The politician has to compromise. That is what makes him a politician."¹² He was aware that life without adjustments will be one of conflict and he was not prepared for conflicts. Given the poverty of the land, production was his first priority. Any attempt to hamper or lessen production, he thought, would injure the nation, impacting the labouring masses. With the problems of Partition and others inherited, he wanted no paralysis of the economic system. To restore confidence in the business community, to invite foreign private capital and to make use of the industrial and technical knowledge he had to steer clear of the leftist and rightist roads. He wanted both foreign and domestic capital to exist and dominate industry. He thought of socialism as a system of abundance and not as a system of equi-distribution of poverty. Only when the country has enough of resources, they could be distributed. Social ownership was to be viewed from the point of view of its ability to produce more wealth and thus pave the way for an affluent and egalitarian society. The wholesale socialization of the economy was never his purpose. Was this philosophy behind the increasing gap between the rich and the poor and the inability to translate that dream of democratic socialism?

Nehru was both non-dogmatic and pragmatic in his approach. While being comfortable with the Marxists or Communists as far as their vision for a new society was concerned, he was neither a Marxist nor a Communist. He had said that he was not a Communist because he had resisted treating Communism as a holy doctrine due to too much of violence associated with Communist methods. He had made no secrets of his opposition to their tactics, activities and extra-territorial loyalty. His socialism was more pragmatic than revolutionary. In order to increase production, he had guaranteed the business class against expropriation and diminution of their profits. Given the stature of Vallabhai Patel, who was more of a rightist in the cabinet, a compromise had to be struck with his leftism. A split of the Congress Socialist group in 1948 from the Congress had also affected Nehru with Dr. Lohia, Ashok Mehta and Jayaprakash leaving the party fold. They left out of disgust that the state was moving away from socialism to the path of capitalism. His cabinet consisted of persons who pulled in different directions. Even when the cabinet was of Congress persons alone, there were sectional conflicts. For Nehru, more important than even socialism was unity and stability of the country and he was willing to make compromises for it. As a member of the Congress party, he could not easily drag an unwieldy bourgeois party to socialism.

2. ROLE OF PRIVATE CAPITAL

His major conflict was with private capital. While the state had a role of primacy in creating a socialistic pattern of society, he was of the opinion that private capital should also play its role. What he wanted from private capital was to keep in mind the public interest and increase production. He was not in favour of the Russian and Chinese model for bringing socialism in India with force and authoritarianism. He was keen to make use of the private sector or the business community for a socialistic transformation of the economy. Being conscious of the price to be paid for rapid development, he failed to take a decisive plunge into socialism. The private capital, he was aware, primarily invests for profits than public welfare. Yet, he could not restrict it. While rejecting the Russian

and Chinese models of scientific socialism, he did not want socialism to be divorced from Indian culture and heritage. Indian socialism for Nehru was to be rooted in the Indian soil. But the philosopher in him did not define what that Indian culture and heritage was all about. The country had inherited a culture of caste, a social order, essentially hierarchical with no political will to change and transform it. Much of the capital remained with the dominant communities. In fact, there was total hostility to include the excluded in national development among many members of the dominant community. Though there were statements and pronouncements to work on a social order of equality, given the culture of society, it was not easy. Indian society was unwilling to accept the notion of social equality at all at the level of society. Besides, to expect private capital to have no private interests and work for national good alone was utopian. Why would private capital invest without profits? Any investor when he or she invests expects returns. Thus, Nehru failed because he relied on compromise, failed to realize the functions of private capital and foreign capital and respected socialism of the Indian soil if at all there existed one.

3. THE COMPOSITION OF THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY

The second cause of our failure in translating the constitutional vision into a reality was the Constituent Assembly. According to Subhash Kashyap, it was due to the class character and elitist composition of the Constituent Assembly that we were unable to realize our dreams. "The Indian Constitution was largely an adoption or adaptation of the 1935 Act. The model adopted was not the British parliamentary system but its colonial version."¹³ They were of course moved by a vision. In implementing that vision into a written Constitution, they had their own notions of what equality and justice meant. With an exception or two, most of them did not hail from marginalized and discriminated communities. They had no experience of multiple kinds of deprivation the poor suffered. While they thought of the poor, they lived their existence without any connectivity to them. As a result, the Constitution though refers to marginalized communities, places the dominant and powerful

communities at the center of the document. Why do I say so? “The poor, illiterate, hungry masses had no use for most of the rights like the right to property, freedom of thought and expression, equality of opportunity in matters of public employment, etc. In any case, they were in no position to claim any benefit from these rights. The rights they needed were those of freedom from hunger, right to education, right to a living wage etc. All these were relegated to the non-enforceable principles.”¹⁴ While people were unable to satisfy their basic economic needs, why did the Constitution offer them the bourgeois rights of freedom of thought and expression and right to property? The constitutional model, all said and done, was premised on the British parliamentary liberal system, providing rights to strengthen the powerful and to deny rights that were essential for the majority. There was no use of giving rights to property when majority of Indians did not have property and the right could only help the protection of the property of the small group that held property in the country. Similarly, in a country where the literacy rate was very low and there were not even a small percentage with higher education, the right to freedom of thought and expression did not make sense. If people were provided right from the time of independence the right to food, the right to clothing, the right to shelter, the right to primary education and the right to employment, the story of our democracy would have been different. A package for community rights of the marginalized groups instead of individual rights would have transformed communities and we would have been able to get rid of multiple kinds of discriminations that the subaltern communities still undergo. Women were totally kept out from any special provisions in spite of their being discriminated. A sole voice of R. K. Chaudhri favouring reservation for women in the legislatures did not find favour in the Constituent Assembly. Those in the making of the Constitution were elites – dominated by English-educated, urban middle-class Indians without a total comprehension of the reality of India. As a result, the Constituent Assembly was much like a debating society than examining what the discriminated communities really needed in the country and how to transform the nation. They were no doubt brilliant persons. At least 20 of them

out of more than 300 members Granville Austin identifies as the most influential. Yet, their brilliance was more at the level of high ideals of discussion and debates than addressing grassroots issues and realities. They were more argumentative than persons of concern and compassion. They wanted to win arguments than initiate steps towards social revolution in the country.

4. WESTERN MODEL OF DEMOCRACY

Paul Brass has argued that parliamentary democracy was unsuited for India since the social structure of the country was imbued with an ideology of hierarchy rather than equality. The parliamentary democracy, he opined was meant for countries that are premised on egalitarianism. Caste Hindus and untouchables and other low castes could hardly be expected to work together as equals in a democratic political order. The caste Hindus would maintain the rigidity of caste hierarchies and caste discriminations that would prevent the poor and the disadvantaged low castes from participating effectively in politics. In most villages in India, one or two elite castes control most of the land and resources. After independence, these dominant castes were able to control and deliver the votes among the low castes that were considered to constitute “vote-banks”. In some parts of India, non-Brahmin movements had been launched to replace the dominant Brahmin castes from their disproportionate control over jobs in the public services and other advantages in society. Since independence, the spread of conflict between the elite and the backward caste groups has become a major source of social tension.¹⁵ “These issues of Hindu-Muslim communal relations, of the integration of the low castes as effective participants in a democratic political order, and of caste conflict between the backward castes and the elite castes have persisted throughout the post-Independence period up to the present and have posed recurring challenges to the maintenance of an integrated society, an equalitarian politics and non-violent mechanisms of conflict resolution.”¹⁶ However, there have been no attempts to face and address them even in the Constituent Assembly.

5. DISCUSSION ON THE MODEL OF DEMOCRACY IN THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY:

At the Constituent Assembly, there were debates and discussions whether India should go for a Constitution focused on democracy and liberty or a social constitution aimed at emancipation and equality. Some advocated a Gandhian constitution based on Panchayat Raj system with the village as a basic unit. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar sharply attacked it saying that these village republics have been the ruination of India. "What is the village but a sink of localism, a den of ignorance, narrow-mindedness and communalism?"¹⁷ H. V. Kamath, one of the Congress Socialists, dismissed the attitude of Ambedkar as typical of the "urban highbrow". N. G. Ranga, the peasant leader, while favouring village panchayats and attacking Ambedkar on his ignorance of Indian history had said, "If he had only known the achievements of the village panchayats in southern India over a period of a millennium, he would not have said these things."¹⁸ Begum Aizaz Rasul fully agreed with Ambedkar since she held that the rights of the citizens are more important against any corporate body and village Panchayats which can be very autocratic. Finally, it was the individual rather than the village that was chosen as the unit. The Constitution in other aspects too looked towards Euro-American practices than Indian precedents. To the objective individual, the Constitution was an adaptation of the Western principles to Indian ends.

6. MODEL ADOPTED

At Independence, Indian leaders were bent upon adopting the political conventions, ideas and practices of Western democratic societies. Those institutions and ideas could not be separated from the societies from which they had evolved. India had an entirely different social order unsuited to parliamentary institutions and egalitarian ideologies. Instead of searching for a system of our institutions more in consonance with our culture, we took to British traditions. The Constitution provided fundamental rights. In a land where the mass of the people were extremely poor, tried to traditions,

exploited by merchants, money-lenders and landlords, these rights were meaningless. In fact, fundamental and other rights have protected the exploiters rather than the exploited. The British structures of civil service, which was “neutral” with no involvement with people and thus an enemy of the poor, were kept intact. The only change was the nomenclature from Indian Civil Service to Indian Administrative Service. Authority and power was concentrated in their hands. However, what India needed then and now is a different kind of civil service to devise structures for local government and popular participation. The plans for the economic development of the country were set during the Second Five Year Plan from 1956 to 1961 by P. C. Mahalanobis. “The central core of that Plan was to move into heavy intensive and fast-paced heavy industrialization led by the public sector which would build the key industries and control the commanding heights of a new modern industrial economy for India, leaving the private sector to play a complementary role in the mixed economy.”¹⁹ The Plan did not draw its inspiration from the political economy of India – its resources, social structure and the immediate needs of the people. The model implied heavy dependence on foreign aid from the capitalist countries for success than the human resource of the people from the villages of India. The needs of the poor were paid lip-service. There were promises that were not implemented on the development of agriculture, the creation of employment opportunities, balanced regional development and schemes for the poor in the rural areas. The efforts to mobilize resources to support urban-biased capital intensive industrialization provided support to the rich. In fact, one would not be wrong if one states that the poor were not the base of the discussions at the constituent Assembly at all. The rhetoric was all about planning, rights of individuals, structure of governance and power. What was done may not have been deliberate. But the ideas that were internalized by those in the Assembly were those of the Western world. Given their training and background and their lack of expertise on rural economy and development, the members of the Constituent Assembly decided not to explore the unfamiliar path.

7. BUREAUCRATIC ADMINISTRATION

The freedom struggle was a mass movement. All sections of people were involved in that struggle. People and leaders were one in the battle. Once the state came into existence, the masses were out and a class took over governance. Nehru gave his administration a bureaucratic form after the example of British bureaucracy and not a mobilisational form. It looked as if the party that took over power was too afraid of the people now to continue with the mobilisational approach. People were distanced and the so-called “neutral” and “insensitive bureaucracy” inherited from the British Raj took over. One of the important things the Congress in power did was to demobilize the movement, given the nature of its local and regional leadership for their own interests and not to radicalize it. It discreetly gave up its promises of distributive justice which was its central programme prior to independence. The party adopted massive plans for capitalist development. The country chose heavy industrialization and institutional control of capital goods industries through the state sector. Political mistrust of foreign capital and to a lesser extent the political power of private capital led to expanding the public sector. This huge state-controlled sector was controlled by a bureaucracy of economic and technical personnel who were earlier with the British regime. The government gradually came to be controlled by a set of technocrats and bureaucrats. They had no experience of the freedom movement or the experiences of poverty in rural areas. Products of elite education, most of them were children of the powerful landlords and businessmen. The only path to economic progress, they had been taught was capitalism. Their influence on planning became significant. As the state expanded its functions, the bureaucracy too increased in number. Since the decision to expand the bureaucracy was with the bureaucracy, the sector spread and increased its control. The politicians depended on them for planning. They were termed experts who knew the economy better than the peasants and farmers in spite of not hailing from communities who cultivated, or without any experience of farming. Some of them may have been even children of the Zamindars. But the Zamindars in India do not cultivate land, they only profit from

their lands. The control by these bureaucrats was termed socialistic.

What is to be expected from such administration? Economic and distributive inequality quickly increased. There was no connect with the people. People's issues were not addressed. The bureaucratic approach kept people away from the state. The people's alienation from the state went on increasing since the bureaucracy was characterized by impersonal regulation of inferior-superior relationships, which is contrary to democratic norms of equality and fraternity. It was an oligarchic system of political domination. Instead of becoming a tool for a social revolution, bureaucracy became the master of the politically dominant group in a new type of society that was neither capitalist nor socialist. All powers were concentrated with them without fully grasping the vision of independent India. Once in control, their primary goal became the consolidation of their own power position instead of the service of the nation. Whenever their interests clashed with the goals of the nation, they were willing to sacrifice the national goals than jeopardize their own privileges. In some ways, the politician-bureaucratic nexus should be held responsible to the decline in radicalism of the democratic socialist programme. The bureaucratic conservatism with support from political class served more the interests of the newly-emerging governing class than the masses. The organizational elites, together with other social elites, having a common interest in the maintenance of the status quo, formed a strong power group determined to oppose any demand for change coming from the masses. That is why Italian Marxist Bruno Rizzi in "The Bureaucratization of the World" (1939) had rightly stated that bureaucracy constituted a new ruling class that exploited the proletariat as much as the capitalists in the past. In the last analysis, it was these bureaucrats – the technicians, directors, and specialists holding key positions in the state administration – in nexus with the political class, who exploited the proletarians and stole the surplus value of work. Bureaucracy thus became a negative, destructive force in society, working openly against public welfare. As far as a social revolution in the country is concerned, bureaucracy has been more destructive than constructive.

Ordinary people still do not have access to this organization in a democracy through they are expected to work for the people. While one could easily state that they work for the government, it is difficult to define their functions in terms of people. Why do social forces still favour their continuance? It is because they protect vested interests of politicians, landlords, industrialists and the powerful. They do that by monopolizing discursive space and limiting public debate on their areas of 'expertise, wasting national resources or tax revenue that is paid as salaries for their upkeep, embracing status quo positions and strengthening the existing system, distrusting the democratic impulse, acting as though they are above the law, failing even to provide the service they are expected to provide and thus eventually subverting the society's values in which they operate. They have earned a bad reputation for delays, inefficiencies, red-tapism, corruption, bribery and delaying the progress of the nation. What the country needed were persons with concern, compassion, grassroots experiences of the locality with expertise, motivation and commitment on issues of the locality than experts in ivory towers who have had no experience of the real situation of the people.

8. THE CONGRESS PARTY:

The Congress Party was another roadblock towards socialism. The Congress that took over governance was not the Congress that won independence. Prior to independence, Congress was a movement. After independence, it was a political party that had to be faithful to a formal constitutional structure. The objective of the movement was to gain freedom. The function of governance is material allocation of advantages. When resources are allocated, there are vested interests. There were party factions at various levels from the district levels to the central in the Congress. There were progressives and conservatives in the party driving in different directions. Once in power, polarization within the party became central. There were differences between Nehru and Sardar Vallabhai Patel. While Nehru was a social visionary, Sardar Patel stood for free enterprise. The mass wave on which Congress rode prior to independence had now become conflictual with different social groups making claims on

the state for economic resources. "After freedom was won, the Congress had degenerated into a dharamsala or rest home, without any unity of purpose or principles, and open to all fools and knaves, friends and foes, communalists and secularists, reformers and orthodox and capitalists and anti-capitalists"²⁰, said Ambedkar. "The Current" paper noted, "From West Bengal to Uttar Pradesh, along the Gangetic Valley, the Congress is split. The old glamour of the premier political organization is fading; factions are becoming more acute and the party's unpopularity is increasing."²¹ The socialists within the party gradually left the party. They opined that the Congress has no great concern for the poor and they would prefer to work at the regional levels and form political parties. Given the all-embracing hold of the Congress on the country, these parties formed by individuals became ineffective and did not even function as regional parties. Under Lohia's influence, those in the North took to slogans which they thought would improve their base. Anti-communism of the socialists precluded any co-operation with the communists. With the radicals becoming weak in the party, the Nehruvian reformist programme could not take off. The Muslims demanded a separate state. The communists intensified their struggles for peasant rights. How would a movement-turned-political party, which included all kinds of interests work towards the interest of the excluded groups and the poor? Several of those in the party came to further their own ends and were able to make use of the party machinery to their gain.

Because of the federal character of the state, measures adopted towards reforms in the agrarian structure were not implemented by the states. The local landlords who were a part of the Congress wanted no change in land relations though land reforms were essential for empowerment of the marginalized communities. Given the fact that more than 85 per cent of India then lived on agriculture and most of them had no land of their own, providing free or bonded labour to Zamindars, without the tillers obtaining land for cultivation, an agricultural revolution was unlikely. The government thus began with its inability to translate the goals of the Constitution though it promised land reforms. Prior to independence, Congress

was a mass party with a developed grassroots organizational structure right from the village to all-India committees. At the all-India level there was an elected president and a working committee to look after the functioning of the organization. After independence, the Congress party as a national party ran the central government and most of the state governments. Nehru believed in decentralization. Decentralization caused its problems for the party. State units enjoyed a large degree of autonomy due to their financial independence since they were able to raise resources for the party. Most of those resources came from local businessmen and zamindars. Because of their financial autonomy, they were able to assert for their rights with the centre. With financial power these units came to acquire, the centre normally accepted the candidates recommended by the state to contest elections, except when there were serious differences. And all those recommended persons for the most part came from regional elite groups. There were powerful Chief Ministers in different states. The autonomy of the state units was so strong that Kamaraj as president of the party could effectively choose a successor for Nehru in 1964. The programme of land reforms was abandoned through a combination of factors like resistance from landlords, opposition from states and judicial conservatism.

a. Indira Gandhi and Factionalism

The Prime Minister after Nehru, Lal Bahadur Shastri, was in office from June 9, 1964 to January 11, 1966. It was too short a time to make new beginnings. He carried on the legacy of Nehru. Partha Chatterjee stated that the nature of the state changed with the Nehru period. "The idea was now fairly established that the state was the principal, and in many instances the sole agent of bettering the conditions of the people and providing relief in times of adversity... The particular strategy of economic development followed in the Nehru period produced a division between large public undertakings in the capital goods and infrastructure sectors and private capitalists, dominated by a few monopoly houses, in the consumer goods sector... Third, the political consolidation that the Congress represented as the principal organization of the freedom

struggle was now a thing of the past.”²² One thought things would improve with Indira Gandhi since she proclaimed a radical socialist vision. She was in power for 15 years. What the country witnessed during her regime was groupism and factionalism. When she took over as Prime Minister in 1966, the old guard was unhappy. A split in the Congress party in 1969 between her and her loyalists and the other faction was hailed as a split between the conservatives and the progressives. That split weakened the party’s organizational structure. In the elections of 1967, Congress was defeated in several states though not replaced by any single party other than in Madras by DMK. The other governments were coalition governments. The party had to give into the agenda of the local elites to stay in power in states. In many of those states, governments collapsed due to defections and the governments of defectors were installed with the Congress support in West Bengal, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Punjab. How could Congress form governments without giving up its ideological moorings? Power became more important than ideology. Several of those parties were parties of local landlords backed by industrialists and businessmen. Defectors joined the party. “It has been calculated that whereas in the 10 year period between 1957 and 1967, there had been in all of India a total of 542 legislators changing parties, in a single year following the 1967 elections, there were as many as 438 defections.”²³ Such defections for the sake of power went on increasing. It is no more ideology that was central but power for the Party. The ideology of socialism continued to be voiced by Indira Gandhi more for survival than for bettering the lot of the poor.

b. Centralization of the Party

During Nehru’s tenure power within the Congress had shifted to the state. Indira Gandhi set about systematically undermining state Congress caucuses to establish her hold over the party. She gave up decentralization of party functioning and centralized and gradually appointed her own leaders, invoking the socialists’ slogans that new leaders were chosen because they were dedicated to remove poverty. There was no electoral process in the party since she took over

power. All were nominated by the party boss. Chief Ministers were appointed and replaced at whims and fancies. Any state leader with efficiency and popularity was replaced after limited years of leadership. Most of those nominated were persons of loyalty and not persons of competency. They even lacked total acceptability in the place. Since these leaders lacked skills to resolve issues as leaders of the party or state, all cases of conflict were referred to be addressed by the Centre. Indira Gandhi presided over a system which was highly centralized and as a result, a far weaker system. Political ideology with slogans was used in electoral discourse. Elections were won since she could directly appeal to the masses. There was a gradual shift of political tasks to the bureaucracy since she wanted no strong leaders at the state level. This led to mindless centralization. At the same time, there was no way she could avoid appeasement to regional bourgeois interests. Though the leaders were all appointed by her, there were mounting pressures for allocation of heavy industries. She could not resist such demands. Socialist changes at the state level were not thought of or contemplated. Many of those appointed for offices hailed from communities who owned land and resources and they were averse to any radical changes. Besides, they were not the persons who could implement changes since they did not have local support. Sometimes, given the multiple kinds of regionalism in a state, Indira Gandhi played one regionalism against another.

At the Bangalore session of the All India Congress Committee meet in 1969, Indira Gandhi spoke of the need for a new economic policy with land reforms, restriction of monopolies, nationalization of banks and other socialist measures. Though the conservatives were not in favour of the proposals, they did not desire to oppose these with the fear that they may become more unpopular. In 1970, Indira Gandhi moved an amendment to the Constitution for the abolition of privy purses and the nationalization of 14 banks, presented as radical socialist programmes. Since the amendment was narrowly defeated in the Rajya Sabha, through a presidential order the privy purses were abolished and the 14 banks nationalized. However, the Supreme Court struck down the order as unconstitutional. In the 1971 elections, with a slogan of “garibi

hatao”, she campaigned extensively and won 350 seats in Parliament while all her opponents were badly defeated. Only those parties that had aligned with her retained their strength. There was a decisive left-wing swing. One might conclude from these measures that Indira Gandhi did more for socialism than Nehru with her agenda of “garibi hatao”, nationalization of banks and insurance and the abolition of privy purses. There is a need to raise the question whether her switch to socialism was more ideological to further the socialistic goals of the Constitution or was more personal, a part of her election and survival strategy? Similarly, was the split of the Congress in 1969 more ideological as she had claimed or a clash of personalities? There is no doubt that she rode to political prominence by making use of the slogan “garibi hatao”. People gave her a massive mandate to forge ahead and carry forward her progressive and socialist policies. Her radical measures of abolition of privy purses and nationalization of commercial banks and insurance companies gave an impression that she was serious about the transformation of India into a socialist state.

c. Indira Gandhi as a Pragmatic Socialist

But there were too many skeletons in her socialist cupboard. She had rarely invoked the word “socialist” prior to 1967. The term was more pragmatic, a word she made use of to distinguish her from the old guard. Speeches made by her, after her re-election, show her identifying with the poor and the downtrodden. “Speaking to the Lok Sabha in February, 1968, she stressed the problem of landless labour, expressed her concern for all the minorities of India and defended the public sector from criticisms that it was not for making profit (her answer that it did not need to, since it was building a base for economic development). Speaking to the Rajya Sabha in August, she asked for a new deal for the downtrodden, in particular the SCs and STs, pledging her unceasing attention and effort to this cause. A few days later, in her Independence Day address from the ramparts of the Red Fort, she singled out industrialists and businessmen who had the nerve to talk of worker indiscipline while continuing to make big profits and draw fat salaries.”²⁴ By proposing

the immediate nationalization of the major banks, which was not favoured by the old guard she converted her personal struggle for supremacy in the Congress into an ideological one. The party manifesto of 1970 elections promised a genuine radical programme of economic and social development, upholding the interest of the small farmer and the landless labourer and of the small entrepreneur against the big capitalists. The betterment of the SCs/STs, OBCs and the protection of the minorities was assured. Urdu language was promised its legitimate place which it had been denied. While promising a strong and stable government, people were asked to support the fight against the dark and evil forces of right-wing reactionaries which were intent upon destroying the very base of our democratic and socialist objective.²⁵ However, what she professed was not what she practised. The manifesto was more to attack the old guard as a strategy than a long-term measure for social transformation. Her election campaigns were impressive. She was able to mesmerize crowds with a manifesto of the kind. "That the rich had been humbled looked like the assurance that the poor would be honoured. The instant poverty removal slogan was an economic absurdity. Psychologically and politically, for that reason, it was however a decisive asset in a community at war with reason and rationality"²⁶, wrote a journalist. She won 352 seats in a Parliament of 518 seats with the Opposition reduced to insignificance. Her victory, of course, helped her to act decisively on the abolition of privy purses.

However, as far as the poor were concerned, there was no radical shift in their lives. A new class of entrepreneurs and rural producers emerged. The Green Revolution had already profited the rural elites. Land reforms did not take place. Communal tensions did not cease. While consumption goods were easily available during her regime, basic essentials were not available. More than 40 per cent of the population lived below the poverty line. The extent of disparity in spite of the socialist slogans was too large in basic essentials of food, clothing, housing and employment. The big industrial and commercial houses still dominated the economic world. Workers were not associated with the management of industries. The much-

advertised programme of fixing ceiling on land and urban property was shelved. There is one theory that was making the rounds that the conservative and non-progressive elements in the Congress party, the Constitution and the Supreme Court were acting as defenders of the rights of the privileged. Fighting against those forces was a herculean task. They were holding up socialistic progress. There were others who said that with such massive support and the support of Left parties, if she was not able to move ahead, it is because Indira Gandhi was not sincere. Her socialism was a device to hoodwink the people. Another section was conscious of her responsibilities as president of the party and the Prime Minister of the country of taking the party and the government with her and the growing factionalism and fissiparous tendency among the Congress leaders. With defections in the party and other national concerns of war against Pakistan, the turmoil in Punjab, problems in Assam and North-East, she must have been so busy that the socialist progress suffered. In spite of the imposition of Emergency, as a daughter of Jawaharlal Nehru she was born and bred in a democratic and libertarian atmosphere. She did wield tremendous power in the Cabinet and Parliament. And yet she was not in a position to force her way in an authoritarian manner. Democracy demanded conciliation, compromise and accommodation of opposite views and that could have worked as a restraint. After the Emergency, she had made herself much more the prisoner of democratic processes. She also must have realized that most of those whom she relied on to implement the policies and the bureaucracy were not committed to the doctrine of socialism. Whatever may be the explanations, in spite of progressive steps on the abolition of privy purses and nationalization of banks, Indira Gandhi did not strengthen the weak and weaken the hold of the elite.

d. Rajiv Gandhi and Liberalization

On the advice of some senior members of the Congress, Rajiv Gandhi, her son, took over as Prime Minister after her assassination. In the Eighth General elections held in 1984, the Congress party won the largest-ever majority. With youth and enthusiasm, he was expected

to provide dynamism to the country and work to transform Indian economy as a modern economy. Economically, it is only after 1985 that the official policy of the Government of India recognized the need for liberalizing and opening the economy. But the total transition took place in 1991 due to the economic crisis. Under Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and his successors, the national and state-level governments liberalized licensing requirements and eventually rescinded rules on foreign ownership, while taking steps to scale down government market share in a number of high-technology markets. One could even say, it was even the end of liberal democracy. The country was opened up not only to national capitalists but foreign capital as well. Multinational firms began to re-enter India in the late 1980s and the early 1990s, as the government encouraged private enterprise and international sales in its search for foreign exchange. India began to open its economy to the world. With great skills in parliamentary manoeuvres, Narasimha Rao, who took over as Prime Minister in 1991, completely gave up the liberal democratic model and ventured into the market model of democracy. The country's elite were in favour of forging a nexus with international capital.

9. MODEL OF DEVELOPMENT

Another reason why we failed to transform India into a socialist economy was due to the model of development that was implemented. The model was Western, industrial, capitalistic and technological that could not include all. Though agriculture was said to be a priority, what really took place was rapid industrialization by setting up new public enterprises in areas such as metals, minerals, machines, chemical industries, fuel, power and transport through direct investment by the state. Quick and fast industrialization was considered as a key for poverty amelioration, which only provided greater impetus to the industrial class for satisfaction of their greed. A Planning Commission was set up as an expert body relatively independent of the Central government, as a think-tank for defining the goals and strategies of development and to carry out investment in planning. Members of the commission were experts on capitalist

economy without any knowledge of the rural economy and the people. As a response to the food crisis of mid-1960, a strategy for the increase of food production through state subsidy for irrigation, seeds and fertilizers and government support for minimum foodgrain prices was formulated. The strategy relied heavily on the enterprise of larger farmers and was tried out in the irrigated zones of Punjab, Haryana and Western UP. With the Green Revolution, a new class of rich farmers became players in national politics. Though the idea of increasing food production was a wise project, the outcome was not the improvement in the lives of ordinary farmers but a creation of wealthy farmers who became politically assertive for their rights. With Nehru, state socialism came to mean the central executive structures of government playing the pivotal role.

With the emergence of Indira Gandhi, things changed. She believed more in centralization than de-centralization in order to have a control over the national administration. The welfare packages were now targeted towards specific groups of the population such as SCs, STs, minorities, workers or women and delivered to produce an impression that they were gifts of the Central leadership, especially of the leader, Indira Gandhi. The traditional pattern of Congress support – alliance of urban elites and minority groups and SCs/STs – was strengthened during this period. The populism of Indira Gandhi's schemes was far more centralized, statist and focused on a single leader. Rajiv Gandhi as a young leader attempted to project an image of change. He promised fewer government controls, liberal imports and greater reliance on the private sector, promoting a liberal agenda. The mobilization that had taken place during the Green Revolution was of rich peasants turning into capitalist farmers and demanding greater state support for agricultural production and marketing. The policy initiated by Rajiv Gandhi of promoting the private and capitalist sectors has been intensified by his successors. The model of development that the country now has is liberal and capitalist that promotes the interests of individuals and the capitalists and not the mass of the poor and the marginalized. There were no plans right from the beginning to mobilize local resources for local development. The poor were to be objects of planning and not subjects in development.

10. THE BOURGEOIS IN INDIA

What is clear is that power in India has been shared by industrialists, landlords, bureaucrats, managers and the intellectual elite since independence. They were never in favour of mass participation in development. What they expected was to strengthen their hold on the polity and society. According to Kaviraj²⁷ the ruling bloc in India contained three distinct social groups – the bourgeois, particularly its aggressive and expanding monopoly stratum, the landed elites and the bureaucratic managerial elite. While the Marxists asserted that power in India was exercised by an alliance of two dominant classes – the bourgeois as a whole and the landlords, Kaviraj adds the third group of the bureaucratic-managerial-intellectual elite as a separate and distinct element of the ruling coalition. While not adding the entire administration in the ruling bloc, Kaviraj includes high bureaucratic elite and industrial management group. Why does he add them? This class may not be bourgeois in a direct productive sense but culturally and ideologically, it was affiliated to the bourgeois order. It is this class that has worked against social transformation and worked out a theory of capitalism by giving it a more reformist and universal form. With the growth of the public sector, there were irritants and conflicts between the bureaucratic elites in the government and the bourgeois entrepreneurial classes. It is this class that mediated crucially between the classes within the ruling coalition, promoting the entrepreneurial classes. Pranab Bardhan identified the bourgeoisie as the capitalists, the rich farmers and the bureaucracy, competing and aligning with one another within a political space supervised by a relatively autonomous state.²⁸ Achin Vanaik, while endorsing the dominant model, emphasized in particular the relative political strength of the agrarian bourgeoisie due to their ability to mobilize rural electoral support.²⁹

CONCLUSION

There are structural forces in Indian society who have not allowed transformation of the social order. State policies increasingly have

come to reflect the interests of the dominant classes. Even the Green Revolution was initiated by the landed gentry who became a force to reckon with after the revolution. The rich farmers who benefit from government price support and input subsidy programmes, the industrial capitalists who have learned to turn to their advantage even the industrial licensing system, the professional bureaucrats who have obtained additional income as a result of their corrupt ways have been responsible for the tuning of the system to their own interests than transformation of society. Policies of heavy industrialization through centralized, economic planning were ill-adapted for India's economic resources and to the basic needs of the people. Social transformation needed de-centralization of the economy so that the people of the locality manage their economy and its resources. But then if that model was to be adopted, the capitalists would not gain. The bureaucrats would not have got employment since the village would manage the economy. The landed gentry would have to disappear with land handed over to the tillers of the soil. There was no way the state could resist the hold of the elites on the government. Instead of transforming the economy, what the elected representatives did was to utilize politics to gain control over the local economies. Organization of political parties required capital. The bourgeoisie in the rural areas were willing to part with capital provided the governing class was willing to protect their interests at the regional level. Politics became a convenient method to protect bourgeoisie interests at the local level, leaving the peasants, workers and the labourers at the mercy of the zamindars. While the landlords supported politicians, politics too was transformed by the support it provided for the landed gentry.

Behind the success of political parties, there are both the rural and the urban bourgeois. With the decline of the Congress after 1967, many more parties entered the fray. But all parties did not make it to power. Even if some made it to power, they did not share equal power. When a party demanded more than its due, the party leading the coalition was not able to offer all that was demanded in coalition politics. If any group was seriously dissatisfied, it normally decided to leave the coalition. Sometimes, this may have an impact

on governance, leading even to the fall of the government. But various members of the coalition demanded their pound of flesh and in the process, strengthened their own and the interests of the class they came from. Sometimes, even being in the Opposition was found beneficial since with defections in political parties and the parties losing majority during the middle of the year, the doors were kept open for the Opposition to join the coalition. Those in governance sometimes became members of the Opposition and those in the Opposition sometimes joined the ruling group.

If Nehru thought that construction of a modern, relatively independent capitalism required a reformist and statist bourgeois programme, Indira Gandhi's approach was more pragmatic. She reduced even the Planning Commission, which was meant for long-term planning into short-term accounting. There were capitalists who were placing pressures on the government. Gradually, the government allowed privatization of industry and other economic activities, reducing public investment. Rajiv Gandhi and others who came after started plans for extending this policy of liberalization towards greater foreign collaboration in order to obtain more sophisticated technology under pressure from these capitalist forces. One of the ways in which the choice for private capital was made in preference to state capital was by attacking the public sector. And this is what exactly took place since the regime of Rajiv Gandhi. Not that there was no criticism on state ownership prior to that. But the rhetoric and the attacks became more vocal. The public sector came to be attacked for inefficiency. Much of the inefficiency might have been due to the interference and wasteful exploitation of its facilities by the politicians and the bureaucrats. But it was important to attack the public sector to promote the private. The earlier strategy of institutional changes for agricultural growth was given up in spite of more than 70 per cent and more of people depending on agriculture in the country. The government under Indira Gandhi was partially responsible for the breakdown of ground rules of political behaviour by encouraging defections, bending of constitutional norms and renegotiating some of the fundamental definitions of Indian political life. All these maneuvers cost

economically. With encouragement to rich farmers and the regional bourgeois, there were pressures by the state for regional allocation of heavy industries. Congress had to yield since it had absorbed a number of regional leaders. Sometimes, the Congress played one regionalism against another as it also did with religious communities. The clever manoeuvres undermined the basis of nationalism.

There were concessions granted to religious communities as common individual citizenship was undermined. To state that the future of a minority group is only safe with the party in power is to continue with the insecure existence for the groups. The government even allowed subversion of secularism by invoking the principle of “sarva dharma samanvaya”, entirely incompatible with democratic secularism, where religion belongs to the private space. The inability of the Congress to denounce communal riots after the assassination of Indira Gandhi gave an encouragement to the forces of Hindu communalism. To provide equal respect to all religions, even TV channels began providing public space for religious celebration of different communities. Thus, the state came to subvert secularism along with the communalists. Why was it done? It was part of competitive politics. While the communalists with the support of the capitalist class used capitalism to mobilize vote-banks in the name of culture, the different political parties with the fear of decline in their vote-banks resorted to communal tactics. Communalism was a distraction to further provide impetus to capital.

Rational reflections on the earlier policies were given up. Electoral power came to mean everything. It provided more avenues for accumulation. Capitalists in nexus with the politicians created a crisis. This crisis was structural. A crisis is structural if it arises from inside the basic laws of movement of a system rather from externalities. The pressure on the system was so great that the poor were kept where they were. The land reforms did not take place. Richer farmers took over dominance where Green Revolution flourished. The bureaucrats were strongly aligned to the establishment. The crucial group was the managerial elite. When the public sector was expanding there was some conflict between the entrepreneurial class and the bureaucratic elite. Once again, it

is these elite who mediated between the government and the industrial class whenever there were conflicts and helped the entrepreneurial class.

EVALUATION

“Antonio Gramsci recognized that social power (which includes the political) is not a simple matter of domination on the one hand and subordination or resistance on the other. Rather than imposing their will, dominant groups within democratic societies generally govern with a good degree of consent from the people they rule. The maintenance of that consent is dependent upon an incessant repositioning of the relationship between rulers and the ruled. In order to maintain its authority, a ruling power must be sufficiently flexible to respond to new circumstances and to the changing wishes of those it rules. It must be able to reach into the minds and lives of its subordinates, exercising its power as what appears to be a free expression of their own interests and desires. In the process, the ruling coalition will have to take on at least some of the values of those it attempts to lead thereby shaping its own ideals and imperatives.”³⁰ Did the Congress and its leaders promise democratic socialism as to win over the people without a deep desire to work for liberty, equality and fraternity? According to Gramsci, acquiring of power is an ongoing process and it cannot be achieved once and for all. That is why those who govern need new strategies, new slogans and new expressions. Consent is difficult to generate when there is a conflict between the desires of the dominant class and the subjugated. The negotiation between groups takes place in the sphere of Parliament, at work with trade unions and workers, with peasants and farmers, even at the level of the family. It also takes place within culture. Unlike the Marxists, for Gramsci, culture is not simply the expression of underlying economic relations but the organization of politics and economy in a relationship of mutual exchange with one another, a constantly circulating and shifting network of influence. This is how hegemony is different from domination.

“The working class can become the leading and dominant class to the extent that it succeeds in creating a system of class alliances

which allows it to mobilize the majority of the working population against capitalism and the bourgeois state.”³¹ The Independence struggle was not a struggle that could be purely posed in terms of economic inequality. In order to lead other groups within the working population the leaders of the freedom struggle had to understand the issues that affected the people of the country and pretend to make them their own. A truly hegemonic group has to make a large part of its subaltern worldview its own. In the process, the leading group may change since its narrow factionalism is been translated into a much broader constituency. The basic apparatus of governmental administration in independent India was inherited from the colonial period. It consisted of a small elite cadre belonging to the All India Services. The members of the Indian Civil Service of the British Raj were retained after independence. A new service called the Indian Administrative Service modeled on the ICS was constituted as its successor in 1947. The British ideology of a professional army under the control of the political leadership was maintained.

The state in India is a bourgeois state in three mutually supportive senses, says Sudipta Kaviraj.³² When we say a state is bourgeois, it means that the state is dominated by the capitalist class or a coalition of classes dominated by the bourgeois is the first sense. The second sense is a reference to the bourgeois form of the state. The parliamentary system of democracy is considered as a historically bourgeois form of government. And lastly, the state expresses and ensures the domination of the bourgeois and helps in capitalist reproduction and a subordinate reproduction of other types of economic relations by imposing on the economy a deliberate order of capitalist planning. The bourgeois state performs these functions through the mechanism of the state with centralized planning when the capital is not able to perform through the market. When we examine the structures of the Indian state, the bourgeois character is evident in its legislative, executive and judicial institutions of governance. Right to property was a fundamental right in the original constitution. The role of planning was central in the Nehruvian era and later in setting economic targets in a way compatible with the bourgeois developmental perspective.

The issue of leadership since independence throws up a number of issues that provided impetus to capitalism. It is Nehru's leadership that granted the Congress movement-turned-Congress party as a leading group to make choices and to act collectively. The party gave an impression all through the freedom struggle of being engaged with the culture of subalterns, treating seriously those practices and values that are meaningful to them. But India's political formation held together uneasy bedfellows. Different strategies were deployed to maintain such alliances. This incorporation of the subalterns into the worldview of a dominant group can get into problems if the ruling group is forced to grant too many economic and ideological concessions. Otherwise, it is even possible for the subaltern group to develop the necessary agency to challenge the authority of the dominant group. If that happens, the leading group will have to go out of all recognition. Congress politics involved a broad coalition of the centrist and even leftist forces. But Congress was never a party of the oppressed though the oppressed, thought so. In its electoral appeal, it called on the people from business, industry, Zamindars and others. The Congress experienced transformism as it switched from being a hegemonic bloc to being a bloc hegemonised by capitalists and Zamindars. Of course, any ruling group that asks for consent and yet which cannot give voice to the aspirations of those in whose name it rules will not survive indefinitely. In order to maintain power, the Congress party had to be constantly alert to the volatile demands of its subalterns in terms of rhetoric and to the shifting context within which it exerted its authority. Any social group has to exercise leadership before it wins power. Once it wins power, it has to learn to lead as well by adjusting at least through loud rhetoric to the aspirations and will of the people.

The question is, why did the people accept the Congress party as theirs? One answer is that the party was a part of the freedom struggle. Since the movement obtained freedom under the leadership of Gandhi and statesmanship of Nehru, it was felt that the party will be able to ensure food for the hungry, adequate healthcare, clothes to the naked and houses to the homeless. The Constitution provided a number of other rights including the right to vote, to contest

elections and even to regularly change their government. People were made to believe that they govern themselves. Electoral process was one way of co-option. The reluctant groups unwilling to be co-opted and assimilated were subjugated through recourse to armed forces. A good example is the way the state dealt with the people of the North-East. Leadership involves combining the level of force with that of consent.

If consent is organized through civil society, then coercion is the responsibility of the political society. Political society is the set of apparatuses which legally enforce discipline on those groups who do not give their consent during a normative period and which dominate the whole society when consent is broken down. The party, in fact, ruthlessly worked against any threat to its hegemony through violence against Naxalites, People's War Groups, Maoists and other extremist and centrist groups. Subaltern groups and individual groups actively give their consent to the use of force and express their consent when such force is presented as in the interest of citizens. The Indian Constitution has been transformed into more of a legal document of the lawyers, by the lawyers and for the lawyers. The Indian capitalist class exercises control by a strategy of coalition through the state-directed process of economic growth. Brain Barry in his book "Liberty and Justice" says that there are three features that define liberal states. These are religious toleration, freedom of the press and abolition of servile civil status. Modern liberal institutions may be seen as an extension of these elements. Religious toleration has come to mean that people should be free to make a choice about their faith or religion. Freedom of the press has come to include freedom of expressions of all kinds. No servile status has come to mean equal citizenship to all irrespective of class, caste and gender. But aren't these rights of the bourgeoisie? Justice and liberty should mean that there are measures put in place to include the excluded. And these measures should not be one of profession, but practice. In the democracy of India, while liberalism has remained a sacred creed, democracy as participative, both in the realm of politics and economics, has had no history.

NOTES

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CHAPTER 4

FROM LIBERAL DEMOCRACY TO NEO-LIBERALISM

Capitalism is greed and it is greed that led to the amassing of wealth by the elites since independence. If with independence we took to liberal democratic practices in the name of socialism, strengthening the hold of the national elites on polity and society, from 1985 onwards the national elites were not sufficiently satisfied with their accumulation. They wanted more. There were more and more pressures from the bourgeoisie to privatize for a linkage with global capital. Mere concentration for accumulation within the country was too restrictive for them. The state and public sector were attacked for inefficiency and corruption and the cry was for the private sector to intervene and save the situation. It was a conspiracy that worked. The average citizen who experienced daily delays, corruption and red-tapism was made to believe that the attacks and criticisms on the state and its institutions were true. They were unable to see the designs of capital beyond their statements. The Indian capital saw greater possibilities for accumulation if they moved beyond the nation into global capital. With conditions ripe and acceptance high for freeing the markets, the plan of the bourgeoisie was given shape.

PASSIVE REVOLUTION OF CAPITAL

Political economists of the Marxist school have characterized the phase from 1950 to 1985 as the phase of passive revolution of capital. Antonio Gramsci spoke of the passive capital as one in which the new claimants to power, lacking the social strength to launch a full-scale assault on the old dominant classes, opt for a path in which the demands of a new society are satisfied by small doses, legally, in

a reformist manner. This is done in such a way that the political and economic positions of the old feudal classes are not destroyed - agrarian reforms are avoided and especially the popular masses are prevented from going through the political experience of a fundamental social transformation.¹ In the Indian case, Partha Chatterjee looks upon passive revolution as a process by which the largest possible nationalist alliance was built up against the colonial power. The purpose was to form an independent nation state. This involved the creation of a series of alliances between the bourgeoisie and other dominant classes and the mobilization under this leadership, of mass support from the subordinate classes.² Integral to passive revolution is the co-option of leadership from below; its integration into the dominant project. The freedom movement and Nehru's concept of "modern India" brought the subalterns into the agenda of the bourgeoisie. Capital was passive during this period in the sense that the state initiated, supported and sustained capital through the Planning Commission. The objective of the commission was to plan for the country and transform India into a modern industrial economy. Creation of vast industrial infrastructure and making the nation self-sufficient in food through a process of technological transformation in agriculture were to be the prime objectives of the Planning Commission. Instead of terming the exercise a process towards socialism, it would have been better to have termed it a form of "state capitalism". It was a hegemonic consensus on which there was agreement among the bourgeoisie. "The characteristic features of the passive revolution were the relative autonomy of the state as a whole from the bourgeoisie and the landed elites; the supervision of the state by an elected political leadership, a permanent bureaucracy, and an independent judiciary; the negotiation of class interests through a multi-party electoral system; a protectionist regime discouraging the entry of foreign capital and promoting import substitution; the leading role of the state sector in heavy industry, infrastructure, transport and telecommunications; mining, banking and insurance; state control over the private manufacturing sector through a regime of licensing; and the relatively greater influence of industrial capitalists over the Central government and that of the landed elites on the state governments."³

MODERNITY AND DEVELOPMENT

The two words that were bandied around were “modernity” and “development”. The ordinary people of the country did not fully understand the implications of the terms. For them, modernity meant better access to food, clothing and shelter. By development, they thought it was all about better roads, better irrigation, right to education and employment. They must have opined that modern India would be a technologically powerful country where their basic conditions of poverty would be addressed. Modernity was understood as development of a scientific spirit through which India would get rid of its caste distinctions and move into the world of egalitarianism. For the bourgeoisie, the words had a different meaning. Both the words symbolized that India would adopt a Western model of development – capitalist in nature, technological in essence, industrial in action and create the necessary infrastructure to transform the country where they would be able to have access to a higher quality of life with more than enough to consume and then to accumulate. There was no reference in the terms to improving the life and livelihood of the poor. The translation of this vision would be the task of the Planning Commission, a non-political body of experts under the care of the state. This was an acceptable goal and vision to different interest groups. The legitimizing principle was provided by the Nehruvian ideal of “modern India”.

The economy no doubt grew during this period. But the masses did not participate or benefit from the fruits of growth as they should have. Why did policies fail? They failed due to deliberate attempts by the bourgeoisie class to avoid economic policies that were radically opposed to their interests. They used the term modernization all the time. But the modern is both a sector of economy and a class of people consisting of the bourgeoisie as a whole - the landlords, the industrialists and the bureaucratic-managerial-intellectual elite. When conflicts arose between the bourgeoisie and the people, they were negotiated or responded to in two different ways. When economic demands were strong, the state offered them some share in the spoils of the state. When non-economic demands like caste, social and religious issues were brought up, these were dealt with economic

terms by providing reservation, special packages to backwards regions and states and offer of subsidies. However, there were no attempts to change the basic socio-economic structure of society to make it inclusive.

The passive state of capital continued as long as a direct or active revolution of capital was not found feasible. However the capitalist class benefitted positively from the passive revolution of capital. "The particular interests of the 'modern' sector were to shift on to the state the burden of defraying the costs of producing a general consent for their particular project. The state sector, identified as the embodiment of the general, must bear these social costs of constructing the framework of legitimacy for the passive revolution of capital."⁴ As long as the state met the cost for infrastructure and the establishment of industries, the bourgeoisie during this period felt satisfied. Deepak Nayyar observed that the political class in India from 1947 to 1966 maintained a long-term perspective, a political consensus and an economic approach that accommodated the interests of the poor. However, the political process became subordinated to the economic goals to be achieved. "Independence meant freedom and sovereignty for the nation as a collective of people rather than for individuals who together made up the people."⁵ In reality, the individuals benefitted more than the collective of people and the political processes were geared for the economic domination of the bourgeoisie.

The bourgeoisie after independence had to balance both the need for accumulation and at the same time be able to provide legitimacy to the government. While maintaining class interests, it was essential for the group not to contradict the professed goals of the freed polity. Since industrialization was equated with development for all, it was easy to arrive at a consensus at the economic level. The voices from below were accommodated with rhetoric and promises, by words than deeds. With industrialization and impetus to Green Revolution with technological changes in agriculture, there was a consolidation of upper caste, rich land-owning community though an impression was created that the rural poor were on the road to progress. As far as the poor were concerned, land reforms did not take place to the

promised extent. There were starvation deaths. Illiteracy was not eradicated. There was frustration among the impoverished. A section of the “aam aadmi” took to armed struggles in the country and social tensions increased.

ACTIVE REVOLUTION OF CAPITAL

The behaviour of capital changed from 1985 but more drastically from 1991. The passive revolution of capital gave way to active revolution of capital. Economists have selected 1985 as a watershed year, delimiting the two stages in the development of capital though the educated Indians hold the year 1991. The reason why 1985 was chosen was for several reasons – primarily political – the election of Rajiv Gandhi as Prime Minister of India with the mandate of bringing India closer to the modernity of the new millennium. The second reason is more economic since it is only after 1985 that official policy recognized the need for liberalizing and opening the economy. The collapse of the regime of Rajiv Gandhi signaled the end of the complex structure of accommodation and negotiation between the grassroots and the top political leadership as well as between the centre and the states. The transition to the opening of the economy and the dismantling of constraint needed the assistance of the 1991 economic crisis.⁶ The characteristic features of this stage according to Partha Chatterjee, are “dismantling of the licence regime; greater entry of foreign capital and foreign consumer goods; and the opening of the sectors such as telecommunications, transport, infrastructure, mining, banking, insurance, and the like, to private capital. This led to a change in the very composition of the capitalist class. Instead of the earlier dominance of a few monopoly houses drawn from the traditional merchant backgrounds and protected by the licence and import substitution regime, there were now many more entrants into the capitalist class at all levels, and much greater mobility within its formation... There have been several political changes as a result. First, there is a distinct ascendancy in the relative power of the corporate capitalist class as compared to the landed elites... Second, the dismantling of the licence regime has opened up a new field of competition between state governments to woo capitalist investment,

both domestic and foreign...Third, although the state continues to be the most important mediating apparatus in negotiating between conflicting class interests, the autonomy of the state in relation to the dominant classes appears to have been re-defined."⁷ While the power of the corporate class increased, this increase of power was not achieved through the mechanism of electoral mobilization.

There was a change in the very composition of the capitalist class with more entrants into the class at all levels as foreign capital flowed into the country without any fear. The bourgeoisie in India found the costs of sustaining the state-centric capitalism too expensive with lack of benefits. The process of state planning, protected markets and maintenance of state bureaucracy were found to be too costly. The liberalization of the Indian economy was a result of those pulls and pressures. Dissatisfied with state regulations, these vested interest forces called for de-regulations and the integration of the economy with the global. For greater profits and accumulation, global capital was the way. In political terms, globalization created a global order with increasing denationalization of the nation-state and its sovereignty. In the process, it steadily and critically changed the nature of the state.

THE POST-REFORMS PERIOD

What exactly did the reforms of 1991 do? There are those who claim that the reforms brought in 'liberalization, privatization and globalization'. It does not take much intellectual effort to see that it was not a transformation from a Soviet – type, centrally-controlled economy to an economy run by the market. India never had a largely state-owned, centrally controlled economy, and the market was quite active throughout India's long economic history. Nor was it a case of privatization. Even in 1991, over 80 per cent of the gross domestic product was generated in a regulated private sector. The essential feature of the reforms was, thus, the opening up of the Indian economy to the rest of the world, in terms of trade, but essentially in terms of foreign capital. What has been its impact on growth rates? Not particularly striking in the first decade. In 2002-03, it was a dismal 3.8 per cent. From then on, as is well known, it has

been a case of “India Shining” – growth rates of close to 9 per cent almost every year, even 9.7 per cent in 2006-07, suggesting that a double-digit growth rate is both possible and necessary “to get rid of chronic poverty, ignorance and disease which still afflict millions of our people” as the Prime Minister stated in mid-2008.

Balakrishnan⁸, however, has some significant comments to offer about the pattern of growth in the post-reforms period. Examining the sectorial patterns of growth, he points out that the share of agriculture in GDP sharply declined, that of industry had barely increased and the biggest share is that of services. The growth rate maintained a high level mainly because of the contribution of services, resulting largely from “the growth of wages and salaries in public administration” and the sharply rising remunerations in corporate enterprises. The public investment in agriculture fell from over Rs 12,000 crore in 1980-81 to around Rs.6,800 crore in 1997-98 (both in 1999-2000 prices), after which it began to pick up slowly. There has been a fall in public support for R&D in agriculture as well. The result has been a fall in agricultural production, with foodgrains production barely keeping up with population growth since 1991. Food prices have also been rising, particularly in the more recent years. Apart from being harsh on common people, it also acts as a damper on the expansion of the market for goods of mass consumption, thus retarding overall growth as well. Agricultural expansion led by an increase in productivity is a precondition for sustained growth, and surely for inclusive growth. To make that possible there has to be greater emphasis on education and the raising of skills of workers. Measures to increase agricultural productivity and to improve education and skills have not been receiving the attention they deserve, and this neglect may prevent growth from being sustained. Since 1991, the contribution of registered manufacturing has not only declined but is also below that of unregistered manufacturing. Then there are the “sectors” recognized as “public” and “private”, the latter further divided into “corporate” and “household”. What is significant is the fact that “households” account for a very high proportion of domestic capital formation, ranging from 30 to over 50 per cent during the period from 1960-61

to 1990-91, with the share being 40 per cent and more during those 20 years while the share of the corporates exceeded 5 per cent only twice during the entire period. Since agriculture still has close to 60 per cent of the workforce, the ownership and use of land must have a bearing on the growth of the economy. That is why the Five Year Plans of the Nehru era repeatedly emphasized the role of institutional transformation, especially land reforms, as a precondition for equitable growth.

STRUCTURAL ADJUSTMENT PROGRAMMES

The country had to resort to structural adjustment programmes to re-structure its economy to be a part of the global economic system. That meant the country's politics and economics would not anymore be independent and will be controlled by global forces. The bourgeoisie till now who worked with local and state economy moved to establish a nexus with global corporations. Multinational and transnational corporations were allowed to do business in India. Neo-liberalism or globalization is the rule of the corporations. It is through these corporations that India is integrated into the global economy. The states have to follow the path set by the World Trade Organization and other international financial institutions like the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, which are no democratic bodies and are aligned with global capital. It is strange that the neo-colonial powers have pursued their actions in the name of the United Nations by using two UN agencies – the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund – that were established after World Wars to assist nations for economic re-construction and are now fully controlled without any pretext of democracy. The other trap on the economic front has come to be known as 'multilateral aid' through international organizations - the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank once again with the International Finance Corporation and the International Development Association. They have the U.S. capital as their major backing. These agencies force the would-be borrowers to submit to various offensive conditions. The nations that are made to borrow have to supply information about their economies, submit their policy and plans to review by

the World Bank and accept agency supervision of their use of loans with strict conditionalities.

NEO-LIBERALISM AS A NEW PHASE OF CAPITALISM

Economically, neo-liberalism represented the new emergent phase of capitalism. The countries of the world are transformed into a single economic unit, cutting across national boundaries. The world is governed and controlled by a few global corporations and international financial institutions, altering the economy, modes of production and human existence on the planet. At the onset of the 1990s, when India took to free markets, there were 37,000 transnational corporations with 170,000 foreign affiliates.⁹ With competitions, acquisitions and mergers, their numbers may have decreased. But they control more than 70 per cent of the world trade and dominate the production and distribution of several goods.¹⁰ The most important aspect of neo-liberalism is privatization. "In former days, one billion-dollar multinationals used to be objects of awe and of some amount of suspicion; governments were keen on exercising control over them through anti-monopoly legislations. But this is no longer the case. Governments now want them. Billion dollar transnationals are no longer under threat from governments' restrictions. The threat comes from somewhere else, from the competitors, from the fear that the transnational corporations have that they may actually be too small to survive in the global markets. Billion dollars are no longer enough. Top managers feel that they need tens of billions, hundreds of billion, preferably trillions!"¹¹ In their investments, these corporations are selective and cautious. They venture into producing those products that would give them returns without much risk.

These corporations, which were at one time viewed with great fear as a manifestation of imperialism are now considered as the embodiment of prosperity and modernity. The state and the bourgeoisie in India continue to be keen to attract investment and technology of the transnational enterprises to increase the comparative advantages of their economy and gain markets, though these economic relations may have nothing to do with comparative

advantages at all. After all, international trade is a sub-product of investments, alliances and agreements among international corporations. It is no more a market for the people as a whole but a market for a class. The situation is such that it is practically impossible for a nation to have a globally competitive export sector without being associated with some transnational enterprise. With lack of national capital, huge rates of unemployment, high demographic growth, raw materials export with unprofitable prices, India's elite sought productive transnational investment at a cost. These corporations exert a strong influence on the political sector as well through battalions of lobbyists. While they enjoy increasing power among countries, they assume no responsibility. They frequently generate unemployment, cause environmental damage, produce what people do not need, create artificial markets and violate rights of the local people. What they are obsessed is with profits and accumulation.

ROLE OF THE STATE

States are directed to assist in the profit-making functions of the big monopolies. Once these corporations take on economic power, they in no time influence politics and government. If individual politicians do not listen to corporate houses, he may even be dropped from the ministry or may not even get a ticket for the next election from his party because corporate houses do not allow any politician to continue if policies are not made in their favour. We have instances of ministers being dropped or individuals inducted into the ministry because of pressure from corporate houses. This does not mean the states have become weak. On the other hand, it means that the states have accepted, very often without the consent of the people to work in nexus with monopoly capital. While politicians are promoted by capitalists, the capitalists in turn receive the favours and blessings of the state. Here is an example how the corporations invested a huge sum for the passing of a Bill on Foreign Direct Investment in retail, which they did not succeed in December, 2011. Devinder Sharma, writing in the Deccan Herald on December 10, 2011, says, "The top 10 MNC retail companies eyeing the Indian

market have reportedly sunk in several hundred crores of rupees... The orchestrated media campaign, which may only be visible to a discerning eye, is actually the handiwork of what is called the corporate lobbyists. Sharp, aggressive and of course always carrying bags of money, they move in the corridors of power. They hobnob with ministers, politicians, economists, and media personalities, 'educating' them for instance on how and why India needs to invite big retail to tide over its unemployment and agrarian crisis. They plan diplomatic evenings, organise industry conclaves and summits, plan seminars and conferences, and also demarcate media strategies. In the United States, corporate lobbying is legalised. In India, it operates undercover and under different names. But both perform the same job – influencing public policy and crucial economic decisions – and in turn undermine democracy. Crucial decisions in agribusiness, fertiliser, seed, farm machinery, animal husbandry, dairy, energy, science and technology, and retail – areas that affect country's food security – are also influenced by corporate lobbying. Crores of rupees have been spent over the past few years by some of the big multinational corporations to seek an entry into India. What may appear to be economic decisions taken by the government often turn out to be the result of intense lobbying by foreign companies. But collectively, the top 10 multinational retail companies eyeing the Indian market have reportedly sunk in several hundred crores in the past few years. According to media reports, coffee shop giant Starbucks had also been lobbying in India seeking 100 per cent FDI in single brand retail. As per a disclosure statement it made before the American Senate, the company had spent more than Rs 1 crore in the first six months of 2011 for 'market opening initiatives in India'. Not only Wal-Mart and Starbucks, a number of foreign companies are lobbying hard to find a foothold in the Indian market. These include financial services major Morgan Stanley, New York Life Insurance and Prudential Financial. The financial services companies have already gained with the approval granted to 100 per cent FDI in single-brand retail. In addition, technology companies Intel, chemical giant Dow Chemical, pharmaceutical major Pfizer, telecom companies AT&T, Alcatel-Lucent are also engaged in

intense lobbying. There are a number of other furniture brands like Ikea and garment retailers like GAP which would benefit from the decision to open up for single-brand retail. In other words, crores of rupees are being spent by foreign companies to influence public policy and the decision-making process. Not many of us realize that the debate we see on the television or the articles we see in support of the foreign companies are often supported with lobbying money. In fact, lobbying is also influencing academic research, which is a very sophisticated way of influencing public policies.”¹² The Bill could not become a law since most of the Opposition parties opposed it for political reasons and not ideological. The government is determined to get the Bill passed sooner than later. India has been one of the investment-friendly countries for the corporates. We have become the second-most attractive Foreign Direct Investment destination in the world. The reason for their investment in retail is that in India the retail industry is large and generates more than 10 per cent of India’s GDP, only next to the agricultural sector. Our growth rate is getting bigger. The state has already created the required infrastructure knowledge, efficiency, quality, consumer awareness, dismantling of monopoly, transport and a wide range of choices for the foreign investment to flow. With a billion-strong population, India is acknowledged as a country for an increasing number of consumers with growing incomes.

IT IS NEO-COLONIALISM

This is pure neo-colonialism, colonialism in a new form. The reason for the retreat of colonialism was the emergence of socialism, the national liberation movements and the struggles of the peasants, farmers and workers for democracy. Though the Britishers had hoped to maintain their full colonial rule after the Second World War, “the widespread strikes and the powerful naval mutiny of 1946, when the sailors hoisted the united flags of the Indian National Congress, the Muslim League and the Communist Party, showed that the great country of nearly 500 million people was on the verge of a revolution. British arms were insufficient to hold down such a powerful force rising in revolt. It was to take 130,000 armed men to defeat a few

thousand guerillas in Malaya, a country of less than five million; clearly a war to maintain colonial rule in India was utterly out of question. The establishment of Indian Independence in 1947 was not a generous act by Britain, but the only choice open to her. In boasting about this concession, the British Government was only making a virtue out of a necessity.”¹³ It is not so much a question of the granting of Independence that worried the British. Of course if there was a way of not granting independence they would have preferred it. But they did want to prevent at all costs the emergence of Independent India with socialistic orientations. They wanted workers and peasants not to take over power. It was in their interest that a group of elites took over governance. Colonial powers retreat only when they are pushed out. Colonialism died. It is in the situation of dying colonialism that neo-colonialism appears as a major phenomenon. The colonial powers have turned from direct colonial rule to the indirect form of neo-colonialism. The ability of the imperialist powers to utilize neo-colonialist methods is a sign of the insufficient strength and maturity of the national liberation movement as well as of the insufficient unity among the forces arrayed against imperialism in India and on a world scale.

INTERESTS OF CAPITALISTS ARE AGAINST SOCIALISM

The colonial powers will do anything to prevent socialism. For the imperialist powers who had lost their colonies, there was an obligation to find new ways in which they could work to maintain the essence of their former influence and safeguard their interests. The leaders of India thrown up by the national movement were keen on a modern state, new industries, universities, towns and parliamentary institutions. It was a typical Western model of development aimed at strengthening and perpetuating the elite hold on both society and polity. The Western powers were quick to realize that they can have their influence by operating via the new social forces which have been thrown up into position of power by the national revolution. Before independence, sections of the local capitalist class were in co-operation with imperialism although the alliance primarily was with pre-capitalist forces. The imperialist

powers were concerned to maintain the feudal or semi-feudal structure of the colonies, treating them as agrarian hinterlands for their industrialized economies. With the change in situation, the Western powers were concerned above all to keep the former colonies from breaking out of the orbit of capitalism. These emerging nations were fully aware of the need for social transformation, but they were not too serious with a view to protect the interests of the bourgeoisie. The new leadership did not desire to face resistance for radical changes. As a result, the promised land reforms did not take off. Majority of the peasants remained without land. They were denied credit. They were too poor to buy machines, good quality seeds, chemical fertilizers and pesticides. The rich peasants employed wage labour. Former landlords became large-scale capitalist farmers.

PRESERVATION OF CAPITALIST INTERESTS

To preserve imperialist economic interests, two things are essential. The independent countries should remain under imperialist domination and at the same time, a degree of indigenous capitalism should develop within these countries. Given the competition between socialism and capitalism, the imperialist powers wished as much of India as possible to remain capitalist. The advance of socialism lowers their prestige. Economic aims are decisive elements of neo-colonialism. There are internal forces with which neo-colonialism aligned. Traders and speculators who feared the advent of socialism and wished to continue as middlemen of the big international monopolies, sections of the new elite and the new rich were the groups that were too keen to align. It is these powers that have influenced economic affairs in India and the countries of the Third World. One of the essential aims of neo-colonialism is to create a false bourgeoisie consciousness to put a break on the revolution and to enlarge the possibilities of the petty bourgeoisie as a neutralizer of the revolution. Social revolution thus did not take off at all in Independent India. There were reforms but they did not affect the basic socio-economic structures.

ROLE OF THE MEDIA

Globalization or neo-liberalism has been fully backed and promoted by the corporate media by changing the consciousness of people. The transnational and multinational corporations use the media to influence world opinion right from the state to the village. "90 per cent of the information and communication industries are presently controlled by the USA, the European Community and Japan. Of the 300 top-ranking firms, 144 are Americans, 80 West European and 49 Japanese. Of the top 75 media organizations, 39 are American, 25 West European and eight Japanese."¹⁴ This concentration is a threat to traditional societies like India and other third world countries since they would culturally uproot people in a far more devastating manner than under colonialism. With information, knowledge and consciousness in the hands of a small number of agents of the global economy, it becomes practically impossible for democratic states to resist the pressure of the media. With privatization of the information sector, the various news agencies, press, radio, television, education are largely influenced by the agents of neo-liberalism. Besides these propaganda devices, there are additional institutions such as libraries, information centers, social and economic institutes that have spread ideas and conceptions that support the ideology of the markets. People are constantly told that they need to tune to the new realities and that they cannot do without foreign capital.

MEDIA MONOPOLY

In globalization, mass media is monopolized by a handful of transnational and multinational conglomerates. Monopolies always pose a threat to multiculturalism, diversity, social welfare, public sense, local autonomy, freedoms of individuals and communities. Centralization, competition, uniformity, greed and profits are essential for monopolies. Relationships and communications are stretched across the globe to create an oligarchic and inter-connected world. Mass media cannot be separated from economy and politics. A capitalist economy creates capitalist media. Casino capitalism with

unregulated markets essentially needs media to further its cause of consumerism and profits and the media is managed in the way corporations would desire to use them, since they are instruments of corporations to push the corporate agenda. The wide coverage for issues like “Special Economic Zones”, “Indo-US Nuclear deal” and the entry of Wal-Mart in recent months in the country are examples of how the media functions. Media legitimizes politics as well. In terms of content, none of them reflect the lives of the ordinary people as long as the economy is dominated by the rule of the corporates. The value system portrayed and propagated is all corporate and commercial. If the ultimate purpose of globalization is to provide customers the choice of goods and products from anywhere in the world to suit their tastes and needs, that becomes possible only through the media and networks. The global media corporations provide the necessary advertisements for the global economy to create global tastes, all financed by the global corporations.

INDIVIDUALS ARE NOT FREE IN THE MEDIA

Individuals who join to work for the media are not free individuals to report and write what they would like. They are expected to report what the media want. This means that the corporations, with their affiliated political leanings, determine who and what makes the news and, more importantly, what doesn't. From the 1990s, with the emergence of the unipolar world, the international financial institutions have tightened their hold over the media. The WTO agreement of February 1997 on telecommunication services and information technology eliminated customer and other duties on information technology products by the year 2000 on a most favoured nation basis. That meant reduction of tariff to zero on a wide range of communications equipment. The most favoured nation clause requires countries to treat all foreign countries and investors in the same manner, preventing the country from using human rights, environment or labour standards as investment criteria. There are no more trade barriers on telecommunication technology.

MASS MEDIA ARE INSTITUTIONS OF CULTURE

The mass media are the chief cultural institutions that mediate the culture and value systems which promote and legitimize the interests of the globalizers. They are the chief agents of cultural colonization. They have the support of the ruling section in their own country and they have been able to establish a support group of the elites in the developing countries. The dependency syndrome has been strengthened by establishing and acquiring direct ownership of broadcast facilities, mergers, through direct investments, joint ventures, production tie-ups and collaboration with the first world. Foreign investors have seen great growth potential in the media business in India. The entertainment and media industry is perhaps the third largest having overtaken oil exploration and telecommunication services in India. It is an empire of more than Rs 95,000 crore. The music industry, television sector, the film industry, the live entertainment sector have all grown. The information industry is dominated by giant transnational corporations – IBM, General Electrical, Philips, Siemens and others. They are spending billions of dollars for research and development, which are often kept closely guarded secrets. Remote-sensing satellites provide powerful countries data about climatic conditions, water and crop conditions. USA has an extensive spy satellite networks. The Western countries control 90 per cent of the broadcast spectrum.

India boasts of entering into the information age. Information society is dominated by professional and technical elite. Our budgets have been IT-friendly. We have a ministry of Information Technology. Many foreign firms have made their way into India in the computer industry. The Indian market has been taken over by the transnational PC market. India is groomed to be a software export centre and provider of experts and professionals for servicing the needs of the big international needs. The firms today outsource certain areas of operation to specialist organizations. With plenty of labour available in the country who can speak English and possess skills, the international business is making use of this human power for profits. Some of the services are medical transcription, back office operations, data entry, remote maintenance, call centres, insurance

claims processing, web content development and maintenance. Indian companies are made sub-contractors, serving the needs of the MNCs. The tendency on the part of the MNCs is to first enter into a joint venture with an Indian company and then to buy it out making it a 100 per cent TNC-owned one.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MILITARY AND COMMUNICATION

The close link between military requirements and the development of communication is hardly known to average citizens. The Second World War already demonstrated the need for technological superiority in communications and weapons systems. The defence budgets in USA and Britain are the major sources of funding for information technology. Britain dominated the First World War because of its monopoly over the cable system. The US navy began to develop the medium of radio to challenge British cable domination. The Internet too was developed with large subsidies by the US defense department. It grew out of the Advanced Research Project Agency, a US defence network set up in response to the launch of the Sputnik by the then USSR. It had the objective of surviving the nuclear war. The modern computers, micro-electronics systems, numerically-controlled machine tools and technological weapons are all developed as a key to the production of high technological weapons. The growth of information technology has provided impetus through military procurements. The cable system, the Internet and all other devices of communication are, therefore, heavily funded by the state in terms of research and development, primarily to establish military superiority. In fact, the next world war if it happens may likely be a war directed by the media, though fought through technology.

MEDIA FOR A HOMOGENOUS MARKET

TNCs and MNCs want to create a global homogenous market for their products and use the mass media to create the appropriate mass consciousness and value system. The made-in-America messages, images, lifestyles and information technology are internationally circulated and imitated. The major components of these messages

are – private property and its expansion, efficiency and rationalization, competition, consumerism, instant glorification of needs, sexual objectification and racial supremacy. There has also been homogenization of demand for non-essentials like Pepsi, Coca-Cola, Jeans and McDonald's. The stress is not on providing food, clothing and shelter but TV for slum-dwellers, replacing neem sticks with toothpastes, country liquor with foreign liquor, locally grown food by Fizzas. It is cultural genocide on the march. The images created through advertising are a major way of changing people's consciousness. The kind of attention and welcome that is offered to media barons by the state is servile. The chairpersons of Microsoft and other corporates when they come to India and visit a local area make a bigger splash than the PM or a Cabinet minister of the country when he goes there.

CORPORATE MEDIA INFLUENCING ACADEMICS

There are ways through which corporate media has influenced higher education. Nokia, a Finnish company is sponsoring students for Ph.D in IIT, Delhi. One may ask the connection between Nokia and research in IITs. Why should they sponsor students? There are no reasons at all. If they are concerned, they could very well establish schools for the slums and the rural areas. But Nokia is keen that its brand is known by everyone to gain acceptability in institutions of repute. Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore has a research cooperation agreement with the company and Motorola. IBM has signed more than 30 strategic alliances to set up state-of-the-art information Technology centres. Intel is involved in computer education programmes in schools. Why do these MNCs take interest in education in India? They need cheap human labour for their corporations and influence the minds of the young. And these graduates do not have to move to USA anymore. They can be employed in India for the companies abroad. The salary levels are lower here. These are the new techno-coolies or cyber-coolies.

The country supplies the largest software solutions. There has not been a policy for the establishment of a self-reliant manufacturing base in this sector. As a result, the industry does not assist in the

requirements of an indigenous industry catering to the needs of the vast masses of the country. The mushrooming of IT training institutes sees more of coaching classes for the export markets. As a result, Indian manufacturing and research has suffered. The present research is more imitative and duplicative of Western technology. ISRO is doing big business with its satellite technology. What we are becoming is more a service economy than a manufacturing economy. We are catering to the service demands of industrially advanced countries, becoming more and more a dependent economy. We are developing software solutions to banking and financial systems, aircrafts, and railways to USA, Europe and Japan. On the other hand the Western scientists are tapping and stealing and patenting our traditional scientific knowledge. The knowledge boom caused by the information technology is hardly related to the information needs of the people to improve their conditions of living in a participatory way. Media in general and IT sector in particular are the fiefdom of the elite. The electronic mass media is used to colonize minds.

ROLE OF RELIGIONS

Religion, too, is distorted and used to support the aims of neo-colonialism. In India, there seems to be some connectivity between Hindutva and liberalization. The ideology of Hindutva is legitimizing two approaches – the new nationalist understanding of the modernization process in terms of raising the economic strength of the nation and the second is the hegemonic reading of national culture and ethos in terms of preserving the existing social culture. The rural elites, Franco Fernando observes, benefit from both legitimizing processes. They derive a significantly greater advantage from the second since they are facing from the poor and the socially marginalized a more serious challenge than the industrial and commercial elites.¹⁵ Nationalism is only one of the many reactionary forces which at present divide and weaken the working class. Neo-capitalism has used religion. Irrational respect for religious authority is used to gain obedience to an equally irrational social system. Many of the most barbaric atrocities, carried out for reasons of “faith” and/

or reactionary self-interest, are publicly justified in the name of religion. Numerous forces within the ruling class have not been slow to ferment and capitalize upon religious frenzy. Islamic or Sikh or Hindu zealots, sectarian rampages from Jammu and Kashmir to Kanyakumari, genocide in Gujarat and Odisha – the examples are endless. In times of economic boom, immigrant labour is used to perform the most menial and low paid work. In times of crisis, immigrants and minorities are the first to suffer its effects. In Maharashtra, the immigrant labour faced threats of being pushed out of the state. Religious and caste divisions are maintained and exploited by the ruling class to set working class people against each other.

One gets the feeling when globalization is well analyzed that it is spreading intolerance. European colonialism embodied a fundamental intolerance. Colonialism was legitimized on the premise that European nations had a responsibility to civilize the natives. The culture and values of Europe were held to be superior to the life and attitudes of the people of the land. Globalization holds on to the very same tenets. We are asked to be more and more like the West. The world with all its richness is plural. Each culture of the world is possessed of its own specific wisdom and characteristics, its own novelty and uniqueness, born of its individual struggles over thousands of years to cope with nature and circumstances. It is now being drowned by the hue and cry that the world is one now with neo-liberal markets, liberal democracy and a Western model of development imposed on all. The emergence of a global market has engendered a belief that we are all consumers. Our cultural identities are transformed into a single economic identity of consumers.

NO IMPETUS TO MANUFACTURING FACILITIES

Very little capital is invested in manufacturing facilities in developing countries. Our economy is transformed into a service economy of the first world. BPOs and KPOs, that employ graduates from universities and colleges, are the new service providers. They are made use of without utilizing their knowledge. After all, the skills needed for services are of low quality. One does not have to be a

graduate to function in these centres. Foreign loans are earmarked for improving the infrastructure – for building roads, ports, airfields. This infrastructure is essential for corporations to do their business. A second feature of the loans is that the lending country stipulates that they must be used neither to construct heavy industry nor to assist the state sector at the expense of the private sector. Open encouragement to the private sector is not hidden. In fact, corporatization is all about private trade and business. The third feature of foreign loans is their interest rates placing an impossible burden on the developing countries to an extent that they are no more in a situation to receive a loan. There are conditionalities as well on the loans which in the long run are liabilities. Every effort is made to see that the developing countries do not become manufacturers but are kept at the level of services. The transnational corporations have made inroads into the sovereignties of all nation-states. It is they who produce the greater part of the goods, services, financial transactions, entertainment and publications. States have been losing sovereign control over economic and cultural decision-making, eroding national capitalism, the very foundation of modern nation-state. Decisions pertaining to the economy are taken outside the national territory to determine the fiscal deficit, the currency value, the price of primary products and the interest rates.

IMPACT ON AGRICULTURE:

a. Suicide of Farmers

Globalization has replaced the labour intensive mode of agriculture to capital-intensive mode. With a population of more 70 per cent dependent on agriculture in India, it was fairly important for the country that agriculture remained labour-intensive. With a shift to capital-intensive mode, this has impacted Indian agriculture in a big way. A self-sufficient sector that provided for the food needs of the country is in a big crisis. Thousands of farmers have committed suicide. Ramachandra Guha notes, 'While hunger and poverty had been the feature of the sub-continental landscape for centuries, never before have so many rural people gone so far as to take their own

lives.”¹⁶ Across the country, 17,107 farmers committed suicide in 2003 and in 2006, the death by suicide was over 17,000. From 2002 there has been no year in which fewer than 17,000 farmers’ suicides have been recorded. In 2006, the state of Maharashtra, with 4,453 farmers’ suicides, accounted for over a quarter of the all-India total of 17,060, according to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB). NCRB also stated that there were at least 16,196 farmers’ suicides in India in 2008, bringing the total since 1997 to 199,132. According to another study by the Bureau, while the number of farm suicides increased since 2001, the number of farmers has fallen, as thousands are abandoning agriculture in distress. According to government data, over 5,000 farmers committed suicide from 2005-2009 in Maharashtra, while 1,313 cases were reported by Andhra Pradesh between 2005 and 2007. In Karnataka, the number stood at 1,003 from 2005-06 till August 2009. According to NCRB database, the number of suicides during 2005-2009 in Gujarat was 387, Kerala 905, Punjab 75 and Tamil Nadu 26. In April, 2009, the state of Chhattisgarh reported 1,500 farmers’ suicide due to debt and crop failure. At least 17,368 Indian farmers killed themselves in 2009, the worst figure for farm suicides in six years, according to data of the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB). Farmers in various states were under high debts and were ending their lives after failing to repay the loans.

b. Reasons for Suicides

The government’s planning lacked concern for the farmers as they were virtually left to the mercy of private money-lenders and vagaries of nature. The heavy cost of inputs and farming operations were not correctly taken into account by the government agencies while fixing a price for their produce. Absence of mandatory crop insurance in areas where natural calamities had ruined the crops had made the farmers helpless. Most farmers who killed themselves swallowed pesticides. Most cases of suicides are due to the inability to return debts from banks, cooperatives and money-lenders. Farmers who had shifted over to commercial crops with the hope of making money lost even their crops after the initial success due to the infertility of

land and the increasing costs of imported fertilizers. If farmers were to commit suicide, one could wonder the situation of workers in the farms. When agriculture is transformed into an industry for the sake of profiteering, the situation can only deteriorate. Corporate interests have gone into agriculture in a big way.

c. Agriculture has been Industrialized:

With neo-liberalism, agriculture has increasingly become part of industry, serving as an area of accumulation in its own right. Food production is commercialized – marketing, the introduction of new crops, brand identities and others. Agri-business corporations have diversified to aqua and shrimp cultivation. India has done away with restrictions on agricultural products, thereby becoming an open field for agri-business making way for the entry of corporations in a big way. Unskilled and semi-skilled workers involved in agricultural and agricultural-related activities are traditional artisans who are phased out. People's control over their resources is lost. Communities who were guarding, conserving and multiplying their natural assets for generations have been displaced. Agriculture has been made a relatively unrewarding profession due to generally unfavourable price regime and low value addition causing abandoning of farming and increasing migration from rural areas. It is increasingly evident that farming is not sustainable livelihood option for 90 per cent of the farmers in India. They can only get yield to survive and satisfy their basic needs – food, clothing and primitive shelter. There is no surplus that can take care of the future good education, good health and a higher standard of living. Trade liberalization, agricultural reforms and structural adjustment measures have served to marginalize the poor in rural areas, to reduce the availability of production from farm land for cultivation for the local market and to undermine food security. It is alarming that India is moving towards a point of no return, from being a self-reliant nation of food surplus to a net importer of food. It is argued that the consequence of the agricultural crisis in India is very vast and likely to hit all the other sectors and the national economy in several ways. In specific, it has adverse effects on food supply, prices of foodgrains, cost of living, health

and nutrition, poverty, employment, labour market, land loss from agriculture and foreign exchange earnings. The crisis in agriculture is a crisis of the country as a whole.

d. Land Acquisition

The other aspect that is closely connected to the agricultural crisis is land acquisition. Corporations from across the world have been allowed to buy land. When they decide to buy land, it is very often the fertile lands of the farmers, tribals or the public land that they buy in hundreds of acres. The state policy of acquiring land for private and corporate interests is common. Here is an example of farmers' resistance to the move in the state of Karnataka in an article that appeared in the Deccan Herald of January 29, 2012. "State government is trying to acquire 25,000 acres in Mysore district. Farmers from various districts across the state gathered here on Sunday and expressed their opposition to the government's plan to acquire lands in the guise of development and to create a land bank. At a meeting organized at State Agriculture Marketing Research Institute, ryot leaders vented their ire against the state government for allegedly scheming to acquire agriculture lands. Leading the discussion, ryot leader Badgalpura Nagendra alleged that the government was planning to acquire 25,000 acres near Srirangapatna, T Narsipura and Nanjangud. Warning that villages were fast turning into graveyards, he said the Karnataka Industrial Areas Development Board (KIADB) was also setting its eyes on fertile land between Hunsur and H.D. Kote. He alleged that the government was planning to acquire 2 lakh acres in the state for industries. While ryot leader KGShanthaswamy from Gadag expressed his approval to industrial giant Posco moving out of his district, farmers' representative from Koppal said trouble had just started flowing into their district. He alleged that the industry was trying to purchase 4,000 acres of land directly from farmers. Also, rumours were rife that a survey was being undertaken discreetly by an industry. Ravikumar of Davangere said the state government had set its eyes on 1,540 acres of land for an airport and 3,000 acres for setting up a power grid. A total of 6,000 acres of land was being sought. But, intensive agitation had

forced the government to go slow on its decision. Bagalkot representative Ramesh said it was a tragedy that a person from his place had become the industries minister. The KIADB had planned to acquire around 3,500 acres of land, but as of now farmers have been successful in stopping it on its tracks. Vidya Venkatesh on behalf of Dakshina Kannada said initially plans were afoot to acquire 6,240 acres of land. But, following protests, the requirement has been scaled down to 2,000 acres. Two gas pipelines are being planned into Mangalore — one from Kochi and the other from Chennai. This would complicate matters, she added. She urged farmers to stop protests only after ensuring that notification for acquiring lands was completely withdrawn.”¹⁷ Examples of this kind are all over the country. Such a policy would further hamper the interests of farmers and food production. For transnational and multinational corporations to establish their markets, they need vast acres of fertile land which developing economies can hardly afford. While the Indian government has done everything possible to amend the land acquisition Act to suit the convenience of these corporations, at the grassroots people have been resisting the attempts of both the governments and the corporations to acquire their land. In the tribal belts of India, in Dalit regions and forests areas, in places where farmers cultivate their land, there have been forced acquisitions of land sometimes with support from the state and at other times with support from vested interest forces. These have been fertile lands where the farmers grew their food for the community and society, where the tribals had lived for centuries and found their life and livelihood and where other indigenous communities of India had discovered their identity. While land is a commercial product for corporations, business communities and the governments, it is life itself for India’s indigenous communities. Their gods and goddesses live in the forests. They bury their dead there. These lands provide them food, clothing and shelter. In times of sickness, they turn to these lands and go in search of herbs and roots to find cure to their illness. Their life of celebrations is around these fields and forests. To evict people forcibly and take over these lands for trade and commerce is inhuman and an attack on the culture of the poor. In

their attachment to land which practically defines the identity of people, is the large dissatisfaction and anger of the people over the acquisition of their land. The special economic zones, where the corporations have their total hold, have acquired thousands of acres of land sometimes at concessional rates and at other times even free. This is scandalous in a country where while the farmers commit suicide and people starve, the wealthy corporations are provided free land.

CRISIS OF ENVIRONMENT

The environmental problems we face are creations of the system. Global warming can wipe out human life on earth. There is no planning and no concern for environmental issues in an unplanned economy. Capitalist anarchy produces environmental disaster on a much bigger scale. This is the only home people ever have! TNCs and MNCs don't worry about it. They want profits even on the dead bodies of people. Look at the way they create pollution. The firm produces iron and steel and gets paid for these outputs. But it also produces smoke and poisons citizens. But the firm is not charged. Who pays? People pay through lung and chest diseases. The National Health Service pays in treating the affected. People thus pay twice. But the firm doesn't pay. The idea that the market treats the environment 'efficiently' is ridiculous. Firms minimize costs because that is the best way to make money. But they don't minimize costs that others have to pay – externalities. Look at what Coca-Cola did in Pachimada in Kerala. While sucking water people badly needed for agriculture, the corporate giant was held responsible for spread of diseases as a result of the poisonous waste that the plant generated. These are real costs that have to be borne by the ordinary people. Probably the biggest danger facing the world today is global warming or climate change. There is a consensus among scientists that climate change is happening. The earth as a whole is getting warmer. More and more greenhouse gases, the most important of which is carbon dioxide, are being pumped out into the upper atmosphere. So, the earth gets hotter. Particularly since the 1980s, the earth has been warming up at a faster rate than ever before. And emissions in the

form of burning fossil fuels that give off greenhouse gases, are to blame. The earth as a whole is now warmer than it has been for the past 400,000 years. It is an observable fact that glaciers and polar ice are melting.

DEFORESTATION

Deforestation is taking place at a rapid pace for commercial purposes. There is large-scale burning. The aim once again is short-term gain in the form of soya crops, logging or cattle ranching. Already, some of the denuded land has become exhausted. The rain forests are homes to an estimated half of the world's species. We have already exterminated many unknown medicinal plants and species of animals. Destruction of forests has led to droughts, extinctions of species and rising sea levels, leading to localized flooding. Between 1990 and 2010, India lost an average of 224,750 hectares of land or 0.35 per cent per year. India's forests contain 2,800 million metric tonnes of carbon in living forest biomass. We have some 2,356 known species of amphibians, birds, mammals and reptiles according to figures from the World Conservation Monitoring Centre. Of these, 18.4 per cent are endemic, meaning they exist in no other country, and 10.8 per cent are threatened. India is home to 18,664 species of vascular plants, of which 26.8 per cent are endemic, 4.9 per cent of India is protected.¹⁸ India is witnessing a rising demand for forest-based products. This is causing deforestation and encroachment into forest-protected areas, which has led to a severe loss of natural resources. Increasing competition for water among various sectors, including agriculture, industry, domestic, drinking, energy generation and others, is causing this precious natural resource to dry up. Increasing pollution is also leading to the destruction of the habitat of wildlife that lives in waterways.

FISHERIES

Similar is the fate of fish in the rivers and the oceans. There were times when the fisherman could walk across the water on the backs

of the fish without getting his feet wet. Today, cod is an endangered species. Blue marlin is extinguished. While bringing technology into the oceans, the dragnets destroy the whole food chain at the bottom of the sea. Overfishing is a prime example of how capitalist greed confronts us with environmental disaster. European countries subsidize the building of trawlers to make the overfishing worse. It is sad that the fishing industry in the West that begs for handouts because of the crisis in fish stocks which is of its own making is destroying the fish wealth in Asia and Africa. These trawlers sail to the coast of Asia and Africa to repeat the whole sorry business of overfishing. In the process they destroy the livelihood of local fishermen who have fished off their coasts for generations.

CHEAP LABOUR

The shift from agriculture to a technology-based economy has created huge unemployment problems. While the industrial revolution was labour-intensive, the computer or information revolution has destroyed more jobs. For the large majority of workers, the economy has not created better jobs but deepened economic inequalities. The unskilled workers are discarded. Those who lose their job and those who are re-trained in the new technology have to be satisfied with lower salaries than before. New technologies are introduced to cut costs. The employers “hire and fire” and the employees have no rights. One of the major reasons for corporations to pitch their tent in India is its cheap labour. Corporations have to spend much less on labour here than in their country. Capital is moving where there is cheap labour to maximize profits. The movement of capital is therefore towards the two-thirds world. This has placed unnecessary stress on cities like Bangalore, Hyderabad, Mumbai and other cities already stretched. More than anything else, life in these cities is altered due to changes in the very style of MNCs and their culture. While the distance between countries is shrunk, the distance between communities has widened. There are a large number of communities who have become poorer in the years of neo-liberal economics with malnourishment, starvation, illiteracy and poverty.

IMPACT ON PEOPLE

“The bourgeoisie has through its exploitation of the world market given a cosmopolitan character to production and consumption in every country... All old-established national industries have been destroyed or are daily being destroyed. They are dislodged by new industries, whose introduction becomes a life and death question for all civilized nations, by industries that no longer work up indigenous raw material, but raw material drawn from the remotest zones, industries whose products are consumed, not only at home, but in every quarter of the globe. In place of the old wants, satisfied by the production of the country, we find new wants, requiring for their satisfaction the products of distant lands and climes”¹⁹ – the Communist Manifesto had stated. With dislocation of agrarian livelihoods, a new form of economy is imposed. The driving force behind the dislocation is the hypermobility of capital. Money capital with investment funds can easily move from one capital market into another and establish factories and machinery almost anywhere. Communities as a result have to adjust or tune themselves to new kinds of economies they have not been accustomed to. The primary effect of that shift is a shift from community livelihoods to individual livelihoods. Agriculture did not disturb life of people as a family. All lived and worked together.

The new economy is different. Transnational images give priority to instant individual gratification over equality and solidarity. Capitalism thus fosters radical individualism and excludes social well-being. The agricultural economy was a community economy where everyone was included. The consumer society does not extend to all even in a family but a very few. Individuals who are employed have to leave their homes and make adjustments to a new culture, and in the process, learn to alienate themselves from their community. Not very often they have to move out from the places of their living to alien lands. With the country taking to reforms, the traditional Indian economy centered on family, community, village and state has come to be destroyed. Individualism has replaced community

economy. Many of those who are rich today, millionaires and billionaires, got there because they were able to capture certain jobs. This capture often owes less to talent and intelligence than to a combination of the ruthless exploitation of others. Jobs are taken disproportionately by people born in certain places and into certain classes. Globalization like the caste system in India is hierarchical and pyramidal. It is another form of social Darwinism, promoting the law of the jungle or the survival of the fittest.

While individuals have become rich, the country as a whole has become poorer. For a poor country like India, it is scandalous to have seven persons among the 100 global richest. Poverty in the midst of plenty is a scandal. It is quite expected and accepted when persons from countries like the US or the UK adorn the crown of the richest, but it is hard to believe that seven persons from a third world country that is counted among the poorest in the world would be among the richest hundred. In a country where around 22-23 crores of people are still living below the poverty line, this crown on the richest seven in the country is scandalous. Disparity in the distribution of wealth continues to be a big blow to the Indian economy. On one hand there are people who are not even earning a dollar per day and on the other, we have people who are counted among the highest. We have malls, luxury foreign car showrooms and various other gadgets for the rich and we have people who are dying of starvation, farmers committing suicides and a variety of others dying because they have no health care. The rich are growing richer and the poor are growing poorer, thanks to the highly unequal distribution of income in the Indian economy! Although the world economy is going through tough economic times, yet the number of Indians making it to the global rich list is increasing. Below is the list of 50 Indian billionaires who have found a place in the global richest club 2011.

Here is a complete list of Indian billionaires in order of India Rank, World Rank, Name, Net Worth, Age, and Source:

India Rank	World Rank	Name	Net Worth	Age	Source
1	6	Lakshmi Mittal	\$31.1 B	60	Steel
2	9	Mukesh Ambani	\$27 B	53 P	Petrochemicals, Oil & Gas
3	36	Azim Premji	\$16.8 B	65	Software
4	42	Shashi & Ravi Ruia	\$15.8 B	67	Diversified
5	56	Savitri Jindal & family	\$13.2 B	60	Steel
6	81	Gautam Adani	\$10 B	48	Commodities & Infrastructure
7	97	Kumar Birla	\$9.2 B	43	Commodities
8	103	Anil Ambani	\$8.8 B	51	Diversified
9	110	Sunil Mittal & family	\$8.3 B	53	Telecom
10.	130	Adi Godrej & family	\$7.3 B	68	Diversified
11	130	Kushal Pal Singh	\$7.3 B	79	Real Estate
12	154	Anil Agarwal	\$6.4 B	57	Mining & Metals
13.	159	Dilip Shanghvi	\$6.1 B	55	Pharmaceuticals
14	182	Shiv Nadar	\$5.6 B	65	Information Technology
15	265	Malvinder & Shivinder Singh	\$4.1 B	38	Healthcare
16.	310	Kalanithi Maran	\$3.5 B	45	Media
17.	347	Uday Kotak	\$3.2 B	51	Banking
18.	376	Micky Jagtiani	\$3 B	59	Retail
19.	393	Subhash Chandra & family	\$2.9 B	60	Media
20.	440	Pankaj Patel	\$2.6 B	57	Pharmaceuticals
21.	440	Indu Jain	\$2.6 B	74	Media
22	440	G. M. Rao	\$2.6 B	60	Infrastructure
23	512	Cyrus Poonawalla	\$2.3 B	69	Biotech
24.	540	Rajan Raheja & family	\$2.2 B	56	Diversified
25.	564	Desh Bandhu Gupta	\$2.1 B	73	Pharmaceuticals
26.	595	N.R. Narayana Murthy & Family	\$2 B	64	Software
27.	595	Gautam Thapar	\$2 B	50	Engineering & Paper
28.	595	Sudhir & Samir Mehta	\$2 B	56	Diversified
29.	595	Aloke Lohia	\$2 B	52	Chemicals
30.	651	Venugopal Dhoot	\$1.9 B	59	Electronics
31	651	Chandru Raheja	\$1.9 B	70	Real Estate
32.	692	Nandan Nilekani & Family	\$1.8 B	55	Software
33.	736	Ajay Kalsi	\$1.7 B	N/A	Oil

34.	782	Rahul Bajaj	\$1.6 B	72	Motorcycles
35.	782	Senapathy			
		Gopalakrishnan & Fly	\$1.6 B	55	Software
36.	833	Brijmohan Lall Munjal	\$1.5 B	87	Motorcycles
37.	833	K. Anji Reddy	\$1.5 B	69	Pharmaceuticals
38.	879	Vijay Mallya	\$1.4 B	55	Liquor
39.	879	Ajay Piramal	\$1.4 B	55	Pharmaceuticals
40.	879	Vikas Oberoi	\$1.4 B	40	Real Estate
41.	938	Baba Kalyani	\$1.3 B	62	Engineering
42.	938	Rama Prasad Goenka	\$1.3 B	81	Diversified
43.	993	Keshub Mahindra	\$1.2 B	87	Diversified
44.	993	K Dinesh & family	\$1.2 B	56	Software
45.	993	Rakesh Jhunjhunwala	\$1.2 B	50	Investments
46.	993	Brij Bhushan Singal	\$1.2 B	74	Steel
47.	1057	Yusuf Hamied & family	\$1.1 B	74	Pharmaceuticals
48.	1057	S.D. Shibulal & family	\$1.1 B	56	Software
49.	1057	Bhupendra Kumar Modi	\$1.1 B	62	Telecom
50.	1057	Mangal Prabhat Lodha	\$1.1 B	55	Real Estate

(Source: rediffmail.com)

While there is an increase in the number of millionaires and billionaires, those below the poverty line are on the increase. The gap between the poor and the rich has aggravated and there has been greater inequality. There is opposition to global capitalism because of its unfairness. Corporates look after the global needs of a small percentage, negating the needs of people and local needs. The economic situation of the poor has undergone changes with greater marginalization. Privatization of government enterprises has adversely affected the lives of the poor.

All these enterprises were built on the taxes paid by citizens. They are now privatized without even the consent of the people. What is more shocking is that they no more provide the services they were expected to provide to common citizens. New rules and regulations are put in place without even the consent of the people or their representatives. There have been cuts in government spending, particularly expenditure, on services that are crucial to the poor, the vulnerable and the aged. Government development projects and social service initiatives are suspended to the detriment of the poor. The primary health care centres that provided free

treatment no more exist in villages. Government hospitals are getting commercialized. In several states, government schools are closed. Education which was managed by the state is privatized and commercialized and becoming so expensive that ordinary citizens are not in a position to afford it anymore. The dual system of education that existed has been aggravated with international schools, vocational programmes, community colleges, and courses on fashion-design, computers, electronics and others to suit the markets. At the level of the state, we are affected by the unjust and unfair terms of trade and other transactions. The third world countries cannot claim equality in an international race, the rules of which have been laid down by the corporations of the first world. It is their world that they want to create and impose and the emerging nations are forced to accept their dictates. We are entering the world of uniformity in consumption, on the dress we wear, the food we eat and the education that is offered. Some have even argued that globalization is erasing cultural differences. It is termed as *coca-colaisation*, *McDonaldisation* or *Americanization* of global culture.

GROWING INEQUALITIES

The most glaring aspect of globalization is the increased inequality between and within nations, as pointed out earlier. Not that there have not been inequalities during the period from 1950 to 1985. But they have been greatly aggravated. Since 1980, the World Bank reports another picture of India's disparity in income. "The percentage of people living below \$1.25 a day (which works out to Rs 21.6 a day in urban areas and Rs 14.3 in rural areas in 2005) decreased from 60 per cent in 1981 to 42 per cent in 2005. Even at a dollar a day (Rs 17.2/- in urban areas and Rs 11.4/- in rural areas in 2005) poverty declined from 42 per cent to 24 per cent over the same period. Both the dollar a day and \$1.25 measures indicate that India has made steady progress against poverty since the 1980s, with the poverty rate declining at a little under one percentage point per year. However, the number of poor people living under \$1.25 a day has increased from 421 million in 1981 to 456 million in 2005. This indicates that there are a large number of people living just above

this line of deprivation (a dollar a day) and their numbers are not falling. To achieve a higher rate of poverty reduction, India will need to address the inequalities in opportunities that impede poor people from participating in the growth process.”²⁰ But the Bank does not say how any person in India can live with human dignity with Rs 21.6 in the urban centres and Rs 11.4 in the rural areas? The number of very poor people who lived below a dollar a day in 2005 may have come down from 296 million in 1981 to 267 million in 2005. While one accepts the fact that the poverty situation in the country is unsatisfactory, the language of the World Bank is meant to promote further reforms in the system. The fact is that no person can make two ends meet in 2005 with Rs 21 in urban areas and Rs 14 in rural areas. The World Bank figures do not indicate a change in the basic structure of Indian society at all. The reality is that poverty has increased since the reforms and the quality of life of citizens has declined.

SURESH TENDULKAR COMMITTEE

“The Suresh Tendulkar committee in its report submitted to the Planning Commission in 2009 had estimated that 37 per cent of India’s population is under the poverty line, while the proportion of the poor is almost 42 per cent in rural areas — sharp increases from official poverty estimates of 27.5 per cent for all of India and 28.3 per cent for rural areas. The committee has changed the method of estimating poverty to a broad-based consumption basket that includes education and health. More than half of the rural population of states like Odisha, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand are still living under abject poverty, not able to meet their basic necessities of food, health and education, according to the revised estimates of the expert group headed by former chairman of Prime Minister’s Economic Advisory Council Suresh Tendulkar. The new figures are not strictly comparable with the earlier estimates, because the Tendulkar panel has significantly changed the method of estimating poverty — from one notionally based on calorific intake to a more broad-based consumption basket that includes education and health. Nevertheless, the revelation that poverty is higher than

it was earlier thought to be may force the government to increase funding for social and rural development schemes such as the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, Indira Awas Yojana and the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana, say economists. Tendulkar himself told Times of India that though this was not the mandate of the committee, as an economist he thinks the government should put a lot of money into education and health, particularly considering the demographic profile of the country with a predominantly young population.”²¹

UNDP GLOBAL HUMAN DEVELOPMENT REPORT

“Pathways to Human Development” is the inequality-adjusted Human Development Index by the United Nations Development Programme that works with 169 countries,, aimed at capturing the distributional dimensions of human development. Three dimensions of HDI i.e. income, education and health are adjusted for inequalities in attainments across people. Globally, India is ranked 119 out of 169 countries but loses 32 per cent of its value when adjusted for inequalities. That would mean India would be ranked 151 out of 169 countries. The report focuses specifically on inequalities in human development attainments across countries. To quantify the potential loss because of such inequalities, the report introduces three new indices, viz., Inequality-adjusted Human Development Index (IHDI), Gender Inequality Index and Multi-dimensional Poverty Index.²¹

MORE PEOPLE UNDER POVERTY-LINE

What does this all mean? “Despite sustained high GDP growth in India, latest estimates of global poverty by World Bank suggest that India has more people living below US \$2 than even sub-Saharan Africa. None other than the World Bank (WB) has busted the hype about India’s post-liberalization success. According to the Bank’s new estimates, not only is India home to roughly one-third of all the poor in the world, it has a higher proportion of its population living on less than \$2 a day than even sub-Saharan Africa. In other words, nearly five out of 10 Indians live below what the world’s

poorest countries consider the poverty line. These figures clearly hint at the fruits of economic benefits having failed to trickle down to India's poor. The data available shows that the rate of poverty decline in India was faster between 1981 and 1990 than between 1990 and 2005. The poverty rate – those below \$1.25 per day – for India declined from 59.8 per cent in 1981 to 51.3 per cent by 1990, or 8.5 percentage points over nine years. Between 1990 and 2005 it declined to 41.6 per cent, which is a drop of 9.7 percentage points over 15 years, clearly a much slower rate of decline. New estimates say: “India has maintained even progress against poverty since the 1980s, with the poverty rate declining at a little under one percentage point per year.” In February, 2011, the Bank's World Development Report revealed that greater investment in agriculture in transforming economies like India was vital to the welfare of the rural poor. The report warned that the international goal of halving extreme poverty and hunger by 2015 would not be reached unless neglect and under investment in the agricultural and rural sectors over the past 20 years was reversed. It should be noted here that the current World Bank commitments in India's agriculture, irrigation and rural livelihoods amount to US \$2.6 billion. Over the years, agriculture in India has seen a steady decline in investment – a matter of great concern.”²²

On the other hand take a look at the annual salaries of the top 12 CEOs in India.²³

1. Naveen Jindal
Salary (2011): Rs 67.21 crore, Salary (2010): Rs 69.76 crore, Salary (2009): Rs 28.27 crore, Designation: Executive Vice-Chairman and Managing Director, Company: Jindal Steel and Power
2. Kalanithi Maran: Salary (2011): Rs 64.4 crore, Salary (2010): Rs 37.08 crore, Salary (2009): Rs 37.08 crore Designation: Chief Managing Director, Company: Sun TV
3. Kavery Kalanithi
Salary (2011): Rs 64.4 crore, Salary (2010): Rs 37.08 crore, Salary (2009): Rs 37.08 crore, Designation: Joint Managing Director, Company: Sun TV
4. Kumar Mangalam Birla
Salary (2011): Rs 38.11 crore, Salary (2010): Rs 37.46 crore, Salary (2009):

- Rs 18.06 crore, Designation: Chairman, Company: Grasim, UltraTech, etc
5. Brijmohan Lall Munjal
Salary (2011): Rs 26.5 crore, Salary (2010): Rs 30.64 crore, Salary (2009): Rs 19.79 crore, Designation: Chairman, Company: Hero MotoCorp
 6. Pawan Kant Munjal
Salary (2011): Rs 26.47 crore, Salary (2010): Rs 30.88 crore, Salary (2009): Rs 19.69 crore, Designation: Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer, Company: Hero MotoCorp
 7. B.G. Raghupathy
Salary (2011): Rs 25.92 crore, Salary (2010): Rs 9.25 crore, Salary (2009): Rs 6.65 crore, Designation: Chief Managing Director, Company: BGR Energy
 8. Toshiaki Nakagawa
Salary (2011): Rs 25.06 crore, Salary (2010): Rs 30.03 crore, Salary (2009): Rs 19.08 crore, Designation: Director, Company: Hero MotoCorp
 9. Pankaj R Patel
Salary (2011): Rs 25 crore, Salary (2010): Rs 28.63 crore, Salary (2009): Rs 15.24 crore, Designation: Chief Managing Director, Company: Cadila Healthcare
 10. Sumihisa Fukuda
Salary (2011): Rs 24.95 crore, Salary (2010): Rs 29.91 crore, Salary (2009): Rs 15.81 crore, Designation: Director, Company: Hero MotoCorp
 11. Sajjan Jindal
Salary (2011): Rs 20.8 crore. Salary (2010): Rs 14.25 crore. Salary (2009): Rs 6.56 crore, Designation: Vice-Chairman and Managing Director, Company: JSWSteel
 12. Bhattacharya
Salary (2011): Rs 17.31 crore, Salary (2010): Rs 13.15 crore, Salary (2009): Rs 11.09 crore, Designation: Managing Director, Company: Hindalco

This is pure vulgarity. Within the same country, how can we have individuals who have excessive wealth and communities that have no food, clothing and shelter? While some starve and die, there are a few who live in vulgar consumption. This is the scandal of neo-liberalism. A society that is sharply divided on wealth with a few living in luxury and the many in squalor easily becomes a ground for social conflicts.

WORLD BANK 2011 ON FOOD INTAKE

Another note of 2011 from the World Bank further stresses the point of increasing poverty in India when it states: "In spite of recent

poverty declines with its rapid economic expansion, India still has higher poverty rates than Pakistan, according to a 2011 World Bank report titled “Perspectives on poverty in India: stylized facts from survey data”. Although consumption poverty has steadily declined in India, the number of people who actually consume calories above the minimum level associated with the poverty line—2,400 and 2,100 kilo calories per day in rural and urban areas, respectively—has not risen. In 2004–2005, as many as 80 per cent of rural households were estimated to be “calorie poor”. India’s middle-class lives barely or not far above India’s poverty line of \$1.02 a day, and well below international poverty lines, especially in rural areas. Large differences in poverty levels persist across India’s states and indeed are growing in urban areas. The rural areas of India’s poorest states have poverty rates that are the highest in the developing world. In contrast, urban areas of Punjab and Himachal Pradesh have poverty rates that are similar to those found in countries such as Turkey or the richer Latin American countries. The World Bank findings are consistent with the 2008 India State Hunger Index study. It showed that Assam and Punjab have much less hunger than the rest of India. Madhya Pradesh has the most severe level of hunger in India, comparable to Chad and Ethiopia. Gujarat, 13th on the Indian list, is below Haiti, ranked 69 on the World Hunger Index.

The World Bank report discusses various causes of poverty in India, particularly discrimination against certain castes and tribes who make up most of the poor. It describes exclusion based on caste (SC or Scheduled Caste) and tribes (ST or Scheduled Tribes) and describes it as follows: “The Hindu hierarchy is said to have evolved from different parts of the body of Brahma—the creator of the universe. Thus, the Brahmans, who originated from the mouth, undertake the most prestigious priestly and teaching occupations. The Kshatriyas (from the arms) are the rulers and warriors; the Vaishyas (from the thighs) are traders and merchants. The Shudras, from the feet, are manual workers and servants of other castes. Below the Shudras and outside the caste system, lowest in the order, the untouchables engage in the most demeaning and stigmatized occupations (scavenging, for instance, and dealing with bodily waste).

Similarly, the scheduled tribes are also referred to as the Adivasis.... we use the terms SC and ST, as these are standard administrative and survey categories. In the text we use the terms Dalits and Adivasis or tribals interchangeably with SCs and STs, respectively. The report acknowledges that “the Indian Constitution set the stage for almost unparalleled affirmative action and other forms of positive actions. These have been translated into laws, programs, and procedures”. The authors explain that “the combination of identity politics, inflexibility of the very systems that seek to promote inclusion and the attendant poor implementation has resulted in patchy impact, affecting some groups more than others. To state the real challenge is to state a truism—that the implementation of policies and of reforms of institutions is the key to ensuring that growth becomes more equitable.”²⁴

MORE POOR THAN IN AFRICA

There is grinding poverty in resurgent India. Just eight Indian states account for more poor people than the 26 poorest African countries combined. The Indian states, including Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, and West Bengal, have 421 million “poor” people, compared to 410 million poor in the poorest African countries. Developed at Oxford University, the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) goes beyond income poverty based on \$1.25 or \$2 a day income levels. It measures a range of “deprivations” at household levels, such as schooling, nutrition, and access to health, clean water, electricity and sanitation. According to Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI) country briefings 2010, 55 per cent of Indians and 51 per cent of Pakistanis are poor.²⁵ One of the reasons for such increasing disparity is corruption, says the report. Quoting a Swiss Bank Director, the report observes that Indians are poor but India is not a poor country. The money that is deposited in Swiss banks can be used for ‘taxless’ budget for 30 years. There are other places where the greedy of the land have deposited their cash. The transfer of money through hawala transactions to foreign banks of large funds, earned by exporting massive quantities of Indian products, has been

causing massive shortages in India, resulting in an immense rise in the prices of essential goods in the country. What has characterized India's economy is greed for a few while lack of food, clothing, shelter, water, primary education and employment for many. The situation has been aggravated by neo-liberal reforms that have caused hardships in the agricultural set-up, compelling many peasants and farmers to give up farming since it is no more remunerative or productive.

MASSIVE INEQUALITIES

According to World Development Report (1994), in India the top 20 per cent of households enjoyed 39.3 per cent of the national income while the lowest 20 per cent enjoyed only 9.2 per cent of it. Similarly, another study points out that the lowest 40 per cent of rural household owned only 1.58 per cent of total landed asset while the top 5.44 per cent own around 40 per cent of land. Thus the progress in the field of attaining social justice was slow and unsatisfactory. India's income inequality has doubled in 20 years read a note in the Times of India dated December 7, 2011. "Inequality in earnings has doubled in India over the last two decades, making it the worst performer on this count of all emerging economies. The top 10 per cent of wage-earners now make 12 times more than the bottom 10 per cent, up from a ratio of six in the 1990s. Moreover, wages are not smoothly spread out even through the middle of the distribution. The top 10 per cent of earners make almost five times more than the median 10 per cent, but this median 10 per cent makes just 0.4 times more than the bottom 10 per cent. "The main driver has been an increase in wage inequality between regular wage earners-contractual employees hired over a period of time," says the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in a new report on inequality in the developed world and emerging economies. "By contrast, inequality in the casual wage sector-workers employed on a day-to-day basis has remained more stable," the report said. South Africa is the only emerging economy with worse earnings inequality, but it has halved this number since the last decade. "The combination of marked spatial divides, persistently high shares of informal sector jobs and disparities in access to education account

for much of the widespread variation in earnings from work,” the report said. Wage inequality has driven more general income inequality in the country. India has got more unequal over the last two decades. In the early 1990s, income inequality in India was close to that of developed countries; however, its performance on inequality has diverged greatly since then, bringing it closer to China on inequality than the developed world. There is evidence of growing concentration of wealth among the elite. The consumption of the top 20 per cent of households grew at almost 3 per cent per year in the 2000s as compared to 2 per cent in the 1990s, while the growth in consumption of the bottom 20 per cent of households remained unchanged at 1 per cent per year. Of all the emerging economies, India has by far the highest proportion of informal employment, by any national or international measure. “In India...informal employment includes a disproportionate number of women, home-based workers, street sellers and workers sub-contracted by firms in the formal sector,” the OECD report said. India spends less than 5 per cent of its GDP on social protection schemes as compared to Brazil’s more than 15 per cent. Its tax revenue as a proportion of GDP is under 20 per cent, the lowest of all emerging economies, and just half that of developed countries.”²⁶ In conclusion, one can state that the ratio of average incomes in the richest countries to those in the poorest has risen. The gap between the high-income countries and the developing countries too has risen. Global inequality among individuals has risen. The number of people in extreme poverty and starvation has risen. The proportion of people in extreme poverty has risen. The poor of the world are worse off in a wide range of human welfare indicators. Income inequality has risen in every country, especially those exposed to integration to the markets.

MALNOURISHMENT AND DEATHS

As many as 42 per cent of the country’s children were malnourished in 2011, the Hungama survey notes. Calling malnourishment “a national shame”, Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh on January

11, 2012 had said India cannot hope for a healthy future with 42 per cent of children aged below five years being underweight. Releasing the Hungama survey that measured the nutrition status of more than one lakh children and 74,000 mothers, Singh said, “What concerns me and what must concern all enlightened citizens is that 42 per cent of our children are still underweight. This is an unacceptably high occurrence.” There are nearly 16 crore children in India below the age of six years. According to Singh, the health of the economy and society lies in the health of “this generation”. “In the years to come, these children will join our workforce as scientists, farmers, teachers, data operators, artisans and service providers. We cannot hope for a healthy future for our country with a large number of malnourished children,” Singh said. Reacting to the findings, Member of Parliament Sachin Pilot said, “MPs might differ on various counts but when it comes to malnutrition, we have all cut through party lines to fight for a common apolitical cause. Small interventions like providing iodized salt or enhancing breast-feeding rates can change malnutrition and maternal health figures. Malnutrition, according to me, begins in the womb of a mother who is not given adequate nutrition.” The PM was also candid in saying that the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS), which continues to be the government’s most important tool to fight malnutrition, can no longer be relied on solely. “We need to focus on districts where malnutrition levels are high and where conditions causing malnutrition prevail. Policy-makers need to clearly understand many linkages – between education and health, between sanitation and hygiene, between drinking water and nutrition – and then shape their responses accordingly,” he said. “A child dies every 15 seconds in India due to neonatal diseases while 20 lakh children die before reaching their fifth birthday. Over four lakh newborns are dying every year within 24 hours of life in the country. Over 20 per cent of the world’s child deaths occur in India – the largest number anywhere in the world. One in three of all malnourished children in the world live in India. A child who has severe acute malnutrition is at least nine times more likely to die than a child who does not.”²⁷

FOOD SECURITY

“India’s food security situation continues to rank as ‘alarming’ according to the International Food Policy Research Institute’s Global Hunger Index, 2011. It ranks 67 of the 81 countries of the world with the worst food security status. This means that there are only 14 countries in the world whose people have a worse nutritional status.”²⁸ Pakistan, Nepal, Rwanda and Sudan all did better than India, while Bangladesh, Haiti and the Democratic Republic of Congo were among the countries that did worse. More than six decades after independence and being counted as one of the growing economies of the world, why are hunger deaths still happening? Is it because there is a scarcity of food to offer the ones hungry? Foodgrains rot in godowns just because our delivery mechanisms are not good enough but it will not reach those who die due to starvation. Shocking reports of hunger deaths have poured in at a time when the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution estimates that 53.3 per cent of wheat and 39 per cent of rice worth Rs 31,500 crore, meant for distribution to the poorest of the poor, have been siphoned off in the past three years. For the last three decades, despite numerous studies and reports, pilferage from the Public Distribution System (PDS) remains colossal. This is treason. To address hunger, there are instances where the poor have sold their daughters and work in bondage. At a time when the newspapers are full of reports of billions of dollars of foreign investment flowing into the country and daily projections of an unprecedented growth rate that will eclipse poverty, the cries of the hungry have gone largely unheard, especially in recent years. A number of Indian states have “alarming” levels of hunger. According to the first-ever India State Hunger Index (ISHI) 2009, Madhya Pradesh has the most severe level of hunger in the country, followed by Jharkhand and Bihar. Punjab and Kerala scored the best on the index. India’s poor performance is driven by its high levels of children under nutrition and calorie insufficiency. Its rates of child malnutrition are higher than most countries in sub-Saharan Africa. The India Hunger Index found that not a single state in India falls in the ‘low hunger’ or ‘moderate hunger’ categories. Twelve states fall in the ‘alarming’

category, and one state – Madhya Pradesh – falls in the ‘extremely alarming’ category. Four states – Punjab, Kerala, Haryana and Assam – fall in the ‘serious’ category. According to the 2008 Global Hunger Index, India ranked 66 out of 88 nations (developing countries and countries in transition). Despite years of robust economic growth, India scored worse than nearly 25 Sub-Saharan African countries and all of South Asia, except Bangladesh.

The conclusion is simple. Strong economic growth does not necessarily translate into lower hunger levels. Even states with high rates of economic growth in recent years, such as Gujarat, Chhattisgarh and Maharashtra, have high levels of hunger, while states with relatively slower economic growth, such as Punjab, achieved a lower hunger level. “India has emerged as the capital of hunger with 214 million people being denied the right to food,” Vandana Shiva said, adding that this was more than the total number of hungry people in sub-Saharan Africa. Over 500 hunger deaths are reported to have occurred in Kalahandi and other parts of western Odisha in the last few months of 2009. Indeed, all the 836 million who live on less than Rs 20 per day are probably unable to get two square meals a day. And yet the government is planning to double the price of foodgrain for the mid-day meals programme. In simple words, the department is making it difficult for the states to provide midday meals for 12 crore (120 million) children. A resource crunch will ensure that, in the future, the Ministry of Human Resources is unable to shell out Rs 12,000 per metric tonne, as against the present Rs 5,650. In a country where 5,000 children die every day from malnutrition and related ailments, the importance of expanding the mid-day meal programme needs no emphasis. But by putting it beyond the reach of the official machinery, the Ministry of Human Resources may now find it difficult to run the existing programme let alone expand it to reach an additional 3 crore (30 million) children. The paradox of plenty — acute and widespread hunger amidst abundant foodstocks — exists at a time when the country is poised on a high-growth trajectory. Policy-makers, planners and economists have been telling us that even if poverty increases in the short term, it is a price that has to be paid for long-term stability and growth. Even

with the largest number of hungry in the world, hunger and starvation no longer evoke compassion in India. News of hunger and starvation rarely makes it to the front pages of the newspapers. In reality, hunger is a non-issue; it's something we close our eyes to. How does it matter to us if the PDS doesn't work, or the mid-day meal programme is eventually scrapped because of lack of adequate funds? What we don't realize is that an empty stomach cannot wait.

The Supreme Court directions to the Government of India in 2011 to distribute surplus food grains to the poor and lower middle class people were deliberately ignored. The deliberate wastage of foodgrains and the creation of artificial shortages are meant for causing massive increases in the prices of foodgrains for the benefit of corrupt politicians, bureaucrats, middlemen and traders and thus deprive the poor of adequate foodgrains of proper quality through the Public Distribution System, or what we also call as the ration shops. With 21 per cent of its population undernourished, nearly 44 per cent of under-5 children underweight and 7 per cent of them dying before they reach five years, India is firmly established among the world's most hunger-ridden countries. The National Family and Health Survey (NFHS), last carried out in 2004-05, had shown that 23 per cent of married men, 52 per cent of married women and a chilling 72 per cent of infants were anemic – a sure sign that a shockingly large number of families were caught in a downward spiral of slow starvation. Global research has now firmly established that depriving the foetus of essential nutrients – as will happen in an under-nourished pregnant woman – seals the fate of the baby once it is born. It is likely to suffer from susceptibility to diseases and physical retardation, as also to mental faculties getting compromised. So, continuing to allow people to go hungry and malnourished is not just more misery for them: it is the fate of future generations of Indians in balance. What can be done to fix this unending tragedy? “The government already runs two of world's biggest nutrition programmes: the mid-day meal scheme for students up to class 12 and the anganwadi programme under which infants and children up to 6 are given 'hot cooked' meals. These need to be spread further and more resources pumped in to tackle weaknesses. For instance, a report by the

anganwadi workers' federation revealed that as many as 73,375 posts of anganwadi workers and 16,251 posts of supervisors are lying vacant. But the biggest contribution to fighting hunger would be providing universal coverage of the PDS with adequate amounts of grain, pulses and edible oils included."²⁹

JOHN DREZE AND AMARTYA SEN ON INDIA'S GROWTH STORY³⁰

Jean Dreze and Amartya Sen, both leading global economists, writing in *Frontline* of November 14, 2011 note that growth is only a means but not an end in itself. "The progress of living standards for common people, as opposed to a favoured minority, has been dreadfully slow—so slow that India's social indicators are still abysmal." For instance, according to World Bank data, only five countries outside Africa (Afghanistan, Bhutan, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea and Yemen) have a lower "youth female literacy rate" than India (World Development Indicators 2011, online). To take some other examples, only four countries (Afghanistan, Cambodia, Haiti, Myanmar and Pakistan) do worse than India in child mortality rate; only three have lower levels of "access to improved sanitation" (Bolivia, Cambodia and Haiti); and none (anywhere—not even in Africa) have a higher proportion of underweight children. Almost any composite index of these and related indicators of health, education and nutrition would place India very close to the bottom in a ranking of all countries outside Africa. "Indeed, even today, after 20 years of rapid growth, India is still one of the poorest countries in the world, something that is often lost sight of, especially by those who enjoy world-class living standards thanks to the inequalities in the income distribution. According to World Development Indicators 2011, only 16 countries outside Africa had a lower "gross national income per capita" than India in 2010: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Haiti, Iraq, Kyrgyzstan, Lao, Moldova, Nepal, Nicaragua, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Vietnam and Yemen. This is not exactly a club of economic superpowers. Bangladesh and Nepal do not have India's per capita income but have vastly improved indices." "India has started falling behind every other South Asian country (with the partial exception of Pakistan) in terms of social

indicators, even as it is doing so well in terms of per capita income. The comparison between Bangladesh and India is a good place to start. During the last 20 years or so, India has grown much richer than Bangladesh: per capita income was estimated to be 60 per cent higher in India than in Bangladesh in 1990, and 98 per cent higher (about double) in 2010. But during the same period, Bangladesh has overtaken India in terms of a wide range of basic social indicators: life expectancy, child survival, fertility rates, immunization rates, and even some (not all) schooling indicators such as estimated 'mean years of schooling'. For instance, life expectancy was estimated to be four years longer in India than in Bangladesh in 1990, but it had become three years shorter by 2008. Similarly, the child mortality rate was estimated to be about 24 per cent higher in Bangladesh than in India in 1990, but it was 24 per cent lower in Bangladesh in 2009. Most social indicators now look better in Bangladesh than in India, despite Bangladesh having barely half of India's per capita income. No less intriguing is that Nepal also seems to be catching up rapidly with India, and even overtaking India in some respects. Around 1990, Nepal was way behind India in terms of almost every development indicator. Today, social indicators for both countries are much the same (sometimes a little better in India still, sometimes the reverse), in spite of per capita income in India being about three times as high as in Nepal. The minority of the better-off forgets that even after 20 years of growth, India's among the world's poorest nations. .. It is also important to recognize that the impact of economic growth on living standards is crucially dependent on the nature of the growth process – particularly relating to basic education and healthcare – that are used to enable common people to share in the process of growth. There is also, in India, an urgent need for greater attention to the destructive aspects of growth, including environmental plunder (e.g. through razing of forests, indiscriminate mining, depletion of groundwater, drying of rivers and massacre of fauna) and involuntary displacement of communities – particularly adivasi communities – that have strong roots in a particular ecosystem”.

REMARKABLE GROWTH

India's growth achievements are indeed quite remarkable. According to official data, per capita income has grown at a compound rate of close to 5 per cent per year in real terms between 1990-91 and 2009-10. The more recent rates of expansion are faster still: according to Planning Commission estimates, the growth rate of GDP was 7.8 per cent in the Tenth Plan period (2002-03 to 2006-07) and is likely to be around 8 per cent in the Eleventh Plan period (2007-08 to 2011-12). The "advance estimate" for 2010-11 is 8.6 per cent. These are, no doubt, exceptional growth rates—the second-highest in the world, next to China. These dazzling figures are, understandably, causing some excitement, and were even described as "magic numbers" by no less than Lord Meghnad Desai, who argued, not without irony, that whatever else happens, "the government can still sit back and say 8.6 per cent".

The authors rightly opine that economic growth per se does not transform the living conditions of the unprivileged. Brazil in the late 1980s saw rapid growth that went hand in hand with the persistence of massive deprivation. The country substantially changed course, and adopted far more active social policies, including a constitutional guarantee of free and universal healthcare as well as bold programmes of social security and economic redistribution. This is one reason why Brazil is now doing quite well, with, for instance, an infant mortality rate of only 9 per 1,000 (compared with 48 in India), 99 per cent literacy among women aged 15-24 years (74 per cent in India), and only 2.2 per cent of children below five being underweight (compared with a staggering 44 per cent in India). While India has much to learn from earlier experiences of growth-mediated development elsewhere in the world, it must avoid unaimed opulence – an undependable, wasteful way of improving the living standards of the poor. The neglect of elementary education, healthcare, social security and related matters in Indian planning fits into a general pattern of pervasive imbalance of political and economic power that leads to a massive neglect of the interests of the unprivileged. Other glaring manifestations of this pattern include disregard for agriculture and rural development, environmental plunder for private gain with

huge social losses, large-scale displacement of rural communities without adequate compensation, and the odd tolerance of human rights violations when the victims come from the underdogs of society.

DISCRIMINATION AND INEQUALITIES

“None of this is entirely new, and much of it reflects good old inequalities of class, caste and gender that have been around for a long time. For instance, the fact that not even one of the 315 editors and other leading members of the printed and electronic media in Delhi surveyed recently by the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies belonged to a scheduled caste or Scheduled Tribe, and that at the other end, 90 per cent belonged to a small coterie of upper castes that make up only 16 per cent of the population, obviously does not help to ensure that the concerns of Dalits and adivasis are adequately represented in public debates. Nor is India’s male-dominated Lok Sabha (where the proportion of women has never crossed 10 per cent so far) well placed to address the concerns of women—not only gender issues, but also other social issues in which women may have a strong stake. A similar point applies to rural-urban disparities: a recent study found that rural issues get only 2 per cent of the total news coverage in national dailies”.

Some of these inequalities are diminishing, making it easier for disadvantaged groups to gain a voice in the system (even the proportion of women in the Lok Sabha, abysmally low as it is, is about three times as high today as it was 50 years ago). However, new or rising inequalities are also reinforcing the vicious circle of disempowerment and deprivation. For instance, the last 20 years have seen a massive growth of corporate power in India, a force that is largely driven—with some honourable exceptions—by unrestrained search for profits. The growing influence of corporate interests on public policy and democratic institutions does not particularly facilitate the reorientation of policy priorities towards the needs of the unprivileged.

The two world renowned economists have even been critical of the inclusive growth slogan in policy debates. “The rhetoric of inclusive growth has gone hand in hand with elitist policies that often end up promoting a two-track society whereby superior (‘world-class’) facilities are being created for the privileged, while the unprivileged receive second-rate treatment, or are left to their own devices, or even become the target of active repression—as happens, for instance, in cases of forcible displacement without compensation, with a little help from the police. Social policies, for their part, remain quite restrictive (despite some significant, hard-won initiatives such as the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act), and are increasingly steered towards quick fixes such as conditional cash transfers. Their coverage, in many cases, is also sought to be confined to ‘below poverty line’ (BPL) families, a narrowly defined category that tends to shrink over time as per capita incomes increase, which may even look like a convenient way of ensuring that social welfare programmes are ‘self-liquidating’. Cash transfers are increasingly seen as a potential cornerstone of social policy in India. There are, of course, strong arguments for cash transfers (conditional or unconditional) in some circumstances, just as there are good arguments for transfers in kind (such as mid-day meals for school children). What is remarkably dangerous, however, is the illusion that cash transfers (more precisely, ‘conditional cash transfers’) can replace public services by inducing recipients to buy health and education services from private providers.

“India’s recent development experience includes both spectacular success as well as massive failure. The growth record is very impressive, and provides an important basis for all-round development, not least by generating more public revenue (about four times as much today, in real terms, as in 1990). But there has also been a failure to ensure that rapid growth translates into better living conditions for the Indian people. It is not that they have not improved at all, but the pace of improvement has been very slow—even slower than in Bangladesh or Nepal. There is probably no other example in the history of world development of an economy growing so fast for so long with such limited results in terms of broad-based social progress”.

STATUS OF CHILDREN

In India, like the rest of the world, cities were the “settings for some of the greatest disparities in children’s health, education and opportunities,” according to a United Nation’s report. There are nearly 97 million urban poor living in 50,000 slums in India, states the UN report – ‘The State of the World’s Children 2012: Children in an Urban World’. Seventy per cent of the urban poor are concentrated in just five states of Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu and Gujarat. The flagship report states that by 2026, 40 per cent of India’s population would live in towns and cities. It called for making cities “liveable and safe places” for millions of children. Karen Hulshof, UNICEF’s India representative, said “a child born in a slum in urban India is as likely to die before her or his first birthday, to become underweight or anemic or to be married before her 18th birthday, as a child in rural India”. The report presents a grim picture of the reach of health services and social schemes to the urban poor who migrate to bigger cities in search of opportunities. Urban violence and crime, stunted growth, malnutrition, poor elementary education, poor hygiene and sanitation were just some of the implications of life in urban slums, it said. Children and adolescents in urban areas are likely to have greater access to alcohol and illegal drugs than their counterparts in rural areas, said Hulshof. The report recommends ensuring urban planning and infrastructure development meet the needs of children in urban slums. It also called for promoting partnership between government and voluntary organizations, and identification and removal of barriers against inclusion of children.³¹

HUMAN SURVIVAL AT RISK

With neo-liberalism, we are facing a crisis of humanity. The survival of humanity is at risk. William Robin has observed, “Emergent transnational capital underwent a major expansion in the 1980s and 1990s, involving hyper-accumulation through new technologies such as computers and informatics, through neo-liberal policies, and through new modalities of mobilizing and exploiting the global labour

force – including a massive new round of primitive accumulation, uprooting, and displacing hundreds of millions of people – especially in the third world countryside, who have become internal and transnational migrants. We face a system that is now much more integrated with dominant groups that have accumulated an extraordinary amount of transnational power and control over global resources and institutions. With militarized accumulation, financial speculation – and the sacking of public budgets, by the late 1990s, the system entered into chronic crisis. The extreme concentration of the planet's wealth in the hands of the few and the accelerated impoverishment, and dispossession of the majority, even forced participants in the 2011 World Economic Forum's annual meeting in Davos to acknowledge that the gap between the rich and the poor worldwide is 'the most serious challenge in the world' and is 'raising the spectre of worldwide instability and civil wars.' Global inequalities and the impoverishment of broad majorities mean that transnational capitals cannot find productive outlets to unload the enormous amounts of surplus it has accumulated. By the 21st century, the corporations turned to several mechanisms to sustain global accumulation, or profit-making. One is militarized accumulation. Waging wars and interventions that unleash cycles of destruction and reconstruction generate enormous profits for an ever-expanding military-prison-industrial-security-financial complex. We are now living in a global war economy that goes well beyond Iraq or Afghanistan. A second mechanism is the raiding and sacking of public budgets. Transnational capital uses its financial power to take control of state finances and to impose further austerity on the working majority, resulting in ever greater social inequality and hardship. The corporations have used their structural power to accelerate the dismantling of what remains of the social wage and welfare states. And the third is frenzied worldwide financial speculation – turning the global economy into a giant casino. The transnational corporations have unloaded billions of dollars into speculation in the housing market, the food, energy and other global commodities markets, in bond markets worldwide. The 2008 collapse of the global financial system was merely the straw that broke the

camel's back. This is not a cyclical but a structural crisis – a restructuring crisis – that has the potential to become a systemic crisis, depending on how social agents respond to the crisis. A restructuring crisis means that the only way out of crisis is to restructure the system, whereas a systemic crisis is one in which only a change in the system itself will resolve the crisis. Times of crisis are times of rapid social change, when collective agency and contingency come into play more than in times of equilibrium in a system.”³²

In the new social structure, neo-liberalism has created more than 50 per cent of India's population locked out of productive participation in the economy. Under the conditions of capitalist globalization, the state's contradictory functions of accumulation and legitimation cannot both be met. The economic crisis intensifies the problem of legitimation for dominant groups so that accumulation crises generate social conflicts and appear as spiralling political crises. In essence, the state's ability to function as a “factor of cohesion” within the social order has broken down. Capitalist globalization and the logic of accumulation or commodification have penetrated every aspect of life. Displacement and exclusion have accelerated since 1991. The system has abandoned a major section of people caught in a deadly circuit of accumulation-exploitation-exclusion. What is sad to note is that the system does not even attempt to incorporate this surplus population. Instead, the system tries to isolate and neutralize its real or potential rebellion, criminalizing the poor and the dispossessed. One can ask what has happened to that agenda of freedom that those who struggled for the freedom of the country promised? The state no doubt has betrayed citizens. Nehru as a product of liberalism had promised individual rights. With the nexus of the transnationals and multinationals with the state and the state obliged to follow the dictates of the international financial institutions, citizens cannot anymore speak about individual rights. The state is no more sovereign. With corporations assuming power beyond the state, our right even for food, clothing and education is determined by the markets. There is no place for the democratic vision of Gandhi in the market economy. He was for decentralization

of politics with Panchayati Raj Institutions and economics with the construction of self-sufficient local and national economies. With the threat of human survival for the poorest of the poor who include the SCs and STs, the vision of Ambedkar of including the excluded remains unaddressed. The Constitutional vision has been negated. The only real solution to the crisis of global capitalism is a massive redistribution of wealth and power – downward towards the poor majority of humanity. And the only way such redistribution can come about is through mass transnational struggle from below – of the marginalized majority.

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CHAPTER 5

TOWARDS AN ALTERNATIVE VISION

No unjust situation can last long. People do not remain silent spectators. Neo-liberalism by its very essence is unjust and unfair. The subalterns have been compelled to change their geographical location from being citizens of a state to members of a global market. With no purchasing power, they have been pushed out from the right to a decent living. It is an unjust world order compelling more than half of the world's population to go hungry and without food. It has deprived people of their hopes for the future. What kind of a world is it where people create wealth but they do not profit from it? What kind of a world is it where a minuscule minority accumulates all the wealth and the majority can hardly survive in spite of daily toil and hard work? What kind of a world is it where the natural resources gifted by nature to be shared with all are appropriated by a few, depriving people of their hope for the future? Ordinary people are forced to work for long hours with no control over what they produce, how it is produced and what it is used for. With no right to participate, they are just objects of the system. Every aspect of their lives is dominated by the corporations. What they are paid allows them to consume a part of what the corporations decide is profitable for them to produce. There is no choice. No participation in the productive system is permitted. No questions can be asked. One has to merely do what is commanded. It is authoritarianism at its worst in the workplace. People are dispossessed. Their labour is at the disposal of the corporations and it is bought and sold like any other commodity. With a "hire and fire" policy, the corporations can decide not to buy individuals when individuals are no longer required. There is no question of a just wage or a permanent tenure. Workers have no right to bargain for just salaries. Wages and salaries are decided

on the whims and fancies of the bosses on an individual basis. For the average worker, it is a life of insecurity and uncertainty with no possibility of planning for the future. All production has a single motive, the motive of profit. Nothing is produced unless it can be sold profitably. Everything is propelled by the lust for profits. The needs of the society do not matter. Citizens are transformed into consumers. For the sake of profit, mountains of food are destroyed and dumped into the sea instead of sharing with the hungry, especially in a world where hunger deaths are on the increase. Resources are denied for basic health care and primary education. Everything is commercialized. Subsidies to the poor are done away with. The cities are allowed to decay with pollution, traffic jams and congestion. Resources which should have been directed to improve the basic essentials of life are devoted to arms and armies so that young people are sent to war against rival profiteers. Resources are used to maintain and arm the state and the police forces which defend the corporations against the anger of the people.

PEOPLE'S AWARENESS

People are becoming aware of the games the corporations play and the betrayal by the state. They are more and more convinced that universal suffrage, people's rights, the rights of parliaments, justice and the democratic state are all slogans to hoodwink the public. These slogans have benefitted capitalism more than the people. In fact, these institutions are set up with the sole aim of perpetuating bourgeoisie rule in the name of democracy and rights. Freedom of trade, the right to private property, right to vote and right to contest elections are all rights of the isolated individuals, to promote the power of the bourgeoisie. For years the poor were fooled into it. Yes, the parliament is expected to be the voice of the people. In a class society only those who belong to the class can be elected to it and the concerns and issues that are debated and discussed are basically class issues than mass concerns. Legislatures are places of betrayals. Instead of representing the people, the legislators have pursued their own interests and the interests of their class. With no accountability, they have amassed wealth that is unaccounted for and promoted the

interests of the corporations in a big way against the people. The people as a whole have become poorer. The SCs and STs have suffered the most. Their economic situation has worsened and they have become insecure. But those who rule and govern have amassed unaccounted wealth by loot and plunder. Whose are those lands and resources they have accumulated? It's a public theft, the resources that legitimately belong to the people.

MISLED BY DEVELOPMENT

In the name of development, large factories, manufacturing units and polluting establishments have been constructed on fertile lands, destroying forests, trees and even streams where humans and animals refreshed themselves with water to cater to the needs of the corporations. The large dams have denied water and irrigation to small farmers and peasants, helping the landlords and zamindars. The poor in slums and colonies do not get even drinking water. Water has been contaminated due to effluents flowing out from pollutant factories and companies. Part of the fish wealth in coastal areas is destroyed due to the waste and poison that have flown out from these industrial establishments into the seas and rivers. Forests have been commercialized. Without any concern about the future of humanity, trees have been felled for commercial purposes to increase wealth. Deforestation has affected ecology. Everywhere, in the name of development, nature has been harmed. There is profit and there is unending greed. Everything is privatized, including water. "Corporate abuse is widespread. For example, Corporate Accountability International named six to its 'Corporate Hall of Shame', including Koch Industries for spending over \$50 million to fund climate change denial; Monsanto for mass producing cancer-causing chemicals; Chevron for dumping more than 18 billion gallons of toxic waste into the Ecuadorian Amazon; Exxon Mobil for being the worst polluter; Blackwater (now Xe) for killing unarmed Iraqi civilians and hiring paramilitaries; and Halliburton, the nation's leading war profiteer."¹ There are many other corporations which have made money with shady deals and questionable products. Some firms are demonized to protect the others. But all of them have a

single motive of profiteering and all this is done in the name of development. Those who have survived on land and resources, the majority of humanity, have been pushed out of their daily bread. The era of capitalism with its injustice cannot go on. Its continued existence threatens the survival of humanity, propelling the world towards economic and ecological catastrophe and towards nuclear annihilation. The globe cannot be kept in subordination with threats of arms and armaments. Instead of providing for the basic necessities of human lives, the system has encouraged consumerism, arms race and exploitation of the majority. The most important result of the crisis is the declining quality of life, in almost every country, of the vast majority of the population.

TECHNOLOGY AND DECLINE IN QUALITY OF LIFE:

What is shocking is that this decline in the quality of life is taking place at the same time as the greatest technological revolutions in the history of humanity. Technology was meant to enhance the quality of human life. However, what we are witnessing is technology being used by the global corporations purely for commerce and business. Those who have expertise in technology refuse to share with those who badly need it. In the underdeveloped world, workers assemble the latest computer technology in sweatshops while the majority of the population there sinks towards starvation and destitution. In the industrialized world, despite the automation of industry, the pace of work has increased while wages have stagnated or fallen. Families are unable to make ends meet. In major cities like Bangalore, known as India's Silicon Valley, while educated young people work at different times of the day to suit their corporate bosses, suicides and murders have been on the increase. Several of those who lived in the city have been forcibly evicted to make way for the new immigrants from other parts of the country and globe, who work here as cyber coolies. The slums have been cleared to make the city available to the super rich. Unemployment has led to third world conditions in first world cities and total marginalization in the third world. The crisis cannot be denied. Even the left-wing governments have not covered themselves with glory in spite of

shouting slogans of social transformation. Across the world, left-wing governments attack the working class just as much as right-wing ones. The socialism which the left-wing parties claim to stand for is in fact state capitalism. Nationalization of industry is a state capitalist measure which offers no benefits whatsoever either to the workers employed there or to the working class as a whole.

REVOLUTIONS ARE LINKED TO ECONOMIC EXPLOITATION

History is witness to the fact that all wars and revolutions the world over are linked to economic exploitation. Closer home too, Naxalism, Maoism, tribal uprisings, caste wars, the tensions in the North-East, People's War Groups and the growing crime rate in cities are all linked to the lack of distributive justice and the fact of economic deprivation. Without a just distribution, conflicts are bound to increase and pose a threat to human survival. As the gap between the rich and the poor increases and wide disparity in incomes carries on, those who are left out are unlikely to remain as spectators. They do not have too many choices. As long as protests and resistance to the imposed model of development are able to change things for the better, they are likely to resort to these means. However, when they realize that the state has sold itself to the interests of the corporations and the state is unwilling to listen, they are sure to harden their position as well. History is a witness to the violence of the 'have-nots'. The French Revolution, which hailed the values of liberty, equality and fraternity, was a result of economic deprivation. French masses suffered under an unjust feudal system. While the monarchy and aristocracy appropriated the fruits of economic growth, the majority of the people suffered and starved. The violent revolution of the peasants and the people overthrew the monarchy and aristocracy. The seeds of World War II were sown in the economic deprivation that Germany had to suffer after World War I. The Treaty of Versailles was unfair and unjust. The allied powers forced Germany to shell out huge amounts as war reparation. The seeds of the second world war were in the humiliation and injustice Germans were made to go through. The Russian Revolution was a revolution of the masses against the class. In China, it was a revolt of the

peasants due to extreme exploitation that caused a revolution in 1949. All over the world, suppression or repression of the majority by a minority has led to violence and conflicts. As far as people are concerned, it is their last resort since there is no other alternative that they can visualize.

SOCIAL TENSIONS IN INDIA

With more than 55 per cent of people in poverty, there is restlessness in India as well. When economic growth does not accompany distributive justice, it is bound to lead to social tensions. What the Indian government is keen to see is growth in the economy. But the government is least interested to know how that growth is shared. And when economic growth is offered to very few and the vast majority is left out from the agenda of development, such a system breeds violence. The Naxalite movements, Marxist-Leninist groups and the People's War Groups are good examples. These extremist groups have been gaining more and more support in an unjust economy that deprives the average citizens their legitimate due. Why are more and more people joining these groups? The poor do not see any other means to protect their life and livelihoods. These organizations have waged wars against the landlords, zamindars, corporations and the state that promote the interests of the bourgeoisie. These groups find it easy to recruit cadres, especially from exploited communities. We have an increasing number of people from discriminated communities taking to arms. Most of these young people are unemployed and the country has neglected their skills. What is worse, even their land has been taken away, the only means of their livelihoods. As a result, in spite of their best efforts, they have not been able to make their ends meet. They are angry at the injustice meted out to them. They take to weapons to gain distributive justice that they have been deprived of by the rich landlords, zamindars and the state, who hold the peasants virtually as bonded labourers and use and abuse their services to earn phenomenal profits. The same is true of every industrial sector. When the average worker is not paid his or her dues and the employee is not given what

legitimately belongs to him, there is unconscious resentment which would burst into violence at the slightest provocation in the streets. The fish workers in all the coastal areas are up in arms against the state for allowing the corporations to come into the profession which is increasingly depriving them and the people of the country cheap fish and proteins. The tribals of Odisha are waging a war against the state for taking over their land and handing it over to foreign companies. Most of the recruits of People's War Groups have been from the Dalit community. There is resistance against special economic zones where land of the poor and the people is handed over to transnational corporations. After the nuclear tragedy in Fukushima, Japan, there are protests against nuclear installations in all the places where the government has decided to have these plants. People are becoming more and more aware of the corporate interests behind the nuclear plants who hardly care for the safety and security of the ordinary people. The factory worker finds himself inadequately compensated and having to work often in unsafe and unhygienic conditions. The peasants and the farmers are more and more pauperized for no fault of theirs. The increase in terrorism is often attributed to the large-scale unemployment among educated youth who are lured to take to arms. Similarly the continuing tensions and movements of secessions' and insurgency in the North-East can be traced to the lack of economic development in these states. The North-Eastern states feel that they are being given a step-motherly treatment by the Centre, which does not have a strategic plan for economic development in these regions. Similarly, the rising crime rates and incidence of violent riots in the metropolitan cities like Mumbai, Delhi, Kolkata and Bangalore are symptomatic of the deeper problems arising from 'growth without distributive justice'. Forced to live out their lives in hovels, pavements and slums, there is a sense of anger and resentment at the injustice. Even the question of caste wars in India is ultimately a question of distributive justice. It is the more powerful castes who enjoy greater economic power and benefits and it is they who corner the most lucrative jobs and other economic benefits arising out of development.

GEO-POLITICS OF HUNGER

Siv O'Neal, writing in the *Countercurrents* on January 20, 2012, says, "Every five seconds, a child under 10 dies of hunger. Thirty-five million people die each year from hunger or its immediate aftermath. One billion people are permanently and severely malnourished and the situation is becoming increasingly catastrophic."² In his latest book "Mass Destruction – the Geopolitics of Hunger", Jean Ziegler. Talks about the current state of the world and the neoliberal politics of starvation of the poor that has led to a crisis situation amounting to calculated murder. What we are witnessing today is the worst hunger crisis in human history. And it is all because of human greed, colossal mismanagement for profit and lack of public concern. This crisis is not determined by fate. The world could perfectly well provide food for 12 billion people, almost the double of the present population of 7 billion. So what made this murderous situation possible where thousands of people are dying (37,000 every day) from lack of food and clean water? The agro-industry is killing off small farmers – some countries are fighting back by fighting against dependency on the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and the World Trade Organization (WTO) – the three horsemen of the Apocalypse. Redistribution of land from large estates with huge tracts of uncultivated areas to small farmers has proven extremely effective in raising the standard of living, in helping the poorest of the poor in several Latin American countries. These countries have wrenched themselves free from the killer treaties like NAFTA, CAFTA and FTAA³, created exclusively for rich North America to take over the natural resources in the southern hemisphere. The United States is intimately tied in with the Transnational Corporations (TNC) and they are firmly determined to end up owning the world. The way they have proceeded is to first take over the valuable commodities everywhere, in Latin America as well as in Africa and now also in India. The transnational corporations essentially own the western governments and they are running the world for the profit of their own cabal and for profit alone. The small and subsistence farmers, who produced enough food to provide for their families and for selling at the market for a

modest income, are being ruined by careful planning. The three horsemen of the Apocalypse of organized hunger, the supra-state organizations IMF, World Bank and the WTO carry out the wishes of the major food companies. They are able to fix the prices of food through the powers they have given themselves as cartels or monopolies. The small farmers in Africa and elsewhere need help to go on with their hard work to support their families and to produce food for the country. Droughts, military conflicts, political crises, natural catastrophes, man-made emergency situations, all these have contributed to recurrent food crises. IMF was ready to extend big loans, but with strings attached. Structural adjustment programmes would follow and the people are the victims⁷⁴. There is now less money for the governments to spend on education, health care, food aid to the desperately poor, infrastructure – and the list goes on. Unemployment and poverty have increased and new loans are needed, if only to pay off the interest on the old loans to the tiger sharks. The third world countries are enslaved in a vicious spiral of debts. There is also disastrous corruption among the leaders of the countries in need that prevents the money from many well-intentioned NGOs from getting into the right hands. To add to the many problems small farmers are faced with, there is also the other product of Western greed – big companies buying up land for huge plantations whenever the farmers are forced to sell at a ridiculously low price. And so those former poor but proud subsistence farmers are now forced to work for a pittance for the big landlords who, instead of producing food to feed the native people, grow cotton, green beans, coffee, tea, cocoa, peanuts and other crops to sell to the rich countries. And these foods for the wealthy are often produced by small children, severely exploited by cruel farmers. Slave labour conditions are the rule.

“The ideologues of the World Bank are infinitely more dangerous than the sad marketing agents Bolloré, Vilgrain (French investors in Africa) and company. With hundreds of millions of dollars of credits and subsidies, the World Bank funds the theft of arable land in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Food has to be imported – all for the profit of the big corporations. Poor people cannot afford

buying imported food at artificially high prices. Children go hungry, pregnant mothers are undernourished and so their babies are born with what can be called birth defects. Very importantly, their brains are insufficiently developed and this deficiency can never be recovered. A large number of the infants die before the age of two. Malnutrition is rampant and it causes unimaginably horrible diseases, such as noma, which is far less known than the killer diseases such as malaria, dysentery, cholera, tuberculosis, diphtheria and other infectious diseases. Noma is not an infectious disease but it has been proven that it is due to severe and chronic malnutrition.”⁵ For the United States and their mercenary organizations, the IMF, the World Bank and the WTO, the UN Declaration of the Universal Right to Food⁶, has no importance whatsoever. It is very simply ignored. Attempts by global structures to make the right to food a human right has not succeeded. “For the United States and its mercenary organizations – the World Trade Organization (WTO), the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank – the right to food is an aberration. To them, there are no human rights except civil and political. Behind the WTO, the IMF, the World Bank, the Washington government and its traditional allies, appear of course the huge private transcontinental companies. The increasing control these transcontinental corporations exert on vast sectors of food production and trade have, of course, significantly affected the exercise of the right to food. The speculative madness of the predators of the globalized financial capital has cost Western industrial states in 2008-2009, \$8,900 billion in all. Western states have in particular paid trillions of dollars to bail out delinquent bankers.” Neoliberals claim that no regulations are needed, because the market is regulating itself. That way they are free to speculate, to trade indefinitely and, in many cases, without even paying capital gains taxes, without any insight or any rules. There are of course also the tax-free havens where speculators can gamble with their billions without the slightest insight or taxation. The whole point to the neoliberal sharks is that the rich must get richer and the poor must be made powerless. The numbers of the poor have been increasing drastically ever since the beginning of neoliberalism in the Eighties (exploratory beginnings

in Latin America already in the Seventies, with catastrophic results). Poor people are made to be so invisible, so voiceless that they can be totally disregarded. This is precisely the goal of neoliberalism. It is mind-blowing how the world can have come to a situation where it is being run by hungry sharks with no understanding of how the world economy can function in a rational way. The gamblers follow no rules whatsoever, except profit, and humanitarian considerations have no place in this casino. What Jean Ziegler is doing in such an expert and passionate way in his latest book is denouncing the monstrosities of the world we live in, using his typical forceful style, with his trademark genuine human empathy. He is explaining how we got to be where we are and what has to be done to remedy the gross negligence of human rights. We can no more sit lethargically in our comfortable homes, watching the blatant propaganda that is fed to us through the mainstream media, listening to the biased reports about the U.S. wars that are fought, so they tell us, in the name of freedom and democracy. The truth is that the wars are fought to make huge profits for the arms industries and all the big corporations. Take over lands and nations by war or by insidious so-called 'aid' that ensnares the nations in a net of debts that it is impossible to get out of. After reading Jean Ziegler's book, one is convinced that the time has come to act on what we know to be the truth. The West is corrupt to the gills and if we the people are too lethargic, ignorant or frightened to do something NOW, then the pillars of the world will crumble. And that will be the end."⁷ If Latin America can break away from the corporate rule, other countries too can. There is opposition to this corporate rule even in Europe and USA. People of these countries have been in discussion and action on the increasing gap between the top 1 per cent and the rest of 99 per cent.

MASSIVE INEQUALITIES ARE UNACCEPTABLE

De Rivero in 2001 noted that "the rich are getting richer and the poor poorer in all countries. The combined income of some 300 individual billionaires is equal to the total revenues of 2.7 billion persons who represent 45 per cent of the world population. The

individuals who have the means to consume the products and services of the global economy number only 1.8 billion. The remaining 4 billion plus are left window-shopping. In nearly a hundred poor countries, real per capita income has not increased in 15 years. If the present trends continue and nothing indicates that they are going to change, in the year 2020, the world population will reach eight billion, of whom some 6.6 billion will live in the underdeveloped world, where there will be 3 billion poor, plus 840 million who are starving and hundreds of millions who are unemployed or at best under-employed. In addition, 2.5 billion will not have adequate housing and 2 billion will have no access to clean water or a commercial energy supply. The overwhelming majority of these marginal inhabitants will live in more than 550 cities with a population of over one million and some 20 megalopolises of more than 10 million inhabitants. These cities will be chaotic, polluted, full of unemployed workers and plagued by delinquency”⁸. His prophecy has come true. The rich have become richer and the increasing numbers of people have become poorer.

NO LEVEL FIELD IN THE MARKET ECONOMY

Poverty is witnessed not only in the second and third world but also in the first world. Ron Forthofer remarked in the Counter Currents on January 19, 2012, “Last autumn, likely due to the Occupy movement, there was a shift of media attention from debt reduction and the cutting of vital public programs to the issue of extreme wealth and income inequality in America. Extreme inequality is of concern for many reasons, but Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis provided perhaps the most crucial reason when he said: ‘We can have democracy in this country or we can have great wealth concentrated in the hands of a few, but we can’t have both.’ Many of those who support grossly unequal outcomes attempt to distract the public from the critical extreme inequality in wealth and income here by stressing equal opportunity as the key. Incredibly, they seem to think that we have equal opportunity in America. Despite the terribly unequal opportunities that exist, Americans have generally accepted the idea of some reasonable level of wealth and income

inequality. The public's acceptance sprang from the idea that some people have special talents or make special contributions that merit greater rewards. However, two factors have undercut this support. First, there is a weakening of the connection between reward and merit. In addition, we have now reached an obscene level of inequality that is exemplified in a report from the Heritage Institute. Based on data from 2000, the Heritage Institute showed that CEO pay for major U.S. corporations was wildly out of line with those of our economic competitors. For example, the average pay for CEOs in Japan was 10 times the average worker's wage, compared to 531 times here. Of the 26 countries in the report, Brazil had the second largest inequality with a value of 57. The obscene rise in this inequality in the U.S. is striking, going from a value of 24 times in 1965 to 42 times in 1980 to 85 times in 1990. More recent data show that the U.S. value declined from the 531 times in 2000 to well over 300 times the typical worker's pay in 2010. Note that the comparisons are affected by how many major corporations are included in the studies. For example, another estimate for the U.S. in 2000 was 300 times compared to the 531 times mentioned above; regardless, the U.S. is way out of line compared to our economic competitors and the change over time is appalling. The Heritage Institute report included 2004 and 2006 quotes from Warren Buffett, chairman of Berkshire Hathaway, that address both merit and extreme inequality. According to the report, in a May 2004 letter to shareholders, Warren Buffett wrote about the inadequacy of corporate governance structures among U.S. companies. '(If) Corporate America is serious about reforming itself, CEO pay remains the acid test.' Buffett added: 'The results aren't encouraging.' Buffett criticized lavish pay packages and the 'lapdog behavior' of directors, calling the situation an 'epidemic of greed.' In a 2006 shareholder report, Buffett stated: 'Too often, executive compensation in the U.S. is ridiculously out of line with performance.' Getting fired can produce a particularly bountiful payday for a CEO. Indeed, he can 'earn' more in that single day, while cleaning out his desk, than an American worker earns in a lifetime of cleaning toilets. Forget the old maxim about nothing succeeding like success: today, in the executive suite, the all-too-prevalent rule is that nothing succeeds like failure."⁹

Vincent Guarisco in his article on “Poverty in America: From Riches to Rags” says that the economic injustice that fuels poverty is very real even in the USA. “And with unemployment soaring, even those lucky enough to have jobs are either working part-time or lumbering through long hard hours for a paltry check that is rarely enough to pay the bills. This is not quality of life. This is not the way it’s supposed to be in a civilized society. It doesn’t take a mental giant to figure out how the system works and for whom. The reality on the ground is grave. People are homeless and way too many bread baskets are empty. All walks of life are affected, including children, the elderly and the disabled. Inequities continue to widen and people are without crucial medicine, dental, vision or other basic health care needs. For the penniless, the sick and the disfranchised – government policymakers are definitely not up to snuff when it comes to serving our best interest. However, poverty has awakened the national psyche. All doubt has melted away and we now know for sure that most politicians are blowhards without virtue... Although our representatives try to convey the foolish idea that they are our champions, we know who is bearing the blunt of policies that slash at already threadbare safety nets. Numbers don’t lie. According to Census data, 47 million Americans now live below the poverty line – the most in half a century (since the last great depression) – fueled by years of high unemployment, home foreclosures, the stock market crash and a diminishing manufacturing base that has jettisoned American livelihoods in every direction outside our border. There’s no pretending anymore, this is the economic agenda favored by transnational corporations and the folks on Wall Street – as businesses, services and other commerce drift away from our shores. And with no good jobs to be had, opportunity will continue be out of reach until we reverse course. And so the story goes – the ‘news media’ has little concern for publicizing the struggles of the little guy, regardless of the consequences that those cited above have engineered. However, once in a while, a few discordant images get through the laughable theme of a robust economic ‘recovery.’ U.S. Census data reveals that from 2009 to 2010, the total number of children under age 18 living in poverty

increased to 16.4 million from 15.5 million. Child poverty rose from 20.7 per cent in 2009, to 22 per cent in 2010, and this is the highest it has ever been since 1993. Racial and ethnic disparities in poverty rates persist among children. The poverty rate for Black children was 38.2 per cent; 32.3 per cent for Hispanic children; 17 percent for non-Hispanic White children; and 13 percent for Asian children. The National Centre for Children in Poverty reports that 17.2 million children living in the U.S. have a foreign-born parent, and 4.2 million children of immigrant parents are poor. It is reported that child poverty in immigrant families is more closely related to low-wage work and barriers to valuable work supports. The Population Reference Bureau (2010) reports that 24 per cent of the 75 million children under age 18 in the U.S. live in a single-mother family. The poverty rate for children living in female-householder families (no spouse present) was 42.2 per cent in 2010; 7 in 10 children living with a single mother are poor or low-income, compared to less than a third (32 per cent) of children living in other types of families. A staggering 50.9 per cent of female-headed Hispanic households with children below 18 years of age live in poverty (48.8 per cent for Blacks; 31.6 per cent Asian, and 32.1 per cent non-Hispanic White). Single-mother headed households are more prevalent among African American and Hispanic families, contributing to ethnic disparities in poverty.”¹⁰

COLLAPSE OF MORALITY

Extreme inequality is even more problematic when it results from questionable behaviour of corporate houses and individuals in nexus with the state. Hunger and starvation when they are human-made are expressions of human greed. When people do not have their basic necessities met and the corporates still want to have more, a sense of injustice touches the core of deprived hearts. What angers the poor much more when they become aware is that greedy men and women stock a large amount of money outside the country to escape taxes and to preserve their unaccountable profits. And when individuals whether they are politicians, bureaucrats or the corporates are caught red-handed, they are protected by the system. The

increasing numbers of scams have made several individuals from the elite class wealthier. Changes in the tax system have increased the level of inequality over the past decades. While the poor are victims of indirect tax, the corporates are not sufficiently taxed on their incomes. How could we otherwise have so many billionaires in this country in the midst of hunger and starvation? If part of this wealth is spent on basic essentials for the poor, there will be much more development. The pursuit of the moneyed life has become the commanding value, in relation to which the influence of other values has declined.

Writing in the *New York Times* on December 3, 2009, Jim Hightower in his article on “A Cloud Still Hangs Over Bhopal” wrote, “Last December marked the 25th anniversary of a mass horror perpetrated by one of America’s richest and most powerful corporations – a horror that keeps growing. During the night of December 3, 1984, Union Carbide’s pesticide plant in Bhopal, India, leaked a 40-ton cloud of poison over the city. Nearly 4,000 of Bhopal’s men, women, and children died before daybreak, gasping for breath. Half a million more were enveloped in the corporation’s poison and horribly sickened, with many still suffering from severely damaged eyes and lungs. Another 15,000 have died since that night from the after effects of what Bhopalis now refer to simply as ‘the gas’. One who breathes freely, however, is, – Warren Anderson, Union Carbide’s CEO at the time. As recently reported by journalist Suketu Mehta, Anderson lives in luxurious retirement in the Hamptons. Neither he nor the corporation ever admitted any guilt, and the families of the people whom they killed received only an average of \$2,200 in a rushed-up settlement. Union Carbide subsequently closed the factory, sold its Indian subsidiary, and left the country – without even cleaning up the deadly toxic waste it left behind in the factory. In 2001, Dow Chemical bought Union Carbide, gaining all of its assets, but rejecting any of its liabilities. The \$2,200 death payments, explained a Dow spokesman, were ‘plenty good for an Indian.’ Such cold arrogance stands as a lasting global monument to corporate immorality. As Mehta reports, ‘What’s missing in the whole sad story is any sense of a human connection between the faceless people

who run the corporation and the victims.' Even after 25 years of the ongoing horror, Bhopal's survivors still have not received the basic human courtesy of an apology for the gross wrong done to them. And corporate executives wonder why they are despised"¹¹.

One would not be wrong if one has to state that corporations do not have a conscience or morality. Union Carbide is not an exception but the rule. Most corporations act without compassion and no matter what damage they cause, it is without remorse. Even worse, they cannot be held accountable for their actions. Another aspect of corporate immorality is the tendency to forget about moral matters in the pursuit of profits. Business persons convicted of serious crimes have testified that they were tempted by the lure of greater profits. In the craze for profits, they do not provide reliable information to consumers. Another underlying contributor to corporate immorality is the very structure of the corporation itself. They are deliberately structured to facilitate the pursuit of profits. Unknown to many, giant corporations have caused horror in homes, offices and communities. They have been responsible for mass murders as in the Bhopal gas tragedy, destruction of families, and introduction of harmful substances to the human body and placed people in death traps and killing machines. They have harmed communities, employees, suppliers, customers and the general public. Public interests are never their concern though they claim to have the interests of the public. Toxic wastes buried by chemical companies have caused serious respiratory ailments, epilepsy, cancer, genetic damage to unborn children and a host of other diseases. Defective products are knowingly released in the market resulting in illness or death to customers. The pharmaceutical companies have caused pelvic infections, seriously affected the health of people and vaccines have damaged human brains. The public suffers from the pollution, depletion of natural resources, commercial encroachment and congestion caused by corporations which disregard the environment. While the wastes of industrialization have engulfed our environment, the corporations have not taken responsibility for it. The bad smell of the passing river, the carbon monoxide-filled air, plastics that clog our sewerage system, carcinogens contained in the food have all

put our lives in danger. The acts of corporations are contrary to morality, ethics and decency. They teach to place obligation to the company and to the job over obligation to one's conscience, family, friends and community. This leads to a schizophrenic morality. Corporate managers, whose personal morality, conscience or religion would prevent them as individuals from ever willingly placing others' lives in jeopardy for a few dollars of profit, will do exactly that in the corporation. Good people end up taking harmful actions because when they enter the corporate environment, they come under great pressure to accept the corporate morality, to allow it to dominate their personal morality.

NEED FOR AN IDEOLOGICAL WAR

Globalization or neo-liberalism is an ideology. This ideology has clear premises, goals and a vision. An ideology can be countered only with another ideology. To defeat the ideology of neo-liberalism that excludes the majority, the alternate ideology needs to be an ideology of inclusive communities and of solidarity. Neo-liberalism is a corporate ideology to enhance the privileges of a few at the expense of the people and the environment. The alternate ideology has to be a people's ideology that is deeply rooted in society - an ideology that unites all those who are affected and exploited by the ideology of neo-liberalism. Those who oppose neo-liberalism strongly hold that the present economy is anti-democratic and has favoured the Multinational and Transnational Corporations. As a result, over 80 per cent of the people of the country have not benefitted from progress and development. The dissatisfaction of the masses is felt all over the country with an increase in violent and extremist activities. Farmers are committing suicide with the collapse of the agricultural economy. There have been starvation deaths in several parts of the country. The average intake of food has declined. There are a large number of protests, strikes and restlessness across states. In the midst of the turmoil, the State has not positively intervened. In fact, all over the country, the various arms of the state are used to counter people's resistance. There has been unprecedented violence on those who work for people's movements, resist the corporate

agenda and side with the victims of violence. Accusations have been made against academicians and activists for expressing concern of being in nexus with extremist groups when they have sided with the oppressed communities. Whether it is Nandigram in West Bengal, Nandagudy in Karnataka, Gujarat genocide, Odisha violence in Kandamal or the protests over nuclear plants, the state's role has been on the side of the perpetrators of violence. India's emergence as a nuclear power, increase in the defence budget and repressive laws like TADA and Armed Forces Special Powers Act are manifestation of this. Political groups that have not been banned are treated as enemies of the people when they resist the government or corporations. Accusations are made against civil society groups on the ground that they are sympathizers of Naxalites or Maoists.

STRUGGLE IS TO REPLACE EXCLUSION BY INCLUSION

Fundamentally, it is a struggle to replace competition by cooperation, markets by society, exclusion by inclusion, production for profit by production for need. This will make it possible to redevelop the large areas of the world devastated by capitalism and create another world. To create that world, people need a vision. The TINA (there is no alternative) syndrome is the syndrome of the defenders of globalization, who hold the view that there is no theoretical and practical alternative to globalization. Karl Polanyi offers an alternative. Polanyi distinguishes three phases of society-economy inter-relationship. Under prehistoric capitalism, with economy embedded in the society, social rules and practices were governed by economic activities. Religion and ethics exerted tremendous influence over the economy. With the emergence of capitalism, the economy became dis-embedded from the society. The so-called 'invisible hand' or 'market mechanism' enabled this dis-embeddedness. The neo-liberal phase has subordinated society to the economy. When the Third World was formed after the Second World War, the governments were assigned the role to maximize 'social welfare' and development planning was prescribed as the means to achieve it. What we need at this juncture is an alternative ideology which could legitimize re-embedding the economy in society rather than having

a society driven by the economy. Democracy makes no sense if it is merely restricted to the political realm. Both at the level of economy and politics, the need for participation of citizens is an essential dimension of democracy. Citizens cannot be alienated from both economy and politics.

GLOBALIZATION BY LOCALIZATION

The analysis of different struggles drives home the point that they are struggles against the global. The demand of the people of Odisha, who have been resisting corporate POSCO from acquiring hundreds of acres of land, is that they should have the right over their land than a global corporation. Similarly, when people oppose Wal-Mart, the message that is sent out is that people would like to manage their own economy and they do not need corporations from outside the country to do that for them. Global economy besides undermining the sovereignty of the people and the state, robs the local people of their resources, homogenizes production and attacks diversity. Nature has gifted different countries with different kinds of resources. On these resources humans have come to rely for their livelihoods, promoting diversity and pluralism. The local community and its people or localization is the main pillar of an alternative to globalization. If local community becomes central, promotion of self-reliance of the local economy becomes crucial. The family has to employ its productive resources in such a way as to provide goods to meet its 'needs' of all the members. At the village level, whatever is required by the people will have to be produced as far as possible within its geographic terrain. On the state and national levels, it then becomes imperative to phase out the dependence on multinational and transnational corporations that provide junk food and destroy local livelihoods in the name of development. The products of MNCs/ TNCs are just not necessary for ordinary people. People were and are able to produce what they need once freed from the clutches of the MNCs/TNCs. While globalization has divided people into rich and poor, local production will unite people into communities. Decentralized politics and planning is a potential weapon to fight capitalism. Grassroots social and economic

institutions like the self-help groups and micro-financing can empower people, enabling them to replace globalization of the economy through localization. The slogan of the World Social Forum is “another world is possible”. As long as, there is no equality, community and justice, the present world can never be a human and just world. An unjust world would create more wars and disharmony leading to even the destruction of the world. That is why it is imperative that a commitment is made to the establishment of another world. Ordinary people across the world are becoming more and more aware of their common humanity and the need for lobbying and advocacy to establish solidarity and oneness to create that world of humanity, living with peace, amity and justice.

MEANS OF CREATING ANOTHER WORLD

Media with its various sectors – newspapers, TVs, websites, internet and other means of information – are a means for that venture. If the corporate media has provided the much needed legitimacy for corporatization, the local media can make a difference to those searching for an alternative. There are committed individuals, journalists and civil society groups though small in number already committed to this alternative. In fact, the alternative is emerging from the grassroots. In the Internet, there are alternative sites. The dissidents in China used the Net to give detailed accounts of state oppression and arrests. The struggle there is on and the state may be able to curb it for a limited time. The Tibetan cause has become an international cause, thanks to the Internet. The North-East groups have set up their websites as part of their war against the Indian army. They have not given up their right for their identity in a federal Indian state. Thanks to the Internet, several local struggles have become global with global solidarity and expression of support to these causes. People searching for their identity have established their websites to awaken and to make people aware of their struggles. Much of the mobilization to Occupy Movements or the Arab Spring have been as a result of the Net. In an information age, the Net has been used for campaigns and mobilization.

The women’s groups, peasant groups, the Blacks and the Dalits,

thanks to the media have established global networks to awaken human hearts across the globe to arouse human support, making their cause international. In spite of being controlled by the corporates, a section of the media has helped out in making the local concerns global as well. While individuals do not have much of a freedom in corporate-managed TV channels or newspapers, individuals have made use of that freedom. Various grassroots struggles like the struggles of the people of Narmada, Dalit cause and the cause of the indigenous people for land and livelihood have become global causes thanks to these individuals in the media. The domestic communication systems reflect the history, needs, concerns, values and cultures of people. Networking among personnel of the local media internationally has made a difference. The present media is global, influencing the local. We need a network of local media to influence the minds and hearts of the people across the globe to defeat the designs of the MNCs and TNCs. Persuasive means are required to mould people's thinking. Small media with websites, local channels, street theatre, village newspapers, documentaries and Internet communication can all make a difference to create global solidarity among oppressed groups and communities and thus resist the designs of the corporates.

There is a need "to spread information through the Internet and those independent – not by government or monopoly capital funded – magazines and papers. Governments are trying to suppress the relative freedom of the Net. But as yet, we can still use these outlets to spread information to the public. We do not, and need not, trust the official reporters. After all, even if they want to be different and report honestly they are employed to sing as they are paid to sing. If they are honest and also strong enough to overcome the gate-keepers, good! If not, it is necessary for us to use other ways. But what is needed the world around is concrete information. You have to see to it that it is spread. The Net is still rather open even if the media are controlled."¹² Jan Myrdal fully understands that the fight is against global capital. It needs an intervention at the level of people locally with solidarity globally. Since the corporate media is the public media of states, the Internet can be used to create people's solidarity for

ideas to be spread, action to be evolved and opposition to be built for 'another world'.

PEOPLE'S RESISTANCE

The examples of people who are resisting global corporations and their local exploitation through different means are many. While some have resorted to violence, others have taken to movements and struggles. Some others have intervened through their academic discourses while being part of the people.

THROUGH VIOLENCE AND VIOLENT MOVEMENTS

The extremist groups see violence as the only method to overthrow the present state aligned with global forces. The reason is simple. Corporations do not dialogue. They want their agenda to be implemented by states. They expect the people to obey the state, which has mortgaged the interests of citizens to transnational and multinational corporations. The extremist groups see no other possibility than taking to arms against the state in the situation. Josy Joseph, writing in the Times of India of May 10, 2005, opined that Naxalism as the biggest threat to India. "Nightmare is beginning to unfold in the heart of India. Latest intelligence reports say that armed Naxalites have a presence in 170 districts in 15 states of India as of now, and spreading wide and far. Just months back, the Naxals were present only in 156 districts in 13 states. Not just numbers, what adds to the administration's worry is that they are armed with sophisticated weapons. From the peasant uprising in Naxalbari village in Darjeeling district of West Bengal in May 1967, the movement is today a complex web that covers some 15 states of India... When the group started under the leadership of people like Kanu Sanyal and Charu Majumdar in West Bengal, it was still part of Communist Party of India (Marxist), but split away, took to underground and stayed there to build a powerful network spanning hundreds of villages. In 1969, they had floated the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist). The group has split several times and some of them have returned to the democratic process. Security

agencies began to worry afresh in September 2004 when two of India's leading armed movements, the Maoist Communist Centre and the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist), popularly called the People's War Group, merged to form the Communist Party of India (Maoist). This united front of the armed movement is the deadliest that Indian police forces have ever faced. Today, it is a 'multi-layered operation', says a senior IPS officer involved in fighting the threat. 'A wide network of armed cadres, who take guidance from ideologues, and both get unflinching support from ordinary villagers who have lost faith in the government and its machinery.' It is not surprising that the Karnataka government has re-routed the Special Task Force originally set up to hunt down forest brigand Veerappan to take on the Naxal movement. It also exposes a major gap in the strategy of Indian states to meet the Naxal challenge and demand. There are dozens of complaints pending with the National Human Rights Commission and state human rights commissions against alleged fake encounters. In response, Naxals are toughening their stand and adding to the violence in an already volatile situation. A cycle of violence and bloodshed is being unveiled across the rural landscape of middle-India. The result has been that rural India is as unruly as it has never been. Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh has repeatedly expressed his concern over the Naxal spread, and recently referred to the 'virtual collapse' of law and order in some parts of the country. His home minister Shivraj Patil has been more forthcoming about the entire issue, arguing that there is a need to identify 'causes' of Naxal violence. Issues such as economic disparities, social injustice and lack of development are among the catalysts of naxal movements, Patil points out. Defence Minister Pranab Mukherjee lists Naxalism among the three important security threats facing India. He argues that there is no alternative to dialogue in a democracy. The ceasefire declared between the government and the Naxalites is tentatively holding, but many accuse the state of being soft on the Naxals, who they believe are resting and recuperating. Intelligence agencies in New Delhi say that they have been warning the Centre of further complications emerging in the Naxal activities. Among them is the easy access they have to modern sophisticated weapons from Europe

and rest of the world. On January 8 this year, some 200 ammunition cases with Pakistani and British markings were recovered in Indrakhor area of Balrampur district in Chhattisgarh, where the Naxals have deep roots. The state police claimed that local Naxal commanders who were interrogated admitted receiving arms from Pakistan, but did not disclose how these came in. Sophisticated weaponry with Naxals 'is scary', says a senior security officer in New Delhi, while admitting that there is no comprehensive input to prove such continuous flow of weapons."¹³ The organization of this group is well knit and connected. With the kind of violence they have inflicted on the state with killings of army and military personnel, the governments both at the centre and the states have felt insecure.

"The CPI (Maoist) has an army of its own called the People's Liberation Guerilla Army (PLGA) which is controlled by the Central Military Commission (CMC). PLGA has three components – the main force, the secondary force and the base force. The main force consists of highly equipped guerillas that are under the commands, of state units. These forces are deployed in major operations. The secondary force is the local guerilla squads. The base force includes people's militia or the ordinary men and women who are given rudimentary military training. While the trained guerillas use sophisticated weapons like AK series rifles, INSAS, carbines and rockets, the local militia used locally available weapons like swords, knives, axes and iron rods. Troupes from People's Militia have participated in the operations like the Jehanabad jail-break in Chhattisgarh and attack in Koraput in Odisha. The estimated number of PLGA is between 15,000 and 20,000. The CPI (Maoist) has a military intelligence wing and a central instruction team. An arrested leader has confessed that the organization spends around Rs 60 crore for purchase of arms every year. The funding for the activities of the outfit is mainly from extortion from big business groups. The Naxal-affected areas in the central and east India are mineral-rich areas and the Maoists collect 'revolutionary tax' from the companies which operate in the areas. The tendu leaf pickers whose wages have multiplied after the intervention of the rebels give a part of their

wages to the Maoists. Maoists also loot banks to fill their coffers. According to Mao, there are three magic weapons for the working class to win political power – the party, the army and the united front. CPI (Maoist) is the party and the PLGA is the army. Maoists in India have successfully built a network of united fronts in various forms. United front is a need-based alliance the Maoists resort to address a specific issue. All the constituents of the front need not share the Maoist ideology, but they share some common concerns. Maoists had intervened in people's issues through their frontal organizations and with the help of the united front. Visthapan Virodhi Janvikas Andolan is an organization launched under the leadership of the Maoists to challenge the threat of evacuation of people for big projects. The meeting of the organization in Ranchi in 2007 adopted the slogan: 'No displacement at Any Cost'. Maoists were present in the Nandigram agitation and are actively engaged in the tribals' resistance in Lalgah against forcible evacuation. The Maoists have a large support base among the intellectuals and professionals. The Revolutionary Democratic Front (RDF) in Delhi, People's Democratic Front of India (PDFI), Democratic Students Union (DSU) in Jawaharlal Nehru University in Delhi and Revolutionary Writers Union (Andhra) have allegiance to Maoism, though they do not have any official link with the left rebels. Recently, Delhi Police included some of these organizations and their leaders in the charge-sheet filed against arrested Maoist leader Kobad Ghandy, alleging that they help the Maoists to broadbase their activities."¹⁴

At the same time, a cable from the United States Embassy sent on December 8, 2005, by Ambassador David Mulford had said, "As long as India's political parties and elites are willing to accept the status quo and not take on feudal interests, the stalemate and the violence will continue. Despite India's rapidly expanding economy, Naxalite groups in poor rural areas and their educated urban sympathizers continue to spread and have extended their areas of influence into 12 states, proving they can launch spectacular attacks on government facilities. Indian economic development has missed large portions of the countryside. India's Scheduled Tribes, and

Scheduled Castes who live in these remote areas, often face lives of desperation and view Naxalites as the only groups willing to defend them. There is no chance Naxalites could threaten the Indian state and the GOI is unlikely to eradicate Naxalism through police action. The most likely prospect is a continuing and bloody stalemate.” In its analysis of the “Naxalite menace”, the Embassy said: “Although Naxalites claim to represent the interests of India’s oppressed Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, the leadership is almost entirely from the upper castes, including some highly educated individuals. The same applies to the extensive Naxalite support network, including above-ground organizations of educated middle class persons from academia, the media and the legal profession.” Without this middle class, above-ground support, the Naxalite movement would not have been able to expand, it added. Another cable, sent on December 20, 2005 by Charge d’affaires Robert Blake, said the government’s unwillingness and inability to make the difficult decisions required to prevent destruction of the forests and to end the exploitation and victimization of tribals plays into the hands of the Naxalites. “Most tribals have little or no faith that the GOI will protect them, and over time may see little alternative but to turn to the Maoists as the best of a bad set of choices.”¹⁵

These movements thrive on the dissatisfaction of the marginalized. The rebel movements have expanded due to the failure of the institutional mechanisms and frameworks to deliver socio-economic justice. Close examination of the movements will enable to understand that the marginalized take up arms only to break down the insensitive establishment, which has failed to deliver an egalitarian society. The Naxalite leaders may talk about deliverance of the proletariat from the neo-liberalist bourgeoisie, and the dawn of new democracy. However, such phrases mean little to the tribals and landless labourers, who find themselves at the receiving end of state sponsored and non- state-sponsored exploitation. They are in the battle only because of their disillusionment with the status quo. Until the government implements the right to employment, poverty alleviation and land reform programmes, stops eviction of tribals and alienation of their land, counter-insurgency measures cannot achieve much. The problem

is a problem of socio-economic injustice and not a problem of law and order. Social justice and inclusive growth are the planks on which the government must build its response. Only with consolidated efforts on the part of the state “to include the excluded” can the problem of Naxalism be tackled. If disparities grow further, there will be more bloodshed and violence. If young people think that the state cheats and takes away whatever they have, their land and resources in the name of development to be handed over to the corporations, what other options do they have?

d. Through Movements and Struggles:

The most widespread resistance to neo-liberalism is what has come to be known as Occupy Movements across USA and Europe. “Occupy Wall Street (OWS) is a people-powered movement that began on September 17, 2011 in Liberty Square in Manhattan’s financial district, and has spread to over 100 cities in the United States and actions in over 1,500 cities globally. It is fighting back against the corrosive power of major banks and multinational corporations over the democratic process, and the role of Wall Street in creating an economic collapse that has caused the greatest recession in generations. The movement is inspired by popular uprisings in Egypt and Tunisia, and aims to fight back against the richest 1 per cent of people that are writing the rules of an unfair global economy that is foreclosing on our future. The occupations around the world are being organized using a non-binding consensus-based collective decision-making tool known as a ‘people’s assembly.’¹⁶ “By making Wall Street its symbolic target, and branding itself as a movement of the 99 per cent, OWS has redirected public attention to the issue of extreme inequality. The topic on the table everywhere seems to be the morality of contemporary financial capitalism. The protestors have accomplished this mainly through the symbolic power of their actions: by naming Wall Street, the heartland of financial capitalism, as the enemy, and by welcoming the homeless and the down-and-out to their occupation sites. And of course, the slogan ‘We are the 99 per cent’ reiterated the message that almost all of us are suffering from the reckless profiteering of a tiny handful. In fact, they aren’t

far off: the increase in income of the top 1 per cent over the past three decades about equals the losses of the bottom 80 per cent. A moral economy for our own time would certainly take on the unbridled accumulation of wealth at the expense of the majority (and the planet). It would also single out for special condemnation the creation of an ever-larger stratum of people we call 'the poor' who struggle to survive in the shadow of the overconsumption and waste of that top 1 per cent. Early in 2011, the U.S. Census Bureau reported that 14.3 per cent of the population, or 47 million people — one in six Americans — were living below the official poverty threshold, currently set at \$22,400 annually for a family of four. Some 19 million people are living in what is called extreme poverty, which means that their household income falls in the bottom half of those considered to be below the poverty line. More than a third of those extremely poor people are children. Indeed, more than half of all children younger than six living with a single mother are poor. Extrapolating from this data, Emily Monea and Isabel Sawhill of the Brookings Institution estimate that further sharp increases in both poverty and child poverty rates lie in our American future. The official numbers don't tell the full story. The situation of the poor is actually considerably worse. Between 2001 and 2007, poverty actually increased for the first time on record during an economic recovery. It rose from 11.7 per cent in 2001 to 12.5 per cent in 2007. Poverty rates for single mothers in 2007 were 49 per cent higher in the U.S. than in 15 other high-income countries. Similarly, black employment rates and income were declining before the recession struck."¹⁷

The movement has spread to England, France and the whole of Europe. Growing dissatisfaction and discontent along with impoverishment of the working class has caused the spread of the movement. "The pro-equality Occupy movement is rapidly gathering pace in Germany, with fresh protests starting in the capital Berlin and the country's financial heartland of Frankfurt. Thousands are set to join the demonstrations, seeking to draw attention to rampant corporate greed and the increasing poverty of the masses. The German Occupy movement has also made significant steps in legitimizing itself, having earned the support of two major political factions.

According to police, more than 10,000 people took to the streets of two major German cities, protesting against the banks' dominance. In Berlin, demonstrators have formed a human chain surrounding parts of the government district to call for an end to excesses of financial speculation and urge the authorities to dismantle big banks, AP reports. Frankfurt police said some 9,000 people were peacefully protesting in the city centre near the European Central Bank's office block. 'We want more democracy and more transparency, and the big banks and other big companies abusing the power of their money,' one of the 'Occupy Frankfurt' campaigners, Thomas Leuten, told RT. 'Only a mass of people will change this.' RT spoke to one of the organizers of the event and a spokesperson for the pro-equality movement – 'Attac Germany', Max Bank. He believes that if democracy is to survive in Germany, now is the time to make a stand. 'We have a worldwide problem in the financial sector, which is absolutely deregulated, and we need further regulation in order to make the sector compatible with democratic societies,' he told RT. 'Otherwise, we will always see such measures as the enlargement of the EFSF that we saw a couple of weeks ago, [when] the German parliament pushed through within days.' Max Bank referred to the events of 2008 and 2009, when many banks were bailed out without any conditions at the time of the global financial crunch. 'We need clear conditions for those banks [which] were bailed out,' he said. 'That hasn't happened in Germany, and that's what we criticize, in order to make a clear sign that democratic societies can no longer tolerate ... banks that can suppress our societies.' Jutta Sundermann of the pro-equality 'Attac Germany' group says Berlin is partly responsible for Europe's economic woes. 'Germany is one of the countries that caused quite a lot of trouble we have in Europe now, because of the way international competition is organized,' she told RT. 'Germany is very often on the winning side, but that means that we also export poverty and [unemployment].' Sundermann echoed Max Bank by referring to the recent crisis of 2008. Back then, taxpayers were forced to save banks, and eventually billions were thrown to bail them out. By doing this, the fundamental principles of democracy were jeopardized, she says. 'People here on

the streets, they agree... that it is needed to go out because everybody learns that democracy is in danger,' she said. 'In our country too, there is no perspective, [it is not clear] how to go on if this crisis goes on further. And it will,' Sundermann concluded"¹⁸. There are stories of the kind from practically every European country.

More than 90 countries of the world have taken to it. The protests in individual countries often focus on local issues, but what they have in common is a concern over economic inequality, high unemployment, and the influence of corporations – particularly banks – upon governments. The movement has alarmed authorities. The American protests have been largely peaceful. Some European cities such as Rome have suffered tremendously from violent rioting: cars were burnt down, a church attacked and the windows of banks and large corporations smashed. A variety of interest groups seem to have found a platform in the movement to advance and publicize their views. Even though the regional causes are different both with regard to their gravity and in their manifestation, protesters are united in their expression of disappointment with both their politicians and the role corporations and banks have come to play in their countries. Citizens of these countries have started to perceive their governments as weak and impotent in their response to the financial crises that banks and corporations had a large hand in causing. This concern unites the protesters in the different countries, even though it is expressed by different actors – broad civil society in the US and anti-globalization NGOs in Europe – but nevertheless plays a key role in both regional factions of the movement. The movement has two significant things. Ordinary people are becoming increasingly aware that they are not alone in their suffering. On the other hand the governments are becoming increasingly aware that society is not as depoliticized and uninterested as often portrayed. By expressing and publicizing their opinion, protesters have made a change within civil society itself.

The impacts of these protests have been so great that Time Magazine named "The Protestor" as the magazine's "Man of the Year" for 2011. Among the numerous protests across the world, the Occupy Movement has been the most prominent. One may not be able to

term it a social movement but it surely is an upsurge where people have mobilized to seek social justice on their own, refusing to rely on politicians and the bureaucrats. Hundreds of thousands have assembled, marched, sang, danced, cheered and shouted, repudiating the status quo, at one level or another with mobilizations of people of all ages, of all genders, of all racial groupings, all education levels, all works, all occupations and status. They cannot be simply dismissed as “the usual suspects”, since the mobilization in general is much larger, more sustained, and more representative of the large majority of people of the country. What is significant in the mobilization is that it is taking place in the very birth place of capitalism and neo-liberalism with the ever widening gap between the rich and the poor. Wages and salaries have been stagnant. There are a lack of jobs and much less good-paying jobs. Unemployment has been on the increase. The social safety net is already gaping. The cost of gasoline, housing, home heating fuel, and food—continue to rise. The worsening economic conditions are structural, not cyclical. The escalating income inequality is another symptom of the disease. The political system is being seen as overwhelmingly corrupt. Politicians are not addressing the problems of the majority. The wealthy have bought off the politicians and the politicians are acting to serve the interest of the rich at the expense of the majority of the ordinary and the poor. The corruption of the mainstream news media that is providing legitimacy to the unjust system is also spreading. People know that to a large extent, the corporate mass media is lying. They see other channels and visit websites and discover the reality different from the one presented by the mainstream media. The Occupy Movement in general symbolizes the dissatisfaction that exists in society based on real situations and understandings. The movement has sent a loud and clear message to the elites, their politicians, and the police who serve them. The movement has been a collective.

ITS SOCIAL POWER

The experience of the Occupy Movement can be better understood as a product of the struggles of ordinary women and men to make real the ideals of the universal principles of justice through re-

distribution of economic wealth. The activists in each of these struggles have taken tremendous risks to win the social support of ordinary people to their goals. There were movements for liberation in the past. The abolition of untouchability movement in India, slavery or racism in the USA, the labour movement, the civil rights movement, the women's movement and the environmental movement are good examples. In fact, it were the activists' efforts that led to the development of each of these and other movements. That's what the Occupy Movement is attempting to do now, furthering this tradition of getting people to join the struggle for a better, less oppressive world. Whatever success has been generated has been the development of social power by the people below to force the people above to do what those below want.

WILL THE MOVEMENT SUCCEED?

The response depends on how to organize active individuals into a series of conscious political groups, each based on solidarity, and then to unite with other groups at a greater level of solidarity. The Occupiers are already there with their open, democratic processes in their General Assemblies. These are an effort to create that groupness, that collective identity and unity. And out of that, have come decisions to engage in collective behaviour. What is going on of course may not be sufficient. To withstand the repression of the establishment, the Occupy Movement needs to pull people together and "construct" the 99 per cent movement to build the unity and clarity that people aspire for, recognizing that they don't have it yet. The Occupiers have a wide range of thinking and positions that shows that they are not politically united. The movement needs to come to more developed common positions and ask questions whether they are trying to "reform" the system, or do they want to begin a process to consciously try to create a new society? Do they want to focus primarily on domestic issues, or do they focus on domestic and global issues at the same time? Do they want to support the existing political parties or do they begin to seriously build an alternative third party for elections ahead? There are no simple answers. It requires treating those with whom we have differences

with respect—and that means being willing to listen to them, to try to understand where they are coming from, and to intervene when they need to hear “alternative” visions.

GENERAL ASSEMBLIES

Occupy Movements are democratic and they have their General Assemblies that decide the course of action. But General Assemblies may not be sufficient. The movement may have to learn from the women’s movement, the anti-nuclear and weapons movement, and the anarchist movement. There may be a need to come together in smaller groups to begin the process of thinking things out. These meetings based on a number of commonalities of ideologies, geographical proximity or whatever brings small groups of people together, are essential. The goal is to create sustainable groups that will last over time to engage in commonly-desired political activities in the not-too-distant future. People are seeing the development of social movements across the world as challenging established dictatorships. They are seeing that the Greeks, and Israelis, and the British are rebelling. They might not understand the “why” of these rebellions, but they know people are not going passively to slaughter. The protests have been overwhelmingly rural and that is positive. The fact is the protesteers are the ordinary.

DEMAND FOR SMALL STATES

Another expression of resistance is the demand in India for smaller states. India has created new states in the past. These include Gujarat and Maharashtra (1960), Nagaland (1963), Punjab and Haryana (1966), Himachal Pradesh (1971), Manipur, Meghalaya and Tripura (1972), Sikkim (1975), Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram and Goa (1987), and Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Uttarakhand (2000). These have been responses to local aspirations. Mayawati has proposed to divide Uttar Pradesh into four states. The festering dispute regarding Telangana has severely damaged Andhra’s governance. The Gorkhaland continues to simmer. Coorg in Karnataka is demanding a status of a union territory. The region of Vidarbha in Maharashtra

is waiting to be self-governed. There are many more groups and communities now asking for an independent status either as a state or as a territory. Given India's tremendous cultural diversity, demands for separate states have surfaced at regular intervals. However, in recent years many more communities of people threatened of their identity have been making demands more than before. Their demands are for both identity and development in the context of market economy that has threatened the identities of subaltern communities while depriving them of their local resources. When the local and indigenous communities are thrown out of their places of livelihoods in the name of development and made refugees in their own homes, they do not easily give up. Even the threat of asking them to let go their identity makes them to hold on to it in a stronger manner than before. It is nature, water, rivers, forests and land that has provided people their identity for centuries. Any dislocation or threat of eviction or further marginalization forces communities of people to assert for their identity. The people of Telangana have felt marginalized. So are the Gorkhas. In recent years, it is the market economy that has threatened diversity and pluralism, defining identities in terms of uniformity. There have been threats to their livelihoods as well. The question whether smaller states would provide greater sense of identity and help these communities to protect their livelihoods is a theoretical one. The elite who take over governance may deprive people of both identity and livelihoods. But the demand for small states is an assertion against nationalism and globalism. There is plenty of evidence to show how people who are demanding a state or a region have been deprived of their legitimate share in public investment and employment, and how the natural resources of the region like land, water, forests and minerals have been alienated on a large scale to the enterprising migrants from other parts of the state and country. When investment flows from the developed to the less developed regions within a state, it often result in the appropriation of jobs by the migrants, apart from the alienation of natural resources. Deprivation of jobs and natural resources and degradation of environment lead to discontent, unrest and tensions.

d. Global Alternative Forums:

A number of global forums have come into existence with an intention of replacing the present capitalist world order with a more human order. The World Social Forum is the most participative among them all. It is not an organization and not a united front platform, but "...an open meeting place for reflective thinking, democratic debate of ideas, formulation of proposals, free exchange of experiences and inter-linking for effective action, by groups and movements of civil society that are opposed to neo-liberalism and to domination of the world by capital and any form of imperialism, and are committed to building a society centered on the human person."¹⁹ It is an annual meeting of civil society organizations, first held in Brazil 2001, which offers a self-conscious effort to develop an alternative future through the championing of counter-hegemonic globalization. Some consider the World Social Forum to be a physical manifestation of global civil society, as it brings together non-governmental organizations, advocacy campaigns as well as formal and informal social movements seeking international solidarity. The World Social Forum prefers to define itself as "an opened space – plural, diverse, non-governmental and non-partisan – that stimulates the decentralized debate, reflection, proposals building, experiences exchange and alliances among movements and organizations engaged in concrete actions towards a more solidarity, democratic and fair world....a permanent space and process to build alternatives to neoliberalism." It is held by members of the alter-globalization movement (also referred to as the global justice movement), who come together to coordinate global campaigns, share and refine organizing strategies, and inform each other about movements from around the world and their particular issues. It tends to meet in January at the same time as its "great capitalist rival", the World Economic Forum's annual meeting in Davos, Switzerland. This date is consciously picked to promote their alternative answers to world economic problems in opposition to the World Economic Forum."²⁰

Under the slogan "Another World is Possible", the first World Social Forum (WSF) took place at Porto Alegre in Brazil in 2001. It

is no accident that the left of the Brazilian Workers Party (PT) were in power in Porto Alegre and that the movement was offered facilities from the local council. Everyone and anyone fighting neo-liberal globalization was invited. The enormous strength of the WSF is its openness and diversity, also the emphasis on democracy and creating an inclusive space. From the outset political parties have not been allowed to be formal participants in the gatherings and structures of the WSF, the reason being the fear of the domination of the space by those parties. However, members of parties and leaders of parties have taken part and have spoken at events and rallies of the WSF.

The World Social Forum has broken down barriers and has assisted in the creation of international networks. It has put the small rural community of Pachemada in Kerala, resisting Coca Cola for stealing and polluting their water supply, in touch with students in Europe and the US who act in solidarity by campaigning for a boycott of Coca Cola on university campuses. It has connected women's organizations fighting discrimination across the globe. The movement is reclaiming the ground of international solidarity and an international consciousness which had been lost for a period. The WSF and the global justice movement are helping create an international consciousness, links are strengthening between diverse and dispirited campaigns and organizations, and there is a space to exchange ideas and to find solutions to the unanswered question of how to organize effective action on a global scale to stop privatization and multinational domination of the world's resources, and protect our environment.

RESISTANCE TO CORPORATIONS IN INDIA

There have been instances of resistance to corporations in India as well. Given the federal nature of the country some of those struggles have been at the local level by the local people. Corporations have succeeded to move out into another state when they have faced resistance in one state. While the leaders of states have welcomed them, it is the ordinary people that have opposed them. Take the case of DuPont in Goa.

a. The case of DuPont

“DuPont had plans to set up Asia’s largest Nylon 6.6 plant in Goa. For seven years, the villages surrounding the proposed site carried on a sustained agitation on environmental and other grounds against the project. The police swooped down on eight demonstrators and stripped and beat them up in the police cells. The incident of police brutality had repercussions on the police and the administration could never have imagined. It led to a large-scale demonstration during a public function organized by Eduardo Faleiro, the Union Minister of State for Chemicals, at Farmagudi, Ponda, on January 21, 1995. Events snowballed rapidly after that, leading to the movement taking over the plant site on January 25. The state tried every kind of tricks, including violence on the mob – women and other activists. The police had fired without any prior warning. Two girls fell, with bullet injuries on their thighs. Then a young man, Nilesh Naik, also fell to the first line of bullets. Eyewitnesses say he was shot in the chest at point-blank range. The women, despite being shot at, moved with determination towards the policemen firing at them. The police panicked as stones began flying at them from both sides of the road. The officials jammed themselves into a police bus, turned around and fled. The other bus faced the fury of the crowd and so did the three jeeps. They were burned to ashes. Several policemen suffered injuries. Some were kidnapped by the crowd and stripped of their clothes in a return action for what had been done to their fellow activists earlier. A passing bus was requisitioned by the activists to rush Nilesh to the Ponda Hospital. However, the police impounded the bus 2 kilometers down the road, broke up the vehicle in anger and took Nilesh with them to the Ponda police station, where he lay for another 20 minutes before he was taken on a motorcycle to the hospital. He was pronounced dead on arrival; the doctor said the young man would have survived had he arrived just a few minutes earlier. The other injured people were shifted to the Bambolim Medical College near Panjim. The villagers next targeted the public clinic set up by DuPont for the villagers at Querim and razed it to the ground. By this time, anger against DuPont and Thapar had reached a crescendo. The night of the police

murder, the Anti-Nylon Coordinating Committee announced a Ponda strike for the following day even as the administration imposed a curfew in the city. The following day, however, before dawn could break, roadblocks were already installed by the activists bringing all life to a grinding halt. Police officials attempting to approach the town were met by a rain of soda water bottles at Kundai and had to retreat to Panjim. Several buses and jeeps went up in flames. No human beings, however, were hurt. In the morning, after they had taken control of Ponda town, the activists went up to the local Thapar DuPont office and brought out more than 700 files, piles of site plans and drawings of the proposed factory, visiting cards, fax machines and office equipment including tables, a refrigerator, three pistols and an illegal Stengun and burned these in the middle of the road. Twelve suitcases stacked with 500 denomination rupee notes belonging to the company were also consigned to the flames. In the evening, a fire engine which came into the city unescorted was also burnt to junk. Throughout the day, curfew was imposed on the police by the people, rather than the other way round. They had now to remain within the precincts of the Ponda and Farmagudi police stations for fear of being exterminated if they ventured out. The strike ended at 8 pm. On January 25, the body of Nilesh was brought to the Ponda bus stand from the morgue where it was dressed with flowers by hundreds of activists and taken in a kilometre long procession to the village of Savoi Verem. The procession took over two hours as villagers all along the 12-kilometre route, including hundreds of school children, insisted on paying their respects to the fallen activist. In the evening, the body was cremated on a specially erected platform just outside the factory's gates. The area was renamed Hutatma Nilesh Pathar (plateau). Even as the funeral pyre was lit, smoke could be seen billowing from the factory's administrative buildings as demonstrators set fire to them. A stick of dynamite exploded among the remains of the administrative buildings. Later the same evening, Thapar DuPont MD Sam Singh informed the press that the company "was completely shaken up over the past three days' events" and expressed his disappointment that the Chief Minister could not provide safety and security for the company's

properties at the site. As the people began returning home from the brightly burning pyre, it was quite obvious that the site - acquired by the Government for the factory - had returned into the possession of the villagers. Village animals, including goats and cows, prevented for several months from entering the area, were now seen once again freely browsing all over the plot. The week's events were an utter humiliation for DuPont, America's largest chemical multinational. The militant and successful rejection of the multinational's factory is the first of its kind since the country began the process of neo-liberalization, and it presages more to come as multinationals attempt to grab more and more Indian resources through the agencies of the Indian state in the name of progress. DuPont was not allowed to establish itself in Goa because of people's resistance.²¹ But the polluting corporation was welcomed to Tamil Nadu.

b. The case of Coca-Cola

The Coca-Cola Corporation is another example of how corporations ruin the environment, causing health hazards and depriving the local population of drinking water and how people if organized can defeat the corporate agenda. The company finally had to leave. A High Powered Committee (HPC) set up by the Kerala government had asked Coca-Cola to pay a sum of \$48 million (Rs 216.26 crore) in damages to the community and the environment around its bottling plant in Plachimada. The Coca-Cola bottling plant in Plachimada was shut since March 2004 on government orders. According to the HPC, the Kerala Agricultural University found that fodder, milk, meat and egg samples collected from the Plachimada area contained copper, cadmium, lead and chromium at levels considered toxic by World Health Organization standards. The HPC had added that the deterioration in the quality and quantity of groundwater and the consequent public health problems, displacement and migration of labour and destruction of the agricultural economy were the main problems in Plachimada, identified as caused and contributed by the Coca-Cola plant. "The drought-prone village has always been in the news for all the wrong reasons, starting with 2003. The Kerala Assembly passed the

Plachimada Coca Cola Victims Relief and Compensation Claims Tribunal Bill on February 24, 2011, effectively allowing the setting up a special tribunal that can make a \$48 million claim on the American beverage giant for alleged environmental and soil degradation, and water contamination caused by its over-extraction of ground water. The three-member tribunal will have powers to consider petitions for compensation or restitution of property damaged, against the company, arising out of grievances due to violation of laws relating to environment, air and water pollution, according to a report by Press Trust of India. The bill's approval came after a report by a high-powered committee evaluated the 'loss.' Over the years, Coca-Cola often has characterized the 'campaign' against it as being xenophobic by nationalists opposed to the American company. Coca-Cola's defence on many grounds, principally over-extraction of ground water, might be defensible but not this one. The alleged environmental damage of the region by Coca-Cola was first uncovered by the BBC in 2003, and far more successful campaigns have been waged against the beverage giant in the United States. Journalists of the British Broadcasting Service commissioned tests on water samples from wells surrounding the Coca-Cola plant as well as a sludge generated by the plant, and liberally handed out to farmers. The tests found that the water and sludge contained toxic substances. It was only after this that the issue came out into the open, leading to global headlines, vigorous protests by the Plachimada village panchayat and court battles. Coca-Cola has, unsurprisingly, used its public relations prowess to fight off critics, who in 2006 also found that its drinks bottled in India had dangerous levels of pesticides. The pesticide issue is a forgotten one now, probably because all bottlers, including rival Pepsi, stood accused. But Plachimada has never died down, probably because it has been isolated here, even though Pepsi has a plant not far away. Also, Coca-Cola's famed PR machinery has been unable to satisfactorily explain the toxic sludge and why it extracted so much water in a known drought-prone area. It is not clear what defence it might have now. Or would it just pay off what is small change for one of the world's biggest companies? Coca-Cola officials merely

expressed disappointment over the Bill, saying it was the result of a 'flawed process.' The Bill is devoid of facts and scientific data and the company was never offered an opportunity to present its facts and views, the company said in a release"²² .

The action on the corporation was made possible due to people's protests. The local protest had completed 3,000 days. The agitation has been described as a struggle by the local people to establish their right to natural resources such as soil and water and a fight to protect their livelihood of agriculture. The licence of the company was cancelled on April 7, 2004. The bottling unit was established in March 2000 with 140 regular employees and 250 casual labourers. Initially, it was a local stir, but it soon drew international attention with environmentalists, including Medha Patkar and Vandana Shiva, joining the movement against the exploitation of natural resources by the multinational at the cost of people and the environment.

c. Struggle against POSCO

The other protest that is on is against tribal land acquisition in Odisha. "Protests continue to intensify against land acquisition for the proposed 12 billion dollar POSCO plant in Govindpur in Orissa (now Odisha). After warning the government of dire consequences in a statement on Friday, five political parties and even civil society activists went to express solidarity with the protestors. Orissa government has re-deployed police force and hinted at action if protesters continue to prevent movement of officials at the proposed steel project site. Around 23 platoons of policemen were camping in the area. They were planning to use alternative routes and demolish betel vine farms in Govindpur. 'Govt officials who are duty bound to acquire forest land here are being prevented. This is unlawful and immoral and so we will do whatever is lawful,' said Devdutt Singh, SP, Jagatsinghpur. Nearly 2000 women, children and men have formed a human barricade to prevent the entry of police and administration in the proposed plant area, in what they say is a last-ditch attempt to protect their land. Some of them have been lying on the hot sand for hours, desperate to stop the police from entering their village. 'Our parents have been agitating for last six years. We

are now ready to die before they do. Naveen Patnaik government wants to snatch away our betel vines and our parents livelihood,' said one of them. For the last six years people in Dhinkia Panchayat have been demanding relocation of the project. They say it will deprive them of their major source of income from the betel vines spread across nearly 3,000 acres of forest land. The Jairam Ramesh-led Environment Ministry gave the go-ahead to the Korean steel giant to build the steel plant in the state. 'The children will die anyway. When we are uprooted and starved how will they survive? All of us would prefer getting killed,' a lady protesting there said. Despite the heat, humid conditions and several threats by the police to use force, the children and women refuse to budge. It is a do-or-die battle for the people in Govindpur and Dhinkia. They say this is the last-ditch effort to protect their land from being grabbed by corporate interests."²³

d. Occupy Food Supply

An initiative of Vandana Shiva to save the farmers from seed theft by the corporations, it was another effective response to the corporate hold on agriculture. "In the biggest corporate takeover on the planet is the hijacking of the food system, the cost of which has had huge and irreversible consequences for the Earth and people everywhere. From the seed to the farm to the store to your table, corporations are seeking total control over biodiversity, land, and water. They are seeking control over how food is grown, processed, and distributed. And in seeking this total control, they are destroying the Earth's ecological processes, our farmers, our health, and our freedoms. It starts with seeds. Monsanto and a few other gene giants are trying to control and own the world's seeds through genetic engineering and patents. Monsanto wrote the World Trade Organization (WTO) treaty on Intellectual Property, which forces countries to patent seeds. As a Monsanto representative once said: 'In drafting these agreements, we were the patient, diagnostician [and] physician all in one.' They defined a problem, and for these corporate profiteers, the problem was that farmers save seeds, making it difficult for them to continue wringing profits out of those farmers. So they offered a

solution, and their solution was that seeds should be redefined as intellectual property, hence seed saving becomes theft and seed sharing is criminalized. I believe that saving seeds and protecting biodiversity is our ecological and ethical duty. That is why I started Navdanya 25 years ago. Navdanya is a movement to occupy the seed. We have created 66 community seed banks, saved 3,000 rice varieties, stopped laws that would prevent us from seed saving, and fought against biopiracy. Corporations like Monsanto have created a seed emergency. This is the reason I am starting a global citizen's campaign on seed sovereignty. I hope you will all join. The lawsuit that 84 organizations, including Navdanya, have filed against Monsanto in New York through the Public Patent Foundation is an important step in reclaiming seed sovereignty. The next step in the corporate control of the food supply chain is on our farms. Contrary to the claims of corporations, the chemical-based 'green' revolution and genetic engineering do not produce more food. Navdanya's report on GMOs, *Health per Acre*, shows that the GMO emperor has no clothes. Biodiverse organic farming protects nature while increasing nutrition per acre. We have the solutions to hunger, but it's not profitable for major industrial agriculture companies like Monsanto and Cargill to implement those solutions. Cargill, the world's biggest grain giant, wrote the WTO's agriculture agreement, which has destroyed local production and local markets everywhere, uprooted small farmers, devastated the Amazon, and speculated on food commodities, pushing millions to hunger. A global corporate-controlled food system robs farmers of their incomes by pushing down farm prices, and robs the poor of their right to food by pushing up food prices. If a billion people are hungry today, it is because of greed-driven, capital-intensive, unsustainable, corporate-controlled globalized industrial agriculture. While creating hunger worldwide, agribusiness giants collect our tax money as subsidies in the name of removing hunger. This system has pushed another 2 billion to food-related diseases like obesity and diabetes. Replacing healthy, local food culture with junk and processed food is achieved through food safety laws, which I call pseudo-hygiene laws. At the global level these include the Sanitary and Phyto-sanitary agreement of the

WTO. At the national level, they include new corporate-written food safety laws in Europe and India, and the Food Safety Modernization Act in the U.S. The final link in the corporate hijacking of the food system is retail giants like Walmart. We have been resisting the entry of Walmart in India because Big Retail means Big Ag, and together the corporate giants destroy small shops and small farms that provide livelihoods to millions. We must Occupy Our Food Supply because corporations are destroying our seed and soil, our water and land, our climate, and biodiversity. Forty per cent of the greenhouse gases that are destabilizing the climate right now come from corporate industrial agriculture. Seventy per cent of water is wasted for industrial agriculture. Seventy-five per cent of biodiversity has been lost due to industrial monocultures. We have alternatives that protect the Earth, protect our farmers, and protect our health and nutrition. To occupy the food system means simultaneously resisting corporate control and building sustainable and just alternatives, from the seed to the table. One seed at a time, one farm at a time, one meal at a time — we must break out of corporate food dictatorship and create a vibrant and robust food democracy.”²⁴

There are unending incidents of resistance to the corporations across the country. While in some places it is the opposition for nuclear installations with capital from abroad, in other places it is struggle against land. People are fighting against Special Economic Zones, land acquisition by the government for corporations, against polluting industries, Foreign Direct Investment in retail and other corporate crimes. All said and done, it is a struggle against the corporations and corporate model of development. There are numerous other groups that are fighting for people’s right for control over resources. These local struggles are aligned with global struggles. They are important for two reasons. “First, they are global in scope, combining campaigns that were previously waged separately. In doing so, they have raised questions about the systemic features of capitalism for the first time in generation. Second, they have shed a powerful light upon the dismal track record of contemporary capitalism. The new movements have joined vigorous mass demonstrations in several

continents and they have shown their opposition to the monopolistic practices of the TNCs. They have challenged patent laws and clashed against other forms of corporate greed.²⁵

To work for a new social order, the alternative project needs to have a common vision. The lack of a common agenda can hamper the abilities of movements to challenge established practices and institutions. And yet these movements have expanded due to political maturity, organizational flexibility and use of the internet. They have been able to transcend the rules, habits and conventions that constrain the NGOs, trade unions, political parties and other institutions. Their recent successes show that there is widespread discontent and fertile ground for the discussion of alternatives, at different levels, around the world. The common vision seems to be clear to replace the present capitalist order with a socialist order, an exclusive order with an inclusive order where all enjoy security and participate. Such a society cannot be created without social movements that increase people's political power. To defeat the global corporates, movements like the fish worker's movements that resist foreign trawlers entry into our oceans, right of tribals over their land, the struggle against displacement, working to protect forests, parks, greenery, encroachment over people's rights for livelihoods and a host of other struggles are moving into global struggles. Among the unresolved issues is the relationship of globalization to democracy. Since globalization weakens the ability of states to make autonomous economic and political decisions, it is an anti-democratic force. An authentic democracy has the responsibility to protect and defend the rights of citizens over corporations. At the present juncture, the distinction that is made between economic sovereignty and political sovereignty is misleading. If a state does not have control over economic resources, what meaning does political democracy make?

e. Regional Assemblies and Groups

The desire to work against the corporate greed is bringing different NGOs, social organizations and civil society groups together for common action. A recent statement by People's SAARC Assembly

where diverse movements came together, held in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, on 8th and 9th November 2011 offers a direction of the movements against corporations. The declaration known as Trivandrum Declaration for uniting people's movements in South Asia is given below that commits itself for an alternative vision:

"We, the participants of the People's SAARC India Assembly 2011, met in Thiruvananthapuram on 8-9 November 2011 to affirm our commitment to justice, peace and democracy in the region. We also affirm and commit ourselves to the vision of an alternative political, social, economic and cultural system that enables social and sustainable development in the region that will do away with discriminations based on gender, caste, religion, language and ethnicity; lead to a situation free from exploitation and oppression; create a climate in which each individual will have the opportunity to realize full development of her or his human potential; restore the balance and harmony with nature; eliminate the artificial and human barriers that divide lands, peoples and mind; and transcend all boundaries. The India assembly was privileged to host vibrant social movements, trade unions and activists from across India and abroad. Over 250 activists participated in three plenary sessions and 7 workshops on issues such as trade and livelihoods, natural resources, women's role in people's movements, de-militarization, labour and exclusion and discrimination. The assembly culminated in a colourful march to the Kerala Secretariat.

PEOPLE'S MOVEMENTS UNITING SOUTH ASIA

A genuine South Asian consciousness, which has been present in a historical sense, is growing today among the peoples of this region. In recent years, the urge for regional cooperation and interaction has manifested itself at different levels. Writers, poets, artists, scientists, social activists, human rights and women's rights activists of South Asian countries have initiated concrete moves towards establishing mutual contacts and developing cooperation among themselves. This declaration captures this paradigm shift of people's movements uniting South Asia.

STATE REPRESSION AND MILITARISM
UNDERMINING DEMOCRACY

The people of South Asia are witnessing the militarization of state and society. The dominance of militarist thinking in the governments, the doctrine of preventive intervention and terrorism as a state policy has prevented the strengthening of the fraternity of the people, consolidation of the political constituency for peaceful resolution of conflict and build a common identity for South Asian people. The context of rising terrorism is being used by the ruling elite to shift public opinion towards an internal security doctrine that is undemocratic, chauvinistic and anti-people. We condemn the increasing budgetary allocation on militarization by diverting resource from social welfare by the governments in South Asian. The reduction of tensions between South Asian countries means the reduction of defence budgets in both countries. This will have a major and meaningful impact on the wellbeing of each country's citizens. We are also alarmed by the accelerated militarization in the region in the name of countering terrorism, eroding democratic space, undermining basic human rights and humanitarian law principles; it has resulted in further terrorization and radicalization of the affected civilian populations. We are deeply concerned at the expanding role of the military and para-military forces in the development processes, including mega development projects and extractive mining, plundering the natural resources, marginalizing and displacing the indigenous peoples inhabiting the region. We must ensure that our governments stop militarizing society by developing the doctrine of internal security, as extensions of war concepts into society, and creating armed forces for internal war. We call for the inclusion of a policy on human rights in the SAARC platform. In Sri Lanka, India and Pakistan, a vision of national security and guise of counter-terrorism is being used as a tool for suppressing democratic people's movements. Whether it is the struggles of communities over control of natural resources, or struggles against state repression or against corporate power or against communal profiling of populations, the dominant policy in all these states is against the will of the people. Hence there is a need for a

clearly articulated human rights policy to be included in the SAARC. We salute the extraordinary resilience of Irom Sharmila Chanu as she enters the twelfth year of a hunger strike in solidarity confinement, demanding the repeal of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act, 1958, which has chronically militarized and displaced democratic governance in North-East India. We must ensure the reduction of influence and control of the military and make it accountable and subordinate to the will of the people. We call upon the governments of South Asia to immediately halt the futile process of militarization generating a spiral of insecurity and to redirect its resources and energy to build genuine democratic institutions to ensure human security, including education, health, housing and other welfare of the people.

WOMEN IN PEOPLE'S MOVEMENTS

Women have played a crucial role and spearheaded several movements. However, in many movements, women and those from marginalized groups including Dalits, adivasis, the disabled, minority communities and those from LGBT groups are seldom heard or their separate needs acknowledged. To create a larger people's movement of South Asia, this understanding needs to be integrated so that these identities are not submerged in larger forums and spaces but that they are included and made visible. We need to create ways of working across differences and identities without making them invisible. This has to be based on principles of human rights, commitment to equality and non-discrimination, focused on the advancement of human security and human dignity. The intersectionalities between different movements and identities need to be recognized and integrated so that we can look at ways of coming together. This presents us with many challenges and complexities because in practice it is difficult for different movements to come together. The Women's Movement has been connecting across borders since the 1970s; this has helped in strengthening our work, learning from each other as well as creating stronger bonds between us. As women, we have always been suspicious of narrow nationalism and patriotism because of how it affects women. It has also presented

many complexities and challenges in our vision of a People's Union of South Asia. There is a need to have dialogues across movements and borders on similar issues, we have a lot to learn and contribute to each other's work. However,¹ the question is how to integrate a feminist framework of analysis and understanding in these various movements. This is so we can create better integrated movements, where the voices of the marginalized are given space as well as awareness about the intersectionalities between different issues and themes.

RE-BUILDING LABOUR MOVEMENT

Contractualisation, migration and the non-implementation of labour laws are common issues in the region. We demand that labour be included as an area of cooperation in the South Asian cooperation framework. Large-scale privatization, both direct and indirect, closures and retrenchments have led to job losses and created conditions for capital to deny labour rights and introduce new labour practices that affect the labour adversely. In the process, rights to organization and collective bargaining became a casualty. We call for the ratification of ILO core standards by South Asian countries and constitute a SAARC mechanism to ensure reporting on compliance on ILO core standards and redressal of complaints. Further, we call upon SAARC to adopt the ILO guidelines on TNCs as an enforceable mechanism to regulate TNCs in the region. The right to mobility with dignity is a human right. Migrants should be assured of dignity and the right to work as well as adequate wages and human working conditions. Safeguards for the basic rights of the local people must be instituted. We demand a SAARC mechanism to facilitate and promote labour migration with dignity and the institution of a SAARC work permit as a first step to institutionalize this process. Labour movements in the region have to establish closer cooperation and take an organizational structure at a South Asian level. In priority, we need to work towards integrating different sections of workers currently marginalized and working people not even recognized as workers, into the ambit of labour movements,

social security regimes and within the collective bargaining framework.

TRADE AND LIVELIHOODS

Current trade policy is undemocratic, pro-corporate, anti-environment and adversely impacts livelihoods of South Asian peoples. Free trade agreements implemented in South Asia such as the India Sri-Lanka FTA have adversely impacted livelihoods of farmers, especially in the state of Kerala. Free trade policies under the WTO have resulted in a loss of food sovereignty due to the loss of control over tariffs and quantitative restrictions. We call for trade and economic cooperation in the region and oppose the current trend of advancing the FTA agenda in South Asia and beyond. We recognize that to bring the people in the region closer, there should be more people-to-people contact and cooperation. On trade, this would imply a paradigm shift with due process of consultation with legislative bodies and affected groups such as farmers, fish workers and labour. Further any trade should be based on complementarity, environmental sustainability, food sovereignty and should enhance livelihoods. There should be due mechanisms to monitor the impacts of trade on livelihoods with policies to protect and compensate any communities that could be adversely impacted. We stand for progressive people-led regional cooperation in South Asia and call for the normalization of economic relations between Pakistan and India.

EXCLUSION, DISCRIMINATION AND OPPRESSION

We express concern about the increasing incidence of state repression against peoples who are fighting for their democratic rights. Dalits, adivasis, sexual and gender minorities, religious minorities, human rights defenders are under constant threat of a militarized state and corporate greed. The struggle of the marginalized for a better democracy needs to be strengthened by rendering solidarity at the South Asian level.

COMMUNITY CONTROL OVER NATURAL RESOURCES

We note that the current model of development is devastating South Asia's natural resources. Investment zones such as SEZs that displace people, undermine democracy and national laws and destroy the environment must be stopped. The principle of prior informed consent of the local communities should be followed for all projects. We note with concern the revival of the nuclear industry despite the lessons from the Fukushima Daichi disaster. We support the valiant people's struggle in Koodankulam and Jaitapur and call for a halt to these nuclear projects. We call upon Governments to promote people-centered non-conventional and sustainable energy sources. We call for a ban on genetically modified seeds in SAARC countries. Governments in South Asia should stop production, distribution, consumption and export of all Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs), including endosulfan. We call upon the people to be cautious that there is an imperialist agenda to use so-called environmental concerns to undermine sustainable development and livelihood needs of the people of developing countries. South Asian coastal and forest communities are facing the brunt of so called development and corporate greed. We call for the implementation of progressive legislations for protection of the environment and livelihoods in the coastal and forest regions.

We resolve to deepen the Thiruvananthapuram process through continuous interaction and consultation to enable people's movements to express and define the South Asian dimensions of their struggles and on that basis build a genuine unity of South Asian people's movements."²⁶

UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RESPONSIBILITIES:

The Occupy Movements have their charter of Universal Declaration of Human Responsibilities to the global community. Released on March 12, 2012, the declaration is as follows:

Universal Declaration of Human Responsibilities²⁷

PREAMBLE

Whereas the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is not self-enforcing,

Whereas statement of the inherent dignity and of the equal and supposedly inalienable rights of all members of the human family achieves little without a struggle against greed, injustice, tyranny, and war,

Whereas disregard and contempt for human rights could not have resulted in the barbarous acts that have outraged the conscience of humankind without the cowardice, laziness, apathy, and blind obedience of well-meaning but unengaged spectators,

Whereas proclaiming as the highest aspiration of the common people the advent of a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want doesn't actually produce such a world,

Whereas non-violent rebellion against tyranny and oppression must be a first resort rather than a last, and must be our constant companion into the future if justice and peace are to be achieved and maintained,

Whereas governments do not reliably conduct themselves humanely toward other nations' governments unless compelled to do so by their own people and the people of the world,

Whereas a common understanding of human rights and freedoms is false if it omits the eternal vigilance, struggle, and sacrifice necessary to create and maintain them,

Now, Therefore THE OCCUPY GENERAL ASSEMBLY proclaims THIS UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RESPONSIBILITIES as a common standard of practice for all people, to the end that every individual and every organ of society, keeping this Declaration constantly in mind, shall strive by energetic use of creative nonviolence to promote the actual observance of what have never been but indeed should be made universal, equal, and inalienable rights and freedoms,

Article 1: Human beings are born into every variety and degree of freedom and oppression, privilege and poverty, peace and war. All have a responsibility to work for the betterment of the condition of those around them and those less well off.

Article 2: Everyone is obligated to work at building understanding and equality across lines of race, color, sex, ethnicity, sexual-orientation, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, and birth or other status. Everyone is obligated to actively reject the privileging of or discriminating against any such group, whether their own or others', with no exceptions created by the presence of or participation in war.

Article 3: Everyone has the responsibility to help organize and take part in resistance to any violation of anyone's right to life, liberty or security of person, whether that violation impacts a single individual or a large number, but in particular including resistance to war of any kind.

Article 4: Everyone has a responsibility to work for the swift elimination of slavery and servitude in all their forms.

Article 5: Everyone has a responsibility to expose any instance of torture or of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, or of any conspiracy to facilitate such acts, and a responsibility to work to end these practices and to prosecute those responsible in a fair and open court of law.

Article 6: Everyone has a responsibility to work and to sacrifice something of their own comfort to ensure that every other human being is afforded equal recognition as a person before the law.

Article 7: All are obliged to actively oppose any discrimination in violation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and against any incitement to such discrimination.

Article 8: Everyone has the responsibility to insist upon, for themselves and all others, an effective remedy by the competent local, national, or international tribunals for acts violating the fundamental rights granted by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Article 9: Everyone has a responsibility to treat the arbitrary arrest, detention, or exile, of anyone else as though it were that of themselves or a loved one.

Article 10: Everyone has a responsibility to understand and require for every human being the right to full equality and to a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal, in the determination of their rights and obligations and of any criminal charge against them.

Article 11: (1) Everyone is obligated to ensure for anyone charged with a penal

offense the right to be presumed innocent until proved guilty according to law in a public trial at which they have had all the guarantees necessary for their defense.

(2) Everyone is obligated to ensure that no one shall be held guilty of any penal offense on account of any act or omission which did not constitute a penal offense, under national or international law, at the time when it was committed, and that no heavier penalty shall be imposed than the one that was applicable at the time the penal offense was committed.

Article 12: All are responsible for not taking part in and for working to eliminate and to legally prohibit any arbitrary interference with anyone's privacy, family, home or correspondence, or attacks upon their honor and reputation.

Article 13: (1) Everyone has the responsibility to protect everyone's freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state.

(2) Everyone has the responsibility to protect everyone's right to leave any country, including their own, and to return to their country.

Article 14: Everyone has the responsibility to protect for all the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution but not from prosecutions genuinely arising from non-political crimes.

Article 15: Everyone has the responsibility to protect for all the right to a nationality and the right to change that nationality.

Article 16: All are obliged to protect the right of free and fully consenting adults to marry.

Article 17: All are obliged to defend the right of all others to own property.

Article 18: Everyone has the responsibility to protect freedom of thought for all.

Article 19: Every human being has a duty to help communicate to others to the greatest extent possible information about injustice and war, and information about non-violent efforts to achieve justice and peace. This duty includes a responsibility to work for the creation of meaningful freedom of the press in which the communication of neither current events nor history is dominated or controlled by any privileged group within a society.

Article 20: Everyone has the responsibility to frequently exercise or attempt non-violently to exercise the right to peaceful assembly and association in opposition to

injustice or war, and in support of the rights listed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Article 21: Everyone has the responsibility to work for the creation and maintenance of democratic and/or representative government uncorrupted by bribery of any form, by an unfree press, or by arbitrary restrictions on participation as electoral candidates or voters.

Article 22: Everyone has a responsibility to struggle non-violently to alter the political and economic world so as to increase the opportunity for every human being to live, learn, and work in dignity with security from fear and want.

Article 23: Everyone has the responsibility to work with others to ensure the protection of one and all to a free choice of employment, to just and favorable conditions of work, to protection against unemployment, to the freedom to join a trade union and to strike, to equal pay for equal work, and to just and favorable remuneration ensuring for themselves and their family an existence worthy of human dignity, and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection.

Article 24: Everyone has the responsibility to work not only at their primary career but also for the betterment of society and the establishment of the rights listed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Article 25: Everyone has the responsibility to work for a more just and less wasteful distribution of resources to ensure that one's own and all future generations can provide every single human being, including every child, a standard of living adequate for health and well-being, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age, or other lack of livelihood.

Article 26: Everyone has the responsibility to assist in the education of themselves and others and to work toward the provision of free, high-quality education, including education in civil responsibilities and the history of social change through people's movements, education directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, education that promotes understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and education that furthers the creation and maintenance of peace.

Article 27: Everyone has the responsibility to defend and exercise the right to freely participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to

share in scientific advancement and its benefits, and the right to the protection of the moral and material interests resulting from any scientific, literary or artistic production of which they are the author.

Article 28: Everyone has the responsibility to organize, agitate, sacrifice, and struggle nonviolently and strategically for sustainable environmental practices, demilitarization, the development of democratic and representative structures of government, and the realization of the rights found in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

INCLUSION OF ALL

Through movements of various kinds, ordinary people are moving away from democratic elitism in their thinking and plan of action to a theory of self-development for all and that is the highlight of the above statement. Peter Bachrach held that a theory of democracy to include all should be based on the following assumptions and principles: “the majority of individuals stand to gain in self-esteem and growth toward a fuller affirmation of their personalities by participating more actively in meaningful community decisions.”²⁸ Is it possible to have a society where all are included? We can at least strive to move in that direction. Bachrach is aware that participation may not always lead to salutary results. In some cases while it can feed the pathological needs of the participants impeding development, in some other cases participation can be a subtle process of manipulation. What Bachrach is highlighting is a form of participation that is free of manipulation. Beneficial results from participation can be best assured when the participants are roughly equal in the power they are capable of exerting in the decision-making process and diverse interests are represented with the participating group. Equality of power and pluralism should be a part of this participation and the SAARC Assembly is a movement in that direction. The other question, of course, is the status of corporations in democracies. While a democratic state professes democracy, corporations cannot be undemocratic within a democratic state. Any institution that makes use of the resources of a locality and provides employment to the public has to be a public institution.

CORPORATE SECTORS ARE PUBLIC SECTORS

In the present economy, society is hierarchically constructed with dichotomy between economy and state. Political decision-making has come to mean the decisions governments make. Similarly economic decisions are the decisions the corporates make. This concept needs to be changed if a state has to remain democratic to include all those responsible working in the corporation. There is governance in the economic private sector as well. Large areas within the private centres of power are political and therefore potentially open to a wide and democratic sharing in decision-making. Infosys and Tatas are not the government of India. And yet they are corporate houses that are situated in Indian society. Their work power is from society and their gains are due to the factor of labour provided by society. They make use of public infrastructure. There are similarities between these business houses and the state. Both authoritatively allocate values for the society. Both Infosys and Tatas are private governments which have no place if they do not democratize. It is on the basis of the similarity that Infosys, Tatas and other private governments should be considered a part of the political sector in which democratic norms should apply. "Within the context of the constitutional law, a private firm which performs a public function is (should be) subject, like the government to the limitations of the Constitution."²⁹ As long as a firm or a corporation is functioning in society, it is wrong to allow it to be an isolated institution to work in an isolated manner without public accountability. All institutions as long as they are a part of society, should be fully participative with accountability. One may ask why politicize private centres of power? There is nothing called private as long as those centres of power depend on land, resources and labour of the community and its consumers and producers are members of society. If a factory or company makes use of labour of people from society and produces for society, it is without any hesitation a public institution. Besides, politicization broadens the base of participation and makes the firms accountable. Ordinary men and women desire a greater share in shaping policies which affect them. In the political realm, there may be a section of the people that does not show much interest in

politics of voting and abstains from voting for elections because elections may look trivial to them. But the issues of their workplace affect them. They are not trivial. One cannot be a mere object in any organization. The corporations need to be democratized. Principles of accountability and equality of power are irreconcilable.

REVISIT SWARAJ AND PANCHAYATI RAJ

Democracy cannot be restricted only to elections. Representative governments have outlived their usefulness. They have represented a class of people than the masses. People desire to be directly included and be a part of direct democracy. More and more people want their voices to be heard in the public realm in the places they work and the locality they live. In recent years popular movements have come to the centrestage and these movements are an expression of the discontentment of the people against the centralized, authoritarian and capitalist agenda of the governments. There is anger and discontentment against corporations and the state that is in nexus since they are held responsible for accumulation and thus the cause behind many of the ills of society. The corporations are held responsible for homogenizing nationalism. States have become too centralized and the people remain alienated. There is a cry for a decentralized state. Governments cannot be national without being local. It is in this context that we have to revisit Gandhi on his two important concepts of Panchayati Raj and Swaraj.

The Gandhian concept of Swaraj though problematic is another concept that may need to be explored with all its limitations, though Gandhi does not provide a rigorous social analysis from which his political conclusions are derived. His was a moral response to what he perceived as the evils of modern civilization, the one centered on self-interest, greed, violence and materialism. His condemnation of Western civilization is on moral grounds and not intellectual. The source of his critique of modern civilization is a worldview, a world view premised on spirituality, a conceptual world different from the real world. The conceptual world may contain the true structure of the real world and it is the responsibility of humans to see what the true structure of things ought to be than what it is. The shift in the

world-view that considered humans as an integral part of a larger order to the one that made man the centre of the universe entails what Iris Murdoch calls a “broken totality”. Man is defined as a subject capable of rational thought and decision. But he is also a subject of desires. It is the working out of this worldview in reality where humans merely exist to satisfy their urges and interests that has made modern civilization a “Satanic” civilization in Gandhi’s view. And it is against this that Gandhi counter-poses his own worldview to restore the fullness and wholesomeness of the human being. Rejecting the modern because it is consumeristic and materialistic, he offers a concrete proposal for reordering society that promises to do away with the ills associated with modern civilization. His starting point is his conception of the uniqueness of being human. Rejecting all attempts to reduce the uniqueness of being human to biological, psychological, material or sociological considerations, he sees the destiny of humans to lie in their moral and religious quest of self-transformation.

The provocation for Gandhi to write *Hind Swaraj* came from the context of the freedom struggle. He wanted India after freedom to be a unique India with its unique legacy and not an English rule without the Englishmen, but Hindustan and not Englستان. If India copied England, she would be ruined and her ruination will come about because of her acceptance of modern civilization as definitive of her way of life. He recognized that humans in spite of being rooted in and springing from the animal world, have the capacity to rise above it and set on a journey to give free play to their moral and spiritual propensity for self-development. Attributes of being uniquely human are neither fixed for all times nor immutable. The goodness of human nature and the perfectability of human nature is the real basis for self-realization. For Gandhi, the primary value of life does not consist in the promotion of bodily welfare for its own sake. Morality requires rising above self-interest. In order to be moral, it is necessary to discipline and regulate the desire of self-interest. This means transcending one’s own powerful desires and aversions and making them subordinate to intelligence and thought purified by the process of self-transformation. It is in this perspective that

Gandhi's branding of modern civilization as "Satanic" should be looked at. As he says, modern civilization takes note neither of morality nor of religion.

Swaraj, for Gandhi, has a dual meaning of 'self-rule' and 'self-government'. The first as self-control, rule over oneself, was the foundation for the second, self-government. In this second sense, local self-government was what Gandhi really had in mind. Gandhi very decidedly gave priority to self-rule over self-government, and to both over political independence, "swatantrata". Essential to both meanings of Swaraj, was a sense of self-respect that is precisely Gandhi's answer to colonial rule. The prime reason for ousting the colonial powers from the land was to provide self-respect to every Indian. Colonialism attacked self-respect and dignity of Indians. That dignity and self-respect has to be a dignity and self-respect for all people, for the toiling masses, and the privileged classes, and most importantly for the least and last Indian. The three pillars of that Swaraj were – Hindu-Muslim unity, the abolition of untouchability and the uplift of Indian villages. He wanted a harmonious social order in a historically-torn Indian society. Clearly, the foundation of Swaraj in both its senses had to be threefold: self-respect, self-realization and self-reliance. The ethic that Gandhi was trying to introduce and inscribe into Indian political life was that "real Swaraj will not be the acquisition of authority by a few but the acquisition of the capacity of all to resist authority when it is abused."³⁰ The basis of his Swaraj could not be just rights, it had to be duties as well. For Gandhi, real rights are legitimated by duties. Swadeshi is the means for Gandhi's quest for Swaraj. Fundamentally it meant 'localism'. This was not an isolated localism of the "deserted village", that Goldsmith romanticized, or the degradation of caste oppression that Ambedkar revolted against, but rather the local neighbourhood community, the village as the node in a network of oceanic circles that over-lapped and spread out in its ever-widening embrace. It is this commitment of the individual to his 'desh' that was Gandhi's Indian alternative to western nationalism.³¹ Gandhi perceived that power in India was inevitably monopolized by the urban elite, at the expense of village folk, and was trying to reverse

this dependency to make the state serve the weaker sections. His was an egalitarian, not just a romantic, inspiration. The village Gandhi idealized was not just a geographic place, or a statistic, or a social class. It was an event, a dream, a happening, a culture. The term ‘village’ implied not an entity, but a set of values.”³²

In *Hind Swaraj*, Gandhi defines ‘passive resistance’ as he called it then as “a method of securing rights by personal suffering”. Clearly, “Gandhi’s Satyagraha then was an ingenious combination of reason, morality and politics; it appealed to the opponent’s head, heart and interests.”³³ This was a “vernacular model of action”³⁴ that the people understood. In fact Gandhi was the first leader to bring non-violence to centre stage in the struggle for freedom with the British. He was well aware that adopting “methods of violence to drive out the English” would be a “suicidal policy.”³⁵ And his *Hind Swaraj* was precisely intended to stymie such a soul-destroying venture. In *Hind Swaraj*, Gandhi locates himself as an insider to mainstream Hinduism, the ‘*sanathan dharma*’. Hence, the radicalism of his re-interpretation goes unnoticed. One of the criticisms made against *Swaraj* is that it is premised on Hindu religion and cannot be made applicable to a secular land. But what was religion for Gandhi? It was to affirm what he considered authentic in life and to sloughed off what is inauthentic. For, “Gandhi’s Hinduism was ultimately reduced to a few fundamental beliefs: the supreme reality of God, the ultimate unity of all life and the value of love (*ahimsa*) as a means of realizing God.”³⁶ His profound redefinition of Hinduism gave it a radically novel orientation. In sum, “Gandhi’s Hinduism had a secularized content but a spiritual form and was at once both secular and non-secular.”³⁷ But precisely because he presents himself as a Hindu in his interpretation of Indian culture, he was seen as too inclusive by traditional Hindus and at the same time as not ecumenical enough by contemporary non-Hindus. Hence his appeals for Hindu-Muslim unity were rejected by the Muslims as being too Hindu, and questioned by the Hindus for not being Hindu enough. Similarly, because he used religious terminology, Dalits, outside the Hindu caste order, have a problem with his worldview. On the other hand, to dub the entire Western civilization as “satanic” is to miss

the finer points of that civilization premised on reason, progress and science.

In spite of all the limitations, the concept of Swaraj can be revisited for its relevance today while keeping its religious baggage away. The principal theme of Hind Swaraj is the moral inadequacy of western civilization, especially its industrialism and centralization, as the model for India. The call for Swaraj represents a genuine attempt to regain control of the 'self', self-respect, self-responsibility, and capacities for self-realization - from institutions of corporate and political dehumanization. Understanding the real 'Self', and its relation to communities and society, is critical to the project of attaining Swaraj. Panchayat Raj and Swaraj can generate new spaces, systems, and processes - based on moral and holistic visions of human potential and human progress - which can lead us out of the global self-destruction which has engulfed us at the present juncture. The grassroots economy aims to fix value in the local community. It is easier to integrate local movements creating solidarity from below within the Panchayat Raj. The Panchayats are local governments of the local people promoting local economy as against the global. The people of the locality are participants here. Good panchayats are in solidarity with each other and they learn from one another. They also connect with other panchayats. Interdependence and co-operation among different panchayats is the characteristic feature of local self-governments. Successes in one panchayat in one area are positively related to successes in another panchayat. People replicate successes and learn from each other. The local movements connect people of different self-governments. Plurality and local relevance lie at the heart of the new movements. The ease with which they communicate with each other is an expression of their sharing a common agenda. Many of the social movements are the result of conscious political work. They could unite people beyond the panchayats and create human solidarity on human concerns.

On another level, Hind Swaraj can be seen to represent a post-modern critique of development. It calls for profoundly questioning the legitimacy of modern science/technology, the nation-state, the global economy, and factory-schooling – oppressive systems and

structures of power which serve to define our existence. As long as our minds remain colonized, the country cannot become free. The Britishers may have left us and in our minds we can still be alien as long as we have internalized the imposed model of development with consumer values and attitudes. To decolonize the mind, self-awareness, self-criticism and public critique are important to building another kind of world. We are forced to admit that no worldview, no ideology, no transformative principle automatically becomes morally acceptable just because we do not have viable alternative and forces us to search for new alternatives. While critiquing the West what Gandhi highlighted was that there are other options for living. However, criticism must go beyond simply an institutional analysis if it wishes to be truly generative. Makarand Paranjape argues that decolonization must be “more centered on the ‘Self’ than on the ‘Other’”. By decolonizing minds we develop ourselves, influence society and realize our potential, enlarging our capacities – rather than displacing, overthrowing or defeating the other. Swaraj means engaging in processes of self-understanding and self-reflection, to rebuild a self-confidence that is free from arrogance, hatred or egoism. We are both ‘oppressed’ and ‘oppressors’ and seek to understand what roles we play as oppressors and in supporting institutions of oppression. We must also re-evaluate our own wants and needs and seek to understand how these are manipulated and controlled by others and the structure we live in.

INFLUENCING THE GLOBAL

It is equally necessary to influence the global agenda for the creation of another world. The local can become global as well as the global can become local. Global capitalism is resisted by local groups whenever they stand against global corporations. The resistance against POSCO – the Korean steel plant in Odisha, Koodankulam nuclear establishment in Tamil Nadu with capital from Russia, the Nandigram agitation against the corporate might of the Tatas and several others across the country are basically agitations of resistance against global capitalism at the local level. However with international solidarity on these resistances, they have become global as well.

Support to these initiatives is provided by citizens from across the global community, through websites, petitions, lobbying and advocacy. Similarly the farmers' movements, the ecological movements, the indigenous movements as well as the women's movements are no more local movements though they may have begun at local levels. Thanks to the Internet and information technology, the local has been internationalized and made global. Medha Patkar's Narmada movement shot into international prominence and received international support. The anti-nuclear movement is a global movement with local units. So are a number of other movements. Though international agendas are formulated by governmental elites, the UN conferences in recent years have accepted a significant input from grassroots movements. New social movements fall into the category of everyday resistance.

RETURN TO THE DEMOCRATIC SOCIALIST AGENDA

For a just human social order, the movement against corporatization has to move from the global to the local. Neo-liberalism puts at the disposal of capitalism the power to exploit the global economy creating continuous unemployment and perpetual misery creating an unequal society. Socialism is to undo such mal-distribution and move towards creation of a just society. The first step towards establishment of a social order is to oppose corporatization. Corporate capitalism or state capitalism is not the answer. Liberty of the individual cannot be sacrificed at the altar of the state or global capital. The emerging economic system has to steer clear off the bourgeoisie economy as well as state capitalism. What we need is swaraj, "relief to the masses from their unutterable sorrow and misery"³⁸ aimed at the re-organization of economic relationships.

To speculate on the kind of direction global resistance to capitalism is moving into may be purely speculative. There is resistance building up. It is not directionless. And yet it is not clearly marked. It is not possible to clearly mark the direction since resistance is evolving. In the process of resistance, a path would be found and direction clarified. Globally, with the convergence of capitalist crisis, renewed neo-liberal offensives for control of natural

resources, and right-wing attempts to dislodge progressive regimes, popular movements will likely to again occupy centrestage in the upcoming cycle of struggles. The crisis has made painfully evident the vulnerabilities of the Indian and global economies. It has been materially devastating for the large majorities that constitute the social base of progressive regimes. The erratic behaviour of commodity prices presaged hard times for economies that relied heavily on international markets for their exports and also for food imports. Deteriorating market conditions have brought into the open deeper structural problems and deficiencies in strategies from the right to the left. If the resistance to global capitalism should begin from the global to the local, creation of an alternative begins from the local and through international solidarity and support moves into the global. Both are simultaneous movements deriving strength from each other. The alternative that people talk of has to come from “a range of grassroots forces: the so-called new social movements, different forms of organized activity in the parallel economy, women’s movements, co-operatives, a new trade unionism of homeworkers and others, campaign over ecological issue, movements by indigenous peoples. By the very process of resisting, these forces are beginning to forge an alternative”³⁹. The nature of that alternative is what will be discussed in the final chapter.

NOTES

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3. NAFTA = North American Free Trade Agreement; CAFTA = Central America Free Trade Agreement; FTAA = Free Trade Area of the Americas
4. A study by Oxfam (Oxford Committee for Famine Relief) which has become famous showed that wherever the IMF applied a structural adjustment plan during the decade 1990-2000, millions of more people were thrown into the abyss of hunger. Jean Ziegler: *Destruction massive*; p.179
5. For the horribly disfiguring and ultimately deadly disease called noma, see ‘NOMA – The Face of Poverty’, By Siv O’Neill and the UN report ‘The tragedy of Noma’ by Jean Ziegler, Vice-President of the UN Human Rights Council Advisory Committee

6. On December 10, 1948, the 64 members of the UN unanimously adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It recognizes in Article 25 that "Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control." http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Right_to_food
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CHAPTER 6

EPILOGUE

REVISITING DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISM

CORPORATES AS INDIVIDUALS

The Occupy Movements are crying against the 1 per cent of the global multi-billionaires that control the economy. They are all individuals against the 99 per cent of humanity, the collectives, who are the victims of corporate greed. Vedanta, Posco, Jindal, Tatas, Birlas and all other corporations are managed by individuals. People are protesting against these corporates and their corporations for destruction of environment that threatens people's existence, for control over their community assets and livelihoods not as individuals but as communities. Similarly, the militarization of state and society, degradation of environment, unemployment, hunger and inflation affects our collective existence. The very fact of groups of people coming together in all protests and resistances is an expression of a strong social bond among those who are resisting the corporate agenda. On the other hand, the corporates are individuals. The world's billionaires and millionaires are all ranked as individuals by Forbes or by the Department of Revenue and Taxation or by the leaders of their respective countries. Even the media look at them as individuals. Their empire is all for themselves. The struggles against corporatization are the struggles of communities or people against individual billionaires and multi-billionaires. It's a call to give up individual greed to meet community needs.

IT'S A CRY FOR SOCIALISM

It is a cry for socialism of a different kind. The world has experimented with communism. This was no socialism. It was state capitalism.

The ideology of communism was given up for the high level of individual oppression and lack of individual freedom in it. The role of the state was suspect in communism and ideology took the centre stage with total protection to the executive members of the political party and those who dissented had no right to live. State monopolized the official economic and social world and quietly consigned the parallel grassroots sphere to an unacknowledged limbo.¹ The socialism that the globe is asking for is a socialism that can undo mal-distribution by re-distribution with respect for individual rights. State capitalism or communism is not the answer. People who resist corporatization while they denounce the hold of capital are committed to the liberty of the individuals and they do not want liberty to be sacrificed at the altar of the state. In fact, the Occupy Movements are all unique and plural with local moorings. Individuals come to participate in these movements voluntarily and in the process become a part of the community. They do not give up their individualities while coming together as a group for a common good. So are the other protests, dharnas and rallies that are taking place in different countries. While all these movements and protests have social and public interest in mind, they are all individuals sometimes unknown to each other and yet committed to a common cause of improving the life of the community. The emerging economic system is attempting to steer clear off the corporate economy as well as state capitalism. It is a form of socialism where the needs of individuals are considered as important as that of a community, one without subjecting the other.

EMERGING MODEL

The world is moving into a new kind of economy. The picture may be fuzzy and not too clear. It is wrong to look for a clear direction in these protests and movements since they are spontaneous. As the movements progress, they may find a more focused direction. The one thing that is clear is that they are protests against corporatization of state and society. They point towards an immediate picture of dissatisfaction, resentment and anger in the present social and economic situation and the desire and hope for a better tomorrow.

People know that they are exploited and what legitimately belongs to them is robbed from them. From their daily experience, they are becoming more and more aware of the exploitative nature of capitalism. They would like their honour and dignity restored by an unjust economic system by providing them whatever is their due. They are demanding justice, a just share in the resources of the earth and a just wage for their labour. They have become a collective since each one of them feels the sense of hardships and oppression, they are daily subjected to. Their unity is due to their common experience of exploitation. What has brought them together into the streets is their anger against corporations and their determination to change things. What do they want? From the various agitations, protests, resistances and anti-corporate struggles, one gets an impression that they desire a world where everyone's need is met than satisfying the greed of a few. At the present juncture, the attack is on 1 per cent of people who have accumulated wealth at the global level at the expense of 99 per cent. They are hoping for a society where all could live satisfied with their needs as individuals and as members of a human community.

RE-INVENTION OF DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISM

The search is for an alternative system of human existence on the planet with distributive justice. From the language that is spoken and the anger that is expressed in rallies, in protests and different levels of meets - regional, national and international, it is easy to conclude that ordinary people are struggling to create a system where they would experience both political and economic freedoms. The slogan of the World Social Forum is "another world is possible". What are the characteristics of that another world? In sharp contrast to the existing world of inequality, division and lack of employment, opportunities and liberty, the globe is looking towards a world of equality, community and freedom. It is here that the combined untried Nehruvian, Gandhian and Ambedkarite model of democratic socialism may have some inspiration and relevance if explored. Not that these models are complete given the complexity of the emerging situation. They are merely inspirational. The world has moved and

still is in movement. There are no eternal truths or doctrines relevant for all times. And yet there are elements and aspects of doctrines that hold inspiration. Though the names of Nehru or Gandhi are not bandied around, the search is for an alternative system similar to “Swaraj”, with focus on the local with a sense of internationalism. Swaraj is a call for re-organization of economic and social relationships. Economy that is controlled by the state and now by the corporations has failed. Communities of the third and fourth world and individuals even of the first world are un-free due to economic bondage and corporate discrimination. The globe is yearning for an economy that is managed by the people at the workplace and the community as they live in the midst of earth’s resources. Through their resistance to the corporate economy, they are asking simple questions to the powerful in society. ‘How did you all get control over those resources? Those resources do not belong to you but to all of us. The ways in which you have accumulated them are dubious. It is through manipulation and devices of fraud that you have accumulated all that wealth you call your own. You might say and believe that we cannot manage those resources. If we are deemed competent enough to select our political leaders why is it that you consider us unfit to be participants in our workplace? Do you think that we are too ignorant or shortsighted to make rational decisions at the workplace where we spend most of our daily time while we are considered competent to choose our representatives? We have made other choices in life and we are as competent as anybody to make choices in our workplace as well. It makes no sense to keep us out from the wealth we have generated. What is in excess of your needs belongs to us and in the true spirit of community we would like you to return that to us.

DEMOCRATIC DICHOTOMY

The global citizens have discovered deep dichotomy in the very concept of democracy. They opine that there is no meaning in a system that offers the right to individuals to elect their representatives who have become powerless as far as economy is concerned or powerful

enough to hand over the economy in corporate hands. Their presence in the legislatures is merely to support a global capital agenda that is already set by global corporations and international financial institutions. In spite of being representatives, they behave more as the representatives of corporations and enemies of the people. What use are individual political representatives if they are unable to intervene in the affairs of the local economy? After all, they have been elected to provide a better quality of life for the constituency that has elected them. Mere representation or political democracy without economic democracy or accountability of the elected representatives on the economic welfare of the people of their constituency makes no meaning. The people of the globe desire economic democracy along with political democracy and that democracy they wish is local than global. All the Occupy Movements and protests against corporations have been local though they may have global networks.

What do we mean by economic democracy? Economic democracy has three features. The first feature is that each productive enterprise should be controlled democratically by its workforce. Secondly, these enterprises should interact with one another and with consumers in an environment largely free of governmental price controls. Raw materials, instruments of production and consumer goods are all bought and sold at prices largely determined by the forces of demand and supply. And thirdly funds for new investment should be generated by a capital assets tax and are to be returned to the economy through a network of public investment banks.² In other words, it is a call for de-centralization of the economy. Global corporations should be replaced by local firms and local firms should be managed by those who work in those firms. The firms are not there primarily for profiteering for individuals. They are there to help livelihoods of communities. That is why all these firms or enterprises will be public enterprises with public accountability. However, while abolishing private ownership and wage labour, economic democracy retains the market. But the market is not to be at the service of individuals but at the service of the community of people who work and toil.

WORKERS TO BE STAKEHOLDERS IN THE ENTERPRISES

For economic democracy to be meaningful, each enterprise should be controlled by those who work in the firm. Those who work in the establishments are responsible for the operation, organization, discipline and order, techniques of production, the extent of production and how proceeds are to be distributed. In distributing the proceeds, the enterprise balances egalitarian considerations with the skills of the workers, seniority and the need to motivate and retain talent. Of course there can be delegation of authority since all the workers may not be able to take every decision since they may not have all the skills required for every function. Representatives may be elected. The elected workers' council may appoint a chief executive officer and other members of the management. There are no stakeholders in economic democracy. Managers will have autonomy for efficiency but not for exploitation of workers. Ultimate authority rests with the enterprise's workers on the principle of one person and one vote. The workers control the workplace but do not own the means of production. The enterprises are collective property of the society. The social ownership manifests in two ways. The firm pays a tax on capital assets which goes into the society's investment fund. The firm has to preserve the value of the capital stock entrusted to it. A depreciation fund is to be created. Money can be set aside to repair, to improve and replace existing capital stock. If the firm has to be sold, the proceeds go to the national investment fund and not to the workers since these assets are of the society as a whole. In essence, economic democracy transforms an enterprise into a community. One can exercise one's citizenship to the full when one enters into a firm as an employee. Rights are transferred when one leaves one firm and joins another. What about the profits then? One may ask how an enterprise is owned by the corporation different from the one owned by the workers as far as profits are concerned. For a capitalist firm, labour is counted as cost. For a worker-run enterprise, it is not. Workers get all that remains after the expenses are paid. Investment in private enterprises comes from private savings. In economic democracy, the capital assets of the enterprise – land, buildings and

equipment are taxed. New investment comes from these funds. Since investment funds are public, the returns once again go back to the society indirectly by workers sharing into it³.

PROTESTS ARE FOR COMMUNITY CONTROL OF RESOURCES

When the Occupy Movements occupy public spaces, when the people of Odisha are resisting land for the giant steel plant POSCO, when farmers are reluctant to part with their land and opposing Special Economic Zones, the message is that the earth resources belong primarily to the people of the locality or the community that lives there. Because people are poor, those with money cannot have monopoly over them. The local people hold that the local resources are theirs and cannot be sold to transnational and multinational corporations. What they are shocked to discover is that the political representatives whom they had chosen by going to the ballot box are in nexus with these corporates and are more interested in the well-being of the corporations than the people. That is why they are asking for changes in the electoral system. They would prefer to have representatives who would represent their cause than supportive of global corporate interests. In the tribal communities of North-East, there is already some kind of an economic democracy. Individuals do not own land. The land belongs to the community. The headman of the village while deciding allocation of community resources has an eye on the public good of the community as a whole. In fact, the tribal self-rule law in India is to encourage community ownership and governance of tribal resources. This is what Gandhi meant by trusteeship. Those who own money should behave like trustees, holding their riches on behalf of the poor and the community. Wealth acquired is God given and belongs as much to the community as to oneself. Gandhi's dream was to transform the capitalist order into a humane one. If people of the country have lost trust in their representatives today, it is precisely because they are alienated from the people and no more represent the cause of the people. The prime challenge of elected representatives should have been to build a sustainable economy for their constituency so

that every citizen of the constituency becomes a part of the economy of the constituency.

NEHRU'S SOCIALIST ECONOMY

The vision people are consciously or unconsciously visualizing has several similarities with Nehru's democratic socialist model for the future of global democracy. It is true Nehru was unable to put his model into practice due to several constraints. But as an idealist, one can discover the relevance of his idealism in the present struggles for an alternative. Socialist by conviction, Nehru was aware that private interests without curbing the individuality of individuals should be placed at the altar of socialism. The attacks in the present movements and protests are against individual corporate greed. But individual corporate greed is different from the deep respect Nehru had for the autonomy of the individual. Unlike Marxism, Nehru did not see any dichotomy between maintaining the autonomy of the individual and socialism. The individuals through their enterprise can contribute to socialism and there is a place for individual enterprise in a socialist economy. "A socialist economy is a mixed economy, part private, part public and mixed in all its aspects. It comprises private spending as well as public spending, private ownership as well as public ownership, private enterprise as well as public enterprise."⁴ While Nehru did not rule out the private sector altogether, he advocated all-pervading public ownership. Nationalization of key industries or corporations was found necessary. But private initiatives were not to be curbed. Socialist transformation is not necessarily wholesale public ownership of all sectors of the economy. While the community or the locality should have control over the local economy, the ownership could be in private hands. How do we provide private owners with public sense? This is an ethical challenge and requires a change in attitudes. Nehru did not succeed in transforming private owners into social beings. And yet it is necessary to develop those attitudes of the public good or common good with public accountability and making people participants in every private enterprise.

To quote Nehru again, “The method of production should be controlled by the state. It does not necessarily mean that every method of production should be owned by the state. But in order to take steps towards introducing a socialist structure of society, it is inevitable that the major method of production should be owned or controlled by the state.”⁵ Where Nehru failed was first in his understanding and then in his implementation of socialism as state control instead of community controlled and in his style of governance. He was keen for conciliation and compromise instead of implementing what he believed to be true. Socialism cannot be implemented if compromises are thought of. Vested interest forces would not like to change the basic structure of economy. Instead of listening to voices from below, Nehru went for consensus and failed socialism by giving in to the voices coming from above. From the socialist point of view for Nehru if exploitation is done away with and there is a public interest in the private enterprise, there should be no objection to such a project. Only those enterprises that have an element of exploitation should be removed and replaced by public ownership. “Anything which could be used for making private profit out of other people’s work should be socialized, that is made the property of the State.”⁶ What is to be tackled is the motive of profiteering, accumulation and acquisition. The good of every citizen was deep in the heart of Nehru. He wanted to bring about that good to every individual, not by force but by moral re-generation of human conscience. It is in living for the common good that individuals realize their best self for him.

CHANGE IN ATTITUDES

The new civilization that Nehru visualized implied a change in attitudes. While the globe today may be against corporatization, it may not be against the private sector with public interests. Even the private sector can be owned and managed publicly. Private sector can co-exist along with the public or state sector provided the ideology behind the private sector is not private gain at the cost of society but welfare of the community. That individual therefore has to be a

‘worker individual’ with the attitude of a worker. While those “worker individuals” discover their own capabilities, talents and potential in the process of working for a common cause through their enterprises, those enterprises through their participative processes could include all the workers working in the establishment. Capitalism imbued with a spirit of social welfare and devoid of exploitative nature was reconcilable for Nehru. He also held that there is no need to socialize small shops, technical centres, stationery shops, workshops that cater to repairs, self-operated local enterprises that are not based on the exploitation of others. Similarly large enterprises as long as they are for public purposes are in consonance with socialist objectives and they need to be encouraged.

ELIMINATION OF EXPLOITATION

One gets the impression that the idea of new socialism that the world is crying for is not wholesale socialization of economy. The fundamental issue is elimination of exploitation. “The idea is that individuals should not be allowed to exploit any of these methods, or institutions, or the labour of others for their own, personal advantage.”⁷ Economic freedom should become inseparable from political freedom. Nation should take charge of the economy than self-styled messiahs. The private sector has to be accountable to the public. But wholesale public ownership would lead to totalitarianism. Government intervention is to make the economy operate with the objective of catering to social welfare than class privileges. “A dynamic national policy must therefore be directed to a continuous increase in production by all possible means side by side with measures to secure its equitable distribution. In the present state of the nation’s economy, when the mass of the people are below the subsistence level, the emphasis should be on the expansion of production, both agricultural and industrial.”⁸ Nehru could read the signs of the times and use the economic policy to the well-being of the country. “We have the private sector because we think they will add to our common good.”⁹ On May 2, 1962, while elaborating his concept of socialism, Jawaharlal said in Parliament, “I do not know what idea of socialism people have. But socialism in my view, is not spending out of poverty

so that everybody should be poor, it is not dispersal of poverty. There can be no socialism with widespread poverty, lack of production and primitive method of production; socialism involves higher grades of production, more production and more wealth being produced and equitable distribution.”¹⁰ What was important for Nehru was public good.

NO TO CAPITALISM

Though not against the private sector, Nehru was averse to *laissez-faire* or corporate economy. It symbolized to him the profit of a few at the cost of the many. “Private enterprise should have a public purpose and there is no such thing under present conditions as completely unregulated and free enterprise. Private enterprise functions within the conditions created largely by the state.”¹¹ He was in favour of a private sector that is socially oriented and participative. In other words private sector had to conform to the norms of a socialist state. In his picture of a socialist society the means of production are largely socially owned and controlled for the benefit of society as a whole. In other words the private and the public sectors are not rivals but can be reconciled if the private sector subjects itself to the controls of the socialist economy. “Some people no doubt feel that private enterprise should be given full and unrestricted scope. There can be no such unrestricted private enterprise and the state has to intervene on a big scale....Our thinking should always be in terms of the masses of our people.”¹² The objective for control over the private sector is public welfare. “With all respect, I should like to inform you, that if your demands come in the way of the good of the masses your demands will be completely ignored.”¹³

ROLE OF THE PUBLIC SECTOR

For Nehru the public sector was to remain in charge of the “commanding heights of the economy”. In 1963, he had said, “We have a private sector and a public sector, the public sector being the most important and dominating the economic policy. Otherwise there is no point in having a public sector helping the private sector

because we want all kinds of production; we want it to be helped.”¹⁴ While Nehru was clear that the state would own and control key industries, services, minerals, railways, waterways, shipping and other means of public transport, the private sector would remain under the control of the state without invading into the strategic sector of the economy. He was in favour of “agricultural land, mines, quarries, rivers and forests are forms of national wealth, ownership of which must vest absolutely in the people of India collectively.”¹⁵ It is possible that Nehru erred here. Since he was no great believer in local self-government though he advocated it prior and after independence, his stress was on state ownership instead of ownership by the community or the people who work in an enterprise.

ROLE OF PRIVATE SECTOR

Within a prescribed sphere, the private sector was to play an important role. “Against the background of the goal of a socialist pattern of society, it is necessary in encouraging and approving programmes in the private sector to guard against industrial development being concentrated in the hands of a few entrepreneurs and leading to complete or partial monopoly.”¹⁶ The private sector was to dominate the non-strategic sector. Handicrafts, cottage industries, small-scale and medium industries have to have a positive role with the private sector. The state had the exclusive responsibility of setting up of new units of industries in schedule A. Even here in the establishment of new units later the state even permitted the private sector. “I cannot obviously go into the question of where the line should be drawn. But the line will ever be a changing one, because, the public sector will be a growing one.”¹⁷

GANDHI'S ECONOMY

Like Nehru, Gandhi too had said no to capitalism. But the economics of Gandhi was premised on ethics. “Economics that hurt the moral wellbeing of an individual or a nation are immoral and therefore sinful. So also, the economics that permit one country to prey upon another are immoral.”¹⁸ The symbolism of Swaraj was in the spinning

wheel. More than a tool, spinning wheel symbolized the local economy or the village economy. He had advocated a self-sufficient village economy. Not that Gandhi was totally averse to industrial production. But industry was to be located in the closest town so that people did not have to leave the places of their lives and migrate. The industrial towns thus will be able to take on rural labour and help rural economy. Only a village-based and service-oriented economy can ensure full employment, social welfare, nature conservation, true democracy and peace. But he was not for state control in the name of socialism. "I look upon an increase of the power of the state with the greatest fear, because while apparently doing well by minimizing exploitation, it does the greatest harm to mankind by destroying individuality, which lies at the root of all progress. I know of many cases where men have adopted trusteeship, but none where the state has really lived for the poor."¹⁹ He was in favour of the local against the global. One can term Gandhi a people's economist. He was against the technology of mass production. He considered technology as violent, ecologically damaging, self-defeating in terms of non-renewable resources and stultifying for the human person. He was for de-centralization or Panchayati Raj system where there is no division between politics and economics as far as local governance is concerned. As for technology, he was in favour of technology that is compatible with the laws of ecology. He advocated an appropriate technology that is suited to the local economy than sophisticated technology for global production. His trusteeship concept is connected to socialism.

The only limitation of the Nehruvian socialism was the state ownership of key industries. In the name of state socialism, the state created a set of bureaucrats who benefitted from the project more than the people. Vested interests were created that made the state enterprises the property of the powerful in the state and not the people. People neither had a share or ownership in it. The entire administration was by the bureaucratic class that was alienated from the people. The new economic model of democracy that is proposed though has the inspiration of Nehru is different from the Nehruvian model. Central to the model is the participation of the community

of workers who work in the enterprise. The model is closer to the trusteeship model of Gandhi than Neruvian model of socialism which is highly centralized and distanced from the ordinary workers. While abolishing the market, Nehruvian socialism substituted it by centralized planning. Bureaucratic planning is unable to provide for basic needs. Its incentive structures are too perverse to yield efficient and dynamic development. Of course, individuals have a place in the economic model of democracy. It is they who manage the enterprise.

ECONOMY TO BE CONTROLLED BY PEOPLE

The global war against capitalism is yearning for a form of democracy that is both economic and political. While the political system cannot be subverted to meet the needs of the corporations, even the economy cannot be subverted to meet the greed of the corporations. Without control over the economy, there cannot be political democracy. Why does any country need representatives other than to feed the hungry, shelter the homeless, clothe the poor, provide employment and help people to manage the economy? The representatives have to remain as representatives to encourage and promote local economy. Their role is to assist local economies and make them inclusive. All the enterprises located in the locality have to be managed by the workers who work in a firm or enterprise for democracy to be meaningful. Workers' management of enterprise extends democracy to the workplace and improves the internal efficiency of a firm. It is a lie to believe that economic democracy would make firms non-competitive. In an economic democracy, there should be competition among firms. It is a competitive economy with firms competing with each other in selling their products to consumers and thus retaining the incentive structure of a market economy. Every enterprise will have a clear strategy to find out and give to consumers what they want to avoid wasting raw materials and to employ the most effective technology. The one question that can be asked is whether workers are competent enough to make complicated technical and financial decisions? As stated earlier, if

ordinary people are competent enough to elect their representatives, they will be as competent to manage their firms. A study in 1990 by Princeton University concludes by stating that worker participation usually enhances productivity in the short run, sometimes in the long run and rarely has a negative effect. Moreover, participation is most conducive to enhancing productivity when combined with profit-sharing, guaranteed long-range employment, relatively narrow wage differentials and guaranteed worker rights such as protection from dismissal except for just cause, precisely the condition that will prevail under Economic Democracy.²⁰ The present global economic crisis has been created due to lack of democracy in the economic sphere.

The other question about empowering the local against the national or the global is of Ambedkar. He was against the Gandhian concept of panchayat raj system of village councils with the village as a basic unity of politics, economics and governance. He was of the opinion that the village republics have been the ruination of India since they were premised on caste, discrimination and subordination. He was taken aback when those who had condemned provincialism and communalism championed the cause of panchayati raj. "What is the village but a sink of localism, a den of ignorance, narrow-mindedness and communalism?"²¹ he had said. At the time of India's independence, the issue of oppression of the discriminated communities was a relevant issue. Dr. Ambedkar and his entire community had been victims of caste oppression. With the framing of the Constitution, certain safeguards were provided for the safety of these groups. Panchayati Raj system along with tribal self-rule is in existence in spite of several limitations in the country. After more than 60 years of democracy, the issue needs to be re-looked given the exclusion of a large section of the poor from the economy. The people of the globe are searching for an alternative in the local. Whatever is national and the global has been alienating. Strengthening the local would mean that land reforms are once again initiated to provide land to the landless, norms are put in place for protection of the discriminated communities, education is provided to all and those who administer and govern are made

accountable to any kind of violations of rights of the people in the locality. If stringent laws are put in place against acts of omission and commission against the subaltern communities, the local system may work better if it is participative and representative.

REQUIEM FOR NEO-LIBERALISM

The neo-liberal road is surely a dead-end. It is madness to entrust the economy to the animal spirits of private investors whose sole intention is profits. They are never satisfied with their profits and they desire more and more at the expense of the global community. A global depression is a real possibility as a result. The global war is against 1 per cent of individuals against the community of 99 per cent. It is unfortunate that the terms of life and living for the 99 per cent are set by the 1 per cent. Who will win this war? The corporations and those who manage them have power of wealth, power of the states with military forces that are in nexus with them and the power of the international financial institutions. They have the backing of police and the armed forces of different countries. On the other hand, the social power of the masses is what has motivated ordinary people to come to the streets and protest. The workers from various professions, indigenous people, trade unions, concerned intellectuals, women and people are struggling for the creation of a new social order. The victory will depend on the kind of democracy that people of the globe look forward to. The global community is not satisfied with the rule of law, freedom of thought and expression, rights to vote, right to contest elections, right to represent, separation of powers and checks and balances. For democracy to be meaningful, democracy needs to enter into the economic realm as well. Democracy is not a mere multi-party system that competes for power but works for the right to food, clothing and shelter of the citizens as well. The various movements may be confused in their direction. But one cannot ignore their principal struggle for economic reforms and participation in the economy. The protestors want a reform of the economic system. Decentralization and autonomy of civil society are essential ingredients of this democracy. Social movements have

a role to play in constructing a society beyond capitalism. The objective is not to seize control of the state but to announce the social power of the people.

SOCIAL POWER OF THE PEOPLE

Social power of the people may even ask the community to explore the relevance of multi-party politics and move into non-party politics. The solidarity among the people who have begun to resist global capitalism has transcended all limitations of political parties, ideologies and other artificial barriers. The new social movements have rejected the authoritarianism of the political parties and their leadership and of dogmatism of ideology. Samir Amin opines to encourage history to move in the popular direction and proposes to re-politicize the masses in a democratic tradition based on reinforcing their capacity for self-organization, self-development and self-defense. This form of an organization may provoke conflict with the state. It is possible here to transform activities that are considered as a part of informal economy into a people's economy which at the present juncture are integrated into the global capitalist system. In the project of democratic re-politicization, he visualized a role for the revolutionary intelligentsia in drafting a concrete alternative plan with a cultural content with a long-term outlook. He recommends a democratic dialogue among all the stakeholders of the alternative agenda. The victory will depend on a democratic conscience and practice.²²

PEOPLE IN CHARGE OF CORPORATIONS

An important part of the social justice agenda is democratizing corporations. This means we must radically change the laws so that people can be in charge of corporations. We must strip them of corporate personhood and cut them down to size so that democracy can work. Democracy should regulate the size, scope and actions of corporations. One of the most basic roles of society is to protect the people from harm. The massive size of many international corporations makes democratic control over them nearly impossible.

Justice demands that we make sure corporations do not harm people. And they will harm as long as the corporations are not made accountable. Democracy must require that they operate for the common good. In order to cut corporations down to size, the people must strip corporations of the special artificial legal protections they have created for themselves. While people take control over corporations and manage them, corporates have to be isolated. Money is an important factor in establishing corporations. Only wealthy corporates can establish corporations. The state needs to change this for a new economic order. In the new economy workers trying to set up enterprises for the local people could be offered assistance by the government. We need to replace private control over investment with social control. There needs to be reforms aimed at discouraging the rapid, speculative destabilizing amounts of funds from one market to another. There must be a halt to market-driven cross-border flows. The Reserve Bank should be managed to enhance the well-being of the democratic community. Tariff should be imposed to make it impossible for countries to gain competitive advantage simply by paying their workers less or being less stringent with environmental regulations. Rich country consumers should be made to pay more for poor country products. What is essential is that the role of the capitalists should be subjected to increased scrutiny by the people and the state, unlike now.

MAKE THE WORKERS ASSERTIVE AND CAPITALIST NERVOUS

The role of the state unlike now should be to make the workers more assertive and capitalists more nervous. For economic democracy to be possible, there needs to be more pressure from below. Once the workers become part of the organization, there cannot be anymore capitalists. The workers would take responsibility once they take charge of the firms, to see capitalists are wiped out. It is the task of the state to provide new kinds of guidelines so that workers are enthused. That is why electoral reforms are essential for making economic democracy possible. The country needs political parties with diametrically opposite ideologies than the ones we have now. Parties do not change unless there are pressures from below. An

economic crisis may not be enough since the capitalists are unlikely to lose given the accumulation they have done even if there is a crisis. We need a new politics that promotes the counter-project. The counter-project should bring together a collective spirit, the various movements now struggling often in isolation from one another – Dalit, women and tribal movements, movements for ecological sanity, against militarism, against corporatization and labour movements. We need an international association of committed activists who share a common global vision. They should be able to represent the most progressive elements of all progressive organizations but work within the confines of their own nation-states, with the international dimensions of the struggle in focus.

Instead of a global market, what humankind is hoping for is the creation of a society that would allow for the full development of human potential and capacity. Wealth is only a means. Development of each individual is the goal. In the economic democracy based on participation human community would be the basis of production. People do not have to look upon capital as a mystical being since it has been the source of all productivity. Rule of capital as common sense is gradually disappearing. Capital is the products of people turned against them. There is a need to demystify capital. It is the social productivity of the collective workers rather than capital that is to be celebrated. In some way the grassroots movements have already shown the way. Economically they have reproduced their own labour through co-operatives, local economies and grassroots innovation, managed important areas of the economy and conducted the knowledge gathering and experimentation necessary for production. At the political level, they have functioned as a resistant or rebellious group in opposing the ruling strata of parasites. What is of importance to be aware of is that it is society that is left directly to confront global capitalism and not the state or the elected representatives at present. It is society at the local level that is making a difference. Self-sufficient local economies are a rational component of human development. They can carry out cultural and economic inter-change. For true development, the richness of local economies has to be restored. Capitalism is controlled by people by

undermining the autonomy of their knowledge systems, their wealth of creativity and lack of respect for grassroots movements. It is this creativity and innovation that has made possible the life and living of the ordinary people for centuries. Conditions today are in favour for popular movements to restore local or grassroots economy. Capitalism is surely weaker. The mobilization on a large scale both against corporate projects nationally and globally are good examples and worthy expressions of the revolt. They have challenged the whole notion of development and professed that “another world is possible”.

Another world cannot be created by negating or destroying the existing order by wiping everything out and start once again. To create a new order, there is a need to preserve what is good in the present. It is not a Marxian model that proposes to level down and destroy whatever cannot be enjoyed by all. It will instead be a project that builds on the material and cultural accomplishments of the past. It will have to embrace the political ideas and ideals of democratic socialism, liberty and the rule of law. It will have to promote values of community, solidarity, accountability, creativity and personal responsibility. The agenda will have to move beyond tradition as well. It will not assume that the struggle against capitalism is more urgent than other emancipatory movements against caste, patriarchy, women’s oppression, tribal discrimination and can be reducible to the struggle against capitalism. All people everywhere in a rule by corporations to overcome structural oppression are participating in a common project. Individuals who have committed themselves to contest some specific evils to identify with the hopes, fears, accomplishments and failures of other individuals struggling against other evils would continue to do their work. We must theorize an economic order beyond capitalism which promotes both political and economic democracy.

MOVING TOWARDS A ‘GENERATIVE ECONOMY’²³

Given the fact that corporate power has more or less become universal, it is wrong to think that there is no alternative and if there is an alternative, the only alternative is to regulate the

corporations. If the thinking of citizens remains limited, citizens cannot achieve anything more than their thinking. That would make those who want change as marginal and powerless. There are options that strike at the very root of corporatization. It's time to root out corporations altogether and search for economic alternatives in cooperatives, employee-owned firms, social enterprises, and community land trusts besides democratizing corporations. In the present system of neo-liberalism, workers are alienated from production. The challenge is how to unite them. Ownership unites. Why should workers go on working in companies, firms and corporations in which they do not participate? Any alternative that makes people participate in the affairs of their economy as members of the working class that is responsible for production is democratic and real. In a democratic state, it is irrational to have an undemocratic economy. To go for a democratic economy is in keeping with the democratic principles and is a permanent shift in the underlying architecture of economic power. The alternative to corporatization of the economy is therefore a revolution on broadening economic power from individuals to the community of those who are involved in the process of production and services in the particular economic activity. This would also change the very objective of all economic activity. The purpose of trade and commerce is not to endlessly grow gross domestic product or to create wealth for a financial elite, but to generate the conditions for the flourishing of life to ordinary men and women. What we need in a democracy is a "generative economy"²⁴ that is socially fair and ecologically sustainable.

WHAT IS A GENERATIVE ECONOMY?

One may ask what is a "generative economy"? Generative economy is more a value of life than mere production for the markets. Companies and firms in the generative economy are built around values, values of fairness, sustainability and community. These values become lasting through the social architecture of ownership. The economy is built on a foundation of stakeholder ownership designed to generate and preserve real wealth—resources held and shared by

our communities and the ecosystems we live in. These enterprises don't have absentee ownership shares trading in a casino economy. Ownership is held in human hands. It is starting with life, with human life and the life of the planet. How do we generate the conditions for the flourishing of life instead of beginning with production and asking questions about profits? The paradigm shift from an economy of "loot and plunder" of the corporations to a generative economy is to discontinue to rely on ownership architectures organized around growth and maximum income for the few, and shift to new ownership models organized around keeping this planet and all its inhabitants thriving. To usher in such an economy, the greatest challenge lies in the realm of imagination and ideas. Is it possible for citizens who resist neo-liberal policies and corporate rule to channel their energies into achievable strategies that support ownership alternatives? Such strategies could include the Move Your Money campaign to shift bank deposits to cooperative and community banks. Citizens can even push for major legislation to advance employee ownership. If campaigns like these are unified as a single movement for a generative economy, there could be an unstoppable force – a movement less about regulating corporations as they are and more about building living enterprises as we want them to be. Workers' ownership and cooperatives not only spread wealth but ensure that owners are local. When people of the community own up the economic activity, they are likely to care about local ecological impacts.

Generative ownership is not all about small and local companies. Even large companies could also be equally generative provided they are founded on fairness. Employees in the firm are not a countervailing power. They're not legally outside the firm, negotiating with it. They are the firm. The previous generation democratized the political aspect of sovereignty. But our politics and economy are so intertwined that imbalances in wealth and ownership have eroded our political democracy. To fix this, we need to democratize the economic aspect of sovereignty. Today the ruling oligarch in our economy is capital. Only capital has the right to vote and has a claim on profits. In the generative economy, ownership is rooted

instead in the hands of stakeholders connected to the life of the enterprise. They can also be community members, as with municipally-owned electric plants and wind installations. In the case of credit unions, the depositors are the owners. Farmers benefit from healthy income. The land belongs to the producers. Employees benefit from stable jobs and rewarding work. Customers benefit from chemical-free food. Investors in the firm's preferred stock benefit from dependable rates of return. Farming communities benefit from the return of vitality that flows from farmers' prosperity. Through enterprises like these, we can begin to grasp the principles that we could use to create a generative economy.

To say that there is no alternative to capitalism is a heresy. It is possible to organize a large, sophisticated, modern economy that tends toward fair and just outcomes, benefits the many rather than the few, and enables an enduring human presence on a flourishing Earth. Getting there is not only about regulation but about emergence. Emergence refers to what happens when local actions spring up and connect through networks. It is a movement for a political and economic democracy that would strengthen local communities, making them participative and productive.

The path is one of mobilization, resistance and organization. For the Dalits of India, if casteism and colonialism were the enemies of nation-building at the time of independence, the policies of neo-liberalism or neo-colonialism are the enemy of the present. In economic terms, India is one of the most unequal democracies in the world. There are shifts that have taken place since independence. But these shifts have aggravated ever since the country took to neo-liberalism as mentioned above. With assertion for equality, subaltern groups have made a considerable progress politically. Several leaders, more numerous than at the time of independence, from marginalized and discriminated communities have entered politics. Thanks to the emerging consciousness among subaltern communities, they have been better organized and their assertion is leading to violence in some parts of the country, while in others the dominant communities have started negotiating. Knowing fully the value of democratic participation, Dalits, tribals and minorities have more and more

gone to the polling booths and influenced politics, leading to their steady march toward democratic inclusion. There have been increasing numbers of people going to the polling booths among these communities in every election. Political leaders even from dominant communities have negotiated with the subaltern communities and their movements for support. In recent years we have had a President in the person of K. R. Narayanan, a Speaker in the person of Meira Kumar, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court in the person of K.J. Balakrishnan and a woman chief minister in the largest state of India in the person of Mayawati from the Dalit community. This was unthinkable a generation ago. There is a presence of individuals from discriminated communities in every profession, occupation and enterprise. The country is on the path of being politically inclusive though social discrimination continues.

However, this social discrimination is also qualitatively different than what it was during the time of independence. With assertion against inequality, people from the untouchable communities have defied caste laws and marched into public parks, restaurants and spaces that were denied to them in several parts of the country. They have occupied positions in local panchayats, municipalities and city corporations. There have been many police officers, bureaucrats and civil servants from the community making the institutions of the state more plural and democratic. Dalits and members of the subaltern communities have made it to top institutions of the country through their own toil and work. These are no small achievements. Simultaneously, group consciousness among them has increased. The emergence of subaltern consciousness has also made a difference in terms of equality. There is a relationship between inclusion and equality. More the inclusion, greater is the sense of equality. No doubt, people of the dominant castes are still better off than those hailing from subaltern communities. One of the reasons for the inability to bridge the gap is that with the introduction of the neo-liberal policies in the country, the private sector has become more powerful and the state has come to subordinate itself to the private and global players. The state has privatized in many aspects. The institutions of the private, financial and administrative sector have

become more and more meritocratic. Educational attainment has become increasingly predictive of economic success. With educational attainment going increasingly to the children of the pure castes without the policy of inclusion there, the country is developing a self-perpetuating elite class that is reaping a greater and greater share of financial rewards. The long history of caste discrimination represented an embarrassing contradiction — and a serious threat — to our national story. Everyone did not have an equal chance. The removal of traditional barriers due to democratic institutions has been taking place. There are more dalit and backward students in the Indian educational system now than at the time of independence. While they were less than 1 per cent of the students in 1951 today they are more than 15 per cent. And yet India's elite universities are increasingly the preserves of the well-to-do. The Indian Institutes of Technology, Indian Institutes of Management, the institutes run by Tatas and Birlas and quality institutions in the private sector are more and more made up of the children of upper and upper-middle class families. The nature of the elite may have changed but they have a firmer and firmer hold on our nation's wealth and power. In a meritocracy, inequality becomes much more acceptable since it is legitimized by the system. It is much easier to defend gains that appear to be earned through merit. The creation of a new technocratic elite has led to the abandonment of the many. The privileges of the new elite are defended because they appeared to be entirely merited. At the same time, there has been the presence of greater diversity. Inequality has grown partly for reasons that have little or nothing to do with inclusion. It is the nature of the economy more than the social structure. All advanced industrial societies have become more unequal. But we have become considerably more unequal with the discriminating communities, losing out more than others in this global race after wealth and power. Whatever rewards the discriminated communities had received, it was due to state policies. It is getting harder for people to jump from one economic class to another, harder to join the elite. In the neo-liberal economy, we are used to considering equal opportunity and equality of condition as separate issues. There is a

need to reconsider. In an era in which money translates into political power, there is a growing feeling, on both left and right, that special interests have their way in Parliament and other institutions of the state. There is growing anger, from the Dalit movements, resistance groups, farmers and agricultural labourers that the current system is stacked against ordinary citizens. And there are more individuals and movements that have joined the battle against discrimination and marginalization. The issue of political, economic and social equality is back in play. State is weak and has not been able to play its role. It is here that there is a need to fight for representation in all the institutions of trade, commerce, business, education and the state as well. Democracy cannot become meaningful apart from representation. In fact, for a successful democracy, representation is more important than efficiency. Not that the subalterns are not meritorious. It is unfortunate that merit is defined partially without including the aspects of attitudes and skills along with knowledge. The way forward towards a social democracy is the growing subaltern consciousness manifested in various social movements, local and national democratic institutions and the support that is derived from international organisations and movements. To create another world, the subaltern movements need to focus on identity, representation, a legitimate share in resources and join other groups struggling for equality, justice and community. Hell cannot be improved and turned into heaven without struggles. If we desire heaven, we have to create something totally different. We can't have a functioning democracy without what sociologists call 'secondary organizations,' places where people can get together, plan, talk and develop ideas and learn to assert. Dalits can't do it alone. The subaltern communities need to create a supportive community of mutual aid and cooperation and have an open space for democratic discussion and participation. Communities like that are really important. There is a need to develop an alternate model of human culture. Several man-made hierarchies, constructs, and barriers have been challenged and need to be challenged. We need to model on a far more cooperative, creative, participatory and tolerant of living

model. There is need to stop dreaming and learn to play the game by being realistic to usher in that another world of equality and community.

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