

Whither Civil Society Conflicts and Adjustments

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The concept of civil society has gained much prominence in the development debate of the 1990s. There is controversy over what to include in it: whether, for instance, market-based institutions or, indeed, every non-state organization would qualify to be the part of the concept's definitional set. There is also the question of how to categorize civic institutions, such as: state regulated religious bodies, academic unions, and public sector interest groups whose members are state employees and, therefore, may be subject to public rules and regulations. Critics have also debated the issue of whether civil society should be treated separately from political society. There is also the problem of how to categorize fundamentalist groups and movements that seek to impose 'uncivil' or doctrinal practices on state and society, which ultimately may destroy civil society itself (Bangura 1999:1). Thus, as a concept, civil society means different things to different people. In relation to democracy, it is primarily used in two senses—consolidation and rejuvenation of democratic institutions (Foley and Edwards 1996: 38-52). The job of consolidation is best carried out by building countervailing checks—in the form of independent institutions—against the authority of the state. The work of rejuvenation, especially in established democracies, is however, performed by encouraging a network of associational relationships that foster an active and robust sense of citizenship. The relevance of civil society hence depends on the context in which it is discussed.

The term 'civil society' is suggestive than precise in nature and intention. They suggest, for example that people behave in a civilized manner towards each other; the suggestion here is normative. The terms also suggest that its members enjoy the status of citizens, which again is intended. The core meaning of the concept however, is quite precise. Civil society describes the associations in

which we conduct our lives, and which owe their existence to our needs and initiatives rather than to the state. While some of these associations are short-lived—sports club or political parties for instance—others like churches or universities are founded in history and have a very long life. Still other associations include the enterprises, local communities and places in which we work and live. The family is an element of civil society. The enmeshed networks of such associations make up the reality of civil society.

Debates on Civil Society

Civil Society has perhaps become the most widely discussed theme in contemporary political theory. The 1999 CIVICUS World Assembly provided a forum for its members and partners to assess civil society's previous progress, to chart its future direction, and to begin formulating appropriate strategies for achieving shared objectives (Naidoo and Tandon 1999). McGill's Centre for Developing Area Studies (CDAS) hosted a three-day conference on 'Hemispheric Civil Society' in February 2003 (CDAS: 2003). The purpose of the conference was to engage people in an open dialogue as to how civil society can be strengthened in order to help build hemispheric networks and reinforce solidarity among civil society groups? Throughout the conference, the presentations highlighted the ambivalence around the term 'civil society' if simply juxtaposed to the state. Some preferred using the term 'citizen movements' while others questioned the misuse of the term and asked us to think about 'uncivil society'. Some rejected the term altogether as it masks the class divisions within so-called civil society. Others included within its core every actor (academics, trade unions, religious organizations, human rights organizations, women's groups, private sector etc.), except government. Still others preferred the term 'social movements' to get away from professionalized NGOs that tend to occupy the institutional space in civil society. Others used the term 'citizen movements' to move away from the idea that professionalized NGOs represent civil society against government. Finally, at the conference, there was a general consensus that we need to position the notion of 'civil society' in a more problematic way. There were those in the conference who felt that the use of civil society as opposed to government idealized the notion of civil society as all good and asked the question, 'What about uncivil society?' (CDAS: 4). In fact, there is a sense of irony, when Manuel Castells says that the hero, i.e., the agency of the 21st century, is not

the state, nor the NGO or organizations like the party and the trade union, but the network (Castells 1996). The network is a new kind of collective-fluid, totally unlike the earlier agencies of the 20th century—the party, the nation state, and the proletariat. Many of the old categories of work, labour and value do not apply easily to the notions of civil society now. The 20th century world of citizens is different from the emerging world of netizens.

For the past century, a dominant elite has seen organized political parties as the sole effective response to the abuse of state power. These parties have either been of a reformist or revolutionary nature, but the common goal was the capturing of state power, albeit, by different means and for a different purpose. Forms of party organization, some with greater and some with lesser internal democracy, came to mirror the hierarchal state itself. While there are many who still subscribe to this approach, a series of new responses have emerged, whose effectiveness is in the process of being tested by its power. Whatever the historical record turns out to be, these new movements will leave their inexorable mark upon the struggle. The struggle is multifaceted and multidimensional and the stakes are sufficiently high that we cannot sanctimoniously be riveted only to responses from the past. (CDAS: 5)

Since the 1970s, when it became increasingly clear to the modernization theories of both the Marxist and liberal dispensations that the state would not be able to deliver what is expected of it, civil society was looked up as an alternative. In the 1980s the national societies in the Eastern Europe activated the associational forms of the civil society to undermine a severely bureaucratized political order. In many parts of the 'developing world', this period also saw political mobilization around issues that fell outside the traditional concerns of the political parties. Experience, such as these, made civil society (Chandhoke 2003).

The idea of civil society is deeply rooted in the tradition of political thought. In modern philosophy it emerged along with the rise of capitalism and liberalism. The concept of civil society as a realm distinct from the State was expressed in the writings of the 17th century English philosophers—Thomas Hobbes and John Locke—and of the later thinkers of the Age of Enlightenment (in France and Scotland). Their works anticipated the subsequent focus of sociology, as did the later philosophies of history of the Italian philosopher Giovanni Battista Vico and the German philosopher GWF Hegel with regard to the study of social change.

... Although the notion of civil society got its distinct flavour in Hegel's writings and much that has flowed since, the two functions associated with democracy have gained currency and popularity in recent times. In certain ways this concept has undergone revisions since the works of Hegel, Marx, and Tocqueville. Tocqueville's analysis of associational life in a pluralistic and democratic context however, gave the idea a more positive and richer connotation. (Acharya 1997: 18). The science of associations, wrote Tocqueville, is the 'mother of sciences', since associations in a differentiated society bring individuals together, teach them civic and political virtues, and thereby act as the 'independent eye of society' where state power is concerned (Putnam 1993). For Tocqueville, civil society constitutes the third sphere of society. Whereas the first sphere comprises the state and its institutions and the second the economy, in the third sphere, civil society, parties, public opinion, churches, literary and scientific societies, professional and recreational groups possess a superabundant force and energy. Through these associations, the potential excesses of the centralized state can be curtailed. 'There is no other dyke,' wrote Tocqueville, 'that can hold back tyranny' (Hyeong - Kikwon 2004: 135). Hegel put forth the notion of civil society as one that emerges from the interdependence of individuals, their conflicts and their needs for cooperation. Those needs give rise to the state, and it is the law, the principle of rightness, that links civil society to the state (Hegel 1942:122-23). Marx reacted to Hegel's conception, arguing that the state is merely the mechanism to defend privileged propertied interests in civil society. He understood civil society in a material sense, in terms of the expression of particular 'property rights', 'bureaucracy' being the 'state formulation' of civil society (McClellan 1979:68). Gramsci noted that besides the educational agencies of the state helping maintain hegemony, there are 'in reality, a multitude of other so-called private initiatives and activities [that] tend to the same end-initiatives and activities which form the apparatus of the political and cultural hegemony of the ruling classes'. This for Gramsci is the civil society (Gramsci 1971: 258).

One difference among them has been the direction of causality: Does the state create civil society or does civil society bring about the state? Whereas Hegel believed that society created the demand for the state, others have argued that the state can create civil society. Civil society, he wrote, is one of the achievements of the modern world because it is here that individuals can realize the self in

conditions of freedom. It constitutes, therefore, the 'theatre of history'. Hegel considered civil society as one of the moments of ethical life that regulates the life of the individual, the other two moments being the family and the state. But in contrast to both these institutions, civil society is the site of particularity, of self seeking individuals concerned with their own gratification and fulfillment of their private needs. In order to achieve his dream of universality, Hegel ultimately subordinates civil society to the state, which in his theory is the embodiment of the universal spirit. The irony is that though Hegel starts with civil society as a precondition of the state, it is ultimately the state that becomes the precondition for the very existence of civil society (Chandhoke 2003).

However, the concept's revival in political theory in the late 1980s was primarily associated with the belief that it provided a powerful tool to confront the authoritarian forms of rule that the regimes in developing and centrally planned communist countries had established during much of the post-war period. Only recently in Latin America, Asia, Eastern Europe and even Western Europe has there developed a discourse that takes more seriously the possibility of civil society versus the state. The revived concept of civil society has a great explanatory potential; as on the one hand, it refers to an attempt to theorize about a specific historical context, and, on the other hand, it refers to a new experience of societies in eastern and central Europe (Pietrzyk 2003: 38-35). In the 1980s the term 'civil society' came to be used by analysts of Eastern Europe (Smolar 1996: 24-41). They were looking for a way to break the theoretical umbilical code between state and civil society. For them, civil society implied a spunky society, which develops autonomy through organizations in opposition to the state. But there was a very different approach, which was associated with empowerment, democratization and participation. It was believed that social groups, viewpoints and institutions that were either previously excluded from policy making processes, or enjoyed limited spaces to influence the activities of the public domain, would gain voice, legality and strength and autonomy from the repressive grip of the state. Naturally most scholars, social activists and global development agencies have essentially been attracted to the libertarian and, by extension, democratic content of the concept (Per Mouritsen 2003). Civil society has become one of the key cross-cutting issues used to define the global development agenda. Indeed the emerging global civil society

movement of the 1980s is against the old class-based or production-oriented, organizations. Global networking; promotion of citizenship and consumer rights; flexible, issue-oriented discourses, open dialogue with dominant institutions and agents of power, and avoidance of grand theories in the pursuit of development goals seem to be the defining features of the new global civil society movement (Gellner 1994: 213).

Much has been written and said about civil society. Robert Putnam's celebrated work, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*, has created much enthusiasm and debate in political theory in the nineties. As Holloway puts it, 'millions throughout the world have given up the dream of a radically different type of society' (Holloway 2002). Citizen movements are indeed different from other forms of social mobilization, such as populist or insurgent challenges to the social order, and seem to express a shift in the way in which collective identities, normative orientation, and common goals are defined. Citizen movements can be seen as a response to the sweeping free-market reforms of the 1990s and the growing economic polarization of most societies, complemented with the widely held belief that elected politicians are incompetent, weak or corrupt, so rendered by the effects of corporate globalization, US military hegemony, and USA-led cultural homogenization. Along with this concrete change affecting the very fabric of social life, many other approaches underscore the needs and entitlements of the ordinary people. Although many of civil societies' activities are clearly and popularly non-political (particularly the charitable groups, human rights etc.), these are centered on the same forms of mobilization embedded in civil society and yet have political goals. That is, they seek to influence the political process, but from outside of its conventional institutions. Highly critical of a profit-driven world that is becoming inhospitable to democracy and social justice, they build on values such as solidarity and compassion for the poor and well being of others. The anti-globalization movement is perhaps the clearest expression of this phenomenon.

Globalization and Civil Society

With the new international trade regimes of the 1980s, a new, thoroughly globalized economy is taking shape throughout the world. As capitalism reaches across borders in search of markets, raw materials, and lower labour costs, transnational corporations

are beginning to have an ever more profound impact on the economies of individual nations. In this new economic era, when corporations rule the world, what is the role of the government in setting a nation's economic agenda and ensuring the economic security of the citizens and communities? For past two decades, governments have transformed much of their sovereignty to global corporations. Mbogori and Chigudu believe that the fundamental political conflict, therefore, will not be between nations or even between trading blocs but between the forces of globalization and the territorially based forces of local survival seeking to preserve and redefine community (Mbogori and Chigudu 1999). Since the late 1980s and particularly since the Earth Summit in Rio in 1992, a growing network of transnational non-governmental organizations has gained unprecedented influences in shaping the international agenda on issues ranging from climate change and human rights to land mines and the working of the multilateral development banks. Through their efforts, governments have endorsed, sometimes reluctantly, international conventions that bind countries to take specifications and produce measurable outcomes. On this new global stage, civil society organizations and NGOs have become potent players in shaping and resolving contentious international issues. The movement has catalyzed a new larger 'democracy movement' that is growing both within countries, as well as among citizen organizations globally. In India it is being called a 'living democracy' movement that views democracy through the prism of local empowerment and community control of resources. In Canada, hundreds of organizations have articulated a new 'citizen agenda' that has attempted to wrest control of government institutions back from corporations. In Chile, coalition of environmental movements has created a powerful sustainable Chile movement that seeks to reverse her drift towards neo-liberalism and reassert control of national priorities and resources. Similar movements have blossomed in Brazil, focused especially on the rights of the poor and landless; in Bolivia, where a mass peasant movement has blocked the privatization of water; in Mexico, where Mayans have re-ignited the spirit of indigenous rights to land and resources; in France, where farmers have risen up in revolt against the rule of trade that threatens to destroy small scale farming; in England, where construction of new highways through the rural landscapes have brought hundreds of thousands of people out to mark blaming globalization and its need for high speed transport (Broad 2002: 42).

What does globalization do to civil society? The answer is it threatens civil society in a variety of ways. The social effects of economic responses to the challenges of globalization have become the subject of public and scholarly attention, especially in the United States. This is no accident. North America is the home of modern civil society, where threats to its strength are most acutely felt. The following illustrations of pressures on civil society draw from American as well as European experiences.

First economic globalization appears to be associated with new kinds of social exclusion. For one thing income inequalities have grown. This is a new type of inequality. It would be better described as inequalization, the opposite of levelling. The income of the top 10 or even 20 per cent is rising significantly, whereas the bottom 20, indeed 40 per cent see their earnings decline. A very significant set seems to have fallen within the underclass section. They are a socially excluded section, not even a class, they are the truly disadvantaged, an indictment of the rest. Many of the truly disadvantaged are not yet economically excluded; they are also excluded on other grounds, such as race, nationality, religion etc. A wave of ethnic cleansing is not confined to war zones like Bosnia and Herzegovina, but threatens to engulf the first world as well.

What does this have to do with globalization? Those whose skills are needed are paid a good salary but many who had a reasonable wage or salary in the past have now sunk to a miserable and often irregular real income. Indeed, the perception is that some are simply not needed; that the economy can grow without their contribution whichever way you look at them; that they stand as a cost to the rest, not a benefit.

Then, there is the tragedy of the middle class in the developed world. The latest wave of efficiency gains has made the office workers redundant. The once hailed echelon of middle management has almost vanished. Such trends created a fundamental change in the world of work. No one would argue that there is not enough work to be done, but work at decent rate of pay is increasingly hard to come by. It is a privilege, not a realistic aspiration for all. In manufacturing, in agriculture and in all other fields, half or fewer of those employed in the past can today produce twice as much or more. What remains is a strange assortment of ill-paid personal-service jobs. In Europe, it is estimated, as per the present nature of marketization, there will probably be 10 per cent unemployment in the coming years out of the total population of those in employment

age. So, poverty and unemployment threaten their very fabric. Civil society requires opportunities of participation, which in advanced countries are provided by work and a decent minimum standard of living. Once a growing number loses these, civil society goes down with them.

The dismantling of the welfare state is on the agenda everywhere. Flexibility has been mentioned as an advantage of economic globalization. But it is the reverse of stability and security as well. One may fairly debate the extent to which stability and security are preconditions of civil society. Both geographical immobility and welfare state security may have gone too far in parts of Europe in the 1960s and 1970s. But the economic response to globalization is intrinsically inimical to both stability and security. Uprooting people becomes a condition of efficiency and competitiveness.

Such developments have advantages but they are to some extent unavailable to the wider sections of society. The pendulum seems swinging far in the opposite direction which may lead to the destruction of important features. In America and Europe inner cities tell a shocking part of the story. Limited term-contracts, like part-time work, is fine for while, notably for the young and the able-bodied and perhaps for child-bearing women. But people, even children, do get older and discovering at the age of 55 and sometime earlier that you are no longer needed is enough to turn many into 'grey panthers'. The pressures of globalization, seems to have brought about what may be called 'Social Darwinism'. The people have been through a period of rampant individualism. Individuals were set against each other in fierce competition where the strongest of the lot prevailed. In the end of the 19th century there was a reaction to individualism in the form of collectivism. Now it stands discredited.

Perhaps the most serious effect of the values, which go with flexibility, efficiency, productivity, competitiveness and profitability, is the destruction of public services. A national health service, universal public education, basic income guarantee become victims of an economism, which is running amok. Small wonders that commuter transport or environmental protection, or public safety suffers in the process. This gloomy picture is not the whole story. Many people, of course, are better off than ever before, they have more choices, they live longer, and they have better education and leisure pursuits. Yet there can be little doubt that the economic challenge of the global market-place has not helped civil society.

Why not to defend Civil Society?

The unfettered market, which also generated tremendous wealth for the privileged, has also demonstrated its capacity to generate new poverty on an unprecedented scale. Health gains that were translating into longer lives and declining infant mortality are being offset, if not nullified, by the HIV epidemic. The end of Cold War and the promise of a peace dividend for development have not materialized. In its wake, we have experienced intransigent civil strife, rising ethnic conflict, and tensions. Why is there no massive movement to defend civil society? Where is the 20th century equivalent of the labour movement of the late 19th century? It does not, and it will not exist. For reasons, which antedate the challenges of globalization, individualization has not just transformed civil society, but social conflicts too. Many people may suffer the same fate, but there is no unified and unifying explanation of their suffering, no enemy that can be fought and forced to give way. More importantly, and worse still, the truly disadvantaged do not represent a new productive force to be reckoned with at present. The rich can get richer without them, government can rise and rise without their help.

Individualized conflicts have been spreading, throughout USA and Europe, which is by no means easier to handle. It means that people have no sense of belonging, no sense of commitment, and therefore no reason to observe the law of the values behind it. If there are no jobs, why not smoke pot, go to rave parties, steal cars to go on joy rides, mug old women, beat up rival gangs and, if need be, kill. So there developed a type of social disintegration. It has become associated with a degree of active disorder. Young men, increasingly young women too, and many who are not so young see no reason to abide rules of the system, which for them are the rules of others. They opt out of a society, which has pushed them to the margin already. They become a threat. Those who can afford it, pay for their protection. No profession is growing faster than private security services. Those who cannot afford protection become victims. A sense that something has gone badly wrong is spreading, a sense of anomic or lawlessness and deep insecurity.

Capitalism itself changed, from saving to spending and on to borrowing. As it progressed, society and politics also changed. Increasingly people demand a share of wealth they produce, they also want to be masters of their own lives. They want to travel, and watch television and choose their own neighbours. They want to

have a say in their own affairs, a vote, the right to form associations, the possibility to tell a government to go away. Civil society and political liberty follow economic development. But do they?

Now in USA and Europe, temptation to authoritarianism are considerable. To mention a few, in the US, growing levels of disillusionment with the political process would see ever decreasing levels of electoral participation. In some countries, questions about media monopoly began to raise concerns about whether it had true access to reliable information on a range of social and political choices or whether it had been replaced by a new orthodoxy reflecting pop culture rather than reasoned debate. Integrating the young into society is no longer easy. When families fail, schools cannot succeed. Labour markets do not exactly wait for new comers. Many young people begin to drift and to embrace unsocial behaviour. All too often liberty has become licence. The behaviour of people in public is disgruntling. Unkempt men drinking beer in public places, half undressed girls cavorting about, no one paying respect to the elderly or the infirm—it needs to be stopped. The welfare state needs to be reformed, which cannot be done without hardships. If people do not want to work, they must be made to do so. We want prosperity for all. We want civil societies, which hold together and provide terms of an active and civilized life for all citizens. We want the rule of law and political institutions, which allow change as well as critical discourse, and the exploration of new horizons. But what can be done to preserve a civilized balance of wealth creation, social cohesion and political freedom? First, we have to change the language of public economics with an emphasis of social well-being as suggested by many, including Amartya Sen. Second the nature of work is changing. It should be accepted and societal norms be reoriented on their reality. Third, disadvantaged present an unmanageable problem. Everything that can be done to include the excluded must be done. It means, as a British parliamentarian Frank Field puts it, 'to cut the supply routes to tomorrows' under class. Fourth, globalization means centralization. It individualizes and centralizes at the same time. Local communities can provide a practical basis for development. Fifth, government is weak. There is an acceptance of the fact that in the global market place, the actors are transnational companies and they seem to leave government out. But they clearly are not out of the picture. Governments set the tone for the economy and for society generally. Both public values and business values should be combined. A new balance needs to be found.

Crisis of Civil Society in India

Independent India opted for what came to be referred to as the 'third way', i.e., combining multiparty democracy, one of the distinctive features of capitalist states, with planned economy, the hallmark of socialist states. This was indeed a challenging experiment; in that the best of both the models were fused together and in doing so, it attempted to fuse state, market, and civil society. Although, one-party dominance persisted for most of the time in independent India, she did not become a party state or usurp the space of civil society (Oommen 2004: 115).

However the intensity of civil society activity in India since the late 1970s is manifestly a response to the centralizing tendencies of state structures, as well as to the inadequacy of state policies and their implementation, especially in the sphere of development (Jayal 2001: 225). The vibrancy of civil society since 1970s is partly occasioned by the aberrations of the Indian state of which some are particularly gruesome, like the declaration of internal emergency during 1975-76; the manner in which Operation Blue Star was conducted in 1984 to flush out Sikh militants from the Golden Temple; the failure to bring to book those who indulged in anti-Sikh riots in 1984; the failure to prevent dismantling of the Babri Masjid in 1990; and the torching of Graham Stains, the Australian missionary and his two sons in 1999. On the other hand, it should be kept in mind that these instances illustrate how the state and civil society condition each other. Recent years have witnessed the emergence of two trends which are quite unparalleled in their attempt to extend the frontiers of Indian democracy. These are the multitude of social movements (sometimes called grassroots politics) and the political assertions of the historically disadvantaged lower castes, primarily the 'dalits' and the castes officially designated as the Other Backward Classes. The newer social movements emerged as a response to, among other things, the violations of civil liberties and human rights, the subordinate position of women in Indian society, the degradation of the environment, the population displacement caused by development projects, and the destruction of tribal cultures. These have often been referred to as 'new social movements', because of an apparent similarity with contemporary social movements in Western Europe, such as the women's, peace and environmental movements. They are not post industrial movements (in many cases they are pre-industrial), and while several are active in the arena of

extra-parliamentary politics, their claims are perforce addressed to the state. Ecological conflicts in India, for example, have not been movements of middle-class urban environmentalism, but rather livelihood struggles for people whose lives depend on natural resources such as forests and the sea (Gadgil and Guha 1994). Thus it is the struggle against felling trees in the forest of Garhwal and Kumaon or that against bauxite mining in the largely tribal belt of the Gandhamardan hills in Orissa, or even that against commercial fishing trawlers off the coast of Kerala—these are clearly quite distinct from the environmental movements in the western hemisphere. The resistances against project, which are perceived to be accelerating the process of destructive development, abound in India. In some cases, the state has given up the project (example, Silent Valley Project in Kerala); in other cases the struggles are continuing (example, Narmada Bachao Andolan or Save Narmada movement). It is not really apt to designate these struggles as anti-state; it is more appropriate to designate them as pro-people.

What is new about the social movements from the mid 1980s onward is that they are not linked to any revolutionary programme (as, for instance, the earlier peasant movements were), or to party politics, and rarely even to each other. Thus, for instance, movements defending human rights and civil liberties have worked independently from the environmental movements. Indeed it has been argued that their fragmentation and *ad hoc* character is the main problem of these movements, as it prevents them from providing an alternative agenda for radical social change (Kothari 1997: 448). Nevertheless, these movements can be said to have expanded the frontiers of conventional politics quite considerably and, even from their distinct vantage point of extra-parliamentary protest, added to the vocabulary of Indian democracy.

The political assertions of the historically disadvantaged castes in the 1990s have, at least partly, been linked to the implementation of the Mandal Commission Report (submitted in 1980, but implemented by the VP Singh government), guaranteeing reserved quotas for members of these castes. 'Compensatory discrimination' (Galanter 1984) had already been provided for in the constitution, through reservation in parliament as well as the state legislatures, public employment, and education for the scheduled castes and tribes, approximately in accordance with their proportion in the population. Almost simultaneously with the acceptance of Mandal Commission report, recent years have seen the emergence of a political alliance

of the 'dalit-bahujan' castes, often seeking also to encompass the Muslim minority in its fold. Their geographical concentration has been mainly in the plains of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, and their ideological programme has also been somewhat limited. As presently constituted, however the idea of 'social justice' in 'dalit-bahujan' political discourse has bestowed an altogether different meaning on the conception of social justice associated with the radical programme of the left. This new conception of social justice does not seek to transform the entire social order or even to impart a more equitable meaning to the universal idea of citizenship, but rather to create special categories of citizenship in relation to certain social goods, mainly education and public employment, and latterly, political power. Consequently, class differences are pushed into the background. It is sometimes argued that even as policies are devised to compensate for historical wrongs, such processes may actually result in the greater entrenchment of caste identity and the consolidation of caste consciousness. The political parties representing these social groups are conventionally identified as the Bahujan Samaj Party, the Samajwadi Party, and sections of the Janata Dal.

The role of new social movements to the Statist discourse on development should be considered first. Feminist, ecological, and indigenous people's movements are challenging the State's subordination of women, dalits, tribals and minorities. The women's movement, forest struggles, and the movements against big dams are articulating alternative forms of governance. Not only are the new social movements redefining and transforming subaltern knowledge that has been subordinated and suppressed by dominant forms of knowledge, they are also demystifying democracy as a consultative and participatory social relation (Parajuli 2001: 259).

The barriers of traditional society have broken down; democracy has provided ordinary people with the language to reject social subordination, even if insubordination cannot, in material terms mean very much for the poor. Here elections are viewed as a political festival, drawing upon elements of secular and religious rituals. Through this democratic rite, voters not merely endorse particular candidates, they also redefine political hierarchy and create new sets of individual and collective relationships in the polity.

New social movements are distinct from traditional anti systemic movements such as oppositional parties in two ways. First, the focus of these movements is not to capture state power through elections

or a violent revolution but to transform the nature of politics itself. Second, new social movements in India and elsewhere dispel the myth of a vanguard. In these movements, antagonisms are expressed not only through class but also through multiple 'sites of power' such as gender, ethnicity, caste, and regional identity (Parajuli 2001: 262).

This tension between the pro-development state and new social movements can best be characterized as a struggle for hegemony. In the cause of development, the state generates one programme after another in order to co-opt people's initiatives. However, with the state committing itself more and more to these issues, the contradictions within the society also increased. As a result of this the state's ability to mobilize and implement development programmes is facing an acute crisis.

New social movements use multiple strategies to counteract state power by applying their own indicators to assess the desirability of development. As carriers of emerging hegemony, new social movements are neither uniform nor devoid of tensions. The debates and tensions within the women's, indigenous people's and ecological movements in India are by no means resolved. They do not have a uniform code of do's and don'ts, neither are they imprisoned by universal categories of predetermined visions. More significantly, at the core of these movements there is self-critical spirit and a sustained inner struggle. In each struggle, there is an internal tension between grasping available opportunity and claiming identity, between participating in the existing politico-economic space and seeking autonomy. A new culture is emerging from social conflicts that appear within this process of transformation (Touraine 1998).

Several questions emerge out of the above discussion. How will the politics of new social movements take shape? Will the various movements continue separately or will they find a common ground to form a 'popular national will'? How will the knowledge base of these identities be articulated? What will emerge out of these multiple micro experiments is open to the future.

But the most important question is: how will this reactivated civil society interact with the Indian state and its political parties? The promise of new social movements lies in the fact that the benevolent image of the state in independent India is outdated. More and more, it has become an appendage to market forces and the international economic order. Traditional political parties have also lost the vigour and credibility to provide alternative (such as integrated development,

eco-development, sustainable development). Now they are seeking an alternative development.

Another very contradictory situation has also emerged in India as a result of globalization, as in other parts of the developing world, as mentioned in the introductory part of this paper. The retreat of the state, which is almost a corollary of economic liberalization, hurts the poor in a material sense. The soft options in fiscal adjustment lead to cuts in public expenditure in social sectors, as the resources allocated for poverty alleviation, health care, education and welfare programmes decrease, or do not increase as much as they should, in real terms, so that there is a squeeze on social consumption. Cuts in subsidies are often at the cost of the poor. The story does not end there as the state withdraws from investment in infrastructure, it is the poor who go without. But that is not all. Markets and globalization have a logic of their own, which leads to inclusion for some and exclusion for others or affluence for some and poverty for others. There are some winners. There are some losers. Exclusion is no longer simply about the inability to satisfy the most basic human needs in terms of food, clothing and shelter for large number of people. It is much more complicated. For, the consumption pattern and the lifestyles of the rich associated with globalization have powerful demonstration effects. People everywhere, even the poor and excluded, are exposed to these consumption possibility frontiers because the electronic media has spread the consumerist message far and wide. This creates expectations and aspirations. But the simple fact of life is that those who do not have incomes cannot buy goods and services in the market. Thus, when the paradise of consumerism is unrealizable or unattainable, which is the case for the common people, it only creates frustration or alienation. The recent election is a clear indication of this trend, the people overwhelmingly rejected those who were in power unable to provide the basic amenities for the poor. As the results of the election clearly show, when the poor are allowed to vote freely, they turn their backs en masse on policies that do nothing to improve their situation.

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