

# The Multitudes of the Invisibles and the Revitalization of the Indian Democratic Space

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## 1 Introduction

The foreword of the Indian Constitution's preamble has three important words "we the people" that underline the concept of a community of equal citizens. It is a shift from the past: in a country that lived in the institutionalized inequality of the caste system, the idea of equality by making the caste system illegal thus bringing all the communities equal and where the community of the subjects had taken for granted their conditions of life shaped by the feudal system of governance, the institutionalization of the parliamentary democracy based on the popular sovereignty was another departure from the past.

While there is this increasing demand and the new pressures generated from the diverse social communities to match up on the deliverables of the democracy both on the intent as well as in the content. One might agree that by observing almost seven decades of Indian democratic journey (minus a brief hiccup of an emergency period in the mid-1970s) one can acknowledge the salient achievements which have worked for the fattening up of the privileged class, expansion of the middle class with a varying level of the middle condition and some trickle-down to the poor. One may further argue about the significant achievements in the socioeconomic and sociopolitical spheres and maintaining the juggernaut of democratic exercise with a relatively free and competitive platform in India has itself been a good indicator of the health of the democratic space. It is also to be taken into account the diversity of the social and economic groups with variegated conditions and interests. Yet there have been massive feelings of betrayal in the masses about the democratic

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institutions. As G. Palanadurai argues “It has come to the stage of declaring that we are incapable of working out democratic institutions. As proof, they point to the growing criminalization of politics, the venality of the political class and the anarchy marking our legislatures” (Palanithurai 2007, p. 5).

In this paper, we try to observe the buildup and convergence of the varying categories of the social organizations with very diverse agendas that lock-stepped their logistics and energy to work for the meta-narrative for the fight against corruption the nationwide mass protest that started in the beginning of 2011 and remained active until April 2013. The paper further analyzes the constituent of the collective expression of the outrage and the vigil of the common citizens in India. This paper wants to examine the two significant happenings in the past quarter of a century that has generated a constituency with necessary rage and assertive capacity against the state that has selectively retreated in her obligation. By the twin development of the decentralization of the polity and governance most notably through Panchayat Raj (local self-governance 73rd and 74th amendment of the constitution) thus politically empowering the citizenry yet at the same time with the gale of neoliberal economic policy and the selective retreat of the state, a new urban space has been created that has a curious mix of the migrated landless farmers and artisans rubbing their shoulders with the new rich middle class that is cosmopolitan, rich and articulate yet politically indifferent. It is this new mix of social muscles that has stirred the political space.

This paper discusses with empirical showcasing of the emergence of the new repertoire of the social movement in India that has galvanized the middle class that has remained more of an affluent consumer class into demanding and monitoring citizens. With the formation of the government of the political party that took birth out of this movement in Delhi, and the higher level of voter turnout in the subsequent elections, this paper argues that the cycle of revitalization of the democratic governance in India has been met with mixed success. It can be seen that contemporary Indian social movements have witnessed a shift of the repertoire and witnessed the formation of a new agitated class of Indian society with the emergence of anticorruption protests in 2011 and took complete formulations with the outbreak of the anti-rape protests in late 2012 and early 2013. This paper intends to examine that, although, with the unstoppable juggernaut of liberalization and neo-liberal policy of the state for the past two decades, where the large scale organized and unionized movements have dwindled, yet the non-unionized mass movement that stirred India for more than 2 years starting from the early 2011 and reaching its zenith in 2013 with two distinct but interrelated tidal waves of Indian citizens thronging the public space and creating the pan Indian circularity of engagement have succeeded on three distinctive preconditions which are density of the active civil society, the citizen’s mobilization and participation cutting across the ethnic and social base and finally and most importantly the power of the subordinate classes.

## 2 The Flattening of the Uneven Indian Socioeconomic Space and the Rooting for Participatory Democracy

The traces of the participatory democracy in India can be seen in Mahatma Gandhi's concept of *Swaraj* and *Swadeshi* (self-government and the community's control over the resources). Hence after the independence of India, the wish of Mahatma Gandhi for the deepening of democracy beyond the representative format was articulated by Article 40(C) of the Indian constitution which clearly stated "the state should take steps to organize village Panchayats and endow them with such power and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as units of self-government" (Srivastava 2010). It took more than four decades of long struggle to finally get this directive of the Indian constitution to become a law in the form of the Panchayat Raj bill in the early 1990s. The understanding for the consolidation of the participatory democracy is to generate the environment for the direct democratic mechanism that allows the citizens to remain active in the policy cycle of governance that directly affects their day to day lives. This necessitates the deepening of the democratic space through decentralization of power. As J. Manor has argued "The transfer of resources and power (and often of tasks) to lower-level authorities which are largely or wholly independent of higher levels of government and which are 'democratic' in some way and to some degree" (Manor 1997, pp. 6–7).

Yet the first comprehensive and politically effective proposal on participatory democracy came from the popular socialist leader Jayaprakash Narayan. The issue of deepening the democracy was central to the agenda, without which he believed; only the elites will perpetuate in the name of democracy. He believed in a democracy where both economic and political power is primarily held and exercised directly by the people from the base of the polity J.P.'s vision of democracy found a powerful political expression in a massive mass movement, known as J.P. movement, in the early 1970s against the authoritarian trends in Indian politics.

A gram Sabha (Village assembly) that constituted everyone who are registered as the voters transformed the dynamic and the agenda setting as the polity and policy designing became one of increasing circularity with multiplicity of stakeholders from the planning to the implementation stage. While the planning process was no more managed by the supply driven activities which is basically the top down approach but more of a demand driven activities with large horizontal planning process and then bottom up polity recommendations and demands. Whenever this participatory aspect in the democratic governance is to be observed in the Indian context, it shall be noted that it is the possibility of the participation of the marginalized, the Dalits and the women, the larger group of the Indian demography that has been disenfranchised for millennium in the polity process as only through expanding the empowerment space of those meek and weak millions, can the participatory democracy have even half a chance.

Yet the process is not without its inherent fault as the disenfranchisement of the hundreds of years of the majority of Indians<sup>1</sup> with the dynamic façade of the representative democratic governance has created the power elites with strongly entrenched political interests. It is further emphasized by Rueschemeyer et al. (1992, p. 60) that ‘any class that is dominant both economically and politically will not be eager to dilute its political power by democratization’ (Huber and Stephens 1999).

The political changes introduced in the Indian polity have been a continuing theme in the subaltern critique. Social scientists like Sudipto Kaviraj have discussed the “inescapable externality” of the liberal democratic institutions in India that is introduced often by using the degree of force (Kaviraj and Khilnani 2001). The argument is that the neoliberal model places disproportionate importance on the inclusion of people in the market where the direct interaction between state and individuals cast as consumer of services and taxpayers. On the other side, Partha Chatterjee discussed the term “Political Society” referring to that particular section of the society from the institutionalized representative politics and the formal economy but has the capacity to generate the increasing circularity for the democratic initiatives.

This *political society* through the process of assimilation of people as citizens enjoying equal civil and political rights as the state has not been able to deliver on the promises of providing equal political and social justice to its members and the gap between the privileged and the excluded is only widening. Partha Chatterjee argues that this political society provides a social location to these various communities who have been left neglected in the liberal democratic socio economic platform through the representative democratic method and recommends to “... include processes outside the formal sphere of state politics and to open up spaces in state and civil society for the subaltern There is a need to redefine politics he maintains to include processes outside the formal sphere of state politics and to open up spaces in state and civil society for the subaltern (Chatterjee 2001). As a very caste and community dominated society that India has been for millennium, the moral order that was led by these groupings still have the precedence over state institutions and the social and political order was not based on the contractual relations and rights between the individual and the state but was highly lumped into the respective communities as the social archipelago that is pluralistic and decentralized yet functional for the socio economic needs. Hence in such condition the grafting of the Western civil society model had a limited penetration with a very limited social impact mostly in the urban and urbane, anglicized and increasingly Westernized social sphere. The famous Indian scholar Damodar Dharmanand Kosambi has so aptly remarked regarding the island condition of the communities with this witty but sharp observation “Modern India produced an outstanding figure of world literature in Tagore. Within easy reach of Tagore’s final residence may be found Santhals and other illiterate primitive people still unaware of Tagore’s existence. Some of them are hardly out of the food gathering stage” (Kosambi 1956, p. 55).

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<sup>1</sup>“A Sanskrit word for majority now used for the disenfranchised and oppressed lower caste majority of Indians bahunas”.

It is in this context that it is important to find the Indian niche in the democratic theory that is so well dependent on the community relations and is the essential part of the Indian social life. These communities have always been a part of India and the caste and religious community with their collective identity remain the catalysis for the grass-root collective participation and mobilization of their democratic rights. As Chatterjee says “community mobilization is more familiar and easier for non-westernized Indians and that communities are now claiming welfare from the State as a collective ‘right’ even though their mode of struggle may be in violation of the law. Their success will depend on how successfully they can network with other groups and political parties to exert pressure on the State” (Chatterjee 2001, p. 177).

As understood by these communities that they don’t limit political participation to voting but goes ahead with all form of political mobilization as well as the effective translation of their community members’ demands into the political process via institutional channels. These three clusters of power in India have a fluid dynamic and work through coalescing via the coalition build up exercise. Hence the very beginning of the Westminster modeled representative democracy had to make way for the community based pluralistic, fragmented, multi layered social reality of Indian social space in order to address the feeble capacity of the state to deliver.

Besides, the dwindling capacity of the political parties to represent the interest of the different groups of the subalterns coupled with the weaker accountability to their constituencies has resulted in the furtherance of the longevity of the community centric participatory and coalitional democratic practices at the grass root level. It is in this context one can see the conception and birth of the policy alternatives that allow the formal and representative democracy to become more participatory and vital with its own Indian peculiarities that cohabit and infuse to the formal and representative democracy.

With all its fallacy it is to be noted that what Mahatma Gandhi wanted to achieve through Panchayats by the participation of the people might have been achieved by utilizing the new opportunity created through the 73rd Amendment to the Constitution of India, provided the Gandhian scholars and activists contextually conceptualize the Gandhian framework of governance. If the Village Swaraj by M. K. Gandhi is reworked in the current context, the 73rd Amendment will fit into the framework of Gandhi (1962).

### **3 The Selective Retreat of the State and the Emergence of the New Mobilizing Groups**

Mass pan-nation movements, which have been rolling over the globe for the last several years, are demonstrating that forms of citizens’ self-organization have not been exhausted. When conventional forms are not effective, new sections of the demography take charge that had thus far remained in the periphery, whose major

resources and transformative powers lie in their discursive practices. There are theoretical frames created by social science scholars to analyze various forms of public participation. As Ravi Kumar says “Social mobilization over a sustained period of time with a collectivity having consensus to struggle (in terms of ideas as well as of action) to achieve certain goals can be defined as movement” (Kumar 2008, p. 79). This generates three points; continuity, consensus and the concise demand for the goal. In the heyday of the mass political movement of the late 1970s in India against the restriction of the civil rights by the Indira Gandhi government, there emerged a passionate discourse regarding the cohabitation of the journey between the reforming and anti-systemic movements.

P. N. Mukherjee further states “any collective mobilization for actions directed explicitly towards an alteration or transformation of the structure of the system, or against the explicit threat to an alteration and transformation of a system” (Mukherjee 1977, p. 38). On the other hand, Melucci voices the need for the new social movement because the established paradigm has become redundant in explaining the new phenomena. “Unlike their nineteenth-century counterparts, contemporary forms of collective actions are not preoccupied with struggles over the productions and distribution of material goods. They challenge the administrative rationality of systems based on information primarily on symbolic grounds, the way in which information based society generates meaning and communication for its members” (Melucci 1995, p. 110). Ravi Kumar further elaborates about the new movements with a “post” phenomenon, a struggle for a “post bourgeois, post-patriarchal” and democratic civil society. Heterogeneity is being raised as a significant standard bearer of such movements with the plurality of pursuits and purposes, and plurality of their social bases (Kumar 2008, p. 80).

As its forms are rapidly evolving, analytical instruments should also evolve in order to keep up with social practice. The participatory democratic movement allows us to explain their social origin not on the basis of demographic data or belonging to a particular social group, like students, workers or the middle class, and not binding diverse participants by one common interest, but, rather, disclose its formation on the basis of shared discourse and common ethical demands towards the power structures.

The new social movement that started in India at the end of 2010 and reached its pinnacle in the mid-April of 2013 had two tidal waves as a set of factors, both of which need to be analyzed. There are a few interrelated changes to be noted. First there has been an immense increase in the degree of inequality of assets and incomes compared to which the inequality before independence of India seemed modest. The dispossession of the petty producers (small farmers, artisans, and small flea vendors) owing to the income compression imposed by the free flow of finance has made even simple reproduction difficult for them. Crisis with the farmers in India is just the visible sore thumb in point that has claimed more than 200,000 lives in the past two decades by the suicide owing to bad loans and credit system in the Indian banking system and the apathy of the state to help out farmers. It has further resulted in their mass migration to the cities where they became unsettled workers

and were condemned to live in the slums. The retreat of the state has been so ghastly and unprecedented as regime has turned deaf ears upon the people for the sake of carrying forward the agenda in the interest of free flow of finance despite being brought on the popular mandate. As Professor Bhambhari commented on the haphazard and unbalanced growth of the Indian economy, “the informal sector of the Indian economy is not an insignificant social reality as shown by the National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO) 2004–2005. First, the labor force numbers 459 million, and 433 million of this 459 million, or about 94 per cent, is in the unorganized sector. The bourgeois state has enacted a toothless law like the Unorganized Workers’ Social Security Act, 2008, which is either half-heartedly implemented by the ‘employers’ or simply ignored” (Bhambhari 2013, p. 76).

Though there is this massive growth in Indian economy in the aggregate terms the largest growth has been in the unorganized service sector where a vast chunk of the informal sector workers are those who are intrinsically difficult to organize. This vast dismantling of the organized work sector that is predominantly substituted by uprooted casual, part time and temporary employment and has multiplied in the past quarter of a century. As in the lack of any outlet of their grievances and lack of possibility to unionize the due check and balance in the economic cycle went missing with the primitive acceleration and no brakes.

The large scale social and political movement of the 1970s and the 1980s became obsolete and flattened out. This process of unabashed and unhindered loot has further increased the disillusionment among the citizenry of different social bases, most notably among the intellectuals and professionals who found themselves at the receiving end of the rapacious clique of the successive regimes in the past two decades. Though their social and economic capacity has kept their social life easier and comfortable, their political influence have remained marginal compared to their economic and intellectual clout. This both ways built political marginalization had run its course and with the arrival of the social media their mediated space on the issue politic or social has become again alive where through the arm chair agitation they could shake off their political dormancy.

As the established political institutions, both social democrats, the right to the center BJP and most ironically the left party failed to take up these issues, the new social actor emerged with the potent method of Satyagraha of Mahatma Gandhi and JP. The emergence of the new actor was because of the fact that the traditional opposition space of both political and social had been co-opted by the system or became docile in the past two decades of the aggressive “reform narrative”. Mainly this urban Indian middle class through its diligence, entrepreneurship and the incidental benefits accruing because of the financial deregulation has gained more economic and social capacity in the neoliberal free market India. They are educated, articulate, urban, cosmopolitan and sophisticated with their profession tied up with the mid or end layer of the high tech industries and are naturally cynical against the state institutions and political participation.

## 4 A Shift of Actors and Repertoire

In their seminal works, Tilly (1978) and later Tarrow (1998) argued that opportunities for repertoire transitions in social movements take place when the following conditions develop simultaneously in societies: economic and political structuring, increased urbanization and importance of the urban centers as a space for collective action, increase in the literacy among the population accompanied by an increasing media presence and the persistence of tactics adopted by various collective actions. The anti-corruption movement marks a significant shift from the rural base of social movements to an urban one. The movements began in the national capital, Delhi, where the Parliament, political elite, and national media are located. However, it soon spread to other metropolises, smaller cities and towns, and generated some interest in parts of rural India. The sites of the sit-in and fast were familiar dissent spaces.

One of the demographic advantages that twenty-first century's India has is that more than 70% of its population is under the age of 25. A new generation also generates a new sense of identity and perception. Compared to some of the other social movements of the Arab countries that has witnessed a complete change of the governance mechanism and the uncontrollable wind of change, the Indian movement for participatory democracy has been demanding the accountability, better governance and higher standards of state capacity such as law and order, transparency and rule of law. This middle-class-dominated pan-Indian social movement has not been decisively controlled by the urban rich.

It has the necessary significant presence of politically conscious citizenry that is a vast collage of urban poor with provincial segments, dispossessed migrant farmers, public intellectuals, life style gurus and their die-hard followers, the nationalists entrepreneurs, the upward mobile white collared young citizens with their global career aspiration, the cross section of the women who are the direct victims of this shrinkage of the state capacity and a range of professional social workers and civil society representatives that articulate the varied angst and aspirations of this vast spectrum of humanity. Together, they expanded the agenda, created the sustained critical mass of support, and remained articulate and mostly nonviolent with their mobilization thus engaging much larger span of social base, which is interested not in alteration by substitution of the system but demanding the strengthening of the capacity of the state and raising through the collective demand the accountability of the system demanding that shall function with transparent policies and mechanisms.

Thus new social movement had the various hues of a very large spectrum including, marginalized section of the urban India, the lower middle class that is outraged with the corrupt and unaccountable economic policies, the landless poor hoping for their betterment, slum dwellers frustrated by their dislocation, persons asserting their cultural and ethnic communities that are not heard enough, middle class organizations that have their own human rights issues, youth protesters who are exasperated with the state policies that affect them. Unless the mini narratives of

different protests are located within the larger contexts and movements are building as vehicles of collective actions, what one gets is debilitated outbursts of certain current issues, that are very soon forgotten.

## 5 The Decline of the Political and the Movement of the Nonpolitics

A dominant trend in India has taken place in the new form of citizen activism and has been described as the “politics of anti-politics”—citizens’ activism that defines itself as apolitical or anti-political and yet steps into the public/political/cyberspace to engage with power. As Maiba states, “globalization has not only created socio-economic conditions that lend themselves to a common recognition of the interconnectedness of political struggle, but it has also provided the technical means—as an unintentional dialectic of this structural transformation—that enables the resistance struggles in different parts of the world to communicate with one another as well as to coordinate their activities (Maiba 2003).

Hellman among others has been critical of the great halo around Internet-based movements (Hellman 2000). In a country like India the understanding of the mediated space has to be seen in the context of the modernization, urbanization and Westernization process with the massive socioeconomic shift along with the increasingly growing migrant low end workers living side by side with an individualized service industry engaged middle class that had remained for two decades highly cynical and indifferent to the political process in India.

The popular uprising against corruption in India began in October 2010 with a slow steam. The UPA government had won the election handsomely the previous year but within a year of taking office, three UPA ministers were facing the grievous charges of kickbacks and financial impropriety. There were three major cases of major financial irregularity that overwhelmed the entire mediated space for around the year including the increasingly powerful social media. They were the Commonwealth game scam, the corporative Housing Scam and finally the 2G spectrum scam that had sunk the reputation of the UPA government at its nadir. The CAG (Comptroller and Auditor General of India) reported that Public exchequer lost to the tune of \$39 billion in the shoddy deals. By the beginning of the 2011, the regime was all mucked.

According to Partha Chatterjee, “Anna Hazare movement is a populist movement but unlike most others of its kind, it is explicitly anti-political and in this respect quite novel in India” (Chatterjee 2012). If politics has a closer cousin in the name of social forecasting, it was nowhere to be seen as the regime was totally unprepared for such a large scale swelling of support for the movement. In the 1-year time before the movement alone, India had been rocked by three major scams. The nation was angry with the lack of response on these issues and the way

the government acted. The idea of a strong Jan LokPal<sup>2</sup> that could investigate ministers and the other big wigs had caught the fancy of the nation that had seen the big and the powerful being let off the hook each time with impunity.

It is said that protest always takes its birth through anarchic shrill, inspiring actors who are indifferent or fence sitters. No one in the mainstream media and the social pundits at the very beginning thought of an old non photogenic person with a motley of adherents creating such a ripple of social wave across the country. These diverse peoples, who came from the most varied socio-cultural background with very different capacity of their wallets, with different hues of their linguistic and communicative skills, huddled together for weeks and months longing for a better India. The unhindered general loot and exploitation by the ruling elites of the state revenues and resources have made both the emerging middle class and the marginalized in the towns and the cities very disillusioned. This massive political movement that had been led by an old Gandhian, namely, Anna Hazare, and was strengthened and cooperated by a motley of the diverse social activists had kept India agitated and on an emotional fence for a year and half.

Basic facts about the Jan LokPal Bill: It was proposed that there shall be an institution with tiers one at the central level named Jan LokPal and Jan Lokayukta<sup>3</sup> at the state level who cover the act of corruption of the government officials at the central and the state levels respectively. It shall be entirely free from the executive and the judiciary branches of the government and shall have complete financial and personnel resources at its disposal. The Jan LokPal and Jan Lokayukta will ensure punishment for corruption by recovery of loss caused to government during investigation and they shall ban transfer of assets of the accused, at the time of the conviction, the court shall assess the loss caused to the government and the entire loss shall be recovered from the assets of the accused. Each bureaucrat, politician and judge would be required to submit their statement of assets (movable and immovable) every year. After each election, assets declared by each candidate to be verified if assets are found undeclared, a case shall be registered.

Each complaint shall be heard and not a single complaint can be rejected without giving a hearing to the complainant. If any case is closed like this, all records relating to it will be made public. All records of all works shall be made public except for those that affect national security, endanger the whistle blower, and impede the process of ongoing investigation. The Jan LokPal shall publish every month on its website cases received and cases disposed with the number of the cases pending. The proposed punishment for corruption varied from 1 year of rigorous imprisonment to life term imprisonment differing from the present 6 months to 7 years of imprisonment. The other feature proposed was that the higher the rank/position of the public servant, the higher the level of punishment. At present there are multiple levels of anti-corruption agencies in India is namely CBI and CVC (Central Beaurο of Investigation, Central Vigilance Commission), and state

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<sup>2</sup>Public Ombudsman.

<sup>3</sup>Public Commissioner.

vigilance department. All of them are controlled by the corrupt officials and the politicians that are ineffective while at the proposed level of Jan LokPal bill all the central and the state level internal vigilance wings shall be merged into the Jan LokPal and shall do away with the multiplicity of the anticorruption agencies.

## **6 Chronology of the Event**

On the death anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi 30th of January 2011, there were marches in more than 60 cities of India to demand the Jan LokPal Bill. Swami Agnivesh, Prashant Bhushan, Kiran Bedi participate the Delhi rally under the leadership of Anna Hazare. On February 26, Anna Hazare announced his hunger strike from April 5 unless the government accepted the demand of the civil society for the Jan LokPal bill. On April 5, Hazare started his fast at Jantar Mantar, a place of daily protest for all civil society organizations from all over India protesting for their grievances. On the 8th of April, Anna broke his fast after the government agreed to form a ten-member forum consisting of civil society members and union ministers to draft a stringent anti-corruption law. On April 9, Hazare ended the strike. On April 16 the joint committee met and both sides exchanged the drafts. On the 30th of May, the differences appeared on the inclusion of the Prime Minister, judiciary and the MP's conduct inside the parliament to be under the preview of the Jan LokPal. On June 6 civil society boycotted the meeting with the government's representative followed by the crackdown on the Baba Ramdev's rally in Ramlila ground. The joint draft committee met for the last time on the 21st of June, but no consensus was reached. Anna declared his intention to fast once again from the 16th of August, a day after the Indian Independence Day celebration.

Hazare was arrested on the 16th of August 2011 and sent for 7 days of judicial custody, there was a groundswell of support all over India, and at night government wanted him to be released. He refused until he was given the venue of his choice to organize his mass movement that is Ramlila Ground. Next day there was a massive crowd that gathered outside Tihar Jail. He continued his fast inside the jail on the 17th and 18th of August. On the 19th he came out of the jail and continued his fast at Ramlila Ground. On the 23rd of August, the government convened the Team Anna for the discussion. On the 24th of August there was a second round of talks convened with all political party meeting but no outcome was reached. After meeting the team Anna on the 25th of August, the government agreed to debate all versions of the Jan LokPal bill at the parliament. On the 27th of August, both the houses of parliament debated the bill and agreed to the three demands of Anna Hazare to send it to the standing committee of the parliament. On the 28th of August 2011, Anna broke his fast onto death.

## 7 The Repertoire of the Mobilization of the Communities: Structure, Strength and Strategy

The anglicized and sophisticated media, along with the public intellectuals even sniggered in the very beginning about this strange mix of civil society activists supported by some religious and spiritual leaders. Some dismissed it as it looked naïve, or unsustainable as it seemed to lack cadres, manifestos or ideologies.

For many other social critics, the dialects and the rituals of protest were disturbing as a strange proximity of religious leaders and social activists. Yet these religious and spiritual leaders, who have millions of followers, provided the critical mass base for the movement. In particular, the spiritual masters Baba Ramdev and Sri Sri Ravi Shankar had the nationwide recognition and following and in their respective discourse spaces had been providing the revival of the normative nature of Politics. It is this moral message that underpinned the populism of the movement. This movement ran the discourse about corruption like never before in the Indian political space. While the first one has the urban and cosmopolitan New age Hindu middle class as the core of its adherents, Baba Ramdev's core constituency of adherents were the more nationally oriented social groups for their consumption habits, especially those whose generic consumption constitutes of MNC (multi-national corporations) substitution as a necessary social practice. With the throwing of their lot behind the protest, they influenced also the dialect and demand of the movement and the lead was processed more by congregation, rather than by the cadre for organizational and logistical needs.

The strong and repeated argument seeped through the agitated citizenry that the answer to corruption is not law but the *morality* and the eligibility for being the Jan LokPal is the impeccable integrity and those who are held in the highest esteem by the public. That simply annuls the category of both the politicians and the policy implementers (bureaucrats) whose credibility was in the trash bin among the masses. The only remedy for the political malaise is the non-political institutions of persons with acknowledged moral probity with the vested power to investigate and prosecute all government officials be it elected or appointed. In this circumstance, where the formal distinction between government and the politics becomes blurred, it is the political that is identified as the enemy of the people.

Besides this power of moral/normative halo, the congregation provided the logistics and basis for constant recruitment of the protesters. Through their active and open participation, they invigorated even those white collar professionals to join shoulder to shoulder with those who are highly disillusioned with the present affairs of the Indian polity. They saw in Anna Hazare an icon who is capable of surgically treating the political gangrene of corruption, dilution of the state capacity and crony capitalism. The skeptics criticized that the unilateral demand of the movement to create an extra constitutional body in the form of Jan LokPal is a challenge to representative democracy as the power to legislate is the prerogative of the legislature that cannot be coerced for enacting one against its will. The reply from the movement to the regime was to refer the constitution more carefully where

the phrase in the preamble of the constitution speaks very clearly as “we the people” as the true source of sovereignty not the dysfunctional and discredited legislature.

When the regime arrested Anna Hazare to preempt his proposed agitation, he continued his fast inside the jail and when after the nationwide condemnation and criticism the government agreed to set him free, he refused to come out of the jail thus generating a groundswell of support for remaining victimized one. His visit to RajGhat to meditate evoked the imagery of the revival of a new freedom struggle. Sitting behind the giant image of Mahatma Gandhi an old and frail 74-year-old man fasting unto death to appeal the lawmakers of the land to make his country a corruption free place evoked a very poignant message. He was a multifaceted icon representing many things to many people. He was a person with impeccable integrity, a man who has invested his life to help and work in rural India, a man with the symbolic link to the history of Gandhi with his Gandhian spirit and way of life. The very diverse social base saw in him clarity of purpose and unshakable belief for the betterment of the marginal, his courage and integrity. Even when he broke his fast, he drank the water from the hands of a Dalit and a Muslim girl thus further consolidating the width and depth of the imagery of the movement that is egalitarian, diverse, pro-downtrodden and secular.

Crowds create their own mediated space and coupled with the integrated communication space of the Internet urban class soaking in the social media generated a massive craze for Anna Hazare’s movement “India Against Corruption” not only within the confines of the Indian state but in the larger Indian diasporas all over the world. Each social movement has its symbols and the India against corruption had this Gandhi Topi as something that was taken as revival of the anti-graft stance of the society. Hazard demanded the Camilla Ground for the sheer size of the audience that it can cover and as the crowd started to submerge there with the clear message and the Gandhi topi on their head, they already got unionized at the symbolic level with thousands of the topi<sup>4</sup> peened with the letter (I am Anna) thus merging their personal identity with the larger identity of the movement.

In the early days, the faces of the protests were mostly those of the vociferous middle class in megacities professional executives, the upwardly mobile, students, young men, and relatively fewer women in the 15–35 age group. As the protests spread from Jantar Mantar to Ramlila Grounds, to the street outside Tihar Jail, Chatrasal Stadium, and into residential neighborhoods, it grew into a movement and became, simultaneously, more amorphous. While retaining its middle class character, it came to be peopled by schoolchildren, migrant workers, teachers, auto-rickshaw drivers, college students, RSS cadres, film actors, farmers from neighboring states of Delhi. In Mumbai, the dabbawalas<sup>5</sup> broke their 120-year-old-tradition of never going on a strike, as 1200 dabbawalas struck work for the first time to march from Churchgate station to the Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus in solidarity with the Anna and the anti-corruption movement. However, the participants of the anti-corruption movement represented a new social demography that has grown

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<sup>4</sup>Topi: An Indian white coned cap wore during the Indian independence movement.

<sup>5</sup>Lunch box carriers.

alongside the emergence of the new, liberalized, and globally more assertive India. Politically, it is a generation that has grown up without much concern about the Cold War, the collapse of the Soviet Union, or the ideologies that went with it.

The campaign made a very savvy use of the information and communication space including the informal mediated space. With the symbolism of fast and meditation to social media (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram), and news media (print, electronic and web) everything was organized with much care. At another, the use of the media, Internet, mobile technology, and social networking platforms dispersed and spread the movement. Significant for the movement was the use of anti-corruption as a generic plank, which was both vague in the sense that it did not address any particular constituency, class, or identity group and at the same time also worked as a catch-all, for the issue of corruption touched everyone. Anna soon became a brand name for the young, consumer middle class in cities, and fashion clothing companies used it to advertise their products. However, the protests on the ground were being through the way in which images with commentaries were projected by the media. Between what was happening on the street, television, and social networking sites, complex forms of mediation were shaping the public gathering, setting the scene and constructing a different kind of an emotional/public space—connecting diverse individuals with little common bonds or interest.

The poetic message “I m Anna Hazare” instead of I am for Anna Hazare erupted an epidemic consolidation among the message. It had more of the participatory character with the capacity to internalize the positioning with the main protagonist of the movement and the be on the same imaginary horizontal platform. Besides, once “I am Anna” is pronounced there were left no much space for half measures of commitment among the participant in the movement.

## **8 The Collective Shriek of Rage: The Protest Against Delhi Rape Case**

The chronology of the event: The horrific gang rape of a student in December 2012 sparked a remarkable movement against rape and sexual violence against women in India. In the late evening of December 16, 2012, in New Delhi the capital of India a young woman was brutally raped by six men in the running bus for more than an hour. The young woman and her boyfriend were massively assaulted while on board and the woman in particular, was mutilated by an iron rod. After the heinous act was done, the raped woman along with her wounded boyfriend was thrown naked from the running bus in the freezing Delhi midnight. The patrolling police later found them and despite specialized medical care both in India and later in Singapore the girl succumbed to her injuries on the 29th of December 2012.

The rape report was first reported in the media on the evening news on December 17, 2012 and within days the candlelight vigil started followed by the demonstration in the capital in particular at the Delhi’s Chief Minister’s residence. By

December 21 the demonstrations were joined by other political parties, other groups and by ordinary citizens. In an unprecedented manner, the question of the gender justice was not left for the woman organizations and gained national prominence gaining the support of all sections of Indians. This public outcry spilled out onto the world stage, predominantly igniting calls for change in how violence against women is dealt with. Within India, the incident became almost personal, as the victim came to be referred to in the media and in popular discourse as Amanat, Damini, Braveheart, or “India’s daughter”.

The anti-rape protests also attracted people from different walks of life, though predominantly middle class. Students from Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), Delhi University, Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University, Tata Institute of Social Science, (SNDT) Women’s University, Mumbai University, and from colleges in Bangalore gathered at different junctions blocking roads and forming human chains. Other political student organizations that participated in and played key roles in mobilizing the protest were the All India Democratic Women’s Association (AIDWA).

Many others from varied backgrounds also joined the protest: members of the recently-formed Aam Aadmi Party, other personalities such as yoga guru Baba Ramdev and his followers, retired Army Chief Gen. V. K. Singh, Swami Agnivesh, academicians, members of the fashion and entertainment industry, FDCI president Sunil Sethi, designers Rohit Bal, Nida Mahmood, Ravi Bajaj, Rajesh Pratap Singh, film actor and social activist Shabana Azmi, and other members of the film industry. Indoctinate-rape protests did not have a centralized leadership. A leader-driven protest like the Anna/anti-corruption movement was clear about from where authority was driven, but with the anti-rape protests it is difficult to give credit to only a few people.

In terms of the movement’s methodology, political groups used speeches and slogans, human chains and prostrated on the street in protest, distributed pamphlets, submitted memos and petitions to police officials and government functionaries, and articulated their views through articles in newspapers, websites, etc. There were panel discussions, signature campaigns, and skit competitions held in different universities of Mumbai. The primary demands that were asserted through these protests were harsher punishment, better patrolling, and fast track courts.

The All India Students Association (AISA), which led many anti-rape protests in Delhi, demanded a special session of Parliament to enact laws against rape and sexual violence; implement gender sensitization programmes at all police stations; set up a separate ward for care for rape victims; and make gender equality a part of the school curriculum. Information came from old media (print and electronic) putting out messages from one source to many readers, viewers, and consumers; new media (social media) simultaneously connected multiple sources with multiple others. If new media (Twitter, Facebook) brought the crowds onto the streets, old media drew from them. At one point, old media borrowed liberally from new media in terms of its treatment of content, and immersed itself in the crowds. In this protest, the power of social media has been crucial. In this movement without leaders, any organized structure, or any predetermined plan, mobilization happened via new media, specifically social media. Young, overwhelmingly middle class

people—who are often dismissed as apolitical—took on the state and mounted an onslaught against the rampant criminality getting thickened in the Indian social fabric. The protests showed two factors that generated two levels of anxiety. The spectacle of a spontaneous, unstructured, unavoidably vague movement born out of genuine rage has unsettled the establishment. The second is a critique that the movement is misdirected: it is blaming the government for what is, in fact, a deep societal problem. But this protest is also about more than rape. It is now an open, generalized, and largely justified expression of contempt for the state.

## 9 Mobilization for the Dignity and Assertions of the Invisibles

The protests are bound to be different because they are an assertion of the assorted community and not a political group or party. The state reaction was knee-jerk initially and it was mostly poor, to say the least. First, because of the widespread nature of the protest and the constant media reporting that had created an agitated movement on the issue of corruption and the apathy and indifference of the state on the subject of economic crime and corruption, it had already generated an active citizenship among the mediated urban class. The barbaric rape to the student in the capital city had further exposed the shrinkage of the state's capacity. Where is the state that can't protect its law abiding citizens? The slogans such as *Bekhauf Azadi* or freedom without fear were used to push forward the need to promote safer streets for woman. The spontaneity of the rape protests was from the very start with groups and individuals often organizing and discussing the pressure tactics on the spot "... hundreds of thousands of Indian woman—and some man—poured into the streets across the country holding candlelight vigils" (Naqvi 2013). Where previous protests were led by the specific group or organizations, rape protest was not led by any specific group. It was structurally horizontal a leaderless movement of ordinary citizens unlike the preceding movement against corruption that had the leadership of Anna Hazard. Second there was no core interest group that had developed the strategies and worked towards the goal. In such a case it was not an assortment of the different sections of the organized civil society but an assemblage of the civil citizens cutting across their social identity, that during the course of its nationwide protest did generate a horizontal core group for coordination whose tactics and goal was conveyed through the united message to fight against the violence against woman. It shall be mentioned that the groundwork for the rape protest had been made by the previous nationwide movement against corruption and had created a vigilant and agitated citizenry to monitor the lapses of the state, the rape protest got its act together despite being unstructured and spontaneous in the large part of its existence.

The anger and frustration of the protesters caught both the Delhi police and the government by surprise and the result was a very aggressive response to the

protests. The non-violent protesters were beaten with sticks, and water cannons were unleashed on them. What was a major issue for the society was summarily dismissed as a law and order question. The aggressive responses by the citizens to the police (in many cases the protesters jostled with the Police personnel) were viewed by many as the last straw and was accompanied by a subsequent venting of growing frustrations of this assorted and activated citizenry that had risen to the previous anti-corruption movement in 2011.

Yet as a response to the mass protest all over India, the state woke up from its slumber and on December 22, 2012, a judicial committee headed by J. S. Verma, a former Chief Justice of India, was appointed by the central government to submit a report, within 30 days, to suggest amendments to criminal law to sternly deal with sexual assault cases. On February 3, 2013, President of India Pranab Mukherjee promulgated the Criminal Law (Amendment) Ordinance, 2013, which provides for the amendment of the Indian Penal Code, Indian Evidence Act, and Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973 on laws related to sexual offences.

The representation in both the India against corruption movement (IAC) movement and the Nirbhaya movement (Delhi rape case, Zakaria 2013) illustrates the Pan-Indian nature, where at the core of the movement was educated youth and they were cosmopolitan as well as provincial, the women of all possible socioeconomic dispensations and most crucially the political divisiveness that was simply annulled by the convergence for the much larger issue that covers and diffused the sharp identity.

The outcome of the India Against Corruption protest was massive: a very new space and language of communication between the state and the society was created because of this movement. The capacity of the state was audaciously challenged by the larger section of Indian population not to create/rewrite the constitution but to invoke the proper promulgation and implementation of the laws. The marathon run for the fight against corruption was of course initiated by the Indian educated middle class, university students and Information-Communication-Technology (ICT) empowered youth, yet the final run was led by the urban poor and disadvantaged that made the movement a very classless affair, provided the critical mass base and provided the necessary combativeness without which it might have been difficult to create the tidal wave of assemblage in a sustained manner. On the one hand, during 5 years from the heydays of the struggle of the millions, when the legitimacy of the rest of the state institutions looked pale in the glowing moral hue of the social movement led by Anna Hazare for the Jan LokPal Bill, till today, the citizens failed to secure the participation in governance. Yet, this movement has given birth to a political party with the name of Aam Admi Party (roughly translated as a common man's party of India with the liberal left politics) that has come to power in the state assembly with an unprecedented landslide to power in the capital city state of India 2 years back. As for the rape protest (Nirbhaya case) the far more stringent law has been passed in record time by the Parliament. It has further given the outlet and the sense of zero tolerance against the perpetrators of such crimes.

## 10 Conclusion

It is 'India' against corruption; where *everyone* is Anna or where *daughters* of India are protesting against rape. The focus in this domain of politics is an individual 'citizen'—who is stepping out into the streets, protesting, making placards in S/he home on the back of used calendars or notebooks. S/he is not affiliated with any political party or stepping out under any specific banner and does not have any specific plan or identity (other than *Indians*, or *Mumbaikar*, or *daughters* of India). They have been speaking in different voices with amorphous demands for 'justice' to end corruption or for different versions of the LokPal Bill. The ideological affiliations of the protesters have ranged the spectrum from Left to Right but the predominant trend has been of 'no ideology'. The 'bonding' has been loose, often ephemeral—forged through cyber 'groups' on social media. The appeal here is to an individual sense of morality, of what is felt to be right, rather than to ideology.

One of the direct outcomes of this endeavor is the consolidation of the participatory spirit of the democratic space in India where the earlier passive beneficiaries of the representative democracies through decentralization and deregulation have emerged as the participant in the governance. It has resulted in the gradual transformation of governance from top down project implementation to the bottom up participatory policy implementation. It shall not be needless to obviate that while acknowledging the safety valve inherent in any functional democracy and its renewal capacity though including the vital segments of new constituents thus both enlarging the democratic space and imbibing the participatory spirit in the democratic space. It is important to acknowledge the empowerment through decentralization and the affirmative action that creates the level playing field for the marginal and subalterns in the society. A country that has the 1000-year history of institutionalized social discrimination and hierarchy and the normative validation, even the half-hearted implementation of the polity decentralization through the affirmative action (specially for the Dalit women in the very first layer of the pyramid of power sharing) has unleashed the caged spirit of the citizenship. The India Against Corruption movement had shown the coalescing of the different social sections around a common fight against the social evil of corruption. The rape protest was the tightening of the monitoring noose by the governed and it showed the rage of the empowered, informed, and engaged Indian citizenry that challenges the cynicism of the party politics but raises both the possibility and profile for the agent-based and participatory capacity in the new democratic space.

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