

CHAPTER-VIII
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Finally, any good Governance agenda must include freedom, equity, sustainability and efficiency. It must be capable of reconciling individual advantage nourished by the market with the societal demand for equity. It is also worth remembering that an acceleration in the rate of growth of the economy is indispensable. However, the process of growth must create employment and incomes for the poor. In India, however, all kinds of regulatory excesses have been spawned on the consideration of equity. The experience showed that eventually it helped the cause of neither efficiency nor equity. In fact, the expansion of market is one of the instruments that can be used to promote human capabilities which can be central to any endeavour for removing endemic deprivation in India. Again, more Government activity and public action remains a critical element in this scheme of participatory economic expansion', (Dreze and Sen 1998: 198).

It has been argued that democracy by itself has little role in removing poverty, what the economic strategies can do (Ashutosh Varshney, "Democracy and Poverty" conference on world Development Report, 1999). Similarly, economic growth itself does not automatically get translated into weapons for removal of poverty and endemic deprivation.

But, the role of democracy In terms of waging a war against poverty and deprivation should not be under-emphasized in the context of a country like India. As Pranab Bardhan argues, "Democracies in general experience more intense pressure to share the benefits of development among the people and to reduce the human costs of dislocation, thus making development more sustainable. They also provide more scope for popular movements against capitalist excesses and industrial fallout such as environmental degradation. In addition,

there are more political opportunities to mitigate social inequalities (especially acute in India) that act as barriers to social and economic mobility and to full development of Individual Potential.” (Pranab Bardhan, *Awakening – Giants - Feet of clay- Assessing the economic rise of China and India*, Oxford, New Delhi, (2010) P.143)

However, despite broadening of political and civil rights, modern citizenship fails to provide necessary resources to effectively exercise socio-economic rights reducing democracies without an effective citizenship for large sections of the political Community. (Prezworski and Group 1995 : 34).

It is true that Globalization of the World economy in its current avatar has posed serious challenges to the Indian economy and polity. But the challenges must be met and the opportunities must be seized by recognizing, and not by ignoring political realities. Policies oriented towards improving the lives of ordinary people can be created in response to the imperatives of democracy. The concerns showed by both international and domestic legal structures about the protection of property rights and the “rule of law” don’t really match its zeal when it comes to equally important rights of human beings. The Employment Guarantee Act (EGA) in India is a classic case in point whereby the human rights of the poor and working people is sought to be protected by creating concrete policy alternatives in the face of sweeping changes in economic policy regime under Globalization by intelligently mixing institutional politics with that of politics based on peoples’ protest.

Thus, it facilitates the transition of State from a patronage-dispensing entity to a promoter of rights for a large segment of population. Either failure or apathy of the mainstream political parties to steadfastly pursue the interests of the majority of the Indian Population especially in the wake of Globalization have created a political vacuum paving the way for social movement activism to fill the void championing the rights encompassing majority of the population.

Thus, Social Movements activism, like political parties, does not weaken the State. Rather, it strengthens the roots of State by bringing more and more number of people within the ambit of state and thereby giving a boost to the Governance Processes. As Khilnani writes, "The meaning of democracy has been menacingly narrowed to signify only elections (Sunil Khilnani, 1997, 'The idea of India'. London: Hamish Hamilton, P.58) 'They are the sole bridge between state and Society.'

Essentially, it works for inclusion. It works as a cushion against exclusionary tendencies of markets as well as elite-led democracy. Therefore, in the ultimate analysis, participation, Democracy and Good Governance are integral to making wide spread deprivation and poverty a history in India especially in the present context and surge ahead along the desired route of social change towards its desideratum.

To bring about meaningful economic, political and social transformations in the life of the poor and the under-privileged, struggles have a definitive purpose. It imparts a new dimension to the Governance processes by making people active and reflective about their reality so as to create social capacity for fast-tracking protest or resistance movements to articulate demands and put pressure on the State in order to transform their existential reality.

According to Majid Rahnema, there are at least two recognizable fields of power – the formal and the informal in most societies. He, further writes, "It is through the creation and the enhancing of these forms of power that the common people, the women, the peasants and the marginalized, the religious or ethnic minorities, the dissidents and the subjugated of all kinds have been able to overcome many of the formal obstacles and structures to their lives." (Majid Rahnema, Power and regenerative processes in micro-spaces, International Social Science Journal, Vol./Issues XL, 3, August 1998, p.p. 361 – 375).

The Chipco movements in the hills of Garhwal or fishermen's struggles in Kerala are some of the shining examples which chronicle grassroots peoples' urges for survival, ecological maintenance and protest against anti-people policies of the powerful. Such micro-efforts can also expand the scope of Democracy Project by democratizing the grass roots level. Most importantly, such micro-struggles may release a salutary democratic spirit that can arrest slide in Democratic functioning at higher levels. Thus, a transition from elite-led democracy to mass-led democracy with positive outcome for the poor and the underprivileged, may complete a full circle in the Indian context by blunting the sharper edges of Globalization as well as correcting the imbalance of policy preponderance in favour of economic and social elites through perennial practice of democratic politics espousing the core principles of any democratic project involving freedom, equity, Justice and sustainability coalescing with each other. In the ultimate analysis, democracy provides an exciting opportunity which not only seeks to safeguard civil and political rights of individuals and groups but also, arms the underprivileged, through engagement in struggles on a sustained basis, with the capability that makes it difficult for the state to avoid lifeguard responsibilities towards them. Let us quote an eminent scholar, while discussing the Dalit Politics in India, who argues very succinctly suggesting the role of struggles as constituting a critical element vis-a-vis social change in these words,

"Though ideology is important for formulating issues, evolving strategies and projecting the future, no ideology is omniscient and a panacea for dealing with complex ground realities. Movements are not created by text books. They evolve through with their own dynamics and the common sense of common people. One need not romanticize the 'common sense' of subaltern groups; but one cannot denigrate and ignore it as irrelevant. From their struggles, one hopes a new ideological perspective grounded in reality will emerge for social transformation". (Ghanshyam Shah, 'Dalit Politics: Has it Reached an impasse?' in

'Democratic Governance in India-Challenges of Poverty, Development, and Identity', Niraja Gopal Jayal/Sudha Pai (eds.), SAGE Publications, New Delhi (2001), p.230.

No doubt, India's journey through Democracy is marked by the trauma and the triumph. Democracy in the context of post-colonial societies is 'the major form of mobilization by which political society (Parties, movements, non-party formations) tries to channel and order popular demands on the development state'. (Partha Chatterjee, 'on Civil and Political Society in Post-Colonial Democracies' in Sudipta Kaviraj and Sunil Khilnani (eds.), "Civil Society-History and Possibilities" (New Delhi: Foundation Press, 2002, pp.173-76). Again, the understanding of economic development is not confined to the conventional focus on generating economic growth, it also includes considerations of equity or distribution.

However, Democracy in India, particularly its Political Dimension, as exemplified through the reassertion of the lower castes, the abandonment of ultra-hawkish Hindutva agenda by the BJP atleast temporarily and the 'resurgence' of Democratizing institutions, like the Election Commission, National Human Rights Commission, Judiciary, mass media, panchyati raj institutions (PRIs) and above all, social movement activism providing enhanced and alternative avenues of Political participation leading to heightened popular consciousness since 1980s, testified to the fact that stranglehold of elites over Democracy and its Institutions in India is in decline and political inclusion is the battle cry at this juncture.

But, this 'success' in the political realm is impeded because of the huge gap between rising aspirations of masses of the population and the inability of the political system to meet them even halfway. This is further, eroded by the process of Globalization and its prescriptive formulae for Governance which not only impairs the capacity of the state but also, in the process, hastens the lowering of its legitimacy in

the eyes of the people who look upto the state for redressal of grievances, particularly, in the context of a Developing country like India.

It is true that the rule of numbers and the rule of law are essential pre-requisites if a nation is to function as a Democracy, (Andre Beteille, Democracy and its Institutions, OUP, 2012) but, the core values of Democracy such as freedom, rights, equity, justice and sustainability should invariably inform the institutions of Democracy so that the people, at large, don't become distrustful of Democracy generally, and the institutions it represents, in particular. However, the fact that the silver lining on the horizon appears to be the charitable perception of Democracy is increasingly giving way to a Rights-based conception of Democracy.

Therefore, the best hope for India's Democracy lies in her ability to stave off "popular disconnect" rather than continuing with remnants of colonial inheritance which is, further, compounded by contemporary neo-liberal orthodoxies. On the contrary, the aspirations of a dignified human existence may be increased manifold for those who live on the edge of society in a Democracy of dynamic kind, which offers them a stake in it.