New Citizen's Activism in India

Moments, Movements, and Mobilisation

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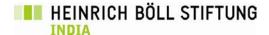
An Exploratory Study

Richa Singh

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Preface

In early 2014, as the national elections draw close, India's democracy is undergoing a period of crisis and renewal.

National parties do not any more attract the widespread support they used to, and the alliances around them have become unstable. Election outcomes appear ever more unpredictable. Political parties and politicians themselves suffer a fundamental crisis of legitimacy, primarily because many Indians view them as endemically corrupt.

At the same time, new forms of protest movements have made their entry into the political arena in recent years. They operate outside established channels of protest and advocacy, and employ innovative forms of mobilisation to make their voices heard and to influence politics and administration. At least until very recently, they stood largely outside the politics based on political parties.

This study revisits the recent history of new protest movements in India. It analyses their causes and actors, their dynamics and forms of action, and their supporters and critics. When it comes to new protest movements, India obviously does not stand alone; but different especially from the 'Arab Spring', new protest movements in India operate in a functioning democracy. They do not want to tear down an authoritarian regime, but to bring into the political arena issues that have either been neglected or not found adequate representation. They do so by mobilising groups of people who have not been involved in politics before, many of them urban, young, and belonging to India's 'new middle class'—however imprecise or even inadequate that latter term may appear. By doing all this, the new protest movements renew and revitalise Indian democracy.

The recent rise of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), its surprising success in the Delhi Assembly elections of December 2013, and the short-lived but dramatic episode of Arvind Kejriwal acting as Delhi's Chief Minister have some of its roots in the earlier anti-corruption protest movement. The AAP is evolving its own peculiar mix of protest and populism, while trying to find a programmatic profile. The AAP may or may not succeed in the 2014 elections. If it does so, a transformation of protest into party politics will have been remarkably fast; and AAP would likely provide some surprises for those used to the established forms of 'doing politics' in India. But even if AAP fails – and perhaps especially if it should fail – the new forms of popular protest are unlikely to disappear. They emerged years before the AAP, and may evolve even stronger in the future, constituting an innovative pattern of engagement in India's democracy.

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Introduction

Over the last few years, we have witnessed burgeoning moments of new forms of protest in India. These have ushered in a new middle class constituency, new methodologies, and (perhaps) new ways of understanding solidarity. From the anti-rape protests in December 2012 to the anti-corruption movement in 2011, to the earlier protests demanding 'justice' for Jessica Lal, Priyadarshini Mattoo, and Nitish Katara[1], middle class anger has been steadily spilling onto urban streets with increasing frequency. Made dramatically visible by the visual and mainstream media, aided by social media and the ICT (information and communication technology) revolution, it has been spreading to other cities, neighbourhoods, small towns, and setting off derivative protests. Amidst it all, what has been undergoing dramatic shifts is our very notion of the public space and streets of protests, our ways of 'doing' social action and activism, and perhaps our very conception of democracy.

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1   These were criminal cases involving murder, and murder and rape in Priyadarshini Mattoo case. The victims were young people from middle class families in Delhi. The perpetrators of these crimes involved sons of influential politicians and bureaucrats, who were initially acquitted by the courts. However, after a media led public outcry, the cases were reopened and the guilty were convicted.

These 'moments' have also propelled civil society as a relevant player in the country's political landscape, and emerged as turning points in redefining the citizen–civil society–state[2] relationship in India (traditionally characterised by an unease and an imbalance where an omnipotent state towered over civil society). Inevitably, then, have come a number of questions: 'Who' is civil society? 'Who' does it represent? What is its role in democratic politics? What is the legitimacy of civil society, and of the social action it undertakes in a 'functioning' representative democracy? Does the leakage of political power from Parliament and institutions of democracy to the streets, media rooms, and city squares deepen or weaken democracy?

For many of us in developmental civil society in India, working with poor and excluded groups, these have been 'befuddling' times. For long, two approaches had dominated the way we 'did' social activism. First, the route of engagement with the apparatus of the state. This tended to revolve around institutions of representative democracy and people's ability to access them or act in relation to them — discourses on governance and accountability being an important part of this approach. Second was the route of collective action through movements — where social action emanated from collective bonds forged out of commonality of experience and location in the world, be it 'class consciousnesses' in the traditional Marxist sense or 'identity politics' in the new social movement sense.[3] Both these approaches largely worked within the constitutionally defined structures of representative democracy and with the logic of representation. The first approach rested on the assumption that structures of representative democracy enable representation of citizens — the real issue being about 'conditions' that enable it. The second approach assumes that shared experience, identity, and working at the grassroots enables claims to genuinely representing the voice of 'the people'.[4]

The recent upsurges, however, defy both these familiar approaches and seem to be unfolding outside the logic of representative politics — in a domain of that some have termed as 'politics of chaos'[5] or 'unruly politics'[6]. The protesters are mostly from the urban middle class (which itself is characterised by immense heterogeneity in India), but have also drawn in the aspirations and political participation of urban poor. Here who is representing whom or who is speaking for whom is not clear. It is '*India*' against corruption; where *everyone* is Anna[7] protesting against corruption, where *daughters* of India are protesting against rape, or where *Mumbai* is protesting against 'terror', or where the *aam aadmi* or 'citizen' is partaking in politics. The focus in this domain of politics is the individual 'citizen'–who is stepping out in the streets, protesting, making placards in S/he home on the back of used calendars or notebooks. S/he is not affiliated to 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 Aam Aadmi Party (AAP, or Common Citizens Party) may perhaps emerge as the anchor to what is essentially a loose assemblage.

However, what is significant to note is that the protesters are stepping on to the public space motivated by affect and emotional narration — stirred by visual media and social media, both of which have played a huge role. The appeal here is to an individual sense of morality, of what is felt to be right, rather than to ideology. What happens then to the rights of the marginalised, stigmatised, vulnerable groups who go against this sense of morality — the homosexual, the sex worker, the single woman who is out past 10 pm,

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2   The location of 'civil society' between state and citizen is intentional, for the hyphenated relationship between state-civil society, between citizens-civil society, as well the interplay between the three, is central to the study.

3   Akshay Khanna, et al, "The Changing Faces of Citizen Action: A Mapping Study through an 'Unruly' Lens", IDS Working Paper, June 2013

4   Ibid.

5   Amitabh Behar, civil society activist, in an informal conversation on new citizens activism.

6   Akshay Khanna. *et al.*

7   "I am Anna" was a popular slogan in the Anti Corruption/Jan Lokpal Movement.

the dalit who is an 'out-caste'? In this terrain of 'politics of chaos', who 'power' speaks to or negotiates with remains unclear. **Who starts and who calls an end to the 'revolt' is also unclear** — is it the media or the citizens themselves (for the government is unable to negotiate) or does the revolt just peter out on its own, but the 'moment' itself becomes significant.

Given that these moments are not obeying the given rules of the game, there is a tendency to perceive this new phenomenon as 'crisis' or as a 'state going into anarchy' by some or as 'revolution' by others. However, there is little serious understanding of this new phenomenon which is occurring with growing regularity. How do we as part of 'developmental civil society' understand these developments with their complexities, and with reasonableness? How do we respond? What implication does it have for civil society's future strategy for progressive social change? Apart from anger and lack of faith in the political system and institutions of government which stands out in these protests, what are the motives and agendas of these protests? Or do we need new frames to understand them as outside agendas and motives? Is this a new politics where chaos itself is the frame? Have we entered a new wave of (digital) social mobilisation for transformative social change? Is this just a passing phase or are we witnessing the awakening of a new generation of social activism? If so, then what alternative solutions are on offer? What are the new modalities of social action that are emerging? How are they reconfiguring the political space? A dominant trend in the new form of citizen activism is what 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/cyber space to engage with power. How do these protests relate, perceive, and connect (if at all) with the other 'political' campaigns and movements of the poor and marginalised sections? These are critical questions for all of us. For, irrespective of what these protests and the emergent political formations achieve in terms of immediate outcomes or what impact they have on formal structures of governance such mobilizations, movements, and the 'moments' itself are bringing about a massive shift in the ways citizens relate with power, and in the very understanding of democracy. These shifts are demanding a need to revisit and rethink how we engage with politics, social action, and the very meaning of democracy.

The starting point of this report is the recognition that these contemporary protests are significant and need to be understood. The current study is exploratory in nature. While an in-depth research on diverse forms of social activism unfolding in India would be more suited to come up with more definitive abstractions about shifting power and politics, that is a larger and a more ambitious project. Our objectives here are modest. We confine ourselves to exploring what is being termed as new citizens' activism, with the following aims.

Objectives of the Study

1   To identify some of the common trends through examination of some of the events that have taken place in the last few years.

2   To identify the broad shifts that these new forms of activisms are bringing about in the landscape of civil society and social activism and their possible impact on democratic politics.

3   To try and make sense of these new protests from the perspective of developmental civil society and provide material for further reflection.

Methodology

As this is an exploratory study, the attempt has been to capture the breadth (rather than depth) of issues — identify common themes, modes of protests, and their dynamics — and bring them in conversation with our

own practices of social activism. The hope is that by making sense of these dramatic changes that confront civil society today, we would better equip our own myriad initiatives for transformative democratic change.

The report is based on the case study methodology, and investigates two case stories — the Lokpal/anti-corruption movement and anti-rape protests — across three cities. The selection of the case study was based on three criteria: relevance in terms of their impact on civil society and its social action; relevance for 'developmental civil society'; and access to information, keeping in mind the limited time period and available resources. Both cases — the anti rape protests and the anti-corruption movement — present moments of episodic shift and have had huge impact on citizen – civil society – state relations in India. While sharing various commonalities, they have also differed in some critical ways, particularly in how developmental civil society perceived and responded to them. Many activists, women's groups, and rights-based organisations joined the anti-rape protests to negotiate their own concerns, voices, and differences but joining the anti-corruption movement directly discomfited them.

Given that these protests were epicentred in Delhi, and also reverberated in other urban megacities (and spread onto smaller towns and smaller cities), the exploration was conducted in three megacities — Delhi, Mumbai, and Bangalore — where these protests had been most visible. The choice of these megacities was also influenced by two factors. One, there was 'something' about the protests starting in these megacities (often called global cities) and acquiring a 'dazzling', larger-than-life image. Two, curiously, the dominant 'middle class' dominated these protests at their start but the urban poor and working class living in these mega cities 'peopled' these later. It was as if the changing dynamics of urban India was shadowing these protests. Hence, there was a curiosity to get a peep into 'that' which was lurking in the shadows of 'middle class' protests. This need to understand the dynamics of the urban,(beyond the middle class) was further corroborated first by the reported opinion polls about the growing support for the Aam Aadmi Party (that had its genesis in the anti corruption movement with the support base among sections of urban middle classes) among urban poor, and then by its remarkable debut on the electoral register in Delhi that showed cross class support. Consequently, though the time-boundedness and focus of this report poses limits on an exhaustive exploration of the emerging dynamics of urban India, it is nevertheless worth flagging and positioning vis-á-vis the unfolding protests — perhaps as an analytical tactic for further probing and conversations to understand these protests better.

The two case studies are based on data collected from over 40 semi-structured interviews of protesters, college students, student unions, youth groups, social media groups, activists, academics, journalists, representative of NGOs, women's organisations, representatives of the Aam Aadmi Party, resident welfare associations, and professional groups involved in these movements. Most informants were interviewed in person and a few over the phone. Particular attention was given to bring in the perspective of marginalised groups such as women, Dalits, and Muslims in each case study. In addition to these interviews, a wide range of secondary literature was reviewed, including media articles, academic analyses, and internal campaign materials. Discussions emerging from three consultations organised by CDSA[8] are also integrated — including two on civil society conversations during the anti-corruption movement and one on changing forms of social action in India.

The electoral debut of the Aam Aadmi Party and the phenomenon it turned into ever since began to unfold just when this report was nearing completion. Therefore, the section on the Aam Aadmi Party — a new development (literally and figuratively) — has been added towards the end. However, it is based on newspaper reports and articles and not on field work or interviews. Given that events are unfolding even as this report is being finalised, the case of the AAP is limited to the point it formed the government. The immediacy of the development also makes definitive conclusions difficult to arrive at, and there fore this report limits itself to delineating trends. The impact of the rise of AAP on politics and democracy is immense, and much remains to be seen and explored as the AAP phenomenon unfolds.

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8   Centre for Democracy and Social Action (CDSA), www.cdsa.in

This report is divided into five chapters. The first chapter begins with the context of a rapidly changing and turbulent India where systemic changes and contestation over different conceptualisations of democracy is under way, which frames the larger discussion in the study. The second chapter focuses on the middle classes and their dynamics, politics, and power given that this social section has come to embody the 'common man' who seems to be 'manning' this revolt. The third and fourth chapters discuss the two case studies — the anti corruption movement and the anti rape protests. The fifth chapter looks at the recent development, the rise of the Aam Aadmi Party, and the emerging politics of the urban. The final conclusion is an engagement with some of the issues and trends that have surfaced, returning to the original question of how we understand them from the perspective of developmental civil society.

Finally, a few clarifications before proceeding with the report.

1 Even as the study focuses on India, the wave of global citizen's activism unfolding since 2010 is inescapable. These have been times of burgeoning movements — from the Arab Spring that brought down dictatorial regimes, to protests in London, Chile, Spain, Russia, food riots in Brazil, protests for access to housing in Tel Aviv, the 'Occupy' movement in US and beyond. Neither the protests nor their contexts (ranging from authoritarian to democracies) are similar, but disparate groups — aided by the global economic crisis and the internet revolution/growth of social media — have woven a global narrative of anger and (perhaps) are telling of a systemic crisis9 with the way things are. However, these protests have a distinctive local character. They are taking place within particular conditions with their own specific political, economic, and cultural contexts and are vehicles of local socio-political claims. While there is 'something' about these multiple and diverse protests that takes these beyond the specific empirics of each case and speaks of an emerging 'global street'10 of protests as it were, it is beyond the scope of this report to draw the differences or the common links. The report confines itself to India.

2 It is also important to clarify at the outset the understanding of 'social action' and 'civil society' as articulated in the report. Though social action is broadly defined as deliberate action geared towards bringing about social change by 'any means' and 'in any direction', the report's interest lies in organised collective action that seeks emancipatory socio-political transformation through non-violent means. The report is also based on the premise that social action is integral to democracy. The two are not just bound together in a relationship of mutual dependence, but social action is the very motor of democracy — be it in the very genesis of the idea of democratic values, in the struggle against apartheid, in the feminist movement and the struggle for universal suffrage, the civil rights movements, or today in India or around the world in the various struggles for justice and democratic values.

Similarly, there are plural definitions of civil society — in both normative and non-normative senses. However, this reports works with the understanding of 'civil society' as a metaphorical space between the family and the state where people enter as right-bearing citizens into associational forms of life to engage with the polity — distinct from the entire society, the force-bearing structures of the state, and the commercial interests of the market. While such a definition of civil society would encompass the myriad forms of associational life that exist in India — which have varying purposes, values, and interests11 — this study confines itself to only those civil society groups, organisations, and projects that work on issues of democracy and rights (hereafter referred to as 'developmental civil society'). Hence, the study does not focus on the varied socio-cultural forms and projects of associational life, or those categorised broadly as 'uncivil civil society'.

9   I. Wallerstein: 'Upsurge in Movements Around the Globe: 1968 Redux?', http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=__o3z-N_R0o

10   Saskia Sassen, The Global Street. Making the Political, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PPpSuDdMzSI

11   Ranging from *Khap* panchayats (caste associations), to clubs to encourage sociability, to associations for discussing popular culture, to those organising to raise consciousness and awareness on a range of issue, amongst others.

1. The Changing India

The last two decades in India have witnessed massive upheavals, ushered in by the impact of economic reforms of the 1990s (termed liberalisation/privatisation/ globalisation) and the ICT revolution. This has also been the phase of the rise of the Hindu religious right wing and, on the other end of the spectrum, a phase of Dalit assertion. These have unleashed new forces and energies created new ghettos, margins, and weaknesses; and we have entered an era of spectacular changes, greater contestations than ever before, and of constant negotiation and renegotiation of social and political relations. It is a moment in history which is witnessing a strategic interface between power and rights. This can be seen at various levels.

At the level of the state, the onset of neoliberal reforms[12] has brought about a major shift in its role — from a Left-leaning, interventionist state that dabbled with socialism in its rhetoric and policies to a Right-leaning state that is committed to capitalist development, and prioritises economic 'high growth' as the goal of the state and big business as *the* main ally. Clearly, what is emerging is not even a 'market'-based strategy of development but a pro-'business' strategy characterised by a growing alliance between a few big Indian business groups and the state — an alliance that is narrow and exclusive and leaves the vast majority of the poor and much of its citizens out in the cold.[13] Here, democracy is conceived in minimalist form (quite in the Schumpeterian[14] sense), where citizens are needed only during periodic elections. In the interim, their interests are relegated to the background and a small ruling elite runs 'a pro-business show'. Given that these developments are taking place within the framework of a democratic state, much of these developments are characterised by 'stealth'[15] insulated from the public realm and from accountability politics. However, even as the state gets narrow/exclusive/stealthy, it has lost control of information flow, or its ability to influence the public. It faces greater public pressure than ever before, newer claims to rights, and a growing contestation from different strata of society to renegotiate the 'social contract'.

At the grassroots level, there is expansion and deepening of democracy, and an ongoing churning in India. The masses face destruction of their livelihoods, displacement, and the forcible takeover of their rights, access to land, forests, and water resources by the state-business alliance. There is growing political activism among the masses that finds expression in sporadic as well as organised people's assertion, or in what has been often referred to as the 'million mutinies'. At one level, large sections of people continue to rely on the state to secure their rights, but the state itself is unable or unwilling to fulfill its responsibility, and has even adopted a confrontationist posture vis-à-vis people's struggles and assertions (Kothari, 2007). Increasingly, the institutions and structures that were created to promote democracy are being eroded. The government (including state governments) of the day are tainted by corruption charges, political parties, (including the Left parties[16]) have been failing to raise people's demands; the judiciary, which until a while ago was seen in an activist mode, also faces a trust deficit and is shrouded in controversies. There is a crisis of state's legitimation here and a growing vacuum in democratic politics in India. Notably, though, many of these movements continue to rely on the state, make demands on it, and ask representative democracy to let them in.

At the level of society at large, we are witnessing the ascendency of the 'market' and demise of the 'social' as the operative norms and values of the market have also become salient to society. This has removed the conditions that created political consciousness and allowed a political public to emerge among sections of the middle class. However, at the interface of neoliberalisation-democracy-ICT revolution in India, a new kind of social activism has emerged: the activism of the urban middle class, individual citizen who have come out in the public/cyber and media spaces in protest and are engaging with power but define themselves as 'anti-politics' and anti-political class. Political analyst Yogendra Yadav has referred to this trend as the 'politics of anti-politics'.[17] Examples of these can be seen in the protests in Mumbai after the 26/11 terror attacks and in in a host of middle class citizens' civic activism in cities like Bangalore and Delhi. This was also the dominant strand in the anti corruption movement, and the anti rape protests. The spotlight here is on the 'citizens' –the 'yes, we can' agents of change – who (it is hoped) will make democracy work in the

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12 For details, see Rob Jetkins, Democratic Politics and Economic Reforms in India, Cambridge University Press, 1999

13 See Atul Kohli, 'Politics of Economic Growth in India, 1980-2005', Part I & 2, Economic and Political Weekly, April 1.2006/April 8.2006

14 Joseph Schumpeter, a economist and political scientist disputed the idea of democracy as rule by the people and instead advocated minimalist democracy- of competition between leaders, much like a market structure, where periodic voting only legitimized the leaders.

15 Jetkins.

16 Over the last decade, intervention in policy has come from some of the civil society organizations/voluntary organizations – on land acquisition, human rights violation, communal violence, on water -air pollution, on health and education, securing Right to Information, Right to Education, Forests Rights, NREGA, amongst others- issue which were traditionally that of the left parties. See Pranab Bardhan, "Our Self-righteous Civil Society", Economic and Political Weekly, July 16, 2011.

17 Yogendra Yadav, interview with Revati Laul, Tehelka, Vol 8, Issue 34, 27 August, 2011

face of representative democracy failing to reflect the will 'of the people' beyond elections. The push here is to make the public sphere (including media/cyber space) the site of deliberations — with a marked distrust of the state and the structures of representative democracy. They seek technocratic solutions rather than political ones. Will such a conception of democracy which virtually posits the public sphere above the procedural structures deepen democracy and justice in the interest of the marginalised sections? Notably, there is a huge gap between the 'political' agenda of the large poorer masses and the 'politics of the anti-politics' between the differing conceptions of democracy and of justice as dalits, minorities, and other marginalised groups continue to rely on the state and its 'procedures for fulfillment of their rights. Is there a possibility that the 'political' agenda of marginalised groups might find a meeting point with the 'politics of anti politics'?

An important part of the changing context in India, particularly from the perspective of social activism, is the revolution in digital and internet technology. Indeed, it has been one of the most transformative forces of the last decade and has changed the world as we know it. It has changed the ways of 'doing' things, inter-personal relationships, social communication, economic expansion, governmental mediation, and flow of information. It is consequently impacting the ways in which social transformation, civic engagement, organising, and interventions on development take place. The internet, mobile, and social media landscape in India has been growing in leaps and bounds. By 2011, there were more than 100 million internet users in India (a mere 8 per cent of the total population) and the number has been growing rapidly[18]. With it has grown social media and cyber-activism as a powerful tool to mobilise public opinion, strengthen civic engagement, invite democratic participation, or even to encourage 'electronic' civil disobedience. Social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, Black Berry Messaging Service, YouTube have become extremely popular, particularly among the young people. They are increasingly being used by the cross-section. Political parties, politicians, business groups, civil society organisations, popular film personalities, human rights groups, civil society organisations, networks, activists are extensively using the web to send e-mail alerts, forge solidarities, publicise opinions, disseminate information, issue press releases, mobilise, and highlight human rights violations.

There have been a slew of well-received public campaigns such as the Consortium of Pub-Going, Loose and Forward Women on Facebook to counter the right-wing Sri Ram Sena attack on women going to pubs in Mangalore the Jaago Re ('Wake up!') campaign that targeted youth to inform them of their political rights. Similarly, Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, blogging sites, and other forms of social media were used extensively in the anti-corruption movement. However, even as internet usage and social media becomes popular in urban India, a large section of rural India remains out of its ambit. But what has bridged the urban–rural divide is the usage of mobile phones, growing annually at 34 per cent. In 2011, there were 290 million mobile phone subscribers in rural India alone[19]. The mobile phone has come to be seen among activists as the most important activist technology and is used extensively to inform, organise, and call for action. Moreover, the mobile phone is turning into a sophisticated gadget with a camera that can take photographs and record videos and is often used for capturing violence in elections, instances of corruption, human rights violation (for instance, by the armed forces in Manipur) and uploaded on YouTube and social networking sites, and widely disseminated. There is also now the growing trend of mobile-driven internet use in rural areas, which perhaps could breach the digital divide.[20]

However, with the increasing role of social media have come a number of concerns over the dual use/misuse of technology. There is concern over the use of social media being confined to those among the middle class who have access to the internet technology, language, and culture. There is also an ongoing debate among social activists over whether its usage is hollowing out politics from activism or is it really a new way of

18   India's Internet, Mobile & Social Media State of 2011, http://www.imediaconnection.in/article/674/Digital/indias-internet-mo-bile-and-social-media-state-of-2011.html
19   Ibid.
20   The net spreads wide, Editorial, Economic and Political Weekly, Vol-XLVIII No. 48, November 30, 2013

forging connectedness and solidarity. Besides, social media has not always been connected with progressive movements or ideas. Its power of crowdsourcing is also (ab)used to 'witch-hunt' — hunt down the 'enemy within' who are perceived as questioning or disrupting the 'harmony' of the nation or are 'different' or 'immoral'. There are also concerns about social media, internet, and communication technology being increasingly used by the state for surveillance, and keeping an 'eye' on its citizens through surveillance technology — inspecting their data traffic, e-mail, telephone records, Facebook friends, amongst others. Nevertheless, as clearly demonstrated in the recent 'Arab Spring', Occupy movements across the world, and in the anti-corruption and anti-rape movements, the power of the internet and digital technology to impact socio-political process, connect and create a virtual voice/space for democratic engagement, re-imagine solidarity, and indeed to trigger 'change' is growing and is here to stay.

2. The Middle Classes
From Common Man to Aam Aadmi, and 'His' Politics

The middle class has been an important historical and sociological grouping in India, but focus on it has intensified ever since liberalisation. Suddenly, the middle class is on television and in the newspaper, scholarly analysis, market discourse on potential consumers, and in the state's projection of India's progress. The middle class is the visible citizen activist on the street — the common man and everyman. All of this tells of the dominant presence the middle class enjoys today, and the influence it has in shaping cultural politics, policy, and national and international agendas. Hence, this section explores who constitutes the middle class, the source of its socio-cultural-economic power, and its politics. Although a number of social activists and development practitioners inside developmental civil society come from the middle class, this section aims to analyse middle-class constituents protesting as 'citizen activists' outside the space of state and developmental civil society.

The Evolution of the Middle Classes

The middle class is an ideological construct across the world. Although it suggests a singular social category, it is differentiated internally by income, education, and occupation. In India, the middle class is further differentiated by language, caste, religion, gender, ethnicity, and rural or urban location. In the popular understanding, there are two concrete classes — the rich and the poor (there is a concrete understanding of who constitute the poor notwithstanding debates over poverty lines) — and everyone else in between becomes middle class. Not surprisingly, then, defining who constitutes the middle class has been tricky. Moreover, in the popular sense, the middle also represents a safe location that avoids the two concrete extremes. It is common in India for many people to identify with the middle class location — be it a school teacher or Jawahar Lal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India, who stated that 'I am, of course, a middle class person' to Narayan Murthy, an IT industrialist, who continues to drive his old Fiat car as a beacon of middle class values. Is 'middle class' then to be defined as an economic category, or by its values and aspirations, or is it a proper noun — as political scientist Yogendra Yadav suggests, a term by which the ruling class prefers to call itself?[21]

Conventional definitions of the middle class have been from the economic perspective, using income, consumption pattern, and asset ownership. Based on these criteria, the National Council for Applied Economic Research (NCAER) identifies 153 million people in this category as per 2001 data, with a disposable annual income of Rs 200,000 to 1,000,000 ($4,380 — $21,890; the numbers have gone up since the survey was conducted). These numbers are not definitive, for the exact number of the middle classes in India has been much debated, and estimates and projection vary[22]. However, as a number of analysts[23] point out, the middle classes make for a complex group. In defining the middle classes in contemporary India, Sandhya Venkatesh argues: "The middle class in India is today a complex group; complex in its classification, its identification, its heterogeneity, its politics, location and other factors. It comprises multiple locations across class, caste, religion, gender, occupation, and age; although in large part it consists predominantly of upper castes and dominant religions. It is not surprising then that the ideological base and priorities of the group vary, depending on the sub-section. Notwithstanding the heterogeneity, it is a class that is in large part defined through the language of liberalisation, and finds its identity not merely in its economic base but through its social and cultural capital. Its visibility, and through that its influence, is linked with its social distinction, lifestyle and consumption patterns; and the class consequently actively engages in protecting and leveraging its social privileges and cultural capital. It is through such protection that differentiation from, and hegemony over, other sections of the population, is often sustained. There are of course exceptions, and some sub-sections of the middle class do speak out for equity and justice."[24]

Clearly, the middle classes in India today are comprised of diverse sub-sections, even as there is a hegemonic middle class. To understand the dynamics of middle classes in India, its evolutions becomes significant and can broadly be seen through three phases — **(1)** pre-Independence, **(2)** post-Independence, and **(3)** post-liberalisation.

In India, the middle class emerged under colonial rule as an administrative class (rather than a manufacturing class, as in the west) in the Presidency towns of Calcutta, Bombay, and Madras, to staff the colonial administration. Modern English education would turn this class of persons into English in taste, morals, opinions, and intellect, as stated by Lord Macaulay in his Minutes to English Education, 1935[25].

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21   Yogendra Yadav, cited in Amita Baviskar and Raka Ray, Elite and Everyman.

22   For a detailed debate on this, see Sandhya Venkatesh. Engaging with the Middle Class and Youth on Issues of Dignity and Social Justice: A Scoping Study, March 2013.

23   Leela Fernandes, Jodhka and Prakash, Sandhya Venkatesh, Baviskar and Ray, E. Sreedharan, Dipankar Gupta, amongst others

24   Sandhya Venkatesh, Engaging with the Middle Class and Youth on Issues of Dignity and Social Justice.

25   Cited in Pavan K.Varma, *The Great Indian Middle Class*, Viking: New Delhi, 2002, p. 2

Notably, Macaulay used 'English' to mean upper-class English, a fact that had long-term implications in defining the traditional middle class, and its often being seen as the elite in India.

In this initial phase, the middle class was characterised by homogeneity. Its members were mostly from financially comfortable, upper caste families; had received English-language education abroad or in India; were employed in the administrative services of the British Government or were lawyers, journalists, teachers, or doctors. What distinguished them from the other classes was their dependence on employment through education — unlike the richest strata and the vast majority. The richest strata (big landlords, aristocrats, industrialists) did not need employment. The vast majority comprised the agricultural poor, unskilled and semi-skilled manual workers, craftsmen, and lower-rung employees under the British such as soldiers, clerks, postmen, among others[26]. However, with modern education came the influence of ideas of liberalism and democracy, which had gained ascendance in the west since the French Revolution. Soon, the middle class in colonial India began championing internal social reform and also emerged as the leaders of the freedom movement against colonial rule. However, though this class represented the modern, it also participated in identity movements and played an active role in strengthening boundaries across religions and communities.[27] Partha Chatterjee argues that since the middle class in India was invented through colonial education, but structurally lacked the basis for economic expansion in the context of colonial control, it was not like the bourgeoisie in the west, and did not really bring about a social transformation. An upper-caste Indian who had access to traditional education could now simply avail the opportunities of English education and become this new class without losing 'his' caste moorings.[28] Understanding this upper-caste mooring of the Indian middle classes helps us understand their existence, values, and politics. One obvious reflection of this mooring is in how they distance themselves from any physical labour — in the household or elsewhere.[29]

The second moment of middle-class evolution began after Independence in 1947. The middle-class leadership of the nationalist movement now became the new democratic leadership of the independent nation. Given the state-led command of the polity and economy, the middle class retained its dominance. The older bureaucracy continued, and expanded with the steady growth of the developmental state that sought socioeconomic development through centralised planning[30]. During this period, the salaried and professional class constituted the middle classes, which relied on the state and were not directly involved in trade, commerce, or industry. They received limited salaries and enjoyed a number of institutional perks[31] and, therefore, austerity rather than consumerism characterised them. Their power came from their control of the state apparatus and, particularly, the bureaucracy. This control enabled them to appropriate policies in their own interest and to claim that they represented the interests of the nation in the task of nation building. The middle classes during this period at one level represented the Nehruvian notion.

> To be middle class was to inhabit a particular orientation towards modernity. It meant being open-minded and egalitarian; following the rule of law and not being swayed by private motive or particularistic agenda; being fiscally prudent and living within ones means and embracing science and rationality in the public sphere. It demanded setting aside the primordial loyalties of caste and kinship and opening oneself to new affinities and associations based on merit and to identities forged at the work place.[32]

26   Sujit Mahapatra, Exlposion of the Middle Class In Chandhoke, and Priyadarshi (ed) *Contemporary India: Economy, Society, Politics, Pearson: New Delhi, 2009*.p 126.

27   Surinder S. Jodhka, Aseem Prakash, The Indian Middle-Class: Emerging Cultures of Politics and Economics, International Reports, Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, Berlin, Dec. 5, 2011.

28   Cited in Sujit Mahapatra, Explosion of the Middle Class, p.126, n. 22

29   ibid

30   Based on the Soviet model of planned development. Jodhka and Prakash, p 46

31   ibid

32   Introduction, Amita Baviskar and Raka Ray (eds), Elite and Everyman – The Cultural Politics of the Indian Middle Class, Routledge Publications, 2011, p 6

At the same time, the middle classes continued to retain their particularistic characteristics based on ethnic and social location of its members, such as caste, religion, and linguistic and regional identities. An important development in this phase was the expansion of middle classes, and further differentiation within it. With the Green Revolution in some parts of India, there emerged sections of farmers ready to enter the fold as the rural middle class — changing, in effect, the urban-centredness of the middle classes. Affirmative action by the state and the institutionalisation of electoral politics also led to the entry of historically marginalised sections (Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes) in state institutions, public sector jobs, educational institutions, and therefore the middle classes, thus diluting their upper-caste nature. Facing resistance from the upper caste, this segment became the voice and leadership for assertion from marginalised castes and the demand for social justice.[33]

The third phase in the evolution of the middle classes in India came after liberalisation and gave them centre stage as never before. It is against this background that the actual size of the middle classes began to be first debated, as they came to be viewed in terms of consumption or as a consumer goods market. It marked the emergence of the new middle classes of today. Leela Fernandes argues that this social class is not new in terms of structural or social basis, and that its newness is characterised not by new upwardly mobile entrants but through its embodiment of India's transition to liberalisation[34]. The new middle class works in the private sector, reposes its faith in the market, and does not depend on the state for jobs or public services such as education or health. It expresses itself in consumerist terms to articulate its style and identity, and believes in efficiency, merit, and competition. Sandhya Venkatesh points out:

> Since ... post-liberalisation growth was based on educated and technically skilled human resources, it led to the creation of a class that was based outside the state system and was empowered with education and skill resources, employed predominantly in the private sector. These attributes, education, skills, facility with language, confidence, social networks and the ability to access a certain type of job, became the cultural capital of the middle class, through which it came to be identified. Carrying the identity of a consumer, this was in large part a self-serving class focused on the protection of their own interests, and emphasising the values of merit, competition, and efficiency[35].

The new middle classes today are both producers as well as consumers who drive economic growth. In addition, the software industry, which grew independent of the old economy, has also shaped a section of the middle classes into a transnational global class. In its composition, the new middle classes are characterised by continuity with the older pattern of middle class formation (upper caste, Hindu, urban). However, it assumes that market principles of merit and competition rather than affirmative action, social justice, and redistributive principles of an interventionist state will enable other segments to join. It differs from the Nehruvian middle-class values of austerity and in its conceptualisation of the state's role and responsibilities. It believes that the state should not do but simply steer or ensure; should not play a redistributive role but a managerial one; and that solutions lie outside politics with the technocrats.

However, given the heterogeneity of the middle classes along lines of caste, religion, regional, gender, and occupation, this formation does not include every section of the middle classes and is confined to the 'dominant' or 'hegemonic' middle class — the prosperous, young, metropolitan, predominantly upper caste, and Hindu white collared professionals who feel as at home in India as in the West and have consumption patterns similar to their western counterparts. They have gained dominance as their interest converges with the market, media, and an increasingly neoliberal state; takes them closer to the centres of power; and enables them to represent the hegemonic ideas shaping the culture, economy, politics, and society in India today. Although this section does not depend on the state for much, it relates to the state as clients

33   Jodhka and Prakash

34   Leela Fernandes, Hegemony and Inequality: Theoretical Reflection on India's New Middle Class, In Baviskar and Ray, Elite and Everyone, p 69.

35   Sandhya Venkatesh, Engaging with the Middle Class and Youth on Issues of Dignity and Social Justice: A Scoping Study, March 2013

primarily to serve its own interest. It is an anti-political class, and supports working democracy along market principles with the new public management (NPM)[36] style of governance rather than then what it perceives as the messiness of politics.

However, large sections of the middle classes articulate a different worldview and seek solutions through politics and the state. For middle classes coming from historically marginalised sections, the state remains an important centre where they gain or lose power. Hence, they continue to depend on the state and its framework of social justice, rights, and entitlements, and on representative democracy. This is in sharp contrast with the push for efficiency, completion, and value-neutral meritocracy by the dominant middle classes, and creates for contestation on issues such as affirmative action policies, representative vs. direct democracy, and notions of equality as sameness vs. substantive equality. Similarly, sub-sections of the middle classes who live in small towns and cities of rural India do not exemplify the new middle classes, because while they may share the aspirations of their metropolitan counterparts (depending on their caste, religion, and other locations), their consumption pattern and location in the economy differ. They have neither the same proximity to power nor the same visibility as the urban dominant middle classes. For instance, protests in non-metropolitan cities by sections of the middle class — be it against rape in Guwahati, or against Reliance Fresh and retail business in Bhubaneswar — hardly makes headlines or the similar impact as protests by the dominant middle classes on the metropolitan street. Notably, the post-liberalisation phase has also been one that witnessed the rise of Hindutva (Hindu right wing nationalism) with the support of large sections of national and transnational middle classes. This phase has witnessed violence and the alienation of minorities, and has particularly marginalised the already small section of Christian and Muslim middle classes[37].

Clearly, liberalisation has sharpened intra-class contestations between segments of the middle class. However, as stated earlier, there is a dominant new segment constituted of the dominant communities in India. This new middle class, as Jodhka and Prakash argue, is globally mobile, inhabits modern spaces, uses the language of modernity and, simultaneously, participates in articulations of identity politics of both dominant majorities and minorities, depends on patronage, and perpetuates the patronage culture.[38]

Political Activism of the New Middle Classes

Given the internal diversity within the middle classes, their varied relationship with the state, market, media, and the growing contestations within, it is not surprising that the political activism of the middle classes are articulated in varied frames. At one level is the not-so-visible activism of the less dominant middle classes in different urban settings — on the issue of privatising water and electricity, price hike, or on the question of loss of livelihoods because of the entry of retail. Over the past decade, a number of middle-class citizens' interest groups have been formed to take up issues where they have had immediate stake in combination with larger societal interests. Some instances of these follow.

a) The Association of Victims of Uphaar Tragedy (AVUT) was formed in Delhi by grieving families of the Uphaar fire tragedy in 1997. They had came together to fight for justice against the powerful Ansal corporate lobby. Ultimately, their personal tragedy turned into a political battle to augment central accident and trauma services and highlight the issue of safety laws in public places. b) Environmental and consumer

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36   NPM strongly advocates bringing in best techniques of private sector practices, discipline and efficiency of the market place to the activities of the state. It calls for depoliticising policy decisions, insulating it from politicians and bureaucrats and entrusting it to professional experts. Hence, state chief ministers become CEOs, citizens clients etc. For detailed analysis of NPM, see New Public Management, John. E. Lane, Routledge (London; New York, 2000).

37   On alienation of Indian Muslim Middle Class, See Asghar Ali Engineers interview to Y. Sikand, Indian Muslim Middle-Class Must Play A More Active Leadership Role: Asghar Ali Engineer http://www.countercurrents.org/sikand180311.htm

38   Jodhka and Prakash, p 56.

groups, such as the Citizen Consumer and Civic Action Group in Tamil Nadu which raised the question of electricity governance. **c)** Neighbourhood committees, such as in the K-East Ward of Bombay, where the voter identity of the bloc became the rallying point for waging struggle against water privatisation, and where alliances were built across jhuggi clusters and middle-class colonies. In Delhi, the issue of hike in electricity tariff and privatisation of water saw the emergence of platforms of resident welfare associations, such as United RWAs Joint Action (URJA), Joint Front, which built alliances with civil society groups like Parivartan and Right to Water Campaign. **d)** Large citizen platforms where middle-class citizens have came together with other groups for a common cause, such as the Save Goa Campaign against SEZ (Special Economic Zone), which is an alliance of professionals, retired government officials, churches, village committees, and NGOs. **e)** Middle class–urban poor alliance against retail. In many cities and towns of Odisha, Uttar Pradesh, and Jharkhand, alliances were forged between small traders, grocery shop owners, and vegetable vendors to protest against entry of Reliance Fresh and retail business which threatened their livelihood.

Most of these activisms (with a few exception such as AVUT, protests against retail) were articulated in the discourse of civic responsibility and in the framework of consumer-citizen — not in the framework of rights, entitlements, or social justice. As a result, there has been hostility towards poor and marginalised groups, unless there was common interest (as in some cases). Environmental activism, for instance, around beautification and cleaning of cities (or bourgeois environmentalism, as termed by Amita Baviskar)[39] has been against the urban poor, hawkers, and slum- and pavement-dwellers; and doctors of the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), a prestigious medical institution, organised against reservation of seats for Dalits and historically marginalised communities. However, the modality of political activism in all these instances was similar to traditional forms of political mobilisation — there were common lines of interest, an organisational structure and logic of representation, a set of clear demands, and planning and preparation. Moreover, given the non-hegemonic location of these segments of the middle classes, they were not choreographed as spectacular events. They nevertheless set the ground, and the tone, for the more visible and audible protests on the urban street that followed.

The more spectacular protests began in the city squares of Delhi with a huge media-led outcry against the initial court verdict in the Jessica Lal murder case — amid satellite television and news and social media. Soon, the young, professional middle classes took up cudgels against the system that had let sons of rich and powerful politicians and bureaucrats off scot-free in the cases of Priyadarshini Mattoo and Nitish Katara. In all these cases, the dominant middle classes in megacities took up the cause of the victims from among them. It led to the reopening of these cases against the powerful political elite. These were followed by even bigger middle-class activism in the anti-corruption and the anti-rape protests, which spilled over from city squares to urban streets. In their later phases, these protests attracted the participation of cross-sections and grew more amorphous, even though they remained predominantly middle class. The backdrop of these urban protests became the ground for the emergence of a new political party with its genesis in the anti-corruption movement and the urban middle class. However, in course of contesting elections to the Delhi Assembly, the AAP expanded its base across different classes, ultimately coming to form government in Delhi. Thus, what began as sporadic though dazzling protests by and for the middle class is now giving way to a more amorphous politics of the urban, and opening up spaces for a different kind of politics. The following chapters examine these dynamics in further detail, through case studies.

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39   Bourgeois Environmentalism and the Battle for Delhi's streets. See Amita Baviskar and Raka Ray (ed), Elite and Everyone: The Cultural Politics of the India Middle Class, (Routledge; Delhi, 2011), p 391-418.

3. Case Study 1
Anti-corruption Movement

Introduction

In 2011, there was an upsurge in India on the issue of corruption. It was triggered by an indefinite hunger strike in Delhi by Anna Hazare, a civil society activist from Ralegaon Siddhi[40]. To begin with, there was little unusual about the movement. The issue of corruption was hardly new for India where endemic corruption has been rampant, and there had been many earlier attempts to fight it. Anna Hazare too had been a known activist, and had on many previous occasions gone on hunger strikes for various causes (including corruption) without creating a stir in the popular domain. Yet, this time, when he sat on a hunger strike demanding the passage of an anti corruption legislation, the event turned episodic. It sparked off a momentous groundswell in urban India that forced the government to accept many demands from civil society. Clearly, something was changing in a very deep way. However, what was changing defied (and still defies) any easy explanation or label. The immediate tendency was to either deify Anna Hazare and call the movement a second freedom struggle, or to critique it as emotional blackmail of elected representatives by unelected and unelectable activists or as a right-leaning, limited, middle-class movement that was too narrow in its approach. Perhaps many of these critiques or celebrations remain. However, as one looks back with some hindsight at what was developing in 2011 (though still with very little distance) and subsequent events, perhaps it is more likely that the anti-corruption movement represents a critical moment of rupture in politics — a moment that was giving way to a new kind of unnamed politics that is still uncertain and unfolding. One does not know which way it will go, though. The case study here is thereby an attempt to both document as well as draw out some tendencies that are emerging. It looks at the context, details the trajectory of events that seem to have become important in itself, and map the faces, places, methodology, and impact of the anti-corruption movement.

The immediate context of the anti-corruption movement was a series of scams within the government that had hit the headlines, such as the distribution of telecom licenses, estimated at $40 billion; the Commonwealth Games held in Delhi that had resulted in a revenue loss of $38 million; illegal selling of mines in Karnataka costing $3 billion to the exchequer; the Adarsh Housing Society scam[41] among others. Despite the familiarity with corruption as part of everyday life in India, and instances in the past of large-scale corruption coming into public view, such huge diversion of public funds was something that had never been witnessed earlier. Fuelling public outrage was the government's silence at these large-scale scams taking place within it and its failure (perceived as resistance) to create institutions to check it. What was staring the public in the eye was clear evidence of crony capitalism, which until now had been working with stealth.

As pointed out by Aditya Nigam,

> The very content of anti-corruption movement was widespread anger against corporate loot of public exchequer, and corruption at high place involving the state-corporate link. It would not have been possible to mobilise people in such large numbers just on the question of individual acts of corruption indulged in by babus.[42]

Significant in revealing and raising a storm over these large-scale scams was the emergent role of alternative and social media, mainstream media, and increased access to information that now lay outside government control. In addition, there was already a constituency of young middle-class citizens in urban centres, who had been stirred by the RTI (Right to Information) movement, and by the usage of the Act, to

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40   A village in Western Maharashtra. Anna Hazare led the Watershed development and people participation initiatives to transform a highly degraded eco-system, into a model of environmental conservation village.

41   Land allotted by chief minister of Maharashtra in 2002 for the construction of a cooperative society for the retired personnel of the defense services, called the Adarsh Housing Society. Was instead given to politicians, bureaucrats and military officials at low prices

42   Aditya Nigam, At CDSA Consultation on *Anna/Anti Corruption Phenomenon: Its implication for Democracy, Civil Society and Policy Making,* 13th. September, 2011.

bring in transparency and curb corruption. For instance, just a few years ago, the 'Goosh ko maro ghoosa' (punch the culture of bribery) campaign or the 'No RTI No Vote' campaign had attracted the participation of large sections of the urban middle class, and had successfully thwarted the government attempt to dilute the RTI Act which had been passed earlier.

At the heart of the anti-corruption movement was the demand for anti-corruption legislation called the Lokpal Bill. Developed on the model of the Ombudsman of Sweden, the proposed legislation sought to set up a national institution, or the Lokpal, to look at, control, and remedy corruption in India. Attempts to bring about such legislation had a long history. The first Lokpal Bill was introduced in Parliament in 1968, and passed by the Rajya Sabha, but left pending. Subsequent versions of Lokpal were re-introduced in Parliament a number of times, but not passed. In the given context, with the exposè of a series of high-profile corruption cases, the issue of the Lokpal came to occupy centre stage as never before.

Trajectory of Events

Since October 2010, a number of initiatives had been launched by the India Against Corruption (IAC) campaign. However, the movement gained momentum after 5 April 2011, when social activist Kisan Babulal Hazare (popularly known as Anna or Anna Hazare) sat on an indefinite hunger strike at Jantar Mantar, Delhi. The objective of the hunger strike was to reinforce the demand for a joint committee that included civil society representation along with government to draft a strong anti corruption bill — a demand that had earlier been rejected by the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh. A draft bill had already been formulated by the government but was critiqued as being weak and toothless by Anna and his supporters.

Anna Hazare began his protest declaring he would indefinitely fast unto death unless a stronger version of the Jan Lokpal bill was introduced. Anna's stance drew immense support, and another 150 people joined the fast, including social activist Medha Patkar, Arvind Kejriwal, amongst others. Soon, the support began to grow as crowds grew at Jantar Mantar, and the movement spread in the world of social media and on prime time television, attracting more people on the ground, and spreading it to other cities such as Bangalore, Mumbai, Chennai, Ahmedabad, and Guwahati amongst others. The movement also received support from some religious leaders such as Baba Ramdev, Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, as well as celebrities from cricket and the film industry. Soon political parties like the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Communist Party of India also extended their support. However, a conscious decision was made by the protesters about not sharing their platform with politicians.

Immediately after the fast began, on April 6, Union Minister of Agriculture Sharad Pawar resigned from the group of ministers formed for reviewing the draft Lokpal Bill. Pawar had come under criticism by Anna and his close supporters (popularly referred to as Team Anna). As the protest grew bigger, so did pressure on the government, compelling it to accept Anna's demands. The government declared it would table the Bill in Parliament in the forthcoming monsoon session. It also accepted the inclusion of civil society members, alongside government representatives in the Bill Drafting Committee. Subsequently, Anna called off his fast on 9 April. On 13 May 2011, the Prime Minister announced the ratification of the UN Convention against Corruption by the Indian Government.

Baba Ramdev's Protest

Barely two months after Anna Hazare's campaign against corruption, mass protests began to surface once again in Delhi — this time led by Baba Ramdev, a religious leader and a yoga guru. Ramdev enjoyed a

cult following among middle classes through his mass yoga camps and TV shows[43], and had been raising the issue of untaxed black money for a while. He had joined forces with the IAC, but also represented an autonomous strand that was perceived to be close to the rightwing RSS (Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh). Baba Ramdev sat on an indefinite hunger fast amidst thousands of his followers in the Ramlila Grounds from 4 June 2011, building enormous pressure on the government. Ramdev's key demand was for strong legislation to repatriate untaxed black money, unofficially estimated to be around US$1.4 trillion (over Rs 70 lakh crore) that was allegedly deposited in Swiss banks and tax havens by Indian politicians, bureaucrats and middlemen[44]. He further demanded that the repatriated money be declared as the wealth of the country, and such practices be treated as criminal activity. A series of talks with senior ministers in the government ensued, which initially seemed to have led to an agreement. However, Ramdev continued with his fast. What followed was police action on the Ramlila grounds and their forcible removal of Baba Ramdev and thousands of his followers, abruptly ending the protest.

August: Anna Hazare's Indefinite Fast in Ramlila Grounds

The next few months saw a flurry of activities. A joint committee had been formed to draft the Lokpal Bill, but soon differences emerged within, leading to government and civil society activists hardening their stance. In a day-long hunger strike organised to protest against police action on Ramdev and his supporters, Anna Hazare accused the government of stalling efforts at creating strong anti corruption legislation, and instead carrying out campaigns to defame civil society members in the joint committee such as Shanti Bhushan, Prashant Bhushan, Arvind Kejriwal, and Santosh Hegde. He then set 15 August (Independence Day) as the deadline for Parliament to pass the Jan Lokpal Bill, and threatened to launch another indefinite hunger strike thereafter. By the end of July, the Union Cabinet approved the Lokpal Bill. However, the approved legislation had kept the office of the Prime Minister, higher judiciary, and the conduct of Members of Parliament inside Parliament out of the purview of the Lokpal. This deepened the confrontation between the government and Team Anna. The anti-corruption activists felt that the government had paid no heed to the majority of their demands, and rejected the government-approved Lokpal Bill. Anna Hazare declared he would go on another indefinite fast unto death from August 16, demanding a revised Bill.

However, before Anna could begin his fast, he was taken into preventive custody on the morning of August 16 along with his supporters and key members of IAC. What followed was public outcry against the government's action and countrywide protests. Opposition parties condemned the arrest of Anna Hazare and other anti-corruption activists. At the end, the government was left with no option but to release Anna Hazare and his supporters that very evening, but laid down conditions for undertaking public protest. However, Anna Hazare refused to step out of jail, demanded the unconditional right to fast in the Ramlila grounds, and began his fast inside Tihar jail. Finding itself in a bind, the government agreed. The next day, Anna Hazare was released and began his public hunger strike in Ramlila grounds. The fast continued for 12 days.

What transpired next was phenomenal, as the Ramlila grounds became the centre of an uprising against corruption. The events received unprecedented media and social media attention. Anna Hazare and the anti-corruption movement attracted even greater public support than earlier, and it grew larger than life. Thousands of people across socioeconomic backgrounds came to Ramlila Maidan to express solidarity with and ownership of the movement. The protests also instigated a heated debate in Parliament, and in the public domain about the very notion of democracy, citizen participation, and the role of civil society.

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43   For more details, see Revati Laul, Godfellas I - A series on gurus and their politics, http://archive.tehelka.com/story_main49. asp?filename=Ne040611GODFELLAS.asp

44   Rao.Venkateswara, Black, bold and bountiful, Business Line; 8. 13. 2010, http://web.archive.org/web/20110511200843/ http://www.thehindubusinessline.in/2010/08/13/stories/2010081350370900.htm

There were also critiques about Anna Hazare's use of hunger strike to emotionally blackmail an elected government into having his way and subverting representative democracy[45]. There were also differences with the content of the Jan Lokpal Bill, and at least three civil society versions of possible anti-corruption legislation were submitted to the government. Dalit and Muslim groups also critiqued the movement for being non-inclusive.

Finally, a special session of Parliament was held that saw high quality deliberation. B The Parliament unanimously adopted a 'Sense of the House' resolution on three principles raised by Anna Hazare: (i) citizens' charter, (ii) bring the lower bureaucracy under Lokpal through appropriate mechanism, and (iii) establish Lokayuktas in the states. Declaring that the battle was half won, Anna said he was suspending his fast until a strong Lokpal Bill was passed by the Parliament.

In the winter session of parliament, the Lokpal Bill, titled Lokpal and Lokayukta Bill 2011[46], was introduced in the Lok Sabha (House of the People) in December 2011. Amidst heated debate, the house agreed upon amendments to keep the defence forces and coast guard personnel out of the purview of the Lokpal and to increase the exemption time of former MPs from five to seven years. Some opposition parties expressed the view that the introduced bill was weak. On its part, Team Anna rejected the proposed bill as anti-people and dangerous on several grounds. In their statement, they declared that the government's Bill retained control over the Lokpal by keeping the powers to appoint and remove members at its will; covered only 10 per cent of political leaders; covered temples, mosques and churches; favoured those accused of corruption by offering them free legal service; was unclear about handling corruption within the Lokpal's office; and only 5 per cent of employees were in its ambit, as Class C and D officers were not included. The Bill also excluded a number of their key demands, such as merging the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) with the Lokpal, and the anti-corruption bureaus and Vigilance Departments of state governments with the Lokayuktas; providing the Lokpal and the Lokayuktas with their own investigative wings, and administrative and financial control over the CBI; and granting the Lokpal and Lokayukta direct jurisdiction over Class C and D officers[47].

However, the controversial Lokpal and Lokayukta bill was passed in Lok Sabha, but hit a logjam in the Rajya Sabha, the Upper House of Parliament. Despite its reintroduction in February 2012, the Bill remained pending in the Rajya Sabha. In the following months, IAC restarted the anti corruption movement, and organised a series of demonstrations, protests, and campaigns. Anna sat on a token day-long fast, and Arvind Kejriwal sat on an indefinite fast. However, though some of the meetings drew large crowds, it failed to generate a wave on the ground or in the media as it had in the past. The indefinite fast had to be called off. It appeared that the anti-corruption movement had lost some of its edge. Soon, one section of IAC/Team Anna led by Arvind Kejriwal decided to change strategy — to forming an alternative political party and contesting elections. Rather than trying to pressurise what they felt was an unresponsive political establishment, the strategy now was to enter the system and change it from within. However, another section led by Anna Hazare was opposed to forming a political party and entering mainstream politics, which they had all along considered to be dirty. A split of Team Anna was imminent. Arvind Kejriwal, Prashant Bhushan, Manish Sisodia along with other supporters moved out of the social movement domain to found the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on 2 October 2012.

Nine months after it was launched, the AAP contested elections to the Delhi Assembly, making a spectacular (and unexpected) debut to win 28 assembly seats in Delhi and forming a minority government. It emerged as a phenomenon (discussed later in this report) that set in motion dramatic transformation in the political

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45   Bhanu Pratap Mehta, *Of the Few by the few*, Indian Express, http://www.indianexpress.com/news/of-the-few-by-the-few/772773/0. Some key members from Annas group also distanced themselves on this ground, such as Santosh Hegde, who headed the Karnataka Lokayukta and Swami Agnivesh, another prominent social activist and spiritual leader.

46   Bill passed by Lok Sabha (House of the People): http://www.prsindia.org/uploads/media/Lok%20Pal%20Bill%202011/Lokpal%20and%20Lokayuktas%20Bill%20as%20passed%20by%20LS.pdf, accessed on 23rd. Dec 2013.

47   Team Anna wants best possible anti-corruption law, The Hindu, 25th. December 2011.

scene. The ripple effect of its victory on the electoral register, the manner of its win where it had decimated the ruling Congress party, including its Chief Minister, and the timing of its entry barely six months before the General Election in India, together ensured that the Lokpal and Lokayukta Bill was back in focus. Anna Hazare also added to this pressure by sitting on an indefinite hunger strike in his village in Ralegaon Siddhi.

Finally, on 17 December 2013, the Lokpal and Lokayukta Bill 2013 was passed in Parliament with some amendments. It created the office of an anti-graft ombudsman to investigate corruption charges against public functionaries including Prime Minister, Ministers, and Members of Parliament. Among other provisions, the Bill makes it incumbent upon states to make within a year their own law for setting up Lokayuktas on the lines of the Lokpal Bill. Anna Hazare and his supporters welcomed the Bill, but the AAP called it weak.

Faces and Spaces of the Protests

Outside Tihar Jail, Gate No 4, 16 August 2011, 11.30 AM: Reaching Tihar Jail where Anna Hazare was detained took longer than usual. There were road blocks placed by the police on some of the routes to Tihar. Outside Gate No 4, a crowd of about 300 protesters stood, waving the national flag, holding 'I Am Anna' banners. The air reverberated with slogans like 'Vande Matram, Anna ji sangharsh karo, hum tumhare sath hai' (Anna carry on with the struggle, we are with you). They were mostly young boys, a few girls, women, men-some old and some not so old. Who were these people? What had brought them out of their homes? Speaking to some of the protesters, I found most were from residential colonies across Tihar Jail, or were traders in the area, or were students from the nearby Raj Guru College. They were not the so-called upwardly mobile from posh colonies of South Delhi, but middle class-yes. Rashmi, 45, was a housewife who lived across the Tihar Jail. She along with other women from the colony had stood outside Tihar until 12 the previous night, shouting these very same slogans. She was back the next morning after sending her children to school to once again join the protest. The placard she held had been made by her, on the back of a calendar, expressing solidarity with Anna. According to Rashmi: This is the first time I am stepping out for something like this. As a housewife with two children, I am always short of time, but this is important. I came because corruption affects everyone, and I came because of Annaji. An old man is fighting for all of us. The whole country must join. An hour later, a group of young men in motorcycle passed, holding a banner of Baba Ramdev. Most people I spoke to here had been mobilised by the Resident Welfare Association, or through announcements made at the local temple, friends in college or in the colony.

There were similar crowds outside each of the gates of Tihar. In front of Gate No 3, Civil society activist from National Alliance of Peoples Movement (NAPM) and Bhopal Gas Peerit Samiti were also protesting.[48]

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 megacities, 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. Jantar Mantar in Delhi is almost a designated space for civil society groups and citizens to converge for any agitation. Similarly, Ramlila Grounds, where Anna Hazare and Baba Ramdev sat on hunger strikes, has been associated with large political rallies during the nationalist movement and later (including the massive rally organised in 1975 by Jayprakash Narayan along with prominent leaders against Indira Gandhi).

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48   Visit to protest site outside Tihar Jail, 16th. Aug.2011

Similarly, in Bangalore, the epicentre for convergence of protest was the Freedom Park, associated with political rallies, and part of the park is allocated for protests. In Mumbai, thousands of people gathered in Azad Maidan, a space also associated with political gatherings. However, the anti-corruption movement here was different from other civil society movements in two significant ways. The first was that though the large number of protesters was not new, what was different from earlier movements was that protesters were unusually diverse and self mobilised. Second, though there was centring of the movement on the sites of dharnas (sit-ins) and fasts, the movement also spilled over to sites of social life in neighbourhoods, in market squares, metro stations, and city streets which began to witness spontaneous marches, sit-ins, and gatherings. Another significant development was that citizens used social media platforms, e-groups, blogs, Facebook pages, tweets, SMS and mobile technologies to connect as well as register protests. Some examples of these were cartoons against corruption[49], IACs IndiACor page on Facebook, innumerable e-groups. Outside India, in New Jersey, New York; London where there are sizeable population of immigrant Indians, protests were held outside the Indian High Commission.

In the early days, the faces of the protests were mostly that 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 neighbourhoods, 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, autorickshaw drivers, college students, RSS cadres, film actors, farmers from neighbouring states of Delhi. In Mumbai, the dabbawallas (lunch box carriers) broke their 120-year-old-tradition of never going on a strike, as 1,200 dabbawallas 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[50].

A section of developmental civil society and political groups were important constituents of the movement. This included NAPM, Bhopal gas survivors/victims, AISA-the student wing of CPI (ML). These various social and political activists sought to fore ground issues of land acquisition, corporate plunder, human rights within the corruption discourse. According to Madhuresh, NAPM, as part of the anti-corruption clearly felt it was important to give the movement a political content by being present within[51]. From Manipur, Irom Sharmilla (who has been on a hunger fast to protest against AFSPA for over 13 years) expressed solidarity. In some of the protests sites in Delhi, grass root social activists joined the movement, travelling all the way from Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, and Bihar. In Chatrasal Stadium, a group of people from flood-affected area in Bihar sat on a hunger fast as Anna Hazare fasted in Tihar Jail, protesting against corruption in the delivery of relief[52].

Notably, middle class youth were amongst the most active participants on the street as well as in cyber space throughout the movement. The youth have been active in political movements of different kinds in every generation. However, the participants of the anti-corruption movement represented a new social demography that has grown alongside the emergence of the new, liberalised, 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. Socially, it is a generation that grew up on the dream promised by liberalisation (and is now facing its possible collapse), have a greater sense of the individual than the earlier generation, and depends less on the state — be it for jobs, education, health or other public services. While externally they imagine the rise of India as an economic power with dreams of

49   http://cartoonsagainstcorruption.blogspot.in/p/ban-on-website.html, Aseem Trivedi launched the website and was arrested. Though the case of sedition was dropped, and he has been released on bail, the case is dtill pending.

50   Dhabawallas March Singing Bhajans, Hindu, August 19.2011. http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/article2372581.ece

51   Madhuresh Kumar,NAPM at a meeting organised by CDSA on Social Action, Civil Society and Democracy in the times of Anna and Ramdev: A Conversation, 29th. June, 2.30-5.30 PM, at National Foundation of India, New Delhi

52   Visit to Chatrasal Stadium, New Delhi, 16th. August 2011.

being a superpower, internally they are watching a growing crisis of governability. Most young protesters interviewed during the anti-corruption movement expressed growing distrust of the political elite and blamed politicians for the problems facing the country and them. According to Manoj, a young student at IGNOU, who stood protesting outside Chatrasal Stadium, *It is not about supporting one particular party or being against another party. Politics itself is the problem*[53].

Similarly, at the Ramlila Maidan, a number of young protesters said that they did not trust the political elites. They felt that politics had become farcical and did not represent citizens' needs or desires. The dominant perception understood clearly during the movement was that politics was not just indifferent but also incapable of fixing the growing problem of corruption and of the joblessness of youth.

Perhaps the most distinctive aspect of this section of young protesters in the anti-corruption movement was their 'ownership' of technology and its possibilities — something that the youth of even a decade ago in India did not own. The middle class youth in urban India are the millennial generation that owns and lives day-to-day with the Internet, personal computers, social media, and cell phones, which make constant local-national-global communication possible.

Leadership of the Movement

The anti-corruption movement was symbolically headed by Anna Hazare, who occupied the centre stage for a month. Under continuous media coverage, Anna came to be projected as an elderly next-door neighbour[54] who was putting his life at stake for the cause of the nation. Soon, Anna (literally, elder brother) became the signifier of all that is good against all that is dirty with Indian politics and yet someone familiar who was part of the everyday[55]. This image of Anna, helped by media attention, was successful — almost inspirational — in mobilising youth and the middle classes, and Anna became synonymous with the identity of ordinary citizens demanding an end to corruption.

However, even as Anna remained the dominant face of the movement, the leadership had more to it. At the initial stage, the initial platform of IAC included a diverse range of social activists, prominent individuals, religious, and spiritual leaders who came from varied background. This included Swami Agnivesh, Kiran Bedi, Arvind Kejriwal, the Archbishop of Delhi Vincent M Concessao, Maulana Mehmood Mamdani, advocate Prashant Bhushan, and JM Lyngdoh, along with Anna Hazare, Justice Santosh Hegde, Medha Patkar, Akhil Gogoi, Baba Ramdev amongst others[56]. However, as the movement grew, so did differences over issues such as the use of fasting unto death and representative democracy, amongst others. Gradually, the real leadership came to rest around a group, popularly referred to as Team Anna, which orchestrated the campaign. Its key figures were Arvind Kejriwal, Kiran Bedi, and Prashant Bhushan. At one stage, Baba Ramdev did emerge as the other face of the anti-corruption movement. However, after his protest collapsed, the leadership of Team Anna became central with Anna Hazare as the leader. Over time, differences surfaced within Team Anna; Anna Hazare and Kiran Bedi went separate ways, and Arvind Kejriwal and Prashant Bhushan floated a political party the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP).

The leadership of Anna/Team Anna soon came under criticism from within and outside civil society on a number of counts, such as displaying authoritarian[57] tendencies and being undemocratic; getting too close to the right wing; not being open or considering various views within civil society; and for playing to the gallery and media.

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53   Interview with a young protester Manoj Kumar, student with Indira Gandhi National Open University, outside Chatrasal Stadium, 16 August 2011.

54   Ashis Nandy, Push comes to shove, Hindustan Times, August 25, 2011

55   ibid

56   See India Against Corruption, see http://www.iacahmedabad.org/india-against-corruption, Accessed 23.6.2013

57   Mukul Sharma, The Making of Anna Hazare, http://kafila.org/2011/04/12/the-making-of-anna-hazare/

Methodology and Tools of the Movement

The anti-corruption movement was a non-violent movement, which used the fast-unto-death stratagem (popularised by Gandhi, and often used as a method of protest in the Indian context) as its key method. In that sense, there was nothing novel about the method of hunger strike. What proved critical was how it was used to tap into popular anger in the wider public sphere in urban India that was dominated by mainstream and social media.

The way the campaign (later, movement) was initially designed, its key targets were the middle class youth/middle class, and the media — the two vehicles which could push the movement closer to centres of power. In its early attempts, IAC activists used a number of tools that included using the RTI to get information out on large-scale corruption, filing FIRs at police stations, undertaking rallies, and calling press conferences. However, this failed to generate the enthusiasm needed to make corruption a burning issue. Thereafter, the campaign reinvigorated itself. It reached out to volunteers, and attracted a large number of middle-class professionals from the IT and corporate sector. With their help, a smart media strategy was developed. Ultimately, the media did not just play a role, but proved to be an important tool of the movement. Television beamed and circulated images about the protest into people's homes, and the anti-corruption issue received unprecedented coverage in almost all popular newspapers across the country. Social media was used extensively to garner support, reach out, connect, and spread. It also became a space of protest and discussions. Here, Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter played critical roles. Special SMS and missed call campaigns were undertaken, which recorded some 2.5 crore missed calls until 6 September 2011; online referendums relating to the Jan Lokpal (JLP) were carried out, which showed overwhelming support for civil society's version of the bill. Information about the protest was also spread through Resident Welfare Associations (RWA) and announcements at local temples, through word of mouth and friends in colleges or residential colonies.

The fact that the movement was given the face of Anna — an elderly Gandhian activist with an austere lifestyle — also struck a chord with the popular, particularly with television beaming news about his life and style round the clock. At one level, the face of Anna and the spaces of Ramlila Maidan and Jantar Mantar became the centring points of the protests and brought protesters together. At another, the use of the media, internet and mobile technology, and social networking platforms dispersed and spread the movement — all the while providing for a union of the dispersed protests.

Also 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.

Protest and Political Ideology (or lack of it)

Agar ek assi saal ka desh bhakt ek behri sarkar ko jaganai ke liyai itnai dino tak bhookha rah sakta hai, toh hum kyon nahi.[58] (If an eighty-year-old nationalist man can stay hungry for so many days to make a deaf government respond, then why can't we act?), said a young student from Delhi University at Ramlila grounds, a sentiment that was often heard throughout the movement.

Though Anna Hazare and the other leaders in IAC came from different civil society formations and represented proximity to one kind of political ideology or another, the predominant stand of the movement

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58   Rohit Prasad, Student, Delhi University, 20 August 2011, Ramlila Grounds.

was against the political class, and of positing *aam aadmi* (ordinary man) vs corruption from a moral position rather than a political or ideological position — something that found resonance with the middle class and the media. The mass of the people who collected at the sites of protests or demonstrated in support of the movement were not contained within either civil society formations or political parties or any political ideology. The protesters spoke in disparate voices that cut across class and political views and disclaimed identification with any ideology or political party, articulating a political outside of politics. While it is critical to examine the role of the media in this, it is significant to note that what was moving the protests to act was affect. The citizens were also claiming the nation and the love for it through nationalist slogans, flags, and symbols to reject the political class. Notably, using the moral position to question power has a long legacy in the Gandhian movements. However, what was different this time was that in this case, each individual subject was acting from her/his own sense of morality rather than as a group sharing common bonds or interest.

The movement also saw the participation of some political groups, both the Left and the extreme Right ideological groups, even as the movement at large distanced itself from politics and ideology. There was a dominant strand of the extreme Right visible and vociferous in the anti-corruption movement (Baba Ramdev, the large-scale participation of the RSS, and in the extreme nationalist rhetoric of Anna Hazare and sections of the protesters). Anna Hazare's praise for Narendra Modi (Chief Minister of Gujarat who had presided over communal violence and the attack on Muslims in 2001) reflected the danger of how easily nationalism, the politics of anti politics of the movement, and anti-minority sentiments could become conjunctive values. According to social activist Aruna Roy, the lack of ideological tethering was amongst the biggest problems of the movement. Given that corruption is such a preoccupation in India, when you call for eliminating it people will join. But the same people joining Anna Hazare in his fast could have little sympathy for the 11-year-old hunger strike of Irom Sharmila against the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA) in Manipur. They would not mind Army rule in Kashmir and North East, and the loss of democratic rights for a huge chunk of people[59].

However, the anti-corruption movement remained predominantly apolitical in the sense that most protesters chose to step out of a given politics and ideology. It indicated a significant transformation in political culture and the beginning of new subjectivities and tools of contestation. It had a powerful democratic strand, and perhaps a new, yet unfamiliar politics that carried the possibility of strengthening an alternative kind of politics. At the same time, it carried an unmistakable element of an aggressive, elite-driven social activism that is hostile, if not opposed, to marginalised groups such as the poor, dalits, women, and others who live on the margins — papering over deep structural inequalities with a technocratic do-good approach. The vociferous right wing element in the movement was a matter of concern. These trends were also reflected in the language and rhetoric used in the movement.

The Language and Rhetoric of the Movement

There were divergent projects competing within the space of the movement — the right wing agenda, the issue of land acquisition by corporations, Ramdev's Bharat Swabhiman Trust, Manuwadi Kranti Samiti, the RSS to All India Students Association, National Alliance of People's Movement, Bhopal Gas Survivors, to angry *aam aadmi*/citizen protesters who saw in Anna and the Jan Lokpal Bill a panacea for ending corruption. Naturally, therefore, the movement did not speak in one voice, and this was reflected in the dominant rhetoric and slogans of the movement. The key icon of the movement was Anna. *Anna was India* and *India was Anna*. Anna was at once the centring symbol and Anna was everyone, the *aam aadmi* or the common citizen, reflected in T-shirts and the Gandhi Topi that read I am Anna or *Mein Anna Hoon* — a phrase that became almost synonymous with the movement and its supporters. The group that led the

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59   Hazare's movement lacked ideological tethering: Aruna Roy, The Hindu, January 21 2012

movement was Team Anna, drawing on the image of the corporate/Indian cricket team popularly called Team India. Anna soon became a brand name for the young, consumer middle class in cities, and fashion clothing companies used it to advertise their products. For example, Tantra came out with a line of T-shirts in support of Anna, and Levi's jeans advertised its new brand of jeans by alluding to the movement, asking citizens to bring about change, under the slogan 'Now is our time' (TOI, 21st August 2011).

The iconography of the movement was deliberately nationalist — with the national flag, pictorial representation of *Bharat Mata*[60], and slogans of *Vande Mataram* and *Bharat Mata ki Jai.* Much of these have also been appropriated by extreme Hindu right wing groups like the RSS, raising concerns about the politics of this iconography. Gandhi was the other image that dominated the movement — not just in the use of his tools, but also as an icon — with Anna at times being projected as a new age Gandhi. A large section of citizens was also using nationalism and Gandhi to reclaim power to speak to an unresponsive elected government.

Role of Communication Technologies
Media and Social Media

The media weren't just doing their job ... they are now part of the movement.

(Arvind Kejriwal, 28 August 2011, Ramlila Grounds)

The movement against corruption marked a dramatic shift in terms of both usage of information and communication technologies and the unprecedented media coverage. The media became integral to the discourse and to the understanding of the event itself, leading some to argue that the upsurge was fuelled, if not created by the media[61].

In terms of coverage by visual media, Anna Hazare, Team Anna, and every aspect of the protest dominated satellite television, which beamed it round the clock. In the earlier phase of Anna's hunger fast in April, coverage totalled 5,576 news clips, of which prime time news coverage numbered 1,224 clips across 152 hours, with an ad value of Rs 52.47 crore. New channels raked in advertisement revenues of Rs 175.86 crore over a nine-day period. Classifying the news clips by their tone, 5,592 were positive towards Anna and his cause, while 92 were characterised as negative[62]. In the second phase of the movement (16–28 August), the two Hindi channels — Aaj Tak and Star News — devoted 97 per cent of total news time during prime viewing hours (7–11 pm) to the Anna fast, according to a monitoring exercise by the Centre for Media Studies (CMS). For the English channels, CNN-IBN and NDTV 24 X 7, the corresponding figure was 87 per cent. Besides, national print media was not too different when it came to coverage. Newspapers covered minute details of the movement and provided a detailed description of every move taken by Anna and every aspect of his public life and his earlier work. Some of the newspapers even carried banners appealing to people to join the movement, such as '*Ek saptha desh ke naam, Anna ke saath utariyae*' (give one week for the nation, join Anna, Nav Bharat Times).

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60   Bharat Mata or Mother India is the powerful heteronormative metaphor for the nation that emerged in the nationalist struggle in the early 20th century, and which has been appropriated by extreme right-wing militant groups such as the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangha.

61   Pritam Sengupta, *How the Times of India pumped up Team Anna*, available at http://wearethebest.wordpress.com/2011/08/31/how-the-times-of-india-pumped-up-team-anna/, Accessed, 3. Jan 2014. Sukumar Murlidharan; *Media as Echo Chamber : Cluttering the public Discourse on Corruption*, http://sukumar-md.blogspot.in/2011/09/media-as-echo-chamber-cluttering-public.html, Accessed, 4 Jan.2014

62   According to a media watch website, The Hoot, quoted in Murlidharan, Media as Ech Chamber.

The usage of social media was phenomenal. With the help of a dedicated group of software professionals associated with IAC, Team Anna was able to spawn a number of social media programmes that were immensely popular and which were then copied and worked upon by others. There were more than 150 Facebook pages related to Anna on Facebook, several online signature campaigns, more than 4 lakhs liked the IAC Facebook page; there were also several Anna Hazare fan pages, as well as several videos posted on YouTube by supporters[63]. Comprehensive SMS campaigns were launched across the country and attracted a huge number of responses. A special campaign involving people to ring a particular number to express solidarity with the movement allegedly clocked 1.3 crore calls. Corporations hooked on to the bandwagon and designed online computer games around Anna. One even came out with an IAC phone app to keep cell phone users updated with the events of the IAC campaign.

Media (both social and mainstream) worked to inform and spread what was happening on the ground as well as a means of getting people on the street. It contributed to the emergence of a heavily connected public space and streets, which was in a web of satellite television, the internet, round–the-clock circulation and movement of images, sounds, and affective experiences. This is what made the anti-corruption movement spectacular.

However, to view the movement simply from the prism of technology and as being media-created would be inadequate, for there was an entire socio-economic-political context that made for the rise of the anti-corruption movement. However, the protests on the ground were being mediaised in the ways 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.

Notably, the mainstream national media has hardly paid attention to other social movements, protests, causes of marginalised groups. As Aruna Roy argues, there is never a TV shot shown of tribals who are mobilised for their causes[64]. There are thus conditions to the role played by media and ICT — the constituency of the middle class which finds common grounds with the media; the ownership of ICT and all the possibilities it offers; and the urban setting which is in the midst of the television and ICT web.

I am not Anna
Those who did not participate

Even as the anti corruption movement grew popular, there were large sections who did not participate in the movement. In terms of gender, the participation was more widespread among young boys and men. Women and girls were far fewer in number. A number of women activists and young girls cited varied reasons. Some pointed out that the presence of right wing groups and of young boys on motor cycle carrying flags and shouting as they passed made them uncomfortable. In Bangalore, Shubha Chacko said:

> Initially we did go to join the protests in the Freedom Park, to find out what this was about. There was little participation from local people, and the dominant groups there were mostly middle class North Indian men, giving slogans in Hindi. Their tone was one of aggressive nationalism. It was only later that the leaders and the movement acquired Karnataka flavour.[65]

Also significant was the absence of marginalised groups like Dalits and Muslims, who had clearly distanced

63   http://www.afaqs.com/news/story.html?sid=31413_How+powerful+is+Anna+Hazare+on+Facebook+and+Twitter   Accessed: 29/11/2011
64   Hazare's movement lacked ideological tethering: Aruna Roy
65   Interview with Shubha Chacko, SANGAMA, Bangalore, 22nd August, 2013, Madhu, VIMOCHANA

themselves from the movement. According to Paul Divakar, NCDHR[66], Dalits and marginalised sections did not join the movement. The anti-corruption movement is reminiscent of the upper-caste anti-Mandal agitation[67] in the 1990s. Corruption was given a narrow meaning within the movement, wherein social inequalities were excluded from being a parameter of defining corruption. The bias against the marginalised in policies — such as the diversion of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe Funds, the diversion of Multi-Sectoral Development Funds for Muslims, the bias of the judicial systems which target Dalits/Muslims — did not seem to bother or find a place in the elitist definition of corruption[68]. The participation of the RSS and the close proximity of some of the leaders to Hindu right wing groups, the use of icons of *Bharat Mata*, and slogans of *Vande Matram* raised serious concerns among secular groups and among religious minorities. Anna Hazare himself was critiqued for being anti-Dalit and anti-Muslim[69]. Noted activist Shabnam Hashmi critiqued the anti-corruption campaign as an RSS project meant to create deep rifts in society. It worked with a binary – either you are with Anna or are an anti-national. This was dangerous for democracy, making it easy to target and silence dissenting voices from the Muslim or minority community by branding them as anti-national.[70] Moreover, the questioning of parliamentary democracy by a movement constituted mostly of the urban, upper caste, Hindu middle class was also perceived as a threat to some of the hard-gained rights for marginalised groups that had come through the politics of parliamentary democracy — be it minority rights, affirmative action and reservation policies, or social justice.

A larger section of the developmental civil society — unsure of what sense to make of the movement — remained on the sidelines. At one end, a feeling of solidarity was expressed with the issue of anti-corruption and for the politics of accountability and transparency. However, there was a feeling of discomfort along several lines. **i)** The movement was seen as succumbing to a narrow, middle-class worldview and demands, which often did not have any place for the marginalised and poor sections. It was criticised for approaching corruption superficially and portraying the Jan Lokpal Bill as a panacea that would end corruption. Corruption was a deeper socio-political issue and the movement did little to address socio-economic power structures. **ii)** There was also immense discomfort with the close proximity of IAC with Baba Ramdev and RSS, and its nationalist jingoism. **iii)** There were differences over the means adopted by Anna Hazare and Team Anna, which some felt was autocratic and undermined representative democracy. **iv)** There was also disagreement over the content of the Lokpal bill. Two other alternative bills were proposed from within civil society.

Resources and Funding

Financial resources were not much of a problem for the anti-corruption movement, as voluntary donations poured in from citizens at large — middle class professionals, government employees, individuals in villages and cities, businessman, trusts, gurdwaras, and resident welfare associations in Delhi[71].

Human resources came from volunteers, who came on board through the networks created during earlier protests in April 2011. As the protests took a bigger form, newer networks were created all across the country. Support came from the youth in schools, colleges, and universities, and professionals in the corporate and IT industry also joined in from different parts of the country[72].

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66   National Campaign for Dalit Human Rights

67   Protest by Upper Caste Students against reservation in government jobs for historically marginalised castes.

68   Paul Diwakar, Civil Society Conversation: *Anna/Anti Corruption Phenomenon: Its implication for Democracy, Civil Society and Policy Making,* CDSA 13th. September 2011

69   Sandeep Dongre , Why I Cannot Support The Jan Lokpal: A Detailed Analysis, 10 September, 2011, http://www.countercurrents.org/dongre100911.htm, Accessed, 23rd. Dec 2014.

70   Shabnam Hashmi, *Civil Society Conversation: Anna/Anti Corruption Phenomenon.*

71   See Revati Laul: The troopers who triggered the triggered the storm. *In Tehelka Magazine, Vol 8, Issue 35, Dated 03 Sep 2011.* URL: http://www.tehelka.com/story_main50.asp?filename=Ne030911coverstory3.asp

72   Ibid.

Response of Other Stake Holders
Intelligentsia and Businesses

While the media, as discussed earlier, was a key ally, the anti corruption movement faced critiques, and roused heated debate among the intelligentsia and academics. While there was across-the-board support against corruption, there were critiques against the movement's strategies and tendency to bypass procedural democracy and its institutions. There were also critiques of over-the-top media involvement, particularly visual media, which tended to use the power of visual images to mediaise politics, create a larger–than-life image of Anna Hazare, and promote what was seen as lopsided image of the movement — where differing voices were not given adequate space. Corporates responded with caution. At one level, all heads of key business houses came out in support of Anna Hazare at the height of the popular movement, but remained cautious about the Jan Lokpal bill.

Impact Assessment and Analysis

The impact of the anti corruption movement in the short term and long term has been far-reaching.

At the level of government and policy, the movement brought the issue of corruption to the centre stage and compelled the government (for the first time) to bend backwards to accommodate civil society demands. The movement compelled the holding of a joint parliamentary session, raised the level of debate in Parliament, and forced the government to acknowledge corruption[73] and formulate its own Lokpal Bill (although the movement critiqued the Bill for being too weak). It left the government walking a tightrope and unable to grasp or adequately respond to the large mass swell on the ground. It was significant moment of redefining state-civil society relations — the impacts of which are still unfolding.

At the level of civil society, at one level the movement put civil society on the centre stage as never before, where for a moment civil society found itself filling in the democratic vacuum that prevails. At another, it raised a number of critical questions about civil society and its role in democratic politics, legitimacy and accountability, and methodologies of social action. It also triggered a backlash against civil society from the government — invisible from the media glare, government began tightening laws to control civil society. Within civil society, it also established the emergence of a new form of social mobilisation — an activism of a new generation, a middle class, that is self-organising through new media (social networking sites and social media) and connecting as individuals and yet spilling into the streets for a collective cause. In the long term, this has critical implications for democracy and civil society. For instance, it remains to be seen if the leakage of power from institutions of representative democracy to media rooms, city squares, and cyberspace weakens or deepens democracy. Will the anti-politics strand of the movement relate to the political campaigns and issues of social justice of the poor and marginalised? Will it open possibilities or shrink civil society space for the issues and concerns of the marginalised? These questions have serious long-term implications, but remain open at the moment.

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73   For instance, the 12th Plan even devotes a section on combating corruption.

4. Case Study 2
Anti-Rape Protests

Introduction

The horrific gang rape of a student in December 2012 sparked off a remarkable movement against rape and sexual violence against women in India. The large-scale public protest in urban India — by men and women — was unprecedented. So was the serious, round-the-clock coverage the incident and the violence accompanying it received — in newspapers, continuous coverage on radio, television, and cable channels. Massive public protests and demonstrations continued for many days in Delhi as well as in other Indian cities, much larger than any seen before on gender issues. 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. Urban India felt a personal connection with the young victim as a symbolic self or daughter or sister or friend. There was grief and anger on the street, which erupted in social media and media rooms in different voices. Some demanded the death penalty, castration, and medieval-style justice for the rapist; others demanded better laws, better policing, and speedier judicial systems; and yet others stressed the need to change social attitudes towards women and asserted the need for *bekhauf azadi* (freedom without fear) for women. Even as different shades of opinion emerged, it pushed the issues of women's safety, violence against women, and the culture that promotes it to the centre of national and societal debate in India as never before.

Faces of the Protesters

The anti-rape protests attracted several hundreds of students from different Universities and members from student organisations. 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 organisations that participated in and played key roles in mobilising the protest were All India Democratic Women's Association (AIDWA)[74], Revolutionary Youth Association (RYA), All India Progressive Women's Association (AIPWA), and All India Students Association (AISA).[75]

The anti-rape protests also attracted people from different walks of life, though predominantly middle class — Resident Welfare Associations, the Indian Association of Physiotherapists (IAP) including a large number of physiotherapy students, the Physiotherapy Community of India, housewives, school children, professionals, celebrities, journalists. Women's groups played an important role in these protests, such as Jagori, Nirantar, Saheli, AIPWA in Delhi and Akshara, Majlis in Mumbai, Vimochana in Bangalore played an important role in the protests.[76] 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. Significantly, the protest march also drew out activists from Kashmir residing in Delhi — who joined because they felt a sense of solidarity with groups that took a stand against Armed Forces Special Powers Act, and recognised rape by soldiers in conflict areas.

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74   http://www.demotix.com/news/1984571/sack-delhi-police-commissioner-demands-protesters-india-gatedelhi/all-media

75   http://epaper.timesofindia.com/Default/Scripting/ArticleWin.asp?From=Archive&Source=Page&Skin=pastissues2&BaseHref=C
      AP/2012/12/20&PageLabel=3&EntityId=Ar00300&ViewMode=HTML

76   http://epaper.timesofindia.com/Default/Scripting/ArticleWin.asp?From=Archive&Source=Page&Skin=pastissues2&BaseHref=C
      AP/2012/12/21&PageLabel=6&EntityId=Ar00601&ViewMode=HTML

> The media covered protests in central areas like India Gate and Jantar Mantar. After Section 144 was invoked on such protests, people protested within their own colonies and communities to show solidarity with the girl. This protest saw a sea of people working at an individual level and standing up for the issue at different sites, which was a welcome change.[77]

Suneeta Dhar, Jagori

One can connect the dots and find that the broader issues raised by the Delhi gang rape have resonated strongly with India's burgeoning urban middle class. The victim was a young, educated, upwardly mobile, first-generation urban Indian — someone with whom India's middle class could closely identify. As a result, she became synonymous with the ambitions and political frustrations of an entire emerging aspirational class and generation. The protesters who came out came from mainly the middle class, educated, and urban background.

Leadership of the Protest

During the initial stages of the protests, the campaign was leaderless. According to an interview given by Minister of State for Home R P N Singh to Times India, 'There were all kinds of people there who I can say were leaderless … there was no particular person we could immediately speak to.'[78] Another protester said:

> The anger that spilled out on the streets of Delhi and other cities was an organic act of intensely felt outrage. A spontaneous movement without any leaders or political affiliation is a sign that something has finally given way. The idea of living in constant fear and having to make do with the platitudes of those in charge is no longer going to be met with stoic indifference.[79]

However, a few regulars who participated in the anti-rape protests consistently and at times played a key role in mobilising and organising protests include JNUSU leaders as well as students from Jawaharlal Nehru University, and Delhi University. The Aam Aadmi Party had also organised protests all over India. Kavita Krishnan, secretary of AIPWA, regularly led protests, as did other women groups across the country. According to a representative of the All India Student Association, some of the activist who played a leadership role were Vrinda Grover, Kavita Krishnan, Nivedita Menon, Sucheta De. Other students we interviewed felt that women's groups and activists such as Kamla Bhasin, and Sunita Dhar had played a significant role. Many, however, had mobilised through blogs and social media.

> The anti-rape protests did not have a centralised 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.[80]

Prof Surinder Singh Jodhka

Explaining the 'leaderless' nature of the anti-rape protest, Chandan Gomes argues that leaderless protests signified a decentralisation of the protest where the protesters were faceless group, and so leaders were not able to divide the group on the basis of one's individual identity, which becomes quite easy in centralised leadership.[81]

77   Interview with Suneeta Dhar, 30th August, 2013
78   http://epaper.timesofindia.com/Default/Scripting/ArticleWin.asp?From=Archive&Source=Page&Skin=pastissues2&BaseHref=C AP/2012/12/30&PageLabel=12&EntityId=Ar01200&ViewMode=HTML
79   http://epaper.timesofindia.com/Default/Scripting/ArticleWin.asp?From=Archive&Source=Page&Skin=pastissues2&BaseHref=C AP/2012/12/24&PageLabel=4&EntityId=Ar00400&ViewMode=HTML
80   Interview with Surinder Singh Jodhka, 26th August 2013
81   Chandan Gomes, Kafila

The Methodology and Tools of the Movement

The movement used multiple methods to mobilise the people. Political groups used speeches and slogans, formed 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. and posts in social media and through discussions in the electronic media. In Mumbai, silent protest marches were taken out. Housing societies held meetings to ensure that their colony has better security, and students burned effigies of leaders from ruling government to symbolise the inefficiency in making cities safe. There were panel discussions, signature campaigns, and skit competitions held in different universities of Mumbai.

> As a way to make Bombay crowds associate with the Delhi rape case, the communal violence of Bombay riots was talked about, and how women are vulnerable citing the Marine Drive rape case. In a way, personalising the issue — [to explain] that rape is not specific to Delhi but exists in Mumbai too — was a deliberate strategy to make Mumbai crowds join the protests.[82]

Veena Panocha

Other methods included wearing black clothes as a mark of protest, wearing a black cloth over one's mouth to do a silent protest,[83] and drafting a charter of demands to try and give some clear direction to the movement. Among innovative methods were social media-driven snap protests and the flash mob phenomenon, which sought to highlight violence against women. Stark imageries were used by youth groups — a few participants went without any warm clothes in the cold; others stood coated in mud to symbolise shame; some youths stood still, frozen to the spot in various poses, to highlight the trauma and injustice of acid attack victims. A notable feature of these acts was that these were done in social settings, and would be moving imageries in real life — moving from one site to another, addressing a large live audience.[84]

Spaces and Spread of the Movement

The spaces of protests in Delhi were scattered. These included India Gate; outside the then Chief Minister Sheila Dikshit's residence; Raisina Hill[85]; Munirka crossing; Delhi University; Jantar Mantar; Vasant Vihar police station; outside Safdarjung Hospital, where the victim was hospitalised[86]; outside the residence of the ruling Congress party's residence; Vijay Chowk; shopping malls; and city squares[87]. In all these places, multiple candle-lit vigils were held, human chains were formed, and slogans were raised from time to time. Vijay Chowk and Jantar Mantar were considered the epicentre for this protest. In Greater Noida, hundreds of residents held a condolence meet at a central crossroad at Pari Chowk. There were similar central points in Mumbai (Shivaji Park) and Bangalore (Freedom Park) even as the protests spread to residential areas, poorer colonies, market places, outside bus stands, neighbourhood parks, and outside police stations. As Anshul Tiwari, a youth blog activist stated:

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82   Interview with Veena Panoocha , 18th July 2013

83   http://epaper.timesofindia.com/Default/Scripting/ArticleWin.asp?From=Archive&Source=Page&Skin=pastissues2&BaseHref=CAP/2012/12/23&PageLabel=1&EntityId=Ar00100&ViewMode=HTML

84   http://epaper.timesofindia.com/Default/Scripting/ArticleWin.asp?From=Archive&Source=Page&Skin=pastissues2&BaseHref=CAP/2012/12/23&PageLabel=1&EntityId=Ar00100&ViewMode=HTML

85   http://epaper.timesofindia.com/Default/Scripting/ArticleWin.asp?From=Archive&Source=Page&Skin=pastissues2&BaseHref=CAP/2012/12/22&PageLabel=7&EntityId=Ar00700&ViewMode=HTML

86   http://epaper.timesofindia.com/Default/Scripting/ArticleWin.asp?From=Archive&Source=Page&Skin=pastissues2&BaseHref=CAP/2012/12/21&PageLabel=6&EntityId=Ar00601&ViewMode=HTML

87   http://epaper.timesofindia.com/Default/Scripting/ArticleWin.asp?From=Archive&Source=Page&Skin=pastissues2&BaseHref=CAP/2012/12/23&PageLabel=6&EntityId=Ar00600&ViewMode=HTML

> *I did not go personally but our team members were protesting at different sites. I was channelising the opinions that were coming in social media. The protests happened everywhere in Delhi, Bangalore, Jaipur, and Pune. My friends were involved in Bombay and Gurgaon. People were protesting and at the same time sending contents and pictures from all these places, and I could see that spread of the protest was everywhere.[88]*

The Language and Rhetoric of the Movement

The primary syntax that becomes visible through the rape protests is the need for a quick fix to solve women's safety issues. The rhetoric of capital punishment or punishment to the rapist, which acts as a deterrent, was doing the rounds. Many just wanted a speedy resolution of the case. There were human rights activists who cried foul over the people's demand for a death penalty and politicians who made the most of the occasion to make an appearance.[89] The primary demands that were placed through these protests were harsher punishment, better patrolling, and fast track courts. The 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 sensitisation 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[90].

Role of Communication Technologies
Media and Social Media

Media Much of the public debate around this issue — including in the electronic and print media — centres on possible institutional remedies such as ensuring public security for women through better policing, crafting better legislation, plugging legal loopholes in rape laws, demanding sensitivity and response from politicians and Parliament, and using the death penalty as a deterrent to rape. Old Media (print and electronic) put 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 treatment of content, and immersed themselves in the crowds — mikes on, cameras rolling, and pens at the ready. Take, for instance, the discourse on capital punishment and chemical castration for all rapists that emerged almost immediately after the incident. It was first raised in television studios before finding easy acceptance among the protesters. Once voiced in the street, it was taken by television anchors (not so much by newspaper commentators) as evidence of social consensus on the issue.

Social Media In this protest, the power of social media has been crucial. In this movement without leaders, any organised structure, or any pre-determined plan, mobilisation happened via New Media, specifically social media. The net-savvy population contacted each other through various social networking sites. The call — asking friends, friends of friends, and all others to protest — was short but powerful. Mobilisation on social media happened via various platforms. On Twitter, groups mobilised support under hashtags such as

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88 Interview with Anshul Tiwari, dated 28th August, 2013
89 http://epaper.timesofindia.com/Default/Scripting/ArticleWin.asp?From=Archive&Source=Page&Skin=pastissues2&BaseHref=C AP/2012/12/23&PageLabel=6&EntityId=Ar00600&ViewMode=HTML
90 http://epaper.timesofindia.com/Default/Scripting/ArticleWin.asp?From=Archive&Source=Page&Skin=pastissues2&BaseHref=C AP/2012/12/26&PageLabel=4&EntityId=Ar00400&ViewMode=HTML

#theekhai and #stopthisshame and lists such as Anonymous India, Centre of Right, India against Corruption, and Aam Aadmi Party (to name a few). On Facebook, groups like Nightwalkers, Safe Delhi for Women, and Citizens Collective against Sexual Assault called for and organised protests regularly. Interestingly, in the current protests, media presence did not ensure coverage of everything that happened. Rather, it was social media that acted as an organism with a million tongues and twice as many eyes; the accounts we heard on social media about police brutality and the arrest of some young protesters were largely missed by traditional media.

Sunil Abraham, executive director of the Bangalore-based Centre for Internet and Society, cautions against being overly technologically deterministic.

While the anti-corruption movement ran on a sophisticated social media strategy and campaign, the ongoing anti-rape protests have no single organiser or banner — just a message that resonates.

Further, Abraham points out close linkages between the internet, text messages, social media, and mainstream media. 'These channels leak into each other and the causal connection becomes unclear', he says. In her article *Anxieties in the Republic: Media Metamorphosis and Popular Protest*, Pamela Philippose writes that the public rage following the gang rape of a young woman in Delhi in December 2012 was a transformative moment for the media. As the government tried clumsily to deal with the public outcry, the mainstream or Old Media of print and television blended with New Media (predominantly the social networking sites) to determine the agenda. To consider this, we need to recognise that the mainstream media — sometimes termed the corporate media, given their close proximity to market forces — do not generally by themselves actually threaten the status quo. This is primarily because they perceive their own survival as crucially hinged to the stability of existing systems and — unless the ruling class is actually undermining that status quo — they see no reason to shake unduly the pillars of society.

> The media and social media acted as a catalyst to get people out, although I do believe that the media did not do a proper job. They could have set the agenda tight. The media has no basic idea of the gender issue; so, rather than talking about patriarchy, they were discussing punishment.[91]
>
> Anshul Tiwari

Who was 'In' and Who was 'Out' of these Protests

Although the lower middle class participated in the protest, most of the crowd was middle class and educated. Here is an excerpt from a post on the Kafila blog.

> It is a young crowd within the protests — students, young men, and women in their 20s, a smattering of slightly older women there to show their solidarity — and it is a large crowd, about a thousand strong at the Hill itself. There are two small knots representing students' political organisations but, otherwise, many of the people here today are drawn together only by their anger. Broadly, there seem to be three kinds of people at these venues — student left-wing and right-wing groups who know exactly what their politics is; unaffiliated individuals who just turn up alone; and small NGOs, women's groups, and groups like the AAP. More women participated than men, although men were present in high numbers.

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91   Interview with Anshul Tiwari, dated 28th August 2013

Protests and Their Ideology (or lack of it)

One can draw an underlying theme through the protest — of extreme emotional reaction and not any particular ideology. The protests were non-political unlike in the Anna movement, where many were seen with a clear political agenda. Young, overwhelmingly middle class people — who are often dismissed as apolitical — took on the state and mounted an onslaught against the sort of criminality that is periodically let loose.

> Because a middle class woman's honour was jeopardised ... one has to understand that the middle class is aspirational; so, when someone tries to hijack that aspiration, an upsurge of sorts will happen. Well, in the corruption movement of today, what is noticed is that *bijli, sadak*, and education reproduction were mainstay for middle class status but now not just subsistence but also children doing better than a parent is doing, So not just survival but, there is new discourse of citizenship which is emerging.[92]

Surinder Singh Jodka

Resources and Funding

Those who participated in the protests provided most of the financing — students from JNU, Delhi University, and Jamia Millia Islamia; women's rights activists; and residents[93]. The others who organised protests (AAP, Sri Sri Ravi Shankar Foundation) used their own personal funding system to mobilise and call people. Most funding was voluntary; and since social media was the genesis of the protest, the protesters were asked to get their own banners, ply cards, etc.

> Within our hostel, I spoke to some of my friends and made posters. We just painted slogans on old newspaper sheets — 'We want justice', 'Rape cannot go on in the national capital', 'Our body, our right'. We stuck these slogans onto cardboard. Being in hostels, we always stock cardboard boxes. So, we carried cardboard posters when we went for the protest. As such, finances were not required; we just pooled in money.[94]

Avipsha Das, Delhi University student

> The anti-rape protest had its own funding. People gave their time, and that is what in today's time and age became critical. Well, I believe it was a horizontal leadership. Anyone who wanted to speak got a chance. Unlike in the Anna movement, there was no centralised leadership. Many feminist groups who spoke during the anti-rape protests work in a non-hierarchal way. What was happening in these protests was street education. There was no stage set, and there was no one individual people had to look up to, which was a lot more liberating then an orchestrated protest. Hence, funding was non-corporate, and took place at a very voluntary, individual level.[95]

Suneeta Dhar

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92   Interview with Surinder Singh Jodka, 26th August 2013
93   http://epaper.timesofindia.com/Default/Scripting/ArticleWin.asp?From=Archive&Source=Page&Skin=pastissues2&BaseHref=C
      AP/2012/12/19&PageLabel=6&EntityId=Ar00601&ViewMode=HTM
94   Interview with Avipsha Das, 26th June, 2013
95   Interview with Suneeta Dhar, 30th August, 2013

Response of Developmental Civil Society

In his article *Rage and Helplessness*,[96] Pratap Bhanu Mehta writes that the protests in Delhi are generating two sorts 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 government for what is, in fact, a deep social problem. But this protest is also more than about rape. It is now an open, generalised, and largely justified contempt of the state.

In her article *From Rage to Movement*, Neera Chandhoke writes that civil society activists did not seek state power; they sought to hold states to the promises of the law. States seldom deliver; they have to be forced to do so by collective action. This was political theatre at its best. Young people belonging overwhelmingly to the middle class and often dismissed as apolitical took on the state and mounted an onslaught against the sort of criminality that is periodically let loose against women on Delhi's streets. These young people were not trying to topple the state, or mount an insurrection. They wanted to foreground an obvious claim: women's bodies are theirs alone. They were also trying to compel the state to do what it is supposed to do — provide protection to people who go about their daily business. This is the minimum a state should be doing if it wants to claim the credentials of democracy.[97]

A significant feature that emerged from the anti-rape protests is that when it came to middle class protesters, protesting on the urban street under the media glare, where leadership is amorphous, the government and the police were clueless on how to respond, and who to negotiate with.

One reason for discomfort over the anti-rape protest was that it did not adequately address the socio-cultural roots of women's sexual subordination, and fell short of questioning the use of sexual humiliation of women by the state, such as by the armed forces in conflict zones or by police forces in situations of communal and caste violence.[98]

Response of the State to the Movement

The reaction of the state towards the movements reflects the poverty of its perspective. To lathi-charge a largely non-violent protest several times and then to clamp prohibitory orders to prevent the protests from taking place is an act of violent suppression, and comes from an ingrained instinct to convert the protest into the problem.[99] The criticism went that the government had left it to the law and order machinery to deal with genuine outrage. Also, after the anti-rape protests, there has come about a political consensus on tightening rape laws. In view of the widespread protests, governments in the centre and various states announced several steps to ensure women's safety. On 22 December 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.[100] On 3 February 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.[101]

96   Indian Express, December 26, 2012
97   http://www.financialexpress.com/news/from-rage-to-movement/1051542/0
98   State of the Nation , http://www.frontline.in/cover-story/state-of-the-nation/article4282563.ece
99   http://epaper.timesofindia.com/Default/Scripting/ArticleWin.asp?From=Archive&Source=Page&Skin=pastissues2&BaseHref=CAP/2012/12/24&PageLabel=4&EntityId=Ar00400&ViewMode=HTML
100   http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/justice-verma-committee-begins-work-seeks-public-comments/article4235212.ece
101   http://www.indianexpress.com/news/president-pranab-mukherjee-promulgates-ordinance-on-crime-against-women/1068720/ and http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/president-signs-ordinance-to-effect-changes-in-laws-against-sexual-crimes/1/248740.html

> The political class was missing, by which they lost political mileage. What happened in the Nirbhaya case is that she wanted to live, which removed the stigma attached with rape. That spirit catalysed people. Everyone — the government, institutions, and people — felt that they had failed. Public debate centred on capital punishment and dealing with juvenile criminals. Yet, the broader system of patriarchy and gender-based discrimination was not spoken about, which is where the government fails all the time. The government wants to do things in bits and pieces, but what is needed to be done is to radically shift the structure of knowledge and institutions. Rape is not just an isolated event, but involves issues of equality, discrimination, and power. The government needs to understand these.[102]

Suneeta Dhar

Response of Other Stakeholders
Academia and Business

> The protests are bound to be different because they are an assertion of the individual and not a political group. It is not a statement of a party but an assertion of an individual. People, ... particularly women, are angry and articulating this anger. ... This is not a generalised statement given by a political party. It is a personal statement by citizens for their city. And it is political parties and MPs who look out of place.[103]

Shiv Vishwanathan, sociologist

Rahul Roy writes, on the other hand, that an important feature of the recent protests against rape has been the public debate on masculinities. What does it mean to be a man? How is this identity of man created and sustained? What is its function in our social relations? These questions have suddenly been foregrounded and opened a door to addressing a crucial aspect of patriarchy and injustice.[104]

Dalit Perspective

In his article *Delhi Gang Rape Case: Some uncomfortable Questions*[105], Anand Teltumbde wrote that Dalits who suffer alone when their daughters are raped and murdered with impunity are annoyed by this sudden burst of concern for rape as though it was some strange occurrence in the country. They poured out their anger in their blogs and e-mail groups asking why all those candle bearers did not shed a single tear over the rape and murder of Surekha and Priyanka Bhotmange committed in a festive mode by villagers in Khairlanji. Secondly, the media may be accused of discrimination against Dalits, but this can be explained in terms of its business interests. Fundamentally, the media today is a business, and business logic would not favour Dalit news, as they neither constitute its readership or viewership nor have sensational value to attract the attention of the larger society. From the University of Leeds, Gould adds that these political movements — specifically, these anti-rape protests, were largely driven by urban middle-class interests. They did not reflect the needs of the rural poor, like the Dalits, who have very different concerns. Washington University's Chandra agrees that the movement galvanising India is in no way a movement that protests the problems faced by Dalit women. Thus, even in the heady atmosphere of a protest campaign that may change history in the world's biggest democracy, the Dalits are again locked out.[106]

102   Interview with Suneeta Dhar, 30th Aug, 2013

103   http://epaper.timesofindia.com/Default/Scripting/ArticleWin.asp?From=Archive&Source=Page&Skin=pastissues2&BaseHref=CAP/2012/12/20&PageLabel=11&EntityId=Ar01101&ViewMode=HTML

104   Roy, Rahul (2013) Men and Their LakshmanRekha. Economic & Political Weekly February 23, 2013 volxlviiI no 8

105   Teltumbde Anand , Delhi Gang Rape CaseSome Uncomfortable QuestionsEconomic& Political Weekly February 9, 2013 vol xlviii no 6

106   http://roundtableindia.co.in/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=6140:delhi-gang-rape-protests-what-about-the-sex-crimes-against-untouchable-women&catid=61&Itemid=56

Responses of Key Political Parties

Lok Sabha Opposition Leader Sushma Swaraj said the rapists should be hanged.[107] Sonia Gandhi visited the Safdarjung Hospital and met doctors on duty in the anesthesia and surgery departments for an update on the woman's health.[108] Bahujan Samaj Party chief Mayawati said that proper investigation was required, and that action should be so strict that no one would dare to act in such a manner again.[109] Jaya Bachchan said that she was terribly disturbed over the incident; she felt ashamed for feeling helpless and sitting in the House.[110] Lok Sabha Speaker Meira Kumar told reporters a new law must be passed to ensure the safety of women. She went on to say: The laws at present are not enough, we need stricter laws.[111] The AAP representative had this to say.

> AAP has decided to set up Women's Security Forces (WSF) in every college and Vidhan Sabha of Delhi. The functions of this Force would be as under:
>
> 1. If the police fails to take cognisance in matters of crimes against women, the WSF would first try to engage with Delhi Police. If the Delhi Police fails to take necessary action, WSF would create pressure on the police by staging dharnas and protests.
>
> 2. If any victim needs medical attention, WSF would facilitate the victim's admission to a hospital, which is equipped to handle such cases.
>
> This same initiative will be taken up in other states too with consultation from our state volunteers.[112]

Impact Assessment and Analysis

The anti-rape protest played a critical role in creating a political will on the issue of violence against women, and centrestaged the issue at the societal and political level as never before. It brought to the fore a new generation of young, urban, middle class women, and men asserting their right to 'fearless freedom' — their freedom to be out at any time of the day or night, to wear what they wanted, and their right to live without fear of violence. While such a discourse in the past had been confined to feminist groups, this seemed to have become the popular slogan in the protest.

In assessing the role of the media in the anti-rape protests, a contradictory tendency could can be seen. On one end, the media is implicated in objectification of women and their bodies, and on the other end it became the shrill voice of the anti-rape protest. At the level of political leadership, there was a failure to grasp the 'anger' that seemed to be brewing against an unaccountable government, the police. As pointed out by Santosh Desai,

> The problem cannot be defined through the filter of rape alone; it is a much larger issue that involves the way in which women are viewed and responded to. The films that we see, the celebrities we ogle, the thrall of consumerist bodies in slow motion, are all crackling with pornographic electricity. The neat and largely imagined distinction between the criminal type and the law-abiding citizen has blurred significantly. The sense that anyone can be the next murderer or rapist serves to create a widespread sense of insecurity. Conversely, the policing mechanism, far from becoming available to all, is retreating into becoming the private army of the powerful.[113]

107   http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-india-20765869
108   http://www.indianexpress.com/news/delhi-gangrape-shakes-parliament--sushma-swaraj-others-seek-death-penalty/1047359/
109   http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-india-20765869
110   http://www.indianexpress.com/news/delhi-gangrape-shakes-parliament--sushma-swaraj-others-seek-death-penalty/1047359/
111   http://www.dnaindia.com/india/1779260/report-delhi-gang-rape-need-stronger-laws-says-meira-kumar
112   Interview with AAP representative, 28th June 2013
113   Santosh Desai, Beyond Anger, http://epaper.timesofindia.com/Default/Scripting/ArticleWin.asp?From=Archive&Source=Page&Skin=pastissues2&BaseHref=CAP/2012/12/24&PageLabel=4&EntityId=Ar00400&ViewMode=HTML

More than anything, the anti-rape protests show that popular aspirations have run ahead, and the government structure is failing to keep up with these changes. As Sayeeda Hameed, a women's rights activist and member of the Planning Commission, points out,

> The silent treatment just does not work with people in the digitally connected world. Social networks, multiple TV channels, mobile phone updates are tools that did not exist in India two decades ago. Their penetration has been growing, and will continue to grow in the coming few years. People expect rapid, direct, relevant, and heartfelt communication from people in charge. These expectations rise in times of a crisis, which the nation has seen aplenty in the recent past. Whether it is rampant corruption, record inflation or the latest, the safety of citizens, the Gandhis have not answered any questions. This has riled the educated middle classes.' [114]

114 http://epaper.timesofindia.com/Default/Scripting/ArticleWin.asp?From=Archive&Source=Page&Skin=pastissues2&BaseHref=C AP/2012/12/29&PageLabel=18&EntityId=Ar01800&ViewMode=HTML

5. The Rise of the Aam Aadmi Party and the Emergence of a 'New' Politics of the Urban

Aam Admi Party: The Initial Journey

> I did not start out wanting to contest an election. For two years, we kept asking the UPA government for just one thing: to pass the Lokpal Bill. They said, if you want one, why don't you enter Parliament and pass the Bill yourself.

Arvind Kejriwal, Delhi Election Rally[115]

The Aam Aadmi Party (hereafter referred to as the AAP) emerged from the Jan Lokpal/anti-corruption movement. By mid-June 2012, a faction within Team Anna felt that the movement had reached a crossroad—it faced a possible fade-out on the ground and an unresponsive government. Rather than continue with the protests for strong anti-corruption legislation, a section within Team Anna took the strategic decision to enter politics by forming a political party. Amidst internal differences, the pro-joining politics faction moved out of the civil society fold and, on 12 October 2012, launched a new political party, AAP. At its launch at the Constitutional Club in Delhi, Arvind Kejriwal declared: 'Our politics is not for power, we want power to change the politics. We did not give up the Jan Lokpal movement to gain political power, but we have taken the movement forward through the political route now because change can only come through politics.' The key stated aim of AAP was to change the system, not just the government.

Elections and mainstream politics in India have long been driven by money and muscle power on the one hand, and by caste, religion, and regional or other primordial identities on the other. Given that, to build an alternative politics from scratch that transcended these barriers was a huge challenge. Moreover, the internal differences within Team Anna had also cast its shadows on the new party, with Anna, the biggest icon of the movement, distancing himself from the AAP. Nevertheless, the APP was able to hold some of the energy and goodwill generated during the anti-corruption movement and, over time, build on it. The biggest advantage, however, was the vacuum that exists in democratic politics in contemporary India. The timing for a new party could not have been better. People's alienation with the political class in contemporary India is at an all-time high; the political discourse on corruption has eroded the legitimacy of most institutions and political parties; and there is a youthful population, representing a new demography in urban India that is ready to go beyond the identity politics that has been dominant since the 1980s. As Yogendra Yadav (then still outside the AAP) argued at the time of the AAP's founding, the topic of corruption had become a political discourse and, for once, money would not be able to play a role in this discourse. For the young political generation that felt sidelined by corruption, this was a defining moment.[116] Moreover, the current context of rising inequality and high inflation also worked to ensure that the space for an alternative political formation was not just limited to the youth and university campuses, but spread much wider[117]. As sociologist Shiv Vishwanathan suggests, the space and rise of the AAP was driven by a new kind of marginality that is emerging both in urban and rural areas.[118]

Structure and Leadership of the AAP

As a movement turned into a political party, and positioned itself as different from others, the AAP sought to build its structure without a party high command and base it on a bottom-to-top decision-making model, openness, and transparency.

The AAP structure comprises five levels — primary, block, district, state, and national, each with a general

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115   Revati Laul, The Aam Aadmi Part: The Incorruptibles? *Tehelka*, Issue 39 Volume 10, 2013-09-28

116   Yogendra Yadav, Cited in Tripathi and V. Ramakrishnan, The Game Changer, Frontline, http://www.frontline.in/cover-story/the-game-changer/article5544474.ece

117   Mayank Mishra, AAP rising fuelled by growing inequality, high inflation, Buisness Standard, New Delhi, January 27, 2014.

118   ibid

council and an executive body. The council members elect the executive body, and also hold the power to recall it. At the national level, along with the National Council and National Executive, a National Political Affairs Committee has also been constituted to formulate substantive issues of policies. Similar subdivisions exist at the state and district level, with a Block Council and Primary Unit at the grassroots. The AAP also lays down strict parameters for itself. No two members of the same family can contest on AAP tickets or become members of executive bodies. Candidates for elections are to be selected by people from the area, and there will be no buying involved. Through a screening process, the party will ensure that no one with a criminal record or proven corruption charges will stand for elections from the party.[119]

The party executive comprises representation of people from diverse backgrounds and different regions of India. Among them are those who had been involved in social activisms, students' movements, academics, journalists, engineers, finance professionals, lawyers, women's groups, and farmers' groups. Some members of the party executive had been part of the Jan Lokpal and anti-corruption movement, such as Arvind Kejriwal; Manish Sisodia; Prashant Bhushan; Kumar Vishwas; Sanjay Singh; Gopal Rai; Pankaj Gupta; Naveen Jaihind; Dinesh Waghela; Shazia Ilmi; and Mayank Gandhi. There are others who joined when the party was founded, after the split with Team Anna. This includes Yogendra Yadav, Ajit Jha (professor at Delhi University and associated with Samajwadi Jan Parishad, a political party); Christina Samy, involved in people's struggle and initiator of a women's political party, Women's Front which had been active at the local panchayat level in Tamil Nadu; Anand Kumar, professor in Jawaharlal University; Habung Pyang, erstwhile Information Commissioner from Arunachal Pradesh; Yogesh Dhahita, farmers' leader from Western Uttar Pradesh; Ashok Aggarwal, social worker, active in addressing health and education for marginalised sections, Subhash Ware, a social activist and president of Chatrabharati Maharashtra; Krishnakant Sevada, a social activist from Rajasthan; Professor Rakesh Sinha, a ceramic engineer by profession who had also been a social activist; and Prem Singh Pahari, a political activist.

Ideology (or lack of it)

Ideologically, the AAP includes three broad streams (a cross over from the anti-corruption movement). One stream is anti-politics and articulates the position that all politicians are corrupt and the solution lies in technocracy. Second is the anti-Congress stream, which feels the need to be closer to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Third, an alternative politics stream which identifies with people's struggle and movements. However, the ideology of the AAP, as stated by its political leadership, is beyond the 'isms' of the 20th century. According to one of its leaders who did not want to be named, the party was ideologically fuzzy by design, so that it could attract well-meaning people committed to the larger well-being of society from everywhere.[120] Other leaders have stated that the AAP does not adhere to any given ideology from a considered understanding that 'isms' are ideological packages that are highly stylised, pre-determined, and pose serious limitations for building a holistic political alternative which can respond to the changing times.[121]

Instead of ideology, AAP had put forward four convictions, or its defining principles. The first is *Swaraj* (self rule) of devolving power, ensuring direct participation of the people, and taking decision making closer to the people. Second, Aam Aadmi or the Common Man First, of drafting policies with the last person or most vulnerable person in mind. Third, zero tolerance of majoritarianism of any kind; hence, no politics of caste, class, or religion. Fourth, the Constitution, as the frame of reference for justice, equity, and diversity.

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119   How We Are Different, AAP website, http://www.aamaadmiparty.org/page/how-are-we-different

120   Cited in Game Changer, Frontline, p. 6

121   Yogendra Yadav, as AAP spokesperson, AAP does not believe in any -isms, says Yogendra Yadav,14th. Jan.2014, http://www.livemint.com/Politics/1bZ8xwxxvBEixvx3DzgcRK/AAP-does-not-believe-in-any-isms-says-Yogendra-Yadav.html

However, critics point out that the problem with the 'no ideology' discourse being put forward by the AAP is that it papers over power hierarchies and structures, such as gender and caste, that underlie Indian society. Rather than ideology, AAP is seeking to appeal to the moral sense. Such an approach, according to Prabhat Patnaik can be of instrumental usefulness in the short run, but dangerous in the longer run. Here, Patnaik points out the danger of the discourse on morality easily slipping into a kind of Talibanisation. Besides, explaining all social ills in terms of corruption without addressing structures that create it is to trivialise the problem. For instance, caste, hunger, poverty, or inflation cannot be wished away by a technocratic 'do good' approach, for structures are not malleable and resist transformation.[122]

Strategy and Methods

The AAP strategy has been multipronged, with a keen recognition of the fact that electoral politics in India is a complex process, which involves cross-sections of people and where the 'masses 'play a far more decisive role. The first prong of the strategy, thereby, has been to aim for cross-sectional mobilisation — of strengthening its middle class base as well as rigorous efforts at expanding among the poor (urban poor as of now) — reflected in its selection of the *jhadu*, or broom, as the party symbol. Second, drawing from the first, it has sought to keep (perhaps deliberately) its ideology fuzzy. The third prong is to use generic issues that could work as glue to bring disparate groups together. Corruption is the big anchor point here, and had proved to be successful in the anti-corruption movement. To further expand the base of the party in urban India, AAP has also taken up other 'glue' issues, such as price rise, *bijli-paani* (electricity, water), and women's safety, that cut across the class divide. In Delhi, the AAP launched the *bijli-paani satyagraha* and carried out dramatic protests, which included burning electricity bills and restoring power to poor households whose electricity connection had been cut off by the service providers. The issue of irregularities and privatisation of electricity and water have in the last few years seen protests by middle-class Resident Welfare Associations (RWA). Issues of its inaccessibility and increasing cost have also been a huge concern for the urban poor, as well as the middle classes. Fourth, the AAP used the media and social media to remain visible, audible, and project itself as a party that was different from the existing corrupt parties — particularly, the Congress Party in power at the centre and in Delhi, and the BJP. Initially, the AAP carried out a series of sensational exposès in front of the media and camera — of scams involving Congress chairperson Sonia Gandhi's son-in-law, Robert Vadra; former BJP president Nitin Gadkari; Union Minister Salman Khurshid; and the corporate group of the Ambanis. Through this, they sought to highlight that the 'use of power for money and money for power' was intrinsic to both the Congress Party and the BJP; that crony capitalism had taken deep root in the system; and the person at the receiving end was the Common Man or the Aam Aadmi. This for a while kept the AAP and its struggle against corruption in the media limelight and, through it, in the public imagination. However, the limitation of such a strategy became evident when — after the exposè on the powerful industrialist Mukesh Ambani[123] on 9 November 2012 — the AAP suddenly disappeared from the headlines of the corporate media and television.

Among the most noteworthy of the AAP strategy is its outreach programme and its setting up of a network of volunteers and supporters (consolidating from the anti-corruption movement as well as expanding its volunteer network) and bringing in IT engineers and management professionals in large numbers from India and from across the globe, along with students and social activists. The AAP built a robust outreach strategy and organised a working committee. Volunteers were organised into a beehive of party cells across 250 districts in the country to reach a cross-section of people directly. By the end of December 2013, the AAP outreach programme across the country had helped it set up 309 district committees, and carry out an extensive drive for support and new units.

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122   Prabhat Patnaik, Rule by messiahs, Indian Express, New Delhi | January 08, 2014 04:52
123   AAP leaders have alleged this was under the pressure from the Ambani group. Notably, the Ambani group enjoys tremendous economic-political-media control.

Contesting Delhi Assembly

In October 2013, the Election Commission announced elections for the Assembly in five states[124]. A decision was taken by the AAP to concentrate only on Delhi and develop a comprehensive and well-thought-out strategy rather than spreading out thinly in all the five states. As Pankaj Pushkar, a senior party leader, pointed out, 'We did not have the same kind of traction in other states at that point of time, but even if we had we would not have rushed in.' The strategy for Delhi was to work with politics of scale, and contest all seats instead of just a few. The second was to mobilise cross-sections of people with the idea of 'citizen' politics instead of identity politics, or any specific ideology, and to focus on non-sectarian issues such as livelihood, basic amenities, and corruption. Third was to raise public money, and make it transparent by displaying the details of the donations on the AAP website (something that no political party had done). A limit was also set on the expenditure for the elections, at Rs 20 crores. Once this amount was raised, the party stopped taking further donations. This proved critical for the AAP — not only in raising its bar on the moral scale but also in building a sense of ownership among the contributors. Besides financial resources, many well placed IT and management professionals, academics, students, and social workers gave up their jobs or took time off to do voluntary work for the AAP during the elections.

Once the process started, Delhi was divided into blocks and wards, where the party set up more than 300 offices. The office spaces were donated by supporters and volunteers. However, the biggest starting challenge was to find suitable candidates. Guidelines were set, and candidates chosen by considering a person's loyalty to the party, and carefully checking at the local level their track record on issues of corruption and honesty and that they did not face any serious character charges; were interested in politics; had a connect with the locals; had done public service; and were willing to do what it takes to contest an election using their own resources. It was also decided that Arvind Kejriwal would take the big challenge of contesting against the sitting Chief Minister of Delhi, Sheila Dixit.

To manage limited funds, the AAP innovated, such as by asking supporters to lend the outer walls of their houses as spaces for putting up posters. To ensure that their posters were not torn down by opposition parties, as well as to create a greater sense of ownership, each hoarding carried the individual face of the person whose house it was stuck on, alongside that of Arvind Kejriwal's. Now that the AAP was going into election mode, it became imperative for the party to clearly spell out what it stood for on socio-political issues. For this, a Political Affairs Committee was formed, which set out the four immovable principles of AAP (discussed above).

Signs that AAP would possibly make a small dent in Delhi Elections began to show up in opinion polls in November 2013. However, when the election results were out, the results were stunning. Barely 14 months since its formation, the new party had won 28 seats and gained almost 30 per cent of the popular vote. Not only had the AAP decimated the ruling Congress Party (eight seats) and its Chief Minister for last 15 years in Delhi, it also halted what would have otherwise been a sure electoral win for the biggest opposition party (BJP, 33 seats). In an Assembly with a total of 70 seats, this was nowhere near the midway mark needed to form a government, but the verdict spoke of a huge wave in its favour. The only other comparable storming to power by a complete outsider in Indian electoral history is perhaps that of the Telugu Desam Party, which with an equally new and inexperienced leadership broke the Congress bastion in Andhra Pradesh in 1983 within nine months of its formation. The AAP has also defied the middle-class tag associated with its origin in the anti-corruption movement and drew support from a cross-section of voters in Delhi — its biggest support coming from jhuggi jhopdi (JJ) clusters and resettlement and unauthorised colonies. On 28 December 2013, after the BJP refused to form the government, the AAP formed a minority government in the hung Assembly, with what Sheila Dikshit describes as 'not unconditional support' from the Indian National Congress.

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124   National Capital Territory of Delhi and the States of Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Mizoram

Emergence of a New Politics

Indeed, by any standard, the AAP's performance on the electoral register has been sensational. However, its electoral victory indicates deeper fundamental shifts, which deserve to be flagged, as they open new possibilities in politics and democracy.

The Rise of Direct Democracy

The biggest story emanating from the rise of the AAP is that of direct democracy. Ever since the Lokpal/anti-corruption movement, the debate on representative democracy had been on. Indeed, scripted in the birthing of AAPs were two stories. One was of citizens running up against the limits of representative democracy, and a growing perception among large sections that that it offered no real alternatives beyond equally corrupt political parties to choose from every five years. Second, of demands being made on activists of the anti-corruption movement to enter the system of representative democracy to prove their legitimacy. As the AAP legitimises itself through the tests of representation, it also carries forth the demand for radicalising democracy — of entering the structures of representative democracy and yet making it more direct. The call is clearly for greater imagination in thinking of ways and mechanisms to bring in citizens in political processes and decision making, and of making the third tenet of democracy — 'of the people' — real.

A New Language of Politics

Politics in India has for long worked on the lines of caste, religion, regional and other identities. Politics has also been about mobilisation along collective bonds and collective interests that emerge out of the commonality of experience and location in the world. The AAP phenomenon represents the rise of a new grammar of politics — that of the individual citizen or the aam aadmi. The 'aam aadmi' has no particular identity (save perhaps Indian) or any political allegiance, and comes from different walks of life, class, religion, gender, and political ideology. The 'aam aadmi'/citizen is an individual but does not act for the furtherance of any individual or located interest. The citizen speaks directly and represents no one and yet represents everyone. Aided by the mainstream and the social media, the citizen is being galvanised not by political ideology but by an emotional striving to act in ways that feel morally right. Such ways include stepping into the street to protest, giving up their lucrative jobs and volunteer, donating money to end corruption, and entering the formal arena of politics. The key driver here seems to be of being the change, cleaning the system, and changing India. Significantly, the citizen is operating not from any ideological universe but a moral universe. From this moral universe, s/he is speaking to power; seizing power from the more powerful political elite; and seeking to create, and ushering in, morality in the rough world of politics. In this moral universe, appearing non-corrupt has suddenly become important; winning elections on limited white money has become possible; and, suddenly, horse-trading to form a government in Delhi has become unthinkable.

The Emerging Politics of the Urban

The rise of the AAP also indicates the rise of a different politics of the urban. The city squares and streets (more so in Delhi) have been the epicentre of protests for a while now. What initially began as middle-class protests has been getting more amorphous and street-like, drawing in cross-sections of the urban population, and shaping a larger politics of the urban. This is hardly surprising because, at one level, the megacities and their governance are undergoing massive change. Public services provided by the liberal state are being outsourced, as is the governance of megacities, to Public-Private Partnership, and neither

the middle class nor the poor know who to hold accountable — the public body or the private player. Megacities projected to grow as dazzling world cities have been drawing large numbers of people — poor migrants, students, professional migrants, workers — and yet these cities are simultaneously becoming inaccessible, unaffordable, and unsafe and offering fewer prospects and jobs. No one seems answerable for corruption or for any failure. The state is becoming unreachable as it were. What we are witnessing, then, is anger that cuts across sections, and is erupting as the amorphous politics on the urban street. Significantly, the urban street is also at the heart of the ICT revolution — in a web of satellite television, social media, the internet, mobile phones, and 'viral' information. This revolution enables the revolt of the citizen, makes it more dazzling and spreads it, and now seems to be crafting a space for a different kind of politics and, indeed, of political formations. It speaks in different voices, outside any political or common bond or interest; yet, the urban street allows for loose collectivisation.

Challenges

The rise of the AAP phenomenon, however, is not without its challenges. The first challenge is to translate all that it has imagined into practice. But the bigger challenge will perhaps come from what is also the AAP's biggest strength now — its amorphous politics, which allows for a loose collectivisation, at times of opposing projects. Such projects include the middle classes in Greater Kailash, the migrant workers in JJ colonies, young students in Delhi University, Khap Panchayat members, and people with varied political affiliations — from the Left-wing AISA activist to the supporter of Narendra Modi. Moreover, given that the AAP is predominantly a phenomenon of the urban, how it dialogues and relates with the vast rural hinterland and its many mutinies will also be critical. How the AAP wades through the murky reality of Indian politics is yet to be seen. But, for now, what is obvious is that both the liberal state and its representative democracy are in deep crisis. Although this is hardly news (to paraphrase Žižek), this seems to be that moment when the little boy has pointed out that the emperor is indeed naked.

Conclusion

We are at a critical moment in history. There is an unmistakable shift in power, and perhaps a new politics is emerging. We do not have a name for it yet or know which way it will go. Nevertheless, this new politics is shaping a new public, public sphere, rules of engagement, and modalities of social action — and influencing democracy in significant ways. This section broadly identifies the conceptual shifts taking place that have far-reaching implications for developmental civil society. These are put forth for reflection under four broad, overlapping themes: **(1)** faces; **(2)** spaces; **(3)** modalities of social action; and **(4)** politics.

Faces

From the initial anger on the street to the anger that propelled the AAP into power, upsurges in urban India are no longer confined to the middle classes; these have become multi-class. Though the primary activist base remains middle class (IT and management professionals, rights activists, teachers, students in universities), it has grown exponentially to include the lower middle class (urban poor, and working class auto rickshaw drivers, railway employees, tea shop vendors, tailors, workers in the informal sector, construction work, and migrant labourers). Many — but not all — protesters were young. Many young protesters, particularly in the later phases of the movements, were not of the 'new' middle class. They seemed to be more moved by a feeling of 'what was happening to India' than by ideology or by a sense of dystopia rather than any utopia. Sections of civil society — such as the National Alliance of People's Movements, women's groups, and various grassroots movements — sought to strategically engage by linking the politics of corruption with crony capitalism; lack of access to public services; inflation; dispossession; the feeling of not being represented by our rulers to unsafe cities; and human rights and, thus, became important faces of the protest. Significantly, while women, Dalits, and minorities did not initially participate in a big way, their participation expanded later, more so with the electoral politics of the AAP. However, although these groups have been stepping into the urban political space as 'aam aadmi'; they have not been articulating their politics as such (except in the anti-rape protests).

Spaces

In India, protests and movements have mostly had a rural base. While there have been street protests in urban India in the past, these contemporary protests were not confined to university campuses and students but happened also in residential neighbourhoods and across sections of people. This urban spatiality of these protests is critical in understanding. It is notable that these protests and events have unfolded in megacities where liberalisation has brought in complex transformation. There is something about these cities that helps make these protests 'spectacular', 'unruly', and difficult to control. They are in the web of satellite television and the internet, mobile, and digital technologies; they are the spaces where the neighbourhoods meet the global, and where multiple actors can step on the same street, and in contradiction with each other — the urban street allows for the assemblage of disparate actors.

Another important space of these contemporary movements has been cyberspace — platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, email groups, blogs amongst others. These provide individuals and groups a new space for plotting or taking social action and allow them to forge solidarity between and among themselves. Also significant is round-the-clock television commentary and circulation of images that mediate events as they happen, and project these as spectacular. In the process, they cobble together a connected public. Notably, the media — whether mainstream, television, or social — have not merely provided information, they have narrated emotional stories. Indeed, the emotional character of these movements needs to be highlighted and seen in conjunction with their popular character to understand how these connected the public emotionally.

The third significant point about these movements is that they are not about virtual activism (such as hacking or 'hacktivism'). The use of cyberspace and media in these protests has not been about escaping from the public space into the virtual. Rather, it is about claiming the public space. However, the public space that is emerging is far more hybrid than we have ever known it — where the cyberspace, media, and physical space overlap. This is unlike in the past when common issues or ideology or politics (be it on Dalit Rights, or Ram Mandir or other issues) brought activists on the streets to support or oppose. The politics of these protests is far more diffused today, as is the emerging political space. The success of

these movements is not simply about the organisational and technological skills of the activists but also about their ability to create a compelling sense of togetherness among disparate groups — irrespective of proximity and bonds. These movements demonstrate the power of emotional narration, and it is important to recognise this shift.

Modalities of Social Activism

When it comes to modalities of social action, there are a number of shifts that deserve flagging given their far-reaching implications.

One, there is a striving for directness — direct action, direct democracy, direct contact, without intermediaries, direct voicing of opinions. There seems to be a distrust of traditional ways of organising — of working with intermediaries and representation, sending delegation. Citizens want to speak directly to power; yet, this directness is mediated by television, social media, or by a core team of organisers (who in some way choreograph the spontaneity of movements) or by a manager of an electronic group (who initiates communication to build an emotional connectedness rather than simply informing the audience).

Second, in sharp contrast to the pyramid structure of the mobilisation model — where a mobiliser mobilises those who support or believe in the issue — these new movements represent a tendency towards 'collectivisation'. In these, the relationships among organiser, mobiliser, and communicator are flatter and diffused. Both the above points taken together suggest a contradictory tendency in the new movements. On one hand there is spontaneity, yet that spontaneity is organised and mediated; of leadership where organisation and communication become difficult to distinguish from each other. Who gives the call to the revolt is clear in some instances (such as the anti-corruption movement) but unclear in others (such as the anti-rape protest). In terms of modalities, then, important ethical questions arise: who is choreographing these upsurges where the leadership is not visible — the media, the corporations who control the media, or the people themselves — and who takes responsibility? Does an invisible, diffused leadership model allow for democratic protest, or can it tend towards a model where no one takes responsibility? To answer these questions, developmental civil society needs to have deeper conversations within itself.

Third, in terms of modality, a notable feature in these new forms of protest is the event itself. Unlike the protests and struggles typical of developmental civil society activism — where there is as much effort in the process and planning as in the event — the critical event, where disparate citizens assemble, is what produces the politics in contemporary protests. The event itself is the message.

Politics

What is emerging is not just another strain of new social movements or the return of conventional Leftist politics or large-scale civil society advocacy campaigns but a politics of chaos, or unruliness, unfolding in spaces outside state and civil society (similar in this respect to recent land struggles in Bhatta Parsool, Nandigram, and Singur). This emergent politics has ruptured the status quo, it is defying the rules of engagement — it is unclear if this emergent politics represents a quest for a progressive or inclusive political transformation. What is clear though is that that representative democracy is in a crisis, and that at its core, the new politics represents the demand for direct democracy. The latter is no doubt a challenging task. The first challenge here is to imagine the mechanics of its structures and how decision making can be taken to the lowest rung. However, given the immense work and thinking within and outside the development sector on participatory, local democracy, this is relatively the smaller challenge. The bigger challenge would be to

imagine the politics of direct democracy — where we can frame democracy around differences and dissent beyond the politics of minimum consensus and where we can negotiate directly (without representation). This is a new terrain, where we have little experience or resource.

This emerging politics seems to insist on a new grammar of politics — outside the politics of identity and ideology. This is another unfamiliar terrain that promises both possibilities and danger. Our activism and conversations have been along pre-set lines for long. First, the question of identity politics is a tricky one, for it has also been about assertion by marginal groups, given the deeply entrenched hierarchies of Indian society along lines of caste, gender, religion, the urban–rural divide, and vulnerabilities along various margins. This assertion is not complete yet. By embracing the universal idea of 'citizen' and seeking technocratic solution to political problems, are we papering over deep hierarchies? Or does the idea of 'citizen' represent the beginning of a far more radical politics?

Second, the politics of ideology appeals to the intellect and to consciousness. In India, the domain of ideology has been messy. Ideological parties and activism have been characterised by caste and gender hierarchy, just as identity politics has also been influenced by one ideology or another. This emergent politics reflects three tendencies at once: one towards technocratic solutions, reflected in the politics of anti-politics; another towards the right wing; and yet another in line with peoples' movements and struggles. What direction it will take is difficult to predict, but a complex urban politics — far more unruly than the neat tendencies described above — is being scripted and unfolding in a way we could not have predicted. One of the biggest challenges — and the one we are least prepared for — is to imagine a radical politics not limited to what we are most comfortable or fixated with. Perhaps, the need is to imagine a politics that lies outside our set frameworks but includes marginalised groups.

Centre for Democracy and Social Action (CDSA),
is a Knowledge – Action based initiative, that aims at bridging
the Knowledge-Practioner/Activism gap to innovate, build,
disseminate, and apply knowledge on issues that are
imperative for working of civil society.

Its key objective is to comprehend the changes unfolding in
the landscape of governance and institutions, and in the
landscape of social activism. It seeks to build knowledge to
strengthen civil society, and deepen democracy.