

Pillars of Social Organization

Lessons from the Farmers' Movement from a Lokavidya point of view

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In the present times capital, politics, technology and administration has so converged to tie down the humanity that it has become rather difficult to think transcending the limitations imposed by them. However, it is important, rather necessary, to make such efforts in the times of constantly increasing injustice, falsehood, indignity and exploitation in society. Such times are a result of tailoring the world, in particular ways by Europe and America in the preceding two and half centuries or so. Their philosophy, values, logic and methods of organization and practical behaviour, come together, to encircle and suppress our wisdom and creativity. They raise big hurdles on every path of initiative. The chief values of the French Revolution, mainly, Equality, Liberty and Fraternity became the basis of Democracy everywhere and even today they are the most respected values of social and political organization. It must be noted that the French Revolution, which was against the Aristocracy, settled in favour of the bourgeoisie and failed to secure the rights of the workers and ordinary people. This revolution opened the gateways for capitalism to emerge victorious all over the world. When Europe started its colonization drive to enslave and loot other countries, then the narrowness and hypocrisy of the systems of democracy became apparent. The values of equality, liberty and Fraternity served only the people who became part of the bourgeois economic-social activity and the price was paid by large population through their enslavement and pauperization. When the colonized countries became independent they continued such systems by incorporating a small number from their own countries into the capitalist social formation, the rest, - a great majority- remained colonized, these were mainly farmers, artisans, adivasis, and service providers and retailers working with very small capital. The farmers' movement in India which began around late 1970s, provided a very clear understanding through the slogans of 'Bharat-India' and 'Gore Angrez- Kale Angrez'.

Farmers' Movement that started in November 2020

The present farmers' movement is also giving a call to think in new ways in the difficult time we are in. In the tragic present time the demand is to rise above the logic and values that have a received status in the present social organization and forms of political power. Noted below are some important observations about this farmers' movement, which started in November 2020.

1. The movement has been non-political all along. It means that very large population of this country has no faith in politics (systems and processes) and they have some different suggestions for the organization and governance of this society.
2. Collective leadership and panchayats have played an important role in this movement. As a result broad participation of many communities has become a source of people's initiative and activity. This is preparing the ground for emergence of new forms of social organization and governance based on people's participation.
3. This movement has straight away rejected the advice/intervention of political leaders and experts of economic and agricultural sectors. This means that the movement is not only registering its opposition to the present policies of organization of agriculture and economic activity, but raising question on the knowledge basis and objectives of this system as a whole. Political parties and experts of today have proven to be the supporters and sustainers of the present system. Their knowledge contains little in the name of knowledge that has any meaningful suggestions for working in the interests of the people.
4. The movement insists on a direct dialogue with the government. However it is becoming clear that the present political intent and the system do not want that this dialogue take place.
5. This movement has the support from all states, regions and classes. Women have been active participants on a big scale.
6. The farmers' movement has been peaceful all along. The very large panchayats have had no place for violence in the language used, the thoughts and the proposed actions. This can only be the result of the extraordinary knowledge possessed by the participant communities generally and particularly of organization and regulation of the movement as a whole. Nyay, prem, tyag and bhaichara has taken concrete forms to strengthen the movement which lays bare the falsity of the statements and the conspiratorial attempts of the state towards the farmers.

7. The way lodging, boarding and sanitation arrangements have been made for all the visitors and supporters who have been coming to the site of the movement is enough to convince that 'Bharat' has the capacity to take one and all with it for organization of life that provides all the basic necessities.
8. Sometimes it is said that farmers' organizations, like trade unions, think only about themselves. However this time the farmers' movement has openly falsified this charge. They have expressed their ideas with force through the slogan "We shall not allow bread to be locked by the moneybags", "We shall not allow trade on hunger/ empty stomach" and "We talk about saving the coming generations". Right from the beginning the movement had said that the three laws shall steal the food of the poor households.

Direction of Reconstruction

One may not be able to say whether the movement will succeed in having its demands met. But this movement has forged a very large unity of the village, farmer, artisan and the worker and also obtained support of various other segments of society. This has brought forward people's ability to organize leading one to imagine that this is perhaps where the leadership and initiative need to rest for a people oriented reconstruction of our society and the nation. The whole atmosphere surrounding the movement appears to give a call for us to return to our roots, our traditions, our values and the philosophy of life to recreate them with the help of our experiences of the latter times. With such an understanding of what this farmers' movement is saying and doing let us try to think about a possible path of reconstruction based on lokavidya darshan and the experience of the lokavidya movement.

1. **The bare essentials of life:** Food, Clothing and housing
2. **Means/resources of life:** Knowledge, natural resources, production and supply.
3. **Values of life:** *Nyaya* (Logic and justice), *tyaga* (giving), *prem* (love) and *bhaichara* (fraternal).
4. **Bases of organization of life:** Truth, ordinary life, autonomy, *lokavidya* (Knowledge in society) and *swadeshi*.
5. **Bases of the unit of organization:** Geographic (territorial) region, economic, social, cultural and other.

This relatively concrete picture is made to enable an imagination of the constituents of the main pillars (the five above) of society and the relations between them. The purpose is to underline that nyaya, tyaga, prem and bhaichara are embodied in the existence, activity and reconstruction of the rest four. Also constituents of any one pillar develop in active relationship with constituents of other pillars. Though this picture appears mechanical, if a comparison is done with the body of living beings then it would perhaps look natural. Something similar to how every part of the body has a stock function to perform and yet each part is in active relation with other parts and partakes in the processes of fulfilling variety of their needs.

There is one more important thing which is not covered in the above picture. Amir Khusaro , the sufi-saint of 13th century Delhi, has said it beautifully.

*Khusro bazii prem kii , jo main kheli pii ke sang
Chhap tilak sab chhiin lii re, mose naina milai ke.*

*खुसरो बाज़ी प्रेम की, जो मैं खेली पी के संग
छाप तिलक सब छीन ली रे, मोसे नैना मिलाइके.*

[Broadly meaning that these values of life work in such a way for every constituent and every unit of life-organization and place such ideals for them, that they may merge their identity in the whole.]

It is obvious that here nyaya and bhaichara are the values of the society and not only supposed to be sanctioned by a democracy according to law and in the leadership of a special class.

The picture above is to open a way to be able to think about a just society.

Thinking about Society

That everybody has food, clothing and housing with dignity is the first and necessary condition for a just society. Equally necessary is that not just humans but every living being must get its natural food and dwelling. To have these physical needs fulfilled with dignity it is necessary that the knowledge, means/resources, production and supply be organized in such a way that large parts of the population partake in these activities. In other words everyone must bear the responsibility of

completing an aspect of some activity. One can see this happening when every person and social formation is seen as a store and source of knowledge. Such knowledge locations house the knowledge of different methods relating to means/resources, production and supply in their specific context or milieu and they are the creators, discoverers, inventors, organizers and thinkers of that universe. It brings us to an understanding that people will be able to obtain and fulfil their life needs by just methods and in a natural course, if the knowledge, means/resources, production and supply of the life-needs exhibit a great variety. In other words if the sources of organization of life have great variety, without discrimination and hierarchy, then the gates for a just, rational and equal society open seamlessly. That such pathways may be identified and constructed requires nyaya, tyaga, prema and bhaichara to assume the status of foundational values of life.

Our country has had an unbroken tradition of these values since early times. Knowledge, truth and people's interests were tested with the criteria of nyay, tyag and prem, and conversely. If the choice and use at every step of resources, processes, means of production, technology, system, supply and use are tested against considerations of tyaga and prem then it strengthens the basis of society in nyay and loka-hita. This further expands the basis of determining the quality and acceptability of knowledge. All this put together opens the way towards distributed control and power over resources and their management. Also as a result different streams of knowledge find themselves oriented for a fraternal relationship among them. For everybody to get food-clothing-housing, they all need to have access to the relevant resources. This is possible when the various constituents of the resources incorporate bhaichara, tyaga and nyaya as the desired values. Goals and means both will need to be supported by the values of nyay, tyag, prem and bhaichara. It is then, that autonomy, ordinary life, lokavidya and swadeshi can become the concrete bases of societal organization. If these bases are wide ranging then the values of nyaya, bhaichara and prema will be strengthened in society.

Today politics, trade, modern industry, administration, services, education, health-care etc. stand on the basic value of 'constant increase in profit'. But this does not mean that values of nyaya, tyaga and bhaichara are dead. Their contemporary forms reside in ordinary life. They find expression in human sensitivity, mutual relations,

creativity and art activity. These sensitivities, activities and artifacts together create that critical space where the logic of truth vs. falsehood and moral vs. immoral takes shape and thereby opens pathways for justice in society. The bases of life organization and values of life have such mutuality that they constantly create and recreate each other, strengthen each other and lead to the construction of a moral, dynamic, active and just worldview – a world-view which facilitates self-transcending view of physical needs, resources and life organization. In such a society production of surplus is determined by wise balance between sensitivity, ability to give and justice. Only such societies, which observe their duty towards the individual, family, community, religion, language, region, race, provinces and the nation and simultaneously also transcend the limitations of each, perform their duty towards the whole (universe).

What needs our attention is that the ongoing farmers' movement has in it embryos of building such a society. If these embryos develop and spread then there surely is a case for a better world. Gates have opened for farmer, artisan, adivasi and worker families to come together and shape the agenda for the country.

[Two booklets published by Vidya Ashram are very relevant for the ideas expressed in this article. These are Lokasmruti and Swaraj Paramparayein. Hard copies of the booklets can be obtained from Vidya Ashram, Sarnath. They are also available on the Vidya Ashram website www.vidyaashram.org]

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