

Note for Discussion (08Nov2022 and later)

- Girish, Gandhi

Points for discussion / to seek more clarity on / for new writings – all in the context of planned English book and social media contributions (mainly FB / VA website / Twitter), but with a more long-term interest in enrichment of a political vision for future samaj.

1. Farmers' movement and politics:

a. Party form of political organization (always proved detrimental to the movement / normally resorted to for electoral purposes / yet movement has gravitated toward it – because it has not been able to visualize any other type of representative power?) Fresh look at popular movements of the past (JP movement, pre independence anti-British movements, caste / region / identity-based movements, tribal movements) in search of alternatives to political organization and system of party-based parliamentary politics. Related questions to ask:

i. Political parties have been centre-heavy, and far from “means-conscious” so far as power-grabs are concerned. Is party form of politics intrinsically incapable of accommodating interests of Lokavidya Samaj, whose power is distributed, decentralized and organized in social organizations like khap / caste / samaj panchayats?

ii. The Constitution does not *mandate* party formation. Can we argue for **a.** complete modification of the People's Representation Act (PRA) - no political parties and party-affiliations in electoral contests; for **b.** institutional framework of traditional caste / khap panchayats, which provides elected representatives; and for **c.** revisiting the demand for separate electorates put forward by Ambedkar before the Poona Pact may be helpful?

b. Farmers' movement and powers in society: Movements in the past created challenges to existing state power, to the standing and prestige of political parties, and to current ideas of political representation - but all this over short durations. Can one visualize longer-term (permanent) challenges based on a deeper source of strength in kisan-samaj? Say, in the potential of the Annadata farmer to transform into Anna-devata (food-sovereign) and thus the creator of a civilization?

- c. Farmers' movement and distributed power: SKM model – does it provide pointers to creating structures of distributed power, and their governing / guiding values and norms? (Again, though, it lasted for just about an year – Was it just because of limited focus of defeating a legislative action?)
 - d. Khaps / samaj / caste and power politics *vis-à-vis* khaps / samaj / caste and distributed power in society, caste as samaj. Is there a “towards Swaraj” argument in this?
2. Farmers' movement and Swaraj, Swaraj and distributed power, politics of Swaraj, Swaraj and autonomy, (Gandhi / Kosambi / Dharampal...), Distributed power *vis-à-vis* decentralization; imagination of 'distributed power' as autonomy of autonomies; clues in the empires of the past, from Mughal back to the Mauryan empire, or even before that, at the time of Buddha or at times of the Mahajanapadas; Dravidian heritage (Tamil Sangam era society organisation) as evidenced in Thirukkural and other works, clues in non-capitalist societies; “India as a federation of janapadas”, or “India of federation of district-level panchayats” any better than “country of villages”?
3. Farmers' movement and sant-parampara; Bhakti movement as expression of aspirations and assertion of Lokavidya samaj, and as upholder of prestige of ordinary life? (Kabir, Raidas, ... in the north, Nayanars, Alvars, ... in the south, Tukaram, Chokha Mela, Namdeo, ... in Maharashtra); Sant-parampara and Swaraj, Sant-parampara and knowledge dialogue, sant-parampara and lokavidya – main threads binding these pairs: social (samaj, caste, values of nyaya tyaga bhaichara, ordinary life); 'political' (place of individual, community, rulers, ... in the world, limits to coercive power, principles of governance); natural (autonomy, environment)
4. Farmers' movement and federal politics; Centre and States, Agriculture as State subject; Dravidian model; Farmers' movement, food sovereignty, powers of local bodies and local governance
5. Education, language, culture – Attempts to destroy variety / build monoliths using state power; lokavidya and language, loka-bhasha as gyan-bhasha; Work of G N Devy; NEP and mother-tongue as medium of instruction
6. Market and unequal exchange: Deepening and widening of unequal exchange with globalisation of the capitalist market - Need to limit scope of the capitalist market? Two possible ways:
 - a. Reduce size of command area - break up global / national (at least the sub-continental sized (US, Canada, China, India, Australia, Brazil,

Argentina) markets: global movement towards smaller nation-states and smaller states within nation; winding up the GST to decentralize indirect tax collection

- b. Bringing economic / financial transactions to the oversight of the local markets controlled by local communities / panchayats / municipalities. Reserve essential articles (food, clothing, toiletries, stationery...) for manufacture and sale by local village / ward-based producer cooperatives, imposing much lower taxation rates than those in centralized factory production; explore idea of sovereignty by local communities over production and consumption of essential items (food sovereignty).
 - c. Imagining markets beyond the capitalist markets: view all economic and financial transactions as services exchanged in local markets among members of localized communities; product also considered a service extended by the producer to fellow community members it being the duty of the community to compensate him fairly; Can one conceive such markets to be governed by laws other than those of the capitalist market?
7. Incomes and unemployment: Falling real incomes and growing unemployment
- a. Pakki aay to members of Lokavidya Samaj; farmers - a legal guarantee for Minimum Support Prices for all major crops calculated (C2+50%) using statutory minimum wages to labourer, statutory minimum wages fixed and related to the salary of a govt servant.
 - b. Unemployment as inevitable outcome of present capitalist system; response of the system - some kind of Universal Basic Income: an indirect admission of the failure of the capitalist system; discussion of welfarism *vis-à-vis* freebees only fudges this admission