

De-centralised Governance: Future for Lokavidya Samaj

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Political ideologies of modern Europe were born in the context of the development of the political society (society and state formed in the domination of the bourgeoisie and the workers as the new classes) post the advent of industrial capitalism in the late 18th and 19th centuries. These Feudal societies transformed into Capitalist societies. Political consciousness that developed was comprised of ideas such as Democracy, Democratic Socialism and Scientific Socialism. In such societies the dominant mode of production became centralised industrial production and the political form of governance was (mostly) through a Republican Parliamentary institution. These societies were characterised by a rapidly atomised social organisation, where the individual (and his rights and duties) became paramount in political discourse and extant communities and almost all community-based kinship relations gradually vanished. The spread of mercantile-capital- driven global-trade , of the previous centuries, laid the foundation for the rapid development of the imperialist phase of capitalism, marked by increased control over human and natural resources (in the colonies) and of global capitalist market development.

Class Consciousness and Political Society

This transformation caused a lot of misery to a large section of the population in these industrialised (imperialist) countries together with great wealth and power accumulation in a new (comparitively very small) elite. The old feudal Kings were displaced by the leaders (Party bosses) of a new political ruling class. In order to counter this new exploitative and dehumanising social order a “new” Class Consciousness of the oppressed was sought to be inculcated in the ‘oppressed’ classes (mainly comprised of industrial working people); within the Political Society that now characterised the transformed society. This led to the

development and spread of ideas of Socialism and Communism in the late 19th century, and the mobilisation of the 'exploited' classes(industrial workers and peasants) to challenge the socio-economic order and bring about social change towards a less exploitative and more just social order. Such 'revolutionary' changes did, in fact take place in many countries; notably Russia and China. The political system that oversaw and guided this new social order(Communism/Socialism) was a one-Party dictatorship operating through a centralised Parliament.

The major developed countries of the World today, such as China and Russia and some smaller ones such as Singapore, are one-Party dictatorships and in many of the other so-called democracies of the First World, such as those in Europe, USA and UK, there are serious attempts to transform them into One-party dictatorships. The 'developing economies' such as Brazil and India are also in the process of installing One-party dictatorships. The countries of Africa, Latin America and South-east Asia are also verging catastrophically into dictatorships while the oligarchies of the Arab world are characterised by wealthy despotism.

All these political dispensations , have actively and militarily perpetuated a 'development' paradigm based on centralised industrial production, rapacious utilization of natural and human resources, globalisation and market-based economic imperialism. The political structure that has 'nurtured' and sustained this process is characterised by extreme centralisation of (political) power and decision making. This has been actualised through One-Party dictatorship over a centralised Parliament. The dramatic rise of China and the sustenance of Russia ;both under the dictatorship of the Communist party, as global economic super powers; underlines the 'success and the compulsion' of this strategy. It is therefore not surprising that the other established economic giants such as those in Europe, USA and UK and the aspiring developing countries, such as India and Brazil, are also heading in the same political direction.

Dictatorships allow the ruling dispensation to wrest and exercise control over all resources (human and natural), production and marketing and use military might to subjugate any dissidence. Such a situation inevitably results in the loss of a number of fundamental human rights for the population, who are then surely driven into a new form of dehumanised slavery.

Every dictatorship needs an 'ideological' base for its sustenance. While the Communist ideology, bolstered by some ethnic nationalism, led the way in Russia and China; the nascent dictatorships of Western Europe and North America have long tried to establish a social base in White Supremacy (such as White Aryan supremacy in Nazi Germany, WASP supremacy in USA). The would-be dictatorships of Latin America seem to have embarked on a process of political ethnic cleansing. The oligarchies of the Arab world have increasingly used Sunni Islam as the ideological base of their dictatorships. While in India, Hindutva has become the chosen basis to legitimize this centralization. It should be quite clear that the global attempts to establish dictatorships to further the capitalist market system seek to suppress and eliminate all 'subaltern' societies that comprise a vast majority of the global population. The nascent dictatorships of North and Latin America and Australia are rapidly moving to capture centre stage in the movement to marginalize and eliminate all 'traditional' societies and their cultural and social identities.

The situation in India

Indian society is made up of a variety of social formations and these social formations are made up of further smaller social communities. The individual, and his identity, rights and duties, are largely defined in a communitarian context. Society and individual are the two complementary features of social reality. This is important because the understanding of human consciousness that thus emerges places the individual and the societal consciousness in a well-defined relationship.

Indian Society is now clearly divided into two large sections. One section is comprised of the (largely) urban educated people and the other section, which vastly outnumbers the former, is comprised of the 'uneducated' largely rural people. The 'educated' section are those that have gone to school and college and base their livelihoods on that acquired knowledge and skills. The 'uneducated' section are those who have almost never attended school or college and base their lives and livelihoods on the knowledge and skills they have inherited from their families, peers within the community and ancestors. Such knowledge is the Knowledge in Society (*Lokavidya*); and so this section should be referred to as *Lokavidya Samaj* rather than 'uneducated'. This section comprised of peasants, workers, artisans, service providers, women, adivasis and the road-side/small retailers, dalits and tribals and is, on a very large scale, comprised of those commonly known as exploited (*shoshit*) and exterminated (*bahishkrit*).

We need to understand the nature of their consciousness, for based on such consciousness the movements of change could derive their strength and build the pathways to liberation. This section, *Lokavidya Samaj*, cannot be understood in terms of classes. It exists as a collection of Samaj's (communities/jatis/upajatis) and each constituent has its identity in terms of their Samaj(communitarian identity). Broadly speaking their consciousness may be seen as mainly composed of four complementary characteristics: moral, social, political and knowledge based. It is this united consciousness that governs all the activity of *Lokavidya Samaj* which includes economic, technical, social, political, cultural and philosophical aspects and all activities related to knowledge production, management, etc. The individual worker/producer often has a reasonable understanding of such consciousness.

The predominant thinking with those who have gone to the University and comprise the intellectual, political and Government circles in India, is that they are unable to think without reference to (received)European thought and

concepts. They have been wholly influenced by the capitalist(centralised) development models and now, unreservedly seem committed to market-based economic imperialism. All political parties have essentially supported this development paradigm and, during the past 70 years or so, the attempt to establish their control over governance (dictatorship) has been underway. The Congress, through the Indira Gandhi regime attempted to usher in dictatorial control over the economy and polity in the 70s , but failed to complete the task. The RSS -BJP , who have been open advocates of rampant capitalism (their anti-socialism/ communism emanates from adherence to the (fascist)capitalist development paradigm), have long sought to establish a popular base(as support to their dictatorship) through Hindutva(Vedic Brahmin supremacy) ideology. The RSS - BJP have continuously been attempting to consolidate 'Hindu' opinion to back their efforts to establish a one-party dictatorship and set the country on the path to becoming an important player in global market capitalism. They have now unabashedly begun to consolidate the dictatorship given the political mandate that has gone in their favour.

It is very important to understand that the lives and livelihoods of Lokavidya Samaj is firmly and wholly grounded in Lokavidya; that is, their productive lives and activities are almost entirely based on *their* Knowledge and skills and their lives are centred around their local living community-spaces. Conflict resolution also takes place within the ambit of community-panchayats and the 'verdict' of the panchayat commands a greater influence on their opinions than the 'external' cannons of Law.

In other words, everything about their existence as productive, contributing humans is decentralised, however oppressive or regressive it might appear to the urban, educated sections of society. They would always be comfortable and continue to be productive in a decentralised system; one that is closer to their ways of thinking and social behaviour. However, over the past decades since Independence, there has been growing opposition to alternate development

paradigms, based on decentralised production, local market economy and localised governance; long advocated by Mahatma Gandhi, Kumarappa, Rammanohar Lohia etc.

The Capitalist Market System, that dominates all thinking today; is firmly grounded in Western Knowledge Systems. This system has purposefully and systematically de-legitimised all other 'local' (indigenous) Knowledge systems (in the Indian context we see the almost complete de-legitimation of Lokavidya) and concomitantly the lives and livelihoods based in these knowledge systems. This has led to great social fragmentation and 'unemployment' (the vast majority of Lokavidya Samaj have all but abandoned their 'traditional'livelihood practices ; they being unable to sustain a basic life of dignity) with the result that people of these 'traditional/indigenous' communities have been forced to migrate to the urban centres, live in slums and eke out a living as coolies(labourers sans knowledge and skills). This forced urbanisation of the population, a sort of social centralisation, has completely disrupted the social fabric and values that people (Lokavidyadhars) lived by. Their lives have indeed become unsustainable and this large mass of humanity has, in capitalist parlance, become 'redundant and disposable'.

Swaraj Chetana(Consciousness):The basis for Social change in India

The unity of human consciousness that promotes and sustains decentralised economic and social systems, may be called *Swaraj Chetana* (consciousness). The just concluded farmers' movement on the borders of Delhi has recast the question of the relation of such movements with politics in the broader context of the values of the rural society(Lokavidya Samaj), namely Nyaya, Tyaga and Bhaichara. Attempts should be made to develop a new discourse on the question of 'centralised mass production versus decentralised production by the masses', in the context of developing 'Swaraj Chetana', within Lokavidya Samaj. A sustainable model of production and marketing, that should serve as the basis for a vision of an alternate development paradigm; should be able to unite

Lokavidya Samaj and define the parameters of an alternate decentralised political/governance model, based on local Panchayats .

The way forward for Lokavidya Samaj

It is quite clear now that, the very survival of this vast section of humanity(Lokavidya Samaj who comprise about 12% of the population on the planet), as a vibrant contributing section of Society, is at stake. The only way forward is to establish decentralised production, distribution(marketing) and governance, at least for *Lokavidya Samaj*. This is the agenda for a new political imagination based on Swaraj Chetana.

The farmers, who comprise the vast majority of *Lokavidya Samaj* and have been at the forefront of many struggles for decentralised economic and political control, need to take the lead in espousing the ideas and consciousness that underlie Swaraj Chetana. All important decisions taken during the course of the recent year-long farmers' agitation were taken by the various community panchayats and mahapanchayats , which were convened from time to time, after due deliberation. It is very notable that women were present in good numbers during these meetings and did contribute their thoughts and ideas during these deliberations. This points out to the success of the form and method of collective decentralised decision making; the basis of *Swaraj*.

Additionally, all those who wish to work for change, - individuals, groups, organizations and those pursuing different ways of thinking; need to promote and develop ideas related to this new consciousness(Swaraj Chetana) and assist the farmers' movement and the different sections within Lokavidya Samaj, to help take the process forward.