

## **Chapter 23 - The Interest on the Kohinoor Diamond**

When it comes to Catch 22s anarchists seem to be swimming in a sea of them. We have already seen how their abhorrence for political centralisation has reduced the effectiveness of their opposition to the centralised state. Fighting for the rights of the poor requires money, and loads of it, as must have become self evident by now. The more they struggle the more the money required. Herein lies the second Catch 22 that the anarcho-environmentalists face - the poor, by definition, do not have money to fight for their rights. Ideally when people are organised they should pool in money to defray the costs of organisational work. Even one rupee a day per family comes to a lot when an organisation spans over a few villages and has upwards of a thousand members. The money pooled in this way can easily cover the expenses of a few full time activists and also that of various court cases and other organisational expenses. However, this never materialises because people tend to seek free services. Contribution to the organisation fund is like a tax and people all over the world dislike paying taxes. Moreover, all the families in a village are never members of the organisation as some, the more powerful ones, owe allegiance to the mainstream political parties. These families constantly pester the organisation members to leave the organisation or at the least not pay its membership fees and free ride on the time and money being expended by the more active members. Thus even in the early KMCS days, when the costs of organisation were minimal and the benefits to the people were immense, apart from free food whenever we visited the villages, little monetary contribution would be forthcoming.

So willy nilly mass organisations have to seek external funding of their operations. Ruling out looting of banks and rich people and forcible extortion from contractors and industrialists, which have been resorted to by the more violent armed revolutionaries one constitutionally legitimate way is to have individual middle and upper class supporters of the movement contribute either regularly or irregularly for the cause because they believe in its genuineness. This is how the Communist and Socialist parties traditionally operated. Those supporters of these parties who were working for a living contributed a portion of their earnings as a levy to finance the full time activists and other party work. However, the rampant consumerism spread by television advertisements has taken its toll as the middle and upper class people these days are busy financing houses, cars, fridges, washing machines, television sets and even their holidays on loans and after paying for these in monthly instalments have little to spare from their salaries for organisational work. Consequently this source of politically correct external funding has all but dried up in the present era.

Not surprisingly when Subhadra and I came to Indore in penniless straits and were forced to beg for help from our friends and family we were looked down upon as worthless panhandlers instead of as public spirited citizens trying to make democracy more meaningful for the less privileged citizens of this country. Begging of course is an exalted Indian pastime with mystic greats like Buddha, Mahavira and an illustrious line of Hindu saints having survived on it. The grand idea propagated by the mystics is that the supreme spirit behind the world can be known only through inward meditation and this has fascinated people throughout history. While the Buddha was an atheistic mystic who stated that there was no way of knowing whether God existed or not and so people should stop bothering about this question and go about living their lives by reining in their desires, Mahavira and the Hindu saints were spiritual mystics who preached of a supreme spirit who was unconcerned with the material problems that common people face and so they should give up the desires from which these problems arise and concentrate on living simply. Thus all the Indian religious

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sages have advised the people to give up their desires and meditate on their inner selves as a way to end their miseries. But common people, while being fascinated by this idealistic mysticism in theory, have in practice turned to a form of grosser religion, that has grown up around the mysticism of the saints, for solace from their every day problems. These arise from a combination of their desires, which they do not want to give up and the basic unpredictability of life. That is why the tendency in people is to reject the exalted desire negating mysticism of the saints and instead worship anthropomorphic Gods who can put an end to their problems. This belief that one single God or spirit or many Gods and spirits animate the inanimate universe and direct it with a divine purpose, in some form or other, has been the core idea of all religions. Throughout history human beings have supplicated these Gods to alleviate the miseries arising from their desires. This animistic tendency in human beings is so widespread that even the atheist Buddha is today worshipped as a God by his followers! So people rich and poor are ever ready to donate generously to religious mendicants and saints who, they feel can mediate between them and the Gods but will only reluctantly do so to social and political activists who can organise them to fight injustice.

On one occasion I was taken aback when an adivasi woman met me at a shop in Katkut and said that she was going to our Mandir or temple. Neither the shopkeeper nor I could make out what she was saying till she explained that she was going to our office cum residence! When the shopkeeper asked her whether she was going to take some dakshina or offering to the temple and its Goddess she said that Subhadra was the bread giver for all the adivasis of the area so there was no need to take anything to her temple. We had taken great pains to build up a democratic mass organisation but animism is so deep rooted in the psyche of the common people in this country that there is no escaping from it. We had been converted into Gods too and particularly benevolent ones at that because we did not demand any dakshina from our devotees! We had learnt the hard lesson from our experiences earlier that one can't rely on the masses to provide for one's sustenance and so had made our own arrangements. But the mediators between the Gods and the masses do not have such worries and these days they are not only able to garner much more mass support than political organisations but also money from the people at large only too willing to buy salvation rather than fight for it.

The reality is that when it comes to fighting in any serious way the Leviathan of the state bent on further beggaring its poorest citizens then unfortunately both levies and begging do not provide much financial succour. Globalisation and the consumerism that it has spawned have so impoverished the poor and their sympathisers that not much is available for radical action anymore. Consequently the university town of Oxford in Britain, which used to pride itself on being their traditional home, now finds that the whole world has become littered with utopian lost causes without so much as a penny being paid to it for the replication of its unique geographical indication! Ironically when the British philosopher Hobbes first mooted in a book of the same name, the proposition of the absolute power of the state or commonwealth as he conceived of it as a beneficial Leviathan that would rescue human beings from the arbitrary use of power exercised through mob violence he was pilloried as being a monster by the members of the British parliament (Hobbes, 1982). Hobbes had been a supporter of the royalty in its losing battle against the rising mercantile class prior to the Revolution of 1648, which established the supremacy of parliament over the king. He thus drew the ire of the parliamentarians as they, characteristically for a set of obtuse plebeians, failed to see the prophetic nature of his ideas in predicting for the first time the rise of the modern state! The parliamentarians even went to the extent of fanning mob fury to burn copies of his book in public and then preposterously alleging that this had caused

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the Great Fire of 1666, which burnt most of London! The Leviathan of the state has not only gained tremendously in power with time but also contrary to Hobbes's expectations become an oppressive entity protecting and promoting the exploitative activities of the mercantile and industrialist class at the expense of ordinary citizens and so impoverishing them that they are now not even able to fund protests against it!

The initial modern anarchist response from the eighteenth century onwards came as a reaction to this centralisation of political powers in the state and its control by the industrialists who had centralised economic power within society. The French anarchist Pierre Proudhon going to the extent of labelling all private property as robbery (Proudhon, 1994). But like in the case of the anarchist political challenge to the state, in the case of its funding too ground realities have once again forced anarchists to compromise on their principles and they have gone in for institutional funding to sustain their activities. No less a figure than Gandhi had to do this by relying on the nascent Indian capitalist class to fund both his political and social work. In the wake of the Civil Disobedience Movement of 1931 during which the boycott of British cloth had led to the Indian mill owners earning huge surpluses he urged them to contribute generously to the Congress and his ashrams (Ghosh, 1989). It was far easier to garner funds from these moneybags than doing so from the penniless masses. But as we have seen, these businessmen succeeded where Shylock hadn't by taking their pound of flesh in the form of state acquiescence for the Bombay Plan in preference to Gandhi's own pet dream of the establishment of decentralised village economies. In the post independence era the Gandhian ashrams have had to rely heavily on the government for their funds in addition to the contributions from industrialists and businessmen. The net result has been that these institutions have gradually become appendages of the state system without any dynamism of their own and mostly cut off from the realities of rural life.

Dhirendra Mazumdar the first chairman of the Sarva Seva Sangh grappled with this problem of bureaucratisation and marginalisation of the Gandhian institutions with little success throughout his incumbency and finally resigned from his post in 1960 on reaching the age of sixty to try and blaze a different trail. He decided that the warp and weft of feudal class and caste oppression had woven a shroud around a moribund rural India and that this shroud could be torn away only through a non-violent mass movement from below funded by the rural people themselves (Mazumdar, 1979). So he went and dropped anchor in a remote village in Bihar, which had a highly skewed land distribution in favour of the upper castes and a surfeit of landless lower castes. The condition that he set for his stay there was that all the people rich and poor must contribute to the expenses of running the village organisation that was to be set up which included the living expenses of the fulltime workers. The landed people had to give up some of their land in such a way that a common farm could be carved out on which all the people would be able to work and produce in a communitarian manner. Initially things went well but soon the enthusiasm of the people began to flag and the contributions of money, grains and labour began to dwindle. The stream of cooperation in farming between the rich and the poor began to dry up in the dreary desert sand of traditional distrust. The lower caste people began to lose interest in the many innovative communitarian sanitation, education and village fund initiatives that had been introduced while the rich upper castes, the babus, actively worked against these.

Enquiries revealed that the people had initially agreed to Dhirendrabhai's conditions in the hope that once he was there he would leverage his status as the chairman emeritus of the Sarva Seva Sangh to bring huge amounts of development funds for the village. But when

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they were told that this was not to be the case and that resources had to be generated from within the village itself through contributions of time, labour, money, land and grains in proportion to the capacity of the contributor their interest in Dhirendrabhai's programme of rural renewal through self reliance began to wane and the poorer dalit landless labourers even began to question whether he had in reality ever been the chairman of the Sarva Seva Sangh! While Dhirendrabhai wanted to persist despite this his young companions who had given up their jobs in various Gandhian institutions to work with him found it very difficult to continue in such circumstances and had to leave thus putting paid to the experiment. Later Dhirendrabhai tried the same experiment in another remote village in eastern Uttar Pradesh to meet with the same fate. During these experiments he learnt in detail about something regarding which he had only an inkling while serving as the chairman of the Sarva Seva Sangh. This was that there was tremendous corruption in the redistribution of the land donated as part of the Bhoodan campaign in which the sarvodayis who were members of the Bhoodan committees at the various levels had colluded with the powerful landed castes to prevent any real redistribution to the lower caste landless peasants.

In the early years after independence the expanding state system and the constitutional provision for reservation provided ample job opportunities in the government sector for youth getting educated from the lower castes. Consequently there was a continuous drain of such youth from the villages and very few of them opted for voluntary or low paid social service work under the aegis of the Sarva Seva Sangh. It was the idealistic youth from the towns inspired by Gandhism who provided the leadership for rural development work as workers of the Gandhian institutions. But the tremendous political and social obstacles they faced and also the progressive bureaucratisation of these institutions soon disillusioned them. Not surprisingly most of them jettisoned their early dreams and left to return to the mainstream and only some stubborn people like Radheshyam Bohre remained for whom Gandhism gradually became a majboori. Bohreji's sole work and headache in Machla when we arrived there was to prevent the people of the village who were at one time active participants of the programmes of the Gramodyog Vidyalaya from encroaching on its land and pilfering its materials. He used to spend most of his time chasing the boys and girls from the village that came to steal the mangoes, custard apples, bananas, lime, drumsticks, bamboo and sandalwood that used to mature at various times of the year. Finally, when Mahendrabhai passed away in 2003, he resigned from this thankless job and is back to enjoying farming on his own piece of land in Khategaon once again.

This highlights yet another Catch 22 that bedevils anarchists in particular and radical social change in general. A mass movement for radical social change can be initiated and sustained only on the strength of a continually increasing committed and knowledgeable grassroots cadre of youth. But youth will be drawn in sufficient numbers to a movement and their living and operating expenses will be borne by the masses only if it is a vibrant one. How does one create a Cinderella of a vibrant movement from the general apathy of the masses without the magic wand of a fairy Godmother? And even if one can find a fairy Godmother in special circumstances like in the case of the NBA there is always the danger that the clock of state oppression will strike twelve sooner or later and the movement will lose its vibrancy in a jiffy! Dhirendrabhai addressing this question came to the conclusion that the monopoly of the state in the provision of social and developmental services through a corrupt and insensitive bureaucracy had killed the initiative of the people to cooperate among themselves and improve their situation by pooling their own resources. He found that the Gandhian institutions too had become a surrogate for the state in their style of working and so the people regarded them as another government department. This was in the early nineteen

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sixties when the stranglehold of the state over its citizens had not become as widespread as it is today. Moreover since he worked within Vinoba Bhave's Gandhian paradigm that stressed on cooperation rather than confrontation as the panacea for the mitigation of disparities between classes and castes he did not have to contend with the phenomenon of state oppression that a confrontationist approach invariably involves.

Jayaprakash Narayan in the Sampoorna Kranti movement in 1975 brought these contradictions of post independence Gandhism out in the open causing a split in the Gandhian fold as mentioned earlier. Narayan emphatically stressed that the Gandhians must once again engage in mass civil disobedience against an oppressive and unjust state as opposed to collaboration and cooperation with it. The government decided to hit back by instituting enquiries against Narayan and the Gandhian institutions that supported the movement despite having taken government funds to run their programmes. Many such institutions thus lost their source of funding including the Gramodyog Vidyalaya in Machla. This was a crucial blow because the whole Khadi programme had been surviving on the crutches of the heavy subsidies that were being provided to it and the withdrawal of this government support meant a total collapse of this programme and the institutions that were surviving on it. Indeed it was the danger of such an eventuality that had prompted many including the leaders of the Gandhi Memorial Fund in Indore for which Bohreji worked to distance themselves from Narayan's movement. Narayan, despite this setback, was able to mobilise youth and funds from the common people outside the Gandhian fold in massive numbers to sustain his movement and make it into a major threat to the establishment. However, after the imposition of the emergency and the subsequent mass arrests of leaders and activists the movement was dissipated because it had not yet been able to strike deep roots within the masses. After the lifting of the emergency most of the youth leaders who had been mobilised by the movement opted for participating in mainstream electoral politics instead of pursuing with the considerably more challenging anarchist agenda of Narayan who himself was bedridden due to a serious illness which eventually led to his demise in 1978.

This was the time when the spring thunder of the Naxalites also had stopped rumbling having been dissipated through a combination of heavy state repression and internal squabbling. Thus while the failure of "trickle down" development leading to deteriorating economic conditions of the people and the festering social inequities had opened up a vast sphere for people's action the two formations outside of mainstream electoral politics hitherto available for channelising such action, that of the Gandhians and the revolutionary Marxists, were both in disarray and unable to provide intellectual and organisational leadership for such action. Globally the oil-price shock of 1974 had put a stop to the post World War II boom in the developed economies of the west and in Vietnam the Americans had been stymied in their onslaught against communism. The first necessitated a greater penetration by the MNCs of the developed countries into the developing countries for raw materials, cheap labour and markets and the latter a new way to dissipate mass movements for radical socio-economic change other than the path of direct extermination as adopted unsuccessfully in Vietnam. This led to the onset of the current wave of globalisation and the NGO boom (Petras & Veltmeyer, 2001). The first consisted of greater bilateral and multilateral aid being given to developing countries in return for their opening up their economies to trade and investment by the MNCs and their reduction of social sector spending and subsidies so as to be able to pay back the debt. The latter involved heavy funding of NGOs in developing countries to bring about "participatory development" trying to ensure greater participation of the people in development without addressing the structural inequalities in society and the economy. India too was drawn into this new wave and there was a mushrooming of NGOs of all kinds



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engaged in service delivery, rural development, mass mobilisation and policy and legal advocacy.

In this new dispensation the Indian state too encouraged mass mobilisation by NGOs through such programmes as the National Literacy Mission, National Watershed Mission and the like and the formation of the Council for Advancement of People's Action and Rural Technology (CAPART). Thus under cover of the rhetoric of participatory development it became possible for the first time to garner funds for mass mobilisation from the government and foreign funding sources. Rajaji faced with the eternal problem of getting youthful cadres and funding them when he wanted to expand his grassroots mass mobilisational work in Chhattisgarh fell back on both these sources. That is how Subhadra who would otherwise have had to spend her time making bidis for a living became a social activist. Similarly I too along with Khemraj and Amit could give shape to our mass mobilisational work among the Bhils in its initial shaky stages as a part of the SWRC and benefit from both its varied funding sources as well as its clout with bureaucrats and the central government. The NBA too started out with NGO support in its early stages and has continually been supported overtly or covertly by various national and international NGOs and has used an admirable mix of policy, media and legal advocacy and rural development work to complement the mass mobilisational work on the ground.

However, there are serious drawbacks to the involvement of NGOs in movements for radical social change. On the one hand when the mass mobilisational work begins to threaten the state or local power structure in any substantial way then the funding tends to dry up or not measure up to the heightened demands resulting from the imposition of false criminal cases as we found to our cost in our relationship with the SWRC. Rajaji and the Ekta Parishad too have had to rein in their activities so as to avoid any direct confrontation with the state, which might lead to the imposition of false cases and a cessation of funding. On the other hand the funding can corrupt the activists and make them give up cutting edge mass work for some support work like running micro-finance groups or doing policy, media, human rights or legal advocacy that can only partially alleviate the problems of the masses. Examples of this latter makeover, a desired outcome as far as the funders' objectives go, are too legion to require enumeration. There are numerous hot debates going on over the Internet, workshops and jan sunwais are being held off and on and online petitions are being filed left, right and centre but there are very few actual mass movements on the ground.

Thus overall the immense amount of funds coming into the NGO sector has turned out to be a bane rather than a boon as far as mass social action is concerned. The NGO sector has become professionalised and there are many more people, from both urban and rural backgrounds, with the shrinking of employment in the government sector, coming in to pursue social work as a career rather than out of an urge to do something for the poor and downtrodden. Moreover theorising about and ensuring participatory and sustainable development has become a lucrative profession for researchers and consultants what with the multilateral institutions like the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank and the various United Nations agencies stressing on social development and stakeholder participation as a sine qua non in the implementation of development projects. So with NGOs having spread to the remotest corners of the country disbursing funds for some development activity or other and employing paid staff to do so, the mindsets of the people have changed so much that it has become far more difficult to get the masses to engage in self sustaining community based activities with self generated funds. Activists who are prepared to live on a pittance and organise them to achieve this are even rarer to come by. This is the principle

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reason for the waning of mass movements for social change over the last decade or so coinciding with the new phase of globalisation of the world economy.

Once in 1996 Subhadra's sister in law, Narmada, came over from Jepra to Machla for a few months to get treated for a chronic illness that she was suffering from that required surgery. Jacob was at that time carrying out a project to conserve and promote the indigenous cereals, pulses and oilseeds of the Malwa and Nimar regions and had about five acres of experimental farming plots in the ashram at Machla and Kasturbagram under cultivation. He had employed two youth to help him with his work and was paying them fifteen hundred rupees a month each as salary. Narmada who was used to working for twenty rupees a day as a farm labourer in Jepra to supplement the meagre harvests from her own farm was puzzled that Jacob could afford to pay so much to his workers despite cultivating low value and low yielding crops. Try as she might Subhadra could not make Narmada understand then that Jacob was running an NGO that was being liberally funded by an agency and so he was not constrained by the generally weak bottom-line of subsistence agriculture in India. Now a decade later the same Narmada is working fifteen days a month vaccinating children in and around Jepra for an NGO and getting paid fifteen hundred rupees for doing so. She phoned up from Jepra after landing this job and proudly told Subhadra that like her she too was now part of the NGO sector!

Things become even more desperate when a mass movement grows to the stage where it faces state repression. On one occasion Subhadra and I were in Barwah to attend a court date and on that day there were more than a hundred people from the Sangathan present there for some case or other. I proposed that we should not let this opportunity go by and start shouting some relevant slogans against the state but I found no takers! This was at a time after the Mehendikhera crackdown, which had smashed the backbone of the Sangathan and considerably reduced its efficacy. The leading adivasi activists like Chhotelal had tens of cases against them and spent most of their time attending the court dates of these cases. The people said that they were finding it tough to bear the expenses of the pending cases and did not want to burden themselves with yet another one for breaking the peace in the court premises. A few funding agencies like SRUTI will at the margin fund mass mobilisation work but will never agree to fund the expenses of the cases that invariably get foisted on the people and the activists when the mobilisation assumes threatening proportions. The contrast between mass mobilisation against inappropriate and unjust state policies and service delivery, rural development or advocacy work becomes starkly visible in such circumstances even to the people at the grassroots. Not many among activists and the people are going to take such risks when comparatively much easier pickings are available in service delivery, rural development, advocacy or consultancy or in just providing training. Many from among the cadre that we had so painstakingly trained have either taken up jobs with NGOs, become members of mainstream political parties acting as agents for them or have become inactive.

There being little accountability either for funds received or work done in the case of NGOs they have now become a handy via media for the Government and Corporates for working in the social sector without having to face parliamentary scrutiny in the case of the former and as a cheap recompense to society for the tremendous social and environmental costs that the latter are externalising on it and nature in their quest for more and more profit. Thus instead of paying taxes and bearing the costs of modern industrial development the big corporations are apportioning a miniscule proportion of their profits to NGOs and basking in false glory by naming this as Corporate Social Responsibility. So there are many NGOs that have been set up by the Government and the Corporates and these have begun to dominate

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the sector given the immense resources they command. Not surprisingly these days the leading social workers and change agents in the country are politicians of mainstream political parties, bureaucrats, corporate honchos and Godmen! Thus a very poor service delivery person like Narmada, mass social activists like Subhadra and Medha Patkar, powerful politicians like Bill Clinton and Sonia Gandhi, assorted retired and serving bureaucrats, Godmen like Asaram Bapu and Sri Sri Ravishankar and billionaires like Bill Gates and Azim Premji are all part of the NGO sector. These latter big guns have taken centre stage by hogging the headlines in the media by virtue of splurging their immense resources. Indeed being media savvy is very important as exposure in the media gets an NGO both funds and respectability. But as one editor friend of mine once told me the media focuses only on the newsmakers and a poor grassroots worker toiling to bring about a change in the social order and her mass movement are never newsmakers. So Bill Gates flexing his financial muscle for aids prevention or Azim Premji doing the same for primary education get the bytes in the media. One would not be far of the mark in saying that the NGO sector as it stands today is a Punch and Judy Show being staged to divert the people away from the serious and taxing work of overturning the prevailing exploitative, destructive and over centralised system of development and governance through widespread mass action.

Some classification of the NGO sector is thus necessary if any sense has to be made of it. There are first of all PGOs or pro government organisations, which work with and as a complement to the government to provide services and development and also formulate policies. Then there are the SGOs or surrogate government organisations set up by the government or corporates and headed by mainstream politicians, bureaucrats both serving and retired and corporate executives or business magnates which have been set up to control the NGO sector and see that it effectively coopts all serious opposition to the prevailing forms of government and development. Finally there are the AGOs or anti government organisations which are uncompromising in their opposition to the prevailing modes of governance and development. These are mostly of a neo-Gandhian bent that have taken off from where Jayaprakash Narayan had left his task unfinished and have added on an environmental dimension to it. The AGOs are very few in number and in Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh they can be counted on one's fingers. The PGOs are the largest in number and have spread across the length and breadth of the country penetrating into the remotest corners doing work that should ideally be done by the community on their own or by the government. The SGOs are numerically in between the former two categories but they are the most powerful because they have the greatest command over resources and easy access to the established centres of economic and political power and the media.

A plea is advanced on behalf of the PGOs that they are in general less corrupt and more efficient than the government departments. However, given the abysmal quality of performance of the government this is not saying very much. Only a very few PGOs of repute are actually doing good work and some even creatively mix service delivery, advocacy, activism and fundraising to do exceptional work in favour of the poor and oppressed (Bornstein, 2005). However, the sector as a whole still represents a miniscule proportion of the services in the two crucial social spheres of education and health which are dominated by the formal and informal private sector in this country. The government too remains a major player in both these sectors despite the roll back of its services post liberalisation and there is very little chance of the working of the government in these two sectors improving through PGO participation or consultation. As we shall see presently some exemplary efforts in the field of education in Madhya Pradesh by an internationally renowned PGO have finally come a cropper faced with bureaucratic and political obtuseness. The same thing can be said for



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rural or urban community development. Ultimately the majority of the PGOs rarely have any original ideas of their own but have to implement the policies dictated by the donors whether in the government, in the corporate sector or in the international funding agencies starting with the World Bank at the top of the pile. The SGOs only facilitate this and in the case of corporate sponsored NGOs there is a clear thrust towards opening up newer markets for their products and services as in the famous "e-choupal" initiative of the Indian Tobacco Company of which more a little later. No wonder that most PGOs these days have lost their original voluntary character and have become professionalised with work cultures that copy the government or corporate sector possess little capacity for bringing about any widespread and fundamental change for the better in the living conditions of the poor and deprived.

These two categories, the agencies that fund them and the intellectuals who eulogise them have perfected the tactic first developed in the western world to counter the revolutionary upsurge of the late nineteen sixties, that considers "everything which disturbs the harmonious coexistence of groups performing different social roles... as an unjustified disturbance symptom" and instead recommends research into how a group may be "conditioned to accept its social role, and how its grievances may best be handled and channelled" (Thompson, 1968 pp 9-10). So much so, that even the much-touted World Social Forum (WSF) of mass movements and NGOs against the deleterious effects of globalisation has been co-opted to a great extent by the funding agencies and their protégés (RUPE, 2003). Ostensibly the WSF is organised to bring together movements and NGOs from around the world to coordinate the efforts to make "another world possible" from the one being promoted by the MNCs and institutions like the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, the World Trade Organisation and Funding agencies. However, in reality the idea of holding it grew out of a need felt among the proponents of globalisation after the Seattle demonstration of 2000 to provide a forum for a safer venting of the protests from below. Moves were made to get some leading NGOs in France and Brazil to organise the event and rope in people who were opposing globalisation. Thus a considerable portion of the tremendous costs of staging the show and transporting people from all over the world to attend it are in fact borne by funding agencies like the Ford Foundation and so the really uncompromising opponents of globalisation who demand a total dismantling of the present system of modern industrial development are excluded from it.

Naturally the AGOs are wary of the PGOs and SGOs and they never overtly take funds from the government, corporates or funding agencies so as to preserve the independence of their actions. However, the exigencies of conducting a mass movement in highly adverse conditions and the inability of the poor to pay for the costs of struggle invariably force the AGOs to covertly source funds and other kinds of help from the other two categories and from funding agencies both Indian and foreign. In Madhya Pradesh at present only the Kisan Adivasi Sangathan in Hoshangabad can claim to be totally free of outside funding as they have the resources of some of their members who have gained from the successful functioning of the cooperative fishing society that is being run by them in the reservoir of the Tawa dam which had been set up following an agitation conducted by the Sangathan. Similarly the Chhattisgarh Mukti Morcha in its heyday before it became moribund, financed itself solely through the contributions of its members who had gained much by way of their sustained agitations. But since it could not expand its base to make it more widespread and firm by including in its fold the workers in Bhilai the Chhattisgarh Mukti Morcha gradually lost out in the battle to forge an alternative to the dominant paradigm when the mines in Dalli Rajhara in which its members worked got gradually wound up. Similarly the fishing cooperative of the Kisan Adivasi Sangathan too is constantly under

## **Recovering the Lost Tongue - A Manifesto of Anarcho-Environmentalism**

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threat of being taken over by the government which eventuality will deprive it of its source of funds for mass mobilisational work and plunge it into crisis.

Ideally there should be a large number of AGOs of various disadvantaged communities and especially their women, with numerous and active dues paying members, operating on principles of thrift, cooperation and equality that challenge the status quo of ruling class domination, through mass civil disobedience. This will ensure that grassroots democracy functions properly and pressure is created on the rest of the players in the NGO sector itself as well as on the corporates, political parties and governments in larger society for the adoption of socially and economically just and environmentally sustainable development and governance policies. However, it must have become abundantly clear by now that this is an anarchist pipe dream that is much more difficult to actualise than the labours of Hercules and we in the environmental mass movements are unfortunately doomed to be followers of the accursed Sisyphus rather than the more successful Greek hero. Not surprisingly very few young people these days opt for the rigours of working in an AGO and most of those who do soon run away and only a very few of us are still left rolling the stone of mass mobilisation up the hill of state insensitivity and oppression.

Ever since we came to Indore, Subhadra and I have been out on our own. Left to plough a lonely furrow we had perforce to do without the ideological luxury of being prim about the sources of the external funds that we had to garner for our mass organisational work. As long as they did not influence the direction of our grassroots work we did not bother about their character. Operating as we do in a very limited area and with a practical understanding that there is not much chance of our work escalating to a scale where it can bring about far reaching changes in the socio-economic arrangements that prevail we can afford to take this cavalier attitude towards funding sources as the funds required are not very large. An attitude that has allowed us to work freely in the field without much hindrance while funding this through research work, which is sometimes of dubious provenance. Thus I have done research consultancy work for the very same World Bank protesting against whose policies I once went to jail! Foundations and agencies in the west that believe in maintaining the status quo rather than upsetting it radically have been and continue to be the sources of funds for our research work while such agencies in India knowing our true colours are not prepared to adorn their canvases with our mugs. The foreign funds we have help us defray the expenses of the legal and other battles that we continually fight to stay afloat against the state.

The state had the intention of completely wiping out the mass organisation in Dewas in the course of the Mehendikhera crackdown but it failed to do so primarily because we had a respectable financial buffer with which to fight it. Try as it might to prove that this buffer was illegal it failed because it had been built up legitimately through completely legal fellowships and research assignments and was well accounted for and professionally audited. If we had baulked at taking these foreign funds we too would have had to run away leaving the poor adivasis to fend for themselves as best they could. Instead we are still rolling the stone and that very act itself has some braking effect on the arbitrariness of the state if nothing more. In the end it does not really matter whether one is taking foreign or Indian funds because all external funds have some strings attached and have the tendency to restrict the capacity to genuinely mobilise the masses. It depends on the persons taking these funds as to how far they can put them to good use given these restrictions. We can only say that we have tried our best to retain our effectiveness as activists. Since in the present milieu taking foreign funds either directly or indirectly has become a necessity that cannot be avoided the best way to get over one's qualms about accepting them is to treat them as the interest being

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paid on the famous Kohinoor diamond, which was taken away by the British from India and is now embedded in the British Crown!

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