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Press Statement

19 April 2011

Anna Hazare and Jan Lok Pal

The Sham of Imperialist led Development that Breeds on Corruption

Once again corruption has become the centre of debate. You name it and ‘Shining India’ has a story of corruption to say about any state policy—whether a mid-day meal scheme in the rural schools, to defence deals or to the mega-deals like the Spectrum scam. We were witness to the 4-day Spectacle of Anna Hazare, wowed by the well heeled middle class, accosted by the ‘civil society’ and every shade of the parliamentary political parties—from the right to the left—a ‘rainbow coalition’ hailing the ‘historic *Satyagraha*’ of the ‘new Gandhi’. The 24X7 sensation driven, reality TV, otherwise called as news channels, could not wait to declare Jantar Mantar as the ‘Tahrir Square’ of India. The images of Anna Hazare positioned before the larger than life images of ‘Bharat Mata’ and Gandhi were boomed in every drawing room of the household—primetime and otherwise. Sooner than later, Anna-inspired images of people’s protests against corruption in various urban centres and small towns, started pouring in from the length and breadth of ‘Shining India’. The slogan was very simple or so it looked: to put an end to corruption what was needed was a Jan Lok Pal—a super cop/activist judiciary/legislature, a three-in-one combination that will be above everything to weed out corruption. At the end of the 4-day show Anna Hazare lifted the *Satyagraha* as the government at the centre agreed to legislate the new bill in consultation with the leaders of the ‘civil society’. As a token symbolism of honesty—which was the main feature of the spectacle—it was later declared before the media that the total expenditure for the 4-day road show was a whopping Rs. 82 lakh. Perhaps a little too less compared to the kind of money that was swallowed by the politician-bureaucrat-corporate nexus! And what Hazare and his supporters conveniently forgot to mention was the sponsors of this show—the corporate sector *ala* the TATAs, Infosys etc. There was much more than met the eye. It was also talked about in some civil society circles that an additional Rs. 20 lakh agreement was struck with four giants in the mobile sector to ensure THAT SMS to reach the millions of subscribers exhorting them to give a missed call to the designated line given to the show at Jantar Mantar as a mark of support to the cause or the emotional text asking them to just be there as the time has come.

Story of Corruption: As old as the ‘Republic’

Throughout the history of post-47 India we have witnessed several politicians of all parliamentary parties making tall claims about the need to weed out corruption. From the days of Nehruvian ‘Socialism’ till LPG, cases of nepotism, swindling of public money,

kickbacks or misappropriation from foreign aid, all have not been new for the people of this country. But in the days of Liberalisation-Privatisation-Globalisation (LPG), the magnitude of corruption has increased in astronomical proportions commensurate with the widening gap between the rich and the poor and deepening strife among the vast sections of people including that of the middle class. And yet till date the fight against corruption has remained the veritable syndrome—that of treating the symptoms than the disease. And why?

Any reflection on corruption is puerile without a simultaneous look into the path of development that the Indian State has adopted ostensibly, for the welfare of the people since 1947. And it wouldn't be surprising to note that either in 'Nehruvian Socialism' or its contemporary guise of outright neo-liberalism like the present day LPG, the notion of development for the Indian ruling classes was heavily dependent on capital—whether imperialist, comprador or feudal. Thus urban centres are showcases of 'development' with malls, flyovers, express highways, imported cars, floodlit stadia for day-night cricket, state-of-the-art airports, high rise buildings housing corporate offices, residential complexes for the rich and a huge middle class with beefy wallets as the new age consumers. Conversely, as the conventional wisdom goes, in the rural areas there is little capital and hence little 'development'. The vast surplus that is extracted from the rural agrarian economy gets drained into unproductive ventures with little being reinvested in the agrarian sector. Thus capital and development both have become neutral terms devoid of any class/caste/regional interest and the presence of the former implies automatically the presence of the latter and vice versa.

Till date 'Shining India' is heavily dependent on technological support from the imperialist West. The comprador bourgeoisie who has monopolised the control over the market and resources—through its parasitism bred on subsidies doled out by the ruling classes—are the custodians of the market for western technology led development. It is the same comprador bureaucrat capital in alliance with the feudal landed sections that ensure the dependency on foreign technology and development that is as per the needs of the imperialist market. Thus from the day go, the very basis of the economy was hinged on usurious exploitation and parasitic capital, breeding money out of money, which was against the real development of the vast sections of the people. It was the interest of the capital—feudal/comprador—that entered the economy for maximisation of surplus that was primary. Every social relation and reproduction was subordinated to this interest. No wonder this was bound to breed corruption with extreme disparities of wealth between the rich and poor. The massive surplus drained from the vast agrarian economy finds its place in beefing up the purchasing power of the salaried middle/upper middle class in urban centres through their meaty revised pay packets, whether it is the bureaucrat or the new age executive in the Silicon valley. At the village level it reflected in the state bringing with capital the new ethos of corruption which was known under various names that made it look natural, part of the communal life. With the new age flagship programmes like MNREGA and BPL ration cards it further created layers of consumers/clients who otherwise had little purchasing power to cater to the products of consumption that reached the highly skewed rural markets. Deeper down, for the Muria adivasi of Bastar, if the endless groves of Mahua trees in the forests symbolised happiness,

corruption and exploitation got embodied in the forest official/contractor who appeared in its midst.

Anna Hazare model: the image of imperialism in the subcontinent

This model of development espousing the ideal of ‘catching up with the West’ was with the blessings of the Bretton Woods Institutions which had envisioned the needs of the imperialist powers in the post World War II scenario to accelerate ‘quick development’ in the developing countries as well as those from which direct colonial rule had given way for indirect rule. Economic policies couched in development logic were the panacea to ensure this indirect domination in the semi-colonies like India. In the Indian subcontinent, if initially these policies talked about government to government aid, to facilitate the safe landing of imperialist capital in the days of ‘Nehruvian Socialism’, the same logic went on a tirade against state intervention in development, under the smokescreen of doing away with the ‘license raj’ in the 70s, and with increasing crisis in imperialism reflected in the Second Great Economic Depression of the recent times in the making, the fallout of the toxic capital that is floating in the Global market has forced the same proponents in Washington to bring back the State into development, albeit, without any harm to neo-liberal policies. This trajectory was propounded by the West in all the African and Latin American economies not to say of their East Asian counterparts in the late 90s. And today here in the subcontinent we are witness to this drama being enacted before us—of that of a war waged against corruption *a la* Anna Hazare through his powerful *Satyagraha*.

And truly so, as in development managers in the West, it is the corporate sector, for more than a reason, which is interested in this war against corruption in the age of so-called war against terror, war against weather and what not. For, they fear the genuine discontentment among the masses on the huge amounts of public money being siphoned off, all in the name of development. And the comprador bourgeoisie knows, more than anyone that what the people of the subcontinent have witnessed in the last two decades in the name of efficiency, entrepreneurship, competition, innovation and growth under the grand rubric of LPG was nothing but a surfeit of scams—the Enron-Dabhol power company scam, Bofors, Howitzer, Lottery, Stamp paper scam, food grain/PDS scam, MNREGA scam, Satyam scam, Adarsh scam, Satna land scam, Coffin scam, ADAG/SWAN scam, IPL scam, AIR INDIA scam, Radia Tapes, 2G spectrum scam etc., to name a few. Add to this the untold stories of hundreds of MoUs that have been signed between various state governments and MNCs and comprador capital. Moreover the UPA government at the centre in connivance with the opposition has so far withheld from the people, the available information on the huge amount of money stashed in Swiss banks. And all these have the unbridled involvement of the corporate sector hand-in-glove with the politicians and bureaucrats involving trillions of public money which is nothing but the draining of people’s wealth. We can see through the reason behind this wholehearted funding of the *Satyagraha* of Anna Hazare by the Tatas, Infosys and the Essars at Jantar Mantar. Here we have a corporate sector that on the one hand advises the government, through its bodies like FICCI, the need to spread the strategy of organising private vigilante gangs like Salwa Judum in Chhattisgarh against the fighting tribal people to other states as well. Besides it is common story that comprador houses like

the Tatas and the Essars have funded the Salwa Judum. And on the other, the story is complete when the same corporate sector exploits the genuine sentiments of the vast sections of the people through the sponsorship of the Spectacle of Satyagraha of Anna Hazare.

If the mass murderer Narendra Modi is the darling of the comprador capital, in Anna Hazare we have its feudal counterpart. It was natural for a corporate backed Anna to be endorsed by a Modi who looks upmarket. And all other living demigods like Baba Ramdev, Swami Agnivesh and Sri Sri Ravishankar have joined. Another image that comes to our mind is the sponsorship of a sophisticated vehicle with the state-of-the-art gadgets, by the Birlas to the VHP, for their spread of Hindu communalism in early 90s which also witnessed the Rath Yatra of Advani. And in Anna Hazare's 'Model Village', in Ralegaon Sidhi in Maharashtra, one can see the production and reproduction of a Ram Rajya Brahminical in every sense strictly based on the tenets of the caste hierarchy. Women, Muslims and Dalits form the marginalised and the faceless in this 'Model Village'. At this juncture, when the corporate credibility is at its nadir before the people the safest way is to reinforce the alliance of the feudal-comprador combine which is exemplified in the spectacle of the Anna Hazare Satyagraha. The talk of a Jan Lok Pal is further in this direction using this alliance to entrench the state in the perpetuation of LPG. The idea of a grand constituency in Hazare's proposed Jan Lok Pal Bill, which will elect the Lok Pal in essence furthers Oligarchical rule. The material basis for a parasitic middle class which has made the fast buck out of the charm of LPG also has given them the fetish of an honest, smart, if not handsome and powerful dictator who can solve all their problems even at the cost of vast sections of the wretched. Thus we have a grand design towards increasing fascization of the Indian polity. In this vein, it is important to note the near total usurpation of the 'civil society' and the parliamentary Left in the hyperbole of 'middle class revolution', the angst of which resonates in the opinion of a self-styled Left academic who takes pains to reiterate the need to stand with the *Satyagraha* of Hazare failing which the only alternative before the people of the subcontinent is the Maoist Movement! It is for the people of the subcontinent to see through this devious strategy of the ruling classes and forge an uncompromising struggle against all kinds of corruption which will also put an end to class, caste, patriarchal and religious exploitation.

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